

National Day honors Nepal's Female Community Health Volunteers



FCHVs at a program organized by District Health Office in Tansen, Palpa district to mark the 10th National FCHV Day

Globally, December 5th is commemorated as the International Volunteer's Day. In Nepal, the national government's Ministry of Health and Population declared this key international day as National Female Community Health Volunteers (FCHVs) Day to honor the selfless contributions in improving the health of thousands of Nepali people in the country. This year marks the silver jubilee of FCHV mobilization in Nepal. Likewise, this is

the 10th National FCHV day observed across the country. Commemorating this landmark achievement, the country saw a wide array of programs organized with the national theme of “महिला स्वास्थ्य स्वयंसेविकाको सेवा स्वस्थ समाजको लागि टेवा” (“FCHVs services contributing towards a healthy society”)

According to the Government's administrative records from 2010/11, there are 48,897 FCHVs actively working and approximately 2000 recruited locally (approximately 50,000 FCHVs mobilized in total) in Nepal. In addition, the Government plans to build up the numbers to 52,000 FCHVs by 2013 and 53,500 by 2015. With 97% of FCHVs serving in rural areas, they are regarded as the backbone of the national health system.

The FCHVs program was initiated in 1988 by mobilizing local women's groups voluntarily selected from the local community to contribute in improving community participation and to expand health education and outreach services to families throughout the country. Under the leadership of the Government of Nepal, the FCHVs program was rolled out in partnership with several external development partners including the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The FCHVs program is widely acclaimed for its contribution in reducing child mortality and improving maternal health in the country.

Understanding the importance of FCHVs in providing health-related messages to the community, USAID-funded Saath-Saath Project (SSP) initiated FCHV roll out program in its four migrant-focused project districts (i.e., Bara, Kapilvastu, Nawalparasi and Palpa) for encouraging the use of family planning (FP) methods and promoting healthy timing and spacing of pregnancies. Utilizing the national day platform, SSP local NGO partners (General Welfare Pratisthan, Namuna, Indreni Samaj Kendra and Sahavagi) collaborated with the respective District Public Health Offices (DPHO) in the four districts to commemorate

National FCHV Day, felicitate best performing FCHVS for their valuable contributions, and to increase community awareness on the roles and responsibility of FCHVs. The event was instrumental in sensitizing FCHVs themselves on their rights and the facilities they receive. The following events were carried out to mark this national event:

Awareness Raising Rallies

Awareness raising rallies were organized in all four districts under the leadership of DPHO and in collaboration with various stakeholders from civil society and media. SSP's local NGO partners also supported in



FCHVs preparing for a rally in Tansen, Palpa

Felicitations to FCHVs

On the occasion of National FCHV Day, Government of Nepal felicitated best performing FCHVs in all districts throughout the country. The felicitations program was led by local government agencies in all districts. Twenty FCHVs were felicitated in Kapilvastu district, 28 FCHVs in Bara district, 30 in Palpa district and 61 in Nawalparasi district.



District Health Officer of Palpa awarding the best performing FCHVs in Tansen Municipality

The felicitations program also provided an opportunity for local FCHVs to share their work experiences for others to replicate. Many FCHVs requested the government to improve their benefit package to motivate FCHVs to continue their valuable work. SSP was able to capitalize on the interaction program to share information on its ongoing family planning and HIV-related activities in the four districts and requested support from FCHVs to increase program reach in them. Likewise SSP also shared its planned activities on FCHV

mobilization for promoting FP messages and use of FP methods to garner support from government and other stakeholders.

10th National FCHV Day in Pictures



FCHV being felicitated in Nawalparasi



A FCHVs-led rally in Nawalparasi



FCHVs attending a program organized by Tahun Primary Healthcare Center, Palpa to mark 10th National FCHVs Day



FCHVs in awareness raising rally in Nawalparasi