



FAO'S ROLE IN THE NEPAL HUMANITARIAN TRANSITION APPEAL 2010

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Background

Nepal suffers from chronic food insecurity, severe and recurrent natural disasters, poor health and sanitation infrastructure, and water and energy scarcity. These factors combined with political instability and civil unrest result in a dire humanitarian situation for Nepal's already vulnerable population. The country's long-running civil conflict (1996-2006) severely outstretched the coping mechanisms of affected families. Further external shocks, such as floods, droughts, pandemics or rising food prices, could have catastrophic consequences for Nepal if support mechanisms are not provided.

Currently, 3.4 million people in the country are highly to severely food insecure. Each year, approximately 28 000 children under the age of five die from easily preventable illnesses. More than 50 percent of districts are food-deficit and nearly one-quarter of the population lives on less than USD 1 per day.

The cost of staple food items in Nepal today is as high or higher than at the peak of the international food crisis in August 2008. Further exacerbating the humanitarian crisis, political instability has disrupted governmental proceedings and limited investment, job creation and exports, while continued strikes have impacted the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

The Nepal Humanitarian Transition Appeal 2010 seeks USD 123.5 million to assist over 3.4 million people countrywide through priority interventions related to food security, refugees, disaster preparedness and coordination.

Challenges facing food security and agriculture

Agriculture is the main source of livelihood for over three-quarters of the population. Nepal's decade-long conflict caused the collapse of the sector as it destroyed rural infrastructure, disrupted storage, transportation and market access, depleted food and seed stocks, and affected livestock production and animal health services. Over the past three years, a further five million people have fallen below the poverty line due to high food prices and low crop yields. In rural areas, over 70 percent of income is spent on food.

Farmers have difficulty in accessing basic agricultural inputs due to their high costs, limited local seed production capacity and poor road networks. The lack of quality seeds, fertilizers and agricultural machinery results in an average per hectare yield of rice, wheat, maize and pulses – Nepal's staple crops – that is notably lower than that of neighbouring countries.

An increased frequency of floods, droughts and hail storms has further impacted crop production. The 2008/09 winter drought resulted in a 14.5 and 17.3 percent decrease in barley and wheat production, respectively, as compared with the previous year. Lack of fodder and access to veterinary services, combined with animal disease outbreaks, continually threaten the food security of families reliant on livestock, a vital livelihood asset for rural communities, especially the landless.



Women involved in an FAO intervention, combining agriculture and livestock support with nutrition education



FAO's response

Within the framework of the Nepal Humanitarian Transition Appeal 2010, original funding requirements for the assistance proposed by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) amounted to

USD 10.9 million. However, current funding needs total USD 5.4 million. This time-critical support will enable vulnerable, agriculture-dependent families to improve their food security, nutrition practices and resilience to future shocks.

FAO's proposed activities aim to:

- Improve the nutrition knowledge and food practices of food insecure families through training, establishing home and school gardens, and promotion of small livestock rearing.
- Increase the resilience of vulnerable farming households to drought by providing agricultural inputs and building local capacity in drought preparedness, response and mitigation.
- Assist conflict-affected households to resume agricultural livelihoods through the distribution of crop- and livestock-related inputs and rehabilitation of small irrigation systems.
- Mitigate the impact of soaring food costs by providing agricultural inputs, disseminating improved agricultural practices and facilitating the development of a national food security and nutrition information and monitoring system.





FAO'S COMPONENT OF THE NEPAL HUMANITARIAN TRANSITION APPEAL 2010

Original requirements: USD 10.9 million

Title: Improvement of the food security and nutrition status of vulnerable families of the Mid-Western Region of Nepal through enhanced dietary diversity and better nutritional and agricultural practices (NPL-10/A/26241)

Objectives: To improve nutrition knowledge of vulnerable populations through the adoption of better dietary and feeding practices and development of homestead vegetable gardens.

Beneficiaries: 84 000 households (children: 42 000; women: 5 880).

Implementing Partners: Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives (MoAC), Ministry of Health and Population, national and international NGOs/institutions, and community partners.

Funds requested: USD 1 000 000

This proposed FAO response aims to address immediate and medium-term food security and nutrition needs in the five districts of the Mid-Western Region. With donor funding, FAO will provide basic inputs for improved agricultural production and hands-on training in food preparation and dietary diversification, establish home and school gardens and promote home-based poultry production. The project's activities would benefit 15 000 households and complement the delivery of emergency food aid (WFP) and therapeutic feeding, and water and sanitation activities (UNICEF). These efforts would improve beneficiaries' dietary diversity, nutrition knowledge and food practices, while strengthening the livelihoods of food insecure households with malnourished children.

Title: Immediate assistance to improve the nutrition and food security of vulnerable communities in the conflict-affected districts of Rukum, Rolpa, Jajarkot, Salyan, Pyuthan and Gorkha (NPL-10/A/26260)

Objectives: To enhance the food security and nutrition status of beneficiaries at household level through the resumption of crop production and the rehabilitation of community-based irrigation systems.

Beneficiaries: 92 500 conflict-affected farmers and their food insecure families (children: 47 600).

Implementing Partners: Local NGOs.

Funds requested: USD 1 700 000

FAO activities conducted between 2008 and 2009 in 23 Village Development Committees (VDCs) of Nepal's Mid-Western and Western Regions enabled marked improvements to livelihood restoration, food security and agricultural production, including a 15-20 percent annual rise in staple crop yields. The proposed project responds to the continual need and request for similar support in a further 25 VDCs and the district of Gorkha, which were severely affected by conflict and 2008/09 winter drought. The project aims to assist 17 000 families during the 2010 winter/summer seasons through distribution of improved cereal and vegetable seeds, training, introduction of improved breeds of small animals and poultry, and raising nutrition awareness.

Title: Immediate rehabilitation of agriculture-based livelihoods and restoration of food and nutrition security in the drought-affected districts in the Far-Western and Mid-Western Development Regions of Nepal (NPL-10/A/26258)

Objectives: To increase the resilience of beneficiary households to drought and enhance the level of food security and nutrition status of beneficiaries through improved livestock and crop production.

Beneficiaries: 100 800 drought-affected, food insecure farmers and their families (children: 7 056; women: 50 600).

Implementing Partners: National and international NGOs, national institutions and national academic institutions.

Funds requested: USD 2 700 000

In view of the increasing occurrence of drought in Nepal, this project aims to assist 20 160 drought-affected households in the Mid-Western Region during the 2010 summer and winter crop seasons by providing improved and drought-tolerant varieties of cereal and vegetable seeds, and establishing water harvesting and micro-irrigation systems. Beneficiaries would learn simple agricultural practices to increase soil fertility and conserve moisture, as well as improved post-harvest and food preservation techniques to prolong the shelf-life and availability of food stocks. The project would also facilitate capacity building initiatives at community level, with the participation of government institutions and humanitarian and development actors, on management strategies for local water resources.

Title: Support to mitigate the negative effects of high food prices on local rural populations in ten districts in the Eastern, Central, Mid-Western and Far-Western Regions of Nepal (NPL-10/A/29578)

Objectives: To enhance food security and mitigate the effects of soaring food prices through provision of improved quality seeds of staple crops, vegetables and pulses, fertilizers and training; and reinforce the capacity of MoAC to improve food security and nutrition monitoring capabilities.

Beneficiaries: 100 000 farmers affected by the soaring food prices crisis (children: 10 000; women: 50 000).

Implementing Partners: WFP, international and national NGOs, MoAC, other relevant line ministries, and academic institutions.

Funds requested: USD 5 500 000 (100% funded by the European Union Food Facility)

The proposed project seeks to mitigate the impact of soaring food prices and assist 100 000 farmers through the provision of agricultural inputs (including various seed types/varieties and corresponding quantities of fertilizers for two cropping seasons) and the dissemination of improved agricultural practices. The intervention would also facilitate the development and deployment of a comprehensive national food security and nutrition information and monitoring system. These efforts would result in the establishment of productive safety nets, with the aim of maintaining and improving agricultural infrastructure, thereby increasing production and boosting the availability of staple foods among extremely vulnerable households.

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