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Breaking New Ground



Conference Report Volume I

International Conference on Women's Empowerment
Hotel Soaltee Crowne Plaza, Kathmandu, Nepal
14 - 16 December, 1998

About the Host

Since 1951, United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has worked in Nepal to encourage broad-based economic growth, currently through agriculture, health, women's empowerment, and hydropower development. Agricultural development, environmental protection and hydropower combine to increase farm-production and slow deforestation. Human health protection is supported by family planning, mother/child health campaigns, and reduction of the spread of infectious diseases. Women's empowerment is strengthened in an integrated, cross-sectoral program of literacy, legal awareness-raising and advocacy skills training, access to financial services and microenterprise development.

The Women's Empowerment Program (WEP) is implemented through internal and national non-governmental organizations within a framework agreement with the Government of Nepal. 100,000 women in community-based economic groups across 21 districts are participating in this 3-year program – the of its kind within USAID.

As an experimental program, WEP is documenting new lessons learned about the value-added of its integrated approach as compared with other programs focused on women. This is the background for hosting the international women's empowerment conference "Breaking New Ground": to share the lessons and experience gained, to discuss and compare notes on successes and failures, and to establish a set of "promising empowerment practices" for the new millennium.

Organizers

The International Conference on Women's Empowerment is funded by USAID/Nepal and WIDtech, the technical office on Women in Development of USAID/Washington.

NEPCON Private Limited, Management and Consultancy Company of the Soaltee Group, provided administrative, logistic and technical support to the conference on a turnkey contract.

SAMANATA, Institute for Social and Gender Equality, is a private sector organization managed by a group of Nepalese women professionals with the aim of advocating for and addressing the social, environmental and gender equity issues in the Nepalese development process. SAMANATA is providing professionals and technical management support to the conference.

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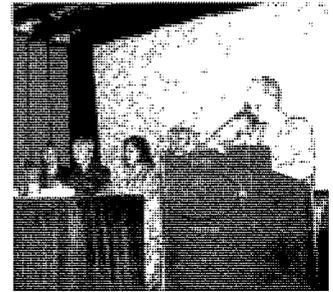
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Table of Content



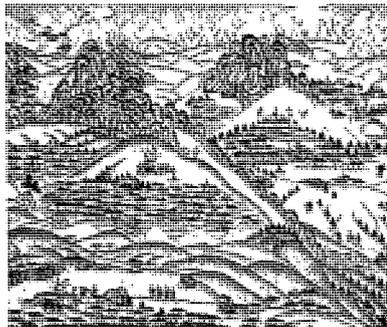
Background	1
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DAY I Conference Proceedings	3
Inauguration	3
Welcome Speech by Joanne Hale, Mission Director, USAID	3
Keynote Speech by Hon Minister Ms Meena Pandey, MWSW	3
Opening Remarks by Janet Bogue, Charge d'Affaires, US Embassy	3
Images of Empowerment - A Multimedia Show	3
The Women's Empowerment Program (WEP) Context by Jane Nandy, Team Leader, USAID	4
First working session WEP Today	4
A real empowerment tale: The story of Pratima Sharma	5
Inroads to Rural Nepal. Field trips to the country side	6
Visit to Chutwan District	6
Visit to Nuwakot District	6
Visit to Rupandehi District	7
Discussion session of empowerment in Nepal	8
Optional evening session	8



DAY II Conference Proceedings	9
Feeding Back Impressions - Recommendations for WEP	11
Summing up of WEP	12
Flying High: Visions of an empowered world	13
Breaking New Ground - A play by sarvanam.	13
HARDtalk - an interactive panel	14
Arts and Crafts of Empowerment - an exhibition	17
Optional evening session	17

DAY III Conference Proceedings	19
Empowerment program action planning	20
Defining Promising Empowerment Practices	24
Awards ceremony - the best practices	24
Concluding Session	
Wrapping Up by Jane Nandy, Team Leader, USAID	26
Closing Remarks by Janet Bogue, Charge d'Affaires	26
Networking and farewell	26
Conference evaluation by participants	26



Annexures

Annex 1 The road to the conference	27
Annex 2 List of participants and address	29
Annex 3 Conference program	35
Annex 4 List of other annexes	39
Fax order form	41

Acronyms

AI	Appreciative Inquiry
APA	Appreciative Planning & Action
ASEED	Asian Society for Entrepreneurship Education and Development
CBO	Community Based Organization
CECI	Canadian Center for International Studies & Cooperation
DEPROSC	Development Project Service Center
FP	Family Planning
GAD	Gender and Development
GTZ	German Technical Cooperation
HMG	His Majesty's Government
IEC	Information, Education and Communication
INGO	International Non Governmental Organization
JHU	John Hopkins University
MIS	Management Information System
MWSW	Ministry of Women and Social Welfare, Nepal
NEPCON	Nepal Consultancy Private Limited
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
NECOS	Nepal Community Service
NWC	National Women Council, Solomon Islands
NZAID	New Zealand Aid
PCRW	Production Credit for Rural Women Program in Nepal
PNI	Pakistan NGO Initiative
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
RRA	Rapid Rural Appraisal
RR&A	Rights, Responsibilities and Advocacy Program in Nepal
SAMANATA	SAMANATA-Institute for Social and Gender Equality
SCO	Saving and Credit Organization
TAF	The Asia Foundation
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WDD	Women Development Division of the Ministry of Local Development, Nepal
WEP	Women's Empowerment Program
WFP	World Food Program
WID	Women in Development



Background

The strategic objective for women's empowerment adopted by USAID in Nepal is unique among USAID country missions. This approach goes beyond traditional mainstreaming which includes gender issues in separate sectoral projects of the portfolio. The strategic focus on women's empowerment serves to raise the perceived value of women's contributions to national development and directs USAID/Nepal's activities on women.

In developing the Women's Empowerment Program (WEP), USAID/Nepal staff had to address unique policy, programmatic and management issues. Thus, it was felt that sharing this experience and lessons learned in developing and implementing the women's empowerment strategy would provide development agencies with important insights into 'promising practices' and help in identifying other potential approaches to strategically address gender concerns in development programming.

Keeping this in mind, it was decided that an international conference would be organized to:

§ Present USAID/Nepal's Strategic Objective on Women's Empowerment as one successful approach to integrate gender into development;

- § Present benchmarks, highlights and constraints in the process of developing the Women's Empowerment Program;
- § Share experiences with other approaches which have successfully promoted a strong strategic focus on women's empowerment in operations by different agencies worldwide; and
- § Identify "promising empowerment practices" central to the development of new and better programs strategically focused on women.

The conference was designed to share real-life, field-based experiences and promising practices. In order to ensure a broad-based discussion, around 100 designers, planners, implementers and practitioners were invited for this first of its kind conference. The invitees represented INGOs, NGOs and donors from all over the world, and the host country, who were interested in creatively framing the empowerment debate and strategies for the new millennium by building on real-life experiences, rather than just academic theories.

The conference was organized by USAID Nepal, in collaboration with NEPCON Pvt. Ltd. and SAMANATA - Institute for Social and Gender Equality (See Annex 1 - The road to the conference).



Conference Proceedings

Day I

The international conference on women's empowerment "Breaking New Ground" was organized in Kathmandu, Nepal from 14 to 16 December 1998. The conference had two parallel themes. Theme one was designed to share experience from USAID/Nepal's unique Women's Empowerment Program as an approach which goes beyond traditional mainstreaming of gender issues in separate sectoral projects. The second theme was to share real-life, field-based experiences from all over the world and identify promising women's empowerment practices for the next millennium.

Welcoming the 89 participants from 16 countries from five continents and the host country (See Annex 2 - List of participants and contact addresses), the conference began on an upbeat note, inviting the international development community assembled to creatively discuss women's empowerment strategies. The conference was designed to ensure maximum interaction and sharing of experience in the sessions. The first day was organized to give participants deeper insights into the empowerment efforts of the USAID program in Nepal by a stage-setting inauguration, a presentation on the Women's Empowerment Program and field trips to program sites in rural Nepal.

Inauguration

Welcoming all guests, participants and members of the press, Joanne Hale, Mission Director for USAID Nepal shared highlights of her 26 years of experience of working with women's empowerment through different development interventions. She emphasized women's strength and resilience to emerge empowered against all odds. While concluding her remarks, Joanne quoted Mother Teresa who said, "We cannot do great things. We can only do small things with great love". She urged all participants to work with greater love to better understand empowerment and its relevance to national development. (See Annex 4 - Welcome Speech by Joanne Hale, Director, USAID/Nepal)

In her inaugural address, Hon. Minister for Women and Social Welfare Mrs. Meena Pandey threw light on the national development policies of His Majesty's Government of Nepal and its agenda for women's empowerment. She commended the significant and valuable role being played by USAID in Nepal's overall development. She also thanked USAID for organizing the Conference, and expressed hope that the exercise would prove to be a milestone towards women's empowerment in a practical and a realistic way. (See Annex 5 - Keynote speech by Hon. Mrs. Meena Pandey, Minister of State for Women and Social Welfare.)

Thanking the participants for their presence Janet Bogue, Charge d' Affaires, US Embassy remarked that the conference was proof of the excitement surrounding the unique Women's Empowerment Program being implemented by USAID in Nepal. Ms. Bogue concluded her remarks by commenting that all the participants worked with women who dreamed, hoped, struggled and worked to get better choices to improve their well being and that of their families. Therefore, she hoped that participants would show these women and their future respect by giving their best to this landmark conference. (See Annex 6 - Opening remarks by Janet Bogue, Charge d'Affaires, US Embassy.)

A feature of the inauguration was a multimedia show entitled "Images of Empowerment". This audio-visual presentation gave a series of colorful snapshots of the status of Nepali women. Comparative images were portrayed of empowered as well as unempowered women. While on one hand the success which had come about in some women's lives through their joint group effort, and its impact on their families and communities was clearly depicted, on the other hand the plight of unempowered women, many of whom are not even aware of group mobilization, was also presented. A success story of a participant in the Women's Empowerment Program was portrayed and contrasted with the life of typical unempowered women. The multi media presentation provided all present a context and overview of Nepal, its development and the status and conditions of Nepali women.

At the end of the inaugural session Jane Nandy, Team Leader for the Women's Empowerment Strategic Objective, USAID/Nepal, explained the context of the conference "Breaking New Ground." Ms. Nandy remarked that the definition of empowerment, which was anchored in the concept of being able to make choices, was reached after a long and very public process of discussion, consultation and debate. Stating that a lot of effort and time had been invested in measuring empowerment, she felt the Women's Empowerment Program (WEP) could make a global contribution by documenting the impact of empowerment change.

Referring to the uniqueness of WEP among USAID Missions worldwide, Jane informed all present that the main lessons learned in framing this program had been documented in a case study which was provided to participants.

She said that WEP was different because it was forging a new way for women in development by having moved beyond the "add women in" mentality. The program was supporting women in three integrated, mutually reinforcing and synergistic dimensions: by providing functional literacy; by training women in legal rights and advocacy; and by promoting economic opportunities, giving women money in their hands. (See Annex 7 - The context of the Women's Empowerment Program Context by Jane Nandy, Team Leader, WEP)

As the inaugural session ended and participants were served refreshments, the first issue of the news bulletin "Empowerpoint" was made available to all. This special news bulletin was published on all three conference days. (See Annex 8 - Empowerpoint News bulletins)

First working session: WEP Today

The first session following the inauguration was a presentation of the structure and content of the Women's Empowerment Program (WEP) in Nepal. Through snapshots and video clips from the field Marcia Odell, Chief of Party for WEP from the INGO Pact and Julio Andrews (Andy), Representative, The Asia Foundation, presented the lessons learned on which WEP is based, as well as the opportunities and challenges of starting an integrated empowerment program.

In the presentation of the literacy and economic program components that Pact implements, Marcia cited examples of empowerment of women in practice, including the true story of Pratima from Rupandehi Dis-

trict in central Nepal. Marcia defined empowerment as a woman's ability to make choices and her ability to bring about changes for the better, not only for her own self but for those around her as well.

She further elaborated that the purpose of WEP is to enable women to improve their own well-being and that of their family and community by offering them an integrated package of literacy, economic opportunities in micro-finance and micro-enterprise development, and legal rights and advocacy training. These new skills will increase their influence on household decision making, increase household spending on family wellbeing, and increase their ability to act collectively for social change in their communities. The direct beneficiaries of the program will be 100,000 women in some 7,000 savings and credit groups across 21 districts of Nepal. The program is implemented through local NGOs with an Empowerment Worker functioning as the front-line contact person to the groups.

It was explained that literacy is the first intervention that women are offered after signing-up, as all other training in the program assumes that participants are literate at a basic level. A new three-month empowerment literacy material has been developed, which is provided to the groups as a self-tutorial.

Meanwhile, the economic intervention consists of support to the strengthening of the savings and micro-credit activities of the women's groups. Smaller groups are encouraged to amalgamate or join a co-operative to increase outreach and thereby the loanable fund. A post-literacy curriculum focusing on savings, credit and micro-enterprise development is provided, and technical assistance will be provided by regional economic opportunities advisers.

Marcia then presented the facts and figures of the Women's Empowerment Program. (See Figure 1.)

The unique partnering mechanism between Pact and The Asia Foundation (TAF) for the Women's Empowerment Program was also highlighted in the presentation. The two implementing partners use the same NGOs, field offices and field staff. The legal rights and advocacy component of WEP was presented by Andy.

Andy stated that the component addressing Rights, Responsibilities and Advocacy (RR&A) was a six month long action oriented intervention, designed to help women understand their legal rights and civic responsibilities (R&R 14 weeks @ 6 days a week), and initiate collective actions for social change and advocacy (10 weeks @ 2 days a week). The program is delivered through a literacy based curriculum designed by TAF and its consultants on the basis of prior programming experience.. The main modules are:

Rights: Legal awareness and redress

- § What is the law
- § How it affects women
- § How to obtain redress

Responsibilities: Civic participation

- § Local governance
- § National governance
- § Elections
- § Participation

Advocacy: Collective actions for social change

- § Social actions
- § Infrastructure actions

Some of the key areas covered in the RR&A curriculum relate to protection of basic rights, child marriage, divorce, property rights, legal aspects of saving and credit, violence against women, trafficking, and

reproductive rights. RR&A encourages women to seek informal redress rather than using the formal judicial system which is costly, time consuming, and generally not supportive of women. RR&A is not a legal aid program; rather it encourages and teaches women to resolve personal and community issues and disputes through informal resolution. (See Annex 9 - Background paper on WEP)

A real empowerment tale: The story of Pratima Sharma

After the presentation Ms. Pratima Sharma, the epitome of an empowered woman was called upon to share her story. Pratima explained that as her father could not support her schooling, she was asked to discontinue school at an early age. However, a determined Pratima set out to educate herself by starting a small shop during the vacation to earn her school fees. As she made enough profit she continued her studies. Now her shop was **paying for the education of her siblings** as well! Pratima's father was very proud of her and called her **the bread-winner of the family!!**

Basic data on WEP

- § Time frame: 34 months from the signing of the agreement with the Government of Nepal
- § Target women are from 21 districts of Nepal and belong to established economic groups.
- § WEP has begun to work with 120,000 women within some 7,000 economic groups in the program areas.
- § By the end of the program these 120,000 women will be able to read and write.
- § Likewise, 100,000 of these women will be running a micro enterprise, and
- § 81,000 of these women will meet certain income targets through their businesses.

The WEP methodology

- § Eligible women's groups commit themselves to the program by paying a participation fee which augments their own group saving fund
- § The entire delivery, training and outreach system applies a grassroots interactive approach
- § Innovative forms of self-instructional literacy and business skills training materials have been introduced

- § The program is virtually in the hands of the women themselves through the decentralized, bottom-up and demand-driven structure.

Empowerment literacy

- § Helps women to improve their reading, writing, and numeracy
- § Encourages women to learn and practice together, share experiences, make decisions, and take charge of their lives
- § Builds strong economic groups and introduces good business practices
- § Encourages open communication, especially with men, other family members, and the community.

Micro-enterprise development

- § Provides insight into sound entrepreneurship
- § Introduces best practices for business operations
- § Outlines key elements of the best small businesses in Nepal; and
- § Promotes the practice to keep adequate financial records.

Figure 1

Getting ready for the field

Participants were encouraged throughout the presentation to use the flashcards on their tables to note any queries, comments or observations regarding the Women's Empowerment Program. These would determine the issues of the group discussions planned for the following day. Participants were then divided into four groups, three groups would be visiting WEP program sites whereas one group would remain to discuss empowerment practices especially relevant to Nepal. Participants visiting the field sites were then given a short interval to change and prepare for the field trips.

Inroads to Rural Nepal: Field trips to the countryside

The three field trips were to Chitwan, Rupandehi and Nuwakot districts. While the groups to Chitwan and Rupandehi took a flight, the third group went to Nuwakot by bus.

Visit to Chitwan

A group of 18 participants joined the field trip to Chitwan. Upon arrival at Bharatpur airport, USAID vehicles took the participants to a total of three field sites, where staff from Pact and their NGO partners welcomed them.

The first stop was the "Chandra Jyoti Women's Saving and Credit Union". A member of the Union gave a presentation about the co-operative, its aims and objectives. This was followed by a brief discussion after which the group was divided into two to visit a tailoring enterprise and a poultry enterprise. The next visit was to the "Shreejana Women's Saving and Credit Co-operative", where following a brief presentation, participants were taken to see some of the income generating enterprises of this group, namely a bicycle repair shop and a cement foundry.

The last stop was the "Dhaddaghari Women's Society". The society was based on the concept of the Grameen Bank of Bangladesh and was promoted by the local Grameen replicator "Nirdhan". The interest rate

charged on loans was 24 per cent which most members of the society felt was too high for the loanable amounts, which were too small to undertake large projects. However, members were pleased that loans were easily accessible and 'obstacles' such as collateral usually posed by commercial banks were eliminated.

Overall, the trip was very interactive and a good learning experience for both the participants and the members of the various WEP groups. Participants were generally impressed with the level of co-operation that existed in the co-operatives and the local area network. They were surprised to learn that members were willing to pay 24 per cent interest on loans taken. Participants had a chance to hear the success stories, where women had repaid their loan installments and were applying for fresh loans for profitable businesses. The participants found it particularly interesting that most of the income generated was being spent by the women on improving their living standard, sending their children to school and attempting to generate more income for themselves. For most it was the only means of earning hard cash, as the farm output was merely enough for subsistence. Furthermore, though the groups were not giving loans to men, they still had their support in all their activities. Questions raised by participants centered around sustainability and empowerment experienced by the women after becoming members of the groups.

Visit to Nuwakot

After approximately an hour of driving up a winding hill road, the 23 participants were greeted by the sight of the mountain ranges in Kakani village. The staff of the NGO Development Project Service Center (DEPROSC) and the implementing INGO Canadian Center for International Studies & Cooperation (CECI) escorted them to the Tara Gaon Restaurant, where they were briefed about the program focused on evolving community based organizations (CBOs) to perform socio-economic activities in an efficient and cost effective manner. The CBOs, of which a number are women-only, are strengthened through a package of technical, managerial and training support as well as access to safe savings and credit for income generation

Reactions from the participants after the trip seemed to reinforce their opinion that "it is necessary to relate the credit programs with literacy, health, women's rights and advocacy responsibility". Furthermore, the trip proved very useful for as one participant put it, "women's empowerment issues are abstract until you see such villages with your own eyes".

Following the presentation, participants were taken to a nearby location where women CBO members were gathered for interaction. A brief description was given by one of the members about their present savings and credit services, their micro-enterprises and what this had meant in their lives. An exhibition-cum-sale of various vegetables and other products such as ghee (clarified butter), honey, herbs and spices produced by the CBO women was enthusiastically attended to by the participants, while experience was shared and issues discussed.

During a lively interaction with a research team currently assessing women's status in the CBOs of Nuwakot, participants compared notes on the ongoing activities in Nuwakot and activities in other parts of the world. Finally, the participants were invited for an interesting cultural program put up by the women portraying songs and drama for equality and empowerment.

Visit to Rupandehi

The Rupandehi group comprised 17 participants. Due to a delay of the flight, the group landed at Siddharthanagar airport 20 minutes behind schedule, but making up for lost time, participants were taken by car to Bihuli village, where the Nirdhan Utthan Bank (an NGO replicating the Grameen model in Nepal as a partner to WEP) was providing loans to village women. Upon arrival the guests were received by Dr. Harihar Dev Pant, Chairman, Nirdhan Utthan Bank.

The members were divided into three smaller groups and taken to meet various women who were conducting business with loans provided by Nirdhan. The groups visited Bina Pariyaar (a tailor), Jatuni Shah (a buffalo raiser) and Indra Kumari Rana (a pig farmer). Great interest was taken by the participants in the activities of these women who were asked numerous questions about their lives. Though most participants expressed excitement that such poor women were carrying out economic activities on their own, a few also expressed concerns that the activities may have added to their already heavy work burden. Some were also of the view that the women



were not actually recovering their labor cost.

Participants then met with members of the Nirdhan Center, Bihuli. Beena Neupane, the leader of the center, explained how the group had grown to its present membership of 50. She also explained the method of giving loans and repaying installments and claimed that the repayment rate of the poor women was cent percent.

The next stop was the Pipariya Village Women's group who had recently signed up with WEP. The group was also part of the Village-Based Community Development Project, which had 23 activities supported by the local NGO Nepal Community Service (NECOS). Despite the plans, shortage of time prevented the participants from walking a tour of the village. However, staff from WEP and NECOS presented some of the tools used in the Appreciative Planning and Action (APA) approach of WEP and showed the related drawings by the women's group portraying their concept of women's empowerment. Most pictures depicted a girl-child going to school, women earning money, and women running their own small vegetable gardens or shops.

Reactions from the participants after the trip seemed to reinforce their opinion that "it is necessary to relate the credit programs with literacy, health, women's rights and advocacy responsibility". Furthermore, the trip proved very useful for as one participant put it, "women's empowerment issues are abstract until you see such villages with your own eyes".

...Meanwhile back at the hotel, the participants who stayed behind held a detailed discussion on women's empowerment in Nepal.

Discussion of empowerment in Nepal

Chairing the session, Nancy Langworthy, USAID/Nepal welcomed all those present to the session which focused on WEP as a continuation of the morning's presentation. Arzu Deuba, moderator, SAMANATA, explained that though WEP comprises three components, in fact it was a synergistic combination leading to empowerment by increasing women's literacy, strengthening their economic participation and strengthening knowledge of their legal rights and teaching them advocacy skills.

Ava D. Shrestha, moderator, SAMANATA, and consultant to WEP for a baseline survey carried out in 1997 added that WEP was a departure from both WID and GAD. The approaches for addressing the critical needs of women had changed over the last three decades. In the 1970s, women in development (WID) programs were put on the development agenda and women's needs were addressed by adding separate women's components alongside in sector development projects. In the 1980s, most development agencies agreed on the need to integrate or mainstream women's concerns into sector programs to address larger structural problems that marginalized women and to better achieve sector goals. However, USAID/Nepal's approach to implementing WEP was taking mainstreaming one step further. Under WEP, it was explained that women are being targeted with an entire package of empowerment inputs. The program uses a systematic, iterative, layered approach that builds on a woman's abilities and skills. Literacy, economic, and legal programs are tools to obtain a higher goal empowerment - and WEP sets out to empower women and to measure that empowerment.

Ava further explained that while preparing the baseline survey, she had had personal doubts about the program, as it had not included vital components such as health and agriculture. However, as she got additional knowledge of the program, her belief in its strategy and success had increased. Speaking of the economic groups identified for WEP, she said that some of them were new while others were old. However, efforts were being made to ensure that WEP included women who had already begun their march towards empowerment. Regarding the non-targeting of perhaps the most unempowered and the poorest of the poor, it was explained that the money factor as well as the time frame was key issues in this, as both would not suffice if women were starting completely from scratch. However, she pointed out that even among the groups experience varied.

Another issue that arose was whether a monitoring system could be made to measure longer-term impact and change in the women and families targeted by WEP, even after the project was completed. The discussion centered on how longer-term monitoring could be made effective and what could and should be done. Some participants suggested that women's groups could federate, or the government could come in, or maybe even other INGOs could get involved in the long-term to strengthen sustainability.

Explaining that WEP was a bottom-up and demand-driven program, it was pointed out that a customer survey had initially been conducted where rural women had strongly demanded the three interventions that WEP now encompasses. But since WEP is implemented through a large number of local NGOs, stress would need to be laid on transparency, honesty and accountability. With regards to the monetary contributions demanded from the target groups, the debate on whether they should be asked to contribute when they were so resource poor was highlighted. Despite objections from several parties, TAF and Pact had decided to go ahead with it, believing that it would prevent donor dependency. The implementers firmly believed dependency would never lead to empowerment. The group discussion supported this view.

On the issue of groups which were left out or opted not to join the program it was unanimously agreed that WEP had to be ready to face some complications as there would always be groups or NGOs which were skeptical towards this particular program. Similarly, WEP should also be prepared for groups which will change their minds and opt out later.

Overall, it was noted that though WEP has tried to deal with many issues in its initial phase, many new and unexpected ones would have to be faced during the implementation period. However, WEP was determined to stay its course, meet its targets and not get daunted by obstacles.

Optional evening session

In an optional evening session after dinner, participants shared their own experiences and wisdom. Though the initial plan was for five participants to make presentations on the evening of the first day, par-

Conference Proceedings

Day II



ticipants were tired and it was agreed that only Dr. Nagendra Singh from the Asian Society for Entrepreneurship, Education and Development (ASEED) would make his presentation. All other sessions would take place the following day.

Dr. Nagendra Singh, from Asian Society for Entrepreneurship, Education and Development (ASEED), discussed “Women’s Economic Empowerment Focus and Strategies”, propagated by ASEED, which addresses women’s economic empowerment. He presented ASEED’s methodology which focuses on: i) women uniting to work together for a common economic goal; ii) women forming groups to explore mutually benefiting relationships; and iii) the economic interest supporting the interdependent relationship of groups in spite of low intra-group cohesiveness.

Explaining that the concept of economic empowerment as initiated by ASEED advocates a paradigm shift in the development process from the conventional model, Dr. Singh highlighted that this strategy brings together groups around income generation, micro-enterprises, and other economic interventions. (See Annex 10- Presentation by Dr. Nagendra Singh)

The second day of the conference began with welcome words from the moderator. As there were a number of queries about WEP, Marcia and Andy were called upon to provide the answers, so that all present could be clear about the program (See Annex 9). After these clarifications the moderator read out the major issues on WEP determined by the flashcards made by participants during the presentation of WEP the day before. The flashcards were displayed in the conference hall too. The major issues (See Annex 11 - Suggested Key Issues) were:

1. Time frame at several levels

- § Will the women have time to participate in so many interventions?
- § Does WEP follow the sectoral priorities for reducing workload, time and risks for women?
- § When do we stop interventions?

2. Balance between and sequencing of the interventions

- § How can economic activities be strengthened even while the women are learning to read and write?
- § With the current time frame of 18 months, how should the interventions be sequenced to ensure maximum impact?

3. Linkages at all levels

- § How can WEP better support the overall need for co-ordination among similar programs?
- § How do we get from WEP to a national ‘woman-to-woman program’?

4. Strengthening and broadening of groups

- § How can small, dispersed and remotely located groups be helped on the way towards sustainability?

- § How can we ensure the inclusion of the poorest/ disadvantaged women?

5. Involvement of men

- § How can WEP better address the need to change men's attitudes in the complex environment of caste and ethnicity?
- § How do we make men more aware of the benefits of empowerment of women?

6. Policies and strategies

- § Is WEP WID, GAD or something else?
- § How can WEP address gender equality while focusing on women alone?

7. Sustainability and replicability

- § How can the impact of WEP be monitored after the 3 interventions are completed?
- § How can we measure and ensure sustainability?

As participants were already seated at the tables in their working groups, they were asked to discuss the content, structure, plans and lessons learnt on WEP guided by the issues raised and based on their own experiences. Each group was then asked to present three recommendations on WEP to the implementing team.

Following completion of the group discussions, presentations of the recommendations were fashioned in an interactive style. Unlike usual plenary presentations, 'lamp post presentations' were made for presenting the group work. A rapporteur from each group put up the group's flip chart on 'lamp post' flip chart boards and presented the findings. The remaining group members each went to one of the other lampposts. After attending the presentation the group members all regrouped in their original working groups and debriefed each other on what had been learnt in the other groups. The major outcomes and recommendations for improving WEP were as follows:



Recommendations for WEP

Table 1

- § Program needs more time to show results
- § Build better understanding at USAID/Washington for women's empowerment as an important and cross-cutting issue for the effectiveness of the traditional sectoral programs of USAID globally
- § Documentation and communication of the process remains important and must be done regularly

Table 4

- § Monitor the program as it progresses for changing power relationships between men and women
- § Define ultimate goal of WEP as women's leadership
- § Work to establish linkages between the program and other efforts at the local level
- § Develop and monitoring and evaluation system for WEP

Table 7

- § Ensure that the program addresses gender issues at the difference and development divisions in various NGOs, USAID, USAID, etc.
- § Obtain assistance of involving men and women in a very complex environment of caste, class and ethnicity should not be overlooked

- § Ensure sustainability of the program by building a phase-out strategy involving all necessary support structures and support mechanisms to ensure the continuity of the program after the 18-month time frame
- § Enhance co-ordination at all levels within the program and with external agencies possible in the areas of micro-enterprise development, advocacy, marketing, support services including child care

Table 2

- § Flexibility in time frame essential
- § Move towards multi-service institutions, as credit is only one part of empowerment interventions
- § Involvement of men essential

Table 5

- § Sensitize men and women about the benefits of WEP to the family right from the inception and conduct this orientation/sensitization process all through the program with regular interventions and orientation sharing
- § Ensure sustainability by building leadership capacity among the women's groups by providing them skills for financial self-evaluation, self-managing, and self-motivation through practical exercises
- § Strengthen linkages at all levels
- § Provide exposure opportunities to WEP groups
- § Mobilize resources for continuing support
- § Encourage the groups to plan and initiate saving efforts to help the women under their own control and for their own use
- § Offer the marketing services to the groups and encourage them to take initiative in marketing their own products
- § Offer marketing training to women entrepreneurs and their colleagues

Table 8

- § WEP leaders address pre-tertiary component of program like the GAD approach (GAD Approach)
- § Grassroots groups should also be included to have access to other interventions, i.e., literacy, numeracy and business development skills
- § Introduce an efficient monitoring system for information of future programs

Table 3

- § Take a holistic approach with a focus on women
- § To replicate success stories, WEP can use development communication, i.e., alternative modes of communication such as street theatre
- § Participatory monitoring, i.e., where communities and local leaders are involved should be attempted

Table 6

- § The time frame should be at least 3 years (this time frame includes Nepal's rural planning, harvesting, seasons, seasons, elections, etc.)
- § Establish policy level linkages with ongoing national government women's programs such as the Production Credit for Rural Women (PCRW) being implemented by HMC/Nepal's Women Development Division (WDD) in districts and with other government agencies, NGOs and multi-national donors

Table 9

- § Main focus should be on operational development phase-out strategy
- § Develop long term linkages with NGOs
- § Involve men and address their concerns

Table 10

- § Educate men more clearly about the GAD approach
- § Strengthen the women's leadership in the districts by teaching them "How the system works" in the PR&A curriculum
- § Linkages should be made at local and central government level as well as with local donors and NGOs to broaden support for women

Summing Up

The session was summed up by Jane Nandy, Team Leader, USAID who tried to capture the common themes reported by the groups, their recommendations as well as the manner in which USAID and WEP would take account of these. Expressing gratitude to the participants for their interest, creativity, patience and willingness to work to help in fine tuning WEP, she stated that WEP was truly viewed as a moving, evolving, adapting, changing and innovating program.

Commenting on the suggestion about the involvement of men and the recommendations that WEP should: i) use the GAD approach to increase the participation of men and households; ii) address gender issues: men and women involved in complex social changes; iii) include men, strategically using GAD; iv) monitor change in the power relations between men and women and v) provide activities for men's involvement and support, Jane said that the first generation of WEP had not addressed men at all. The second and current generation had brought about several changes, one of which was the recognition that the role of men should be addressed. Accordingly, in the villages of every women's economic group WEP is: a) holding an orientation to explain the WEP program to the men of the village to make them supportive of the program, and b) organizing family days (bringing together men, children and elderly) so that they all are involved and informed in an informal, village fair-type atmosphere.

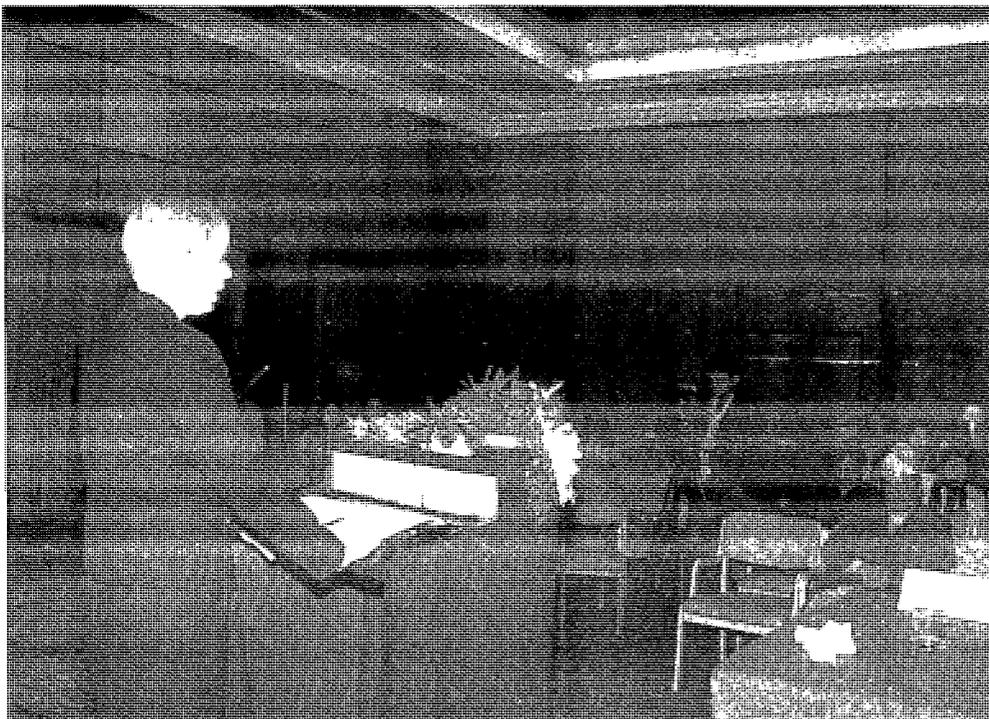
In response to whether WEP can or should do more, Jane pointed out that both limited time as well as the budget presented major obstacles. Five months of the 18 months time left would be spent by communities on planting, harvesting, festivals and the up-coming elections. Therefore, the current time frame is already extremely short for just completing all of the basic WEP activities.

On the second common theme of time the recommendations made were: i) need for more time frame to show results, ii) need of at least five years for empowerment activities, and c) negotiate time frame for flexibility to achieve goals. Jane commented that the present time frame for the USAID women's empowerment strategic objective in Nepal is 1997-2000. The recommendation from Nepal to USAID Washington would be that the program be extended to 2001. However, this raised the issue of additional funds, which remained uncertain.

Under the theme of sustainability, the issues raised were: i) linkages at all levels, i.e., at the local and national levels between the government, donors, and NGO community; ii) need for a phase out strategy for the programs; and iii) strengthening the leadership in women's groups by using tools such as self-evaluation, self-monitoring and self-management. Remarking that WEP was to some extent already implementing these suggestions, Jane emphasized that self-management had been built in the program. Two out of three interventions already used tutorials where the women learned by themselves, thus breaking donor dependency. This approach had been chosen both due to the varying literacy level within the

groups, and in order to promote and ensure maximum sustainability of the groups within the time frame available.

Summarizing the discussions on WEP, Jane again thanked all participants for the very useful recommendations and observations, and promised to incorporate as many as at all possible in WEP, hoping that there might be a possibility of a third generation of the program.



Flying High: Visions of an empowered world

Leaving the specifics of the Nepal program to turn to global empowerment issues, the first afternoon session contemplated the visions of a future world where women are empowered. The broader perspectives of the how's and what's of empowerment were presented by participants from three different continents who shared their hopes, dreams and visions of a world where women are empowered.

'If.....'

by Zo Randriamaro, WID Officer at USAID Madagascar

In her presentation, Zo talked about the existing status of women in Madagascar, a status typified by disparaging verbal expressions about women. Commenting on the issue of equality which was often raised as lip service, the need for deep cultural change in mentality and behavior was highlighted. Zo read out a powerful poem which she had written with the assistance of a male friend, stating the achievements in the 21st century which could be made if women were empowered. Her vision of other ways the world could work and other ways women could live, if women were empowered earned her a thundering round of applause. (See Annex 12 - Empowerment vision by Zo Randriamaro, USAID Madagascar)

'A European Vision on Gender Equality'

by Gabriele Reichenbach, International Consultant

Gabriele shared a European vision for gender equality focusing on decision-making, access and control of resources and division of labor as the three major themes currently debated in Europe. Regarding influence in decision-making, Gabriele mentioned the quota system practiced at the professional level (reservation) and in the political sphere. Speaking of it as an essential but intricate process, Gabriele commented that despite setbacks women in influential positions were on the rise in Europe and the quota system for executive positions was continuing. England was presented as an ideal, where the vision of women's political empowerment was more concrete and equal representation of men and women in political fora was accepted as normal.

On access to resources such as education, jobs and options for a professional career, she pointed out that

most European countries had come a long way since the beginning of 20th century when segregation in school systems and stereotyping of female roles had prevailed. After the second world war co-education had been introduced as it was felt girls would get a better and more equal chance. However, presently it was again being debated whether perhaps segregation is better to enable girls and boys to learn the same subjects in different ways.

Speaking of work sharing both at office and at home, she stated that the ideal family in Europe comprised of two working professionals, with a maximum of two children, who would share the workload equally. Concluding her presentation, Gabriele said that many of the ideals mentioned were already being practiced, thus, they were not 'undoable'.

'Images of Rural Women'

by Ms Mehnaz Akbar, TAF Pakistan

Taking the participants through a series of slides from the remotest part of Tharparkar, Pakistan, Mehnaz's presentation depicted the status quo of the women of the region and the changes required. Alluding to the place as an area where the elderly stress that 'women's roles should not change because the sun and land do not change', she shared the hopes and changes that women are bringing about in their lives despite the odds. Pictures in the slide show presented girls getting educated and coming together, and gradually mobilizing themselves. The presentation comprised images of change that would affect not only the present generation, but the women and girls of the future generation as well.

'Breaking New Ground'

A play by Sarvanam Theatre Group

Next on the agenda was a play by a renowned Nepali drama group called "Breaking New Ground - Voice of the Voiceless". This play contrasted the lives of a typical disempowered Nepali woman with that of empowered women organized in a group to improve their own lives. The empowered women become role models and a symbol of hope for the less fortunate woman. This play was presented by the Sarvanam Theatre Group, which is renowned for its street dramas and plays, nationally and around Asia. (See Annex 13 - Synopsis of the play 'Breaking New Ground'.)

HARDtalk

Maintaining the global perspective on empowerment, the following session was an interactive panel on the challenges of implementing women's empowerment programs to give food for thought to the inquisitive. An international panel of three experts, Carmen Velasco from Pro Mujer in Bolivia, Charity Kabutha from Women's Leadership Network in Kenya and gender consultant Quratul Ain Bakhteari from Pakistan discussed the intricate challenges facing empowerment implementation in future. The discussion was globalized via e-mail, fax and an internet chatroom.

The discussion focused on three major issues: strategies for linking the multiple interventions required to achieve empowerment; the paradox of specialized implementers and the need for multi-sectoral programs; and how to master the demands of scale and replicability. Moderated by Joanne Spicehandler, a specialist in management of family planning and reproductive health programs, the first half of HARDtalk was a dialogue between the panelists while the second half had the three panelists responding to issues raised from the floor.

The issue of linking multiple interventions needed to achieve empowerment was discussed by Carmen Velasco who shared her decade long experiences in Bolivia. Her experience in Bolivia had brought on the realization of the importance of strategies to link all the pillars which could prod women to empowerment. In her opinion, a successful empowerment strategy has to combine the three elements of being participatory, being group based and truly integrated. She quoted the example of her own organization Pro Mujer, which had grown from one women's group to now 300 women's groups comprising 60,000 members (See Annex 14.). The three elements were key to the groups being formed and becoming successful. The group programs included leadership development, childcare, reproductive health, savings and credit and income generation. One result had been that now the women really had a voice in the community.

The second issue addressed local communities versus development agencies, how they evolve their sense of issues and what the emerging challenges were. Quratul Ain Bakhteari from Pakistan discussed that communities see themselves as being holistic and can determine their own needs. However, external organizations come into communities with their own agenda and programs which

might not match the needs of the communities. But, the crosscutting issue is basically to assist in the organization of a community committee irrespective of the sector or program focus and then to help bring about a true partnership. Once the technique of organization and partnership is well incorporated in the communities they can then successfully link up with any program or sector that the external organizations are offering.



Quratul recommended that program implementation should include a close partnership between NGOs/donors and the community in question. She cited the example of a community which actually required a 24-hour water tap and electricity, but were given a program for pit latrines by a NGO. Such initial 'mismatches' could, however, be viewed as bridge-building exercises and a partnership to actually respond to the needs of the community could grow from there.

Quratul shared her experience of how needs of a community were not always expressed or were expressed differently, when communicating with intermediary organizations. Likewise, the projection by the intermediary to e.g. a donor of the same would take the "needs-based" designs further off course. Citing the example of Baluchistan, she therefore felt that intermediary organizations had to be placed literally at the field level and that community workers had to be in direct contact with the donor/s to ensure accurate communication. That is why training and mobilization both of community aspects in the organizations and of development field workers is so important.

When asked from the floor whether inroads to such ideal communication can be identified even when communication amongst major donors was not clear, Quratul responded that breakthroughs can be made and gaps filled in with a little more focused and rigorous training at the community level by the implementers so that the community becomes a lobbying force for the correct interpretation of its own needs.

Discussing the challenges of scale in empowerment programs, Charity Kabutha interpreted 'scaling-up' in two ways: a) begin very small, in a pilot project and expand geographically, or b) move up from lessons learnt at a lower level, to a policy level where one can begin to form policies and give direction in terms of resource allocation. Therefore, she remarked that scaling-up was natural where it grew through diffusion or because new resources had been infused. Scaling-up from lessons learnt at the local level and influencing policies was identified as the most difficult area.



Charity said in her experience, in terms of challenges in getting programs to scale-up and be replicated, working with institutions which are structured, have a clear mandate and defined packages and which meet the terms of the people is likely to yield most success. When implementing projects, she advised, it is useful to have had the chance to discuss the issue with all the organizations, to carry out a comprehensive need assessment and develop a relevant and demand driven program.

Vertical scaling-up, moving from the community to the policy levels, was identified as a big challenge. Winrock International was cited as an example which brought together key stakeholders from communities and top-level management of organizations and jointly developed needs and identified resources as required. Programs which begin on the ground on their own, without connecting to the top, almost immediately find it difficult to make a breakthrough. One solution recommended was to conduct a participatory needs assessment. In terms of replication, alliances of persons at all levels who are committed to success could be used to overcome many difficulties and obstacles she advised.

Floor discussion

In response to a query posed by Rezaul Haque, USAID Bangladesh, on whether any panelist had faced a situation wherein vested interest groups, especially religious fundamentalists, had used or misused religion to oppose women's empowerment programs, Quratal stated it was a common enough issue in Pakistan. Speaking of the years spent in the remote and religiously orthodox area of Baluchistan, she spoke of the slow pace of change and acceptance of new ideas in orthodox societies. Referring to the importance of the need for front line workers to be informed of community requirements, she said that without this knowledge working in

the backward societies becomes very difficult. However, direct ways and at times indirect ways of addressing the political structure always exist. She cited an example from Baluchistan, where enrolment of girls in primary schools had increased from 57,000 to 174,000 within a five-year period, despite resistance from the Mullahs, due to acceptance of girls' education by the community.

Referring to the situation in Pakistan, Mehnaz Akbar, TAF Pakistan, mentioned the Shariat Bill which was proving to be a new threat to women's empowerment. As a large part of external funding comes from fundamentalist sources, a strong fight was necessary in terms of advocacy and lobbying, especially, when the legal system was also very biased against women. The government tended to feel threatened by NGOs, as a result of which a NGO Bill designed to control in-coming funds, NGO activities, and especially women NGOs had been passed.

Speaking of the lack of self-confidence amongst women and the amount of information which can be tapped from them in rural areas, Aziza Helmy, USAID/Egypt, shared an incident in Upper Egypt, where during a review mission in a conservative area, starting a dialogue with women directly had been impossible. However, while interviewing men of the area a woman kept responding and correcting the men, as she knew more about the issues raised. Therefore, empowering women is very instrumental in the development process. Carmen supported this statement by pointing to the example that all the Bolivian government chambers now have women representatives, in contrast to 15 years ago when there had not been one single woman involved at that decision-making level. Adding that tradition is a major factor, Charity also strongly validated this viewpoint and said she could also cite many similar examples.

Joanne mentioned the issue of the recipient-mentality brought about by donors and agencies which keep donating, thus bringing about a sense of disempowering dependency among women. She asked if the external flow of resources perhaps had to be stopped before a real empowerment process can begin.

Julio Andrews asked the panelists if they had any experience with politicians trying to manipulate and use women's empowerment for their own purposes, since it frequently occurred in Nepal. Carmen spoke of a similar situation in Bolivia where the word 'empowerment'



in Spanish was translated as 'taking power' which the government had not liked. Quratul gave an example from Baluchistan where the Minister for Education had filled up 700 vacant teachers' position with supporters from his political party during a community mobilization campaign for more female teachers.

In response to a question from Lila Manandhar, Congress Trade Union Nepal, on how women in the organized sector, who have jobs as well as the family burden should handle matters, Carmen agreed that women have a heavier workload. However, women have to show the society and themselves that they are capable of carrying that burden. Only then would men realize the benefits of empowerment and begin to work together with women. If women feel they cannot cope individually, they should join groups as the first step to empowerment is the knowledge that there is someone to rely on. Also, in most credit programs a woman cannot get a loan without the collective guarantee of a solidarity group. The minute a woman can get an individual loan, she becomes really empowered.

Trinidad Magbitang, GTZ Philippines, shared an experience of the National Government Agency in the Philippines, which is attached to the Office of the President. The few women in the office were able to enact a law which lightened the burden of women, especially of those who were in offices. As a result, day-care centers were established for mothers in the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, and currently plans were being drawn up where the husbands would take turns to baby-sit. Men would also get educated on sharing the reproductive role.

Trinidad also spoke of the importance of 'ownership' in development activities. In this context, Carmen mentioned a law called 'popular participation', established by the previous government of Bolivia. The law had ensured that all municipalities received a percentage of the national income. The municipalities could invest their money and could monitor the investment. It had proved a very powerful tool, but, unfortunately it had not been followed up by the current government.

Aziza shared two mechanisms for women to share ideas and thoughts, do lobbying and rationalize resources in Egypt: a) at the government level, and b) at the donor level. At the government level, every two years a National Women's Conference, headed by the wife of the President and comprising government representatives, NGOs and women and men come together to focus on issues related to women. It is a venue for women to voice their views and lobby to get their requirements accomplished through the government. The other mechanism is a meeting of donors involved in gender and development which meets every month to compare notes, share experiences and seek to avoid duplication of efforts.

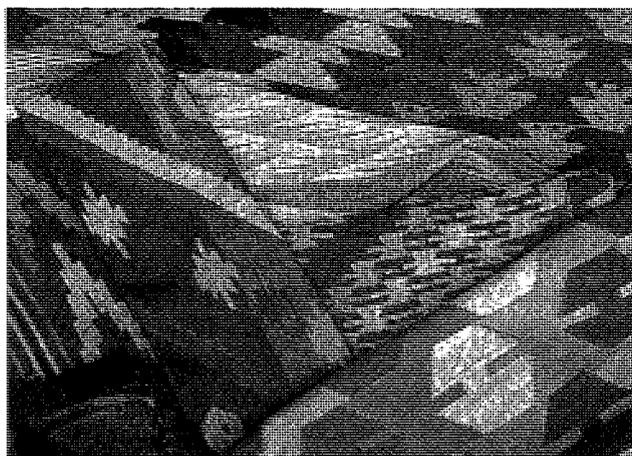
The last issue of the session involved examples of existing models or interventions being used to decrease violence against women. Charity recognized that the line between public and private, domestic abuse and public acts of crime are very thin. Forces which should take action to stop violence in the home feel it is a domestic issue and they have no business getting involved in it. However, a lot of support has been provided to train the police force, particularly in getting them to better

understand the situation of women, to be supportive and now positive changes can be seen. Carmen added that violence against women was very bad in Bolivia. However, presently the situation had improved and police were attentive to both physical and psychological problems in the home. An important reason for this improvement was women's empowerment initiatives, for now women can talk about violence without fear or shame.

Arts and Crafts of Empowerment: An exhibition-cum-sale by 'Mahaguthi'

The evening of the second day had been allotted for 'Art and Crafts of Empowerment', an exhibition of handicrafts prepared by disadvantaged and marginalized people of the Nepalese society, especially women. The marketing NGO Mahaguthi, established in 1994 as a promoter of handicraft business was selected for the conference exhibition as it focuses on the upliftment of the disadvantaged. The exhibition displayed items such as hand painted silk, silver ware, traditional paperwork, which were much appreciated by the participants, and the sales were very brisk!

On display were also 19 paintings by 11 young Nepali artists from the Srijana Art Gallery, who had been working in the garden all afternoon creating their personal images of women's empowerment in oil and water colors - several of the pieces now adorn the offices of participants from around the world.



Optional evening session

After dinner, an optional session was organized of presentations by participants to share their experiences and strategies for women's empowerment. Five presenters each gave an insight in their programs and current work which provided excellent grounds for further comparison of notes across continents.

Gretchen Bloom, Senior Gender Adviser at World Food Program (WFP), Rome who presented first, highlighted WFP's 'Policy Commitments to Women: 1996-2000'. She said that WFP was deeply committed to using its resources in interventions which sought to reduce gender related inequalities. For this purpose, she went on to describe five commitments that had been agreed upon:

- § Provide direct access to appropriate and adequate food
- § Take measures to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in the power structure and decision making
- § Take positive action to facilitate women's equal access to resources, employment, markets, and trade
- § Generate and disseminate gender disaggregated data and information for planning and evaluation
- § Improve accountability on actions taken.

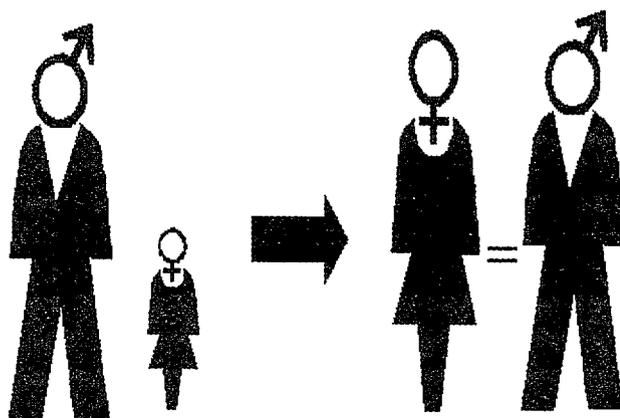
Gretchen then showed a short video which portrayed food relief aid provided by WFP to Sudanese people of a southern village plagued by war, droughts and malnutrition. The video depicted the role of the community women who had recently gained power in managing food distribution. The question of whether the food reached its destination was overcome when the women managed the distribution process. Also women's voices were now heard and they were more empowered as their decisions were being accepted by the men of their community. (See Annex 15 - Presentation by Gretchen Bloom, World Food Program)

Discussing the severe problems in Pakistan that were leading to an increase in women's suffering, and a gender disparity being one of the highest in the world, **Mehnaz Akbar of TAF Pakistan** stated that discrimination against women in Pakistan exists in all forms. With high maternal mortality, low female literacy rates, inability to report rape, etc., Pakistani women were not just poor, but they were also voiceless. Therefore, the **Pakistan NGO Initiative (PNI)** was focusing on:

- § Non-privileged Girls' Education - supporting both teachers and students
- § Reproductive Health - conducting studies on family planning and providing information
- § Micro Finance - Doing what other donors were not doing, with plans of bringing together donors to discuss how women could be supported to more influence by access to credit for income generation.

It was pointed out that PNI was collaborating with 60 other NGO partners in this effort and it was hoped that in the long run PNI would help in bringing forth people who would work on and with gender.

Aziza Helmy of USAID/Egypt presented USAID's new strategy in Egypt and how it was **addressing gender**. Explaining the strategy, she said it began with defining gender equality. Data was collected and analyzed on whether men and women had equal opportunities and life chances. The identification of disparities led to interventions for gender equality such as girls education, women's literacy, technical assistance for credit and training, income generating activities, and support to women headed households. Therefore, gender was the crosscutting issue in the five major objectives of USAID/Egypt, namely, i) Population/Health / Nutrition, ii) Education, iii) Jobs/Economic Growth, iv) Environment and v) Democracy.



The aim of the cross-cutting gender work was that Egyptian men and women would contribute and benefit equally from: i) Improved quality of life, ii) Accelerated economic growth, iii) Private sector led development and iv) Promoted trade and investment. (See Annex 16 - Presentation by Aziza Helmy, USAID Egypt.)

Presenting the **American Center for International Labor Solidarity (ACILS)**, **William Conklin** said it was a labor rights organization with a mandate different from the others. Stating that **empowerment** is more than literacy, economy or power, he asserted that it also stands for freedom of association and freedom for women in development.

Speaking of the problems faced by women workers, he mentioned that ACILS' programs in Sri Lanka, Pakistan

and India are addressing issues such as domestic violence, a common problem faced by many South Asian women, through awareness and coalition building.

Another issue being addressed by ACILS was harassment. In many cases existing laws are not implemented. He further said the problem of women living in squashed and cramped rooms, with unhygienic and unsanitary conditions should also be addressed. He concluded by saying that in Pakistan ACILS was working with lawyers, providing legal service as well as disseminating information on women's issues. In India, in collaboration with SAAKSHI, it was working to create awareness on issues such as sexual harassment. Meanwhile, in Sri Lanka focus was being laid on migrant women workers, providing them information and training prior to their departure from the home country for domestic work abroad. (See Annex 17 - Presentation by William Conklin, ACILS.)

Dr. Shiva H. Achet, Deputy Director, Department of Soil and Watershed Management, of the

Ministry of Agriculture of Nepal presented a socio-eco-system perspective on women's empowerment issues and opportunities in integrated resource management. He focused on the conceptualization of an analytical, socio-ecological model for examining issues and opportunities in integrated resource management and outlined a future perspective for empowering women in integrated resource management. A major issue was sustainability which involved the question of: i) enhancing positive change through women's empowerment as a social transformation mechanism for integrated natural resource management; ii) getting full support of women through their institutions, their activities and self-help initiatives; and iii) the integration of women's empowerment in strategies such as resource mobilization, poverty alleviation and participation of disadvantaged groups. (See Annex 18 - Presentation by Shiva H. Achet, Nepal.)

Despite the fatigue after a long day, the evening session was fruitful and inspiring and most participants could bag a new idea, concept, method, or just a new way of presenting their programs after the session.

Conference Proceedings

Day III

The third and final day took the conference from high-flying visions and general issues back to the specifics of implementation. The day focused on combining the many empowerment lessons learned worldwide into relevant and realistic program designs for the new millenium. In the sessions the participants were divided into groups by drawing seat lots to ensure that all tables had a mix of participants with diverse opinions, backgrounds and countries.

“Back to Earth”

The vast wealth of visions and experience represented at the conference was applied to real life programming in the first session “Back to Earth”. Based on a program design hand out (see Annex 19), the groups designed programs promoting best empowerment practices. The program goals were stated as

increased level of empowerment of women and/or the level of gender equity in any country or region and groups were asked to define parameters such as objectives, results, activities, success criteria and means of verification. Suggestions regarding program duration, location and implementing agency were also to be made. Furthermore, groups were asked to give a short description of the program as well as a title for it. The groups then transferred their proposed program onto a flip chart paper for presentation in the plenary. The ‘lamp-post presentation’ method was again used to share results of the group work. The following are “Empowerment program action plans” prepared by the different groups.



“Empowerment program action plans” (Group 1 - 4)

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4
Program Title/Name	Targeting the Excluded The Role of Change Agents in Reaching Marginalized Rural Women	Scale-up Women’s Empowerment Program (WEP) or Power of Women’s Empowerment and Rights	Improving Status of Girls and Women in Rural Communities	Empowerment of Hill Women in Nepal
Goal/Vision	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Increase Level of empowerment for women 2 Increased equity between sexes 		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Empowerment of Women 2 Real equality between men and women women 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Increased level of empowerment for women 2 Increased equity between sexes
Target Group	Women left out of development due to poverty and mobility issues			
Location	Teraí plains of Nepal	WEP areas		Hill districts in Nepal
Time Frame	5 years (Initial Project Phase)	7 years	10 years	Phase I: 2 years Phase II: 3 years
Objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Marginalized women’s access and control over resources 2 Increased decision-making role within household and community 3 Increased women’s participation/responsibilities in household, on/off-farm activities 4 Decrease in domestic violence against women 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Improve environment for Nepalese Women to be in decision-making position 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 To enable women to determine their own life-role 2 To enable women to be fully involved and to participate in decision making in the lives of their families and communities and communities 3. To attain men’s commitment through active participation and involvement with women for common goals 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Number of women in 2 hill districts made capable to identify and implement own economic project 2 Improved access of women in 2 districts to information and knowledge in economic, social and legal terms
Results	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Increase literacy rate among women and men 2 More women accessing health services 3 Savings generated 4 Men and women discussing issues of violence 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Increased advocacy capabilities of local NGOs 2 Decrease the educational gender gap 3 Increased gender awareness of reproductive rights and health service 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 85% of girls will have completed secondary school 2 Women will become economically independent 3 Women and men will share leadership roles in the community equality 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Well organized groups capable of managing credit and other activities 2 Better informed groups 3 Economic opportunities identified 4 Radio programs designed

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4
Activities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Initiating non-formal adult education for men and women 2. Developing alternative communication medium: Theatre, folk plays, music, songs 3. Audio-visual aids 4. Savings groups 5. Agriculture-promoting/strengthening women's role in on-farm and off-farm activities 6. Identifying change agents 7. Base line surveys 8. PRA 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Training for Nepales NGOs on advocacy 2. Adapt a "one classroom" scheme for girls on a pilot basis in remote areas 3. Develop public awareness campaigns, including radio programs/spots in different languages (in a drama form). 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mentorship programs for girls children 2. Participatory social and educational activities for children, parents and teachers 3. Adult self-educational and literacy program 4. Local women's co-operatives, savings and credit schemes 5. Promoting women representatives at local, regional, and national level 	<p>Phase I (2 Years)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Needs assessment - Baseline 2. Capacity-building of groups men+women 3. Radio programs 4. Literacy and awareness to men and women (legal, economic aspects) <p>Phase II (3 Years)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Self-managed credit groups introduced and managed 2. Various radio programs launched - and technology 3. Functional economic enterprise running 4. Continuous monitoring of health status of women and children
Additionality	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Collaboration/interaction with HMG 2. Sharing of information 3. Utilizing HMG resources, e.g. training facilities resource people, etc 			
Success Criteria	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Men and women attending classes 2. Women attending meetings to discuss violence issues, household responsibilities 3. Women managing savings 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Number of advocacy initiatives undertaken by women NGOs 2. Percentage of girls enrolment in primary education 3. Percentage of adults reached by communication campaign 4. Contraceptive prevalence rate 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Percentage of girl children completing secondary schools 2. Number of women members in co-operatives 3. Number of women gainfully employed 4. Number of women attending public meetings at different levels 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Decision at family and community are children and women friendly 2. Increased decision-making of women 3. At least economic opportunities for village identified by women 4. Women and children have improved health and nutrition status by the end of phase II 5. Qualitative change in decision made and equity
Means of verification	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. PRA 2. Base line survey 3. Identifying indicators 4. Monitoring and evaluation studies 5. Management information system (MIS) 6. Beneficiaries included at every level 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Women focus groups 2. Survey studies 3. Nepalese Human Development Report 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Periodic progress reports/bulletins 2. Periodic community feedback 3. Surveys and case studies 4. Final projects reports 5. Impact evaluation 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Focus groups and self-evaluation and community evaluation 2. Surveys - Gender disaggregated data 3. MIS 4. Reports
Implementing agency	National Nepali NGO with <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Extensive experience in rural areas * Staff capacity * Gender focus * Out reach in rural areas 	PACT, TAF, Local NGOs		Existing NGOs and CBOs of the districts/region supporting the self-managed groups
Back-up support/ External				Media - Electronic print - Journalists (as necessary as needed)

“Empowerment program action plans” (Group 5 - 7)

	Group 5	Group 6	Group 7
Program Title/Name		Solomon Islands Empowerment Program (SIEP)	Durga
Program description		Given women's situation in the Solomon Islands, the program's focus is on women's social, economic and political participation and national policies that respond to the needs of rural and urban women	
Goal/Vision			Empowered women within a harmonious society Harmonious society based on the principles of * balance * nurturance * ecological sustainability * holism * spirituality
Location	1 Tanahun (Mid hills of Nepal) 2 Western Region of Nepal 3. Mixed Communities	Solomon Islands	South Asia
Time Frame		Proposed Phase I: 3-5 years (provincial level development) Phase II: 3-5 years (national and provincial linkage)	
Objectives	1 Foster environment that empowers women to make decisions regarding their own development 2. Increase awareness in families and communities on the importance of women's participation in the development process at the household and community level 3 Enable communities to assess, analyze and take action to address gender gaps	1. To increase women's participation in decision-making in public affairs and the private sector 2 More conducive policy environment for women's participation 3 To improve women's solidarity and organization	1. Empowerment of women through an ecological sustainable society
Long term objective			1 Increased number of effective women community workers 2 Access to basic social services at the communities/village level 3 Equal partnership at all levels 4 Education 5 Health 6 Civic participation 7 Food security 8 Economic sustainability 9 Ecological balance

	Group 5	Group 6	Group 7
Results	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increased household responsibilities of men (childcare, cooking, etc) 2. Women's continued participation in existing networks/informal groups 3. Increase percentage of girls completing primary schools 4. Increased nutritional status among girls under 5. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improved women's integration into the market system 2. Increased women's access to information 3. Increased women's participation in local and central government. <p>* Voting and election</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Female community workers 2. Education - Formal/Non formal for women and girl children 3. Reproductive health + Mother and Child Health = Integrated Program 4. Civic Participation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Rights and enforcement of rights for women family 5. Food Security - 12 months <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Increased yield of basic food needs met * Good distribution system in place 6. Economic - Women in partnership in creation, control and decision-making of household income/resources 7. Ecological <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Full respect for use of natural resources (with strong spiritual base)
Activities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conduct gender analysis at household level 2. Conduct PRA/RRA/appreciative inquiry, needs assessment. 3. Train school staff, village leaders, parents on how to increase girls participation and address gender discrimination in the classroom/curriculum 4. IEC (e.g. JHU models and others as identified by communities) 5. Provide leadership and advocacy skills training for women 6. Provide parent education training (including nutrition) for parents/adolescent boys/girls. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase employment opportunities for the youth (men and women) 2. Increase women's access to quality health services 3. Women and youth ministry to implement women's policy 4. Strengthening the NWC (National Women Council) to be representative and effective in advocating for extension programs for rural areas (food production, health, nutrition, FP, etc.) 5. Women's capacity building to participate in local and central government 	
Success criteria	<p>Community has acquired needed support services</p> <p>Conduct gender analysis as a means of verification</p> <p>Demonstrated attitudinal and behavioral change at household levels, schools and community levels.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increased percentage of rural and urban women at provincial and central government level 2. Increased percentage of women moving from the labor level to the negotiation level in the market system 3. Increased percentage of women with improved access to extension services (agriculture, communications, health, etc.) 4. Increased percentage of solidarity groups participating in policy development and implementation 	
Means of verification	<p>Conduct gender analysis</p> <p>PRA/RRA/AI</p> <p>Revalidate</p>		
Implementing agency	Ministry of Provincial Government/USAID/NZAID/NCW		

Tailoring the Vision

Following review of all the great and imaginative empowerment programs prepared and discussed at the conference, participants once again regrouped to reflect upon and short list promising empowerment practices for the “Good Empowerment Practice Award” during a working lunch. Each table was asked to agree on three empowerment practices which they thought were so important that without them empowerment programs might fail.

Sharing the Wisdom

The three best practices as selected by the groups were put up on flip charts and presented briefly in plenary by a rapporteur from each group. (See “Proposals for Three Best Practices”.)

Awards Ceremony

“Tika”, the little colored dots used to adorn the forehead of Nepali women, were distributed. Each participant then individually voted for the three empowerment practices applying red tika dots for the first preference, black tika dots for the second preference and colored tika dots for the third preferred practice on the 9 flip charts on display.

While the votes were being counted, participants checked and corrected a draft address list, reconfirmed airline tickets, and made sure to get the hand-outs and information materials brought and displayed in the room. After 20 minutes, the votes were counted.

The awards ceremony was held amongst fanfare and music!! The moderator Arzu Deuba, requested the winning teams to come up and receive their awards.

The prize for the **SECOND RUNNER UP** was awarded by Namrata Sharma, Nepal to **GROUP NUMBER 8** and the practice **“ENOUGH TIME AND A REALISTIC TIME FRAME FOR SUCCESS”**

The prize for the **FIRST RUNNER UP** was awarded by Tahera Yasmin, Bangladesh to **GROUP NUMBER 1** for the practice **“INTERVENTION SHOULD BE BUILT INTO A SOCIAL MOVEMENT THAT CAN GO BEYOND THE PROJECT PHASE”**.

Last but not least, the **GOOD EMPOWERMENT AWARD 1998** was presented to **GROUP 9** by Janet Bogue, Charge d’Affaires, US Embassy for the practice **“CREATING SISTERHOOD LINKAGES LOCAL, REGIONAL AND GLOBAL IS EMPOWERING!”**



Proposals for Three Best Practices

Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The intervention should build into a social movement that can go beyond the project phase, empowering both women and men. 2. Participation of women and men right from the conceptualization, design and planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the project. 3. Build network/linkages with stakeholders to strengthen lobbying and advocacy to engage civil society. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Demand - driven (literacy, finance, micro-enterprise, etc.) 2. Working with local non-governmental organizations (NGO) in collaboration with community based organizations (CBO). 3. Working with groups of local women. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. One classroom school for the girl children in a community place. 2. Identify supportive men (but not controlling) as spokespersons and advocates for women's rights within the community. 3. Increased use of media, including alternative media, for disseminating message on women's empowerment.

Group 4	Group 5	Group 6
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mentorship program for girls to encourage completion of secondary level education. 2. Development of opportunities for empowered women and men within their local communities in order to reduce migration. 3. Actions taken by women's advocacy groups to alter policies at national, regional and local government levels. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Male support in empowerment programs. 2. Linkage between policy making and grassroots level. 3. Participatory needs assessment and self-monitoring system. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify and support female leaders and change agents in communities to mobilize women to assess, analyze and take action. 2. Identify and support men role models who support gender equity. 3. Linkages between women's groups, government services and NGOs for sustainability and moving to the next phase of empowerment.

Group 7	Group 8	Group 9
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Women's mobilization and leadership skill development through group formations, i.e. CBOs, SCOs, literacy, solidarity, etc. 2. Engage men as "Agents of Change", i.e., for domestic violence, gender issues, legal awareness training etc. 3. Participation of rural women in monitoring and evaluation of targets set by women. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Women's active participation at all levels of decision-making. 2. Install support mechanisms: national/local/field; implementor/planner/participants 3. Enough time! Realistic time frame for success! 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create sisterhood linkages, both local, regional and global. 2. Women participating in activism, leadership and mediation/negotiations 3. Integration, both vertical and horizontal, across sectors linking back to women's groups.

Wrapping Up

Wrapping up the three-day conference, Jane Nandy of USAID/Nepal thanked all the Nepali and international participants from 20 different countries. Jane added that breaking out of the mould meant getting to the heart of empowerment implementation and empowerment practices. She expressed her heartfelt desire that participants would go back themselves better empowered and adopt and adapt the promising practices identified in new and better programs strategically focusing on women world wide.

Closing Remarks

In her closing remarks, Janet Bogue, Charge d' Affaires, US Embassy, stressed the fact that she thought the best outcome of the conference would be to take the insights from the conference and use them to expand, refine and develop efforts for women's empowerment. This would take a lot of perseverance. However, it would also bring a lot of reward and satisfaction.

Janet hoped that the interaction of the last three days and the field trips had been inspiring for all the participants. Quoting Aga Khan, "If you can only afford to educate one child, educate the girl child" she urged all the participants to share their knowledge with others working to empower women. She reiterated the importance of the promising practice of creating sisterhood at the local, regional and the global level as she felt it was the best way forward for women to forge ahead towards power, and concluded that the conference had been one such forum for creation of sisterhood linkages.

Networking and Farwell

In order to ensure that all the participants could communicate and keep in touch in the future, the corrected contact address list of the participants was distributed to all participants together with the third and final issue of Empowerpoint and the written up notes from the day's deliberations at the warm and cozy reception hosted by Janet Bogue at her residence.

Conference Evaluation by Participants

Overall, the conference was rated as a success by the participants. The diverse background of the participants, as well as the technical and logistical organization was much appreciated. Participants commended the innovative workshop methodologies used during the conference. Participants expressed hope that such a conference could be repeated in a couple of years' time with the same, as well as additional, participants. Some of the comments were:

"EXCELLENT CONFERENCE in every respect. Thanks a million to USAID/Nepal, and to everyone who participated in making it happen."

"INCREASE MEN'S participation too in such conference in future."

"MORE PAPER presentation and group discussion on specific issues."

However, participants also commented that the conference was at times tiring, especially with regards to the field trip and the optional evening sessions. It was pointed out that it was unfair to the participants who had worked hard to prepare their presentation to not have a full audience. Therefore, more time should have been allocated to presentations by participants. Some participants would have liked more men to take part in the conference, and others commented that local implementing NGOs should have been present as their absence seemed to leave a vacuum in the conference. Another participant suggested that more time should have been devoted to explaining WEP as it would have cut down on many of the questions which took so much time. The chat room during the HARDtalk session, which did not attract any of the women-focused audiences invited, was also pointed to as having been more of a distraction.

In a wholesome statement, one participant aptly summed up the good wishes with which participants left Kathmandu to return to their work in the field of women's empowerment as follows: "Such a conference will only be fruitful if we seriously take the conclusions to heart and put them into practice. Otherwise, such expensive conference would be just an exploitation in the name of the poor and recreation for the so-called development activists". And so, after three intensive days, participants went away with the strong intent to take as seriously as possible the lessons learned, new knowledge shared, and conclusions reached to make headway for empowerment in the new millenium.

Annex 1

The road to the conference - The preparations

Based on an open tendering process, NEPCON Pvt. Ltd. was selected by USAID/Nepal to provide administrative, logistical and technical support for the conference. SAMANATA - Institute for Social and Gender Equality was in turn sub-contracted by NEPCON to provide professional and technical support to the conference. After several consultations and discussions between all parties involved, the conference details were finalized. Some of the major pre-conference activities undertaken were:

1. Prepare a conference web site

A conference web site was developed by SAMANATA, NEPCON and USAID/Nepal. The web site, www.south-asia.com/empower-conf, comprised details of the conference, such as the conference rationale, registration details, travel information prior to arrival in Nepal, and an introduction to the case study on the Women's Empowerment Program "Breaking New Ground". Simultaneously, announcement on the conference was also circulated via different networks. The conference web site had links to various other home pages on the web, i.e., Lonely Planet's Kathmandu, Visit Nepal 1998, Soaltee Crowne Plaza and Nepal online.

2. Setting up a conference secretariat

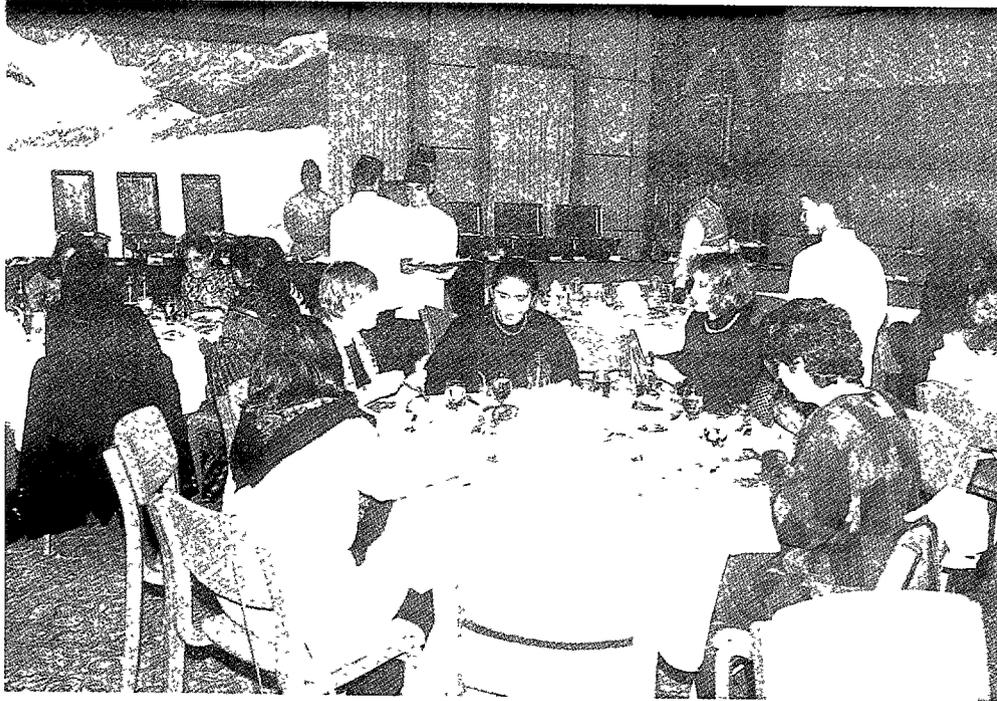
A conference secretariat of 1-3 staff was set-up to plan and prepare the logistic aspects of the conference and serve as a customer interface regarding information, travel schedules, visas, registration of participants, printing of materials and organizing all the other administrative details.

During the conference, the venue hotel staffed a travel desk to serve participants.

3. Press and media

Reputed press and media of the host country, as well as international stringers were contacted to ensure that information about the conference was disseminated nationally, regionally and internationally. A total of 16 Nepali journalists and 11 international stringers as well as the Nepali Television were invited for the conference (See Annex 22 - List of national and international journalists invited and in attendance). A press desk was set up to serve their specific requests, and press tables were provided in the conference room.





Annex 2

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Annex 3

Conference Program



Day 1: Monday, 14 December 1998

- 8:30 - 9:00 **Registration**
9:00 - 9:50 **Inauguration:**
- Welcome** by Joanne Hale, Mission Director, USAID/Nepal
- Opening remarks** by Janet Bogue, Charge d' Affaires, US Embassy, Kathmandu
- Keynote speech** by Hon. Meena Pandey, Minister of State for Women and Social Welfare, Nepal
- "Images of Empowerment"** - a multimedia show
- 9:50 **"What's it all about?"** Context by Jane Nandy, Team Leader for Women's Empowerment Strategic Objective, USAID,/Nepal
- 10:10 **Tea and Coffee** - and the newsletter "Empowerpoint"
- 10:30 **"WEP today"** - A presentation on empowerment in practice by Dr. Marcia Odell, Pact, and Julio A. Andrews, TAF
- 11:30 Getting ready for the field
- 12:00 - 19:00 **Inroads to rural Nepal:** Field trips to the countryside
- 19:30 **Dinner and cultural show** - The Sherpa Highlands
- 21:00 **Optional evening session** to share empowerment experiences

Details on the sessions:

The vivid inauguration multimedia show called "Images of Empowerment" features the current and emerging new life conditions for women in rural Nepal. Today at 9:30.

WEP Today is a presentation of the structure and content of the Women's Empowerment Program (WEP) in Nepal. Through snapshots and video clips from the field, Chief of Party for PACT Nepal, Dr. Marcia Odell and Representative of The Asia Foundation (TAF) Julio A. Andrews presented the lessons learnt on which WEP is based as well as the opportunities and challenges of starting an integrated empowerment program Today at 10:30.

Field Trips Chitwan District

A 30 minute flight to three lowland farming villages in Chitwan District where two new WEP women's savings and credit cooperatives and a Grameen Bank will present some of the differences that group membership, savings, access to credit, and establishment of micro-enterprises have made in their lives. Appreciative Planning and Action (APA) is an important new tool for introducing empowerment, literacy and business skills training, which is just about to start. **Departure December 14 at 11:45 am from the hotel, return approximately at 18:00.**

Rupandehi District

A 50 minute flight to two traditional lowland farming villages in Rupandehi District where a new WEP women's village society and a Grameen Bank group will present the ways in which group membership, savings, and investment of credit in productive livestock raising and services in improving their economic situation. Also here, APA emerges as an important tool in introducing the empowerment literacy course which is starting shortly **Departure December 14 at 13:00 from the hotel, return approximately 19:30.**

Nuwakot District

A one hour bus ride to the hill village of Kakani in Nuwakot District, where members of two women's savings and credit groups will present how access to savings and credit, business literacy, skills training and on-farm micro-enterprises has led to more economic empowerment for the women and higher household income. Self-assessment and peer based capacity building are some of the tools emerging as important in this process. **Departure December 14 at 12:30 from the hotel, return approximately 17:30.**

Day 2: Tuesday, 15 December 1998

- 5:30 Optional bus ride to see sunrise at Nagarkot village
- 8:30 - 8:45 Good morning and introduction to group work
- 8:45 - 12:15 **"Feeding back impressions"**. Group Discussions on key issues of WEP
- 12:15 - 12:30 **Summing up**. Wrap-up on WEP by Jane Nandy USAID/Nepal
- 12:30 - 13:30 **Lunch**
- 13:30 - 14:00 **"Flying High**: - Vision of an empowered world" by participants
- 14:30 - 15:00 **"Breaking New Ground"**. - A play by Sarvanam Theatre Group
- 15:00 - 15:30 **Tea and chat** - and the newsletter Empowerpoint
- 15:30n - 17:00 **HARDtalk** - an interactive panel on the challenges of implementing empowerment program
- 17:00 - 22:00 **Arts and Crafts of Empowerment** - an exhibition
- 19:30 **Festive dinner**

Details of the sessions:

Feeding back impressions - Let's have your point of view! Based on the WEP case study and the presentations on WEP in the field and from the podium, groups of 8-10 participants will discuss key issues related to the content, structure, plans and lessons learnt of WEP and present three recommendations to the implementing team. Today at 8:45-12:30.

Flying high: Visions. Leaving the specifics of the Nepal program, visions of a future world where women are empowered will bring a broader perspective of the how's and what's of empowerment. Participants from three different continents will share their hopes, dreams and visions of a more empowered world, and the Nepali theater group Sarvanam will present the empowerment drama "Breaking New Ground".

HARDtalk - Food for thought for the inquisitive. An international panel of four experts including Carmen Velasco from Pro Mujer in Bolivia, Charity Kabutha from the Women's Leadership Network in Kenya, Quratul Ain Bakhtari from Pakistan and Taheera Yasmeen from Saptagram Nari of Bangladesh will discuss the intricate challenges facing empowerment implementation in future. The discussion which is open to everyone through microphones in the conference hall, e-mail, fax and an internet chatroom will focus on three issues: strategies for linking the multiple interventions needed to achieve empowerment; the paradox of specialized implementers and the need for multi sector programs; and how to master the demands of scale and replicability. The panel is moderated by consultant to ICRW Joanne Spicandler, a specialist in management of family planning and reproductive health programs worldwide. Today at 15:30-17:00.

Time out for **Arts and Crafts of Empowerment**. Individual members of the 'Fair Trade Groups of Nepal', which is a network of marketing and business development, NGOs and companies focusing on production and trade of handicrafts made by women, will display their products at this exhibition. This exhibition will provide an opportunity to sample some of the exquisite crafts of the kingdom. Today at 17:00 - 22:00 - So do go see before or after dinner.

Day 3: Wednesday, 16 December 1998

- 5:30 Optional bus ride to see sunrise at Nagarkot village
- 8:30 - 8:45 Introduction to group work
- 8:45 - 11:00 **"Back to Earth"** - Group on designing empowerment programs
- 11:00 - 12:30 Presentations of empowerment program action plans
- 12:30 - 13:30 **"Tailoring the Vision"**. A working lunch on promising practices
- 13:30 - 15:00 **"Sharing the Wisdom - breaking Fresh Ground"** - Presentations of the promising empowerment practices identified.
- 15:00 - 15:30 **Tea, coffee while choosing your favourite practices.**
- 15:30 - 16:00 **"Award ceremony"**. - Election of the three best empowerment practices for the new millennium
- 16:00 - 16:15 **Wrapping up** by Jane Nandy, USAID/Nepal
- 16:15 - 16:30 **Closing remarks** by Janet Bogue, Charge d' Affaires, US Embassy
- 16:30 - 17:00 **Networking and farewell.** The final issue of Empowerpoint
- 18:30 - 20:00 **Reception for all participants** hosted by Janet Bogue, Charge d' Affaires, US Embassy

Detail of the sessions:

Getting back to work, the vast wealth of visions, experience and field realities represented at the conference will be applied in the Back to Earth session. Groups of 8 - 10 participants will combine the many empowerment lessons learned worldwide into relevant and realistic program designs for the new millennium. Goals, results, activities, success indicators and their verification methods will be described in 'action designs for good empowerment programs' to be presented in plenary. Today at 8.45 - 12.30

Time for Tailoring the Vision to review all the great, less successful, untested and promising practices of empowerment presented and discussed at the conference. At a working lunch, groups of 8 -10 participants will debate and select - among the practices described and designed - three 'candidates for graduation, three practices which to the groups seem so 'promising' that they are short-listed for the "Good Empowerment Practice Award". Today at 12.30 - 13.30.

Finally, the plenary meets to Share the Wisdom of the selected practices from the groups at 12.30 - 13.30.

And - after a think break - to vote in the Awards ceremony for the winners and runners up among the short-listed empowerment practices. We hope that the conference can adopt and present a prioritized list of recommended practices for further implementation of empowerment programs. Today at 15.30 - 16.00.

And to top it all up, the Charge d' Affaires of the US Embassy in Kathmandu, Janet Bogue will host a reception at her residence for the participants of the conference at 18.30.

Annex 4

LIST OF OTHER ANNEXES

- Annex 4 - Welcome speech by Joanne Hale, Director, USAID/Nepal
- Annex 5 - Keynote speech by Hon. Mrs. Meena Pandey, Minister of State for Women and Social Welfare, Nepal
- Annex 6 - Opening remarks by Janet Bogue, Charge d'Affaires, US Embassy
- Annex 7 - Women's empowerment program context by Jane Nandy, Team Leader, USAID/Nepal
- Annex 8 - Background paper on WEP and handouts
- Annex 9 - EmpowerPoint Newsbulletins
- Annex 10 - 'Women Economic Empowerment - Focus and Strategies' - Presentation by Dr. Nagendra Singh, India
- Annex 11 - Suggested key issues for WEP discussion
- Annex 12 - Empowerment vision by Zo Randriamaro, USAID Madagascar
- Annex 13 - Synopsis of the play 'Breaking New Ground'
- Annex 14 - Presentation on Pro Mujer by Carmen Velasco, Bolivia
- Annex 15 - 'WFP Policy Commitments to Women' - Presentation by Gretchen Bloom, World Food Program
- Annex 16 - 'Examining USAID/Egypt's Program through a Gender Lens' - Presentation by Aziza Helmy, USAID Egypt
- Annex 17 - Different Perspectives on Empowerment of Women' - Presentation by William Conklin, ACILS
- Annex 18 - 'Women Empowerment Issues and Opportunities in integrated Resource Management: A socio-ecosystem Perspective' - Presentation by Shiva H. Achet, Nepal
- Annex 19 - Handout on empowerment program design
- Annex 20 - Status on Women in Nepal
- Annex 21 - Newspaper Articles on the Conference
- Annex 22 - List of national and international journalists invited and in attendance



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From: Name -----

Complete Mailing Address: -----

- Annex 1 - 'The road to the conference' - The preparations
- Annex 2 - List of participants and contact addresses
- Annex 3 - Conference program
- Annex 4 - Welcome speech by Joanne Hale, Director, USAID/Nepal
- Annex 5 - Keynote speech by Hon. Mrs. Meena Pandey, Minister of State for Women and Social Welfare, Nepal
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Please provide me a copy of the above checked annexures. Thank you.

You can also order the annexures by email to: Bhuvank.c.@usaid.gov