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NEPAL FACT SHEET

PAANI PROGRAM

Water is the single most important natural resource underpinning Nepal’s economy and livelihoods. Inclusive, sustainable management of water resources in Nepal depends on addressing climate change and protecting healthy, biodiverse ecosystems.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The four-year (2016-2020), \$24.8 million USAID Paani (meaning “water” in Nepali) program enhances Nepal’s ability to manage water resources through climate change adaptation and the conservation of freshwater biodiversity. Focusing primarily at the watershed, basin, and national scales, USAID’s Paani project aims to reduce threats to freshwater biodiversity and increase the ability of targeted human and ecological communities in the Karnali, Mahakali, and Rapti river basins to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change through improved water management.

The program will play a pivotal role in shaping Nepal’s management of critical water resources between now and 2020. It will apply an integrated, whole-of-basin perspective to freshwater biodiversity conservation and sustainable water management in the three critical river basins in Mid-West and Far-West Nepal in response to changing climate conditions. Paani is part of USAID’s ongoing investment in strengthening natural resource management in Nepal. It is a sister project to the USAID-funded Nepal Hydropower Development Project (NHDP) and complementary projects funded by the U.S. Forest

Service and the International Water Management Institute. It builds upon USAID's experience in terrestrial conservation, extending successful community-based models for reducing threats to key species and building resilience from Nepal's high mountain slopes to the rich waterways in some of the most pristine natural habitat on the planet.

Implementation of USAID Paani coincides with the passage of the country's new constitution, which provides the opportunity to integrate improved water governance within the newly established provinces.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

- Increasing knowledge, engagement, and benefits for local water users
- Improving basin-level resource management
- Strengthening coordination and creating an enabling environment to develop effective policies and programs
- Expanding the knowledge base of conservation and water management

KEY RESULTS

The USAID Paani program will expand the knowledge base with regard to both the threats to, and solutions for, conserving freshwater biodiversity and adapting to climate change. The project will strengthen policies, institutions, and relationships in improving:

- Local capacity for water management
- Integrated planning and operation of hydropower and water management
- Management of capture fisheries
- Local capacity for managing invasive species
- Local capacity for regulation and management of roads and mining, and
- Local capacity for waste management.