

# Fifth Annual Report of Rural Community Infrastructure Works

## Section 1

Rural Community Infrastructure Works Programme (RCIW)

### Summary of Phase I Five Years (1/96 to 12/00)

- The major programme partners:**
- Ministry of Local Development, HMG (MLD)
  - World Food Programme (WFP)
  - GTZ – Food for Work Programme (GTZ)
  - Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW)
- Implementing organisations:**
- User Groups or Local Self-help Groups (UGs)
  - Village Development Committees (VDCs)
  - District Development Committees (DDCs)
- Programme location:**
- RCIW currently works in 35 food-deficit districts, of which seven are without GTZ support.
- RCIW target populations:**
- About 250,000 households or one million people.
  - People living in food deficit areas of Nepal.
  - Mainly landless, female-headed households and jobless farmers.

### Background

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An estimated 42% of all Nepali people live below the poverty line, and 36% consume less than the minimum daily caloric requirement. Poverty and food insecurity are due largely to a shortage of fertile land and declining per capita availability of food, poor distribution of the available food, and a lack of local employment opportunities. To address this situation, the Government of Nepal (HMG/N) established the **Rural Community Infrastructure Works Programme (RCIW)** in 1995. It is one of the major poverty alleviation programmes in Nepal.

### RCIW's objectives are to improve:

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- Temporary food supplies of over 50,000 food-deficit families annually by providing about 270 kg of rice for the labour of family members in Food for Work (FfW) projects;

- Community infrastructure and food production by constructing FfW structures such as fish ponds, small scale irrigation schemes, flood protection dams, trails and rural roads;
- The self-help capacity of 1,000 food-deficit communities by enabling them to plan, construct, operate and maintain projects that contribute to an overall improvement of village life.

## **RCIW pursues a two-pronged strategy:**

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RCIW mobilises communities through FfW projects that help local people to overcome temporary food shortages by initiating self-help activities to invest in sustainable, community infrastructures. RCIW activities aim to improve physical access in rural areas, increase food production, and promote disaster prevention and mitigation.

### **1) Food for Work**

In exchange for labour on FfW projects, food deficit households receive three kg of rice and Rs 3 or Rs 6 per day of work in Terai or hill districts respectively. The World Food Programme (WFP) provides rice; and the local VDC provides the cash.

### **2) Community Self-help**

User groups (UG), consisting of workers from food-deficit families, implement FfW-projects, own the structures/assets created, and are responsible for their construction and maintenance. RCIW offers training, and provides food, tools, materials, and cash. The government provides engineering services and construction material. The District Development Committee approves projects, co-ordinates planning, monitors implementation, and mediates problems. Local NGOs and consultants help to mobilise and establish the groups, and train their members.

GTZ advisors assist the Ministry in policy, planning, co-ordination, and monitoring matters. It also trains government and private technicians, and committee members of the self-help groups in both technical and social aspects.

## **Resource Mobilisation and Management**

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To implement about 1,200 FfW projects in 35 districts over the previous five working seasons, the major RCIW partners contributed and managed the following financial and physical resources:

### The main RCIW programme activities were:

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- Assisting the District Development Committees to develop and establish appropriate project support structures
- Orienting and training relevant professionals and decision-makers about the concept and guidelines of the RCIW Programme
- Assisting food-deficit communities to identify and select FfW projects
- Preparing pre-feasibility studies, and detailed project designs and cost estimates
- Assisting communities to form User Groups (UG) and User Committees (UC)
- Training and guiding UG and UC in technical and organisational fields
- Providing rice, material, and advisory support to UGs
- Monitoring the project implementation by the UG and evaluating its impact

#### **Ministry of Local Development (MLD):**

- Funds, materials and expertise for project implementation

#### **WFP:**

- Rice as remuneration for workers in FfW projects
- Funds for tools, equipment, and food management
- Advisory services for food management, training, and programme targeting

#### **GTZ:**

- Advisory services, technical expertise, and training
- Action research

#### **KfW:**

- Financial support to government for material support

#### **DDCs:**

- Co-ordination of planning and implementation

#### **VDCs:**

- Funds as partial remuneration for workers in FfW projects

**User Groups (UG):**

- Implementation of FfW projects and economic and social activities

**RCIW Philosophy**

The principles that guide the implementation of the RCIW Programme are:

- Target population orientation
- Self-help basis
- Transparency
- Participation
- Gender balance
- Sustainability
- Food security

**Financial contributions by partners**

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The pie chart below shows the financial contributions by partners covering the total RCIW operational costs of about US\$ 28 million during the five years of Phase I. It excludes the User Group contributions of about 10% of total FfW Project costs.

**Programme areas**

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RCIW has carried out FfW Project in the 35 districts illustrated on the map, of which seven were one-time interventions without GTZ support. These districts were selected on the basis of the food-deficit VDCs identified.

**RCIW Performance and Achievements during Phase I**

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During the past 5 years of RCIW Phase 1, about 1,200 individual FfW projects were implemented by food deficit households, which belong to about 1,400 different communities (VDCs) in 35 districts. RCIW's major achievements are:

**1) Improvement of Rural Community Infrastructure through FfW Projects**

These 1,200 FfW projects contributed significantly to improve communal infrastructure as shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1:  
Physical Achievements during the previous 5 Programme years.

<b>Project types</b>	<b>No. of Projects implemented</b>	<b>Achievements</b>
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Roads (completed, in progress, newly constructed, or rehabilitated)	390	1,866 km
Trails (rehabilitated as well as newly constructed)	300	1,400 km
Small scale irrigation channels	60	245 km
River/flood control measures (embankments, spurs)	240	133 km
Fish ponds	100	50 km
Agro - and community forestry projects	30	950 km
Soil erosion measures (gully control etc)	80	530 km

**Total 1,200**

*Remarks: Green road projects commonly extend over 3-4 years until they are completed. On average, it took about two years to complete the construction of FfW projects.*

## **2) Improvement of the Food Supply Situation of the Target Population**

### ***a) Increased short-term food supplies***

During the first five years, WFP has supplied 46,174 tons of rice to about 250,000 food deficit households that participated in FfW projects, or 80% of the target population. These households received an average of about 231 kg of rice and Rs 300 as remuneration for labour provided during construction periods averaging about three months.

### ***b) Improvement of the long-term food security situation***

FfW projects such as small-scale irrigation schemes, river/flood control measures, fishponds, agro-forestry and soil erosion measures contribute directly to increased food output. It is estimated that through these FfW projects, food production increased by about 4 to 5 thousand tons of rice and 25 tons of fish annually.

## **3) Improved Self-help Capacity of Rural Communities**

During Phase I, about 1,200 user or self-help groups were established with the aim of implementing FfW projects. To enable them to plan, construct, and maintain these FfW projects they received training, material, and guidance. As a result of RCIW support, UGs were able to:

- Claim ownership of the FfW structures and continue to manage project-related issues after RCIW support has been withdrawn.
- Solve problems in a participatory and transparent manner.
- Obtain resources for the maintenance and operation of the FfW structures, and to secure continued improvements for the welfare of their members.
- Begin additional economic and social activities.

#### **4) Other Important Achievements Realised by RCIW during Phase I**

##### ***a) Improved gender equity***

RCIW provided equal employment opportunities for men and women; improved the integration of women into the decision making process; and enhanced the gender sensitivity of stakeholders in RCIW intervention areas.

##### ***b) Improved transparency and accountability in the implementation of community infrastructure activities***

RCIW provided clear and simple Project Guidelines, Public Rate Boards, and Project Books; and integrated public audits, orientations, and awareness campaigns into the process.

##### ***c) Improved planning, construction and maintenance capacity of local organisations***

More than 25 DDCs, 15 NGOs and 10 consulting firms, with more than 300 professionals, have been trained and have gathered practical experience regarding the implementation of labour intensive, gender balanced, and environment friendly community infrastructures.

#### **General Performance of RCIW**

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The first Phase of RCIW directly assisted about 250,000 poor and food deficit families (1.0 million people) to create productive assets and improve their self-help capacity. RCIW enabled the poor to invest time in building assets by providing Food for Work. The activities of RCIW lead to improved food production and rural access, and mitigated natural disasters (floods, droughts and landslides). In addition, RCIW enhanced the skill level and implementation capacity of many local organisations resulting in markedly improved employment and income opportunities for the poor. RCIW also made a significant contribution to advance further gender, decentralisation, and good governance issues.

However, RCIW also encountered a variety of constraints and had several shortcomings, related to the insufficient implementation capacity of local public and private partners; the limited economic development options for the poor in target areas; and the lack of the consistent application of good governance principles in some cases.

Most decision-makers agree that the benefits and advantages of RCIW far outweigh its costs. Therefore, it was decided to continue this successful programme. Lessons learned during Phase I are described in Section 5 and have been incorporated into the design of the subsequent Phase II.



## Section 2

### Introduction and Overview: Rural Community Infrastructure Works (RCIW) Programme

The majority of the Nepali people

are poor. An estimated 45 to 60 % of the population lives in absolute poverty facing acute food shortages because the resource base is inadequate to supply their basic needs. This situation results from insufficient local food production and a shortage of fertile land, and is worsened by people's inadequate purchasing power due to lack of local employment opportunities.

In response to this problem, His Majesty's Government of Nepal (HMG/N) established the Rural Community Infrastructure Works (RCIW) Programme (WFP project No. 5572). It was launched in December 1995 with the signing of the Plan of Operation between HMG/N and the World Food Programme (WFP). The Federal Republic of Germany provides technical assistance to the programme through GTZ and DED. Germany also provides financial assistance through KfW.

The programme is one of the government's major poverty alleviation schemes and is widely felt to have contributed significantly to improving rural access, food availability in remote areas, and the food supply of the rural poor. It aims to benefit 1.0 million people living in food deficit districts of Nepal. The first phase of the RCIW programme has lasted five years from January 1996 to December 2000.

#### 1. RCIW Objectives

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The three main objectives of the RCIW Programme are to improve:

1. Poor rural families access to food
2. The community infrastructure in food deficit areas
3. The self-help capacity of rural communities.

In achieving these objectives, the programme seeks to enable target groups and their organisations to plan, carry out, maintain, and operate community infrastructure projects according to the established guidelines. In the long-term, these activities are also expected to improve people's general problem-solving and project implementation capacity.

#### 2. RCIW Programme Strategy and Stages

RCIW pursues a two-pronged strategy to mobilise communities through Food for Work projects that help local people to overcome temporary food shortages while participating in self-help activities. These projects invest in sustainable, productive community infrastructures



that directly address the long-term causes of food insecurity by increasing physical access and production in food deficit areas, and / or promoting disaster prevention and mitigation.

The RCIW strategy has evolved in several ways since the programme began in 1995. Since 1998, targeting of specific districts for RCIW intervention is guided by vulnerability and food security analysis work carried out by WFP's Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping (VAM) unit. On the basis of VAM data indicating high vulnerability in the mid- and far-western hills and mountains, and HMG prioritisation of these areas, RCIW was started in Darchula, Achham, Kalikot, Bajura and Bajhang, and piloted in Mugu, since the third work season. WFP's 1999 policy for Food Aid and Development, Enabling Development, was also influential in the evolution of RCIW strategy, particularly in the increasing concentration of resources on food-insecure areas within Nepal, and the commitment to use RCIW assistance to achieve a longer term impact on food security for the poorest. The RCIW strategy is also increasingly gender-oriented, largely as a result of GTZ policy and WFP's Commitments to Women.

### **1) Food & Cash for Work**

The User Group (UG) members are generally too poor to contribute even free labour. Therefore, RCIW remunerates them with food and cash, and provides technical assistance and construction material. In exchange for labour on FfW projects, poor households receive three kg of rice and Rs 3 / day in Terai districts or Rs 6 / day in the hill districts. The World Food Programme (WFP) provides the rice; the local Village Development Committees (VDCs) provide the cash.

### **2) Community Self-help**

The UG are the actual initiators, implementers, and owners of FfW projects through the RCIW Programme. Each UG consists of 50 to 200 food deficit families organised to implement a particular FfW project of their choice. In the Terai, the most successful projects have been roads, water ponds, river control measures, and small-scale irrigation schemes. In the hills and mountains, the projects chosen by the communities have been feeder roads, mule tracks, and erosion control measures.

### **3) Assistance at All Levels**

RCIW staff professionals assisted User Groups, VDCs, and DDCs to plan, construct, maintain, and operate FfW Projects. The UGs implement the project in three stages. In the first year, the local

people form UGs and receive project-planning support. The UGs carry out construction work in the second year and maintenance work in the third year. Programme support to the UGs usually ceases after three years.

The government assists the self-help groups by providing engineering services and construction material. Local NGOs and private consultants help to mobilise and establish the groups, and to train their members.

GTZ assists the Ministry in policy, planning, co-ordination, and monitoring matters. In addition, GTZ trains government and private technicians, and committee members of the self-help groups in both technical and social aspects. It also strengthens the implementation capacity of local NGOs involved in FfW activities. WFP provides rice and assists the DDCs and UCs in its proper storage and in monitoring and accounting procedures. WFP also facilitates training that is necessary and relevant to rice management.

### 3. Programme areas

RCIW has been implemented in the thirty-five districts illustrated on the map.

GTZ is physically present in only 20 districts.

The **first year**, it was initiated in ten districts; Baitadi, Dadeldhura, Doti, Kanchanpur, Kailali, Banke, Surkhet, Dailekh, Baglung and Parbat.

The **second year**, the programme started in ten more districts; Tanahun, Kavre, Sindupalchowk, Dolaka, Makwanpur, Salyan, Danusha, Siraha, Saptari, and Udayapur.

The **third year**, it was initiated in five more districts; Darchula, Achham, Nawalparasi, Pyuthan, and Ramechhap. During the **fourth year**, RCIW added Kalikot, Bajura, and Bajhang.

In the **fifth year**, interventions without GTZ support were carried out in seven districts: Mahotari, Lamjung, Rautahat, Mugu, Sayanja, Mayagdi, and Sindhuli.

## 4. RCIW Partners and Facilitators

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### **At the local level:**

Local self-help user groups (UG), consisting of food-deficit families, implement FfW projects. UGs own the projects and are responsible for their construction and maintenance. The Village Development Committees (VDCs) provide cash to remunerate workers constructing FfW projects.

### **At the district level:**

District Development Committees (DDCs) co-ordinate and facilitate RCIW Programme activities through District Programme Support Units (DPSU). These units facilitate UGs in their efforts to plan, implement, and maintain FfW projects. They work under the DDC and are staffed and financed by the Ministry of Local Development (MLD).

DPSU professionals provide technical expertise, guidance, and construction materials. They certify and monitor the performance of UGs.

The DPSU work is facilitated by locally operating NGOs and / or consultants hired by the GTZ. These private organisations assist the UCs in mobilising, orienting, and developing the skills of UG members. They also train and guide the UC members in project planning, management, and maintenance. New partnerships have also been developed in 1999 to complement the resources and expertise that GTZ and MLD are able to offer. (Refer to pg. 39)

#### **At the national level:**

RCIW facilitators at the national level are:

- The Ministry of Local Development (MLD) guides and co-ordinates, provides resources, and monitors activities.
- World Food Programme (WFP) provides rice, training, tools, and strategic and operational support.
- The German Agency for Technical Co-operation (GTZ) provides technical assistance to the programme at all levels—national, district, and village.

## **5. RCIW Major Principles**

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The principles that guide the implementation of RCIW are:

**Target population orientation:** FfW activities are driven by the needs, demands, and initiative of the target population, and the resources available to serve them.

**Self-help basis:** The activities are implemented through voluntary contributions by User Group members in the form of labour and materials, and their assumption of responsibility and ownership for the FfW project.

**Transparency:** FfW projects strive to be transparent especially with respect to the decision-making process and the use of food and non-food items.

**Participation:** UG members participate in all relevant decision-making processes related to project planning, construction, and maintenance.

**Gender balance:** FfW projects must provide equal employment opportunities for men and women who receive the same remuneration

for similar types and amounts of work. In addition, women must be included in all decision-making.

**Sustainability:** FfW projects must be sustainable especially through maintenance by the User Groups.

**Food security:** FfW projects must contribute to improving the food security situation in the project area by increasing food production, creating long-term employment opportunities, and improving linkages to markets and basic services.

## 6. Activities and Resources Provided by RCIW Partners:

### **WFP:**

- Rice as remuneration for workers involved in FfW projects
- Food security mapping and targeting support
- Training support in food handling
- Tools and equipment
- Capacity for strategic planning, pilot initiatives, and training

### **District Development**

#### **Committees (DDCs):**

- Approval of projects
- Co-ordination of planning
- Monitoring of implementation
- Mediation of problems
- Road maintenance funds

#### **User Groups (UG):**

- Implementation of FfW projects.
- Implementation of economic and social activities

### **KfW:**

- Financial support to MLD to procure construction material, tools, and related services

### **Ministry of Local Development (MLD):**

- Construction materials
- Technical and management expertise
- Funds to operate district offices (DPSU)
- Funds for local storage and handling of rice (ITSH)

**Village Development Committees (VDCs):**

- Funds for remunerating workers involved in FfW construction activities (Rs 1 or 2 per kg of rice received by workers in the Terai and hills respectively).

**NGOs and Consultants:**

- Support for the social mobilisation through GTZ
- Technical expertise and support to the DDC

**GTZ:**

- Technical expertise and advisory services
- Material and financial support for training
- Extension and transport facilities
- Work tools, equipment, storage facilities
- Implementation of action research

••Section 3  
RCIW Activities Implemented  
during the Fifth Year (1999 - 2000)

**D**uring the RCIW Programme's

fifth year, the various partners and facilitators implemented a wide variety of activities of high strategic importance. The most important were:

1. FfW-project planning, construction and maintenance activities
2. Training activities
3. Gender activities
4. Action research activities
5. Monitoring and evaluation activities
6. Resource mobilisation and management activities

**Important Targets for the Fifth Year:**

- 1) Orient and train local stakeholders about the RCIW concept, strategy, and guidelines.
- 2) Facilitate the formation and management of about 450 new User Groups (UG) located in 35 districts.
- 3) Orient and train 1,300 UG committee members in project planning and management, 800 technical supervisors and 300 professional officers.
- 4) Facilitate UG in their effort to construct the infrastructure shown in Table 3 and 4.
- 5) Provide rice and cash for 40,000 food deficit families involved in FfW projects. Each family should receive at least 250 kg of rice and Rs 250 or Rs 500 in the Terai or the hills respectively.

## 1. FfW Planning, Construction and Maintenance Activities

RCIW professionals; including staff of GTZ, MLD, and WFP; undertake many activities to facilitate the FfW projects that UGs implement. These activities can be grouped as planning, construction, and maintenance. A review of the main activities implemented during the fifth year is presented in the following tables.

### **1) Number of projects implemented**

During the fifth year 249 old FfW projects, started in previous years, were continued. In addition, 168 new projects were initiated. About half of the projects implemented were roads. The projects implemented are shown in Table 3.

TABLE 2:  
Activities Implemented, Achievements Realised, and Problems Encountered

Planning	Activities implemented	Achievements realised	Problems encountered
	1. Select food deficit areas and households.	1.1 In RCIW districts, potential intervention areas were identified and 800 VDCs were selected.	1.2 In some cases, the most food deficit VDCs could not be selected due to logistical problems.
	2. Assist the UGs in selection of FfW-projects.	2.1 About 300 new project proposals were forwarded but only 168 were approved. 2.2 For most projects detailed designs and cost estimates are available.	2.2 Resources were insufficient to support all proposals. Some proposals were not feasible technically.
	3. Form user groups and committees and train UC members.	3.1 About 200 new groups were formed and committees installed. All members received training.	2.3 The quality of these designs and cost estimates was not always good due to time pressures and manpower shortages.
	4. Assist preparation of Project Book and ratification of Project Agreement.	4.1 About 500 UGs received a book and 280 new Project Agreements were made and signed.	3.2 Committee members are sometimes appointed. They may not necessarily represent the interests of UG members and sometimes lack ownership.
	5. Provide material, technical and project management guidance to UG.	5.1 UGs received hand tools, construction material and rice. They also received training. In 65% of all projects, materials and services were available as scheduled.	4.2 About 83 % of all books were kept in order. Agreements were not always adhered to fully.
	6. Assess and certify amount of work performed.	6.1 Most work performed by UGs was assessed and payments made accordingly. 73% of all physical targets were achieved.	5.2 Often there were not enough hand tools and construction materials. UGs in remote locations were not properly
	7. Prepare Project Maintenance and Operation Plan.	7.1 About 155 UGs have a plan and operate a maintenance fund.	
	9. Prepare Completion	47% f ll j t	t d

	Report	<p>47% of all projects carried out maintenance as planned.</p> <p>8.1 About 500 UG members were trained and are actively involved in maintenance work.</p> <p>9.1 About 250 Completion Reports were prepared.</p>	<p>supported.</p> <p>6.2 In some districts, there were major delays in the payment of workers due to rice shortages.</p> <p>7.2 Plans are satisfactory but funds are insufficient to satisfy maintenance demands.</p> <p>8.2 The skills obtained are only partially applied usually due to a lack of motivation.</p> <p>9.2 The quality of the completion reports is not always satisfactory.</p>
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TABLE 3:  
Number of FfW Projects Implemented during the Fifth Year

Project type	Old projects	New projects	Total projects
Rural roads	140	64	204
Trails	22	37	59
Small scale irrigation	17	11	28
River / flood control	23	28	51
Fish ponds	14	8	22
Agro / community-forestry	-	12	12
Others (e.g. soil conservation)	33	8	41
<b>Total</b>	<b>249</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>417</b>

## 2) Targets, Achievements and Progress Made

The following table provides an overview of the accomplishments in the fifth year. Due to the availability of resources and the hard work of RCIW participants, the progress



made this year was very satisfactory when compared to the targets. In the hills, about 300 km of new roads have been constructed according to the “*Green Road*” concept. In the Terai, about 400 km of existing farm roads were rehabilitated this year. DDCs are eager to expand RCIW road construction activities at the expense of other types of projects because the benefits of roads are more highly valued than the benefits of other FfW projects.

TABLE 4:  
Targets, Achievements and Progress of FfW Projects in the Fifth Year

Project type	Target	Achievements	Progress made
Rural roads	917 km	798 km	87%
Trails	282 km	283 km	101%
Small scale irrigation	35 km	29 km (546 ha)	83%
River/flood control	31 km	27 km (2,450 ha)	85%
Fish ponds	8 ha	11 ha	136%
Agro/community-forestry	99 ha	100 ha	100%
Others (e.g. soil conservation)	85 ha	85 ha	100%

#### **Lessons Learned: FfW Planning, Construction, and Maintenance**

- The key to successfully implementing a FfW project is a genuinely interested and fully committed UG and UC that take on ownership of the structure. Through the support of NGOs and consultants, the UG is prepared and enabled to function properly and successfully. On-the-job trainings covering record keeping, group management, and public audits, were the most appreciated and effective activities.
- The guidance that government technicians provided was often insufficient, especially in the hill districts, and affected the quality of the structures. There is evidence that if there are enough village-based supervisors available, then the technical standards are good. Hence, using more technical supervisors may substitute for the government technicians.
- Maintenance problems still exist in cases of community owned FfW projects such as roads and trails. It has been very difficult to convince UGs to take over the responsibility for road maintenance. Only in cases where VDCs or DDCs were willing to financially support the UGs were they able to carry out maintenance activities.

## 2. Training Activities Implemented in the Fifth Year

Capacity building activities such as orientations, training, and skill development sessions were carried out at various levels: user or target groups, district / professional, and national political / administrative. These activities were mostly organised and conducted by GTZ. In addition, GTZ developed and produced teaching

and extension aids for each subject. Important training activities are summarised in Table 5.

### 1) Skill development for UG members in technical matters and group management

During the year, more than 11,100 UG members were trained. On average, they attended three to five training sessions lasting from one to three days. This is equivalent to about 15,000 training days. User group members were trained in fields such as project planning and management, record and bookkeeping, gender awareness, public audits, construction techniques, and maintenance and operation of the FfW structures.

### 2) In-service training for RCIW staff members in social and engineering fields

During the fourth year, more than 200 staff members attended one or two training sessions lasting about one week. This is equivalent to about 1,900 training days. Major subjects covered were project planning and management, monitoring and evaluation, teaching and communication techniques, gender awareness, food store management, record keeping, and labour / environment friendly construction technologies.

### 3) Awareness and orientation for local politicians about RCIW aims and principles

The RCIW management; consisting of senior central-level staff of MLD, GTZ, and WFP; organised and conducted a series of orientation and awareness building functions for local politicians such as DDC and VDC members. The main subjects covered were the RCIW concept, FfW project planning and management, gender awareness, and monitoring and evaluation principles.

### 4) Training for NGO staff members

Training courses were conducted to improve the skills of NGO staff members in technical fields such as FfW concepts, Saving and Credit, Income Generation activities, and community Leadership. They were also provided to improve the internal management of the respective NGOs. These training activities contributed to improving the performance of the local community based NGOs currently involved in delivering RCIW services to the target groups.

TABLE 5:  
Capacity-building Activities Implemented during the Fifth Year

Category of People	No. of Persons Trained			Total Person Days of Training *	Major Topics of Training
	Female	Male	Total		
RCIW Technical and Non-technical staff	25	447	472	1,900	Engineering, Project management, TOT, Communication and

User Groups and Committees at Village Level VDC and DDC representatives	3,715	7,396	11,111	15,000	Facilitation, Gender, Monitoring & evaluation, Accounting and store keeping. RCIW concept, Project Management, Record keeping, Monitoring, & supervision. Project planning, Monitoring, Self- evaluation techniques
		384 1,540	1,156	3,100	

- *Figures of person days of training are rounded up to the nearest hundred.*

## **Lessons Learned: Training**

The participants greatly appreciated most of the training sessions conducted by RCIW, which helped them to perform better. However, a relatively large number of trained government professionals have left RCIW due to structural problems such as low salaries. To partially overcome this brain drain, RCIW is trying to privatise the services offered by the government.

Training activities conducted for the skill development of target group members have not yet built the confidence of the participants up to the necessary level. More training activities and follow-ups are needed.

## **3. Gender Capacity Building Activities**

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During the fifth year, Gender Promotion continued to be one RCIW priority and is now an established topic in each DDC, VDC, and user orientation. Gender training, reviews, and experience sharing exercises have been carried out at the national, district and local levels. There were 26 women-only projects this year and special training courses about skills, income-generation, and saving / credit activities have been initiated or continued.

### **1) Gender Training Curriculum and Manual**

At the start of this work season, RCIW conducted a workshop with 12 of its District Gender Professionals to design a *Gender Training Curriculum and Manual*. The workshop's objective was to use and strengthen the training capabilities of the grass-root and district level gender-related personnel. Using participatory methods, these programme partners and district-based staff developed the curriculum for gender training in districts and communities.

This curriculum was developed, as a practical aid, into the *RCIW Gender Promotion & Training Manual* in both Nepali and English. It was tested at a number of district and field level orientations for motivators and UC members from all RCIW districts.

### **2) District Gender Action Plans**

RCIW District Gender Action Plans (GAP) were reviewed and updated by district gender officers and motivators. Activities specified in the GAPs were integrated into RCIW district work plans. Three regional (district cluster) follow-up workshops on gender promotion were held for the forty RCIW district professionals who initiate

gender-related activities in the target communities and are expected to facilitate them skilfully and reliably. The intended results of gender activities are:

- Gender awareness is created among all RCIW decision-makers so that they are able to identify and help solve problems arising from gender inequality and discrimination;
- Gender planning recognises gender-related issues when identifying problems and addressing them while planning FfW projects;
- The status of women is enhanced in RCIW activities by integrating women into all decision-making processes, by creating women-only projects, and by providing special skill and professional development training.

### **3) Local Gender Motivators**

To enhance the social aspect of RCIW and raise gender awareness among the UGs, UCs, and VDCs, a pilot proposal was approved to give UGs in seven districts the opportunity to hire local (gender) motivators from their own members. The local motivators help the field-based professionals to promote gender awareness, and to communicate the RCIW Gender Concept and related knowledge and skills. They motivate women to participate in project selection and management, and serve as volunteers to represent the interests of women at UC meetings.

Depending on the size of the project, one to three people, preferably active women, were nominated from each UG / UC as a local (Gender) motivator. They were employed under the same terms and conditions as local technical supervisors, and remunerated accordingly with their cash component paid from the VDC budget. The local motivators ensure transparency, accountability, social sustainability, and the active participation of women in community decision-making. There have been positive results wherever political interests did not affect the selection of the motivators.

### **4) Gender Quotas on User Committees**

Despite encouraging progress, results are not expected after only one year. The crucial question remains: "How can RCIW involve women in decision making?" The experiences of previous work seasons led the RCIW management to decide, in August 1999, to introduce a provision in the RCIW guidelines making it mandatory for all newly formed UCs to have at least 50% women members. The local motivators on each UC facilitate the implementation of this guideline. As a result, this year the percentage of female UC members increased from 33% to 40%.

## 5) Women Staff Members

RCIW seeks to increase the number of women on its staff by training and qualifying women in technical and social fields to work as engineers and overseers, or sociologists, field motivators and gender professionals. The programme still has a problem finding women who are willing to work in remote project areas because social traditions deter them from moving away from their families.

The programme will recruit more local male or female personnel from the programme districts. It will be easier for them to contribute to enhancing local women's skills for their long-term empowerment and food security.

Young women are now often willing and prepared to gain professional experience by working for RCIW. Since the proportion of women among government staff is 6%, with two women among 18 engineers, and two women among 45 overseers, more capacity building needs to be done.

### Lessons Learned: Gender

The Gender Action Plan has yielded good results and proven to be a powerful instrument in promoting gender issues. The participation of women as labourers and in the decision making process of FfW projects has further increased but is not yet satisfactory. Despite several comprehensive attempts, the RCIW professional cadre is far from being gender balanced. To increase the female professional cadre in RCIW, a long-term strategy has been employed.

TABLE 6:  
Review of RCIW Gender-related Objectives, Activities and Problems encountered

Gender Objectives	Achievements in the 5 <sup>th</sup> Year	Remarks / Problems encountered
Equal access for women to unskilled jobs.	On average the women's participation was 33% and women used on average about 30% of the total working days per project.	Causes of the low participation rate are: (a) some women are not allowed to be with men, (b) earning money is seen as a male domain, and (c) project sites are too far from home for women. Generally, men earned more because they worked more hours per day, and performed jobs that are better paid.
Equal pay for equal work by men and women. Target: 3 kg of rice and Rs 3 (Terai) or Rs 6 (hills) per standard work day (government norm).	In most cases, there was no difference in pay if men and women performed the same work. On average, the actual payment received per workday was 5 kg of rice and Rs 10.	Generally, men earned more because they worked more hours per day, and performed jobs that are better paid.
At least one women-only project per district. The target was 20 projects.	There were 26 women-only projects in 11 RCIW districts.	It is extremely difficult to convince VDCs to allocate the necessary funds to this measure.
There should be at least one active female member on each UC.	Due to the quota for women members on newly formed UCs, there was an average of 3 women on each UC. 50% of	There are many traditional barriers that prevent women from fulfilling their roles as committee members

<p>At the national and district levels, 10% of RCIW professionals are women, with at least one trained RCIW gender professional per district.</p>	<p>them actively took part in the decision-making processes. By the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> year there was one female RCIW professional at the national level and 12 in the districts. 16 RCIW districts have at least one trained gender professional.</p>	<p>in mixed male / female committees.</p> <p>The targets have not yet been met because it is extremely difficult to contract female professionals. There is an acute shortage of female engineers and construction supervisors who are willing to live and work in remote areas.</p>
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#### 4. Action Research Activities

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During the fifth year, the RCIW management continued to implement a variety of action research activities with the assistance of GTZ. This work has yielded many positive results, some of which have already been adopted outside the action research area. Action Research Activities carried out included:

##### 1) Testing of River / Flood Control Measures

The main activities in this field were:

- a. Monitoring and evaluation of the suitability of river / flood control structures built during the previous three years;
- b. Developing and testing different structure designs and materials;
- c. Testing of different plantations useful for riverside and bank protection.

This testing was done at three different river sites near Lahan in collaboration with the Department of Soil Conservation (DSCO). The preliminary results have been positive.

##### 2) Developing Soil Erosion Measures

Appropriate FfW measures to control soil erosion are not available in Nepal. However, RCIW target group members are increasingly demanding soil erosion control projects. To meet this demand the following action research activities were carried out during the fourth year.

- a. Construction of water catchments or retention ponds.
- b. Establishment of multi-purpose grass / tree plots.

Most of the micro-projects proved to be technically and financially feasible, and beneficial for the target group members. Results will be available at the end of the coming working season.

### **3) Compiling Best Practices for the Construction of Flood Control Measures**

During the fifth year, a **Best Practices Report on FfW Flood Control Measures** was finalised and published. The compilation of this report engaged a substantial amount of manpower and funds. It is hoped that this report will facilitate the promotion of labour intensive and low cost flood control measures. This report also serves as a training aid. The flood control report and the **Best Practices Report on Green Roads** report produced last year can both be obtained from the GTZ / FfW Project for a small fee.

### **4) Non-formal Literacy Classes**

RCIW introduced non-formal literacy classes as a pilot project in Achham district. These classes use the REFLECT method as a complimentary social measure to achieve the objectives of RCIW in a more sustainable manner. More than 600 illiterate women from food deficit households attended afternoon or evening classes for about 6 months. Preliminary results are highly encouraging especially regarding the gains in literacy level and increase in awareness of the participants. Many participants have already started saving / credit and improved food production activities on their own. The positive results achieved so far, especially regarding the empowerment of women, prompted the RCIW management to expand these activities and start similar classes in other programme districts.

#### **Lessons Learned: Action Research**

RCIW participants generate new ideas how to improve the programme performance almost daily. Some ideas relate to technical and others to management matters. Many of these ideas are worth trying and exploring further as pilot schemes. To facilitate these schemes in the future, the RCIW management will also make resources available and encourage UG members to be creative.

## **5. Monitoring Activities**

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The RCIW Monitoring System has five main components:

- 1) Information routinely produced by the analysis of FfW fact sheets
- 2) Findings from self-evaluation exercises by UGs and partner organisations
- 3) Audits carried out by independent organisations
- 4) Findings revealed by special studies such as Impact Assessment Studies
- 5) Observations of RCIW staff members during field and project visits (Travel Reports).



The major activities of the fifth year were:

### **1) Consolidation of the Monitoring System**

This year, the system for data collection and information analysis on individual FfW projects was further consolidated and some minor adjustments were made. For instance, the data processing system was modified, professionals were trained, and a data clerk was employed. For each FfW project implemented, a project file has been produced which contains all relevant data such as the material and monetary resources used and physical achievements. The system is now operational. Data is aggregated to produce summary profiles for each district and for the national level.

### **2) Self-assessment / Self-evaluation**

Self-assessment activities were done by UGs, and by the various organisations facilitating UGs such as NGOs / Consultants and DPSUs. RCIW professionals and UC members were trained and assisted to perform this task properly. During the year, many self-assessment activities were carried out, such as the *Participatory Experience Sharing Exercises* (PESE). These activities helped improve the sense of ownership, motivation, and project identification.

### **3) Audits**

**Public audits:** Many public audits, an average of one to three per UG, were carried out. NGOs and / or consultants trained and assisted UC members to enable them to perform this task. These public audits were an effective tool to improve transparency and accountability. As well, public audits combined with publicly displayed work norms and payment rates were an excellent way to inform UG members of their entitlement, to ensure proper payment, and to discuss and clarify inquiries.

**Institutional audits:** WFP commissioned three district audits that were implemented by an independent reputable audit firm. MLD also carried out some audits by their internal auditors. An independent audit firm routinely audited GTZ-FfW accounts. Findings of these audits helped to greatly improve the account system and transparency.

### **4) Vulnerability Mapping**

WFP developed a Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping (VAM) unit that has been used in 1998 and 1999 to indicate food-insecure districts for RCIW targeting. It has also developed a method to rank VDCs to be prioritised within districts. RCIW's geographic

and beneficiary targeting will continue to be guided in the future by VAM analyses of vulnerability related to food insecurity. VAM also helped to define food security monitoring indicators during the fifth year and in the future will assist RCIW to refine the indicators used to measure the programme's impact on the improvement of the target groups' food security situation.

#### **Lessons Learned: Monitoring**

Project books and public reviews have proven to be powerful tools to achieve transparency at the local user group level. Guided self-assessment or self-evaluation by UG and RCIW staff members was another effective monitoring tool that helped improve project steering, enhance the sense of project ownership, and ensure transparency. External audits are also necessary to improve accountability. Another useful exercise was to clarify the project design by defining meaningful and feasible monitoring indicators. Despite some managerial shortcomings to be overcome, there are ample signs that the RCIW monitoring system is working.

## **6. Resource Mobilisation and Management**

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### **1) Programme Funding and Costs**

In the fifth year, RCIW Programme costs (excluding the voluntary contributions of the target group) totalled about Rs 530 million or US\$ 7.4 million. The breakdowns of contributions from the various partners and of the costs is illustrated in the pie charts.

### **2) Resources Mobilised and Used by WFP**

During the final year of RCIW Phase I, WFP delivered 15,800 MT of rice in the programme districts. The cost of procurement and delivery of the rice was US\$ 3,875,072 (equivalent to Rs 283 million). The average price of rice was US\$ 247.5 per ton or Rs 18 per kg.

During this reporting period, WFP funded a pilot initiative in Achham district for awareness-raising and functional literacy using the REFLECT method, which was carried out through GTZ. WFP also funded the preparation of extension materials on gender issues in RCIW, and training of gender trainers. WFP and German Government funds supported a planning mission to develop a VDC ranking methodology for RCIW.

For effective monitoring and management of the RCIW programme, WFP also supported the Programme Support Unit at MLD. It supplied 20 motorcycles to MLD in the fourth year and one car in the fifth year. WFP also provided office equipment such as computers to MLD. Resources mobilized by WFP were used to support a study visit to FfW Projects in Bangladesh for 28 DDC Chairmen and RCIW staff. WFP and GTZ sponsored a study

visit to China to learn from the success of WFP and GTZ integrated food security projects in China.

TABLE 7:

Resources provided by WFP over the five years of Phase I

Items	1 <sup>st</sup> year	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	4 <sup>th</sup> year	5 <sup>th</sup> year	Total
Rice	2,000 tons	7,374 tons	8,400 tons	12,600 tons	15,800 tons	46,174 tons
Cash (for CfW)		Rs 2.0 mil	Rs 2.0 mil	Rs 1.6 mil	-	Rs 5.6 mil
Hand tools (pieces)	4,000	12,000	12,000	3,211	31,211	

Remarks: At the end of the 5th year there was a balance of 1,600 tons of rice, which will be distributed in the coming year.

### 3) Resources Mobilised and Used by the Central Government

**Funding:** In the fifth year, the treasury allocated funds totalling Rs 120 million. Although this is a slight increase from the previous year and high in comparison to other projects, it still falls short of the target. Due to this shortage of matching funds, programme activities had to be adjusted accordingly. For instance, FfW projects that require a relatively large amount of materials, such as small-scale irrigation schemes, were reduced in number.

The difference between funds allocated and actual expenditures, seen in the table below, has improved over the previous years but is not yet satisfactorily. This is mainly due to the late release of funds, tedious procurement procedures, and general administrative problems in the districts.

**Staffing:** The central government made the commitment to provide one engineer, three overseers, one accountant, and one storekeeper for each district, for a total of 150 staff in 25 districts. The central and local governments were unable to fill all the posts due to administrative problems that limited recruitment. As well, several officers resigned due to the low government pay scale and relatively difficult working conditions in remote districts. The shortage of government professionals was one of the main reasons for implementation problems experienced again during the fifth year.

### 4) Resources Mobilised and Used by VDCs

Funds contributed by VDCs to pay unskilled labourers engaged in FfW construction work totalled about Rs 32 million in the fifth year. This exceeds the VDC contribution in previous years by about 23% because the size of the labour force increased. Despite this increase, the VDC contribution still falls short of their commitment by about 30%. This is due to severe budget constraints in some VDCs and implies that many workers engaged in FfW projects did not

receive their full entitlement. However, FfW project activities were not notably hampered since the cash payment is small relative to the food payment and accounts for only 6-12 % of the total remuneration.

### 5) Resources Mobilised and Used by GTZ

During the fifth year, GTZ fulfilled all of its targets and commitments outlined in the programme document. It provided professional expertise and advisory services to communities and target groups, and at the district and national levels. These services covered four major fields:

- FfW project planning and policy formulation
- Social and technical skill development
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Development and promotion of best practices

GTZ provided two expatriate officers (24 PM), about 100 local officers (1,200 PM), and about 30 PM of short-term expertise. It also provided training material, extension aids, and training funds worth more than Rs 20 million.

TABLE 8:

Funds provided by HMG/N over the first five years

Funds	1 <sup>st</sup> year	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	4 <sup>th</sup> year	5 <sup>th</sup> year	Total
Funds allocated	Rs 30 mil	Rs 80 mil	Rs 105 mil	Rs 118 mil	Rs 133 mil	Rs 471 mil
Funds spent	Rs 11 mil	Rs 68 mil	Rs 78 mil	Rs 96 mil	Rs 125 mil	Rs 378 mil

### Lessons Learned:

#### Resource Mobilisation and Use

The financial contributions from the Central Government (MLD) and the VDCs are insufficient to adequately support all the FfW projects proposed and planned by the districts and the target groups. This problem could be partially overcome by integrating FfW projects more effectively into local development plans and by pooling locally available resources.

In order to ensure that RCIW resources are managed properly, external and internal monitoring activities must be intensified. In particular, the target groups must be better oriented so that they can more effectively claim their entitlements.

## Section 4 Overall Performance and Achievements during Phase I

This section examines the extent to

which the activities implemented in Phase I contributed to meeting the following objectives of the RCIW Programme and whether the intended benefits reached the target populations:

- Improved the rural community infrastructure in food deficit areas
- Increased the accessibility to food of poor rural families
- Strengthened the self-help capacity of rural communities

This section also assesses whether the RCIW Programme contributed to:

- Gender equity
- Transparency and accountability
- Strengthening professional and organisational capacity
- Strengthening the national economy

### 1. Improved Rural Community Infrastructure through FfW

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During the past 5 years of RCIW Phase I, about 1,200 individual FfW projects were implemented by food deficit households from about 1,400 different communities (VDCs) in 35 districts. These FfW projects contributed significantly to improve the communal infrastructure.

#### 1) Roads and trails

Through RCIW, 1,866 km of roads and 1,400 km of trails have been constructed. These roads and trails improve the accessibility and availability of food, other essential commodities, and services. Roads and trails link farmers to markets, enabling them to intensify their agricultural production and find better markets for their cash crops.

For several reasons, roads enjoy substantial support from local authorities, politicians, and the poor. It has been observed that the price of fertiliser may decrease by more than 50% following the opening of a road. In some cases, local farmers have more than doubled their earnings from dairy and vegetable sales. Along FfW roads, new businesses have emerged because retailers and craftspeople have new opportunities. In some places, land prices have tripled. Target group members have also suggested that better roads and trails are beneficial as disaster mitigation investments,

which improve the flow of food imports into a region when drought or pests cause temporary food shortages.

## **2) River / flood control and soil conservation projects**

During the past five years, about 3,000 ha of arable land was protected from being flooded through various flood control measures. There are indications that various types of FfW initiatives help reduce the target population's exposure to disasters such as flash floods, droughts, fire, landslides, and earthquakes. River control measures have the highest impact because they markedly reduce the risk of floods, especially for the poor. Though floods affect rich and poor alike, the most vulnerable people are the poor. To repair or rebuild after a disaster, the poor must become indebted and depend on moneylenders. Embankments may provide poor families with the opportunity to rehabilitate old riverbeds and turn them into paddy land.

## **3) Fishponds**

During the past five years, about 100 FfW fishponds were established; each is about ½ ha in area. In the Terai, women like fishponds because they provide a source of drinking water for people and livestock, a washing place, and a source of income. As well, the stock of water is available to fight house fires, and is some insurance against drought.

## **4) Small scale irrigation projects**

About 60 small-scale irrigations projects were implemented during Phase I; each covering an average command area of 15 ha. By rehabilitating irrigation channels in the Terai and constructing new irrigation channels in the hills, paddy production increased considerably through these projects. Irrigation projects contribute to agricultural stability by making crop production less susceptible to drought.

## **5) Agro and community forestry projects**

During Phase I, 30 projects were completed; each plot averaged about 30 ha. Women groups own the majority of plots on which they grow mostly fodder plants for their cattle and goats.

## **6) Soil erosion control measures**

FfW structures such as gully control measures, water retention ponds, and slope protection are small and are implemented with the assistance of the Department of Soil Conservation. These projects make a substantial contribution towards improving the

management of natural resources, especially in fragile ecological regions such as the Churia Hills.

TABLE 9:  
Physical Achievements during the 5 years of RCIW

Project types	No. of projects implemented	Achievements
Green Roads (completed)	100	313 km
Green roads (incomplete)	100	552 km
Terai roads (newly constructed)	100	168 km
Terai roads (rehabilitated)	90	833 km
Trails (rehabilitated as well as newly constructed)	300	1,400 km
Small scale irrigation channels	60	245 km
River/flood control measures (embankments, spurs)	240	133 km
Fish ponds	100	50 ha
Agro- and community forestry projects	30	950 ha
Soil erosion measures (gully control etc.)	80	530 ha

**Total 1,200**

*Remarks: Green roads projects usually extend over 3–4 years until they are completed. On average, it took about two years to complete the construction of FfW projects.*

**Ecological, Financial, and Social Sustainability:**

**Ecological:** RCIW ensures that FfW projects are environmentally sound through a planning process that considers issues such as cutting trees, blasting rocks, and digging soil in fragile ecological formations. The programme promotes bioengineering techniques that help minimise the environmental damage that could result from FfW infrastructures.

**Financial:** The sustainability of FfW structures relates to the financing of the construction and maintenance costs. The implementation of these projects minimises the use of expensive items. Cost-cutting measures include using locally available workers and materials instead of bringing in technicians and construction materials such as cement and steel. This approach ensures that FfW projects are affordable and built within the financial limitations of local communities.

**Social:** RCIW supported FfW projects are socially sustainable because their management needs are minimal. Locally available skills can meet the project requirements, especially if local NGOs support the

communities. This is especially true for projects where the ownership is clearly defined, such as fishponds, small-scale irrigation, and agro-forestry schemes.

RCIW achievements satisfactorily improved rural infrastructure by meeting most physical targets, and enhancing the quality of rural infrastructures.

## **2. Increased Food Supply Situation of the Target Population**

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### **1) Short-term food supplies**

Over the past five years, WFP has supplied about 46,174 tons of rice to about 250,000 food deficit households that participated in FfW projects. These households received an average of 231 kg of rice and Rs 300.

In the fifth year, about 72,000 unskilled workers from 57,600 households benefited from the programme. This year, households participating in FfW projects received an average of about 285 kg of rice and Rs 550 as remuneration for labour provided during construction periods averaging three months. The amount of rice received per household has increased from the previous year due to better targeting to food deficit families.

The amount of rice received is sufficient to meet the basic food requirements of an ordinary beneficiary household for 2-3 months, but often insufficient to bridge the entire food gap. However, all family members shared the food received and there was no intra-household gender discrimination observed. Food assistance is provided during the agricultural lean season, when it is most required by the recipients and is least disruptive to local rice markets.

### **2) Improvement of the long-term food security situation**

FfW projects such as small-scale irrigation schemes, river/flood control measures, fishponds, agro-forestry and soil erosion measures contribute directly to an increased food output. It is estimated that through these FfW projects, food production increased by about 4 to 5 thousand tons of rice and 25 tons of fish annually.

There was a distinct difference observed between various project types in how they improved long-term food security. Small-scale irrigation projects are best because these structures have the potential to double, or in some cases triple, food output. River and flood control projects in the Terai considerably improve food output by reclaiming agricultural land and protecting crops against



flood damage. However, the additional food produced by fishponds per unit of land, or per household, was very low due to management shortcomings and too many group users.

Roads and trails only indirectly contributed to an increase in agricultural production. They improved access to agricultural inputs such as fertilisers, pesticides, and improved seed. There were marked differences between the hills and the Terai. Increased grain production due to improvements in the road network was very modest in the hills, while in the lowlands these increases were much more obvious, and sometimes substantial.

In conclusion, RCIW has succeeded in making a substantial and direct contribution to improving the temporary and long-term food supply of more than 250,000 families (1 million people). In addition, these poor households no longer have to search for temporary income-generating opportunities away from their homes.

TABLE 10:

Estimated direct contributions of FfW projects to food production during Phase I

<b>Project types</b>	<b>Achievements</b>	<b>Assumed food production rates per hectare (ha)</b>	<b>Incremental production/year</b>
Roads hill	865 km	-	-
Roads Terai	1,001 km	-	-
Trails	1,400 km	-	-
Small scale irrigation	60 No	(15 ha/No *2,0 tons/ha)	1,800 tons grain
River/flood control measures	133 km	(15 ha/km* 1.0 tons/ha)	1,995 tons grain
Fishponds	50 ha	(0,5 tons fish/ha)	25 tons fish
Agro-and community forestry	950 ha	(0,25 tons/ha)	238 tons grain
Soil erosion measures (gully control etc)		530 ha (0,25 tons/ha)	133 tons grain

*Remarks: Assumed food production rates are based on case studies conducted during previous years.*

### 3. Strengthened the Self-help Capacity of Rural Communities

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One of the three major objectives of the RCIW Programme is to strengthen the self-help capacity of the poor and the disadvantaged in a manner that can be sustained.

During the fifth year, RCIW made a renewed attempt to develop User Groups involved in the implementation of FfW projects into real self-help organisations. The most prominent activities were conducting mass orientation and training sessions for UG and UC

members, granting UC members with management tools and office materials, and providing construction materials, rice and cash.

### **Indicators to Measure the Sustainability of User or Self-help Groups:**

- User Groups and their organisations claim ownership of the FfW structures and continue to solve their own problems even after RCIW support has been withdrawn.
- User Groups are able to solve their own problems in a participatory and transparent manner.
- User Groups are able to obtain resources for the maintenance and operation of the FfW structures, and to secure continued improvements for the welfare of their members.

#### **1) The sense of ownership**

Small-scale irrigation schemes and water pond construction groups appeared to develop the strongest sense of ownership because the UGs were actively involved from the beginning, even in the selection of the projects. Generally, the sense of ownership is not as strong in the case of river and erosion control measures and mule trails. There is little sense of ownership by UGs and their committee members for rural roads. Thus the interest of UGs in projects, especially with respect to the maintenance and operation of roads, is often relatively low. For roads, the User Groups were simply used as a medium to channel programme resources to the target populations while enhancing the community infrastructure.

#### **2) Transparency and participatory approach of UCs**

In 45% of the cases investigated, the project activities were publicly discussed and reviewed (audits), and workers were aware of their entitlements and benefits. About two thirds of the record books are properly maintained.

Sometimes half the UC members were appointed by the respective DDCs and VDCs, and were not elected by members of the User Group. UC members are appointed more on UCs dealing with roads, mule trails, and larger river control measures, and less with water ponds and small-scale irrigation schemes. The actual number of UC members elected or appointed ranges from 7 to 15, including one or two women members. In most projects, only 2 to 3 members are active because in many cases UC members do not have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities.

#### **3) Voluntary resource contribution and promotion of group interest**

RCIW's target has been to ensure that UGs voluntarily contributed about 20 % of the total project resources required. Except with roads, the UGs and workers have made voluntary contributions in the form of free labour and / or construction materials. However, the level of contributions differed widely among the projects. In most cases, the voluntary contribution made by UGs ranged between 10 to 20 % of the prevailing official district daily wage rate and the RCIW payment. Often the UC members, usually the chairperson, lobbied strongly for UG interests. In many instances, they pressured the DPSU and succeeded in obtaining the services of technicians and administrators.

#### **4) Conclusion**

In conclusion, RCIW helped to promote self-help principles and to improve the self-confidence of the target population. Factors that were instrumental in the successful implementation of many FfW projects were:

- a. The social mobilisation and group formation process with the assistance of NGOs and /or consultants.
- b. Leadership development within the self-help or user groups.
- c. Skill development of group members in technical and management fields.
- d. Linking these groups with government and private service providers.

Shortcomings still exist in the maintenance and operation of various FfW investments especially with roads and bigger river / flood control projects where the financial needs exceed the self-help capacity of the UGs. To fully utilise the economic potential and improve the sustainability of FfW projects, UG members must be properly trained and facilitated, and, in the case of roads, financially supported. It is necessary to adjust the current RCIW concept in order to incorporate these aspects.

## **4. Other Important Achievements**

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### **1) Gender Equity**

The RCIW Programme defines women as one of its major beneficiaries. It clearly states that men and women from all groups should take an active part in all stages of the RCIW project cycle, especially in the decision-making processes. It can be concluded from survey results that RCIW has continued to help empower women in the target communities. Starting from a very low level, RCIW has made significant progress in its gender awareness efforts.

There are clear indications that better gender equity is being attained. Women's participation in the construction work is about 30%. More importantly, women will now be better represented in the projects' decision-making. Probably RCIW's most significant contribution has been in creating awareness of gender related issues among local policy-making institutions. The majority of local authorities are now aware of RCIW's focus on gender issues and requirements. However, not all institutions are fully applying the requirements.

Major changes have been included in the RCIW guidelines to enhance the role of women in decision-making. These include increasing the share of female UC members up to 50%.

Another achievement was the development of an RCIW FfW curriculum on gender training and the publication of the *Gender Training and Promotion Manual*.

## **2) Transparency and Accountability**

Both transparency and accountability have been important principles of RCIW. In districts and communities where the programme has worked more than three years, transparency and accountability has markedly improved through several measures.

RCIW innovations that have been instrumental to this improvement are the *Project Guidelines, Rate Boards*, the *Project 'Blue' Book* and the *Participatory Experience Sharing Exercise (PESE)*. A simple but effective monitoring system was developed and introduced, and several internal and external audits have been conducted.

However, the existing government and social-cultural system is complicated and often less than transparent to outsiders. Though RCIW has endeavoured to improve transparency and accountability, there are limitations that can only be overcome with concerted efforts. In addition, more time and good governance is needed to improve accountability, and to establish transparent planning, implementation and maintenance processes at all levels.

## **3) Capacity Building**

At both the district and national levels, RCIW has attained a high level of visibility and respect. The RCIW Programme approach and methodology has become widely accepted as an integral component of HMG/N's poverty alleviation policy. Through RCIW's massive investments in orientation and training, the concept of "good governance" is more widely understood and generally accepted and applied in many districts.

Another contribution of the programme has been improvement of the technical and managerial skills among more than 500 Nepali professionals involved in RCIW. However, the institutional sustainability in government offices has been hampered by many structural shortcomings that are beyond the influence of RCIW. For example, the performance of RCIW has been constrained by frequent staff transfers and serious staff shortages especially among government staff working in remote hill districts.

However, RCIW has contributed greatly, especially through GTZ's efforts, to improving the performance of locally based NGOs and five consultants involved in the implementation process of RCIW activities.

#### **4) Improved Partnerships**

RCIW has become one of the major poverty alleviation programmes of HMG/N. Since the resources of HMG/N and its current partners (WFP, GTZ and KFW) are very limited, there is a need to solicit the support of additional private and public partners. Additional financial and technical support is needed to expand the target group coverage and to complement FfW activities with social and economic empowerment measures such as literacy classes and income generating activities.

During the past year, the RCIW management was relatively successful at bringing additional partners into RCIW. New partnerships were formed with the Swiss and Netherlands Development Agencies (SDC and SNV), and with the Ministry of Forestry and Soil Conservation. Additional organizations have expressed their willingness to work directly with RCIW in the future.

#### **5) National Economy**

The government assumes full responsibility for RCIW and provides substantial financial and personnel support. RCIW's combination of poverty-targeted food security, rural infrastructure, and institutional strengthening fits well in HMG/N's rural decentralisation policy. RCIW also contributed to fostering good governance. Combined with other means, FfW projects proved to be a very cost-effective at creating additional jobs and increasing food production. Other characteristics of FfW that have contributed to this cost-effectiveness and efficiency are:

- a. Maximum use of locally available labour and construction materials, which have low opportunity costs.
- b. Minimal project management costs as target group members implement projects on a self-help and voluntary basis.

c.FfW projects complement other development activities, and are frequently synergetic with, and well integrated into other regional development activities.

It can also be concluded that the poor and the food insecure are well targeted by RCIW but the assistance they receive is insufficient for them to become food secure in a sustainable manner. Despite this shortcoming, the programme has generated impacts far beyond the individual user group or community.

The RCIW model has become widely recognised and appreciated as a successful way to undertake public works in other sectors and areas of Nepal. RCIW's positive impacts are substantial, rendering it an attractive programme from the individual, household, community, and national perspectives.

#### **Women's Equal Pay**

Indra Kumari worked on a mule trail in Barabise VDC and describes her reaction to the project:

*"This is the first time and the only project when women and men have earned equal wages. Before contractors would pay men Rs 50 and women Rs 30. This is a lesson for everyone now. The fact that we earned the same makes me happy."*

## Section 5

### General Lessons Learned and Directions for the Future

1. The FfW concept works well. It is decentralised, and community, target group and self-help based. RCIW target groups are capable of planning, constructing, maintaining, and operating small or large FfW projects if they are properly facilitated.

#### Preconditions:

- Large amounts of technical assistance (TA) in technical and non-technical fields must be provided for at least 3 to 5 years, depending on the type of FfW projects being implemented by the UG.
  - Besides providing food, the UG must be supported with sufficient construction materials and skill development activities.
2. The concept of using government technicians as DPSU members and as UG facilitators works fairly well for technical issues in more accessible areas, such as the Terai. Trying to also use government technicians as social workers and in remote hill conditions failed. However, it has been proven that private sector (NGOs, consultants) personnel are more effective at supplying the non-technical aspects of project facilitation, and are available for hire in the market.
  3. The viability of the RCIW concept in the future depends upon the provision of relatively large amounts of public capital as well as good will, determination and good performance.
  4. Obtaining the support, including financial, of DDC, VDCs, and other major community leaders has proven to be possible, especially if their interest in improving the rural infrastructure is met. Roads trails benefit the poor less than other kinds of projects. Therefore, road construction must be complemented with smaller more agricultural FfW projects.
  5. It is possible to reduce corruption, and improve transparency and accountability within User Groups and the facilitating agencies by raising awareness of RCIW guidelines, making project records public, maintaining a '**Project Book**', conducting public audits, holding people accountable, and rewarding those who did well, without alienating the stakeholders.
  6. Public works can be efficient if they are self-help based and adhere to result-oriented payments. Self-help groups are more efficient because they manage the projects themselves.

Facilitating these works can be more efficient by limiting the number of projects, clustering them, and mixing a few small with a few larger projects. Long-term development plans help to integrate FfW projects with other district development activities to achieve more synergistic effects.

7. Three different management systems and organisational cultures (WFP, GTZ and MLD) have worked effectively together, and learned from each other. The collaboration is sometimes difficult and frustrating but in the end, all gain more than what they give.
8. The participation of women at all levels of FfW projects can be greatly improved if, as RCIW has done, clear guidelines are established and enforced. A critical mass is required for the effective participation of women, especially in the decision making process. The experience of the programme is that women should be in the majority.
9. Food security is best achieved in the long term by implementing a blend of FfW project types that combine large scale community infrastructures such as roads, and river / flood control with smaller complementary agricultural FW projects such as fishponds, small scale irrigation, and agro-forestry.

**Directions for the Future:**

10. RCIW will carry out an integrated food security approach in future that links the construction of community infrastructure and the improvement of physical access with a range of complementary interventions. By integrating food aid with technical assistance, including social mobilization, RCIW addresses the low availability of food and the lack of employment and income opportunities in its target areas. RCIW also acknowledges and acts upon the fact that the poorest need extra assistance to develop the skills and capital required for to take advantage of the opportunities that physical access and community infrastructure offer. The new strategy is:
  - RCIW will work with the same beneficiary households for three years, rather than one, in order to achieve the desired capacity-building and facilitate training investments.
  - An integrated food security approach will combine community-constructed and managed infrastructure with agriculturally productive interventions, training, and capital formation for the poorest, especially women.
  - The proportion of women in the labour force and on project management bodies (UCs) will be increased because a stronger



framework for women's participation in decision-making will require that 50% of UC members be women, and at least one of two key positions on each UC be held by a woman.

- RCIW will actively seek partnerships with a wider range of government line agencies, NGOs, and donors to complement and extend the expertise and resources that MLD and GTZ are able to offer.