

Final Evaluation of Adapting to Climate Induced Threats to Food Production and Food Security in the Karnali Region of Nepal from 2018 to 2022



Terms of Reference

WFP Nepal Country Office

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1. Background

1. This Terms of Reference (ToR) has been prepared by the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) Nepal Country Office based upon an initial document review and consultation with program management team and external stakeholders. The ToR follows Adaptation Fund guidelines on project/programme final evaluations and WFP's decentralised evaluation standard template. The purpose of this ToR is to provide key information to stakeholders about the evaluation, to guide the evaluation team and to specify expectations during the various phases of the evaluation.

1.1. INTRODUCTION

2. This ToR sets out guidelines and expectations for the final evaluation of the project "Adapting to Climate-Induced Threats to Food Production and Food Security in the Karnali region of Nepal". The operational evaluation will be commissioned by WFP Nepal through an independent evaluation team and will cover the project implementation period from October 2018 to October 2022.
3. The Government of Nepal (GoN) has received grant from Adaptation Fund (AF) to execute the project. The project is being implemented jointly by WFP as Multilateral Implementing Entity and the Government of Nepal (GoN)- Ministry of Forests and Environment (MoFE). The project implementation aligns with Nepal's Climate Change Policy and National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA).
4. The total project budget is USD 10,277,160 (over 4 years) which includes USD 9,527,160 from the Adaptation Fund and WFP's contribution of USD 750,000.
5. The project implementation arrangement is aligned with federal governance structure and has been adhered to the new institutional setup of the local governments. The project activities are prioritized and reflected in the annual work-plan following the agreed planning process at the national and sub-national levels. The National Project Steering Committee (NPSC) chaired by Secretary of MoFE provides overall strategic policy guidance, and coordination to the project. The Project Support Unit (PSU) established within the MoFE headed by Joint-Secretary/ Chief of Climate Change Management Division of MoFE and supported by a Programme Manager (Under-Secretary) facilitates and coordinates the implementation of project activities to achieve the results as specified in the project document. For provincial level coordination for project-related activities, as required, Provincial Project Coordination Unit led by Secretary of the Ministry of Industry, Tourism, Forest and Environment is established. Similarly, at the Rural Municipality level, the Local Project Coordination Unit led by Chief Administrative Officer of Municipality coordinates the project activities, provides overall guidance for project planning and implementation and ensure multi-stakeholder engagement and coordination. WFP manages the overall project implementation, monitoring/evaluation, quality assurance and oversight through its various implementation mechanisms, employing implementing partners (NGOs, private sector organizations) and government agencies. WFP has its Country Office in Kathmandu, Sub-Office in Surkhet for Karnali province and WFP Field Coordinators in all project districts.
6. The project's goal is to increase the adaptive capacity of climate vulnerable and food insecure poor households by improved management of livelihood assets and natural resources in Kalikot, Jumla and Mugu of Karnali province. The key objectives of the project are to strengthen local capacity to identify climate risks and design adaptive strategies; diversify livelihood and strengthen food security for climate vulnerable poor households; and increase the resilience of natural systems that support livelihoods to cope with climate change induced stresses. Approximately 10,850 households (estimated 65,800 people) in 7 Rural Municipalities of 3 districts were expected to benefit from different interventions (directly/indirectly) over the four years of period through two programme components: 1) developing local, district and national capacity to plan, implement and monitor adaptation and risk reduction actions, and 2) building household and community resilience and increase adaptive capacity of climate vulnerable poor.

1.2. CONTEXT

7. Nepal is a landlocked country straddling the Himalayas and Tibetan plateau to the north and the dry Indian plains to the South. Its 147,516 square kilometres of land contain immense geophysical and ethnic diversity. Nepal's population of nearly 30 million is ethnically diverse. The major ethnic groups are

mosaics of people originating from Indo-Aryan and Tibeto-Burmese races. Two major religions, Hinduism and Buddhism have melded the country's cultural landscape. The population growth rate is over 2.2%, while life expectancy is about 71 years and literacy rate around 65%.

8. Nepal's economy is largely agricultural. Over 80% of the population is engaged in agriculture¹. However, farming is largely at subsistence-level, without advanced technology or markets. Agriculture (33%) and services (39%) are the largest contributors to GDP.
9. Nepal has made considerable progress towards eradicating poverty. Government data shows Nepal has 17.4 percent poverty rate. According to the government, there are still 4.98 million people in Nepal who live in poverty on many levels, accounting for 17.4 percent of the population. While Nepal is on track to achieve its commitment towards Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030, the country remains one of the poorest in the world. Nepal is categorized as 'least developed' ranking at 147 out of 187 countries in UNDP's human development index. Per capita annual income is only about USD 1000.² A combination of shocks, including political instability, limited economic growth, high prices and frequent natural disasters combine to keep a quarter of Nepal's population under the poverty line.
10. Nepal is one of the most food insecure countries in Asia. Estimates suggest that approximately 38 per cent of the country's population does not consume enough food and is undernourished.³ In recent years, the combination of climate-related disasters, high food prices, and low economic growth has resulted in higher food insecurity in the most vulnerable communities, particularly in Western Nepal. The mid-Western Mountain regions have some of the worst hunger rates in the world, highlighting the spatial differences in vulnerability across the country⁴.
11. Poverty in Nepal is correlated with household size and number of young children. Poverty is higher among dalits⁵ (who have larger families and are caste-discriminated) than non-Dalits. Most tellingly, poverty rates fall drastically for households with over one hectare of agricultural land. Poverty is also strongly linked with a largely limited access to public services such as schools, hospitals and health posts, paved roads, bazaars and markets and banks.
12. Foreign remittances have become a main source of income for rural families, especially in the mid- and high- hills. Migration for labour (mostly unskilled) is seasonal, covering the lean rainfall months, as well as semi-permanent. The largest destination for migration is India, however some poor people travel to the Middle East or Southeast Asia.⁶
13. Nepal's Karnali area has been experiencing the worst poverty and food security impacts of climate change. At one time in the past, the area's location on the trade route between Nepal and Tibet ensured prosperity, when salt from the high Tibetan lakes was traded for grain from Nepal. However, this trade collapsed in the 1970s and low productivity due to climatic factors (mostly drought) and conflict have left the region in poverty.
14. The region is comprised of five districts - Humla, Jumla, Dolpa, Mugu and Kalikot and is named after the Karnali River, which originates from the Himalayan districts of Mugu and Humla and eventually flows into the Indian Ganges River. The region is bordered by Tibet (China), and defined by its mountainous terrain, highly variable precipitation, and high vulnerability to natural disasters. Karnali rates 48.1 on the Human Poverty Index (HPI-1)⁷ and is the most impoverished region in Nepal.

¹ National Adaptation Program of Action to Climate Change. Ministry of Environment, Science and Technology, Government of Nepal 2010

² World Bank Country Overview 2012

³ Nepal Living Standard Survey NLSS-III 2010-2011

⁴ WFP and NDRI Food Security Atlas

⁵ A scheduled caste

⁶ Passage to India: Migration as a coping strategy in times of crisis in Nepal. World Food Programme 2008 ¹⁴WFP and NDRI Food Security Atlas

⁷ The United Nations Development Program's Human Poverty Index (HPI-1) is measured on the scale of 0-100 where 0 is least impoverished.

15. The terrain in Karnali varies from high Himalayan mountains to river valleys dissecting the lower hills. Due to steep terrain, there is very little cultivable land, and the soil is poor and eroded. As per WFP's estimation, food production in poverty-stricken areas of Karnali region is sufficient for only 3 to 6 months round the year. At higher altitudes only one crop is possible. per year, Except in Jumla (a relatively better-connected district), irrigation throughout the region is largely limited.⁸
16. Most households rely on subsistence farming as their primary source of livelihood. Farmers in Karnali commonly sow rice, maize and millet as summer crops, while wheat and barley as popular winter crops. Traditional crops such as native barley and oats are still important. Karnali households depend on a mix of their own subsistence agriculture, harvesting of timber and non-timber forest products (NTFPs), daily wage labour, seasonal migration to the Terai districts or India, and government and international food aid.
17. Karnali districts have low population density and are remote and unconnected by infrastructure (roads and bridges). Some higher elevations are habitable only during the summer months. A WFP vulnerability analysis shows that the region is highly exposed to changing temperature and precipitation and all districts face the risk of drought. Some are highly exposed to landslides as well.
18. All districts show very low adaptive capacity in terms of the robustness of markets and connectivity. Despite low population density, one district (Mugu) ranks "very high" in overall vulnerability to climate change⁹, while two districts (Kalikot and Dolpa) rank high, and others (Jumla and Humla) rank moderate. However, the moderate districts are still vulnerable to changes in precipitation and temperature, and they are considered to be at risk of facing severe droughts. This project therefore has been designed to address these issues of poverty, food insecurity, malnutrition and climate induced threats to food production and food security in the Karnali region.
19. Nepal's Gender Development Index is 0.886¹⁰.. Gender disparity is more pronounced in rural than urban areas and is manifested in poor access to education, health care and income earning opportunities. ***Districts in the far and mid-west rank the lowest in GDI values.*** Due to cultural and other ingrained practices, women have limited control over household decision-making, but have primary responsibility for childcare, agricultural activities and domestic chores such as fetching water. Employment opportunities for women are limited outside of subsistence agriculture. In the country as a whole, nearly 70% of economically active females engage in unpaid agricultural labour and only a few handfuls of women work in non-agricultural sector in comparison to their male counterparts. Women are also discriminated in labour wages, with men earning substantially more for both skilled and unskilled labour.¹¹ There is general undervaluing of the women's education and access to health care. As a result, women are more vulnerable during periods of food insecurity.
20. The status of women with regard to employment, health, life expectancy and education is the lowest in the hills and mountains of the far and mid-west. ***The highest prevalence of female-headed households is found in far and mid-western Nepal, caused by out-migration of male members in search of employment.***
21. Food insecurity negatively correlates to adaptive capacity. Rural agricultural livelihoods in the project area depend on the health of forest, land and water resources. It is therefore vital, in such climate vulnerable communities, to enhance agro-ecosystem services that increase production, reduce food insecurity and also directly generate income and energy for rural people.
22. CAFS-Karnali is aligned with the federal governance system embraced by the Constitution of Nepal 2015, National Climate Change Policy 2019 and Sustainable Development Goals 2 (Zero Hunger) and SDG 13 (Climate Actions). The project also aligns with the country's 15th Development Plan (2019/20-2023/24) and WFP-CSP (2019-23).

⁸ National Planning Commission – National Food Security Monitoring Task Force Food Security Atlas of Nepal (NeKSAP)

⁹ National Adaptation Programme of Action, Nepal, Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment (MoSTE)

¹⁰ https://npc.gov.np/images/category/NHDR_2020.pdf

¹¹ Food Security Atlas of Nepal. WFP and GoN 2010

23. The table in **Annex 4** presents a summary of climate change observations, current coping methods, and expected future risks to livelihoods in Karnali, based on reports of The Mountain Institute (TMI)¹² and ICIMOD¹³ and field consultations carried out for the preparation of the proposed project.
24. Therefore, the project strategy is to improve household adaptive capacity and food security to current and future climate risks by 1) Improving natural resources and building community assets; and 2) Developing climate resiliency in livelihoods and social sectors
25. The main target population for this project is climate vulnerable poor households as defined by 1) low income and consumption; 2) reliance on subsistence agriculture 3) social discrimination and 4) low access to technology and assets - and the capacity of state and non-state service providers supporting these populations.
26. Particular activities have been focused on easing the burden of rural women and improving their living and health standards, ultimately contributing to household adaptive capacity to adverse climate impact.
27. Service delivery organizations at the local level - especially extension services related to agriculture, irrigation, livestock and forestry - will be the primary executing agents in implementation and monitoring of the project. The project focuses on developing capacity of the local communities to respond to climate shocks and design long-term adaptive strategies.
28. An important part of the project strategy is to mainstream project learning and outcomes into regular development processes at the municipalities, District and provincial levels, further contributing to national capacity and sustainability.

¹² The Mountain Institute (TMI) conducted an unstructured community perception assessment to climate change in Humla and Jumla in early 2012

¹³ Responding to Challenges of Global Change- enhancing Resilience and supporting adaptation of mountain communities. ICIMOD Project Brief 2009

2. Reasons for the evaluation

2.1. RATIONALE

29. As the project comes to an end in October 2022, a final evaluation is being commissioned to independently review the project in accordance with the AF requirements.
30. The evaluation serves the dual and mutually reinforcing objectives of accountability and learning. These factors are given equal consideration in this evaluation in order to assess performance and draw lessons learned for both the donor and key stakeholders at the project's closure. The evaluation is required to assess the performance and results of the project for meeting internal and external accountability requirements. An evaluation is needed to validate results and provide confirmation about the extent to which the intended and unintended results were achieved e.g., increased resilience, decreased vulnerability, improved cost-effectiveness, among others. This evaluation will critically and objectively review the progress of implementation with an eye to generating recommendations that will strengthen project implementation and inform future project design. The evaluation determines the reasons why certain results occurred or did not occur to draw lessons, derive good practices and provide pointers for learning. It will provide evidence-based findings to inform operational and strategic decision-making.
31. The evaluation is required to assess the relevance, efficiency, performance, management methods and success of the project, examining the impact¹⁴ and sustainability of results, including the contribution to capacity development and the achievement of global and national environmental objectives.
32. The AF's guideline for project/ programme evaluation indicates that the 'final evaluation of AF projects and programmes should assess progress towards achievement of increased resilience/reduced vulnerability, and actions taken to achieve sustainability and replicability'. In general, the final evaluation in given context have the following objectives:
 - To promote accountability and transparency within the Fund, and to systematically assess and disclose levels of project or programme accomplishments. Are programmes and projects achieving what they were intended to achieve? An evaluation validates results and can make overall judgments about the extent to which the intended and unintended results were achieved (e.g., increased resilience, decreased vulnerability, improved cost-effectiveness).
 - To organize and synthesize experiences and lessons that may help improve the selection, design, implementation, and evaluation of future AF-funded interventions. What worked or what did not work and why?
 - To understand how project achievements contribute to the mandate of the AF. Aggregated analysis and reporting of individual project achievements provide evidence of the effectiveness of AF operations in achieving its goal.
 - To provide feedback into the decision-making process to improve ongoing and future projects, programmes, and policies.
 - To assess the relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency of project design, objectives, and performance.
33. In addition to AF suggested objectives, as the implementing agency, WFP is commissioning this evaluation with following key learning objectives.
 - Establish the extent to which the skills and knowledge passed on by WFP to different national and local level stakeholders were adopted and put to use.
 - Build a clear contextual understanding of the wider role WFP and Government play in ensuring gender equality and women's empowerment act as interlinked drivers for climate change adaptation works that benefits women, men, girls and boys, and people living with disabilities. Identify and review how innovation opportunities have been promoted through the project.

¹⁴ The Adaptation Fund's RBM defines impact as "the increased resilience at country level to climate change, including climate variability."

34. WFP Nepal Office will use the findings to assess and inform its positioning as the UN's inter-agency lead on agriculture. Together with the government, UN and donor counterparts, WFP will use the learning to develop strategies that will help the government incentivise food production and food and nutrition self-sufficiency. Attention will be given to alignment with the Economic Contingency Plan 2020 and national Build Back Better agenda for enhancing national resilience in the emerging context of the COVID-19 pandemic.
35. The evaluation is coming towards the end of the five-year Country Strategic Plan (CSP 2019-2023) of WFP CO Nepal in which building resilience and climate adaptation and preparedness is a core part of country strategy. The evaluation of CSP is also being conducted by WFP. In that regard, the findings from this evaluation will complement the evaluation of current CSP and inform the future design of the climate change adaptation activity for second generation CSP of WFP in Nepal.
36. This project is first and only one project in which Nepal accessed the climate finance from the Adaptation Fund. Even until 2022, no other agencies have accessed the Adaptation Fund for Nepal. Therefore, the findings of this evaluation will be valuable for the Adaptation Fund focal point (MoFE of Nepal) in designing strategies for better access and utilization of the funding allocated for Nepal from Adaptation Fund.

2.3. STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

37. A number of stakeholders both inside and outside of WFP have interests in the results of the evaluation and some of these will be asked to play a role in the evaluation process. **Annex 2** provides a preliminary stakeholder analysis, which should be deepened by the Evaluation Team as part of the Inception phase.
38. Accountability to affected populations is tied to WFP's commitments to include beneficiaries as key stakeholders in WFP's work. As such, WFP is committed to ensuring gender equality and women's empowerment (GEEW) in the evaluation process, with participation and consultation in the evaluation by women, men, boys, and girls from different groups. The evaluation will further investigate the distribution of benefits of the climate change adaptation programme to women, men, boys, and girls from different groups.
39. The primary stakeholders for this evaluation will be:
 - Implementing partners; PACE Nepal for Jumla, Rural Community Development Center (RCDC) for Mugu and HuRENDEC for Kalikot
 - Local government (Gaupalika) officials (agriculture section, livestock section, social development section) and elected leaders
 - District line agencies such as District Development Coordination Committees, Agricultural Service Centers, Livestock Service Centers, Agricultural Research Stations
 - Provincial level ministries including Ministry for Industry, Tourism, Forest and Environment, Ministry for Land Management, Agriculture and Cooperatives; Ministry for Social Development

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