

Asta-Ja Research and Development Center

# ANNUAL REPORT

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## 1. Background

Asta-Ja Research and Development Center (Asta-Ja RDC) is a registered non-profit and non-governmental organization with headquarters in Kathmandu, Nepal. It is dedicated to enhance grassroots community engagement in research and development of Asta-Ja natural resources (water, land, forest, medicinal & aromatic plants, manpower, animals, crop plants, and climate) for poverty alleviation and socio-economic transformation of Nepal.

Established in 2015, Asta-Ja RDC's goal is to develop a partnership with research and developmental institutions, governmental agencies, community organizations, universities, non-governmental organizations, and other stakeholders and work collaboratively in agricultural, food and nutrition, natural resources, environmental and other research and developmental projects. We strive for community capacity-building, gender/ethnic equity, social justice, innovations and solutions to nation's agricultural, natural resources, and environmental problems and management challenges. We are well-connected to grassroots communities, governmental agencies, and policy making bodies. The Asta-Ja RDC is dedicated to community capacity-building through training, technology transfer, logistic support, policy advocacy, and research and development.

## 2. Achievements

### 2.1 Seeds for Family Nutrition and Income Generation in Tanahu, Nepal

With the financial support of GreaterGood.org, the project 'Seeds for Family Nutrition and Income Generation in Tanahu, Nepal' has been implemented by Asta-Ja Research and Development Center (Asta-Ja RDC) since 1<sup>st</sup> March 2019. The objectives of the project are: 1) To improve nutritional status of the target communities through vegetable production in home gardens, 2) To increase household income through the sales of vegetables, and 3) To train local communities on improved methods of vegetable cultivation. The project will support target communities by providing vegetable seeds for two seasons (summer and winter) for one year, providing training on improved vegetable cultivation, and establishing demonstration plots of improved vegetable cultivation.

Major achievements and key activities of the project are described below:

#### 2.1.1 Baseline Survey of the Project

With the purpose of collecting information on prior project status of the target households, a baseline survey was done from March 16-24, 2019. A questionnaire was developed in English and later translated into Nepali for the convenience of local interviewers and respondent farmers. The survey questionnaire had 8 sections with 30 questions. The sections



were: Respondent's consent and identification; Respondent demographic profile; Current land use/livestock; Area, production, consumption, sale and purchase of vegetables in the last year; Assessment of vegetable farming in home garden (area, seed quantity); Improved vegetable farming practices implemented last year; Current problems in vegetable cultivation; and Household income last year. Please see the baseline questionnaire in Annex I.

Six local interviewers (four males and 2 females) were recruited to conduct a baseline survey. They were given one-day training which included briefing on the project, interview technique, and the content of the survey questionnaire. A total of 300 households were interviewed in Ward 5 and 6 of Vyas Municipality in Tanahu district. The baseline data were analysed and prepared report.

### 2.1.2 Farmers Training on Improved Methods of Vegetable Cultivation

Farmers Training on improved vegetable cultivation methods were conducted from April 4-7, 2019. These trainings aimed at enhancing knowledge and skills of the local farmers. The contents of the training consisted of importance of vegetables in improving nutritional status of the family, particularly children and women; improved method of vegetable cultivation including soil management, controlling insect pests and diseases, and organic agriculture practices for vegetable cultivation. Farmers Trainings were conducted by highly qualified and experienced resource person at four locations in the project area. All 300 households participated in the training.



### 2.1.3 Vegetable Seed Distribution

Summer vegetable seeds were distributed during April 4-7, 2019. All 300 households received the vegetable seeds. Vegetable seeds distributed included sponge gourd, bottle gourd, bitter gourd, cucumber, pumpkin, okra, and beans. Vegetable seeds of high quality were purchased from a reputed seed company in Nepal. Each target household was given a packet containing summer vegetable seeds mentioned above. Vegetable seeds were distributed on the same day after the training was over.



#### 2.1.4 Plastic Tunnel House for Vegetable Production

Two plastic tunnel houses were constructed during April 12 – 20, 2019 for demonstration of improved vegetable cultivation methods. Land for these demonstration plots were selected by the communities and are centrally located in the project area. These demonstration plots will show how vegetable should be produced using improved production techniques in plastic tunnel houses. Target households in the communities will gather 3-4 times during project duration at demonstration plots for observation and discuss improved vegetable production techniques. Asta-Ja RDC will arrange resource persons to facilitate these discussions.

#### 2.2 Environmental Community Awareness Seminar

Environment pollution is a serious public concern in the city of Kathmandu in Nepal. Rapid, but unplanned, urbanization, increasing number of vehicles and energy consumption, emissions from industries, heating, and burning woods and other trash materials; trans-boundary air pollution, chemical uses in agriculture, poor and failing septic systems, exposed ground surfaces leading to excessive dust in the air, poor disposal of solid and hazardous

wastes, and activities are leading to environmental degradation at alarming rate. Environmental pollution has not threaten public health, it is



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adversely affecting the aesthetics, tourism, ecological integrity, and economic activities in the city. Unsafe disposal of hazardous waste, e-waste, and biomaterials is spreading highly toxic substances which are often long lasting in the environment. City inhabitants are already experiencing nontrivial impact of geometric growth of contaminants in air and water, and, there is a strong public call for immediate control on environmental pollution and ecological restoration.

As envisioned by the Constitution of Nepal 2015 (Part 3, Article 30), clean living environment is the fundamental right of the citizens of Nepal. In order to improve environmental conditions in the country, the Government of Nepal has declared a five-year environmental campaign called 'Nepal Clean Environment Campaign'. The campaign aims at controlling environmental pollution in the rural and urban areas, managing solid-waste disposals, and increasing green areas and public parks. However, due to very high level of environmental degradation coupled with very low level of public awareness and the lack of appropriate corrective measures, it is quite challenging for the Government of Nepal in achieving environmental goals within the stipulated timeframe of Nepal Clean Environment Campaign.

To contribute to the governmental campaign of controlling environmental pollution in the rural and urban areas in Nepal, Asta-Ja Research and Development Centre (Asta-Ja RDC) Nepal has initiated a project called "Environmental Community Awareness Seminar Series", with the funding support from Community Environment Academy & Non-Resident Nepali Association National Coordination Council (NRNA NCC) USA and technical support from Asta-Ja USA.

A monthly seminar has been planned in this series. Six seminars have been conducted in this series. The five seminars were on a smaller-scale focusing on air, water, flooding, and solid waste, and were participated by the students of colleges of Kathmandu. The seminar held in the month of June 2019 was on a larger-scale with a comprehensive view of environmental pollution and climate change in Kathmandu valley. The students from the two US Universities, University of Louisiana and The University of Arizona, along with students, teachers, faculty members, researchers and other stakeholders from Nepal had participated in the seminar. The seminar was a great success on raising awareness among the participants on global climate change and environment quality in Kathmandu valley and Nepal. In addition, it provided a good opportunity for students, professors, scientists and experts of both USA and Nepal to meet, share and exchange their knowledge, views and experiences on the issues of environment pollution and climate change.



All the seminars were very effective in communicating the message of environmental pollution, its impacts on health, and related issues in Kathmandu valley and in Nepal. All the participants have realized that it is the responsibilities of all the stakeholders including students and citizens to support and compliment environmental awareness campaign undertaken by the government of Nepal for meeting the goal of clean, green and prosperous Kathmandu valley and Nepal.

### 3. Drinking Water Project in Chunder, Tanahu

In partnership with Rotary Club of Honolulu Sunset, USA and Damauli Rotary Club, Nepal, Asta-Ja RDC has been facilitating to seek complementary funding supports for the management of the Chunder Drinking Water Project in Tanahu, Nepal after completion of its construction with the financial support of Vyas Municipality. This will help improving access to safe drinking water and also hygiene and sanitation at personal, household and community levels of the target community. Chudher Village in Vyas Municipality of Tanahu district in Nepal, inhabited predominantly by Magar community, is located at 2,206 ft. above sea level, where women have been spending as much as five hours daily carrying water on their backs for the families. This water supply project will serve more than 120 households and an elementary school.



Dr. James Ham, President and Dr. Arjun Aryal, International Service Chair of Rotary Club of Honolulu Sunset USA have supported to receive Global Grant for the Chunder Drinking Water Project in collaboration with the Damauli Rotary Club, Nepal. Dr. Durga Poudel, President of Asta-Ja USA has been coordinating with Rotary Club of Honolulu Sunset USA, Mayor Mr. Baikuntha Neupane of Vyas Municipality, Tanahu, and Mr. Santosh Kumar Shrestha, President of Damauli Rotary Club, Tanahu for this project.

In February 2019, a team of 7 members representing Rotary Club of Honolulu Sunset USA and Asta-Ja RDC had visited Rotary Club Damauli to assess the feasibility of the Chunder Drinking Water Project in Tanahu. Of the seven members in the team, two (Ai Koshirae and Laura Combee) were from Water Hands Hope USA, two (Prakash Sharma and Pratik Bhuj) from Lucen Drop Nepal, and three (Pushpa Lal Moktan, Dr. Bishnu Chapagain and Hari Bhusal) from Asta-Ja RDC. Together with members of Damauli Rotary Club and officials of Vyas Municipality, the team from USA and Kathmandu had visited the project site for drinking water and also held community meetings.



#### 4. Talk Programme by Asta-Ja USA President

Prof. Durga Dutta Poudel, President of Asta-Ja USA gave a talk programme on Agriculture Business at Ambassador Hotel, Kathmandu on June 21, 2019 organized by Bankers' Association of Nepal. The talk programme was attended by bankers, representatives of various agribusiness related organizations, and business jouranalists.

#### 5. International Visitors to Asta-Ja RDC

##### 5.1 US Students Visit

Fifteen undergraduate as well as Master degree students with their two Professors Dr. Durga D. Poudel and Dr. Timothy Duex from the School of Geosciences of University of Louisiana at Lafayette, USA had visited Asta-Ja RDC office Kathmandu in June 2019. They were briefed about Asta-Ja RDC's past and ongoing project activities as well as upcoming activities by Mr. Pushpa Lal Moktan, President of Asta-Ja RDC. A brief discussion on Asta-Ja activities was held following the presentation. Dr. Durga Dutta Poudel had briefed the Asta-



Ja team that US students were visiting to gain first-hand field experience of effects of Global Climate Change on High-altitude Agriculture, Ecosystem, and Environment in Nepal. All the visiting students and professors were provided souvenirs (tea cup with Asta-Ja logo) at the Asta-Ja RDC office.

##### 5.2 Asta-JA USA Officials Visits

##### President Dr. Durga Dutta Poudel of Asta-Ja USA Visits Asta-RDC Nepal

On 16 Dec 2019, Asta-Ja USA President Dr. Durga Dutta Poudel had visited the office of Asta-Ja Research & Development Center (Asta-JA RDC) in Kathmandu Nepal. He was welcomed by Mr. Pushpa Lal Moktan, President and by the Board members of Asta-ja RDC. Mr. Moktan briefed him about ongoing, past and anticipated projects of Asta-Ja RDC in the meeting. Dr. Poudel also briefed about the ongoing projects and future plan on fund raising of Asta-Ja USA for development projects in Nepal. There was also discussion on the possibilities of collaborative works between Asta-Ja USA and Asta-Ja RDC to develop future projects for Nepal. Dr. Poudel appreciated the





efforts of Asta-Ja RDC team to make organization's vision into reality. Mr. Moktan thanked Dr. Poudel for making time available to visit Asta-Ja RDC office in Kathmandu.

### **Asta-Ja USA Vice President Dr. Prem Bhandari Visits Asta-RDC Nepal**

On 24th March 2019, Asta-Ja USA Vice President Dr. Prem Bhandari visited the office of Asta-Ja Research & Development Center (Asta-JA RDC) in Kathmandu Nepal. Welcomed by the Board members of Asta-ja RDC, he was briefed about the Asta-Ja RDC and its ongoing projects. The possibilities of collaborative works between Asta-Ja USA and Asta-Ja RDC were discussed in the meeting. Arjun



### **Asta-Ja USA Vice President Dr. Prem Bhandari Visits Asta-RDC Nepal**

On 1<sup>st</sup> July 2018, Dr. Arjun Aryal, General Secretary of Asta-Ja USA visited the office of Asta-Ja Research & Development Center (Asta-JA RDC) in Kathmandu Nepal. Welcomed by Mr. Pushpa Lal Moktan, President and the Board members of Asta-ja RDC, he was briefed about the Asta-Ja RDC and its ongoing projects. The possibilities of collaborative works between Asta-Ja USA and Asta-Ja RDC were discussed in the meeting.



### 5.3 Intern from GreaterGood USA

Mr. Avery Julian Baker, Post graduate student from The University of Arizona participated in internship programme at Asta-Ja RDC for one month in May 2019. He was recommended by GreaterGood.com for this Programme. During his internship, he participated in the fieldwork of midline survey of Vegetable seed programme in Tanahu district, and also joined the US students of University of Louisiana for field experience of effects of Global Climate Change on High-altitude Agriculture, Ecosystem, and Environment in Nepal.

