



FINAL EVALUATION
ILO/JAPAN
ASIAN REGIONAL PROGRAM
ON
THE EXPANSION OF EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES
FOR
WOMEN PROJECT (EEOW):
NEPAL CHAPTER

Submitted to
THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANISATION

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December 2002

**ILO/Japan
Asian Regional Program
on
the Expansion of Employment Opportunities
for
Women Project (EEOW):
Nepal Chapter**



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Photos: GEFONT, VDRC, SOLVE and Binod Shrestha (BKS)

ABBREVIATIONS

CBO	Community Based Organisation
CBS	Centre Bureau of Statistics
CDO	Chief District Officer
CTA	Chief Technical Advisor
CECI	Canadian Centre for International Studies and Cooperation
DDC	District Development Committee
DECONT	Democratic Confederation of Nepalese Trade Unions
DEPROSC	Development Project Service Centre
DFID	Department of International Development
EEOW	Expansion for Employment Opportunities for Women Project
FNCCI	Federation of Nepal Chamber of Commerce and Industries
GDI	Gender Development Index
GEFONT	General Federation of Nepalese Trade Unions
HDI	Human Development Index
HMG/N	His Majesty's Government, Nepal
ICIMOD	International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development
ILO	International Labour Organisation
MOL	Ministry of Labour
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NPC	National Planning Commission
NSC	National Steering Committee
NTUC	Nepal Trade Union Congress
PCRW	Production Credit for Rural Women
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
PWG	Project Working Group
ROAP	Regional Office for Asia and Pacific
SAAT	South Asia Multi-Disciplinary Advisory Team
SCO	Savings and Credit Organisation
SFCL	Small Farmer's Cooperative Limited
SFDP	Small Farmer's Development Project
SNV	Netherlands' Development Organisation
SOLVE	Society for Local Volunteer's Effort
STEP	Strategies and Tools against Social Exclusion and Poverty
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
VDC	Village Development Committee
VDRC	Vijay Development Resource Centre
WEAN	Women Entrepreneurs Association of Nepal
WEDC	Women Enterprise Development Committee

Ropani = 5,476 sq. ft.

Exchange Rate:

Sept 2000 US\$ 1= NRs. 72.90

Oct 2002 US\$ 1 = NRs.78.00

PREFACE

It has indeed been an enriching experience to have been continuously associated with the progress of the EEOW project and formally or informally backstopping its activities. The author had participated in the Mid-Term Review in 2000 and two years later joined this Final Evaluation Mission, thus providing an opportunity to compare the progress made during the interim period and document the activities of the project. This has been an exercise in positive appreciation of the achievements made by the rural women in the project area and the assistance provided them by the EEOW project, despite the adverse frame conditions (political, economic and social) in the country.

First of all, I am grateful to the rural women beneficiaries of the project who so readily shared their experience and vision with the mission. I would also like to thank the project partners, namely the ILO social partners (MOL: Mrs. Moti Shova Shrestha and Mr. Tamrakar; FNCCI: Mrs. Shanti Chaddha, Mr. Meghnath Neupane, Mrs. Mina Shrestha; DECONT: Mr. R.B. Raut and Mr. K N Dahal; GEFONT: Mr. Bishnu Rimal; NTUC: Mr. Laxman Basnet) and the NGOs (DEPROSC: Mr. Pitamber Acharya and his colleagues; SOLVE: Mr. Rajendra Pradhan and his colleagues; VDRC: Mr. Keshav Sapkota and his colleagues; WEAN: Mrs. Shyam Badan Shrestha) for making all the information available to document the achievements of the project. Similarly, I would like to thank Hon. Dr. Prakash S. Mahat, Member, NPC and Mr. P. N. Gyawali, Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare for their time to discuss the project activities.

Finally, I am most grateful to the ILO, particularly Mrs. Leyla Tegmo Reddy, Country Director and Mr. Yoshiyuki Fukuzawa, Project Chief Technical Advisor, for entrusting this assignment to me. I would also like to express my gratitude to the following mission members for sharing their views and ideas: Mr. Megumu Fukumi, Deputy Director, MOHLW/Japan; Dr. Jyoti Tuladhar, Senior Specialist on Gender and Women Workers' Issues, ILO/Multi-Disciplinary Team, New Delhi; Ms. Padma Mathema, Under Secretary, National Planning Commission, Nepal; and, Mr. Prasert Tepanart, Programme Officer, ILO/Bangkok. Finally, thanks to Ms. Nita Neupane, National Project Coordinator and Ms. Anita Manandhar, Project Assistant for the excellent arrangement, documentation and support provided during the mission.

Binod K. Shrestha
Consultant
December 2002



Song sung by a woman in Parsauni, Nawalparasi describing the progress made by her group and thanking the ILO

प्रशौनी महिलाको कविता

सुनुहोला दिएर चित्त
प्रशौनी महिलाको कविता
घर हाम्रो प्रशौनी घोखाडो हो गाउँ
राधा कृष्ण बचत तथा ऋण संस्थाको नाउँ ।
दिदी बहिनी समूह साथी भाई
मेरो स्वागत यहाँ आउने जतिलाई ।

२०५६ साल भदौ ३ गते
महिलाहरुको बैठक बस्यो दिउँसो १२ बजे
बैठक बस्यो महिला यसरी
बाहिर रिण नखोज्ने कसरी ।

बाहिर रिण खोजे भने ३ रुपैया लाग्छ ब्याज
भन्छन् साहु माहाजनले नमानेर लाज
बाहिर रिण खोजेलाई हुन्न
चर्को ब्याज तिर्नलाई सकिन्न ।

चुरा, धागो, सिन्दुर पोते कम्ति खर्च गरि
रु ३० उठाई बचत गरी महिला अधि सरि
फजुल खर्च हटाएर बचत गर्न लाग्यौं
ILO द्वारा महिलाहरुले धेरै सहयोग पायौं ।

दुध डेरी जाम जेली खानेपानी धारा
टोल-टोलमा राखिदिए खुशी भए सारा

धन्य-धन्य ILO को मित्र
शोभा बढ्यो प्रशौनी गाउँ भित्र ।

महिलाहरुलाई शिकाई दिए ज्ञान
बल्ल भेट्यो विकासको मुहान
यसै गरि गछौं हामी तरकारी खेती
बाल बच्चा पढाउछौं सागपात बेची ।

बारी भरी लगाउदैछौं आलु काउली बन्दा
साहुको रिण छैन हामीलाई किन मान्ने धन्दा
बारिभरी तरकारी लगाउछौं
परिवारको गरिवी हटाउछौं ।

किन जाने विदेश हामी पैसा सकी-सकी
स्वदेशमै गरी विकास कम्मर कसी-कसी
दिदी बहिनी समूह मिली
आफनु संस्था बनाउँ है मिलीमिली ।

महिला सबै बढुन अगाडी
हाम्रो संस्था नपारी पछाडी
चेतनाको कुरा राख्न बोके एउटा भोला
गल्ती के-के हुन गयो क्षमा दिनु होला ।

A Poem : Women in Parsauni

Please listen carefully to this poem from the women from Parsauni. The name of our group is Radha Krishna Savings and Credit. Our village is Dhokado, Parsauni.

Dear sisters from the groups, brothers and friends, I welcome all those who are present.

At mid-day on 3 Bhadra 2056 the group of women met to discuss how not to take loans from outside.

Outside the money lenders, without hesitation, ask for an interest of three rupees per hundred per month. We cannot pay that kind of interest.

We decided to decrease expenditures on cosmetics and unnecessary expenses and instead save Rs.30 per month.

The women have received a lot of assistance from the ILO. We are happy with milk collection, jam and jelly production and construction of drinking water taps in different localities. We are all happy in finding friendship in the ILO and the progress of our Parsauni.

Women have received knowledge and we have found a source of development. Likewise, we grow vegetables and from the income send our children to school.

We grow potatoes, cauliflower and cabbage in our land. We have no worries as we have no loans from the money lenders. We grow vegetables, which contributes to decreasing our poverty.

Why should we go abroad spending all our money. Let us remain in our own country and work towards its development. Dear sisters, let us work together for the betterment of our group.

Let all the women prosper without hindrance to our group. Let us talk about awareness.

If I have made any mistakes, please forgive me.

(Literal translation of the poem.)

PROJECT BACKGROUND



1. INTRODUCTION

The World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen, 1995) called for equal participation by women and men in social, economic, political and cultural aspects of life. The Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995) stressed on the empowerment of women along with poverty alleviation and women's participation in political decision making process.

Following the adoption of the Platform for Action by the Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, the ILO has been further strengthening its efforts to mainstream gender concerns at all levels of its operation. Seven of the twelve critical areas are related to the ILO's mandate to promote opportunities for women and men to obtain decent and productive work in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity. The ILO has categorized these seven priority areas under (i) poverty eradication and productive employment, (ii) working conditions and social protection, and (iii) international labour standards and normative action on women workers.



Women welcoming guests, Nawalparasi (BKS)

In response, ILO has put forward the Decent Work concept, which is based on the expressed wish of women and men for work that will allow them and their families to have access to a decent standard of living¹. It is believed that the promotion of women's employment will play a crucial role in alleviating poverty and in promoting equality, social integration and enhancing the overall socio-economic status of women. ILO is committed to play a special role in the field of employment promotion, gender equality and social development.

Within this framework, a number of specific projects have been initiated including the ILO/Japan Asian Regional Program on the Expansion of Employment Opportunities for Women (EEOW). This project was first launched in Indonesia and Nepal in 1997 and expanded to Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam by 2002.

EEOW is a gender specific employment promotion program for women in poverty. It aims to improve social and economic conditions by supporting the work of community-based women's groups, setting up savings and credit systems, providing skills training, improving market linkages and providing technical and financial support to pilot projects in support of national efforts. Furthermore, EEOW aims at assisting national programs in reducing poverty by creating jobs for women, by promoting gender equality and social justices, by improving working conditions and by improving the overall status of (rural) women².

In Nepal, the project aims at contributing to national efforts in poverty alleviation by enhancing the economic and social empowerment of women and promotion of gender equality and social justice

A Mid-Term Review was conducted in August/September 2000. During the one year period, since the actual start of the project to the time of the Review, activities focused on establishing relationship, building confidence and establishing trust. Organisation of women into savings and credit and producer groups was initiated. As it was a very short period of field level activities, the Mid-Term Review Mission expressed that the project had just established a building block on which a community driven development process could be built upon. The mission concluded that "The real project starts now!"

¹ ILO (not dated). Decent Work for Women, An ILO Proposal to Accelerate the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, Geneva

² ILO (1997), ILO/Japan Asian Regional Programme for Expansion of Employment Opportunities for Women Project Document, July.

The project has now reached its fifth year since initiation but actually four years of actual implementation due to initial delays in recruitment and start of activities. Hence, the ILO/Japan/ROAP planned this final evaluation of the project to study and document successful implementation approach, best practices of the project in terms of economic and social empowerment of women and to assess the contribution of the project to poverty alleviation, to enhancement of the socio-economic status of the women and to capacity building of participating organisations.

The mission started with a review of the project document, studies, progress reports and contracts with the partners. The ILO Nepal Country Director, the Project Chief Technical Advisor and the National Project Coordinator briefed the mission about the project activities. Subsequently the Mission visited Dhankuta and Nawalparasi where the NGO partners provided project briefing. This was followed by discussions with women beneficiaries and field staff. Field visits were made to observe the actual activities. (Although on the mission schedule, due to security reasons, the field visit to Nuwakot was cancelled at the last moment. In this case the mission held discussion in Kathmandu with the NGO partner organisation staff.)

Discussions were also held with all the social partners of the ILO. The mission had a briefing with the Honourable Member, National Planning Commission (NPC). NPC is the project holder. The mission also discussed the project activities with the Secretary, Joint Secretary and Under Secretary at the Ministry of Labour and Transport Management.

The mission discussed with the respective organisations, the project activities implemented through them, namely, the employers' organisation (the Federation of the Chamber of Commerce and Industries) and with the workers' organisations (Democratic Confederation of Nepalese Trade Unions, General Federation of Nepalese Trade Unions and National Trade Union Congress)

Finally, at the end of the mission, debriefing discussions were held with the Donor Representative from the Ministry of Labour (Japan), the ILO Nepal Country Director, the Chief Technical Advisor and the National Project Coordinator. A briefing on the preliminary findings of the mission was presented at a workshop on the final day of the mission.

The mission consisted of the following members: Mr. Megumu Fukumi, Deputy Director, MOHLW/Japan; Mr. Yoshiyuki Fukuzawa, CTA, ILO/Bangkok; Dr. Jyoti Tuladhar, Senior Specialist on Gender and Women Workers' Issues, ILO/Multi-Disciplinary Team, New Delhi; Mr. Prasert Tepanart, Programme Officer, ILO/Bangkok and Ms. Padma Mathema, Under Secretary, National Planning Commission, Nepal. However, the responsibility of conducting an independent review and drafting of this document, including formulating the recommendations, was that of the External Consultant Evaluator.

This report is organised in three sections. In Section A, the poverty context of rural Nepal as well as the current governance frame conditions and the situation of women are reviewed. Then an overview of the project goal, objectives, strategy, planned activities, intended beneficiaries as well as selection of project area, are given with observations about the performance of the project in these aspects.

In Section B, each of the planned activities is described including results achieved. In each chapter, project performance at the time of the Mid-Term Review and this evaluation is compared in quantitative terms. The second part of each of these chapters consists of discussion on the project performance and recommendation for future action.

Finally, Section C consists of conclusions about the project as well as recommendation for future action.

2. POVERTY CONTEXT, GOVERNANCE AND WOMEN IN NEPAL

2.1 Poverty Context

Of the population of 23 million, 86 percent live in the villages in Nepal. Of these, 60 to 80 percent are poor, depending on the villages³. The share in total income of the bottom 40 percent of the population is only 11 percent while the share of the top 10 percent is as high as 52 percent⁴.

In 1977 the National Planning Commission had estimated that 36 percent of the population to be absolute poor. The Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper describes poverty in Nepal as "widespread" with 42 percent of the population living below the poverty line⁵. Over time the incidence of poverty has increased from 33 percent in 1977 to 42 percent in 1995/96. In absolute terms the poverty situation is even more alarming in that the Nepalese living in destitution has increased by more than 60 percent from about 5.7 million in 1976 to an estimated 9.2 million 20 years later⁶. Today, nearly 10 million people live in absolute poverty. Nepal is poor and daily become poorer – this 1974 statement of an ILO report is still true today.

Nepal remains one of the few countries in the world where highest proportion (83 percent) of the population depend on subsistence agriculture.

Agricultural production, land ownership and land quality are principal determinants of rural poverty. When examining the data on major food crops production from 1985/86 to 1998/99, both production and productivity are found stagnating or only marginally increasing. Nepal's agriculture is barely yielding enough to match population growth and only one-fourth of the very poor have *khet* (rice-growing) land.



Project Area, Dhankuta (BKS)

The growth of the non-agriculture sector has helped to reduce the incidence of urban poverty, but it has not been strong enough to have a desirable effect on the rural poor. Not only do the poor farm the least amount of land but they also farmed the least productive land.

In addition to purely economic aspects, a related dimension refers to the poverty that arises out of social inequity and exclusion based on caste and ethnicity. The lowest caste groups are severely deprived of opportunities in all dimensions of life. Illiteracy rates are highest among the lower caste groups as well as among the disadvantaged groups. The incidence of poverty is higher among the people belonging to lower caste groups, ethnic minorities, tribal groups and *Dalits* (lower occupational castes).

The survival strategy is for the rural households to either send at least one worker in search of seasonal employment or sometimes the entire household migrates. Remittance therefore contributes significantly to total income. However these migrants have few income-earning skills.

³ CBS (2002). National Population Census 2001, Summary Sheet (Final Result), Kathmandu

⁴ HMG/N (1996). Nepal Living Standard Survey, Kathmandu

⁵ National Planning Commission (2001). Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, Kathmandu.

⁶ World Bank (1998). Poverty in Nepal at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century, Washington.

Under such circumstances, the Millennium Development Goal of halving the proportion of people living in extreme poverty by 2015 will be a challenging task. The government aims to bring down the number of those under the poverty line from the existing 42 percent to 32 percent during the 10th five year plan (2002 – 2007).

2.2 Governance

Political instability together with the rise in terrorist activities, weak governance and resource constraint has constrained better management of the economy and led to a lack of accountability during the past few years. Political stability and more importantly, good governance has remained elusive in the country, despite the popular enthusiasm with which the restoration of multi-party democracy was welcomed in 1991. None of the nine governments have completed their full term in office. Lack of coordination in the government, mounting irresponsibility in the administrative services, politicisation of administration have resulted in increasing difficulty for the poor and the weak to access government services and facilities. Political instability

One of the major development constraints of democratic Nepal is acceleration of violent activities waged in the name of Maoists since 1996. With the acceleration of violent activities, development activities have come to a virtual standstill in the rural districts.

A study, funded by DFID, found from the field study that the poor generally feel that they have benefited little from the restoration of multiparty democracy in Nepal a decade ago. The study revealed the cruel paradox of Nepalese democracy at present. While the people look up to their leaders for the alleviation of their sufferings, their experience tells them that the latter are instead more interested in their own prosperity and in continuing their grip over power at any cost. There is utter sense of disenchantment on their part with the present state of practice of democracy, be it at the national level or closer home, in their districts and villages⁷.

Yet, against this background the promotion of self-help groups at the grassroots has become an innovation of extraordinary significance. The same study notes, despite the traditionality of the rural social order, such self-help groups have emerged as very significant and substantive centres of decision making at the grassroots in which three critical elements of good governance namely, participation, transparency and accountability are fully ensured."

With some 12,000 savings and credit organisations in Nepal this sector is reaching as many members and providing as much credit as any of the government's priority sector lending programs.⁸ The farmer-managed cooperatives called, Small Farmers Cooperative Limited, is an example of higher order organisation of the self-help groups and a recent review indicated that they are functioning effectively in most cases, for example, in Dhading District.⁹

2.3 Nepalese Women

Women in Nepal are deprived and severely underprivileged. This is especially so in rural areas. Nepal ranks 119th among 143 countries in UNDP's 1998 Gender Development Index (GDI), published in 2000. The gender empowerment measure, which reflects women's participation in economic, political and professional spheres of Nepal was 0.191 in 1996, well below the average of 0.367 for developing countries that year.

More than eighty percent of Nepalese women cannot read or write, and only one in twenty of Nepal's poorest women are literate, compared to one in three of the poorest men. Whereas men can expect to live for 58 years, life expectancy for women is at 57.6 years. In general, the poor,

⁷ Shrestha, Bihari (2000). Good Governance in Nepal Perspectives from Panchathar and Kanchanpur Districts, Rural Development Foundation, Kathmandu.

⁸ Upadhyay, Hari (1995). Community Based Savings and Credit Organisations in Nepal: Current Status and Future Prospects. A final report submitted to CECI/Asia.

⁹ There are 73 SFCLs in 29 districts with membership of 13,597 female and 42,194 male.

and especially women, lack access to and control over resources, and they have little or no access to the social and economic infrastructure of Nepal.

All evidence indicates that women's overall welfare is substantially below that of the males. Although women constitute a little over one half of Nepal's population, they rank lower than men in almost every social indicator in the country. The problem can be illustrated through a number of indicators:

- Maternal mortality is the third highest in the world at 475 per 100,000 births.
- The adult female literacy rate is 23 percent.
- The average work load of a woman is 50 percent more than males, i.e. 77 hours a week.
- At least 200,000 Nepalese girls and women are thought to work in brothels and sex industries in India.
- Women have only 33 percent share of the total earned income.
- About 60 percent of the reproductive life of women is spent dealing with stress factors related to pregnancy and lactation.
- 45 percent of women aged 10 and above are listed as economically active, while the corresponding figure for men is 68 percent.
- Some 82 percent of the women are self-employed and 12 percent are wage-employed as compared to 69 percent and 27 percent in case of men.¹⁰



Behind these figures loom such discriminatory practices as early child marriage, restricted mobility, lack of control over income and a culture that celebrate boys at the cost of girls. While efforts are being made to improve the status of women, the Constitution of Nepal and related legislation do not treat women equally. A recent report noted 28 specific discriminatory references in existing laws against women despite attempts to promote gender equality.

Rural women experience the brunt of the effects of poverty in Nepal. In the rural areas of Nepal women often bear the brunt of manual chores, including farm work, fetching water and fuel-wood collection, caring for children and livestock, cooking and cleaning. A very low literacy rate, lack of access to productive assets, limited decision-making in community and public life suppress their participation. While they bear the major share of domestic and farm work, women are excluded from power in their households and economic decision making.

Most women are overloaded fulfilling the roles of mother and homemaker. Male family members seldom share household responsibilities. Women's relationship with the external is restricted and is generally mediated through male relatives. Therefore, they have less knowledge and time to be involved in decision making and access to administrative, judicial or economic institutions.

The assessment of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, in overall terms, reported that "gender equality and women empowerment have been slow as evidenced by only marginal improvements or virtually no improvements in twelve areas of critical concern. Nepal has formulated action plans, adopted new policy initiatives and initiated new programs. However, their effective implementation has been constrained by political instability, weak governance,

¹⁰ Tuladhar, Jyoti (1996). Factors Affective Women Entrepreneurship in Small and Cottage Industries in Nepal - Opportunities and Constraints, ILO-SAAT

inadequate political commitment, inadequate resources, inefficiency of the public systems and traditional patriarchal society.”¹¹

Similar assessment of the implementation of the declaration of the Social Summit reported that, “In Nepal, government initiatives to fulfil commitments made in Copenhagen have been lacklustre at best. No new initiatives can be attributed specifically to the Social Summit. Most current programs that directly or indirectly affect social development started long before the Summit. The Summit should have accelerated or intensified programs that could contribute to verifiable fulfilment of the commitments. Most of these programs, unfortunately, suffer from serious deficiencies and do not contribute meaningfully to fulfilment of the commitments.”¹²

Yet there is hope. The numbers of women's self-help groups are rapidly increasing. Mothers' groups, community forest groups, literacy groups, anti-alcohol abuse groups, etc. can be found nationwide managing far-reaching changes in their communities. Illustratively, the women's groups promoted by the Production Credit for Rural Women (PCRW) organises poor women borrowers in savings and credit groups and implement socio-economic development projects. Whatever their economic status or ethnic background, women do not seem to have problem participating in self-help group activities in large numbers. Once in groups, women manage community affairs much better than men.

For the first time in Nepal's history, since September 2002, all unmarried women now have rights to their parental property and all married women, to their husband's. Likewise, conditional abortion has been legalised. The bill grants the right to an abortion up to 12 weeks of pregnancy and up to 18 weeks in cases of rape and incest. The challenge is now in the implementation of these rights and in communicating this to the grassroots level.

Additionally, with the amendment of the local self-governance act introducing 20 percent representation by women at ward level, they are engaging in political action in large numbers and in a more organised way. There has also been substantial shift in social norms towards education of girl child.

Finally, a necessary condition for sustaining the escape from poverty is not to raise the next generation in poverty. It is women who raise the next generation. The care they give and the knowledge they have, determine the potential in the children to learn and seek a better life!

¹¹ SAS Nepal (2000). Beijing +5: An Overview - Implementation of Beijing Platform for Action, Kathmandu.

¹² Civil Society Forum for Report Preparation, Nepal (1999). Assessment of Nepal's Performance in Implementing the World Summit Declarations on Social Development – 1995, Rural Reconstruction Nepal, Kathmandu.

3. PROJECT FRAMEWORK

3.1 EEOW Project in Nepal

Although launched in 1997, the EEOW project activities in Nepal actually started in January 1998 with the establishment of the Nepal Chapter Office. Subsequently, the project agreement was signed between His Majesty's Government of Nepal (HMG/N) and the ILO in June 1998. Contracting of partners for the implementation of project activities started in March 1999. Additional time was required to identify staff and establish linkages. Actual field level implementation was further delayed because of the monsoon season. Therefore, the actual implementation of activities in the field has only been for four years.

Specific to Nepal, the project document states that the EEOW will: "contribute to the alleviation of poverty, promotion of equality and enhancement of the overall status of (rural) women". Furthermore, the project aimed "to contribute to the national efforts in poverty alleviation, through enhancement of the socio-economic status of women and promotion of gender equality and social justice."



Towards fulfilling the above long-term goal, the following set of interrelated purposes were identified¹³:

1. gender-oriented employment promotion schemes for poor rural women, will have been designed, implemented and evaluated
2. women beneficiaries will have been empowered through various activities, such as gender awareness raising, legal literacy, lobbying and advocacy training
3. capacity of implementing partners, grassroots organisations and relevant government agencies in designing, implementing, coordinating, monitoring and evaluating policies and programs in respect of women's employment promotion and empowerment will have been strengthened and
4. policy issues will have been identified and appropriate policy recommendations concerning women's employment promotion and empowerment in the country formulated and advocated at the national level.



Group Discussion, Nawalparasi (VDRC)

¹³ Project agreement with His Majesty's Government of Nepal, June 1998.

Furthermore, at the end of the project, social partners, central government agencies, district level participating organisations and community organisations will have established dialogue on issues pertaining to women employment promotion and women's legal rights and they will collaborate to harmonise and synergise these efforts. The design, implementation and coordination problems associated with the macro-policies, decentralisation act and the existing legal framework in the areas of work will be identified and debated among implementing partners and possible solutions based on lesson learned from field experience will be shared with the central policy making bodies.

3.2 Project Strategy¹⁴

The project was designed on the ILO's experience in employment promotion taking into account gender dimension and specific socio-cultural circumstances. The fundamental feature of the project strategy was the mobilisation of community-based groups of women. These groups were to be the main channels for all project interventions.¹⁵ Through these organisations, women residing in the project areas assume access to and control over the resources and play an active role in shaping the development of their social, economic and physical environment.

As the women's organisations gain experience and mature, they act as pressure groups and create demands. Therefore, this building of institution of the organised groups of women was a collaborative process of developing skills, capacities and sustainability through the strengthening of the internal abilities and establishing linkages with the external environment. The demands or needs generated or identified by the women's organisation must be effectively addressed by the service providing organisations. The project activities included both the strengthening of the organisational capacity of the women's organisations as well as the strengthening the institutional capacities of the concerned organisations in discharging employment promotion functions. The principle was that before wealth can be created, people must first learn to work together.

In the following section, the project strategy is further conceptualised. First the central role of the women's organisations in the development process is defined where the service organisations provide support to their needs. Later, the development process of how and the types of activities these women's organisation manage are presented which eventually lead to achieving the project goal.

3.2.1 Women First

The core or central focus of all project activities, as stated in the project goal, is the rural women in the project districts. It is they who should be organised, it is they who should discuss and decide on the activities, and it is they who should implement. Then, as shown in the figure below (Figure 3.1), around the core are the various activities the women groups would implement. Then from outside this circle, various supporting agencies should provide support to these women's groups or organisations. This assistance should be based on the comparative advantage of the service delivery agency and directly in response to the request from the women.

The elected political offices coordinate and facilitate the development activities as already provided for in the project working group. The line agencies should provide technical services. The NGOs are more capable to assist in organising the women. The private sector (also referred to as employers' organisation) has a comparative advantage in assisting establishment of enterprises and investment opportunities and linkages with the market. The workers' organisations have the competency in promoting the rights of the workers and building awareness. The donor should establish partnership with all these agencies and refrain from direct implementation.

The operative principles of these women's organisations are that they are organised on the basis of voluntary self-help and in their activities they promote collective action. In order to promote

¹⁴ This section has been extracted from the Mid-Term Review report (September 2000). However the two figures have been amended.

¹⁵ ILO/Japan Asian Regional Programme for Expansion of Employment Opportunities for Women Project Document, July 1997

these organisations, it has been a prerequisite to observe the principle of subsidiarity. This principle stresses that superordinate, central bodies should only be responsible for dealing with those matters which cannot be handled at a lower, decentralised level.

Figure 3.1 Relationship between women's organizations, their activities and service organisations

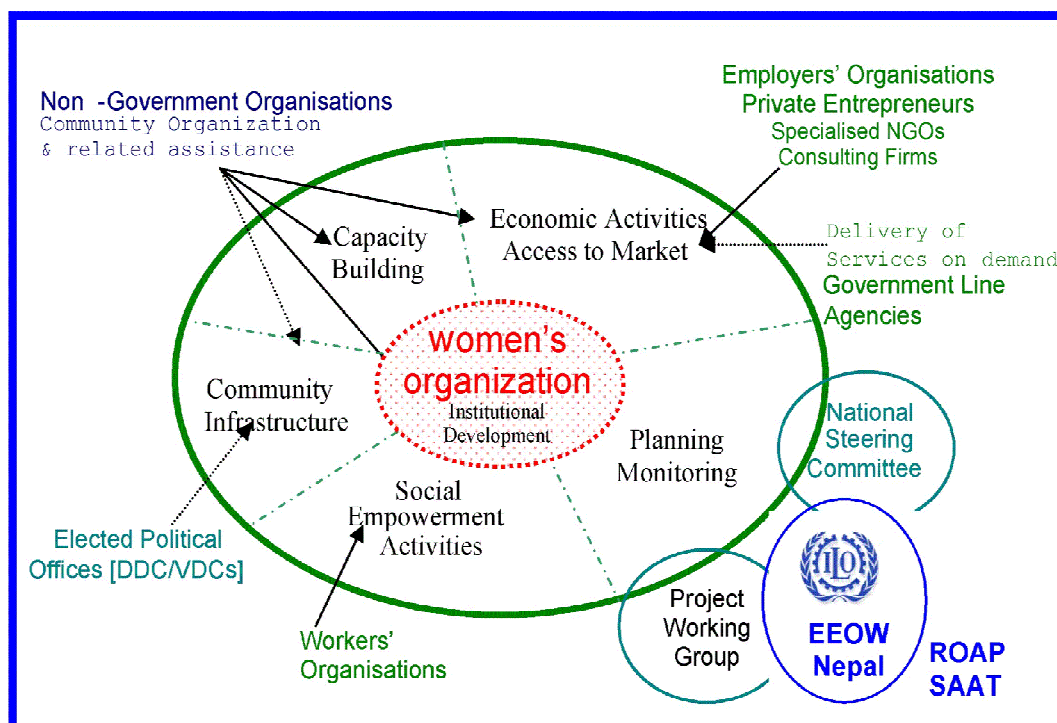
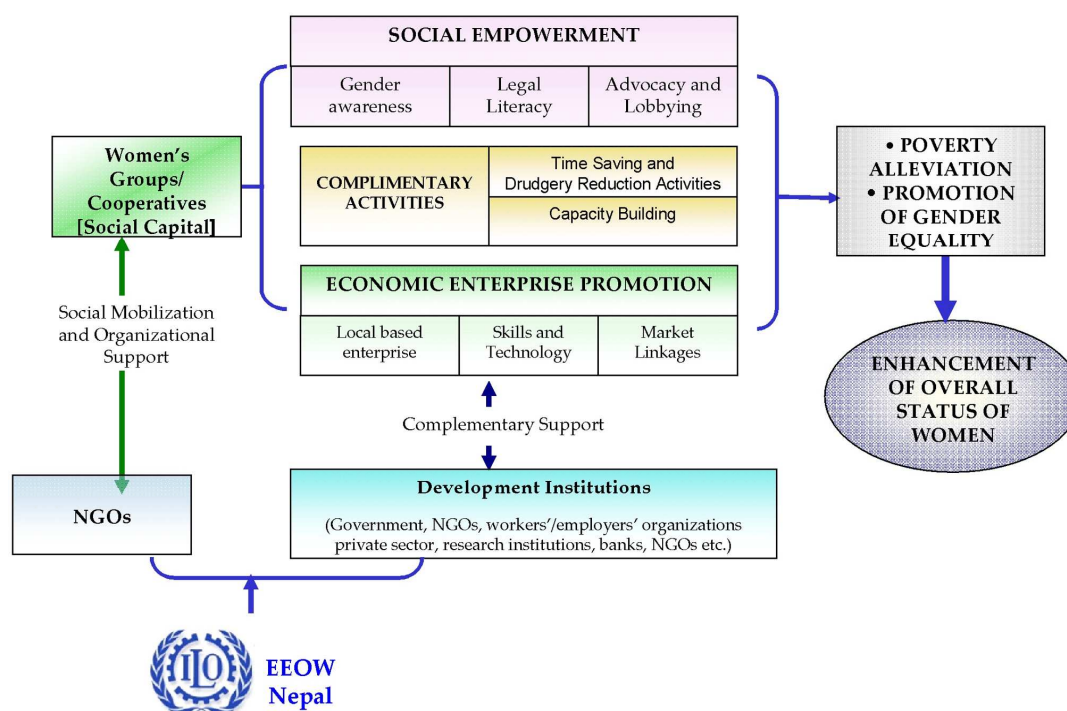


Figure 3.2 Process of implementation of various project components and relation with the overall project goal



3.2.2 The Process

As already mentioned earlier, women's organisations at the village level is considered as a focal point of development. People have talent and abilities and they need to be provided opportunities to use and develop them. By utilising individual and collective skills and opportunities the women will develop and manage activities and schemes on their own. As these organisations of the women gain experience, their participation in the development activities increases.

The institutionalisation of the groups takes place through a learning process. The primary responsibility rests with the groups to be involved in activities through their own initiatives in an effort to meet their individual and collective needs. This is the process of participation both in decision making and implementation.

In figure above (Figure 3.2), the successive boxes from left to right represent the women's organisation at various stages of development. As the women implement one set of activities, this experience energises them for the next stage of development. Through involvement in group activities they gain confidence. With investment in economic activities, production increases and production groups are formed.

As women begin to use their own resources to produce for the market place and to increase their income, their ability to solve their economic problems also increases. This may be achieved through increased yields, by processing primary products, by starting small-scale enterprises, by upgrading the use of agricultural land or by planting orchards on the under-utilised ridges. It is important that the natural resource base is judiciously used in the quest for economic activities.¹⁶

In terms of activities, the process flow is essentially confidence building, training, new opportunities and market place. The transition from confidence building to new opportunities requires strong technical and financial/credit support. To negotiate from the new opportunities to the market place requires development of the infrastructure and collaboration with the private sector.

These economic spheres of activities are to be further complemented with activities on the social empowerment side. The issues of social protection, together with the economic activities, must be the integrated core of the project. In promoting employment opportunities, women's rights specially as they relate to women's access to and control over productive inputs, services and resources are called to fore.¹⁷ Project activities include various gender-oriented measures such



Group Members, Dhankuta (BKS)

¹⁶ Shrestha, Binod (1997). Building on Success and Strength, Paper presented at the National Workshop on Grassroots Level Organisational Development, Kathmandu.

as gender awareness raising, legal literacy, lobbying and advocacy. This is directed not only towards the organised women but also covers all the partners of the project and more.

To initiate the development activities through these self-help organisations, the project not only aims to organise the women but also develop their institutional capacity as well as that of the service organisations. Therefore, institutionalisation takes place at two levels, namely (a) through promotion of self-help organisations of the women and (b) through promotion of intermediary service organisations which work with the women.

As the women travel through the various stages, they require support services. Here comes the role of support agencies to respond to the request for services. The provision of services should be on the basis of comparative advantage and competence. The decision regarding from where the women's organisations get the required services should rest with them. The services should not necessarily be free as the tendency is that free services are generally not on time or of quality.

3.3 Project Activities and Indicators

The major activities to be supported by the project indicate a poverty alleviation strategy focusing on empowerment and employment opportunities for the women. Not all the activities were to be implemented by the ILO itself, although it assumes responsibility for all the outputs. The ILO was responsible for activities like monitoring, capacity building, studies, etc. Other activities were implemented through sub-contracted agencies, mainly NGOs but also the worker's organisations earlier in the project life. ILO was to support, assist and/or facilitate the work of these organisations. The lists of major activities of the project were:

Objective 1. Women's savings and credit cooperatives will be organised and strengthened
These groups of poor women will be provided training to support income generating activities. Financial viability and legal recognition of these groups will be a prerequisite.

Indicator: 60 percent of the total households in the VDCs (only women members) will be organised into these groups.

Objective 2. Community-based and gender sensitive employment promotion schemes for women developed and implemented in the selected project areas

Both on-farm and off-farm employment creation schemes will be implemented assuring proper market linkages. Time saving activities for women (including potable water, fodder trees and grasses, improved stoves) in response to the community needs will be implemented.

Indicator: Two to three employment creation schemes will be developed where 60 percent of the women organised in savings and credit groups (refer to one above) will participate. At least 50 percent of the participants will have increased (above the baseline) their cash income and the days of employment for these participating women will be increased by 30 percent. A sustainable system of linkages of the women with credit institutions, line agencies for technology and the markets will be developed. The women from 70 percent of the households will benefit through time saving activities. Community baseline information will be established.

Objective 3. Programmes for women's social empowerment will be formulated and implemented

Awareness program on women's legal rights will be developed and launched for the group members. The activities supported will enhance the decision making capacity and strengthen gender equality in the community. Participatory gender analysis workshops are conducted with the groups.

Indicator: Of the groups organised (refer to one above) 70 to 80 percent will be aware of their legal rights. Participatory gender analysis will be conducted with 60 to 80 percent of the women. Similarly, partner organisations will be aware of women's issues and will be committed to action for change. The public and the media will be provided information about women's issues relating to empowerment and counter actions against gender discrimination practices and gender-biased power relations.

¹⁷ ILO/Japan Asian Regional Programme for Expansion of Employment Opportunities for Women Project Document, July 1997

Objective 4. Capacity building programs in respect of planning and management of women's employment and empowerment designed and implemented

The capacity of the partner organisations to conduct participatory planning and monitoring women employment generating activities and awareness raising on women's rights program will be enhanced. Field exposure program will be conducted for the National Steering Committee members so that the policy makers better understanding the field realities and analyse the policy constraints impending the implementation of the project.

Indicator: At least 75 percent of the VDC (and DDC) members and representatives from the workers' organisations, employers' organisations and NGOs will be provided training in implementing gender sensitive employment and empowerment of women. Field exposure visits will be organised.

Objective 5. Policy recommendations on the basis of the project experiences made available to the policy makers

The lessons learned during the project implementation will be documented and disseminated among the ILO constituents and NGOs. The knowledge of ILO and its constituents in the field of employment creation for women and women's rights will be enhanced. Gender component will be integrated in the policy and program of the partner organisations. The project partners will play an active and efficient role in the policy dialogue concerning women's employment promotion and empowerment.

Objective 6. Project operations are managed efficiently as per agreement with HMG/N and Labour Ministry of Japan

Project's chapter office and district units will be established. Project working groups in the districts will be formed. The DDCs, VDCs and the relevant government line agencies, together with the implementing partners will be involved in district level program planning and monitoring. Planning, monitoring and evaluation tools for women's employment and empowerment program will be developed and made available to the participating organisations.



3.4 Intended Beneficiaries

The project was focused on the following two groups of beneficiaries¹⁸:

1. In terms of the focal point of project activities, it is intended that the project gives priority:

- to self-employed poor women in informal sector, particularly those in the backward rural villages and urban communities, and
- to women workers in the urban formal sector.

The project agreement with the Nepalese Government specified that the focus of the project is to be on "the rural women in the selected project districts".

2. In terms of institutions, the project was expected to strengthen the institutional capacities and policy-making functions of intermediary organisations including government and non-government agencies. It was

recognized that gender-sensitive employment promotion needs to be built and strengthened in these organisations.

The project agreement with the Nepalese Government further specified that the list of the intermediary organisations as being the District Development Committees, the Village Development Committees, government and non-government agencies, worker's organisations and employer's organisations at the national and local level.

¹⁸ ILO/Japan Asian Regional Programme for Expansion of Employment Opportunities for Women Project Document, July 1997

3.5 Project Partners

The responsibilities for the implementation of project activities were sub-contracted to Nepali NGOs, employers' and workers' organisations. Depending on their capacity one or two organisations were contracted for each district. These implementing partners of ILO interacted directly on an on-going basis with the local community organisations. They were also responsible for coordinating with the local government (DDCs and VDCs) and with the related line agencies. There was also a provision for sub-contracting women's NGOs, private enterprises, professional consulting firms, government agencies, etc. to provide specific technical support to the project as per need.

Two levels of coordination were envisaged in the project management structure. The National Planning Commission is the direct project counterpart or facilitating agency. A National Steering Committee had the responsibility of policy advocacy, mobilisation of non-project resources, planning and guiding project implementation and institutionalising the project approach to ensure long-term sustainability. What was envisaged is that HMG/N will (at the end of the project) assume full ownership of the project and replicate the program nationwide. At the local district level, a Project Working Group functioned as a forum of discussion among all concerned line departments and other donor agencies working in the district.

The DDCs were the focal point and they and the VDCs were to be the local project counterparts.

The ILO implementing partners were required not only to participate in the planning meetings but also present the program budget and disbursement information for public auditing. It was anticipated that local level planning in the field of project activities is improved through better coordination among the

local government line agencies, NGOs, community organisations and central level policy making bodies. A number of initiatives were to be taken by DDC, VDCs, employers' organisations and trade unions to develop cooperation with local organisations (community organisations and NGOs) in their effort for women's employment generation and enhancement of women workers' rights.



The ILO project was to network and cooperate with other existing projects or agencies implementing similar and complementary types of activities. The project was to build upon the previous experience of a number of ILO, UNDP, HMG/N and other donor projects. The project is expected to establish linkages with HMG/N programs and funding activities of other donors relevant or complementary to its area of work. A review of the implementing policies of those projects and agencies was to be conducted.

3.6 Project Area

The project was implemented in three districts representing eastern, central and western parts of Nepal. Within each district four to five Village Development Committees were selected by the second year of the project (starting with two VDCs in each district during the first year). The following criteria were applied in selecting the VDCs in each district to "minimise risks of project failure and maximising the chances of success"¹⁹:

- a. to avoid duplication or contradicting with the ongoing activities of other agencies: "VDCs where there is another development agency implementing similar activities will be avoided" but presence of complementary projects would be a positive criteria

¹⁹ Project agreement with His Majesty's Government of Nepal, June 1998.

- b. “for minimising the staff and also the monitoring cost” and “ensure demonstration effect”: two adjoining VDCs are to be selected in the first year and “priority” is to be given to selecting adjoining VDCs in the second year
- c. other “important factors for determining the effectiveness of the project”: availability of local support, accessibility to the road head, proximity to urban market, high potential of agriculture and natural resources based income generating activities and existence of project infrastructure.

3.7 Assessments of Results

3.7.1 Project Goal and Strategy: Consistent with Policies

The set of project objectives (goals, purpose) is consistent and corresponds to the guidelines of HMG/N and the ILO. Both the Ninth and the Tenth Plan (approach document) stress the need to focus on empowering the women through capacity building, participation in decision making and increasing access to resources in order to accelerate the economic and social development for poverty alleviation. All relevant factors for improvement of the living conditions, gender equality, empowerment and overall status of women in the rural areas of Nepal have been addressed by the project. It was believed that addressing these closely intertwined purposes will contribute towards achieving the goal of promoting the Decent Work concept.

3.7.2 Planned Project Activities: Social Empowerment Objective Defocused

There were six clearly defined activities planned for the project. The contracts with the project partners for the past two years period did not identify “social empowerment” (objective 2) as an area of activity. The NGOs did try to continue some of the activities initiated during the previous period but it was clear from field visit that this was not the area of priority as it was not included in the contract. The project had a two-pronged strategy of improving the economic and social conditions of women, but the latter received less attention during the past two year.

3.7.3 Indicators: Different Figures

With reference to the quantifiable indicator, the project was to provide benefit to “at least 8,000 beneficiaries during the project period”. This figure had been revised to 6,000 beneficiaries for the current phase. The target was distributed evenly among the three districts (2,000 for each district). There is still vagueness regarding whether the indicators refer only to the savings and credit groups or also to other activity groups (commodity producers, water users, forest users, etc.). Elsewhere in the service contracts with the project partners, the targets were set as 1,800 members in savings and credit groups plus 1,500 members (750 in case of Nawalparasi) in producer groups in each district.

3.7.4 Project Intended Beneficiaries: Disaggregated Data Not Available

Consistent with the observation in the Mid-Term Review, the observation in the field indicates that the project has been very successful in directing the project towards the rural women. All the members of the groups are women in all the VDCs and district. However, although recommended by the Mid-Term Review, disaggregation of the group membership by income group and/or by food sufficiency and/or by ethnic group (i.e. more disadvantaged, casteless, vulnerable groups, etc.) were not conducted. Earlier annual report from DEPROSC had reported that of the 465 women members only 16 women were from occupational caste.²⁰ Similarly information from VDRC had shown that two groups dominated 56 percent of group membership²¹. Current data from SOLVE showed that 60 women (out of 1,827) were from occupational caste while two groups dominated 45 percent of the membership which is slightly less (52 percent) than the membership of the most dominant ethnic groups (Rai, Limbu, Gurung, Tamang) in eastern Nepal²².

²⁰ DEPROSC (2000) Fourth Quarterly Progress Report 1999/2000 (April 2000)

²¹ VDRC (2000). Final Report 1 April 199 – 31 May 2000

²² Information provided by SOLVE during the evaluation mission.



Training program, Nawalparai (VDRC)

20 districts and two industrial estates. Although project support has been discontinued, GEFONT has continued the activities on its own.

As observed during the Mid-Term Review, there is still a scope for the better off in the project area to benefit from the project at the cost of the worst off women in the community and thus creating a widening gap among the different groups of women. The pro-poor focus should not be lost in the numbers.

The targeting of women working in the urban formal sector has been discontinued. GEFONT had been contracted during the earlier period of the project to work with women in

3.7.5 Project Partners: Building Partnership

A. NGO Implementing Partners: Competent Partners

The project has contracted three NGOs (one for each district) as its implementing partners. As mentioned in the Mid-Term Review report two NGOs each had submitted proposals for implementing the project in Nuwakot and Dhankuta and three NGOs has submitted proposals for Nawalparasi. The ILO short-listed the NGOs using a scoring procedure and the National Steering Committee reviewed and approved the NGOs. From among the applicants, following three NGOs had been sub-contracted as implementing partners (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1 Contracted NGOs and Area of Operation

NGO	District
Development Project Service Centre (DEPROSC)	Nuwakot
Society for Local Volunteers' Effort (SOLVE)	Dhankuta
Vijay Development Resource Centre (VDRC)	Nawalparasi

The Mid-Term Review had noted that the NGOs face a persistent problem with staffing every year as the annual contract comes to the end. The staffs felt uncertain about the extension and start looking for alternatives. During the present phase the contract was signed for the entire remaining period of the project (18 months) overcoming this situation to some extent. The field staffs of these NGOs were found capable and understood what they were doing. All the VDCs visited during the mission had been staffed with female motivators and technical staff. In Dhankuta five of the 12 staff was female. SOLVE and VDRC being local NGOs expressed their commitment to continue the project activities after the project terminates in due course.

B. Workers' Organisation Partners: EEOW Support Discontinued, Program Continues

Involvement of the workers' organisation is a prerequisite for all ILO activities. Accordingly all three trade unions had been contracted by the project with various responsibilities (Table 3.2).

The Nepal Trade Union Congress (NTUC) and Democratic Confederation of Nepalese Trade Union (DECONT) had been contracted to implement project activities in Rupendehi and Nawalparasi districts respectively. Social mobilisation, savings and credit and other social awareness programs were implemented with the hope of supporting the workers' organisations' broader mandate of organising the agriculture workers and focus on gender equality. Both DECONT and NTUC reported that the women's groups are still functioning although EEOW support has been discontinued or scaled down to mini-program level (in case of DECONT).

Table 3.2 Contracted Trade Unions and Area of Operation

Organisations	District
Nepal Trade Union Congress (NTUC)	Rupendehi (3 VDCs)
Democratic Confederation of Nepalese Trade Union (DECONT)	Nawalparasi (2 VDCs)
General Federation of Nepalese Trade Unions (GEFONT) ²³	20 Districts + 2 Industrial Estates

The contract with General Federation of Nepalese Trade Unions (GEFONT) signed in October 1999 was substantially different from the contracts with the above two trade unions. GEFONT felt in its proposal that it had the comparative advantage and extensive experience in preparation and dissemination of gender awareness raising and advocacy using the media. Some excellent promotion materials have been prepared and are being disseminated.

The trade unions were positive about their experience in implementing the project activities and were of the opinion that it has helped in fulfilling the broader mandates mentioned above. Continuing relationship in their area of competence (social awareness and dialogue) would have been most beneficial for the project even if their involvement in micro-finance activities were discontinued.

C. Employers' Organisation Partners: Partnership Initiated, a Right Direction

The Mid-Term Review had noted that the involvement of Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI) particularly in developing market linkages and innovative entrepreneurial activities, marketing and training should be discussed. During the current phase the project has actively involved the FNCCI, in particular WEDC, and through it the WEAN cooperative, and also the Floriculture Association of Nepal. Involvement of the district chapters of FNCCI, in the project area, for promotion of market led economic activities and employment still remains an unexplored prospect. FNCCI expressed strong interest in this regard.

3.7.6 Project Governance: Steps Forward, Long Way to Go

A. National Steering Committee

A National Steering Committee has been constituted with the National Planning Commission as the Chair. A number of key central ministries are represented in the Committee. ILO constituent social partners are also represented. The Committee has been meeting regularly and it is to be noted that the members of the Committee participated in the launching of project in the districts. The NSC met six times during the project period.

The Honourable Member, National Planning Commission, who is the Chair of the NSC, and the Under Secretary, NPC were very positive with the activities of the project and satisfied with the coordination efforts. They also stated that the objectives of the project were consistent with the national policies.

One NGO project partner specifically pointed out that being a member in the NSC had provided them access to discuss issues at the national level, beyond those related to project activities but concerning the non-governmental sector as a whole. Unfortunately membership of other line agencies in the NSC has not been translated into fostering cooperation between the project's field activities and their constituent district offices. This would have resulted with an unprecedented partnership to provide complementary services to the community organisations. As the project budget is limited, such cooperation (as envisaged in the project document) would have made available supplementary resources for project activities.

Although one of the NGOs (SOLVE) has given membership in its board to one of the woman members of the groups, the project has not yet considered to have a woman representation in NSC, from one of the more progressive community organisations representing the project

²³ The contract with GEFONT was for production of social awareness materials.

beneficiaries. This would have been an enormous morale building for the grassroots women bring forward the “voices of the poor” in the planning process.

B. District Project Working Groups

The District Project Working Groups have also been constituted and they were involved in the selection of the VDCs, which was a very good step taken by the project. Information sharing planning meetings has also been held at the district and village levels.



Explaining the project, Dhankuta (BKS)

It would have been of strategic interest for ILO and HMG/N and practical interest for the implementing partners to foster linkages between the community organisations and the line agency members of the project working group. Instead, the project trained local vet field workers, have been formally requested to provide services as the line agencies technical staff have not been able to go to the villages due to security concerns. This is an indication of the reversal of functions.

Also at this level the project should consider membership in the PWG by women leaders from the registered cooperatives. The women have strongly expressed difficulties getting services from the line agencies and political bodies, to the extent that they are aspiring to stand for local elections to assure that women's voices are heard. The presence of such women as members in the PWG (and NSC) representing the intended beneficiaries would have changed the dynamics of discussion. Even during the remaining period (and possible extension) of the project, membership by women beneficiaries in these bodies must be assured as *a priori* for project continuation.

3.7.7 Project Area: Appropriate Selection

A. Selection of the Districts

The project activities continued in three districts, namely Dhankuta, Nuwakot and Nawalparasi. In terms of overall ranking and most of the other criterion the selection of Nuwakot and Nawalparasi are among the “intermediate” group of districts (Table 3.3). Dhankuta overall may be better off but within this district poverty pockets have been selected as seen from the VDCs information below. Based on a range of proxy indicators and on existing statistical evidence, Sadeque (1998) has suggested that certain ‘pockets of poverty’ exist in Nepal, both across and within districts and development zones²⁴.

Table 3.3 Comparative Ranking of Districts Based on Weighted Scores²⁵

Project Districts ²⁶	Overall Ranking	Poverty & Deprivation	Women's Empowerment	Institutional Infrastructure Development
East: Dhankuta	70	73	67	71
Central: Nuwakot	37	32	37	29
West: Nawalparasi	47	38	49	54
Kathmandu (reference)	75	71	74	75

²⁴ Sadeque, Syed Zahir (1998). Poverty Mapping in Nepal: A New Way to Look at Poverty Characteristics and Policy Options, ICIMOD, Kathmandu.

²⁵ ICIMOD (1997) Districts of Nepal, Indicators of Development, Kathmandu.

²⁶ The 75 districts in Nepal have been ranked with ranking of “one” being the least developed. Furthermore, districts ranked 1 to 25 are considered relatively “worst” off, districts ranked 26 to 50 as being “intermediate” and districts ranked 51 and above as being better off relatively.

Table 3.4 Population Data and Other Indicators

Districts	Population (2001) ²⁷			HDI 1966 ²⁸		GDI		Proportion of Earned Income	
	Total	Male	Female	Rank	Value	Rank	Value	Female	Male
Dhankuta	166,479	81,841	84,638	6	0.401	6	0.357	0.533	1.479
Nuwakot	288,478	142,731	145,747	42	0.312	57	0.202	0.281	1.714
Nawalparasi	562,870	278,257	284,613	51	0.300	45	0.256	0.421	1.575
Kathmandu	-	-	-	1	0.603	1	0.460	0.292	1.653
Nepal	23,151,423	11,563,921	11,587,502	-	0.325	-	0.267	0.361	1.634

According to the 2001 census, female out number male in all three districts (Table 3.4). In all three districts the proportion of earned income for female is one third or less than that of the male. The HDI and GDI of Nuwakot and Nawalparasi are lower than the national average.

B. Selection of Villages (VDCs)

Five VDCs have been selected in each of the three districts. Two VDCs were selected in the first phase and three were added in the second phase. The indicators of the first six VDCs selected in the three districts are given below (Table 3.5). In terms of food sufficiency (although the farm size is larger), the two VDCs in Dhankuta are worst off but at the same time in these VDCs the proportion of under employed is relatively small compared to the other four VDCs. The criteria of market accessibility and potential for commercialisation are varied. The VDCs in Nawalparasi are fairly accessible to the market and therefore has the potential for commercialisation. However the VDCs in the mountain districts are at distance for the market, which means different types of agro-based enterprises, needs to be promoted in these VDCs.

Table 3.5 Selected Development Indicators of Project VDCs²⁹

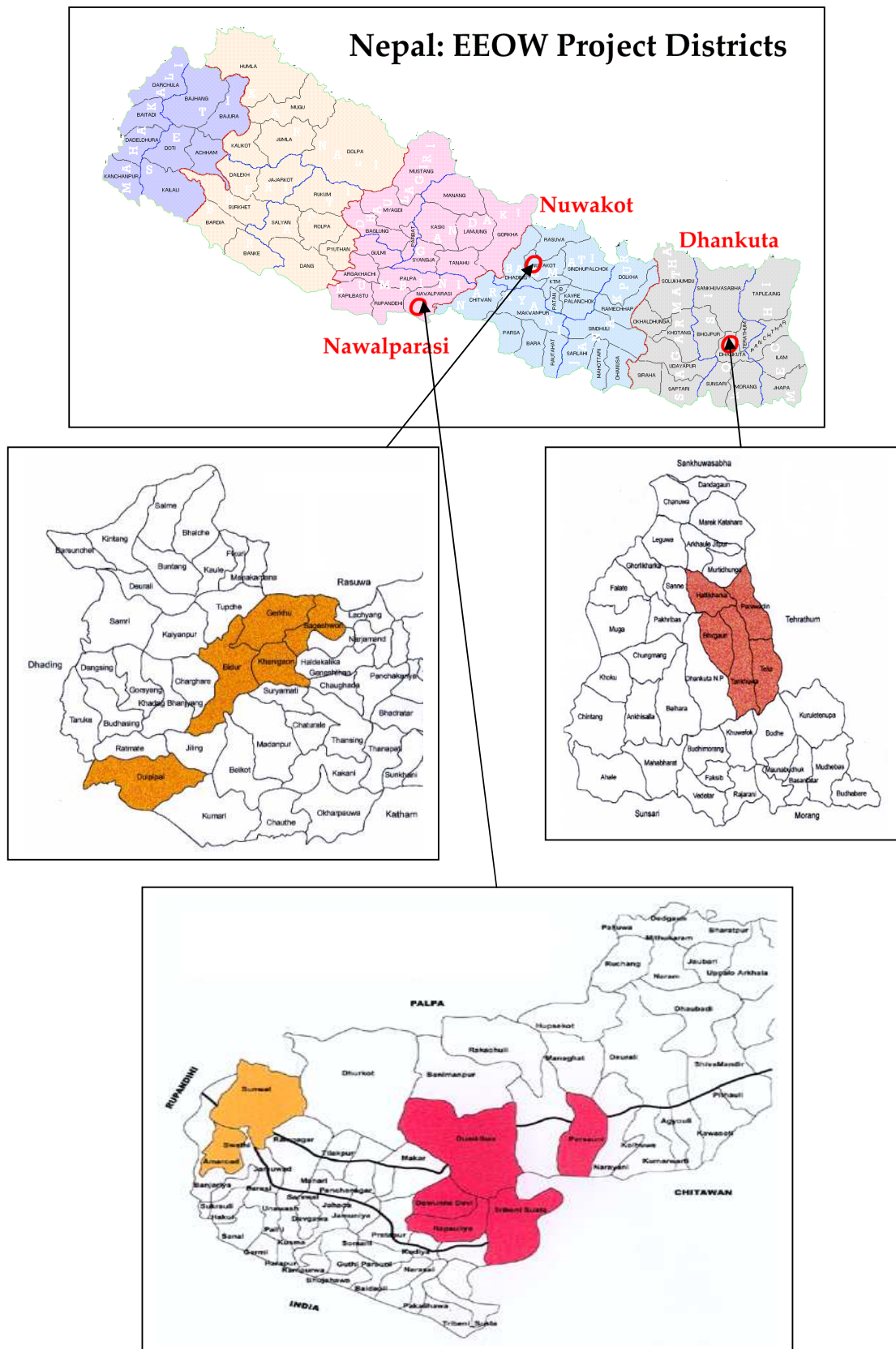
Selected Indicators	Dhankuta		Nuwakot		Nawalparasi	
	Bhirgaun	Taliya	Bageswori	Duipipal	Parasauni	Tribeni
Family size	5.94	5.88	5.98	5.95	6.2	6.3
Literacy Rate	66%	68%	50%	51%	62%	61%
- women	56%	55%	39%	40%	42%	49%
Employment Status						
- under/un employed	34%	42%	92%	92%	88%	45%
Food Sufficiency Status	64%	50%	25%	21%	35%	47%
- less than 9 months						
Farm Size (ha)	1.18	1.16	0.75	0.98	0.8	0.9
Sources of Credit						
- formal (interest rate %)	44 (16)	34 (16)	31 (16)	12 (16)	28 (18)	50 (18)
- informal (interest rate %)	56 (30)	66 (30)	69 (36)	88 (36)	72 (28)	50 (28)
School enrolment rate of school going population	83%	83%	84%	87%	85%	91%
- girls	80%	79%	78%	85%	76%	79%
Off-farm activities	37%	23%	20%	15%	8%	7%
- women	12%	7%	12%	10%	4%	6%
Average daily working hours: women (men)	9.3 (6.1)	9.0 (5.9)	9.9 (6.7)	9.7 (6.9)	9.7 (6.4)	9.3 (6.2)
Awareness of Social Issues						
- legal knowledge	High					
- legal knowledge use	Low					
- gender roles/responsibilities	Low					
- child issues	Moderate					
- role of VDC	Moderate					
- role of line agencies	Low					

²⁷ CBS (2002). National Population Census 2001, Summary Sheet (Final Result), Kathmandu

²⁸ Nepal South Asia Centre (1998). Nepal Human Development Report, 1998 Kathmandu

²⁹ Project Base Line Studies

Figure 3.3 Project Area



ANALYSIS BY COMPONENTS



4. SOCIAL MOBILISATION AND RURAL FINANCE

4.1 Introduction

The first major activity of the project was that: the women's savings and credit cooperatives will be organised and strengthened. The project planning document identified that these groups of poor women will be provided training to support income generating activities. Financial viability and legal recognition of these groups will be a prerequisite. Accordingly, the women's groups were expected to fulfil the following characteristics:

- being organised as functional groups which manage their own affairs
- conducting regular monthly meetings
- collect regular savings and managing credit operations
- getting involved in income generating activities
- getting involved in implementing social empowerment activities
- assessing needs, planning activities and making decisions at their group meetings.

During the current phase of the project the major activities to be implemented were as follows (quantitative indicators are given in Table 4.1):

- a. strengthening the technical and managerial capacity of the women's Savings and Credit Organizations (SCOs) developed in the project VDCs in order to establish these SCOs as independent women's Savings and Credit Cooperative
- b. regular coaching to the women's SCOs for effective monthly meetings of their organisations and for transparent and correct accounting system.
- c. encouragement to the women in the SCOs and facilitation for discussing various women's issues in the SCO meetings, in addition to the agenda related to SCO activities.
- d. all necessary training for the SCO development at the appropriate time.
- e. encouragement and support to the SCOs in increasing their membership and the saving amount per member.

4.2 Results Planned and Achievement

A. Savings and Credit Groups

1. Overall, as well as for individual districts, the performance of this sector is significantly better than planned. During the project period 5,635 women have been organised into 62 savings and credit groups. In terms of membership the actual achievement is 87 percent of the target but in terms of groups, 17 more (38 percent) have been formed than planned. The details of activities performed by the NGOs are given in Table 4.1.

Activities	NGOs ^(a)		DECONT		NTUC ^(b)		TOTAL	
	Planned	Achieved	Planned	Achieved	Planned	Achieved	Planned	Achieved
Savings and Credit Groups								
Members	6,000	5,024	450	440	-	171	6,450+	5,635
Groups	41	50	4	8	-	4	45+	62

(a) Details are given in Table 4.1; (b) NTUC data is from Mid-Term Review

2. The formation of groups and membership is fairly uniform in the three districts where NGOs are implement the project, except in Nuwakot where relatively fewer women have been organised compared to the other two districts because of the security situation in the district.

3. Since the Mid-Term Review the number of groups in NGO programs has increased from 18 to 50 (Table 4.2). The number of women involved in these groups has increased from 1,798 to 5,024. The increase is due to the addition of new VDCs (from 6 to 15). The increase in the number of women membership in the groups in the old VDCs is only 13 percent showing relatively slower growth.

4. The project is being implemented in 15 VDCs in three districts (20 VDCs if activities implemented by DECONT and NTUC are also included). During the Mid-Term Review 16 percent of the female population in the six VDCs included in the first phase had been organised. Current

data from Dhankuta show that 45 percent of the households (16.5 percent of the female population) in the project VDCs are members of the organised groups.

5. All SCOs have defined rules and regulations and have mobilised savings and started credit activities (using own funds without supplemental contribution from the project). 20 out of 50 groups have membership of over 100 women. The groups hold two-day meetings every month particularly to collect savings and disburse loans.

6. The average number of members in a group is 100 which was also the case at the time of the Mid-Term Review. The average group size has increased from 85 to 101 in the case of DEPROSC while in VDRC this has decreased from 136 to 114.

Table 4.1 Planned indicators and results achieved in social mobilisation activities

Activities	SOLVE Dhankuta		DEPROSC Nuwakot		VDRC Nawalparasi		TOTAL	
	Planned	Achieved	Planned	Achieved	Planned	Achieved	Planned	Achieved
Savings and Credit Groups								
Members	2,000	1,890	2,000	1,315	2,000	1,819	6,000	5,024
Groups	14	21	13	13	14	16	41	50
Defined rules, regulations	14	yes	13	yes	14	yes	41	yes
SCOs Registered								
Meet minimum registration requirement	6	10	6	9	5	5	17	24
Registered (in process)	6	7 (3)	6	6 (3)	5	3 (2)	17	16 (8)
SCO Building								
With own office, staff	-	-	-	-	5	3	5	3
SCO building	4	4	4	5	6	-	14	9
Loan fund to SCO	-	-	-	-	300,000	Being disbursed	-	-
Group Savings								
Total savings – A >40,000	14	18	13	11	14	11	41	40
Total savings – B >Rs70,000	6	9	6	7	5	7	17	23

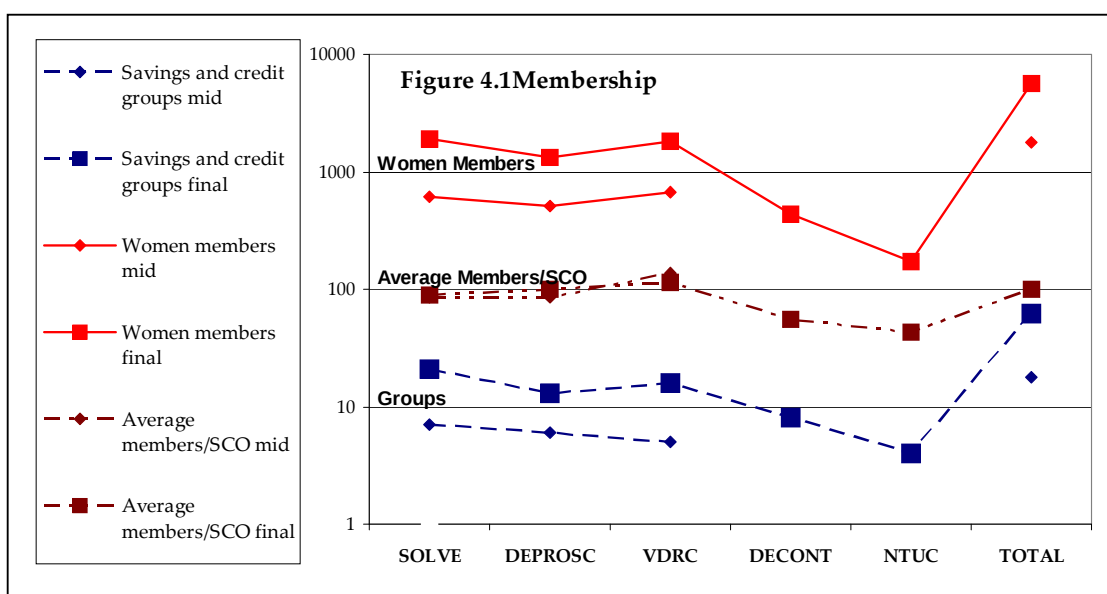


Table 4.2 Comparison of performance between mid-term review and current evaluation

Activities	Eva-lua-tion	SOLVE Dhankuta	DEPROSC Nuwakot	VDRC Nawalparasi	TOTAL
Savings and credit groups	mid	7	6	5	18
	final	21	13	16	50
Households involved	mid	580	508	575	1,663
	final	1,827	1,315	2,780	5,922
Women members	mid	608	512	678	1,798
	final	1,890	1,315	1,819	5,024
Average members/SCO	mid	86	85	136	100
	final	90	101	114	100
SCO registration	mid	-	-	-	-
	final	7 + 3	6 + 3	3 + 2	16 + 8
Total capital (Rs.)	mid	-	-	-	-
	final	1,582,874	927,900	1,951,328	4,462,102
Total savings (Rs.)	mid	196,789	158,401	233,680	588,870
	final	874,821	659,059	1,439,294	2,973,174
Avg. savings per SCO (Rs.)	mid	28,112	26,400	46,736	32,715
	final	41,658	50,697	89,956	59,463
Avg. savings per member (Rs.)	mid	324	309	345	328
	final	463	501	791	592
Total loans (Rs.)	mid	175,477	540,567	400,190	1,116,234
	final	4,966,368	3,699,295	5,701,531	14,367,194
No. of loans	mid	179	342	191	712
	final	3,377	2,565	2,211	8,153
Average loans size (Rs.)	mid	980	1,581	2,085	1,568
	final	1,471	1,443	2,579	1,762
Outstanding loans (Rs.)	mid	-	-	-	-
	final	1,398,981	838,580	1,778,344	4,015,905
Outstanding loans (no.)	mid	-	-	-	-
	final	1,080	509	679	2,268
Interest rate (savings)	final	5 – 11%	8%	10%	-
Interest rate (loans)	mid	18%	24%	24%	-
	final	18%	24%	18% - 24%	-

Sept 2000 US\$ 1= NRs. 72.90 Oct 2002 US\$ 1 = NRs.78.00

B. Registration into Cooperatives

1. Although the plan was to register 17 SCOs into cooperatives, at the time of the evaluation 16 had already been registered and the papers for eight more SCOs were being processed. Therefore, nearly 50 percent more SCOs, than planned, will likely be registered by the end of the project period.

2. However, of the 18 groups which had been formed by the time of the Mid-Term Review, only six have been registered and the remaining 12 still have not been able to fulfil the requirements for registration mainly because of the limited membership in the groups. Other problems are lack of citizenship documents required for registration and in some case the members are younger than 15 years of age.

3. Nine SCOs have constructed their own buildings. In Nawalparasi, number of cooperatives have rented office premise and hired staff. The cost is being covered from the interest earned from the credit program. The overall administrative expenses ranged from 16 to 37 percent of income which is very favourable. None of the groups reported higher expenditure than income.

SAVING AND CREDIT ORGANIZATIONS PROCESS³⁰

The community mobilization process encourages and motivates women to organize themselves to work together for common good and mutual support. Women who are living in close proximity and share common interest are organized into groups. These groups are the institutional base for implementing project activities.

Women as a group are able to gain access to various community resources and also resources available from the government line agencies and the local authorities, which would be impossible for a woman to access individually. Project supports these groups to grow in size and also build institutional capacity.

Saving and Credit Organizations (SCOs) are member-based organizations promoting self-governance. Selected Executive Committee members from each SCO are trained to become managers. Women have a vision to develop these groups as Savings and Credit Cooperatives.

Saving and credit promotion and management training is provided to all members of SCOs. The general objective is to impart fundamental knowledge of SCO to its members and to enhance their understanding of roles, responsibilities and rights as members. More specifically, orientation is provided to familiarize the members of SCOs with the co-operative philosophy, its evolution, principle and importance; about the laws, by-laws and legalization process of the SCO; and, orient them about linkage building options and avenues available to SCOs to gain better services and attain financial viability.

Basic account training is provided to four or five members selected by each SCO. The objective is to develop professional resource person within each group to operate SCO account. Basic account training is followed by refresher training and also advanced accounting training.

Exposure visits are organized for SCO members to successful women organizations in other parts of the country in order to develop their capacity, enhance self-confidence and observe what is possible and how others achieved them.

Loan management training is provided to all members of loan management committee (three to four members in each SCO) and selected executive members. Main objectives are to familiarize selected women with the concept of loan management, lending methodology and practices and loan policy, to equip them with tools and methodology for loan appraisal and loan monitoring and to orient them on the concept of group pressure and joint liability for timely repayment.

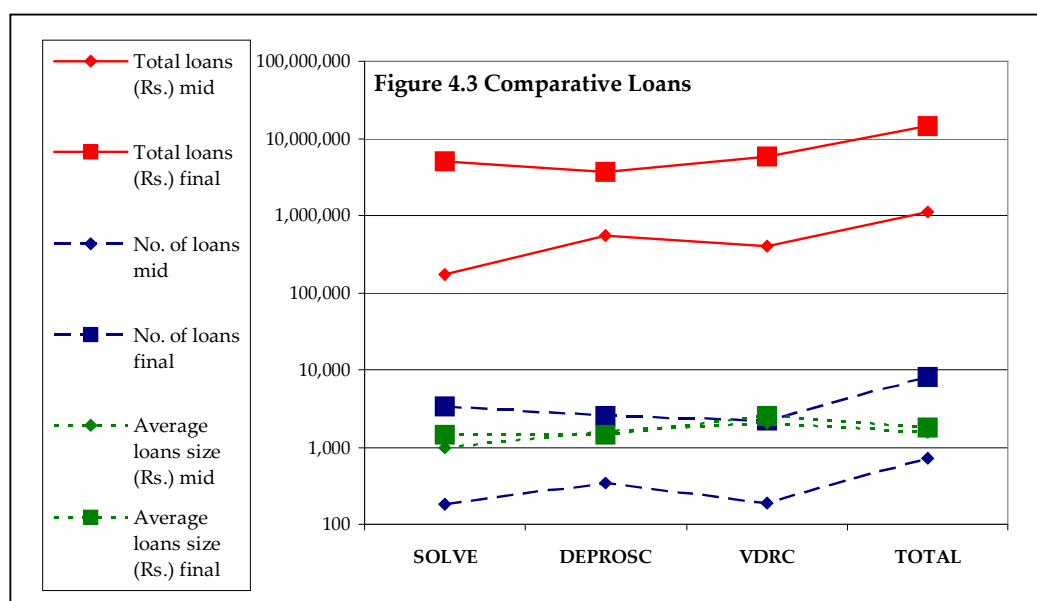
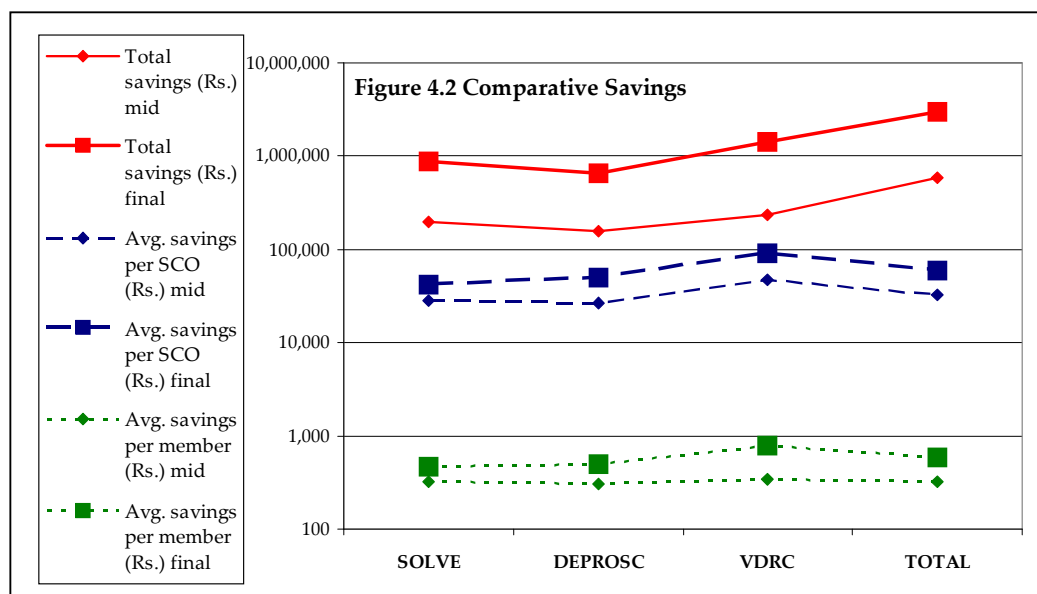
C. Savings

1. Of the 50 SCO/cooperatives, 40 have a savings of over Rs.40,000 and 24 have savings of over Rs. 70,000. The number of groups with savings of more than Rs.40,000 is very close to the planned figure. However, more than the planned number of SCOs have a savings of Rs.70,000 (or Rs.100,000 in case of Nawalparasi) or more. All the SCO have mobilised their savings into credit.
2. The total individual savings during the past two years has increased by five folds (from Rs.588,870 to Rs.2,973,174). In case of VDRC the increase is seven folds. In the case of Nawalparasi, the project is in the process of supplement the savings of the cooperatives with a revolving fund managed by the partner NGO and the District Cooperative Office.
3. The average savings per SCO ranged from Rs.41,658 in the case of Dhankuta to Rs.89,956 in Nawalparasi. The total average is Rs.59,463.

³⁰ Extracted from the Project Annual Progress Report, January 2002.

4. The per capita savings by members has increased from Rs.328 to Rs.592. The per capita savings in the terai district has more than doubled from Rs. 345 to Rs.791 while the increase has been relatively gradual in the mountain districts. The amount of monthly savings is variable depending on income. It is hoped that the larger amount of savings in the groups is not coming from the better off in the society and that it actually reflects the actual income.

5. An interesting aspect of the program in Dhankuta is that parents have started savings in their groups in the name of their children for future use.



D. Credit

1. The loan disbursement has increased by more than 11 times from 712 to 8,153 in terms of number of transactions and by nearly 13 times in terms of total amount from Rs.1,116,234 to Rs.14,367,194 since the Mid-Term Review. The highest growth, since the Mid-Term Review, in number of loan transactions as well as in value is in Dhankuta from 179 to 3,377 transactions and

from Rs.175,477 to Rs.4,966,368. This is although the average group and individual savings in Dhankuta is lower than the other two districts.

2. Although there is extremely high demand for credit, the average loan size has increased very marginally from Rs.1,568 to Rs.1,762. The average loan size in Nawalparasi is higher at Rs.2,579 compared to the figure during the Mid-Term Review. The average loan size has increased by 50 percent in Dhankuta.

3. The total amount of outstanding loans is 90 percent of the total group capital which shows the extent of utilisation of funds available. The outstanding loans are with 45 percent of the group members. Probably more members would have taken loans if the funds availability was larger.

4.3 Assessments of Results

1. The efforts at social capital formation are not new and all three partners were found to have expertise in this field. Social mobilisation has been an approach adopted in development administration for past few decades, particularly starting with the PCRW and SFDP activities. Also the cooperative formation is a national phenomenon at present. This is a familiar aspect of the project particularly for the partner NGOs.

2. The project was to organise 60 percent of the total households in the project VDCs (only members). During the Mid-Term Review it was estimated that 16 percent of the female population in the six VDCs included in the first phase had been organised. There is no baseline data to calculate the percent of women in the project area who have been organised into groups. So far it is estimated that 45 percent of the households in the five VDCs in Dhankuta have been incorporated in the program. This is less than the target of organising 60 percent of the households in the VDCs. This shortfall could be attributed to the difficult political frame conditions in the country during the past few years.

3. 16 SCOs have been registered and eight are in the process of being registered out of 50 SCO. As the project will come to an end in less than three months, the project will have to formulate a strategy regarding the status of the remaining 26 SCO. One approach would be to merge the groups in the same locality so that the membership numbers are as per the requirement. The NGOs would also have to provide assistance to these SCO to prepare the required documents for registration.



Group Members, Nawalparasi (BKS)

4. Even the registered cooperatives are just starting to take on rudimentary collective initiatives. All the NGOs (particularly the local based ones i.e. SOLVE and VDRC) expressed that they will continue some support to all the groups even after the termination of the project. DECONT stated that the groups they have formed are still functional despite the termination of project support for social mobilisation component.

5. The SCO have been registered as cooperatives but the concept of cooperative is not yet clear to all members. Investment on more orientation and training would be worthwhile.
6. Tactically the formation of cooperative should have been demand-driven and spontaneous. Transition from informal organisation to formal organisation or from soft social infrastructure of SCOs to the hard business organisation competing with established businesses is not easy. It is understandable in some sense as the savings increased and members felt that legalisation was necessary.
7. Cooperatives are social movements as well as economic institutions promoting self-governance. Aside from the banking function, the mission was not made aware of a vision of what cooperatives should do to increase the prosperity of their members. A notion of total collective benefit must be promoted in a cooperative structure.
8. Another aspect to consider during the immediate future is federation of the cooperatives at the district level. This will increase scope for bulk credit from financial intermediaries for retailing, formulating product marketing structures, etc.
9. Other issues related to the cooperatives are:
 - a. Membership in cooperative is on the basis of subscription of shares (value Rs.100) and fulfilment of certain criteria including availability of citizenship certificate. As some members of the groups are not able to fulfil the requirements, the coverage of members could decrease.
 - b. As cooperatives increase their membership and transactions, loyalty will be needed to challenge the market and economic players.
 - c. In order to build trust a system of performance and financial audit will have to be instituted at the cooperative level. Trust will be a precondition to success.
 - d. Related to this is initiating a self-monitoring system by the cooperatives regarding their affairs.
 - d. The cooperative need to increase capital formation and assure that they do not become ghetto institutions of the poor and women, marginalised by markets and the economy.
 - e. Some cooperatives have hired staff to manage the affairs particularly their accounts. A board has been formed. Management apprenticeship and training with the promoting, partner NGOs (who are all financial intermediaries) will be most beneficial.
10. The flow of funds for credit purposes has not kept pace with the needs and ambitions. Although local savings seems to be increasing, as the funds are still not able to meet the demand, banking intermediaries should be in place to supplement rural savings. Rather than providing "matching" fund from project resources, a long term solution and an innovation would be to link the cooperatives with financial intermediaries. In this regard, all three NGO partners are officially approved financial intermediaries.
11. DECONT, a trade union, was also involved in organising women savings and credit groups involving 440 members. It reported a positive consequence from this experience in that 728 agriculture workers have been involved in the union as a result of this program.
12. The interest rates applied by the groups are higher than the normal rates charged by commercial or development bank. The access of funds without collateral and lower transaction costs compensates for the difference. It was not possible to determine whether men are using women as conduits for credit, as women are able to access credit at lower transaction costs from their groups.
13. Out of the interest charged, the groups have earned Rs.1,006,561 as profit, which is 7.5 percent of the investment. Of the profit, 22.8 percent was spent on management expenses. The expenses are higher in Nawalparasi as groups have hired staff and rented rooms for their offices. The net profit was 5.8 percent of the invested amount. This shows that transaction costs are being covered and savings is not being decapitalised.

14. Control of self-indulgence and non-productive investment (consumptive expenditure) like alcohol, gambling, ornaments (although this is also a form of savings for times of need) should be taken up by the groups as an issue to increase household savings.

15. In rural areas credit is also necessary for education of children and other social needs. Social needs in particular, are the distress market where moneylenders prey on the poor. Therefore, the provision of social credit is a legitimate priority of the poor until the women are able to meet these costs from their own savings. However, the investment priority should still be for income generating activities and social credit should only be a temporary measure until the members are able to meet these costs from their own savings.

4.4 Further Assistance

Women repeatedly state that they have now developed a habit of savings, the credit program has increased access to funds and has freed them from indebtedness, the monthly savings are from their own income, they are contributing to household income, etc. Group membership has increased, savings have increased, meetings are being held monthly, accounts are being maintained, a number of trainings have been provided, etc. Therefore, social mobilisation and micro-credit program has led to a perceptible increase in women's self-respect and awareness, an increase in their involvement in decision making and leadership and self-confidence.

As recommended by the document on the ILO contribution to the PRSP in Nepal, the potential for such groups for economic growth through local generation of social and economic capital should be recognised and adequate investment made to enhance their growth.³¹ Therefore, providing continuity to the EEOW project will provide a practical basis for furthering the PRSP and Decent Work concepts.

The challenge for the future will be in keeping the cooperative initiative alive by going through the learning process without dampening the initiative of self-organisation towards strong cooperative organisations. Even in best of times, as cooperative movement gains ground and becomes noticeable and influences decision making, it will be challenged by predatory pricing, character attacks, etc. We have ample examples in Nepal from e.g. Small Farmers' Cooperative Limited or even our own partner organisations (managed by educated, dedicated and capable persons) who have taken years to build a functioning cooperative. Social mobilisation is a process and it takes time. Here we are talking about economically difficult times and we are talking about cooperatives of women. The cooperatives and groups promoted by the project are still in their infancy. A mentoring program is necessary for the next while so that the cooperatives become functional.

The groups have come a long way but still some additional time must be allowed for the not yet registered groups to get their documents organised for registration as cooperatives. Another area where attention is required is for small groups to be merged so that the membership numbers are viable. Formation of federation of cooperatives at the district level should be explored.

Establishing financial linkages is another area where more attention is required. Increasing savings must go hand in hand with decreasing expenditure, particularly consumptive expenditures. Besides economic activities, focusing group activities on issues of collective good will help in social empowerment.

³¹ ILO (2002). Decent Work for Poverty Reduction: An ILO Contribution to the PRSP in Nepal, ILO, Kathmandu.

CASE 1. TRIVENI SAVINGS AND CREDIT COOPERATIVE LIMITED: A RAY OF HOPE

Triveni VDC lies in southern part of Nawalparasi district. Promoted by EEOW a group of 19 women started meeting every month since August 1999 and started collecting their savings (Rs.30 per month). Now 279 women are members. The group has been registered with the District Cooperative Office as Triveni Savings and Cooperative Limited. A board of women members manages the affairs of the cooperative with assistance from field staff of VDRC. As the transactions of the group have substantially increased, a woman staff has been hired to manage the administration and accounts of the cooperative.

The cooperative has a total capital of Rs.456,198. So far 336 loans have been provided to 151 women with total value of Rs.1,196,200. The total capital has been recycled nearly three times. The group has made a gross income of Rs.101,391 and a net profit of Rs.62,806. Rs.416,088 is outstanding with 144 women loanees. 294 loans of a total value of Rs.1,070,200 were provided for income generating activities to 130 women. That is 88 percent of the loans or nearly 90 percent of the loan amount went for economic activities while the remaining went for social activities. The interest rate is 18 percent per annum. A loan management sub-committee supervises the investments.

Although goat-raising and grocery shops are most popular and have high returns, the women

are also thinking of other investment opportunities like for example, turmeric production. A number of management and skill development trainings have been organized to improve their skills. They have also constructed drinking water, irrigation and other physical infrastructures.

A women member expressed with joy that, "we never imagined such cooperation and team spirit could be possible. We were always involved in household tasks and child care only. We never realized our resources and potentials." She continued, "We have shown our men that women can also meet, save, work as a group and earn."

Safala Nepal, Vice President, felt that things have changed for women in Triveni. "We are feeling socially secure, respected, trained and confident." As a woman para-vet she has personally overcome a lot of social alienation but now confidently goes around the village treating animals (and makes a earning to supplement her household income).

Sunita Sharma, President of the Cooperative hoped that her cooperative continues to expand, involving more women and is able to promote different types of enterprises based on their local resources and in turn empowering rural women.

5. ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

5.1 Introduction

The second objective of the project was: to develop and implement community-based and gender sensitive employment promotion schemes for women in the selected project areas. In order to achieve this, the project planned to do the following:

- both on-farm and off-farm employment creation schemes will be implemented assuring proper market linkages
- a sustainable system of linkages of the women with credit institutions, line agencies for technology and the markets will be developed
- community baseline information will be established.

During the current phase of the project the major activities to be implemented regarding promotion of micro-enterprises were:

- a. identifying at least three/four viable micro-enterprises for women in the project areas
- b. identifying potential women and developing women entrepreneurship by supporting them to establish and run these micro-enterprises in their villages in collaboration with other organisations in the district.
- c. providing support to ongoing income generation activities ensuring that the potential of high value cash crops production for improvement of economic condition of the family in the project area is fully exploited.

The activities planned to provide support for marketing of the products were:

- d. establishment of collective marketing system
- e. training selected women members for marketing their produce through capacity building on leadership, financial and organisation management, organising market tours to understand market dynamics and organising business workshops among the producers and the trader buyers.

5.2 Results Planned and Achievement

A. Beneficiaries

1. It is reported that 2,954 women are participating in economic activities in the three districts which is nearly 59 percent of the women members in the groups (Table 5.1). Although the information provided by the partners is not complete, both in terms of groups and members, the numbers far exceeded the situation during the Mid-Term Review.

2. 3,558 women have been organised in 179 producer groups focused on specific activities. These groups are separate from the savings and credit groups. The number of groups is more and the membership is just a few hundred less than the planned figure.

3. Women in all three districts reported increase in income from various activities. Particularly in Nawalparasi, but also in Dhankuta, women have started producing vegetables on commercial scales. Some women in Nawalparasi are even leasing land from others in the village to grow vegetables as their own land was not sufficient to meet the demand for vegetables.

B. Inputs and Labour

1. In terms of input from the project, like provision of vegetable seeds and agriculture tools, micro nutrient demonstration, model demonstration, animal health campaigns, provision of improved breed of livestock, the achievement are as planned. Provision of vegetable seeds exceeded the targeted amount by three times. Detail information on the inputs provided by the project is shown in Table 5.1.

2. The members reported contracting seasonal labour as household labour was not sufficient. As vegetable cultivation is labour intensive, women complained about lack of labour and this situation

will only extenuate as attraction to vegetable farming and income increases subsequently. Some women asked if their men folks could also be provided training in some technical aspects so that they could help in vegetable farming.

Table 5.1 Planned indicators and results achieved in creating economic opportunities

Activities	SOLVE Dhankuta		DEPROSC Nuwakot		VDRC Nawalparasi		TOTAL	
	Planned	Achieved	Planned	Achieved	Planned	Achieved	Planned	Achieved
Members benefiting from IG activities								
No. of women	1,000	990	1,000	1,020	1,000	944	3,000	2,954
Women realise increase in income								
Increase income	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Commercial production	-	-	-	-	√	√	-	-
Land leased for vegetable production	-	-	-	-	√	√	-	-
Producer Groups								
Groups	50	85	54	69	50	25	154	179
Members	1,500	1,700	1,500	1,654	750	204	3,750	3,558
Micro-enterprise created								
Enterprises created	3	4	3	3	4	4	10	11
Marketing promotion	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Area identified for enterprise	1	-	-	-	2	2	3	2
Market promotion								
Market centres	2	2	1	1	mkt linkages	mkt linkages	3	3
Equip support	80,000	80,000	25,000	25,000	-	-	105,000	105,000
Product market association	2	2	1	1	-	-	3	3
Support Activities								
Vegetable seeds distribution	160 kg	160 kg	100 kg	370 kg	160 kg	587 kg	420	1,117
Technical support	10	10	10	10	6	6	26	26
Micro nutrient demonstration	25	60	25	25	35	25	85	110
Demonstration plot	25	60	25	25	40	25	90	110
Animal health campaign	10	10	10	10	3	3	23	23
Agriculture tools								
Sprayer	25	25	17	17	35	19	77	61
Water cans	50	50	25	25	70	128	145	203
Plastic sheets	25 kg	25 kg	25 kg	25 kg	60 kg	40 kg	110	90
Poly bag	25 kg	25 kg	25 kg	25 kg	55 kg	25 kg	105	75
Plastic crate	-	-	-	-	40	40	40	40
Livestock promotion								
Improved breed	-	-	20	20	18	18	38	38
He-goat	-	-	-	-	5	1	5	1
Castrator	-	-	-	-	2	1	2	1
Milk cans	-	-	-	-	3	2	3	2

C. Micro Enterprises

1. Besides vegetable and livestock, production of *amala*, cardamom, mushroom and handicrafts have been promoted by the project. EEOW project also provided limited support for quality improvement, labelling and marketing of jam and jelly production in Nawalparasi (initially established by another donor).

2. Workshops were organised in Dhankuta, Nawalparasi and Nuwakot to identify local raw material based micro-enterprises with potential for sales in local and external market and/or enterprises for which buy-back marketing system could be arranged. The products identified are shown in Tables 5.2 and 5.3.

Table 5.2 Potential micro enterprises identified for regional and local market

Products	D	N	Products	D	N
Vegetables		√	Bamboo crafts, baskets	√	√
Ground nuts	√		Bags, sweater, <i>dhaka</i> shawl/caps	√	√
Pickles of lemon, mango, <i>amala</i>	√	√	Flowers		√
Potato chips, <i>dalmode</i>	√		<i>Dhaki, gundri, jharu chokari</i>		√
<i>Gundruk, mashura</i>		√	Tailoring, knitting		√
Turmeric		√	Woven materials of pine needles	√	√
Processed products from banana		√	Paper from lokta, banana sheath		√
Processed products from papaya		√	<i>Amliso broom</i>	√	
Jam, jelly		√	Soap	√	
Mushroom	√	√	<i>Tika</i>	√	
Poultry	√		<i>Agarbati</i>		√

D = Dhankuta; N = Nawalparasi

Table 5.3 Potential micro enterprises identified for Kathmandu market

Products	D	N	Products	D	N
Dried <i>amala</i>	√		Dried orange, <i>junar</i>	√	
Groundnuts, deshelled pods	√		Fibre of <i>bhorla</i> plant	√	

Table 5.4 Amount of loans distributed and number of loanees

Activities	SOLVE Dhankuta	DEPROSC Nuwakot	VDRC Nawalparasi	TOTAL
Vegetable (no. of loans)	902,497 (528)	816,202 (550)	224,549 (109)	1,943,248 (1,187)
Other Crops (no. of loans)	-	-	824,272 (346)	824,272 (346)
Agriculture Inputs (no. of loans)	-	227,000 (146)	92,580 (37)	319,580 (183)
Small Grocery (no. of loans)	75,187 (41)	84,820 (33)	824,272 (387)	984,279 (461)
Goat (no. of loans)	992,018 (618)	1,732,599 (1,160)	686,031 (282)	3,410,648 (2,060)
Piggery (no. of loans)	500,998 (474)	13,892 (8)	59,900 (25)	574,790 (507)
Buffalo/Cow (no. of loans)	192,090 (90)	81,373 (37)	452,255 (112)	725,718 (239)
Poultry (no. of loans)	153,923 (187)	433,211 (419)	47,700 (34)	634,834 (640)
Bee Keeping (no. of loans)	-	-	7,500 (3)	7,500 (3)
Sewing (no. of loans)	-	-	80,800 (27)	80,800 (27)
Other income generation (no. of loans)	412,446 (247)	99,288 (53)	200,626 (64)	712,360 (364)

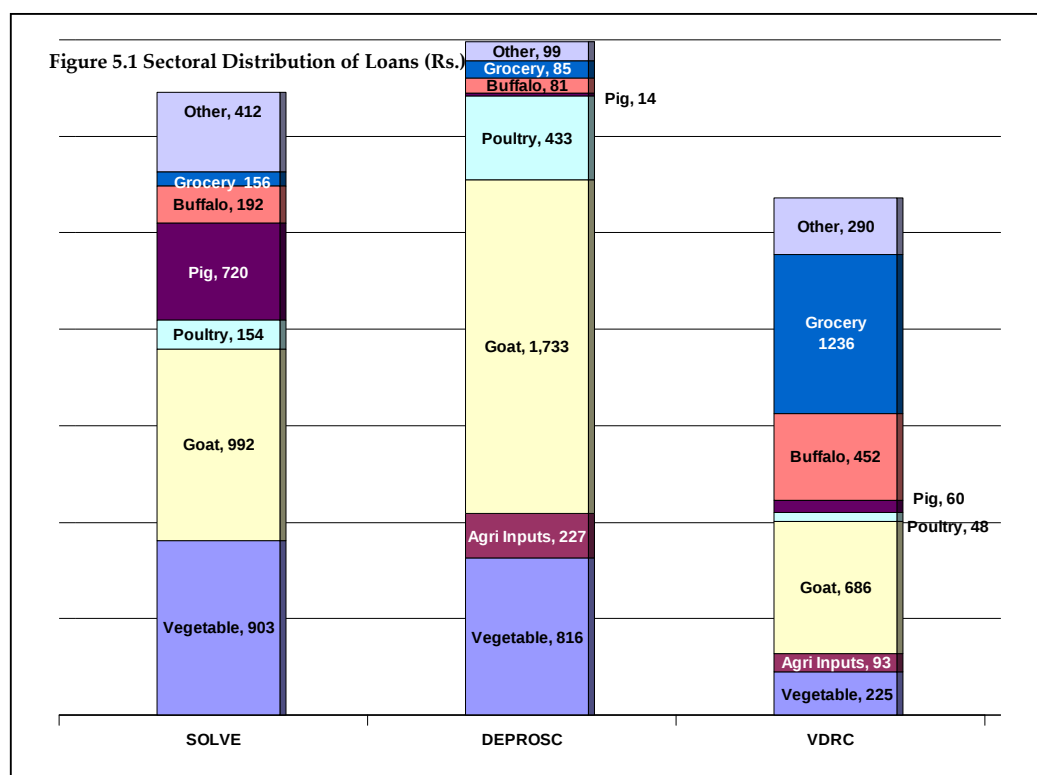
3. These workshops were organised by WEDC of FNCCI (employers' organisation) in consultation with the district chambers of commerce. Kathmandu based successful women entrepreneurs, commodity associations and agriculturist, established local entrepreneurs and marketers, etc. were invited as resource persons. Also product samples were exhibited as well as field visits conducted.

D. Credit

1. Women are increasingly attracted towards vegetable production. Although the external input requiring credit is minimal, nearly Rs.2 million has been disbursed in this sector for 1,187 loans (Table 5.4). More loans have been disbursed in Dhankuta and Nuwakot, compared to Nawalparasi, for vegetable production. In Dhankuta and Nawalparasi, more women are producing vegetables for the market because of easy access compared to Nuwakot.

2. However, the highest number of loans (2,060 loans for the value of Rs.3,410,618) have gone for goat rearing because women (without additional labour) prefer to keep few goats as they are easy to sell when cash is required immediately. This is true for all areas, but particularly so in Nuwakot. While talking of small livestock, piggery and poultry are areas of investment for women in Dhankuta and Nuwakot.

3. In the terai district of Nawalparasi, highest number of loans (after vegetables) has gone for starting small grocery stores where there is quick return on investment. In total 461 women have invested Rs.984,279 in this sector. Growing other agriculture crops (turmeric, sugar cane, banana, etc.) is also gaining popularity. 346 loans have been provided (Rs.824,272) for other crops.



E. Marketing

1. The project has provided support for the construction of market centres in Dhankuta. In Nuwakot the process of forming a marketing cooperative is underway.

2. Both in Dhankuta and Nawalparasi, individual women (or their family members) have been taking their produce to the markets (locally or to the regional centres). Sometimes buyers come to the villages to buy the produce wholesale in which case the sales prices are lower.

3. Formal purchasing agreements have been signed between the women producer group and Nepal Knot Craft Centre for purchase of handicraft products from Nawalparasi. WEAN Cooperative in Kathmandu has agreed to purchase jam and jelly from Nawalparasi and *amala* from Dhankuta.

4. In Dhankuta and Nawalparasi one case each was reported where a woman has been able to hire transport to take the produce to the market. The mission could see many truck loads of vegetables leaving from the project area but the women's group have not been able to penetrate the marketing system in an organised manner and still needs further assistance.



5.3 Assessments of Results

1. The increase in income from economic enterprises is reflected in increased savings in the groups. Of the 2,954 women who have reported to have benefited from participating in income generating activities, 1,390 women are benefiting from vegetable farming alone and earning more than Rs.3000 per year (Table 5.5). 53 of them earn more than Rs.30,000 per year.

Table 5.5 Income from vegetable sales

Income	Dhankuta	Nuwakot	Nawalparasi	TOTAL
Rs.3,000 per year	525	15	59	599
Rs.7,000 per year	325	30	70	425
Rs.12,000 per year	125	30	44	199
Rs.20,000 per year	50	42	22	114
Rs.30,000 or above per year	25	19	9	53

2. In Nawalparasi highest amount of income came from sales of vegetables (Table 5.6). However, on per capita basis the highest return was from milk production and tailoring. Although significant amount of loans went for small livestock, the returns were relatively small. These income levels are higher than the average per capita income in the country.

3. Project reports show that vegetable cultivation alone provided an income of Rs.4,957,413 in Dhankuta. A total of 68.3 tons of vegetables were produced. The vegetable crops in order of production were: cauliflower (snow crown), radish (minu early), capsicum (california), tomato (avinas 2), carrot (new crode), peas (sikkim local), local hot chilli (akabare), etc.

4. Women also reported that the increased income is being spent on education of their children and only on exceptional cases on themselves. Other areas where income has been spent are: renovated house; bought land, buffalo, goats; eat and wear better; hire additional labour; etc.

Table 5.6 Income from different activities in Nawalparasi

Activity	No. of Women	Annual Income	Per Capita Income
Vegetable	204	1,905,000	9,338
Small livestock	182	171,080	940
Grocery stores	170	1,483,586	8,727
Tailoring	11	114,607	10,419
Milk	39	528,816	13,559
Tuber production	21	32,920	1,568
Handicraft	21	10,500	500
Mushroom	16	30,690	1,918
Jam/Jelly	25	12,750	510

5. Group based enterprises have just started with assured market linkages. The returns are still very minimal (Rs.10,500 from handicraft; Rs.12,750 from jam and jelly; and Rs.30,690 from mushroom from Nawalparasi and similarly *amala* from Dhankuta). The project conducted three workshops involving the employers' organization and prominent women entrepreneurs to link the production with market.

6. Some results have emerged in terms of linkages between the producers and the market and actual sales of produce. Still more proactive work is necessary to assure that the buyers are diversified, credit is channelled for investment in activities identified at the workshop as priority sectors (not just in the same sectors as before), specific training is arranged in these priority sectors identified and explore product value adding (producing secondary products, processing, packaging, etc.).



7. Besides the above, more meetings should be organised between the women producers and experienced entrepreneurs. Eventually the marketing arrangements must be institutionalised.

8. Although many women are involved in various income generating activities, they continually express interest to start other activities also. This was true during the Mid-Term Review also. Therefore, although a number of activities have been started there still seems to be some gap between the desires and wishes of the women to selecting and starting new opportunities and the assistance being provided by the project.

9. As new investment opportunities increase, the demand for credit will also increase. The need to link the cooperatives with financial institutions/intermediaries cannot be stressed enough at this point.

10. Access to quality extension service is still difficult in the project area. In the livestock sector para-vets have been trained by the project and are providing services to the people. The para-vets need more training for which the district livestock office should be contacted.

11. In the agriculture sector, people depend on the services of the NGO technical staff or the state-run services (which is not readily available). Linkages with agro-vet shops would be one alternative and the project should consider training the village based agriculture cadre also.

12. The NGO staff noted that there has been a noticeable change in cropping pattern in the project area. From rice-mustard/rape seed-fallow, there is a reduction in the fallow period and introduction of two and in some cases even three crops of vegetable after the rice harvest. The popularity of vegetable farming is on the increase.

13. The women will also require assistance in post harvest management as well as access to quality seeds.

14. Also noticed from the group discussion and project reports is that with the increased production, household consumption of vegetables contributing to improvement in household nutrition.

15. FNCCI in general, but also WEAN and Nepal Knot Craft in particular, should be credited for their positive attitude and coming forward to help the women in the project area in product development, training and marketing. This has a mutual benefit for the rural women (getting skills, orientation on the market behaviour and linkages with market) as well



Jam/jelly production, Nawalparasi (BKS)

as for the above organisations (diversification of production base, sense of fulfilment in helping fellow women, etc.). Further involvement on product identification and continued consultation with experienced entrepreneurs will be most beneficial.



Shop established with loan from the group, Nawalparasi (VDRC)

17. DECONT has also been involved in promoting economic activities in Nawalparasi through the women's groups where it has set up nine vegetable model demonstration plots and has conducted three training programs on

vegetable farming. Both NTUC in Rupendehi and DECONT in Nawalparasi have supported women in pond fish farming.

5.4 Further Assistance

In strategic terms, rural cooperatives must build their economic base with their members and rural clients first. The activities promoted by the project provide potentially viable alternative to wage employment and a source of decent employment for women. Women are able to combine this work with their household responsibilities (although they did mention that they have less free time now.) Initiatives have been made but they are still in their infancy and need more nurturing. The women's groups have come a long way and all the indicators of project performance show that they are doing well. The project is filling a vacuum in development funding in rural areas and there is no viable state-run alternative to take over this program under the present circumstances. This is the unfortunate reality.

Providing assistance in product diversification, processing, product chain and value adding, packaging are going to be important tasks for the project. Women are very interested in processing. Specific training needs to be arranged in product value adding (producing secondary products, processing, packaging, etc.).

Similarly, product marketing based on assured market strategy and market demand are essential interventions. For this more meetings should be organised between the women producers and experienced entrepreneurs leading to not only diversification of buyers but also institutionalisation of marketing arrangements. Some results have emerged in terms of linkages between the producers and the market and actual sales of produce.

Linkages with financial institutions for increased credit volume are urgently required to increase access to credit. The first step in this would be to link the women's cooperatives with the financial intermediary activities of the NGO partners' themselves rather than look elsewhere. This should be possible, particularly in Dhankuta and Nawalparasi as the operating base of the NGO partners' financial intermediary activities overlaps with the activities of the project. In future, selection of partners should be considered in perspective of their willingness and ability to provide financial intermediary services to the groups and cooperatives they promote.

Still more proactive work is necessary to assure that credit is channelled, as priority, for investment in activities identified at the workshop between producers and buyers. Current loan portfolio indicates that credit is concentrated in the same sectors as before. The importance of the workshop was not just in initiating linkage between the producers and buyers but also in identifying marketable products.

CASE 2. SHANTI DEVI GURAU (THARU)

A SUCCESSFUL COMMERCIAL VEGETABLE GROWER

Shanti Devi Gurau (Tharu), a 25-year old Tharu woman from Rupauliya VDC, Nawalparasi, since the past two years, is a successful commercial scale vegetable grower, earning more than Rs.47,000 every year.

Prior to this she was a housewife taking care of her two children and her husband. Their small house is situated on a 0.3 ha land of which 0.23 is cultivated without irrigation. About 0.56 tons of paddy harvested annually, was sufficient to feed the family for five to six months only. They used to grow some vegetables around the house for household consumption. She and her husband worked as daily wage labourers to supplement family income.

When EEOW project started in her village, the VDRC field staff suggested that she grow vegetables. After receiving training, she planted cauliflower and cabbage in 0.07 ha of her land. Last year she earned Rs.3,500.

This year she used all of the 0.23 ha of her land growing off season and regular season vegetables. So far she has earned Rs.10,500 from cauliflower; Rs.14,000 from

cabbage; Rs.7,000 from bitter gourd; Rs.6,000 from cucumber; and, Rs.10,000 from bottle gourd, sponge gourd and beans. In total she has had a gross earning of Rs.47,500. She sells the vegetables in the daily and weekly markets. Wholesale vegetable buyers also come to her house to buy her produce. Although less profitable, she is also selling them.

The cropping intensity of her land has increased from 185 to 371 percent. The rice-mustard-fallow cropping pattern has now changed to rice-vegetable-vegetable-vegetable (legumes). Now she procures agricultural inputs from Bardaghat and Sunawal and sometimes as far away as Butwal.

Shanti Devi said that she has problems of getting quality inputs and assuring secure market. She is finding that the water from the pedal pump (installed through project support) is not sufficient. She is considering drilling a bore hole and installing a pump as well as leasing land from others in the village. She is a source of inspiration to other women who frequently call on her for advice.

6. SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT

6.1 Introduction

The third objective of the project was to raise awareness of women's fundamental human and legal rights and on gender issues within families, at work place and in the community. More specifically the project had the following social empowerment objectives:

- awareness program on women's legal rights will be developed and launched for the group members
- activities supported will enhance the decision making capacity and strengthen gender equality in the community
- participatory gender analysis workshops will be conducted with the groups
- partner organisations will be aware of women's issues and will be committed to action for change
- public and media will be provided information about women's issues relating to empowerment and counter actions against gender discrimination practices and gender-biased power relations.

Although no specific activities or indicators are mentioned in the service contracts with the partner organisations, the NGO partners continued legal awareness activities during the second phase.

6.2 Results Planned and Achievement

1. The project organised para-legal training-of-trainers for 54 women representing the entire project VDCs and NGO staff (Table 6.1). The nine-day para-legal training focused on women's fundamental human and legal rights and women workers' rights.

Table 6.1 Comparison of performance between mid-term review and current evaluation

Activities		SOLVE Dhankuta	DEPROSC Nuwakot	VDRC Nawalparasi	TOTAL
Paralegal Training	mid	6	6	7	19 + 8 staff
	final	9	6	7	22 + 5 staff
Legal Literacy Classes	mid	28	18	26	72 + 4 staff
	final	-	65	55	120
Participants	mid	551	424	599	1,574 + 81 staff
	final	-	1,599	1,414 + 750 couples	3,013 +1,500
Women aware of their rights	mid	-	-	-	-
	final	1,543	1,175	1,362	4,080

2. The trained paralegals returned to their communities and conducted a 12-day (12 modules of two hours duration each) workshop. Compared to 72 classes during the first phase, 120 classes were conducted during the second phase. These paralegal trainers conducted four to five village level orientation workshops which was participated by 4,587 women. While 1,574 women had participated in these workshops during the first phase additional 3,013 women participated after the Mid-Term Review.

3. Women have realised that being aware of women's rights themselves is not sufficient until the men are also aware about these issues. VDRC is planning to conduct legal awareness training for 750 couples during the next few weeks. Involving both wife and husband from each family is an excellent idea as both the female and male would be aware of legal issues.

4. In order to sensitize women members of the SCOs, their male counterparts and the staff from the partner organisations on gender equality and social justice, a nine-days training was organised to train local facilitators. These 14 trained facilitators will conduct gender sensitization training for 3,000 women and men in the project areas. A field training package was also designed during the workshop.

5. During the earlier period of the project a number of other activities had been implemented including:

- A training kit on women's rights, which includes training guide and training tools to be used by the trainers targeting the illiterate women, had been prepared.
- Awareness raising materials like booklets, posters, audio and video cassettes all carrying strong message on women's rights
- 42 women trade union workers of GEFONT, from 20 districts and two industrial estates trained on unionization of women agriculture workers
- Workshop on minimum wages and legislation was organized by DECONT in Nawalparasi which was participated by various district line agency chiefs, local authorities, trade unionist, industrialist in the district and journalist,
- Several campaigns for workers rights organized in Nawalparasi and Rupandehi by DECONT and NTUC. More than 4,000 women participated.
- On the occasion of the 91st International Women's Day, DECONT organised a campaign on equal opportunity, repeal of laws discriminatory against women, sexual harassment, and call for the ratification of the ILO Convention No. 103.

6. GEFONT and DECONT have prepared numerous awareness materials and they are being reprinted and reproduced (Table 6.2)

Table 6.2 Awareness raising materials produced by GEFONT and DECONT

Media	Title	Edition	Remarks
Documentary (GEFONT)	Together for Equality	1 st 2 nd	prepared version being prepared
Audio (GEFONT)	<i>Samjhadai ma Sharmik Mahila</i>	1 st 2 nd MP3	2000 pieces 1000 pieces distributed to 7 FM stations
CD ROM (GEFONT)	<i>Samjhadai ma Sharmik Mahila</i>	1 st 2 nd 3 rd	50 pieces 300 pieces music edition prepared
Picture Book (GEFONT)	<i>Hami Mahila</i>	1 st 2 nd 3 rd	5,000 pieces 2,000 pieces 2,000 pieces (2 nd revised edition)
	<i>Sharmik Mahila for Adhikar</i>	1 st	5,000 pieces (cartoon book on women's rights)
Poster (GEFONT)		1 st 2 nd 3 rd	42,000 pieces 2,000 pieces 3,000 pieces by WOREC
Radio Program (GEFONT)	Women rights Program	broadcast	Once over Radio Nepal; twice over FM stations and twice over Nepal Television
Pamphlets (DECONT)	-	-	5,000 pieces
Posters (DECONT)	-	-	3,000 pieces
Banners (DECONT)	-	-	22 pieces

6.3 Assessments of Results

1. In many words women and NGO staff pointed out the following changes in the rural society during the project period:

-
- We can now "go out", attend meetings (husbands and relatives to not restrict mobility)
 - Unfortunately, we still have to cook and take care of household chores.
 - Increased self confidence
 - Women can also be para-legal, para-vets, run income generating activities, etc.
 - More aware of rights
 - We can write our name
-
- Free from indebtedness
 - Habit of savings and credit
-

-
- No collateral and high interests, reduced transaction cost for loans/credit
 - Group collateral: *ijjat* is at stake when not paying on time
 - We now handle money from our income and household level cases of women being the centre of cash/credit transactions was stated.
 - Previously this was a male domain
 - Increased income but less free time (however do not feel overburdened)
 - Make our own contributions in the savings schemes
 - Previously have to ask particularly their husband
-
- Household violence has decreased with cases of husband encouraging wives to go for the group meetings
-
- Group unity and women's solidarity have enhanced
 - In certain cases the women have been able to take their cases to the police and the CDO.
-
- People ask for advice
 - Now able to eat and wear better, change in food habit (fresh vegetable)
 - Change in age of marriage
 - Able to express future desires
-
- Change in perspective from "money" to more training as project assistance
 - Positive affirmative action: identifications of wants, needs, ability to make choice
-

2. There are many cases where issues/experiences are being shared more widely. Cases studies and experiences from SOLVE program are being broadcast by the regional radio in Dhankuta. The project staff helps in scribing for women to tell their stories. The NGO publications from SOLVE and VDRC have published case studies, poems/songs, etc. contributed by women members. Awareness raising materials prepared by GEFONT and DECONT have been reprinted or reproduced up to three times in some cases.

3. Some women in Dhankuta have expressed interest in declaring their candidacy in the coming local VDC election as Chairperson (Saraswati Limbu and Bindu in Dhankuta). Two women have already been appointed in school management committee and one woman is in the VDC ward committee. SOLVE has appointed one woman (Santa Dahal) as member of its Board. The VDCs invite representative of cooperative in their meetings recognising their contribution.



Elected members taking oath of office (Binai SCO)

4. The formation of groups has assisted in breaking down the social and party political barriers. Caste distinction has been narrowed. All caste groups and women of different party political affiliation participate in savings and credit group meetings, producer groups meetings and other group activities without holding any biases.

5. VDRC and SOLVE mentioned that their proven capability was in savings and credit programs. Previously, they only concentrated in and were limited to providing adult literacy classes as a program for women. Joining EEOW as implementing partners introduced gender equality and social dialogue as new dimensions in their programming and expertise. They are now replicating this approach in other donor programs they are managing in other districts of the country. However, the observation made during the Mid-Term Review, that social empowerment, gender equality, social justice issues should be given more prominence in contracting the partner organisations, is still pertinent.

6. The training of facilitators for sensitization on gender equality and social justice was organised in July-August 2002. This has been organised too late during the project period. Provision should be made during the follow-up phase of the project to assure that there is time to organise the planned field level orientation activities.

PROCESS FOR AWARENESS RAISING ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS

The methodology for "Awareness Raising on Women's Rights" legal education consists of two steps. First is the Training of Trainers. In the second step the Trainees are required to carry out literacy classes in their villages. From every VDC, three to four women, who have completed eight or more years of school and are members of the saving and credit organizations, are selected as para-legal volunteers. The SCO are responsible to select most suitable member for this training.

These women are trained as para-legal volunteers (who are paid a stipend by the project for a specified duration.) One project staff from every VDC is also trained, so that s/he can supervise the work of the para-legal in their villages. This is nine-day residential training.

The ILO has contracted a specialized organization for this training. A training package has been developed, specially targeting rural women who are mostly illiterate or just literate. The whole package is made of 12 modules, each of two hours and used pictures, story telling, role-play and games as discussion tools.

After the training of trainers, the para-legal trainers return to their villages, organize the women in their SCO and near by SCOs, into groups of 20 to 25 women. Given the number of members in each group, up to nine sessions were organized.

The para-legal volunteers and women together decide venue and time for conducting legal education classes. The classes are conducted regularly for 12 days but the timing is made flexible to suit the time availability for the women in the project areas. The NGO staff regularly visited the classes and provided feedback to the para-legal volunteers.

7. The awareness raising materials prepared by GEFONT and DECONT should be more widely used by the project and the implementing partners. The project could have taken a more proactive role in disseminating these and other materials to other organisations and to the SCOs and cooperatives as the para-legal trainers and women requested supplemental reading material.



8. The meetings, previously held once a month, are now being held two days. Activities on the first day focus on collection of loan requests and savings collection and loans are disbursed on the second day. Also as recommended by the Mid-Term Review, the meetings are being held at sub-group (or *tole*) level. With the ever increasing number of members in each group, discussing social issues is being put on the back burner with economic activities being given preference.

9. On case-by-case basis women are taking up social issues in the groups. There are many cases in Dhankuta where the groups have intervened on social issues. In one case, the group got one office working husband transferred to another location as he continued beating this wife despite their repeated interventions. Other cases were reported from Nawalparasi and Nuwakot also. The para-vets trained by the project, as women in non-traditional roles are now accepted by the society, without much resistance. This is an improvement from the situation during the Mid-Term Review when it was observed that “for women to lobby themselves and advocate for their rights, it could still take some time until they gain more confidence and collective strength.” There is evidence that the women are gaining strength.

10. It is not possible to say that 70 to 80 percent of the group members are aware of their legal rights as stated in the project document because the 4,080 women who have received legal rights orientation included non-members. On the other hand not all members in the SCO/cooperatives have been exposed to the legal rights issues. They wished they could also participate in the orientation.

11. At the community level there are examples of collective action on social issues including addressing household violence and polygamy issues. However, the social awareness activities have not yet altered the household division of labour and promote decent living. Women are allowed to attend meetings, go out of the households and start economic activities, but their household responsibilities is reported to be the same and men are not contributing to reducing this burden yet.

12. The para-legal trainers themselves need refresher program to renew and update their knowledge. There have been a number of significant changes in legal rights issues recently which the para-legal trainers should be aware.

13. So far men have not been included in the legal awareness orientation. While it is to be welcomed that they were provided legal awareness orientation, women felt that maybe it is the men who should be made aware of the legal situation. In this respect the initiative by VDRC to also include husbands in future orientation should be further encouraged and replicated in other project districts also.

14. The experiences of the women in the project districts (Dhankuta and Nawalparasi) and material prepared by GEFONT and DECONT are being disseminated in a number of ways:

Magazine	Both SOLVE and VDRC are publishing readable Nepali language magazines with articles, poems, experiences, stories written by women and staff. The field staff helps illiterate women write their stories.
Radio	- The regional radio station in Dhankuta regularly broadcasts stories about the women's groups. - More than seven FM stations are regularly broadcasting songs prepared by GEFONT. To maintain quality, songs have been prepared in MP3 format. - GEFONT prepared radio program has been broadcast over radio Nepal twice, by FM stations twice and once by Nepal TV.
Audio Tapes	- A collection of folk songs on women (<i>Samjhadai ma Shramik Mahila</i>) prepared by GEFONT has been reproduced by private individuals for sale. - The songs are being picturized for broadcasting over Nepal Television.
Brochures	- <i>Hami Mahila</i> has been reprinted in 2nd edition by a Danish project. - WOREC has reprinted the poster prepared by GEFONT.

6.4 Further Assistance

We have seen that social perceptions and attitudes are beginning to change through collective efforts and participatory ownership. To recapitulate, in the first chapter of this section we saw the changes regarding social mobilisation and collective action. In the second chapter we saw the experiences in the economic capital formation. In this chapter we read about further changes in the social capital formation and transformation of perceptions and attitudes.

There are examples of where women are collectively being able to address and take recourse against domestic violence and polygamy. These are two very important injustices being experienced by rural women in Nepal. Experiences in breaking down of caste, societal and political barriers are other positive contributions of collective action by women. There is still a long way to go. It takes time for the voices of the poor in general and voices of women in particular to be heard. There is an issue of societal value change and change cannot be expected in two to three years of project cycle. Disruption in the continuity of SCO/ cooperative activities could have a ripple effect and retrogress the level of confidence of these rural women who are starting to make a difference in their lives.

Unfortunately compared to the time of the Mid-Term Review, no specific activities or indicators were mentioned in the service contracts with the partner organisations for the present phase. The project seems to have decided to focus on economic activities alone during the second phase. One NGO partner equated investment in social development/empowerment as a non-financial cost burden on financial institutions which is unsustainable and financially and commercially non-viable. This is indeed unfortunate as the innovative characteristic of this EEOW project is the promotion of complimentary activities focusing on economic as well as social empowerment issues. Achieving broad-based ameliorative impact on the living conditions of women will require social and political structural changes which the collective forum of women in cooperative can provide as a foundation.

Therefore, the observation made during the Mid-Term Review, that social empowerment, gender equality, social justice issues should be given more prominence in contracting the partner organisations, is even more pertinent now. In categorical terms, the project must promote economic and social empowerment issues through a combined strategy.

7. TIME SAVING ACTIVITIES

7.1 Planned Activities

In order to achieve the objective of promoting community-based and gender sensitive employment promotion schemes, the project planned to implement time saving activities for women (including potable water, fodder trees and grasses, improved stoves) in response to the community needs.

The service contract with the partner organisations for the second phase identified support for improving the small irrigation activities to provide water for the vegetable plots.

7.2 Results Planned and Achievement

1. Accordingly 33 irrigation activities were supported benefiting 219 households comprising of 1,854 persons (Table 7.1). Although the number of irrigation systems was more than planned, the number of beneficiaries was less than the targeted numbers.

Table 7.1 Planned indicators and results achieved in time saving activities

Activities	SOLVE Dhankuta		DEPROSC Nuwakot		VDRC Nawalparasi		TOTAL ³²	
	Planned	Achieved	Planned	Achieved	Planned	Achieved	Planned	Achieved
Micro irrigation								
Number	10	13	10	2	6	18	26	33
Households	200	123	200	39	180	57	580	219
Population	1,200	1,037	1,200	225	1,080	602	3,480	1,864



Peddle pump, Nawalparasi (BKS)

2. Peddle pumps for irrigation, introduced in Nawalparasi at the cost of Rs.4,000 per unit, seems very effective. The women also appreciated the low maintenance aspect of the peddle pump. A reservoir tank with 42,000 litre capacity was constructed in Dumkibas to store rain water. Sprinkler irrigation was a preferred choice in Dhankuta.

3. Besides irrigation, the project has also supported construction of 80 drinking water systems benefiting 1,109 households (Table 7.2). Compared to the Mid-Term Review the number of drinking water systems increased from 24 to 80. It could be seen during the field visit that these systems were definitely the felt needs of the rural women as the time they have to spend to fetch water has reportedly decreased.

7.3 Assessments of Results

1. DEPROSC has submitted a detailed completion report of eight drinking water systems which has benefited 2,091 persons in 291 households. The density was 7.9 households per tap and in two cases the density was 13 households per tap. The cost was Rs.26,498 per tap or Rs.3,369 per household. The per capita cost of the water systems ranged from Rs.274 to Rs.621. An average of 69.5 percent of the total cost was borne by the project with the rest being contributed by the community (with some contribution from the VDC in some cases).

³² Only information from SOLVE and VDRC have been included in the total figures.

Table 7.2 Comparison of performance between mid-term review and current evaluation

Activities		SOLVE Dhankuta	DEPROSC Nuwakot	VDRC Nawalparasi	TOTAL
Drinking water	mid no. hhs.	5 399	3 92	16 1,545	24 2,036
	final no. hhs.	12 236	17 479	60 582	89 1,297
Improved cooking stoves	mid	110	142	128	380
	final	12	-	128	140
Irrigation	mid	1	1	1	3
	final hhs.	13 123	2 39	18 57	33 219
Rice mill	mid	-	1	-	1
	final	-	-	-	-
Fodder grass	mid	72,060	12,584	10,200	94,844
	final	-	-	-	-

2. In Dhankuta the density per water tap was 4.1 households which is much lower than in Nuwakot. At Rs.47,001 per tap and Rs.11,446 per household, the construction costs were much higher in Dhankuta compared to Nuwakot. Consistent with the figures from Nuwakot, 67.4 percent of the total cost was borne by the project in Dhankuta also.

3. Information from Dhankuta showed that 50 percent of the cost of sprinkler irrigation was borne through local contribution. The per household total cost of this irrigation systems was Rs.10,020. It was quite clear from the field visits that the irrigation systems have directly supported in increasing the vegetable cultivation.

4. In these projects, water user group have been formed to manage wells, water collection tanks and irrigation systems (except where the ownership is on individual household basis). A maintenance fund has been established to cover repair costs. This is a change from the Mid-Term Review

when maintenance systems were not established. Although this time also, in the same water project visited during the previous review in Triveni VDC, there was maintenance problem but the issue was over and beyond what the group could do. Getting the pipe parts from India was a problem being faced by the group.

5. During the earlier phase, a number of women had been trained in the construction of improved stoves and they in turn helped 380 households build stoves in the project area. During the current phase only one partner (SOLVE in Dhankuta) reported supporting construction of 12 stoves. This is indeed unfortunate as these stoves contribute to the time saved by women both for cooking and fetching of firewood. These stoves have better efficiency than the traditional stoves and consume less firewood.

6. Fodder collection is women's daily chore in rural areas. The project had provided seedlings for improved and fast growing fodder plants to increase the supply of fodder during the previous phase. There is no report regarding this sector during the current phase.



Inauguration of drinking water system, Dhankuta (SOLVE)

7. The ability of some of the groups to attract some cost sharing from the local government is also to be noted as a positive start. VDCs in each of the three districts continued to support the SCOs but not to the extent expected and desired by the women. This is indeed a very difficult process and the groups must have been very persistent in their effort. Their frustration was expressed by few women in Dhankuta to stand for the election for VDC chairperson in the next local election and assure that the women's voice is heard and supported.

7.4 Further Assistance

The project budgetary allocation for this component is still small although these activities address the needs of the women (drinking water in terms of actual time being saved, irrigation to provide water for vegetable cultivation, cooking stoves in terms of reduced drudgery, etc.). Creating a "quick response fund" to support SCOs interested to invest in collective or individual irrigation projects on cost sharing basis should be considered. The partner NGOs could also explore funding possibilities from other donors including linking with bio-gas promotion program. More appropriately the women's cooperatives could be linked to these external sources as well as to the VDCs and DDCs for support in construction of time saving activities.

CASE 3. SABITRI ADHIKARY GOLD GROWS ON MY LAND

"There is no need to go elsewhere. Gold grows on my land," says 32-year old Sabitri Adhikary, from Shri Shri Laxmi Savings and Credit Group in Hattikharkha, Dhankuta who is a very busy woman and even hires extra labour to help her during busy periods.

Initially, she had spent Rs.650 to buy some *avinash* tomato seeds. In her half *ropani* of land she could only plant half the seeds she got, so she sold the rest for Rs.400, giving her the first profit and experience in handling money.

Today she owns three *ropanies* of irrigated paddy and seven *ropanies* of dry land. Her fields are never without vegetables: cauliflower, radish, beans, carrot and tomatoes. She has even planted mango, orange and litchi trees. In her shed are few

buffaloes and goats. She also sells *ghee*. She has renovated her house.

Describing the changes she has experienced in her family's well-being, Sabitri said, "These days we eat enough. We eat well. We wear better clothes. We even eat meat twice a week. All this has been possible from the vegetables I am growing. Land is gold and one only needs to be willing to put ones effort to it."

In the coming days she wishes to learn more about poultry and goat farming as well as diversifying her vegetable cultivation. She says she needs more support in marketing. She confidently added, "Now I can leave the house to go to the market to sell the produce or to attend group meetings. Everyone in my family is happy."

8. CAPACITY BUILDING

8.1 Planned Activities

Capacity building was an integral and important part of the project. The objective of this component was that: Capacity building programs with respect to planning and management of women's employment and empowerment will be designed and implemented. Specifically the project intended to do the following:

- capacity of the partner organisations to conduct participatory planning and monitoring women employment generating activities and awareness raising on women's rights program will be enhanced.
- field exposure program will be conducted for the National Steering Committee members so that the policy makers better understanding the field realities and analyse the policy constraints impending the implementation of the project.

8.2 Results Planned and Achieved

1. With regards to capacity building of project beneficiaries, three areas received considerable attention, namely, management of savings and credit groups, accounts training and vegetable production. Unfortunately complete data was not available from the partner organisations. From the preliminary data, the achievement is generally less than the targeted numbers (but this needs to be updated and confirmed). The details of training activities are shown in Table 8.1.

2. Training in production of off-season vegetables received significant attention. In Dhankuta, out of the total number of women who are shown to have participated in various training programs, the actual number of women trained was 65.6 percent of this figure. Some women participated in trainings more than once. Therefore, about 34.4 percent of this figure should be discounted for double counting.

3. Furthermore, still referring to Dhankuta, among those trained, 70.8 percent of women actually started growing vegetables and all of them are earning more than Rs.3,000 per year. Over one-third of women are earning more than Rs.12,000 per year. This is indeed a significant achievement.

4. In every component more women have received training during the past two years than at the time of the Mid-Term Review (Table 8.2). With the growth in number of members and groups, more women were given orientation about the savings and credit activities. Similarly, more women received orientation about cooperatives. Different levels of accounts training was arranged for selected group members.

5. Training of Trainers on gender sensitization (titled Towards Empowered and Equitable Society) was organized for 14 NGO staff and managers in August 2002. ILO SAAT provided technical support in preparing and implementing this training. A training package was designed during the course and field level trainings are expected to be conducted in the near future. It is expected that these trainers will sensitize 3,000 women and men.



Woman weaving a mat, Nawalparasi (BKS)

Table 8.1 Planned indicators and results achieved in capacity building activities^(a)

Activities	SOLVE Dhankuta		DEPROSC Nuwakot		VDRC Nawalparasi		TOTAL	
	Planned	Achieved	Planned	Achieved	Planned	Achieved	Planned	Achieved
Exchange visit for CBOs	1	6 groups	1	-	1	176 no.	3	-
Off season vegetable	1,520	1,320	1,400	977	375	439	3,295	2,736
Integrated pest management	-	-	100	-	25	-	125	-
Mushroom cultivation	-	-	-	3	25	56	25	59
Micro-enterprise deve	60	-	20	2	30	21	110	23
Accounts								
Accounts	95	87	65	85	25	75	185	247
Accounts Refresher	95	72	65	50	42	-	202	122
Advanced Accounts	45	-	60	39	-	-	105	39
SCO								
SCO Mgmt.	950	739	750	771	106	917	1,806	2,427
Cooperative Mgmt.	56	57	65	-	-	185	121	242
Loan Mgmt.	56	3	65	50	-	39	121	92
Group Mgmt.	-	-	-	-	500	917	500	917
Leadership	-	-	-	-	25	21	25	21

(a) DECONT has also organised a number of training programs regarding pre-group orientation (6), basic accounts (1), promotion and management (2), savings and credit management (1), etc.

8.3 Assessments of Results

1. Significant changes noticed among beneficiaries of the project, since the Mid-Term Review, are:

- despite the difficult political and economic situation in the rural areas, mind-set of the women is beyond "fatalistic today" into "hope for the future"
- women are not asking for subsidy or money or handouts but instead asking for skills and training which shows that they are willing to help themselves
- in terms of economic activities they have moved beyond "sewing and knitting"
 - to processing or value adding (e.g. turmeric), irrigation, group enterprises, etc.
 - thinking of new business opportunities like mushroom, floriculture, etc.
 - thinking of linkage products and use of by-products.

2. The project has adopted an effective strategy of training local women as trainers and entrusting the field level dissemination of knowledge to them. At the same training, selected field staff from the partner organisations are also included in the training activities so that they can backstop the women trainers. This way a local resource pool is being developed. In this respect the two most significant interventions of the project are mentioned in the following paragraphs:



Project trained para-vet at work, Dhankuta (SOLVE)

A. The training or para-vets and the eventual breaking of the social barriers for women being involved in non-traditional role is now given. In Nuwakot, the EOW trained para-vets were formally requested by the District Livestock Office to provide services in the villages as the Maoist have burned down the service centres. They are filling a service vacuum in rural Nepal and making a living at the same time.

B. While no fees are charged by para-legals (contrary to para-vets) the former mentioned that their satisfaction comes from being able to help other women in distress. This is a social service and they also fill a knowledge vacuum in the rural areas.

The women who have participated in these trainings have requested for certificates to verify the completion of the training. They also need refresher training to update their knowledge. The District Livestock Office has recommended that the training for para-vets should be extended to 35 days as per the requirements of the government and they have expressed willingness to cooperate with the project.

Table 8.2 Comparison of performance between mid-term review and current evaluation^(a)

Activities		SOLVE Dhankuta	DEPROSC Nuwakot	VDRC Nawalparasi	TOTAL
Exchange visit for CBOs	mid	-	-	-	-
	final	6 groups	-	176	-
Savings and credit promotion	mid	195	374	360	929
	final	739	771	917	2,427 (a)
Cooperative management	mid	--	--	33	33
	final	57	-	185	242
Loan Management	Mid	-	-	-	-
	Final	3	50	39	92
Leadership	mid	-	-	-	-
	final	-	-	21	21
Gender	mid	--	-	--	-
	final	-	6	4	10
Accounts	mid	43	--	22	65
	final	87	87	75	249 (a)
Accounts Refresher	mid	-	-	-	-
	final	72	50	-	122
Accounts Advance	mid	-	-	-	-
	final	-	39	-	39
Para vet	mid	-	-	-	-
	final	-	6	4	10
Para legal workers	mid	-	-	7	7
	final	9	6	14	29 + 6 staff
Fresh vegetable Off season	mid	40	67	30	137
	final	1,320	977	439	2,736 (a)
Vegetable nursery mgmt.	mid	--	18	-	18
	final	16	26	-	42
Mushroom production	mid	-	-	-	-
	final	-	-	569 kg	569
Livestock raising	mid	49	4	-	53
	final	-	20	-	20
Fodder grass	mid	-	20	-	20
	final	-	-	-	-
Fruit production	mid	-	20	-	20
	final	-	-	-	-
Micro enterprise development	mid	-	-	-	-
	final	4	2	21	27
Noodle production	mid	-	--	20	20
	final	-	-	-	-
Plumber	mid	-	1	-	1
	final	-	-	-	-

(a) DECONT has also organised a number of training programs regarding pre-group orientation (6), basic accounts (1), promotion and management (2), savings and credit management (1), off-season vegetable production (3), training of trainers on unionization (1), etc.

3. Training in mushroom farming in Nawalparasi showed that finding appropriate solutions are not easy as the variety selected for the first training was not suitable for local conditions. A different variety was introduced later.

4. One of the most significant training provided by the project was the workshops conducted between the women and established women entrepreneurs and the linkages established between the former and in particular with WEAN and Nepal Knot Craft.

5. The achievement of the capacity building component of the project could be summarised as follows: The confidence of the rural women has been developed through:

- woman as a leader (management of groups/cooperatives)
- woman as a doctor (para vet)
- woman as a lawyer (para legal)
- woman as a planner (group/cooperative activities, economic activities, accountants).

6. The NGO partners have acquired considerable experience in providing support to women's groups in social and economic empowerment. In particular, they have expressed satisfaction that the project has provided opportunities in staff capacity building, in gender orientation and social empowerment, i.e. awareness raising on women's rights.

7. During the first phase field exposure program were conducted for the National Steering Committee members so that the policy makers better understanding the field realities and analyse the policy constraints impeding the implementation of the project. This was not continued during the second phase.

8. The trade unions have also organised various training activities in group management, pre-group orientation, basic accounts training, etc. DECONT for example has conducted ten such trainings. The trade unions were appreciative of the opportunities to participate in the EOW project activities which contributed to furthering their mandate and looked forward to continued association. Similarly, the employers' organisation, which just started joint activities with the EOW project, expressed possibilities of extending the cooperation and involving the district chapters. This would not only benefit the project but also increase the capacity of the district chapters in promotion of economic activities.

8.4 Further Assistance

From Table 8.2, it can be seen that many women have received training in SCO promotion, fresh vegetable cultivation, accounts and gender orientation. With the training they have received, women are managing their SCOs, keeping the accounts (previously the NGOs field staff used to do this), producing more vegetable and earning from it, starting to establish linkages with the market and private buyers and at the household level, the new role of women is being accepted.

In the perspective of Decent Work, the project has initiated affirmative action not only to promote self employment through entrepreneurship but also to widen the occupational choices for women and breaking the occupational gender segregation.

In future, more attention is necessary for capacity building in other areas of micro-enterprises including value adding, processing, packaging, marketing, pest management, alternative micro enterprises (besides vegetables), etc. Learning lessons from training of para-vets, the project could also train rural women in providing services in the agriculture sector (particularly vegetables and fruits). The women themselves have requested for more training in accounts keeping, loan management, cooperative management, orientation about purpose and objective of formation of cooperatives, preparing business plans, etc.

The groups/cooperatives will also benefit from cross visits to observe the activities of other and learn from others' experiences.

CASE 4. SAFALA NEPAL and SARASWATI LIMBU OUR RURAL VETERINARY DOCTORS

The women's group in Trivenisusta, Nawalparasi had selected Safala Nepal to participate in a 15-day animal health workers training organized by EEOW project in Chitwan in April 2001. Since then she is the only animal health extension worker in her VDCs. She confidently provides services like drenching, castrating, dressing and vaccination. Up to now, she has treated more than 500 animals. Her fees are Rs.5 if the animal is brought to her house and double that if she has to go out. This supplements her family income.

After the training, she was given a box with essential supplies of equipment and medicine. She has gone and replenished the supplies four times from Narayanghat.

It is considered a taboo for woman to castrate animals and local belief is that in the next generation that particular woman will not bear any children. Initially, this seemed an insurmountable challenge. But, now she is accepted in her village.

"We have found Safala as our rural veterinary doctor" said a resident of Trivenisusta VDC. Dil Kumari Sapkota was happy that, "had Safala not been there, my buffalo could have died." Safala's husband added, "A housewife veterinary technician! Thanks to EEOW." This is how she has challenged the male dominated spectrum of Nepalese society.

Similarly, Saraswati Limbu is a para-vet in Dhankuta district. She, at 35 years, is unmarried and lives with her parents and three other brothers and sisters. She is one of the founder members of Lali Gurans Savings and Credit group. She is committed to her vision of developing this group into a sustainable cooperative.

She charges between Rs. 20 to 40 per animal treated. In the early days, after she started her jobs as para-vets, the community did not accept her. She also broke the tradition about castration being performed by women and has now received recognition and acceptance.

She has also received training in legal issues. She has been able to mediate and resolve several family disputes, violence, alcoholism and polygamy issues in her village.

Finally, in Nuwakot, because of the security situation, government technical staff has not been able to go to the field. Most recently the District Livestock Office requested EEOW trained para-vets to provide services in the villages as the Maoist have burned down the service centres.

All the para-vets wished to get more training so that they can provide better services. They also wished that they received a certificate for their previous training.

9. PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 Planned Activities

The project was planned for implementation by the women in the district and locally based agencies and enterprises. The ILO Office was expected only to play a role of facilitator between involved partners and also had the role of “think tank”.

Specifically then, the objective of this component was that: Project operations are managed efficiently as per the agreement between HMG/N and Labour Ministry of Japan. This meant:

- Project's chapter office and district units will be established and project working groups in the districts will be formed.
- The DDCs, VDCs and the relevant government line agencies, together with the implementing partners will be involved in district level program planning and monitoring.
- Planning, monitoring and evaluation tools for women's employment and empowerment program will be developed and made available to the participating organisations.

In addition to management functions, a major responsibility for the project related to the following objective: Policy recommendations on the basis of the project experiences made available to the policy makers. In addition,

- lessons learned during the project implementation will be documented and disseminated among the ILO constituents and NGOs.
- knowledge of ILO and its constituents in the field of employment creation for women and women's rights will be enhanced.
- gender component will be integrated in the policy and program of the partner organisations.
- project partners will play an active and efficient role in the policy dialogue concerning women's employment promotion and empowerment.

The service contracts with the implementation partners however, identified the following activities for the past two years:

- a. establish effective management of the project both at the central and field level.
- b. support the CBOs to establish linkages with their VDC, DDC and district line agencies
 - More specifically, all the CBOs will be aware about the responsibilities of local authorities and line agencies towards the community and they will be able to access required services from different organisations.

9.2 Assessments of Results and Future Action

1. The management team's performance, as a facilitator among a large number of role players, continues to be excellent. The project is highly regarded by the National Planning Commission. The employers' organisation and the three workers' organisations praised its achievements and equivocally requested that it be continued.

2. The National Steering Committee was constituted in July 1998 with representation from five Ministries, FNCCI, trade unions (in turns), women's NGO and the ILO. The Honourable Member, National Planning Commission, chairs the Committee. Regular meetings have been held and the Committee has been involved in major decisions of the project like selection of implementation partners, composition of project working groups in the districts, monitoring the progress, etc.

3. The partnership agreements with the three NGOs were continued during the past two years whereas the agreements with the workers' organisations have been discontinued. 18+ months contracts were signed with the three NGOs which is a change from the annual contracting procedure applied previously. The Mid-Term Review had recommended that a project period contract be signed in order to provide some stability in staffing.

4. Partnership has been developed with the employers' organisation in order to provide support to the groups and cooperatives as they move into a stage where they need training and support in

marketing of the produce, diversification of the products and value adding. FNCCI is interested in involving its 22 district chapters and the proposed counselling centres (being supported by the ILO), in the future activities of the EEOW project.

5. Two of the workers' organisations, namely NTUC and DECONT, were involved in savings and credit activities, an area where NGOs had a comparative advantage. DECONT stated that their involvement in the program has assisted in organisation of the agriculture sector workers and 728 individuals were enrolled into the union. The third trade union (GEFONT) had purposefully selected to be involved in awareness raising activities. The experience here proved that definitely this was an area of competence for the workers' organisations. The continued involvement of the workers' organisations in the area of their competence should be positively considered.

6. In order to develop women's access to locally available services and technology, linkage development between the women's organisations and different government and non-government organisations in the district was targeted. There are few examples of individual project support being received from VDCs. Some DDCs, like Nuwakot, has been involved in the Project Working Group. Information meetings have also been held with the VDC and line agencies. DECONT, for example, organised two meetings at VDC and one at DDC level.



Laying the foundation stone of a SCO building, Nawalparasi (BKS)

Unfortunately, these efforts have not resulted in any tangible cooperation. In fact the women in Dhankuta were so frustrated with the VDCs and DDC that they wished to stand in the next election for the chairpersonship in their VDCs. It must be noted here that this particular situation of not being able to establish linkages with the line agencies have been and is being experienced by all projects throughout the country. In Nuwakot, it was the line agencies asking support from the project trained para-vets to provide services to the people.

Table 9.1 Planned indicators and results achieved in coordination^(a)

Activities	SOLVE Dhankuta		DEPROSC Nuwakot		VDCR Nawalparasi		TOTAL	
	Planned	Achieved	Planned	Achieved	Planned	Achieved	Planned	Achieved
CBOs aware of responsibility of local authorities								
Information meeting with	-	2	-	4	-	-	-	6
- VDC	-	5	-	3	-	6	-	12
- line agencies	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Coordination Meeting								
PWG meeting	-	3	-	1	3	3	-	10
Review workshop	3	3	3	3	15	3	21	9
Physical facility support to SCOs								
Buildings	4	4	4	5	6	6	14	15
Operational costs	-	-	-	-	3	3	3	3

(a) DECONT also organised information meeting at DDC and VDC levels.

7. The project has also provided support in the construction of buildings for the SCOs in all three districts. A total of 15 SCO buildings are reported completed or nearly finished. The project is providing operational costs in some cases.

8. NGO staff have participated in a number of training programs organised by the project, for example, in gender orientation and training of trainers, legal awareness training and others as shown in Table 9.2. The staff have also been involved in the planning and needs identification process and participated in all project related workshops organised by the ILO. A number of senior staff has also received opportunity for international exposure. Partner organisations reported that they have gained knowledge on gender and empowerment issues in practical terms and they are using this knowledge in other projects they are implementing in other parts of the country.

Table 9.2 Planned indicators and results achieved in NGO staff training

Activities	SOLVE Dhankuta		DEPROSC Nuwakot		VDRC Nawalparasi		TOTAL	
	Planned	Achieved	Planned	Achieved	Planned	Achieved	Planned	Achieved
Field Staff								
Cooperative Management	6	5	6	-	-	6	12	11
Accounts	5	4	5	-	-	2	10	6
Loan Management	5	4	5	4	-	4	10	12
IPM	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Off season vegetable	-	-	-	6	-	-	-	6
Program management	-	-	5	9	-	2	5	11
Gender orientation	-	-	-	7	-	7	-	14
Other	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	2

9. There are evidences of cooperation and sharing among the project partners based on each organisation's areas of competence. For example,

- VDRC provided training for trade union staff from DECONT and GEFONT, particularly in savings and credit programs. The trade unions provided orientation on social dialogue issues to NGOs.
- The two partner NGOs, namely, VDRC and SOLVE shared training opportunities, sending project beneficiaries and staff to visit each other's program. VDRC provided training to the project beneficiaries from SOLVE.
- The three partner NGOs conducted joint meeting on formulating strategies and concepts on the savings and credit programs.

10. The reporting format from the implementation partners have been standardised as recommended by the Mid-Term Review. The quality and level of information still varies from report to report.

11. The NGOs could provide mentoring assistance to the groups and particularly to the cooperatives in self-monitoring.

The program belongs to the poor women and they hold the central interest in effectiveness of the program in reducing poverty. Monitoring at the SCO and cooperatives level should develop the capacity of the women to hold the program and the service delivery agencies accountable.

12. A process of performance and financial audit should be introduced at the cooperative level. Similarly, gender auditing should be a process of evaluation and self-assessment.



Project Staff, Dhankuta (BKS)

13. The EEW project could provide lessons for number of projects within the Nepal Country Program of the ILO and similarly it can learn lessons from the other ILO projects. This mutual learning and cooperation could, in particular, be fostered with the time-bound program on child labour project, the ILO/STEP project and the bonded labour projects. There are similar components in each project and inter-project sharing of lessons and approaches would have a synergy effect and be a form of replication of good practices. Between these projects almost the whole country could be covered with similar approach.

14. There are also resources within the ILO system from which the EEW project could get conceptual input and contribute in furthering the corporate knowledge base. For example, from the SAAT/MDT in New Delhi, besides the excellent support from the gender division, the cooperation could be extended with the enterprises development division as the project is moving towards this area. Extension of Start and Improve Your Business could be another area of cooperation.

15. Similarly, the ILO has other areas of competence, like the cooperatives, at the regional and headquarters levels, for sharing of ideas and support. Discussions during the project evaluation related workshops have identified a number of areas of policy level shortcomings regarding cooperative movement in Nepal where the ILO could contribute at the national policy level.

15. At this point in time, as the project is searching for new areas of opportunities while considering phasing out direct intervention as well as looking for opportunities for wider dissemination of lessons learned, the project should consider following management structures, - Creating a small, but multidisciplinary pool of local professional experts, comprising of local Nepalese know-how, to provide process-oriented advisory support to the ILO/EEW Nepal Chapter and the partner organisations by discussing relevant issues, reflecting on activities and developing and analyzing new strategies. The services of this team could also be available to ILO projects mentioned above and other national as well as bi- and multilateral projects of other donors.

- One of the members of this team could be an external monitor, who would report to the CTA. The person could provide support to the Project Coordinator at certain intervals (quarterly), at a conceptual level as well as in assuring that the recommendations from reviews/evaluations are implemented. The time of a Project Managers/Coordinator is often pre-occupied with managing the day-to-day activities of the project (the trees) and there is no time for conceptualising and strategizing (the forest).

16. Finally, it is time to design a strategy of withdrawal of support to partner NGOs. Their departure must go hand in hand with linking the women's cooperatives and groups with resource persons and organisations at the district level to provide access to local know-how. As two of the NGOs are locally based, they feel that they are obliged to continue support to the cooperatives and groups. However, the achievement or satisfaction of accomplishment should arise if the cooperatives and groups function as capable, independent organisations with professional relationship with the promoting partner (the NGOs) as contemporaries.

CASE 5. SURAKSHA HANDICRAFT PRODUCTION GROUP

SMALL EFFORT, BIG CHANGE

Rupauliya is a community of Tharus in Nawalparasi located off the main highway between Narayanghat and Butwal. A group of 21 interested women formed the Surakshya Women Handicraft Production Group, at Chhibani. Traditionally, women of the Tharu community are used to weaving *dhakiya* (basket) from different fiber plants like *mujha*, *gundha*, *patera*, etc. These baskets are used as wedding gifts.

In order to improve this traditional weaving skill and produce baskets for the market, EEOW project arranged for a five-days training on handicraft production. Thereafter, few of members participated in a workshop on "Micro-enterprises Identification for Women" conducted at Narayanghat.

EEOW project mediated an agreement (witnessed by VDRC and Nawalparasi Chamber of Commerce) between the group and Nepal Knot Craft Centre in Kathmandu whereby the Centre agreed to:

- provide handicraft production training and upgrade skills of group members so that the produce is of standard quality,
- sign a three-year contract to procure all products of stated quality (type of raw materials used, stitch patterns, size, shape, colour and design) under the contract.

The project also provided inputs (handloom frames, hataso and other required materials for weaving) to the women. The women brought *pateras* from nearby marshy land

and other *gulgulla* and *gundh* from marshy land elsewhere. They cut and collect the raw materials and their husbands bring them on their bicycles to their home.

In the first agreement 60 pieces of handicrafts (particularly mats) were produced. This was 65 percent of the order from Nepal Knot Craft. Two pieces were returned for poor quality and some received only 50 percent payment. In the second consignment, one woman received 10 percent more than the agreed amount because of her creativity in design. Majority of the women received full payment (only three items were returned).

Shyam Badan Shrestha, owner of Nepal Knot Craft, confident that these women have the potential to improve, added "the women are still having difficulty with the concept of measurement; and, they need further practice on making the ends straight, consistency in pattern and in colour combination." She is seeing improvement in the product and mentioned that "one mat was presented to Her Majesty the Queen at the recent exhibition".

"We only used to make simple mats from straw for our home use but EEOW provided us technical know-how and improved our skills" said, Kanti Devi Chaudhary, President of the group. "We are now saving some money in our saving and credit group," said Padmini Chaudhary a member of Surakshya Handicraft Group.

CREATING SPACES FOR FUTURE ACTION



10. BUILDING ON STRENGTHS AND SUCCESSES

10.1 What is Working?

The objective of the EOW project was to contribute to the alleviation of poverty, promotion of equality and enhancement of the overall status of (rural) women. The project followed a two pronged strategy. The first focus was to promote the self-help potential of women, by forming and strengthening groups among them. Experience shows that the highest demand was for savings, credit as well as income generating activities. The second focus was on the social empowerment following a rights based approach to promote decent conditions and quality of life and gender equality. In addition, capacity building of the women's groups and organisational development of partners were complementary activities. Time saving activities helped reduce the drudgery faced by women in fulfilling daily household chores.

This double pronged approach supported by the complementary activities is achieving a multiplier effect to empower women and alleviate poverty. Self-help processes and savings and credit groups was the entry point of the project. Participation in self help groups is augmenting the entrepreneurial abilities of women. Raising the problem-solving capacity of self-help groups is leading to the altered social relations and economic upliftment. People's participation is being seen as a precondition for significant and sustained development. Gender relations are beginning to change positively.

The purpose of this mission was to assess the success of the project in achieving its objectives and providing recommendations for policy makers. In reviewing any project in Nepal, one has to keep in mind the serious conflict and security situation that has affected every part of the country since 1996 and has brought development activities to a virtual standstill in many rural districts. Whatever the project has been able to achieve is within this perspective of these frame conditions which were socially and economically not conducive to start with.

The Mid-Term Review in September 2000 had made three observations regarding "what is working" in the project. They were:

- (a) Through the social mobilisation process, more women are being organised. This was seen as a building block for future activities.
- (b) A start has been made in the social awareness process and it was already one of the most appreciated components of the project.
- (c) A pluralistic arrangement of institutional partnership promoted by the project provides a platform for policy reform.

The following discussion shows that there are more things working in the project compared to the situation two years ago.



10.2 At the Beneficiary Level

A. Reaching the Target and Confidence Building: *critical mass of involvement is being created*

The social mobilisation process is involving the women in the project area and reaching some of the poorest sections of the rural settlements. 5,635 women are participating in project activities through 62 savings and credit groups and/or cooperatives. It is estimated that 45 percent of the households in the project VDCs have been incorporated in the program.

A critical mass of women's involvement in the SCOs/cooperatives cannot only change the behaviour of the VDC or service agencies but also change perception and attitudes towards the women. As women gain self-confidence they begin to demand social and political rights. VDCs and other agencies in the villages are reported to begin to pay attention to the priorities of women. More active and targeted involvement of young women (youth) is another areas for consideration (para-vets, para-legal, etc. as well as promoting youth self-employment). This aspect of the project could be strengthened further.

B. Enhanced Social Capital: *need to keep the cooperative initiative alive*

Participation in savings and credit groups and cooperatives have augmented the entrepreneurial abilities of women and enhanced their self-esteem. So far 16 SCOs have been registered and eight are in the process of being registered out of 50 SCOs.

The most fundamental challenge for the future will be in keeping the cooperative initiative alive by going through the learning process without dampening the initiative of self-organisation towards strong cooperative organisations. As member equity increase, the movement will become vulnerable to attack. A mentoring program is necessary for the next while so that the cooperatives become functional. Besides managerial issues, formation of federation of cooperatives at district levels, instituting a monitoring system (self-monitoring) by the cooperatives members themselves and instituting performance and financial audit should contribute to further strengthening capacity of the cooperatives.

All project holders must realise that increase in income alone is not sufficient for poverty alleviation and women's empowerment. Cooperative movement and collective action must move beyond banking or economic activities. Conscientization of social and political issues must be an integral part to make structural changes. Cooperatives are also a social movement and these higher order organisations must be made capable of going beyond the relatively narrow mandate of financial intermediation to challenging the frame conditions.

C. Increased New Opportunities: *innovations on commercialisation of economic entrepreneurship, market linkages and technology transfer*

Both income and wealth are increasing among SCO members, privately and collectively. Of the 50 SCO/cooperatives, 40 have a savings of over Rs.40,000 and 24 have savings of over Rs.70,000. The total individual savings during the past two years has increased by five folds (from Rs.588,870 to Rs.2,973,174). It is reported that 2,954 women are participating in economic activities in the three districts which is nearly 59 percent of the women members in the groups. Among them 1,390 women are benefiting from vegetable farming alone and earning more that Rs.3000 per year. 53 of them earn more that Rs.30,000 per year. Project reports also show that vegetable cultivation alone provided an income of Rs.4,957,400 in Dhankuta in one year.

The loan disbursements have increased by more than 11 times from 712 to 8,153 in terms of number of transactions and by nearly 13 times in terms of value from Rs.1,116,234 to Rs.14,367,194 since the Mid-Term Review. The hegemony of the money lenders and indebtedness are decreasing. Out of the interest charged to the members, the groups have earned Rs.1,006,561 as profit. This is 7.5 percent of the investment. The net profit, after all expenditure, was 5.8 percent of the invested amount.

In strategic terms rural cooperatives must build the economic base of the members and rural clients. Women are not only involved in sewing and knitting but, as emerging entrepreneurs, are increasingly undertaking more productive sphere of economic activities like agriculture, livestock rearing, handicraft and other small businesses.

The project has initiated an innovative approach in commercialisation of economic entrepreneurship among the rural women. Women are starting to produce particularly vegetable at commercial scale and handicrafts for the Kathmandu market. Another contribution of the project is starting a linkage between the rural women producers and women entrepreneurs in

Kathmandu through the involvement of the employers' organisation. Also important is the support in technology transfer to the rural areas linked with the economic activities.

However these initiatives have just been started. Business counselling, product diversification, product chain and value adding are going to be enormous tasks for the project. Similarly, product marketing based on assured market strategy and market demand is very important and essential interventions. Likewise linkages with financial institutions for increased credit volume are necessary as women need larger amounts money than they have.

D. Group Dynamics and Collective Action: *evidence of social awareness among women*

Women did repeatedly state that they have now developed a habit of savings, the credit program increased access to funds and has freed them from indebtedness, the monthly savings are from their own income, they are contributing to household income, etc. The micro-credit program and cooperatives is leading to a perceptible increase in women's self-respect and awareness, an increase in their involvement in decision making and leadership, and self-confidence to increase their income and improve their living conditions.

Furthermore, the project activities have raised consciousness among the women and heightened their interest in social issues. The perception about the social structures is changing. Earlier the women were governed by rigidly defined caste and even political barriers. Now the dividing line is less sharp and women from different caste and political groups work together. Husbands are reported to be more supportive of their wives.

Although women mentioned these changes above, there is still a long way to go. Tangible results of empowerment will take time to become evident. It takes time for the voices of the poor in general and voices of women in particular to be heard. There is an issue of societal value change and change cannot be expected in two to three years of project cycle.

Another innovative aspect of this project is the promotion of economic and social empowerment issues together to support decent conditions of living and improved quality of life. This approach must be maintained and particularly the social aspects should not be defocused or diluted with economic arguments. The project should be cautious if partners are not able to take both of these aspects together. Activities to increase gender sensitization to promote gender equality and social justice must be prominently targeted during the next phase.

E. Women's Capacity Building: *slow but sure*

Among the women who have participated in training programs, 70.8 percent have started growing vegetables and all of them are earning at least Rs.3,000 per year. Over one-third of women are earning more than Rs.12,000 per year.

The project has adopted an effective strategy of training local women as trainers and entrusting the field level dissemination of knowledge through them. The project has shown that marginalised women can become barefoot experts through continuous capacity building. Women are not asking for subsidy or money or handouts but instead asking for skills and training. One of the most significant training provided by the project was the workshops



Group Meeting, Dhankutai (SOLVE)

conducted between the women and established women entrepreneurs and the linkages established between the former and in particular WEAN and Nepal Knot Craft.

Therefore, in the perspective of Decent Work, the project has initiated affirmative action not only to promote self employment through entrepreneurship but also to widen the occupational choices for women and breaking the occupational gender segregation.

It can be noticed that many women have received training in SCO promotion, fresh vegetable cultivation and in accounts. More attention is necessary for capacity building in other areas of micro enterprises including value adding, processing, packaging, marketing, pest management, alternative micro enterprises (besides vegetables), etc. During this evaluation, women have identified a number of areas where they need further capacity building support and is already mentioned in earlier sections of this report. Internship with partner NGOs and inter-group visits would further strengthen the women's cooperatives.

10.2 At the Institutional Level

A. Pluralistic Partnership and Linkages: *partnership is possible*

An asset of this project is the pluralistic arrangement of partnership with organisations. Contracts with these organisations are based on comparative advantage of each organisation to deliver services to the intended beneficiaries. These partners include government institutions, National Planning Commission, elected institutions at the district and village levels, workers' organisations, employers' organizations, non-governmental organisations and of course the self-groups of women at the grassroots. There are evidences of cooperation and sharing among the project partners based on each organisation's areas of competence

Government

There are coordination forums at the national and district levels. The national level forum is being chaired by the NPC. This is one of the successes of the project to create an environment of "participatory action research" for policy input. But, donor and ILO support can only be understood as subsidiary and complementary to Nepal's own efforts in this field. The project must continue to foster close collaboration with the government and national development organisations. Additionally, the local employment generation possibilities demonstrated by the project in rural areas should be of interest to the government in its effort at peace building, and in providing relief and rehabilitation from the current conflict in the country.



Woman weaving mat, Nawalparasi (BKS)

Employers' Organisation

The employers' organisation is keen to continue cooperation with the women's cooperatives through its district chapters, commodity associations and business counselling centres (being established). An environment for business-to-business linkages will help in the growth of the micro-enterprises, i.e. the cooperation with WEAN, other commodity associations as well as with successful women entrepreneurs must continue to expand.

Trade Unions

One trade union stated that their involvement in the program has assisted in organisation of the agriculture sector workers. Another trade union had purposefully selected to be involved in

awareness raising activities. The experience here proved that definitely this was an area of competence for the workers' organisations. The trade unions have expressed interest to continue working with the project in their areas of competence.

NGOs

Focus on contracting local, district based NGOs (SOLVE, VDRC) provides possibility of continuity of services to the SCOs/cooperatives albeit at a reduced scale. The partner NGOs stated that they themselves have gone through a process of self-review and evaluation regarding gender equality issues and incorporation of gender equality and social justice aspects in their programs. NGO partners must focus activities on both the social and economic aspects of the project. This women's empowerment project is more than the traditional financial cooperative. Also, NGOs should concentrate on weaning away from the SCOs and cooperatives during the follow-up phase of the project.

DDC/VDCs and Line Agencies

In order to develop women's access to the locally available services and technology, linkage development among the women's organisations and different government and non-government organisations in the district was targeted. Currently, there are few examples of individual project support being received from VDCs and line agencies. Some DDCs, like Nuwakot, has been involved in the Project Working Group. The scope for linkage here is enormous regarding the coordination role of the DDC (among similar projects in the district) and the scope for technical support from the line agencies.

Financial Institutions

The flow of funds for credit purposes has not kept pace with the needs and ambitions. Although local savings seems to be increasing, as the funds are still not able to meet the demand and banking intermediaries should be in place to back the rural savings and credit organisations. NGOs must train the cooperatives and groups to gain access to and approach district officials to avail services and to negotiate with financial institutions for loans.

Within the ILO Nepal Country Office

The EEOW project could provide lessons for the number of projects within the Nepal Country Program of the ILO and similarly it can learn lessons from the other ILO projects. This mutual learning and cooperation could, in particular, be fostered with the time-bound program on child labour project, the ILO/STEP project and the bonded labour projects.

Within the ILO

Besides sourcing support from the gender division of SAAT/MDT, there are also resources within the ILO system from which the EEOW project could get conceptual input and contribute in furthering the corporate knowledge base. The cooperation could be extended with the enterprises development division including extension of Start and Improve Your Business, regarding cooperatives, etc. ILO could contribute in the strengthening of the national policy on cooperatives.

10.3 At the Conceptual Level

A. Sustainability

Cooperatives are a given. Some of them have own staff and income from credit is being used for administrative services of the cooperatives. Vegetable farming has increased the income of individual members. There is a vested interest to assuring that the irrigation project continues functioning because this is directly linked to vegetable production and cash income. Para-vets are socially accepted and they are being employed and generating income. Local user committee and maintenance fund has been created for the water supply projects and seems to be working.

Farmers are buying services and inputs because of increased income and the vested interest in keeping the enterprise going. The project provided only limited subsidy on inputs and has a cost recovery program.

B. Replication

All VDCs in Dhankuta have requested for extension of the program, there is high expectation. But, replication is not automatic or spontaneous beyond local territory. Social mobilisation of the poor requires both an internal catalyst and external sponsor. So far the project has been financing the program in the 15 VDCs in three districts.

Realistically besides policy support and moral commitment, one cannot expect the government to finance any replication given the severe budgetary constraints. This is already evident because there are very few projects where NPC takes interest in overseeing implementation like that with the EEOW.

So replication has to be seen and pursued in alternative ways:

- includes growth in membership in the groups and cooperatives
- extending the lessons and experiences of the project to the neighbouring VDCs through inter-group visits
- share the experience of the project at the district level with other similar projects
- transferring lessons from EEOW project to other related projects within the ILO program portfolio in Nepal.

Other options are to identify and scale up workable problem solutions successfully action researched in EEOW project in a form of a new project with different thrust.

CASE 6. RAM KUMARI THAPA

EVERYTHING IS POSSIBLE

The income of Ram Kumari Thapa, a member of Tallo Bokre Vegetable Group, in Parewadin VDC, Dhankuta has increased. Two years ago, at the time SOLVE/Nepal brought the EOW program to her village, she was like any other woman. Going from house to house, the field staff from SOLVE explained about the project objectives and process. Ram Kumari was one of the women who showed interest in the program. Soon a group of women initiated the Shivalaya Savings and Credit Group and started savings and loan activities.

Ram Kumari is a mother of one son. Eight years ago her husband left her and she has been living in her parents home since. She was looking for ways to pay her son's school fees. So in consultation with her group members and field staff, she took 10gm of cauliflower seeds at 50 percent subsidy and took the first step in vegetable farming. Within three months she sold 10 quintiles of cauliflower in Dhankuta bazaar at Rs.20 per kilo with a total income of Rs.20,000. Her net income was Rs.14,000 after deducting the expenses. Her joy was immense. She thought "who said it could not be done. Everything is possible."

From her earnings, besides paying her sons school fees, she helped her mother and brother to renovate the house, particularly the leaking roof. She also bought cardamom seeds worth Rs.1,000 and *amriso* (broom grass) seedlings for Rs.200. With the experience from the first season she also started cultivating radish and peas also during the following season. This process of earning and reinvestment continued from season to season.

In the past she started cultivating her vegetable in her parents' land, to-day she has bought 5.5 ropains of land in her own name. She also has a savings of Rs.3,000 in the bank. She has bought few cows and goats, but since she is very busy with her vegetables, these animals are being raised by other families in the village. She has also built a nursery.

Future is never out of her mind. She wants to start a poultry farm now. She has heard about composting and wishes that the SOLVE field staff teach her about it. She repeatedly stressed, "I need more training. I still have so much to learn." Happiness has returned in her life. Her son is now studying in class 4.

11. CREATING SPACES FOR THE FUTURE

The document on the ILO contribution to the PRSP in Nepal has made policy recommendations that a framework needs to be instituted to promote entrepreneurship development for women.³³ It states that provision of institutional support, access to credit and market will help transform low level subsistence enterprise run by women into high value added enterprises. The document further suggests involvement of district chapters of FNCCI and the Chambers of Commerce as well as business counselling centres. The document also recommends supporting affirmative action for equal opportunity program and removing occupational boundaries. It recognises the potential for promoting self-help groups for economic growth through local generation of social and economic capital.

The ILO is committed to support His Majesty's Government's efforts to implement the PRSP strategy and has submitted to the National Planning Commission the above mentioned recommendation document. Moreover, in this document, the role of the ILO is defined in the context of the Decent Work concept, which is at the heart of the ILO agenda and its primary goal. In order to assure their relevance, policy recommendations must be based on practical experience, strengths and successes. The EOW project has initiated activities at the pilot scale in the three districts very consistent with every aspect of the above policy level recommendations in the ILO and the PRSP document. The EOW project provides this practical base and experience.

The conflict in the rural areas of Nepal has severely affected the social, political and economic life of the people. Particularly vulnerable are the women because more and more men have migrating or they are now widows and the economic base as well as coping mechanisms are not available. This project has shown that social and economic activities can be implemented in the rural areas even during the times of conflict. (The project did face many constraints at times to operate in unstable and insecure environment.) The government should be interested in replicating the experience of this project for promoting self-employment for peace building.

When it started, the project expressed its commitment to the rural woman to help them improve their living conditions. Many successes of the EOW project have been documented in this report. However, many issues have also been identified which require further assistance or to fulfil this commitment. Both the rural women i.e. the beneficiaries as well as the project have achieved a significant amount during the past few years (despite the difficult security situation). But, a project like this, which aims at improving the living conditions and empowerment of women in consonance with their own priorities and needs, can only yield results through a long-term process.

Moreover, this project has formulated a basis for replicating the experience to create a broad mass impact about which the current donor plus the ILO should be most interested to continue their involvement or association in the future. This is indeed a rare opportunity in development administration to be able to take a success story and make other successes out of it. The achievements should not be allowed to collapse or regress but rather every effort should be made to continue. The story of this quite social transformation should not end yet with pilot testing in a few VDCs in few districts which in itself is not yet complete.

So, providing some continuity to the EOW project would be judicious and relevant in the following context,

- (a) to demonstrate ongoing commitment to the rural women in the project area,
- (b) to provide a practical base in relation to the commitment to assist HMG/N in the implementation of the PRSP and the Decent Work agenda
- (c) to address economic and social empowerment issues in conflict areas, contribute to building peace in the rural areas of Nepal and to provide relief to the vulnerable women.

³³ ILO (2002). Decent Work for Poverty Reduction: An ILO Contribution to the PRSP in Nepal, ILO, Kathmandu.

A number of alternatives (individually and/or collectively) are possible to spread the effective of the present EEW project beyond the boundaries of the present VDCs and districts:

- ✚ Design a follow-up project for replicating the activities beyond the current pilot areas
 - o based on practical experience of the EEW project, to implement the policy recommendations in the ILO and the PRSP document
 - o maintain the social and economic focus of the follow-up project
 - o at the same time, not to forget the roots of its success, continue support in selected priority areas to make the cooperatives in the three districts sustainable, and in increasing the number of women involved in the present districts/villages (which is also a form of replication)
- ✚ Within ILO Nepal program,
 - o replicate the EEW experience in other projects (like the time bound program on child labour, STEP, bonded labour, etc.), which cover most of the districts of the country
 - o also focus on extending the advisory support from and consultation with other sectoral areas of competence of the ILO (enterprise development including youth self-employment etc.)
 - o continue cooperation with the gender equality and social justice promotion program
 - o design a program for policy level support in the cooperative sector
- ✚ Take few innovative parts of the project and replicate them in a larger scale as a separate follow-up of the project activities. For example, there are cooperatives throughout the country. As EEW has benefited from linking activities with the social partners, a new project could make this knowledge and experience to be made available to all the cooperatives through the country. Such areas for multiplying success are:
 - o commercialisation of economic entrepreneurship
 - o establishing market linkages and providing business counselling through involvement of employers' organisation
 - o gender sensitization towards promoting equitable and empowered society and improve decent conditions and quality of life
 - o technology transfer linked with economic activities
 Other activities would also be possible.

✚ While we only think of the expansion and replication, we cannot forget about the work, improvement, fine tuning and further conceptual development required with the cooperatives and enterprises in the present three pilot districts. Replication has the potential danger of spreading oneself too thin while there is still need of going deeper into a selected set of issues still requiring assistance. The activities should focus on consolidating the present achievements through specific, time-bound, follow-up activities.

The project still needs to provide the following support to the groups and cooperatives in the three districts:

- a. improve the dynamics of self-organisation with focus on both social and economic rights and environment, demand raising and claim making capacity
- b. promote higher order cooperative structure (federation) which is capable of working the economy to the advantage of their members
- c. mediate institutional frame conditions at micro, meso and macro levels and harmonize national policy and structures with district and village administration and household entrepreneurship of women



- d. strengthen product diversification, product chain and value adding within the context of entrepreneurship activities by the women
- e. mediate market structures to improve access, pricing and service for the women entrepreneurs
- f. mediate linkages with financial institutions for increased credit volume
- g. improve access by the women to judicial, health, education, transport, commercial, professional services, etc. whether they are provided privately or by the State
- h. provide hands-on, apprenticeship experience to group/cooperative women leaders with the partner NGOs

Finally, going back from the policy level to the life and realities of rural Nepal and rural women, in this report a number of case studies have been presented about individual women: the commercial vegetable growers Shanti Devi Tharu and Sabitri Adhikary; “our veterinary doctors” Safala Nepal and Saraswati Nepal; and, finally, Ram Kumari Thapa who thinks “everything is possible”. These were just a few women in the project area, who started with very little and had everything going against them. But now they have HOPE for the future. In our decision making process we must be able to create a small space for their future, their hope. This should not be the end!