CARTA PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT

Project description, outputs, outcomes, and results

Sunaula Hazar Din
Community Actions for Nutrition

Third-party Monitoring of the Rapid Result Nutrition Initiatives

March 2014 - April 2015

Submitted to:

CARTA/HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation Nepal
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Submitted by:

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Acronyms

CARTA	Citizens Action for Results, Transparency and Accountability
CBAS	Capacity Building and Advisory Services
CBO	Community Based Organization
CVO	Cluster Verification Officer
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DDC	District Development Committee
DNFSC	District Nutrition and Food Steering Committee
DFGG	Demand for Good Governance
ESMF	Environment and Social Management Framework
ESRSM	Environmental and Social Risk Screening Management
FCHV	Female Community Health Volunteers
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GoN	Government of Nepal
HDI	Human Development Index
JSDF	Japan Social Development Fund
LDO	Local Development Officer
LGCDP	Local Governance and Community Development Program
MC	Monitoring Committee
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MoFALD	Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development
MSNP	Multi Sector Nutrition plan
NEST	Nucleus for Empowerment through Skill Transfer
NFSSC	Nutrition and Food Security Steering Committees
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NPC	National Planning Commission
OP	Operational Manual
PCT	Project Coordination Team
PMT	Project Management Team
PRAN	Program for Accountability in Nepal
PTF	Partnership for Transparency Fund
RR	Rapid Results
RRNI	Rapid Result Nutrition Initiative
SHD-CAN	*Sunaula Hazar Din*-Community Actions for Nutrition Project
SPAC	Sub Project Advisory Committee
SPMT	Sub Project Management Team
ToT	Training of Trainers
VDC	Village Development Committee
VNFSCC	VDC Nutrition and Food Steering Committee
WB	World Bank
WCF	Ward Citizen Forum

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1   Executive Summary

The Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development (MoFALD) has been implementing *Sunaula Hazar Din*[1] - Community Action for Nutrition (SHD-CAN) Project since 2012, with the support of the World Bank, in two clusters of 10 districts (Cluster 1: Okhaldhunga, Khotang, Udayapur, Saptari and Sunsari; and Cluster 3: Makwanpur, Bara, Parsa, Rautahat and Sarlahi) in Nepal. The project aims to improve the nutritional attitudes and practices of pregnant and lactating women and their children, during the period from pregnancy until the child is two-years old (the first 1,000 days). The project uses the rapid results approach in 100-day project cycles at the community level to achieve nutritional outcomes through Rapid Result Nutrition Initiative (RRNI) projects.

Starting in early 2014, Nucleus for Empowerment through Skill Transfer (NEST) undertook independent third-party monitoring of the World Bank-funded SHD-CAN Project, with CARTA funding and the support of PTF and HELVETAS Nepal. It mobilized seven Cluster Verification Officers to monitor the project implementation process and to verify the reports produced. Through a consultative process, NEST developed checklists for field verification of the RRNI projects. Focus group discussions, key informant interviews, and field observations were used to collect data and information during the first cycle and partial implementation of the second cycle of RRNI projects.

NEST monitored RRNIs from March 2014 through April 2015. It arranged the districts of three ecological zones - Terai, Hill, and Mountain - into seven clusters, considering transportation facilities and socio-economic and cultural settings, which the sub-project team believed enhanced the coordination with RRNI teams, WCFs, VNFSCs, NSPs, and DDCs. In the ten districts of the World Bank-funded projects, there were a total of 2,401 RRNI teams established in 94 VDCs. Of these, the sub-project reviewed 1,216 RRNIs, which was 183% more than the initial target.

NEST found that most of the RRNI teams substantially followed the project's operational guidelines during different stages implementation, although there were deviations. The most significant findings were:

- 96% of RRNI teams complied with the guidelines by holding Ward Citizen Forum meetings and forming RRNI teams. (All sampled RRNI teams held a goal-setting meeting.)
- 85% of the RRNI teams in the first cycle and 93% in the second cycle followed the guidelines while selecting projects.
- Financial transactions were done through banks in 77% of the sampled teams in the first cycle and 87% in the second cycle.
- In the first cycle, 65% of the teams followed the guidelines while procuring goods and services. Verification was not possible in the second cycle, because no districts (except Okhaldhunga (100%)) were in purchasing stage by the time the sub-project ended on 30 April 2015.
- In the first cycle, 86% and 73% of the teams conducted mid-term and 100-day reviews, respectively.
- Two activities, monitoring visits by DDC/VDC and public audits - although very important from the point of view of ensuring transparency and accountability - had the lowest scores,

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[1] *Sunaula Hazar Din* means first-thousand-days and refers to the project's target of assisting women and children during the period of pregnancy until the child reaches age two years.

44% and 46%, respectively, in the first cycle. Verification could not be done in the second cycle because the sub-project ended.

- While verifying the reports produced by VDC coaches in the first cycle, only 62% of the RRNI teams confirmed them.
- 59% of the teams completed their projects by the time of 100-day review.
- 80% of projects had budgets exceeding Rs.100,000 in the first cycle and more than 90% in second cycle.
- The three most common projects were: stopping open defecation (33%), consumption of animal based protein (18%), and access to clean drinking water (13%). The projects related to late marriage/pregnancy, family planning for unwanted pregnancy, and reduction of physical labour were preferred less frequently by the teams. Some goals, such as children's immunization and infants' treatment during chest infection, fever and diarrhea, were not chosen by any of the RRNI teams. RRNI team members may not have been properly oriented about the fifteen focus areas in the SHD-CAN project, which may have affected the selection of goals.

NEST observed widespread enthusiasm from the community members about the projects they chose to work on. This excitement was attributed to the increased local control over the projects, such as the active roles in RRNI project selection, its management and implementation, cash handling, and benefit sharing. However, perhaps because the rapid result initiative was a new approach in Nepal, it appeared that most stakeholders, including service providers and beneficiaries, did not initially understand all the operations.

The SHD-CAN sub-project was the only CARTA sub-project implemented at the start of the World Bank-financed project it supported; the other sub-projects were initiated after the projects had been under implementation for some time. The SHD-CAN sub-project therefore provided feedback on the project's initial implementation experience. This feedback[2] was taken into account in a formal restructuring of the project, including the implementation arrangements, agreed with the government and approved by the World Bank in June 2015.

2 Background

2.1 Description of the World Bank-funded SHD-CAN project

The SHD-CAN Project has been implemented in 10 Nepalese districts with the support of the International Development Association (IDA)/World Bank since 2012. The project's development objective is to meet the health-related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by improving the nutritional outcomes of women of reproductive age and children under the age of two. The SHD-CAN Project was designed primarily to address the risk factors for chronic malnutrition, although Nepal has high levels of acute as well as chronic malnutrition. The project's main focus is on the period from conception to the age of 24 months, since during this period damage to physical growth, particularly cognitive brain development, due to inadequate nutrition can be extensive and irreversible. Results expected from project interventions include: improved hygiene through practices such as hand-washing and use of safe latrines; reduced smoking levels during pregnancy; reduced indoor air pollution; improved safety of drinking water; continued schooling for girls; delayed age of first pregnancy until age 20; improved dietary intake during pregnancy; increased

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[2] Meetings with the WB TTL

consumption of micro-nutrient supplements during pregnancy; and improved breastfeeding and feeding practices for children aged 6 to 24 months.

There were two project components. The first component supported the implementation of Rapid Results Nutrition Initiative (RRNI) projects. At the ward level, key nutritional challenges of the community were discussed using the rapid results approach, and an RRNI team was selected. Each ward had an RRNI team; approximately 21,000 RRNIs were expected under the World Bank-supported project. The projects planned to achieve nutritional outcomes selected by the communities were implemented by the teams with the support of the Nutrition and Food Security Steering Committees (NFSSC). The second component supported project management, capacity building, monitoring and evaluation to provide support for implementation of the first component.

The RRNI process started at the Ward Citizen Forum (WCF). The RRNI team set an appropriate and realistic target for meeting the goal (chosen by the WCF from a menu of prescribed goals) and pledged to achieve the goal within a 100-day period by mobilizing the community and finding the best approach to achieve the target in its particular context. The team prepared a project proposal outlining the goals and inputs needed to meet the targets, which were later submitted for review by the NFSSC at the VDC level, if the total value is less than Rs.100,000 and to the NFSSC at the district level if the total value was greater than this amount up to a maximum of Rs.300,000. Once the funds were provided to the RRNI teams at the ward level, the 100-day initiatives began. WCFs were expected to implement a series of RRNIs through cycles and individual wards of a VDC were expected to select 2 Rapid Results goals every year from the menu of 30 goals identified by the program. The 100-day RRNI cycle had certain milestone events in its project cycle, including launch, mid-term review, public audit, and sustainability review meetings.

The RRNI team was mobilized and supported by a coach and a social mobilizer recruited by MoFALD in each VDC. The coaches and the social mobilizers operated at the VDC level and reported on the results achieved and expenditures to the WCFs and NFSSCs at both village and district levels. SHD-CAN provided for VDC coaches to report the progress of RRNIs at the ward level to MoFALD through the local government hierarchy.

2.2   Governance gaps and accountability issues addressed by the CARTA sub-project

The sub-project monitored whether the RRNI teams followed the 100-day cycle, complying with each milestone at its stipulated time. NEST was responsible for reviewing the reports in the sample districts. The verification process also determined whether the WCFs were receiving the reports prepared by the coaches.

NEST was responsible for reviewing governance gaps in the project's implementation. This included reviewing various issues, including the formation of RRNI teams incorporating marginalized groups, compliance with social and environmental safeguard measures, dissemination of information by service providers and RRNI teams to beneficiaries, verification of the milestones of RR goals, verification of reports developed by RRNI team regarding rapid result goals, noting redress processes for beneficiaries' concerns and grievances, and whether there was active engagement of a community in RR goals.

2.3   CARTA Sub-Project Objectives

At the time the sub-project TOR was created, there were concerns that RRNI teams may have limited planning, implementation and monitoring capacities. Therefore, the quality of the information produced by the RRNI teams was received skeptically, and it was suspected that the RRNI teams

might not have adhered to the guidelines, including the inclusion of minorities and women. Ideally, the NSPs would provide additional input to the SHD-CAN Project implementers on the quality of work done, including information dissemination; indications of decision-making, planning, and procurement practices; and environmental and social safeguard issues. NSPs were considered an important component in the SHD-CAN, but there were many suspected issues that prevented their proper functioning.

The overall goal of the sub-project was to make key service providers more accountable and responsible for effective implementation of SHD-CAN, with the help of the NSPs and RRNI teams.

Objectives
- To verify, with the help of RRNI teams, that key service providers carried out all the activities for effective implementation of the RRNI process
- To increase stakeholders' access to RRNI-related information
- To verify reports prepared by the service providers with the help of RRNI teams

2.4   Sub-project Terms of Reference
The sub-project provided independent, third-party monitoring of the SHD-CAN Project in ten project districts, beginning March 2014 and ending April 2015. NEST conducted monitoring in 292 wards in 146 VDCs of the 10 districts.

The initial monitoring plan was to select wards using a Lot-Quality-Assurance-Sampling method. However, the project had already identified wards on the basis of Disadvantaged-Groups criteria for its baseline survey. Hence, the sub-project was limited to those pre-selected wards. Cluster Verification Officers (CVOs) employed by the sub-project were responsible for verifying that the RRNI teams complied with the guidelines in the Project Operational Manual and that the reports prepared by the RRNI teams were consistent with their field observations and interviews. The CVOs analysed and reported any discrepancies. NEST shared the observations with Helvetas, PTF, the World Bank team, and the MoFALD through information sharing meetings and formal reports.

Concerns that lack of understanding about the roles and responsibilities of the third-party monitor could affect the sub-project's performance led to NEST's responsibly for clarifying to stakeholders its monitoring activities, including the mechanisms and tools used to report results, the use of resources, and the RRNI teams' compliance with the SHD-CAN Project guidelines.

Division of Districts and Cluster Arrangement
NEST grouped the ten project districts into seven clusters taking into account cost effectiveness, staffing arrangement, geographical proximity/accessibility and number of VDCs. Four clusters included one district only; three included two districts. The cluster arrangement is given in the table below:

Table 1: Cluster Arrangement for the Sub-project

Cluster	District	Sub cluster Station	Region
I	Khotang	Diktel	Eastern
II	Okhaldhunga	Okhaldhunga	Eastern
III	Udayapur	Udayapur	Mid
IV	Sunsari & Saptari	Inaruwa	Eastern
V	Rautahat & Sarlahi	Chapur	Mid
VI	Parsa	Birgunj	Mid
VII	Bara and Makawanpur	Hetauda	Mid

3   Data collection methodologies and TPM tools

The sub-project third-party data-collection activities gathered the opinions of various interest groups and stakeholders of the SHD-CAN Project using participatory methods and approaches. A multi-method collection approach was employed, using both primary and secondary sources. The CVOs had intensive interactions with a large number of actors, including RRNI teams, VDC coaches, NSP supervisors, DDC focal persons, local government entities (WCF/VDC/DDCs), and beneficiary households. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), interactions with the stakeholders, and field observations of project activities were the methodological tools used to verify the information produced by the service providers.

The sub-project staff from NEST prepared and used guidelines, checklists, and questionnaires (the annexes provide details) for the reviews of the reports produced by the VDC coaches and supervisors. Such tools have been used to verify the reports and to assess whether there were gaps in the implementation of project activities.

Focus Group Discussions
Based on the checklists, focus group discussions with RRNIs were conducted with the WCFs to verify reports, project effectiveness, beneficiary satisfaction levels and the nature and number of grievances.

Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with RRNI teams
Meetings, interactions and group discussions in the field were done periodically to verify the reported milestone achievements of the local projects and to disseminate information to the beneficiaries.

Interactions and Field Observations
The CVOs participated in RRNI milestone meetings, including launch, mid-term and final evaluation meetings organized by the RRNI teams during implementation of the 100 day initiatives on a sample basis (at least one ward in the poorest VDC, according to the baseline conducted by the World Bank). The CVOs undertook field observations to verify the reports provided by the RRNI teams.

Meetings with District and VDC-level NFSSCs
Monthly meetings with DDC and VDC-level Nutrition and Food Security Steering Committees (NFSSCs) and RRNI teams were conducted, especially to identify and discuss gaps in RRNI reports and implementation progress. During such meetings, NEST explained discrepancies between what was reported and what actually happened. For this, NEST collected data and produced reports to share its findings and recommendations for improvement of outputs/outcomes. These meetings were also useful to coordinate plans and for consultation purposes.

4   Outcomes and Results

In this section the findings are organized according to the four sub-project objectives—monitoring compliance with guidelines, verifying the accuracy of reports, identifying issues, and increasing stakeholders' access to information. NEST was able to monitor the first cycle of RRNI activities, but the sub-project ended before the second cycle was completed[3]. Therefore, the completion of activities that continued until the end of the second cycle could not be monitored; these are indicated by "NA" in the table below.

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[3] The sub-project's duration was constrained by delays in the initiation of the SHD-CAN Project and CARTA's closing date.

4.1   Result 1: Monitoring of sampled RRNIs to assess compliance with project guidelines

The MoFALD issued a comprehensive operational manual with guidelines for the implementation of RRNI projects. As indicated in Table 2, NEST's field verifications found substantial but not complete adherence to the guidelines during different stages of project implementation. The following findings indicate that there were many issues in the implementation of the local projects.

- Ward Citizen Forum meetings were held in 82% of the wards in the first cycle and in 96% in the second cycle.
- RRNI teams were formed in 82% of the locales in the first cycle, while in the second cycle 81% followed the guideline.
- Conducting a goal setting meeting was the only activity done according to the guideline by all sampled RRNI teams.
- 85% of the teams' proposals were approved on time by the responsible VNFSSC or DNFSSC in the first cycle, but only 21% in the second.
- Although 85% of the RRNI teams' the proposals were approved in reasonable time in the first cycle, only 21% were approved timely in the second cycle.
- Only 50% received the first instalment on time in the first cycle, which fell further to 33% in the second cycle.
- The guidelines require RRNI teams to form different committees to facilitate project implementation. Eighty-two percent of the teams formed budget committees,
- Responsibility to carry out the teams' business for RRNI project implementation was distributed appropriately in 67% of the cases.
- 65% of the teams followed the guidelines while procuring goods and services.
- The mandated mid-term and 100-day reviews were conducted by 86% and 73% of the teams, respectively.
- 44% of the RRNI teams reported monitoring visits by DDC/VDCs.
- 46% of the teams conducted public audits of their projects.[4]
- 77% of the RRNI teams in the first cycle and 87% of the RRNI teams in second cycle opened bank accounts for project operation.
- 82% of the RRNI teams formed budget committees in the first cycle and 88% in the second cycle.
- 85% and 86% of the RRNI teams followed the guidelines for the selection of projects in the first two cycles, respectively.

Table 2 data shows that from the first to the second cycle—for those activities that could be measured—there were improvements in some implementation operations, but an equal number had lower compliance rates.

Table 2: Percentage of RRNI in compliance in first and second cycles

SN	Process verification	% in 1st cycle	% in 2nd cycle
1	Guideline compliance on Ward Citizen Forum meeting	82%	96%
2	Guideline compliance on RRNI team formation	82%	81%
3	Guideline compliance on RRNI goal setting	100%	100%
4	Guideline compliance on RRNI project selection	85%	86%

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[4] Since public audits are part of sustainability, as per the Operational Manual, both should have been done in the same sitting, yet sustainability reviews/completion reviews were done in 73% of the communities, while an actual public audit done in 46%. Why the difference? According to the CVOs, public audit events often occurred *on paper* only. The discrepancy might be due to this very reason. Although the sustainability review was reported in 73% RRNIs, actual public audits occurred in 46%: the difference, based on field verification, (73-46=27%) can be attributed to a *paper only* audit.

5	Timely approval of proposal submitted	85%	21%
6	Opening of bank account by RRNI teams	77%	87%
7	Timely release of the first installment	50%	33%
6	Work distribution among RRNI teams	66%	47%
8	Budget committee formation by RRNI teams	82%	88%
9	Timely initiation of the projects after the approval	59%	NA
10	Guideline compliance on procurement	65%	NA
11	Project implementation as per the budget & time-frame	71%	NA
12	Conduct of midterm review meeting	86%	NA
13	Monitoring visit by DDC/VDC	44%	NA
14	Conduct of 100 days meeting/sustainability review	73%	NA
15	Conduct of public audit	46%	NA
16	Completion of the projects at the time of 100 days review meeting	59%	NA
17	Accuracy in VDC coaches report	62%	NA

One of the most significant findings was that an average of only 59% of the teams completed their projects within 100 days. The next table shows the completion percentage by district. In only one district, Okhaldhunga, were all projects completed within this time frame. Other higher performing districts were Udayapur (85%), followed by Khotang (75%) and Rauthat (75%). Makwanpur, which had the fewest projects, performed the worst, completing only nine (21%) of 33 projects. Bara (37%) and Saptari (40%) also had low completion percentages. The primary reasons for the incompletion rate within 100 days was primarily due to late approvals of communities' proposals and late transfers of funds. It is not known if all of the incomplete projects were finally completed later since the sub-project ended, but most were expected to be completed.

Table 3: Completion status of RRNI projects by district

District	Total Project	Completed	Incomplete	%
Khotang	81	61	20	75
Okhaldhunga	63	63	0	100
Udayapur	54	46	8	85
Sunsari	54	28	26	52
Saptari	126	51	75	40
Rautahat	108	81	27	75
Sarlahi	108	64	44	59
Bara	108	40	68	37
Parsa	99	54	45	55
Makwanpur	42	9	33	21
Total	**843**	**497**	**346**	**59**

4.2 Result 2: Monitoring the accuracy of VDC coaches' reports concerning RRNI activities, results and expenditures

NEST verified the accuracy of the VDC coaches' reports using several parameters: opening of bank accounts by the RRNI teams; timely release of the first installment; budget committee formation in RRNI teams; compliance of the project within the scope of the budget and time-frame; compliance with the project guidelines on procurement; and accuracy of their reports.

- In the first cycle, 62% of the RRNI teams confirmed the information in the reports submitted by VDC coaches. Unfortunately, it was not possible to evaluate the second cycle results. (There were no cases of "ghost" proposals or budget inflation. Some events, such as mid-

term review, public audits, sustainability review, etc. were found to occur *on paper* only, although reported in a coach's report. The most faked activity was a public audit.)

4.3   Result 3: Monitoring RRNI activities and identification of issues

In the World Bank-funded project there was a total of 2,401 RRNIs in 94 VDCs in the 10 sub-project districts. Of these, 1,216 RRNIs (51%) were verified by the sub-project. The table below reflects the extent that RRNIs were verified in each district.

Table 4: Distribution of RRNIs with verification percentage

District	Total VDCs	Total RRNIs	No. of Verified RRNIs	% of total
Makwanpur	5	132	81	61.4
Bara	12	324	110	34.0
Parsa	11	270	178	65.9
Rauthat	12	324	115	35.5
Sarlahi	12	324	105	32.4
Cluster 1	**52**	**1374**	**589**	**46**
Saptari	14	278	195	70.1
Sunsari	6	162	71	43.8
Udayapur	6	162	105	64.8
Khotang	9	237	142	59.9
Okhaldhunga	7	188	114	60.6
Cluster 3	**42**	**1027**	**627**	**56**
Total	**94**	**2401**	**1216**	**51%**

While making observations of RRNI activities, the sub-project team noted issues. The most significant[5] are listed below:

At district level:
- The DDC focal persons and DFNSCC demonstrated low knowledge levels and awareness of the concept, approach, and implementation modalities of the SHD-CAN Project.
- Inadequate monitoring and backstopping support to NSPs and VDCs
- Delays in project proposal approval and funds released
- Several DDCs attempted to influence the development of projects for their own interest
- Several DDCs exhibited rent-seeking behavior

RRNI issues
- Inadequate knowledge and awareness on the concept, approach, and implementation modalities of the SHD-CAN Project by VDC secretaries, and VFNSCC and RRNI teams
- Inadequate monitoring and backstopping support from VDCs
- Frequent instances where processes were not followed according to the Project Operational Manual
- Delays in the submission and approval of project proposals
- Inadequate management costs (just 2%) to supervise particular RRNIs, the actual costs being very high for remote VDCs
- Fictitious reporting

NSPs issues (Supervisors and VDC Coaches)
- Inadequate knowledge and awareness on the concept, approach, and implementation modalities of the SHD-CAN Project by supervisors and VDC coaches
- Inadequate orientation of RRNI team members about their roles and responsibilities
- Delays in salary payment to VDC coaches and supervisors and lack of other incentives
- Lack of regular monitoring and backstopping for VDC coaches by NSP supervisors
- Inadequate number and capacity of VDC coaches in general as well as some NSP supervisors

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[5] The issues mentioned in this section are those which were found more frequently across the districts. Unfortunately, data was not collected in a way to create a standard frequency distribution. Several issues were common across the districts, while some were specific to a geographic area. A more detailed list of these issues at the VDC level is included in Annex 3.

- ◆ Because of gender-based stereotype roles, female VDC coaches (including pregnant women and breast-feeding mothers) faced difficulties going to the field
- ◆ Instances where the recruitment and mobilization of VDC coaches was not done according to the Manual
- ◆ Fictitious reporting

4.4 Result 4: Increasing stakeholder's access to RRNI information

The reports on RRNI activities submitted by the VDC coaches to the WCFs were important in providing information to stakeholders. However, probably more important was the routine sub-project activities—the third-party monitoring and the public audits—that led to increased information accessibility by stakeholders. Unfortunately, there was insufficient time to develop more institutionalized ways to increase access, primarily because it took too long to get the RRNI reports from the first cycle of local projects.[6]

5 Sub-project Management

Considering the possible effectiveness and feasibility of the third-party monitoring strategy, NEST created two tiers of supervisory staff: one at the center and at the cluster level. NEST's central office executed the overall sub-project management functions. NEST established a sub-project Management Team (SPMT) with five members (NEST Chairperson, Executive Director/Sub-Project Manager, Admin and Finance Officer, two Cluster Verification Officers) to organize and manage sub-project activities. The SPMT directed sub-project activities. A sub-project advisory committee comprising an advisory team and NEST subject experts backstopped the SPMT team.

5.1 Problems and challenges encountered

NEST encountered several issues that affected the delivery of outputs within the short sub-project duration. The problems are described according to the levels at which they occurred.

At the district level, the sub-project faced initial difficulties because the various stakeholders had a limited understanding of the World Bank-funded project and the purpose of third-party monitoring. The DDC focal persons, for example, did not have proper understanding of their roles in the project and had no experience with the mechanisms for collaborating with a third-party monitor. For example, this lack of knowledge led to delayed disbursement of budgeted funds to localities trying to implement their small projects and had the unintended effect of demotivating the project's field level staff, which affected the collaborative working environment between the beneficiaries and the sub-project team.

At the VDC level, the sub-project team noted that the RRNI teams and VDC secretaries were poorly oriented on project implementation and monitoring activities. The lack of capacity led to many implementation issues. For example, the mid-term reviews of the RRNIs were not done, although several reviews were reported on paper, and trainings were shortened to less than the required

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[6] Since a baseline survey was not conducted to collect initial data, there was no indication of initial conditions, or changes that resulted from the project intervention. Still there are indications that changes occurred. For example, one of the important issues identified was the low knowledge levels and awareness of the concept, approach, and implementation modalities of the SHD-CAN Project at DDC level, at RRNI team level as well as at NSP level. Despite those short-comings, compliance with the project guidelines during the first cycle seemed quite encouraging, thanks to the CVOs' efforts to provide all necessary information to these stakeholders. Furthermore, Table 2 in the report shows that from the first to the second cycle—for those activities that could be measured—there were improvements in some implementation operations. This wouldn't be possible without increased access to information and awareness raising.

hours because of inadequate budgets. NEST staff therefore had to spend significant time reorienting project implementers, which required substantial time to build rapport and trust.

Similar problems were observed at the community level, where NSP supervisors and VDC coaches worked. For example, the VDC coaches had little idea of the objectives and *modus operandi* of the project. They were also poorly monitored and backstopped, making them unaccountable, less effective, and less likely to work collaboratively with the sub-project team. The NSP supervisors were also unable to complete their tasks. In many instances, the reports of the NSP supervisors were missing, and the sub-project assumed they had never been submitted.

6   Sub-project Sustainability

NEST, in partnership with HELVETAS and PTF, highlighted the advantages of having independent third-party monitoring in a large public-sector investment, such as the World Bank-funded SHD-CAN project. The impacts of this independent monitoring were noticeable during implementation and were appreciated by various stakeholders of the SHD-CAN Project and CARTA sub-project. The most prominent effect, for example, was that the reporting mechanisms of VDC coaches and RRNI teams were now scrutinized and regulated. Other activities will also continue after the sub-project ended. For example, the need for accuracy and transparency in financial transactions has been highlighted. This led to the mandatory use of banks for all financial transactions.

In addition, through the implementation of this sub-project, a network of CSOs with expertise on social accountability, and TPM in particular, has been established. The network was engaged in various capacity-building exercises, particularly in assessing the quality of services using different social accountability tools and the use of TPM for routine monitoring to improve the scrutiny of project deliverables. Such synergy of CSOs is believed to help build the capacity of other potential actors and establish a roster of professionals to improve the accountability of future public sector investments of all origins.

7   Dissemination of Outcomes

NEST expects the outputs and outcomes to help future design of similar, future government programs. Therefore, there were several sub-project activities that were intended to disseminate the outcomes.

- Good practices and findings from the third-party monitoring were shared with CARTA partners and stakeholders during sharing meetings.
- Partnership with the media was an important tool that had dissemination impact. Local FM stations and newspapers were mobilized to disseminate the project outcomes. A sample newspaper clipping is attached to this report.
- NEST initiated and participated in regular sharing and interaction meetings to share the sub-project team's experiences. The major focus was on lessons learned, issues and recommendations.
- Four sharing workshops were organized in Makawanpur, Bara, Parsa and Okhaldhunga, with the active participation of mass media agencies. These workshops were crucial in disseminating the outputs and outcomes of this sub-project.

8   Lessons learned and recommendations

8.1   Lessons

There were several lessons from the sub-project that can be applied to future project design. Of course, the lessons should be customized to fit other projects in their context.

- More training is needed. It was clear that most participants—at all levels—did not have a sound understanding of the SHD-CAN Project at the start of the first phase. One would expect that the next phases would have proceeded more smoothly given their experience with the first phase, but this assumption could not be fully tested given the short term of the sub-project monitoring activities.

- The 100-day cycle for local projects may not be possible in all localities, even with sufficient training. This may be true especially for construction projects that require importing materials to the community, although this observation requires more study.

- Almost all the local projects were run exclusively by women. While the local projects were ostensibly designed to improve the nutrition and health of infants, one very real side-effect was that it empowered women to take a more decisive role in their communities. According to the women, due to the ability to generate money in these projects, a woman's status seemed to increase, and their voice became more audible in their community. More study needs to be done to determine why men were not involved in the local projects.

- The sub-project could have provided more valuable data if the research questions were more carefully agreed upon at the beginning of the sub-project. Each stakeholder, in retrospect, had their own data needs to answer questions about the project. It would be very useful to agree upon these questions beforehand. For example, there was little input from the communities about their data needs. Consequently, the sub-project could not provide systemic information to answer questions, such as "Why were the transfers late?", or "Why did a community have to make repeated requests for their funds?"

- The data provided by the sub-project, given its short duration, provide only an impression of the actual issues, since it is, at best, only a snapshot of activities in selected areas. Therefore the data is incomplete. The lesson is not to make this data more concrete, and therefore draw more substantive conclusions, than is warranted.

There were also several general lessons that can be implied, based on observations of the changes in stakeholder behaviour:

- The use of an independent third-party monitor improved the implementation of project activities. The objective nature of the data enabled project management to know the reality in the field. This feedback was taken into account in a formal restructuring of the project, including the implementation arrangements, agreed with the government and approved by the World Bank in June 2015[7].

- Also, the sub-project used a constructive engagement approach that relied on collaboration. This approach was effective; it led to cooperation between stakeholders, VDC coaches and RRNI teams, which was assumed to lead to greater levels of transparency.

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[7] International Development Association, Restructuring Paper on a Proposed Restructuring of the Community Action for Nutrition Project (*Sunaula Hazar Din*) Credit 5137-NP and Grant H786-NP to Nepal Approved June 26, 2012, to Nepal, June 17, 2015. Document of The World Bank, Report No: RES18529, restricted distribution.

- The qualitative information provided by the sub-project led to a greater awareness by project management of the widespread excitement and enthusiasm among the target beneficiaries and communities. This feedback was assumed to promote greater effort by the management team since they were more encouraged by the positive effect.

8.2   Recommendations

Given that one of the goals of the sub-project was to demonstrate the use of a third-party monitor, recommendations are primarily made from the perspective of ways to use this approach better. Other recommendations are made to improve the World Bank-funded project.

- A third-party monitor should use a constructive engagement approach. This means that all parties must be aware of their roles and responsibilities and that there should be a process through which grey areas in responsibility can be discussed and clarified. Unfortunately, frontline workers in this project had a limited understanding of the project's standard operating protocols and the purpose of the sub-project monitoring activities. The misunderstandings reduced the effectiveness of the sub-project by causing the monitoring to take longer than planned. Therefore, a clear capacity building plan for the frontline workers and stakeholders should be planned and executed at project inception and periodically afterwards.
- The SHD-CAN Project has been successful in empowering individuals in communities by giving them meaningful roles, such as the ability to select their own projects, and then manage implementation. While training about project goals and methods is critical, additional training in basic rights—to empower individuals—could make changes sustainable.
- Many project implementation issues can be attributable to lack of training, but there is also the issue of poor monitoring by the Project Management Team (PMT), reportedly due to a lack of adequate and appropriate human resources. If the PMT had had   the resources it needed, the monitoring mechanisms may have been more effective, and many issues would could have been resolved earlier. These resources would have also indirectly facilitated more effective collaboration with the CARTA sub-project for third-party monitoring. Therefore, for future design, a practical monitoring schedule with corresponding levels of funding should be included.
- Improving grievance mechanisms was not part of the sub-project activities, but it could be a deliverable for a third-party monitor and included in its ToR. Had such engagement and empowerment activities been included in NEST's ToR, the improved system might have had longer term impact on RRNI teams.

9   Annexes

9.1   Logical framework

Proposed Logical Framework* of CAN sub-project

	Intervention Logic	Objectively verifiable indicators (OVI)	Means of verifications (MoV)	Assumptions
General Objective/ Goal	The overall objective/goal of this sub-project is to make coaches (key service providers) more accountable and responsible for effective implementation of RRIs under the CAN project.	▪ Improved accountability and responsibility in RRI implementation process ▪ Reduction in discrepancy between RRI implemented and reported	Evaluation Report Final Project report Monitoring reports Regular report produced by service providers Records of health posts Interview with beneficiaries	Beneficiaries & stakeholders are fully cooperative Stakeholders welcomed the third party monitoring of RRI implementation process
Specific Objective	To verify activities of coaches that have carried out for effective facilitation of the RRNI process	▪ # of women, dalits and janajati in the RRNI team ▪ # of coaches implementing RRNI process transparently	Key Informant Interview Review Report Focus Group Discussion Field Observation	Participation of stakeholder is remarkable
	To increase access of stakeholders on RRNI related information	# of RRNI team which can explain objective of RRI process	Group discussion Key Informant Interview	Concern stakeholders are positive
	To verify reports developed by the coaches	# of RRNI that actually implemented compare with reported	Key informant interview Group discussion Interaction	
Expected Results/ Outputs	Reduced in gaps between reported and implemented RRIs	▪ # of report produced on time by the Coaches ▪ # of reports produced by Coaches consistent with actually implemented ▪ Diagnostic reports produced by NEST	Evaluation report Review report Interview Report of DDC/coaches	
	Beneficiaries engaged effectively in RRN initiatives	▪ # of milestone meeting attained by beneficiaries ▪ Representation of DAGs in RR team	Report of DDC/Coaches Interview with RR team/WCF	

	Increased timeliness and accuracy of reports produced by coaches	# of reports timely submitted by the coaches	Report of coaches/service providers Project report	
	Minimized of the discrepancy between number of reported and actual RRIs implemented	No any variances of reported and actually implemented	Review report Diagnostic report	
Activities:	Recruitment of Field Staffs	▪ Seven CVOs ▪ Training materials ▪ Policy documents ▪ Orientation materials ▪ # of meeting and FGD ▪ # of media coverage/ publication /broadcasting ▪ Contract agreement with Media ▪ Attendance Sheet	Baseline data of phase I & II Inception report Progress report Financial progress report Diagnostic report Completion report Photo of various event Attendance sheet	The agreement shall be signed by mid-January 2014. No political obstruction to sub-project assignment World Bank and Service providers are positive Release of tranche as per legal agreement
	Preparation of Training Manual			
	Training to CVOs and Focal Person of Cluster CSOs			
	Stakeholder Orientation			
	Development of Checklists/Questionnaire			
	Collection of Baseline Information			
	Verification of RR initiatives & Identification of Gaps Conduction of Meeting/Focus Groups Discussion with RR team, WCF/CAC ▪ *Meeting with DDC/NFSSC and Coaches* ▪ *Focus Group discussion* ▪ *Participation/Observation of Milestones Meeting*	**Human Resources** ▪ Project Manager cum Governance Export-1 (full time input) ▪ Public Health/Nutrition Advisor-1 (part time input of 3 months) ▪ Account Officer-1 (part time inputs of 6 months) ▪ CVOs-7 (full time input) ▪ Office Assistant cum Computer Operator-1 (full time input)	**Budget of sub-project** Total budget of the sub-project: NRs. 74,38,410.00 (USD 78,135.00) PTF Grant: NRs. 69,88,410.00 (USD 73,254.00) CSO contribution: NRs.450,000.00 (USD 4,727.00)	
	Awareness Raising and Information Dissemination ▪ *Preparation & Distribution of Leaflets/Newsletter*			
	Media Mobilization ▪ *Event Broadcasting/Publication* ▪ *Feature News Broadcasting/Publication* ▪ *Broadcasting of Successful RR goal Story*			
	Monitoring & Evaluation ▪ *Central Monitoring* ▪ *CSO Monitoring* ▪ *Sub-project level Monitoring*			
	Organization of Workshops			

9.2 District verification details

District: Sarlahi

Name of the VDC	Major Issues
Chattauna VDC	• Third Installment freeze in Ward no: 3,4,5,7,8,9 and community groups were unaware of the reason • Eggs and milk were distributed in ward no: 3,4 where in ward no: 3 only Rs. 7000 was invested by distributing 3 eggs per week and ½ kg of milk powder dissolved 20 liters of water • One time a week milk distribution was done from the first installment, second installment was not released due to dispute in the community and third installment was freeze • In ward no: 2 fund was released but instead of investment in the community it was provided to people on loan. • Interest was charged in the amount provided in ward no:2
Simara	• More amount of money was claimed by other parties rather than the filtered groups by showing threats in ward no:6 • To minimize the risk of getting the installment freeze,100 days minute was done in consultation with the NSP supervisor and the second and third installments were released
Manpur	• Eggs and milk were distributed in ward no: 4,6,8
Dhankaul	• 250 ml of milk and eggs 3 times a week were distributed in Dhankaul west ward no: 5

District: Rautahat

Name of the VDC	Major Issues
Gaumaria	• Tube well distribution program was organized but there arise some problems due to dispute in the community.
Peprajada	• The VDC coach was pregnant so her husband was the in charge of the fund, but when went on inspection after getting complaint from the community it was found that there were no minutes and chickens were distributed only in 2 wards.
	• Delay in fund release by DDC in all VDC's
	• 7 months old chickens were distributed in all VDC's
	• A complaint against the focal person for demanding 10% commission by threatening was put forward by Coaches Anita Yadav (Bishrampur), Sunita Yadav (GaumeriaParsa), Kumari Kanchan das (Bhrammapuri) and RRNI team leader.

District: Saptari

Name of the VDC	Major Issues
Mahadeva	Incomplete toilet construction in ward no: 1,5,6,7,8,9
Malhanna	Incomplete toilet construction in all wards
Kubersain	Incomplete toilet construction in all wards.
Tikulia	Incomplete toilet construction in all wards.
Melhannia	Incomplete toilet construction in ward no: 2,3,5,8,9
Maenkaderi	Incomplete toilet construction in ward no: 1,2,5
Trikaul	It was found that the work equal to 30% of the budget was complete and rest fund was not released by VDC
Silbabelhi	Incomplete toilet construction in ward no: 1,2,3,4,5,8.9

Tilathi	Incomplete toilet construction in ward no: 8,9
Simrahasigioyon	Incomplete toilet construction in all wards
Hanuman nagar	Incomplete toilet construction in ward no: 2,6
Dhangadi	Incomplete toilet construction in all wards
Farsait	Work equal to the 60% budget was complete.
Joginia 1	Incomplete toilet construction in ward no: 1,2,3,5,8,9

District: Sunsari

Name of the VDC	Major Issues
BarahChettra	Incomplete stove construction in ward no: 9 other work complete
Mahendra Nagar	It was mentioned that work equal to the 100% budget released was complete but during field inspection it was found that some of the works were incomplete.
Gautampur	Incomplete stove construction in ward no: 3,4 other work complete
RamnagarBhutaha	There was seen incomplete work but minute was presented with all the coaches
Bhokraha	Incomplete toilet construction and school maintenance work in ward no: 1,3,4,5
Madhuban	Incomplete toilet construction in all wards.

District: Okhaldhunga

- It was seen that the reports and minutes were not well managed by RRNI teams and VDC Coach
- Rs. 20000 was excluded for management expenses but it was found that there was a dispute among the VDC coaches regarding it as they have been using 2% of it.
- Transfer of government officials was seen as a serious problem because they need to provide information about the program time and again
- It was seen that there was no supervisor since august and recently a supervisor was appointed so it was hard to coordinate
- A new program officer was appointed so coordination was hard
- The equipment to construct toilets were purchased by DDC
- Because of the delay in ………. Program by the ministry the concerned authorities were in dilemma
- There was no sustainability of the first phase program.

District: Udayapur

Major issues related to VDC Coaches	- All VDC Coaches are appointed by vacancy announcement-written exam and Interview. - All VDC Coaches have made their report after finished cycle not in activity wise. - All VDC Coaches have not recorded their report in field. - Lack of orientation in all VDC coaches, so RRNI team complains about them.
Major issues related to RRNI Team	- According to project agreement, all RRNI team had made 50 days, 100 days and public audit report only in paper. - All RRNI team (Thanagau, Mayenkhu, Herdeni, Tamlichha, Katunjebabala and Basnbote VDC's) had already prepared and submitted report before end of fiscal year because of budget frieze, so DDC had payment in VDC, but VDC had payment in installment wise of RRNI

	account.
	• 8 RRNI team out of 54 have still working. In Thanagau VDC ward 2, 5, 7,3,8,6 and Herdeni VDC 9, 5 • Public audit report is limited in only minute. (i.e. Thanagau VDC' s all team, Herdeni VDC's 7,5 and Basbote VDC's 1,3) • All RRNI team formation is too processed.
Major issues related to NSP Supervisor	• NSP Supervisor has made report and record update. • Coordination part is weak in district level and VDC level. • NSP supervisor is not able to provide notice and information for VDC coach and RRNI team.
Major Issues from field observation	• RRNI team formation has made process. • Sub projects were monitoring by VDC representative, DDC representative and LGCDP facilitator. • Weak of training part of all RRNI team. • Public audit report is limited in only minute. (i.e. Thanagau VDC' s all team, Herdeni VDC's 7,5 and Basbote VDC's 1,3) • In sub project selection process, all RRNI team had not prioritized of focus areas. • DDC had cut 5% to saying contingency among the budget of all RRNI's sub project.

District: Makwanpur and Bara

In all VDC's of Makwanpur ,the 1st installment and 3rd installment of the budget were not released to RRNIs
In Bara District, only 1st installment was released to the RRNI group
In Bara, The RRNIs responsible for the poultry program were also seen distributing eggs and milk
In Makwanpur Bharta, Kakada, Dandakharka and In Bara Manorba, southern JhitKaiyaPrasana, Balirampur, Innerwasirba, and Uchhidia VDC coach submitted their mid-term review report on the basis of paper work only
It was seen that the RRNI's of MakwanpurKakada were unaware of the social auditing
In ward no: 3,7 of Bara and Ward no: 1,2,3,4,5,6,8,9, cages worth Rs, 45000 were built but instead of poultry farming eggs and meat were distributed, the expense was not well utilized.
In Makwanpur Dandakharka coach Baburam Ghalan was seen doing other job as well, he was the Principal of the School.

District: Parsa

- Duplicate coach in Jaymangalapur, Sambhuta, Bagahi and Udaypurghurmi VDCs
- Salary deduction of coaches 15 % per month

Name of the VDC	Major Issues
Harpur	In ward no: 7 toilet construction in school was remaining
BelwaPrsauni	In ward no: 7 the expense on RRNI committee and hand wash products were more than budgeted.
Amarpatti	ladies garments were not distributed in ward no:3 and in ward no: 8.9 the work according to the work plan was not carried out instead blocks were ordered.
Bagahi	In ward no: 5 Tap construction complete and in other wards training and iron pills distribution was done. In ward no:1 and 5 1st installment and 2nd installment of the fund was released and in ward no: 6,7,8,9, only 1st installment was released.

JhauwaGhuti	All works in all wards are complete
LipaniBirta	Stove distribution was not done in ward no:6 and school uniforms were not distributed in ward no:2Drinking water tap construction was not done in ward no:3Toilet construction was not done in ward no:5
GauddhodPipra	Work equal to 30% of budget was complete and remaining fund was not released by the VDC
Gammhariya	Stove distribution was not done in ward no:6 and school uniforms were not distributed in ward no:1,2
Sambhauta	Drinking water tap construction was not done in ward no:7,8,9 and ladies garments were not distributed in ward no:2,3,5
Udaypurghurmi	All works in all wards are complete.
Jay Mangalapur	Toilet construction was not done in ward no:2,3,9 and ladies garments were not distributed in ward no:4,5

District: Khotang

Budget not released in time in all VDCs
Bank account not opened in Khartansa and Sundel VDC
VDC coaches report says 86 toilet constructed in Khartansa VDC but verification report says only 50 toilet constructed
Budget transferred from one ward to another ward (from 8 to ward no 9) in Bhaulidanda VDC.
In all wards of Phedi VDC health and sanitation training (3 days training completed in one day) and goat party
In Phedi VDC , VDC coach have triple role i.e. Coach, Teacher and leader of a political party
VDC Coaches and NSP supervisor are influencing only three focus areas i.e. Toilet, water filter and Smokeless stove in all VDCs
Public audit conducted only in Jamire VDC

9.3 Newspaper clippings

9.4 Work plan

Activity	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	Responsibility
	2014										**2015**				
A. Inception/ Preparatory Phase															
1. Collection & study of project related document	■	■													**Central Team/CSO**
2. Recruitment of Staffs	■	■													**Central Team /CSO**
3. Introductory workshop for thirty party monitor to meet stakeholders	■	■													**Central Team /CSO**
4. Stakeholder Orientation		■	■												**Central Team/CSO**
5. Prepare and submit inception report		■	■												**Central Team/CSO**
A. Implementation Phase															
6. Development of Operational guidelines		■	■	■	■										**Central Team/CSO**
7. Conduction of Meeting/ Interaction/ Group Discussion with RRNI team, WCF/VDC			■	■											**Central Team /CSO**
8. Training to subproject staff (CVOs and Focal Points) on RRNI process at the project districts					■										**Central Team/CSO**
9. Field Verification (FGDs, HHs, KIIs, Observation)			■			■	■		■			■			**Central Team /CSO**
10. Participation in Milestones Meeting								■					■	■	**CVO**
11. Meeting with NFSSC		■	■		■	■	■	■	■			■			**CVO**
12. Organize meeting with stakeholder to share RRNIs											■	■	■		**Central T Central Team/CVO**
12. Media Mobilization and Information, Dissemination			■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■		**Central Team /CSO/CVO**
Post implementation Phase															
13. Documentation and reporting		Inception				Semi-annual							Completion		**Central Team /CVO/ CSO**

9.5   Pictures

Cluster Verification Officers and NSPs representatives training

Joint secretary of MoFALD Mr. Reshmi Raj Pandey facilitating training

Field observation by CVO   RRNI process monitoring by NEST team

Review meeting with CVOs   VDC Coaches Training

9.6   Questionnaires and check-lists