

Strengthening Advocacy and Local Government Accountability
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II. Summary

Through the widening of citizenship in the last decade of democracy in Nepal, forest and water users have capitalized on openings in policy and political spheres to organize collectively as resource managers and policy advocates, and other coalitions have begun to emerge around women's interests. Yet such citizen coalitions have rarely advanced member issues beyond the point of disparate and sporadic protests in *ad hoc* forums, and are unable to monitor accountability of local government. They often are undemocratic and fail to represent the true interests of their members. Forest users, water users, and women, have not taken advantage of common interests and formed strategic alliances across groups to influence changes in policies and practices. Nor have they reached out to potential allies, such as the media and civil society groups, to increase the power of public scrutiny to change local government's allocation and management of funds. With regard to local government, the Local Self Governance Act (LSGA 1998-99) seeks to transform the traditionally feudal relationship between Nepal's rural communities and government. However, democratic responsibilities and rights continue to challenge both citizen and public servant. This challenge is further confounded by the LSGA's inherent conflicts with other legislation, as well as a lack of clarity regarding the specific roles and responsibilities of citizens, local government, and line agencies at the local level.

In September 2001, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) provided a two-year grant to The Asia Foundation (TAF) to implement the Strengthening Advocacy and Local Government Accountability (SALGA) project, details of which are reported herein. From September 28, 2001 to September 27, 2003, The Asia Foundation (TAF) worked to strengthen advocacy capacity of select federations/coalitions, establish partnerships between federations/coalitions and local government, and increase scrutiny of local government public expenditure and action on social justice issues through NGO partners in Saptari, Siraha, Dhanusha, and Sarlahi districts in Nepal's Terai region. In the four districts, the Foundation and NGO partners worked with 180 lead forest/irrigation/women groups; 17,428 other forest and irrigation group members; 9,583 other women; district chapters of the Federation of Community Forest Users of Nepal (FECOFUN) and the National Federation of Irrigation Water Users Associations of Nepal (NFIWUAN) where present; and emergent women's coalitions.

Despite the absence of local government, the ongoing Maoist insurgency, and other daunting sociopolitical challenges during the project period, significant results were obtained that meet and exceeded the performance plan of the project. Inter alia, within user groups, undemocratic users committees have been reconstituted, voter turnout in general assemblies has increased, defunct users committees have been revived; eight watchdog committees (one each for natural resources and for women's issues in each of four districts) are established, trained, and active; budgets of all related line agencies have been made public in the project districts; women's coalitions are active in all four districts, where none previously existed; increased activities have been recorded within lead users groups and in the FECOFUN and NFIWUAN district chapters; membership in federations is up by an average of 40 percent; a defunct FECOFUN district chapter has been reactivated; NFIWUAN chapters are established in two districts, where there were none; groups and their watchdog committees have established relationships with local radio listeners' clubs, NGOs, and the media and enlisted their support on issues they scrutinize; media reporting of project activities averaged over 25 reports in each of the last few quarters of the project; and a comprehensive and focused review of

laws/policies impacting on resource users and on women at the local level was completed, providing a substantive foundation for continued public action.

The SALGA project was innovative, in the sense that it sought to address disillusionment with government at the local level as a way to help address, in the medium to long-term, governance failure. The Asia Foundation is very grateful to USAID for supporting the idea.

III. GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

The goal of the Strengthening Advocacy and Local Government Accountability (SALGA) project was to strengthen advocacy and local government accountability in four districts. The goal-level results were: 1) advocacy-generated change in policies and practices related to forest, irrigation, and women and 2) sustainable mechanisms to ensure government accountability.

The project had three inter-related objectives:

1. Strengthened capacity of federations/coalitions to advocate for member interests;
2. Strengthened partnerships between federations/coalitions and local government; and
3. Increased scrutiny of government performance on allocation/management of funds for local development.

The project strategies focused on consolidating federations/coalitions; stimulating and supporting effective local advocacy; strengthening functional collaboration between local and national levels; stimulating consensus and collaboration through new participatory forums; and stimulating and supporting federation/coalition watchdog activities. The progress towards objectives of the program was gauged using a Project Monitoring Plan (PMP) that specified two goal-level indicators and seven objective-level indicators (see Appendix A).

IV. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

During the first year (months 1-12), efforts were mainly directed at the users group level to inculcate skills and achieve change at the federation/coalition level prior to public action. The project worked with select lead groups as catalysts for change within the federations/coalitions. They took on the challenge of making parent federations/coalitions more democratic, and provided the nucleus of skills and energy to demand, initiate, and fuel transformation. The lead groups also used local government processes to influence change in the federations/coalitions. A comprehensive training package was designed and delivered through experienced and trained Master Trainers. The first year interventions saw a rise in critical awareness among the lead groups and surrounding communities. Beginning then and until the middle of the second year (months 7-18), efforts were directed at using federation and group skills for public action and at achieving qualitatively better relations with local government and other local stakeholders. In year two, project activities were directed at increasing and enhancing advocacy at the local level and linking local advocacy with district and national advocacy. The activities implemented during the life of the project are described in detail below.

A. Preparatory activities

Sub-grant agreements

The project began with a series of consultation meetings between the Foundation and Forum for Protection of Public Interest (Pro Public) and Informal Sector Services Center (INSEC) during October-November 2001. The meetings provided common understanding of implementation schedule and activity descriptions, and provided opportunities for joint brainstorming on coordination. Based on these meetings, these partners submitted clear and comparable sub-grant proposals with project descriptions and implementation plans. After several iterations, the proposals were finalized in the second week of December 2001, and by third week of December sub-grant agreements were signed with Pro Public and INSEC.

In early April 2002, Forest Action was added as a third NGO partner to the team of implementing partners, with a view to provide qualitative inputs to the project. This partner helped build capacity in self-monitoring and learning, documented best practices, and strengthened implementation of select activities. Forest Action was also responsible for review and revision of training materials developed by Pro Public and INSEC to ensure quality and consistency, and for facilitation and adaptation of fresh tools for increasing citizen participation in addressing local-level problems and strengthening government accountability. In addition to these initial responsibilities, Forest Action was given the responsibilities of finetuning advocacy strategies of groups, backstopping citizen-government interactions, and advising federations/coalitions on advocacy and governance strategy. These three partners were carefully selected for their demonstrated capacity at the grassroots and proven capability and commitment to the project's thematic concerns.

Project Steering Committee (PSC)

Established in December 2001, the PSC comprised senior program staff of The Asia Foundation, Pro Public, INSEC, and later, Forest Action. The PSC ensured planned and coordinated project implementation at the central level. A total of 11 PSC meetings (8 in year one and 3 in year two) were organized in Kathmandu during the project period. These meetings discussed issues of concern as and when deemed necessary by the Foundation and the partner NGOs. While PSC meetings were very productive, the first-year plethora of pre-implementation concerns required these meetings for resolution and coordination. Critical activities, such as Village Development Committee (VDC) and group selection, material preparation, implementation planning, activity development, strategic timeline, and intervention overlap, the PSC meetings were invaluable. The PSC meetings became less necessary in the second year when the "reflective workshops" commenced from August 2002. Although broader in both scope and audience, these reflective workshops provided continuous and accurate feedback to partners, which informed planning, correction, and better-synchronized implementation. It also helped the project mostly adhere to specific timeline and proved as an effective coordination mechanism.

Project administration

Partners established field offices in the second quarter following sub-grant agreements with the Foundation in December 2001. Kathmandu-based staff were recruited in December-January 2001, while field-based staff were recruited in February-March 2002. All recruitments were done through advertisement in local and national newspapers, and subsequent interviews at district and central levels. Pro Public and INSEC each maintained field offices in four districts and recruited a Program Coordinator, a Program Officer, four Field Officers, a part-time Accountant, and an Office Assistant. Field-based Social

Mobilizers (SMs) were hired according to partners' respective program volume and need. Pro Public hired 16 SMs, four in each district for both irrigation and forest groups, while INSEC hired eight SMs, two in each district for women's groups. Both field officers and SMs were provided detailed orientation/training during February-March, 2002.

Forest Action, added in April 2002 as the third partner, operated out of its Kathmandu-based office manned by a Project Coordinator and an Office Assistant. Field-based staff included two Field Coordinators each responsible for two program districts.

Preliminary survey

During the consultation meetings in the first quarters, partners decided to divide the baseline survey into two steps: 1) a preliminary survey to assess needs and identify lead groups and their locations, and 2) a subsequent exercise to collect baseline data for qualitative and quantitative performance monitoring. The partners carried out the preliminary surveys separately in their respective areas, but shared reports in finalizing the working areas and lead groups. The surveys identified 180 lead groups in 152 VDCs and 360 lead group members, with minimum risk of overlapping each other's membership. In each district, a women's group was identified in a VDC, then a forest user group in an adjoining VDC, and a water user group in yet another adjoining VDC wherever possible. This selection strategy sought to eliminate overlap of households in lead groups. This arrangement also facilitated advocacy with a broader geographic coverage. In a few cases, overlap was unavoidable due to limited accessibility to groups and security concerns (Table I). In such cases, forest, irrigation, and women's lead groups were selected from the same VDC but from separate wards, in order to minimize overlap. The surveys served as a preliminary needs-assessment of the lead groups, and also assisted in finalization of training materials. INSEC conducted its survey in February 2002, while Pro Public completed its survey in April 2002.

Table I

List of VDCs and Overlapping Groups									
Districts	Total VDCs	F/F	F/I	F/W	I/W	F/I/W	F	I	W
Saptari	42	0	0	3	0	0	12	15	12
Siraha	43	0	0	2	1	1	12	13	12
Dhanusha	40	1	0	3	1	0	11	14	11
Sarlahi	27	3	4	8	6	3	4	7	4
Total	152	4	4	16	8	4	39	49	39

F: Forest; I: Irrigation; W: Women (see Appendix D for details)

Baseline survey

Pro Public and INSEC completed baseline surveys in July and August 2002. Pro Public sampled 32 VDCs while INSEC sampled 20 VDCs in the four program districts. A one-day training to enumerators and project staff preceded the surveys in both cases. The survey methodology, designed to collect both qualitative and quantitative data, was developed in consultation with the Foundation. Ethnic diversity, geographic spread, and varied characteristics were taken into account to enrich the survey sample and reduce error. In

addition to primary beneficiary, the baseline targeted other stakeholders such as the general public, government line agencies, elected women leaders, representatives from the district chapters of FECOFUN, NFIWUAN, and women's coalitions. Some key findings are provided below to illustrate what existed before the project began its work.

- Most users groups were unaware of their role within federations and, in many cases, lacked information about the national or even district chapters of the federations.
- District chapters of NFIWUAN did not exist in Siraha and Saptari; district chapter of FECOFUN in Sarlahi was defunct.
- Majority of users group committee members were nominated and not elected.
- Users groups depended heavily on government initiative to renew community forest operational plans and inventory, which hindered speedy handover of forests to communities.
- Women's coalitions in all four districts were nascent and not functional.
- Minimum funds were allocated for women's issues in the annual budgets of local bodies.

Baseline information has been so far used for PMP reporting to USAID, adjusting implementation strategies, and activity development for the second year. For detail information on figures, please see separately the PMP reporting in Appendices (Appendix A).

Curriculum and resource materials (see Table II)

Core training materials: Training materials were developed to provide a lasting basis for learning and actions during the project period. Based on the reality of rural livelihoods as well as on the essential tenets of citizenship and good governance, these materials triggered extended interactions about citizenship responsibilities with respect to natural resource users and women's groups. Even at project's end, the demand for these materials from other organizations and groups vouches for their scope and usefulness. It is worth noting that the national chapters of FECOFUN and NFIWUAN have requested and obtained these materials for use with their districts chapters in other parts of the country. These materials may have proved valuable also because they were carefully developed in stages, by incorporating lessons learned at each stage.

From January 2002 to June 2002, Pro Public and INSEC developed a set of curricula in close consultation with the Foundation. The Pro Public curriculum consisted of a master trainers' manual and a resource book for forest and irrigation water user groups. To be consistent with project objectives, the contents were divided into four sections. The first section provided background information on forest and water management, with an overview of rules and regulations relating to forest and irrigation, introduction of key information on natural resources in Nepal, users' roles in local development, and introduction to the respective national federations of forest and irrigation water users groups. The second section dealt with good governance and advocacy. The so-called four pillars of democracy--citizen participation, transparency, accountability, and rule of law--are discussed at some length in this section. The third section addressed capacity building for effective citizenship. The final section provided information on ways and means to develop linkages and partnerships at and between local and national levels of advocacy.

INSEC's curriculum consisted of a master trainers' manual and a resource book for the use of emerging networks of women's groups. Based on the experiences and materials of USAID's Women's Empowerment Program (WEP) implemented by the Foundation, the curriculum has four sections that provide general information on rights, development and participation; women's status and rights in Nepal; action-oriented information on citizen advocacy, budget analysis, and monitoring of government performance; and dispute resolution at the household and group level.

As mentioned earlier, both sets of curricula are widely disseminated among FECOFUN's other district chapters, NFIWUAN's district chapters, district and national stakeholders, civil society groups, and relevant government ministries and agencies. Experts in law, natural resource management, governance, and curriculum development--Dr. Ananda Mohan Bhattarai, Krishna P. Acharya, Dilraj Khanal, Kabita Ram Shrestha, Kedar Khadka, and Shankar Thapaliya (who also helped develop the Foundation's WEP: RRA curriculum)—helped develop Pro Public's curriculum for forest and water users groups; while Chitra Niraula along with INSEC's core project team developed the curriculum for women's groups.

Follow-up advocacy training package: Forest Action played a major role in reshaping and revising the draft curricula of Pro Public and INSEC through a series of participatory meetings in Kathmandu and in the project districts. Building on these curricula, Forest Action developed an advocacy follow-up training package in the beginning of the project's second year, and trained the Master Trainers from Pro Public and INSEC in March 2003. This material was the outcome of consultations with partners and lead groups, observation of district-level interactive forums, as well as observation of the nature of public actions that were beginning to emanate as a result of initial curricula use. In addition to clarifying and emphasizing concepts of good governance commonly applicable to all three types of groups (forest, water, and women), the package imparted tools for planning and implementing advocacy at user group level, and formulating strategies and tactics at federation/coalition level (more detail under **Training for Lead Group Members** below).

Thematic IEC materials: INSEC and Forest Action each developed and disseminated two sets of posters. INSEC's posters addressed women's equality and dowry-related domestic violence. INSEC reported that these issues were perceived as most prevalent problems among women's groups. One thousand copies of each poster were disseminated among users groups, district-coalitions, like-minded organizations, members of women's coalitions, and members of coalitions' strategic alliances both at the local and national levels. These were prepared in both Nepali and *Maithili* language. Similarly, Forest Action developed two posters that targeted the most prevalent problems with forest and irrigation water management: collaborative forest management and equity within forest users groups. A total of 1000 copies of each poster were disseminated among forest and irrigation water users lead groups, district federations, federations' members in the adjoining districts, additional users groups in the project areas, and like-minded civil society groups.

Newsletters: Pro Public developed a newsletter *Sachetan*, which was disseminated among the lead groups, federations, and local and national stakeholders in the districts and at the national levels. Various articles, stories, case studies, and information carried in the newsletter not only encouraged additional public actions but also called upon district and national levels policy advocates and like-minded individuals/organizations to support grassroots advocacy. INSEC published a mini publication *Prachi*, which highlighted gender

mainstreaming issues, and another *Good Governance and Women's Participation*, both in Nepali.

Table II

Materials: subject	Number of copies	Partner
Resource book: natural resource	1000	Pro Public
Resource book: women	500	INSEC
Trainer's manual: natural resource	500	Pro Public
Trainer's manual: women	35	INSEC
Poster: natural resource	1000(500 x 2 types)	Forest Action
Poster: women	4000 (2000 x 2 types)	INSEC
Newsletter: natural resource	2000	Pro Public
Newsletter: women	5500	INSEC
Legislation review	500	Pro Public

Training of Trainers (TOT) for Master Trainers (MTs)

INSEC and Pro Public separately selected and trained eight MTs each for the project during March-May, 2002. In addition, a few resource persons from Pro Public and INSEC were also added as training reserves. The selection criteria for MTs included training experience, subject knowledge, and familiarity with the project's geographical coverage. A total of 14 MTs were locally hired, while two were nominated from the target federations (FECOFUN and NFIWUAN). Pro Public conducted their five-day TOT in Kathmandu; INSEC conducted their seven-day TOT in Dhanusha district. Facilitated by curriculum designers and a pool of resource persons, the training was participatory with focus on curriculum content clarity, adult learning principles, and information building. Since most MTs were seasoned development trainers, new areas were also identified to further improve the curriculum and challenge the MTs. Resource persons were at hand to clarify local and national policy and regulatory issues governing forest, irrigation water, and women's issues. For every training activity, MTs were paired, with each pair responsible for training or facilitating in one district. Kathmandu-based project management staff from Pro Public, INSEC, and Forest Action also attended the TOTs.

MTs also received refresher training in March 2003 based on Forest Action's follow-up training package mentioned earlier. All 16 MTs participated in the three-day workshop along with program staff from the three partner NGOs. MTs then conducted advocacy refresher training for the project's lead group members.

B. Strengthening federations/coalitions

Training for Lead Group Members

The project worked with members of a select number of users groups, called lead group members (LGMs), who were core participants of most project activities as well as the catalysts for change within their groups, and through their groups their respective federations/coalitions. These LGMs went through several rounds of training during the life of the project; each round aimed at enhancing and finetuning their skills (Table III). Pro Public and INSEC each conducted initial five-day advocacy training for LGM during July-August, 2002 in the four program districts. A total of 231 representatives of FECOFUN and NFIWUAN and 119 representatives from women's coalitions attended the training. Trained in rights, responsibilities, advocacy, and good governance, these LGMs serve as locally based resources for continuing advocacy at the VDC level and within their respective federations/coalitions. During the project they played the important role of supporting their peer groups in identifying advocacy issues and developing advocacy plans.

Following initial training and a period of advocacy activities, Forest Action identified places for improvement and made recommendations for making the LGMs and their parent groups more effective advocates. Based on these recommendations, Pro Public and INSEC each conducted follow-up training to improve the quality of public actions. Conducted from November-December 2002 for 249 representatives of forest and water users federations, and 160 representatives of women's coalitions, the training emphasized collaborative problem solving. In March of 2003, Forest Action trained Pro Public and INSEC's MTs using a follow-up advocacy training package focused on social structure, power relation, good governance, decentralization, people-centered advocacy, planning of advocacy, leadership, laws relating to issues, network, and media. These MTs then trained the LGMs.

Table III

Federations/ Coalitions	LGM training I		LGM training II		LGM training III	
	Groups	Individuals	Groups	Individuals	Groups	Individuals
Forest	60	120	60	125	60	126
Irrigation	60	118	60	124	60	124
Women	60	119	60	160	60	140
Total	180	357	180	409	180	390

District-level participatory workshops (DLPW)

Beginning August 2002, Pro Public and INSEC organized a series of district-level participatory workshops (DLPWs) to share and discuss assessments originating from stakeholders' experiences with the project (Table IV). In addition to lead group members (LGMs) and district watchdog committee members (see page 13, subsection E. **Supporting Community Scrutiny of Local Government**), representatives of district federations, government line agencies, NGOs, INGOs, and local government attended these workshops. The DLPWs provided the initial push to the formal process of cooperation among these stakeholders, focusing first on fostering local ownership and assistance for the project. They dealt with basic problems of natural resource management policy and implementation and

strategies for joint action to address the problems. In addition, the workshops helped establish coordination and working relations among these key stakeholders, most importantly with local government. While the workshops were structured to focus on internal governance issues of federations/coalitions, many were successful in going beyond that initial mandate, to extract commitment and support from the government agencies and local authorities that participated in the workshops during the life of the project.

Table IV

Partners	Year One		Year Two	
	# of DPLWs	# of Participants	# of DPLWs	# of Participants
Pro Public	8	399	12	830
INSEC	15	552	15	593
Total	23	951	27	1423

Reflective workshops

Conceived in August 2002 to adapt to changing issues and challenges, and to foster continued learning, six reflective workshops were organized during the remaining project period by Forest Action. The workshops usually were of two to four days' duration, depending upon type and salience of issues. The agenda for the workshops revolved around a core of critical reflection on events and processes relating to the project's conceptual orientation on monitoring, adaptive management, and action learning. These workshops provided a forum for reviewing ongoing public actions, sharing field experiences, planning joint activities or activities that were postponed earlier, devising improved advocacy actions, crafting better ways to capture PMP data, devising monitoring tools, and addressing challenges such as the absence of local elected government. The most successful aspects of these workshops were event management, improved coordination, and better understanding among partners on the issues of advocacy and government accountability. The last of the workshops was conducted with the objective of reviewing the entire program with partners and lead group representatives. Among the major issues discussed during this meeting were: sustaining and institutionalizing the efforts of the past two years, and developing and applying self monitoring in women's groups and community forestry groups.

Inter-district exchange visits

Beginning October-November 2002, inter-district exchange visits provided opportunities for users/women's groups to replicate best practices from advocacy actions, internal governance reform, alliance building, and other institutional development. Pro Public organized visits for 246 participants in all four districts, while INSEC organized a two-day exchange meeting for 120 women representing all target VDCs in Siraha. Field officers and social mobilizers organized and facilitated the visits between groups. In particular, participants were able to learn the types of profitable agro-forestry, special provisions for underprivileged, products of voluntary labor contribution from members, provisions within local government for skill-based training, and how to handle corruption issues within groups.

Orientation/training for federations/coalitions

As mentioned earlier, from the seventh month of the two-year project, efforts were directed at using federation and group skills for public action and at achieving qualitatively better

relations with local government and other local stakeholders. In year two, project activities were directed at increasing and enhancing advocacy at the local level and linking local advocacy with district and national advocacy. With this in mind, Pro Public and INSEC each organized a one-day orientation/training workshop to the district federations/coalitions in four districts in May 2003. A total of 219 representatives from federations and 141 women from women's coalitions came together in May 2003 to discuss rights and responsibilities of federations/ coalitions towards the member groups. The training materials used for lead group members were synthesized and tailored for these participants, in order to focus on advocacy skills and strategies for federation/coalitions. Facilitated by the Master Trainers from partner NGOs, these meetings resulted in advocacy action plans for the remainder of the project period.

These orientations/trainings equipped the coalitions/federations members with skills necessary to systematically position themselves vis-à-vis government officials. The most significant outcome was the formation of NFIWUAN district chapters in Saptari and Siraha districts, which was a significant step forward in defining their collective position on irrigation water issues in the two districts.

Community meetings

Although there had been some community-level meetings in the first year, they became a regular feature in the project areas from the beginning of the second year. Planned in order to encompass additional users groups and women, particularly disadvantaged, the community meetings focused natural resource management, groups' sustainability, increased participation in public affairs, identification of issues, alliance building, and taking actions in a larger group. Organized through social mobilizers from partner NGOs, the meetings were successful in garnering local support to meet project goals. They clarified roles and responsibilities of community members, identified users' problems, promoted better relationships between users and user committees, promoted ownership in resource management, improved users' and women's participation, and discussed and prioritized advocacy issues. By project's end, Pro Public had organized a total of 437 community meetings and trainings, involving 13,942 additional users from 120 VDCs in the four districts. Of these 6,201 participants were women. INSEC organized 243 community meetings, involving 3,486 additional users from the four districts of which almost all were women.

District-level participatory workshops with service providers

In April-May 2003, Forest Action organized four separate one-day participatory workshops in the four districts to build relations between service providers and civil society groups. These workshops explored more effective coordination among different service-providing agencies at the district level, and brainstormed ways to sift through and prioritize issues emanating from citizen groups. A total of 107 representatives of government bodies, NGOs, journalists, and networks participated in these workshops.

C. Fostering strategic alliances

Media linkage activities within districts

Both Pro Public and INSEC worked to improve their working relationships with local media through district-level activities from the fourth quarter of the project period. Given the important role of media in advocacy and local government accountability, partners ensured that journalists were invited and brought to participate in or observe training, participatory

workshops, and interactive meetings. In addition to these standing invitations to the media, Pro Public organized multiple interactive meetings, eight workshops, and sent 41 media persons on three observation tours in order to expose them to experiences and success stories from the project. INSEC organized seven workshops and a media exposure to local NGOs in the project period. INSEC-led coalitions also organized a “Meet the Press” event in Saptari that encouraged the press to champion women’s issues at the grassroots. The increased media coverage contributed to raising awareness in local communities and local government bodies on issues advocated by project partners. The improved relationship between project partners, lead groups, and the media resulted in comprehensive media coverage of almost all of the major activities of this project, both at local and national levels.

Local-national linkage workshops

Fostering advocacy linkages from local to national levels was an important project strategy, in order to surface and articulate local-level issues in national policy debate. To this end, linkage activities at both district and national levels were initiated between federation/ coalitions, like-minded individuals, organizations, and policy advocates in the first year. This activity was started in November-December 2002 using national-level linkage workshops organized by NGO partners. These workshops had wide participation, from district and national representatives of FECOFUN and NFIWUAN, district-level women’s coalitions, district-level watchdog committee members, and representatives from Ministry of Local Development, Department of Irrigation, Department of Forestry, Assistant Minister and representatives of Women, Children, and Social Welfare; and representatives from Beyond Beijing Committee, Sancharika Samuha, Alliance Against Trafficking of Women and Children, National Women’s Commission, I/NGOs, National Human Rights Commission and journalists, and resource persons. The second year local-national linkage activities used these workshops as a focal point for effective policy advocacy on specific themes such as community forestry policy on forest revenues, government facilitation of irrigation canal committees, dowry, violence against women, participation of women in the mainstream development process, and issues of women’s empowerment.

District-central FECOFUN linkage activities

In order to establish and enhance trustworthy and functional relationships between community forest users, their groups, FECOFUN district chapters, and the FECOFUN national chapter, several two-day interactive workshops were organized in the four program districts during the second year. These workshops brought about a consensus that there are plenty of opportunities for FECOFUN to work with users groups, identify issues together, assist users groups in securing use and management rights from government, and act together around common interests. These workshops first provided clarity and common understanding of advocacy fundamentals such as principles of social justice, governance, difference between issues and problems, issue and problem framing, and so on, which was very important to begin to improve the relationship between users groups and FECOFUN.

As a result of the workshops, FECOFUN’s executives agreed to review and revise their conceptual understanding of representativeness as well as their strategy of work. A total of 113 FECOFUN executives and user groups’ representatives attended these workshops. As another followon result, the FECOFUN district chapter in Dhanusha organized a two-day workshop to discuss current community forestry issues and internal challenges faced by FECOFUN, and asked Foundation partner Forest Action to facilitate the workshop. The workshop included FECOFUN representatives from Sindhuli, Dhanusha, Sarlahi, Mahottari, Morang, and Saptari districts as well as representatives from FECOFUN’s central office. This

workshop provided a forum to address contentious issues within the federation, and resulted in an action plan for communication, empowerment for disadvantaged groups, and joint advocacy with other types of federations/coalitions. Following this workshop, Forest Action organized an interaction program for the field officers of Pro Public and INSEC, representatives of watchdog committees, women coalitions, NFIWUAN, and FECOFUN to identify joint action issues and plan joint advocacy action.

D. Stimulating Government-Citizen Partnerships

Brainstorming between federations/coalitions and local government

Seeking to build a clearer and more substantive relationship between federations/coalitions and local governments, the project first worked to clarify the roles and responsibilities of both parties within the extant democratic framework of rules and regulations, which was followed by meetings to explore ways to work together. Following a series of consultation meetings with experts at the national level, and with the help of a law and decentralization expert, Pro Public prepared a *Review of Existing Policies, Acts, and Regulations Relating to Forest, Irrigation, and Local Self-Governance in Nepal*. The review critiqued existing rules, regulations, and procedures with a view to expose those that are problematic in practice at the local level. Using this review, Pro Public disseminated the findings at the field level and explored avenues for improved partnerships between federations and local government. Copies of the report were distributed to federations, local NGOs, INGOs, government ministries, and policy advocates.

As a first step for reviewing the Local Self-Governance Act in relation to women, INSEC organized a national-level workshop in Kathmandu. Based on feedback received by individuals and representatives of organizations working on women's issues, INSEC prepared a draft agenda for brainstorming with local government in the four project districts. At district-level, INSEC organized eight brainstorming sessions with local government, with participation from women's coalitions. A total of 220 people attended these sessions. Unresolved issues identified through brainstorming with local government later became advocacy issues addressed by public actions.

Policy discussion papers

The Foundation encouraged partners to widely circulate and, if possible, publish project experiences, so that others could participate in policy debate and benefit from the project. To this end, Forest Action prepared, circulated, and published two policy discussion papers: *Equity and Social Justice in Natural Resource Management*, by Netra Timilsina and Harisharan Luitel, and *Community Forestry in Nepal: Current Issues and The Way Forward*, by Hemanta Ojha. The former paper advocates the need to:

- develop an adaptive approach to resource management that emphasizes learning by doing through conscious action and monitoring;
- enlarge the pool of professionals who are equipped to analyze power relations such as social, economic and political issues, while facilitating community-based resource management;
- create neutral forums to discuss positive discrimination issues, equity, and social justice for the marginalized;
- craft negotiated and collaborative visions, strategies, and policy instruments that better address the issues and opportunities in all aspects (technical, political, institutional, service delivery, and economic); and

- encourage more civic engagement to put pressure on power holders to be more responsive and accountable to citizens.

The latter paper provides a constructive critique of the limited impact of Nepal's progressive community forestry legislation on improving livelihoods, urging:

- inclusion and strengthening of the civil society constituency in the government's high-level forestry sector coordination committee;
- creation of legal provisions to allow a portion of community forest benefits to go to the poorest in communities;
- institution of an independent national body to assess, license, and promote private forestry service providers in the country; and
- promotion of civil society group and FECOFUN participation at all levels of policymaking.

E. Supporting Community Scrutiny of Local Government

Watchdog activities

Regular monitoring of local government through scrutiny of their budgets proved extremely effective in increasing accountability during the project period. For forests and irrigation water users, Pro Public formed a seven-member watchdog committee in each of the four districts. The committees consisted of two members each from FECOFUN and NFIWUAN district chapters, one member from the local Good Governance Radio Listeners' Club (GGRLC), and two retired government officials as advisors. Similarly, INSEC formed a five-member watchdog committee for women in each of the four program districts. Five-day training was provided to watchdog committee members, to equip them with skills necessary to scrutinize local budgets. This included knowledge of development spending related data collection; budget analysis; summarizing budget findings in actionable format; networking; and so on. The training also served as mechanism to begin and strengthen relationships between watchdog committee members and their federations/coalitions. These watchdog committees scrutinized development data, investigated discrepancies, and fed information to the project's lead groups as well as to participants of interactive workshops for discussion and action. To date, these watchdog committees have successfully made public the budgets of the Irrigation Divisional Office, District Forest Office, District Soil Conservation Office, and other local government agencies in the four target districts. Watchdog committees also convened 16 progress review and action plan development workshops in order to institutionalize their function.

Public hearings and public audits

Over 30 public hearings and public audits were conducted from the first quarter of year two by the watchdog committees in the four project districts. These flowed from preparatory situation analysis; data collection and analysis of government budget allocation and expenditure on programs for women, forests and irrigation; and a series of meetings with stakeholders. Attended by representatives of local government, stakeholders, civil society groups, and local communities, these public hearings were successful in eliciting local government's responses on questions of allocation and spending. They also succeeded in influencing future allocations.

Participatory budget analysis methods

As a pilot activity, Forest Action developed participatory budget analysis techniques for district agencies' budget and programs, focusing on services provided, fair allocation, system transparency, and accountability. This process was facilitated in Bastipur VDC of Siraha district, where the local community discussed and analyzed the VDC's sources of income, its process of project selection, fund disbursement, and so on at the *Tole* (neighborhood) level. *Tole* representatives then participated in a two-day workshop where they met former VDC representatives (in the absence of elected local government) and together analyzed the budget, which was presented to the public at a village assembly. This pilot provided insights about how VDC government functions at present: for example, it was noted that there was lack of long-term thinking among VDC members, of knowledge on developmental practices, of initiative in preparing requests for budget, and of basic good governance practices.

V. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

All performance indicators as defined in the Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP) were tracked through regular monitoring and final assessment survey. Using data collection forms they developed, Pro Public and INSEC regularly collected data through their respective social mobilizers for review, analysis, and reporting by their district officers. This data was then fed into each partner's management information system and compared to baseline data. Pro Public and INSEC's management teams and the Foundation's program officer monitored, evaluated, and reported on project activities. They regularly traveled to project areas to assess overall progress, and ensure necessary guidance and support to maintain program quality. The Project Steering Committee also ensured timely, coordinated, and effective program implementation. In addition to regular interaction with mission staff, the Foundation submitted annual workplans and quarterly reports, which also included up-to-date PMP data. The final evaluation of the project was conducted in August 2003; information is reported in the PMP.

VI. PROJECT ACHIEVEMENTS

The Strengthening Advocacy and Local Government Accountability (SALGA) project tracked two goal-level and seven objective-level indicators. All indicators were tracked through regular project monitoring by the field-based staff and participatory assessments carried out in first half of 2002 (baseline) and August 2003 (final assessment). By the end of the project period, SALGA had exceeded targets set for all indicators. Although these indicators are quantitative and may not fully capture behavioral impact or change, they do indicate significant project achievements. To augment and enrich the quantitative information on results recorded in the PMP (Appendix A), this report also provides qualitative results described below as well as in the form of case studies (Appendix B) and some elaborated results (Appendix C).

Increased public actions

As a result of project activities, such as advocacy training, district-level participatory workshops, and interactions with local government, users/women's groups and watchdog committees developed critical awareness about their rights, responsibilities, and the functioning of local government. This awareness formed the basis of an upward spiral of public actions. The public actions were initiated to secure rights, safeguard interests, reveal lapses in management of public funds, and to hold government responsible for its actions.

The actions also address governmental backlog or inaction, such as in renewal of operational plans of community forests and larger irrigation systems, simplification of inventory, corruption (see case study on forest users group in Sarlahi district, Appendix B), dowry, malnutrition, trafficking of girls and women, *double tancha* for the sale of forest products, extraction of gravel/sand from community forest with DDC approval but without consulting community forest users, DDC contract-seeking mechanisms, disclosure of government budget and other official information, special provisions to treat witchcraft, double allowances for forest technicians, land encroachment, and so on. These actions not only showcase the raised awareness and enthusiasm of the project's lead groups but also the advantage they realized and exploited in being change agents within their local communities and parent federations.

A total of 198 public actions took place in the four districts during the project period, of which joint actions by forest and irrigation water users groups comprised a significant proportion (Table V). This is an indication that the two types of users groups and federations have been able to arrive at a common understanding and strategy of action on issues requiring joint interventions.

Table V

Groups	Number of Public actions				
	Saptari	Siraha	Dhanusha	Sarlahi	Total
Forest	10	10	10	10	40
Irrigation	10	10	10	10	40
Joint actions (Forest and Irrigation)	22	16	14	15	67
Women	28	6	10	7	51
Total	48	26	30	27	198

It is further interesting to note that among forest users groups and irrigation water users groups, internal governance issues were brought up and acted on in larger proportion than broader governance issues, indicating that problems *within* these users groups had higher salience (Table VI). Between the two types, irrigation water users groups were more preoccupied with internal governance issues, signaling relatively higher levels of contentiousness and lower levels of democratic praxis than forest users groups. Women's groups were recorded as most active on broader governance issues; the case studies and elaborated results in Appendices B and C provide evidence of their overriding concern for social and gender justice, likely born of personal experience.

Table VI

Groups	Public actions addressing internal governance issues (%)	Public actions addressing broader governance issues (%)
Forest	62	38
Irrigation	75	25
Women	18	82
Total	52	48

Note: Some actions may address both internal and external governance issues and figure in both columns.

In terms of success, women's groups were able to exert more influence on government policies and practices than other groups, most likely because they present a united and vigorous front on broader issues and because forest and irrigation users groups appeared more preoccupied with cleaning their respective houses (Table VII).

Table VII

Groups	Public actions that were successful in influencing change in government policies and practices				
	Saptari	Siraha	Dhanusha	Sarlahi	Total
Forest	8	8	10	9	35
Irrigation	8	8	10	10	36
Women	19	31	31	16	97
Total	35	47	51	35	168

Note: These are public actions but do not necessarily reflect that each action resulted in change (for example, a large number of actions may be required to accomplish one change). One public action may also result in multiple changes. This table, in addition to independent advocacy actions, also includes advocacy generated in multiple advocacy forums such as public hearings/audits and district-level participatory workshops.

Users group-led governance reform within federations/coalitions

Reform initiatives within federations/coalitions were achieved by working through a select number of lead member groups, district-level federations/coalitions, and relevant government line agencies. This was an overt strategy deployed by the Foundation at the very outset. Lead group members were core participants for most activities; they spearheaded initiatives to transform their respective federations/coalitions from within, making them more democratic and providing the nucleus of expertise and momentum within federations/coalitions to continue organizational reform. This sustained internal push for reform has had the effect of rejuvenating and increasing the number of federations/coalitions district chapters, increasing membership in federations/coalitions by an average of 35 percent, increase in user participation in federations/coalitions affairs, more internal debates, more regular elections, greater involvement of the federation/coalition in forming or restructuring new/defunct users committees. In addition, the increased membership in FECOFUN and increase in

participation through voting in elections and general assemblies indicate renewed expectations and faith in their federations/coalitions (see **More active federations/coalitions** below). The growing interactions between watchdog committees, federations, and users also undergirded the reform within federations (see Table VI above).

More active federations/coalitions

That district chapters of the federations/coalitions have become more active is well documented by numbers as well as cases. More frequent federations/coalitions' meetings on issues for public action, increased collective actions by the federations/coalitions, many more federation/coalition press conferences organized to brief media, transformation of women's coalitions into district-level referral centers to deal with women-specific cases, all testify to more active federations/coalitions. All district-level women's coalitions are beginning to document and research potential public interest litigation (PIL) issues. The coalition from Dhanusha district has planned a PIL on behalf of victims of violence perpetrated by accusations of witchcraft. This is being prepared for court hearing by Pro Public's public interest litigation firm.

Rejuvenation/establishment of district federations and coalitions

When the project began, federation/coalition chapters for forest users existed in three of four districts, for irrigation water users in two of four districts, and for women's groups none in the any of the four districts. By project's end, a district chapter for FECOFUN was resurrected in Sarlahi, district chapters for NFIWUAN were established in Saptari and Siraha, and all four districts had established and registered active women's coalitions. These continue to function well.

Improved media relations

Partners worked to improve relationship between the federations/coalitions, policy advocates, and media throughout the life of this project. Media, particularly local, played an important part in highlighting grassroots issues, ranging from rights violations to corruption and lack of government responsiveness. Interactive workshops and meetings were supported for district-level journalists, political leaders, and civil society groups working on forest, irrigation, and women issues. Improved media relations were amply evidenced by comprehensive media coverage of almost all major activities of the project, both at the local and national levels. Due to increasing demand from the journalists, Pro Public also organized media observation tours to the project sites, with a view to enable media to make in-depth and informed reporting. Now exposed to newsworthy information and news sources, the media in these districts can be expected to continue to highlight federations/ coalition issues in future.

Increased confidence among forest/water users and women

Forest and water users as well as women translated knowledge into actions both at individual and collective levels. This is evident in actions that showcased their sense of identity and confidence. The increase in affiliation with district chapters, increased membership (membership more than doubled by April 2003), collective action plans, increased participation in federations/coalitions affairs, and formation of new committees all indicate improved perception of the capabilities of self, group, and respective federations/coalitions.

Groups catalyze local development

In addition to advocacy, lead group members who partnered with the project demonstrated increased commitment and capability in using their empowerment to provide physical and social solutions for their communities' problems. On many occasions, they and their groups

contributed labor, organized skills training based on their own training, built and upgraded schools, provided for teachers' salaries, built and maintained roads, built a bridge and constructed check dams, and cleaned and maintained ponds and irrigation canals.

Increased engagement with local government

Lead group members and their communities were successful in laying claim to and obtaining local government funds to undertake public works. By influencing a shift in local government attitude towards community groups, they were able to accelerate the handing over of irrigation systems and community forests and renewal of operational plans; fund a tree plantation, an award for well-maintained forest and irrigation canals, and nursery establishment; provide for forest management, accounting, and sewing training; and so on. They were also able to obtain local government commitment to fund development initiatives in spite of lack of budgetary allocation from the central government. In all four districts, women's and users groups were successful in obtaining funds in the range of Rs.2000 to Rs.100,000 from their local governments. For example, an irrigation group in Siraha received Rs.40,000 from the local government for construction of a *siphon gate* for their irrigation canal; similarly, a user group in Devi Daha received Rs.100,000 from the Soil Conservation Office for pond conservation.

Cross-sectoral and upward linkages

Activities were organized to establish linkages with media, like-minded organizations, policy advocates, policy makers, and government institutions. These activities, mainly interactive workshops, successfully introduced users and women groups and their federations/coalitions to a range of local and national stakeholders over a period of time, which facilitated understanding and channeling up of grassroots issues into national policy debate.

More transparent local government

One of the major achievements of this project is budget transparency of most government bodies in the project area, both local and central government. There are very few government bodies left that have not made their budgets public. Some of those that have made public their budgets are District Development Office, Village Development Committee, District Forest Office, Department of Irrigation, Women Development Division, Local Development Office, Municipality, and the Soil Conservation Office. At least in the project areas, citizens are now able to make any inquiry regarding the budget and express their satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Forums for budgetary debates are now not uncommon, and more and more citizens are appreciating the project's budget analysis technique as an effective tool to ensure government accountability in public expenditures.

Replication of best practices

The inter-district project activities and exposure visits proved particularly effective ways to share and replicate best practices in other project areas. Users groups in one district adopted the farming methodology of users groups from another district; it is now usual practice to distribute resources in a just way rather than using equal allocation; ways of interacting with government are were copied; more democratic methods of selecting local leadership for group activities (*Tole-neta*) are replicated; the practice of writing memoranda to government on issues is widely copied; and women's coalitions have seen and copied each others' practice of referring victims of violence. These are some examples of best practices that have been being replicated by other groups. In addition, there are groups that took actions against corrupt chairpersons/managers based on the precedence set by a case from another district.

Quantitative summary of achievements: Table VI

Activities	FY 2000/01	2001/02	2002/03
Membership in FECOFUN	80	118	161
Membership in NFIWUAN	36	38	104
Membership in coalitions	00	50	None ^a
Forests handed over	49	60	77
Irrigation systems handed over	42	44	51
Forests registered	78	92	103
Irrigation systems registered	75	76	81
Voters in FECOFUN	180	236	322
Voters in NFIWUAN	524	527	236
Voters in Coalitions	00	50	50
Number of committees ^b	78	83	85 (as of June)

^a Coalitions converted into NFIWUAN district chapters as of May 31, 2003.

^b Includes both formation of new committees and restructuring of defunct committees

VII. PROGRAM SUSTAINABILITY

Although the project period was not long enough to complete activities to satisfaction, sustainability of some processes is likely due to strong qualitative relations built between implementing partners, communities, and the lead groups, and the mechanisms set up to advocate and call government to account. Each implementing partner has well-established offices in the project areas, and continues to work on forest, irrigation, and women issues. This was the case before the project began, which is why these partners were selected. The level of support will definitely change but the involvement will remain.

This also holds true for the stakeholders who partnered with the program. Already embedded with the project, the existing networks of Radio Listeners' Clubs (RLC) of both Pro Pubic and INSEC will continue to interact with users and women's groups to discuss issues and initiate collective actions. Watchdog committees formed within the federations, given their link with RLCs, government agencies, like-minded NGOs, and users/women groups, will continue to monitor government performance. Women's coalitions established and mobilized through this project, will carry on with referral centers to address women's issues given their close ties with INSEC's district-based partner networks. Budget analysis, now established as an effective tool to scrutinize government spending, should be sustained by watchdog committees, federations, and women's coalitions, albeit at a reduced level. The district-based interactive forums have already been adopted by federations/coalitions as a viable mechanism

to resolve most pressing issues and frame strategies. The sustainability strategies that were adopted by NGO partners and lead groups during the sustainability workshops will help maintain some momentum of ongoing activities. These include coordination with other groups, quarterly meetings of watchdog committees, raising support funds from the VDC, including a representative of the VDC in the watchdog committee, and maintaining public hearing activities. Above all, given federations' functional linkages with the media, like-minded organizations, and local government, public actions continue to take place and produce results. Lastly, because of their close work with VDC, DDC, as well as district line agencies throughout the project period, partners NGOs, groups, and districts chapters of federations/coalitions will continue to enjoy strong support.

VIII. PROJECT LEARNING

The innovative nature of this project provided tremendous opportunities for learning. Fresh strategic interventions were innovated to improve project's effectiveness and sustainability, and all learning was diligently and meticulously recorded. Methodologies were observed closely, interventions were studied, and training/workshops were scrutinized to identify the best practices. Where opportunity arose to integrate lessons in a timely fashion, it was done through interactive workshops and followup training. Some highlights of the project's learning are described below.

Project approach

Flexible implementation approach, partnership among like-minded organizations, involvement of a wide range of expertise in the project, improved relations with media, and efforts to link grassroots actions to policy level guaranteed amplification of grassroots interests at national levels.

Innovative entry point

The project chose a pragmatic approach of working initially with the lead groups rather than directly with district federations given disenchantment towards parent entities among users groups. By developing the capacity of these groups first, the project aptly innovated an entry point to improve the capacity of parent federations/coalitions by starting with internal reforms.

Reflection, learning, and improving

Project reflections were guided by a learning approach. Given the innovative nature of the project, it was essential to collectively reflect on past actions and improve the strategic interventions on a continuous basis. Innovative approaches such as reflective workshops proved effective in review of project learning and instrumental in activity development. Implementation approaches improved over time as lessons learned from the workshops were incorporated.

A forum for effective advocacy

District-level participatory workshop not only provided users and women easy access to government officials but also provided a platform for effective advocacy. The target groups took advantage of these opportunities and voiced their demands with government officials, which generated some decisions in favor of users groups. As a result of such forums, a few forests and irrigation canals were handed over instantly (*Hardinath* irrigation canal in particular was important), government directives were issued, District Administration Officer sought formal explanation from other government entities (e.g. District Forest Office), and

some actions were taken regarding corruption. Later, these workshops and group meetings also became forums for advocacy.

Creating women's forums

The districts lacked platforms where women's issues were dealt with; lack of conceptual clarity about women-specific issues led to suppression or sidelining of women's issues at the village or VDC levels. With the establishment of women's coalitions and the level of confidence women had in them, the coalitions soon turned into district-level referral centers. The effectiveness of these coalitions is guaranteed by the critical mass of women's groups associated with the coalitions, which continue to grow beyond project's end. The coalitions have so far dealt with property, domestic violence, dowry, and witchcraft. Continued support for these coalitions is desirable in order to bolster continued actions.

Citizen-government interaction

Due to increased interaction between lead groups and government, a strong partnership developed. The groups' confidence in working with and addressing local government is growing, and they now seek to achieve change *through* government. The local governments have also recognized the potential of citizen groups, and their actions are increasingly geared towards being responsive (See Table VII). The active involvement of local government in any programs or interactions is seen as desirable for project success.

Nature of advocacy actions

This project used the media and press successfully to create effective advocacy to sensitize the government officials about the need to be responsive and accountable. Local newspapers exposed cases of corruption and misuse of resources by government officials and resource managers. A number of issue-based public hearings were organized to bring citizens and government officials together to discuss rights and responsibilities. The public hearings related to forestry, irrigation, and VDC budget allocation were found to be the most effective way to raise the concerns of people and their awareness levels. Many of the government officials made written and verbal commitment to deliver services in an efficient way. As a result, in many occasions, DDCs and VDCs have agreed to allocate budgets for the development of the poor, marginalized and women groups. Several community forests have been handed over, which had earlier been stopped by the District Forest Office prior to the public hearings. The public audits done by partners and watchdog committees using DDC and VDC budget analysis have led more transparent practices.

Experiments for methodological innovations

An action learning approach for promoting governance reform and self-monitoring process was experimented at local level with various groups such as forest and water users groups, VDCs, and women groups. This was found to be a useful tool in reforming the internal governance and empowering the poor and marginalized. The people themselves identified main issues, organized people around the issues to take actions. This process appeared to be useful in addressing issues related to internal governance of user groups, and social justice particularly equity (for example, in the case of *Gagan Khola* FUG and *Bastipur* VDC's budget analysis). It also effectively mobilized the local people to exert pressures on federations and networks working at district level to strengthen their advocacy actions. The outcomes of the action learning process were fed in to other partners' and federations' ongoing activities to improve the quality of the project activities through training and reflective workshops.

IX. LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Projects dealing with complex issues such as governance, citizenship, and resource management (in the context of livelihoods) require substantial investments of time and efforts to show results, both of which this project did not have. It did not help that a state of national emergency was in effect during many months of the project, with restriction on public gatherings imposed during the emergency hindering advocacy initiatives and limiting some group and federation-level activities.

After considerable preparation, field-level efforts in the last six quarters of the project were beginning to show measurable, exciting results, all of which exceeded project targets. The progress made within, between, and among lead and other groups, district chapters of federations/coalitions, watchdog committees, local government, and media should have been maintained if results were to endure and have multiplicative effect. Till the end of the project in September 2003, this remained a pressing concern for the Foundation and its NGO partners, lead groups, and local supporters of this project.

It is still early to gauge the long-term effectiveness of public actions; behavioral changes in both citizens and government officials require time to take root and flourish. That said, some lessons learned and recommendations are provided below.

Partners with national outreach

Because the Foundation used national NGO partners with extensive experiences in the chosen areas and outreach, local ownership of programs and participation by local government were encouraging. In addition, the partners elicited support from national stakeholders and government. This was seen in government's increased participation both at the local and national levels in interactive workshops and meetings.

Enlarge the base or critical mass

In order to leverage policy change, the demand base for change must be large enough to guarantee representativeness and relevance to policy makers. This project had too small a critical mass to influence sweeping policy reform. However, with the introduction of linkage activities, the project was successful in multiplying support for advocacy actions that did result in a change in local government's exercise of power.

Social mobilization

Adequate participation by local stakeholders is critical for relevant and effective programming, and for establishing a favorable context for program implementation. Local line agencies, VDCs, media, civil society groups, and local stakeholders must be informed, as in this project's case, from the very beginning and their views must be reflected in activity implementation. Inclusion of community meetings as one of the activities in the second year not only gave rise to numerous collective actions but also proved effective in building confidence of users in their parent organizations. Community meetings mainly engaged *dalits*, women, and the disadvantaged.

Continued use of curriculum

The development of training materials involved legal scholars, national-level natural resource managers, women activists, and policy advocates. The materials also incorporated the views of local stakeholders through participatory preliminary surveys and interactions. As a positive

consequence, FECOFUN, NFIWUAN, and local/national level women activists have requested and obtained these materials--especially the resource books--for use as reference materials throughout their own programs. It is recommended that other natural resource management programs use or build on these materials.

Complement local government

Local communities, NGOs, and government officials usually perceive projects as competing undertakings to local government's own programs, thereby giving rise to critical views and conflicting positions. Projects can sometimes impede local confidence and ownership building processes by the very nature of their implementation. Government systems are a complex web of structures requiring careful plans and time to show effects that requires continued commitments. Repositioning of citizen-government relations therefore should be addressed by projects not just in rhetoric but in action. Projects come and go but local government and citizens remain, and long-term social goals cannot be achieved unless they work in complementary partnership.

Duplication

In the last two quarters of the project, some of the local communities voiced their concerns about a program that appeared very similar to the SALGA project that was being started with USAID funding in their areas, with similar objectives and with the same target groups. Although the new project was different in some ways, these differences were not apparent to the beneficiary communities, prompting concern about duplication and posing a dilemma for those asked to participate. To the extent possible, projects with similar goals and target groups should not be colocated, however compelling the need. The fallout may well not be worth the investment.

Lead groups' effectiveness

As envisioned when the SALGA project was designed, every effort should be made to incorporate lead groups and federations/coalitions already worked with in USAID's future programming as they are trained, aware and active. This not only reduces startup costs, but also vests more in groups most likely to succeed

Strengthening Federations/coalitions

By project's end, the district chapters of FECOFUN and NFIWUAN were readied for advocacy roles larger than their districts. It is recommended that future USAID programming emphasize federation/coalition-led public actions that emanate from consultative processes with their constituent groups.

Targeted Support to Watchdog Committees and Women's Coalitions

Many of the public actions recorded were based on research and findings of the watchdog committees, especially the analysis of local government budgets. Although much appreciated for their work and valued by their constituents, they require further mentoring to be durable accountability-seeking mechanisms. It is recommended that the committees in the four districts be supported to the extent possible for another one year. Similarly, the women's coalitions, which are now turning into effective referral centers to protect women's rights, should be utilized in USAID's trafficking or any programming that deals with women's issues.

**X. Appendix A: Performance Monitoring Plan
October 2001 – September 2003**

Performance Indicators	Indicator definition	Achievements	Source
Goal			
PI 1 Advocacy-generated changes in local government policies and practices related to forest, water, and women's issues	Indicator 1.A % increase in local government decisions addressing federation/coalition issues Year I: 5% Year II: 10%	Results 1.A Pro Public Baseline: n/a Year I: decisions: 19 Year II: decisions: 22 INSEC Baseline: 0 Year I: 6 decisions: > 5% Year II: 32 decisions: > 10%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of DDC/VDC decisions • Analysis of advocacy actions • Monitoring of local Councils decisions and local government records • Partners' reports
PI 2 Sustainable mechanisms to ensure local government accountability	Indicator 2.A Watchdog committees established Indicator 2.B # of participatory meetings with local government attended by federations/ coalitions or their constituent members Year I: 3 per F/C Year II: 3 per F/C	Results: 2.A Pro Public Baseline: 0 Year I: 4 committees Year II: 4 committees continued INSEC Baseline: 0 Year I: 4 committees established Year II: 4 committees continued Results 2.B Pro Public Baseline: n/a Year I: 31 Year II: 72 INSEC Baseline: 0 Year I: 15 Year II: 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observation of meetings • Monitoring of district reports and records • Monitoring of government documents and checking with local NGO partners of INSEC

Objective 1:			
<p>PI 1</p> <p>More democratic federations/ coalitions</p>	<p>Indicator 1.A</p> <p>% resolution of internal governance issues raised</p> <p>Year I: 50% of issues raised Year II: 75% of issues raised</p> <p>Indicator 1.B</p> <p>Disclosure of federation/coalition finances to member groups in each district</p> <p>Year I: 3 per F/C Year II: 3 per F/C</p> <p>Indicator 1.C</p> <p>% increase in group-level concerns raised at district-level federation/coalition meetings</p> <p>Year I: 50% Year II: 75%</p>	<p>Results 1.A</p> <p>Pro Public Baseline: Year I: 19 issues raised; 14 issues resolved: > 50% Year II: 19 issues raised; 18 issues resolved: > 75%</p> <p>INSEC Baseline: 0 Year I: 4 issues raised; 4 issues resolved: > 50% Year II: 20 issues raised; 20 issues resolved: > 75%</p> <p>Results 1.B</p> <p>Pro Public Baseline: 0 Year I: 6 Year II: 8</p> <p>INSEC Baseline: 0 Year I: 3 Year II: 10</p> <p>Results 1.C</p> <p>Pro Public Baseline: 8 Year I: 25 issues: > 50% Year II: 23 issues: > 75 %</p> <p>INSEC Baseline: 0 Year I: 6: > 50% Year II: 8: > 75%</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring partners progress reports • Monitoring districts reports by partners • Monitoring coalitions meetings and minutes • Monitoring minutes of the lead groups
<p>PI 2</p> <p>Increased member confidence in and commitment to their federations/ coalitions</p>	<p>Indicator 2.A</p> <p>% Increase in # of new member groups per federation/ coalition</p> <p>Year I: 10% per F/C Year II: 10% per F/C</p> <p>Indicator 2. B</p> <p>Increase in # of members who vote</p> <p>Year II: 10%</p>	<p>Results 2.A</p> <p>Pro Public^A Baseline: 116 members Year I: 156: >10% Year II: 265: > 10%</p> <p>INSEC Baseline: 0 Year I: 2: > 10 % Year II: 2: > 10 %</p> <p>Results 2.B</p> <p>Pro Public^B Baseline: 704 members Year I: 763 members Year II: 558: > 10%</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring of partners progress reports • Monitoring of district reports by the partners • Monitoring of coalitions/federations minutes • Monitoring of media collection

	<p>Indicator 2.C</p> <p>% increase in member participation in advocacy campaigns</p> <p>Year I: 5% Year II: 15%</p>	<p>INSEC Baseline: 0 Year II: 2 persons > 10%</p> <p>Results 2.C</p> <p>Pro Public Baseline: 41 Year I: 749 Year II: 972</p> <p>INSEC Baseline: 3% Year I: 10% Year II: 15% (115)</p>	
<p>PI 3</p> <p>More effective local advocacy</p>	<p>Indicator 3.A</p> <p># of positive changes in local government policies and/or practices resulting from the F/C advocacy</p> <p>Year I: 1 per F/C Year II: 2 per F/C</p> <p>Indicator 3.B</p> <p>Case study of selected policy or legislative changes</p>	<p>Results 3.A</p> <p>Pro Public Baseline: n/a Year I: decisions: 19 Year II: decisions: 33</p> <p>INSEC Baseline: 0 Year I: 6 Year II: 12</p> <p>Results 3.B</p> <p>Pro Public 2</p> <p>INSEC 11</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring of partners progress reports • Monitoring of district reports by the partners • Review of VDC/DDC decisions • Analysis of advocacy actions • Monitoring of local councils decisions and local government records
<p>PI 4</p> <p>Sustainable alliances at and among all levels</p>	<p>Indicator 4.A</p> <p># of district joint advocacy campaigns by federations/ coalitions at district-level</p> <p>Year I: 2/district Year II: 3/district</p> <p>Indicator 4.B</p> <p># of F/C issues discussed at national-level meetings</p> <p>Year II: 6</p>	<p>Results 4.A</p> <p>Pro Public Baseline: 0 Year I: 25 Year II: 41</p> <p>INSEC Baseline: 0 Year I: 2 Year II: 6</p> <p>Results 4.B</p> <p>Pro Public Baseline: n/a Year II: 16</p> <p>INSEC Baseline: 0 Year II: 4</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring of partners progress reports • Monitoring of district reports by the partners • Review of district coalitions/federations meetings • Analysis of advocacy actions • Review of media collection • Reports of coalitions

Objective 2			
<p>PI 1</p> <p>Participatory and responsive local government</p>	<p>Indicator 1.A</p> <p># of local government decisions in target issue areas in which input from participation mechanisms taken into account</p> <p>Year I: 1 Year II: 2</p>	<p>Results 1.A</p> <p>Pro Public Baseline: n/a Year I: 6 Year II: 23</p> <p>INSEC Baseline: 0 Year I: 3 Year II: 14</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of annual budget allocation to local councils • Review of public hearings reports • Monitoring the records of District Administrative Office • Review of reports from the districts
<p>PI 2</p> <p>Local development initiatives jointly planned and implemented</p>	<p>Indicator 2.A</p> <p># of joint local development initiative planned and implemented in each district</p> <p>Year I: 1/district Year II: 2/district</p>	<p>Results 2.A</p> <p>Pro Public Baseline: 0 Year I: 8 (2 per district) Year II: 17 (4.25 per district)</p> <p>INSEC Baseline: 0 Year I: 6 Year II: 14</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentation of district offices or partners and records of DDC
Objective 3			
<p>PI 1</p> <p>More transparency in government spending on forest, water, and women's issues</p>	<p>Indicator 1.A</p> <p># of watchdog activities (PH: Public Hearings; PA: Public Audits) per district</p> <p>Year I: 1 per F/C Year II: 2 per F/C</p> <p>Indicator 1.B</p> <p>Public disclosure of government spending by each federation/ coalition in each district</p> <p>Year I: 3 Year II: 3</p>	<p>Results 1.A</p> <p>Pro Public Baseline: 0 Year I: 9 Year II: 18 (7 PA, 11 PH) Total watchdog activities including budget analysis and others: 117</p> <p>INSEC Baseline: 0 Year I: 6 (4 PH; 2 PA) Year II: 10 (2 PA, 8 PH)</p> <p>Results 1.B</p> <p>Pro Public Baseline: 0 Year I: 0 Year II: 22</p> <p>INSEC Baseline: 0 Year I: 3 Year II: 8</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring of Watchdog Committees' minutes • Monitoring reports of coalitions • Monitoring media coverage • Public hearing reports • Monitoring documentation of district office • Progress reports from grantees

^A Increase In Number Of New Member Groups Per Federation/Coalition

FECOFUN	2001	2002	2003
Saptari	28	45	68
Siraha	38	43	45
Dhanusha	13	19	26
Sarlahi	1	11	22
NFIWUAN	2001	2002	2003
Saptari ^a	1	1	18
Siraha ^b	1	1	13
Dhanusha	7	8	19
Sarlahi	27	28	54
Total	116	156	265

^a Represents Chandra Canal Main Committee (No NFIWUAN district chapter).

^b Represents Kamala East Canal Main Committee (No NFIWUAN district chapter).

^B Increase In Number Of Members Who Vote Per F/C

FECOFUN	2001	2002	2003
Saptari	56	90	136
Siraha	76	86	90
Dhanusha	26	38	52
Sarlahi	22	22	44
NFIWUAN	2001	2002	2003
Saptari	280	280	48
Siraha	208	208	51
Dhanusha	9	11	29
Sarlahi	27	28	108
Total	704	763	558

Note: In the absence of a federation chapter of water users associations there were a large number of eligible voters. After the formation of federation chapters in Saptari and Siraha districts, the number decreased, as only two members per water users association are now eligible to vote.

X. Appendix B: Case Studies

Forest Users Groups

Saptari District

The Khairakhola community forest at Khoksar Prabaha VDC-9, Saptari district, covers an area of 100.25 hectares. The forest contains *Khair*, *Sissoo*, and other valuable tree species. Those living in the vicinity are Rais, Limbus, Magars, Tharu, Musahars, and Muslims.

For three years, the Khairakhola community forest users group had made multiple representations to various local authorities like VDC, Forest Range Post, and District Forest Office seeking help for afforestation programs but to no avail. This may have partly owed to the fact that the users themselves could not agree on the issues as they met only on an ad hoc basis.

After being introduced to the SALGA program by Pro Public, a coordination mechanism was established between the users and concerned authorities. Sensitization was done on the importance of participation in natural resource management, transparency, and accountability in group activities. This led to more regular meetings to discuss important issues, prioritize critical issues, and act together. As a result of the project's work, users have planted saplings in 10 hectares with the help of GTZ, constructed a water conservation pond with the help of the district forest conservation office, and constructed a canal to irrigate 60 ropanis of land. They now plan to clear scrubby/bushy forestland, which constitutes nearly five percent of the total forest area and plant saplings.

The forest users group greatly appreciated SALGA's intervention as a timely eye opener on rights, responsibilities, and group behavior.

Sarlahi District

A community of 58 households of marginalized *Tharus* and Muslims in Laxmipur VDC succeeded--after numerous attempts beginning 1984--in growing a forest on 18.6 hectares of riverside land. This they achieved by planting saplings with loan assistance from the Small Farmers Development Project, for which they made payments using income from selling forest products. In 1995, the District Forest Office of Sarlahi recognized their efforts and handed over the forest with the name Mahabirpeti Community Forest. The problem arose after the handing over, because community forestry and local government rules restrict sale of forest products and require revenue sharing with the DFO (40%) and the VDC (25%). With what was left loan payments were impossible; many households faced the risk of their houses and lands being auctioned if they defaulted on the payments.

This group participated in the SALGA program supported by Pro Public. In addition to the revenue problem, their group's constitution needed to be renewed and the status of the operational plan needed to be amended so they could continue forest management activities. The forest ranger responsible had demanded Rs. 6000 rupees for the renewal and amendment, of which they'd paid the first installment of Rs. 3,200 a while back with no action. They remained unable to cut trees in the community forest and pay back their loan amounts. The SALGA partners offered them a forum to share their grievances in front of the media, and offered them advice and support through the relevant watchdog committee. The journalists and forest users confronted the officiating DFO, Mr. Sampat Yadav, revealing the ranger's corruption. An official explanation was sought from the ranger for taking money illegally for

doing work he was paid for, and the amount taken was returned to the users group. Through facilitation by SALGA partners, the users group invited the assistant DFO and the DFO to a meeting, where they shared the contract paper signed with the VDC and other necessary papers explaining the activities carried out by the users group since its formation. They also shared their dilemma in giving 40 percent of their profit to the District Forest Office in addition to the VDC's share of 25 percent of the total earnings. Convinced of the financial implications of the same, the District Forest Office agreed to an amendment of the group's operational plan and constitution.

The committee today holds regular meetings and conducts its work in line with procedural requirements. They have been provided with a nursery from the VDC and have also produced their own plants for re-forestation. They have acknowledged the role of SALGA and the watchdog committee in assisting them, and have provided assurance of their commitment to keep exposing corruption.

Saptari District

Situated 26 kilometers north-east of Rajbiraj, the headquarters of Saptari district, the villagers of Hardiya VDC formed the Bhedia Community Forest Users Group six years ago, and have been protecting, conserving, and utilizing the forest. Despite their efforts, the community forest was not handed over to them, nor did they have basic rights of use or management. Permission from the Range Post was required even for collecting firewood.

The awareness generated by activities of SALGA helped provide the impetus for this users group to state forcefully and clearly to the District Forest Office, Saptari, their need for the community forest to be handed over. This was soon done. However, when they tried to extract wood from the forest, the officials at the Range Post correctly said that a workplan was needed before harvesting activities could begin. The users approached the district forest office for a work plan, at which point the forest ranger demanded an illegal payment in return. At this point the users group turned to the watchdog committee in their area, and with facilitation from Pro Public, were provided with the work plan without paying a bribe.

Water Users Groups

Siraha District

The Sukhathaur Branch Committee, Rajapur VDC, falls in the jurisdiction of the Rajapur-Kamala Irrigation East Canal system, and oversees nine sub-branches. The responsibility of maintenance of the branch--which is yet to be handed over--lies with the Kamala Irrigation Office. That office collects water tariff at the rate of Rs. 2 per kattha of land irrigated. Employees and committee officials usually pocketed the amount thus collected; being ignorant of the role and function of the committee, users made regular payments without checking to see how the money was used. Under the SALGA project, a meeting was organized between office employees and the users' committee, following which a bank account was opened with an initial deposit of Rs. 15,000 for all future collections to be deposited. Details of income and expenditure are made public through local newspapers on a quarterly basis, resulting in transparency and accountability to the water users.

Saptari District

The Dudhaila Sector Irrigation Project, constructed north of Birendrabazaar (Terhaouta), is a 15 kilometers away from Rajbiraj, the headquarters of Saptari district. The Rs. 7.2 million project was constructed with financial support from the ADB and HMG in 1996 to provide

irrigation to 320 hectares of land covering two VDCs. The contractor and the technicians, conspiring with a handful of “informed” and “aware” locals formed an irrigation users association ignoring the other users. Despite complaints from the bonafide users, construction went on. The project failed before it could irrigate a single piece of land. Local farmers point to faulty site selection and corruption as the major reasons for the failure.

Encouraged by SALGA program partners, the local farmers reconstituted the association in September 2002, to attempt to reconstruct and run the project. After the new association failed to get cooperation from the concerned authorities, they called a public meeting and announced that they themselves should rebuild the system. Thus encouraged, the farmers agreed to provide volunteer labor to reconstruct the project. The association’s meeting in early 2003 decided to ask the District Irrigation Office for a technician to estimate costs of reconstruction and authorized the establishment of bank accounts for the association. This is an important step for their future work together.

Women’s Groups

Dhanusha District

A women’s coalition, formed with INSEC support in Janakpur, took up the issue of rights protection of women who work in hotels and restaurants. The coalition first did some fact finding of the situation of women workers in this sector. A delegation of this coalition then held a discussion regarding the services and the facilities provided to the women workers in hotels and restaurants. The vice-chairperson of the coalition, Lila Manandhar, took advantage of the occasion to hand over a letter of concern to the Chief District Officer (CDO).

The coalition coordinator, Ms. Usha Karki of Maiti Nepal, informed the CDO that despite there being several notices warning against child labor, the coalition had found children of ages 12 and 13 working in hotels and restaurants there. They also pressed the CDO to provide legal assistance from his office to get all the details of the 70 odd women working in the hotels and restaurants, a majority of whom are from outside Janakpur. Although there are no lodging facilities in the restaurants, the women are provided a room to stay in that was not secure. The coalition came to the conclusion that these women workers were being exploited, and therefore some regulations needed to be in effect: they should not be made to work after 8 p.m., they should have fixed working hours, they must be provided lodgings by the hotel owner, their personnel details must be maintained by the owner, and they must be provided with leave and basic fixed salary.

The CDO agreed that the details of all restaurants must be recorded along with the name of their owners. He asked members of the coalition to meet with him again, when he’d arrange a discussion regarding this issue with representatives of the Ministry of Labor, the Municipality, and owners of the hotels and restaurants in order to come up with appropriate solutions. The women’s coalition in Janakpur has committed to maintain pressure and resolve this issue.

X. Appendix C. Some Results Elaborated

Successful fundraising for irrigation (Siraha District)

The Hanuman Nagar VDC Narhaiya Minor Irrigation System, which falls under the Kamala Irrigation Eastern Canal System, had only a barely functional users association and committee. After receiving their first training from Pro Public, the association successfully ran a house-to-house fundraising campaign. They started collecting five rupees as membership fee and two rupees as water tariff from each user, and opened a bank account in the name of the association's committee. They also hold regular meetings of the committee and association, and have established an office. Emboldened by internal success, the committee approached the local authorities for funds, and was successful in collecting 26 thousand rupees from Siraha Municipality to construct a canal.

Activated user group (Sarlahi District)

The Farhadwa Irrigation Water Users Association had remained passive ever since it was constituted about six years ago. After SALGA's intervention through Pro Public, the reconstituted committee holds regular meeting. They have reconstructed and renovated irrigation canals and dams through voluntary labor. They are also now affiliated to the national federation, have fixed water tariff (at Rs. 200 or 20 kg raw rice per 0.75 hectare), and are in the process of renewing the Association's constitution. They are now capable of demanding the services they rightfully deserve from local authorities, and have started to organize different mass activities (e.g. fairs) to increase awareness among the users.

Accountability of resources (Sarlahi District)

The District Forest Office had rewarded Shree Buddha Community Forest Users Group a cash prize of Rs. 5,000 for conserving and protecting the Community Forest. The chairman of the user group, Megh Bahadur Moktan, informed neither the committee nor the users about this and spent the money. When the user groups were told of the situation by the local SALGA supported watchdog committee, they gathered at the District Forest Office to further learn about what was going on. They then called a meeting of all the users and reconstituted the group. The meeting also ascertained that of the 5000 rupees, 3500 rupees was embezzled by the former chairman. The former chairman was made to pay this amount back into the users' fund. The new user group is active, holds regular meetings, and conducts affairs in a transparent manner. The users are much more aware of the potential of wrongdoing.

Coalition success in providing justice to a widow (Saptari District)

Shankeria Devi Das, a resident of Rajbiraj Municipality -7, Saptari district, has a son and daughter. She was widowed four years ago and has since lived with her in-laws. She runs a small *paan* (betel) shop for her livelihood. At present, her only assets are 10 dhur of land and a small thatched hut.

After her husband passed away, her in-laws' behavior towards her and her children began to change. They along with their daughters planned to prevent her from getting any share of the family's money. After selling their own land, the parents began planning to sell Shankeria's 10 dhur of land. Not able to resist them any longer, she filed a case against them. The in-laws retaliated by physically torturing her. When the police hesitated to intervene, the Coalition of Saptari Women represented Shankeria and discussed matters at length with her in-laws. At long last, the matter was resolved and Shankeria's 10 dhurs of land were secured along with the hut.

Allowance secured from husband (Dhanusha District)

A Chaudhary couple were living together in Janakpur Municipality- 6. One day, Manju Chaudhary's husband abandoned her and their two daughters. She wrote an application to the district administration office as well as SALGA and INSEC's district partner organization, Samaj Utthan Kendra, requesting assistance in receiving financial assistance from her husband. Through the efforts of that partner, the president of the District Women Rights Coalition, and Usha Karki of Maiti Nepal, a discussion was held between Manju and her husband. In the end, both parties agreed that her husband would provide Rs.1500 per month as child support, verified physically through the office of the partner organization. To date, Manju has received the money for several months.

VDC budget secured for training activities by women's group (Saptari District)

Manakamana Mahila Samuha, Bakduwa VDC, Saptari is an active group involved in advocating for their rights since the inception of the SALGA program. The group discussed the most feasible and appropriate training for their women, which would also enable them to earn money. They decided that the sewing training would be most cost effective and suitable for the village women as well as help provide accessible services to the villagers. They then prepared an application with the help of INSEC's social mobilizers and submitted it to the VDC chairperson. The chairperson was not at all cooperative at the first meeting, but was convinced by the women about this being a worthwhile development program. They were able to secure one kattha of land to build the tailoring shop and three sewing machines from the VDC. The group is now actively training its first batch of women. After the dissolution of local government, the VDC secretary has been kept in the loop and is very positive about the whole initiative. He has promised more funds for the group when the next budget is planned and disbursed.

Village road construction by pooling resources (Saptari District)

Sabbhu, 52, member of Shardha Mahila Samuha, Saptari raised the problem in the group's regular meeting of their local fair-weather village road, which turned into a mud river in the rainy season. The group unanimously prioritised this issue as the most important on their list. With the support and guidance of SALGA social mobilizers, an application was made and submitted to VDC chairman. The group succeeded in acquiring Rs. 4,000 from the VDC to construct the village road. They also contributed Rs. 2,000 from their group's savings and provided voluntary labor. The women's group then went on to construct a nice five-kilometer, which is being used by all villagers. This success has given the group's women greater confidence in themselves. They like to say that "the men of this village do not want women to lead but now we are aware that government has allocated budget for development and we are very happy we succeeded in our efforts."

X. Appendix D: Location of Lead Groups

Irrigation groups, Dhanusha

S.N	Name of user group	VDC
1	Kamala Dam Western Irrigation System	Raghunathpur
2	Hardinath Eastern Irrigation System	Tarapatti
3	Balganga Farmer's Irrigation	Dhanusha Govindapur
4	Deep tube well WMB (8)	Basahiya (8)
5	Mahalaxmi Deep Tube well WMB (5)	Basabitti (5)
6	Irrigation WMB (6)	Bindhi (6)
7	Deep Tube well WMB (6)	Kurtha (6)
8	Deep Tube well Water Management Board	Kanakpatti (1)
9	Kamala Dam Western Irrigation System	Deudi Parbaha
10	Dudhmati Farmer's Irrigation Organization	Sinurjhoda (8)
11	Deep Tube well WMB	Sapahi (6)
12	Hardinath Irrigation Western Dam System	Baniniya
13	Deep Tube well WMB (9)	Laxmipur Bagewa (9)
14	WMB (3)	Aurahi (3)
15	Auraha sarbi Irrigation	Digambarpur (8,9)

Irrigation groups, Siraha

S.N	Name of user groups	VDC
1	Pirari Upasakha	Malhaniyakhori
2	Gautari Upasakha	Gautari
3	Bandipur Upasakha	Badaharamal
4	Sukhathaur Sakha	Rajpur
5	Nagaiya Upasakha Samiti	Hanuman Nagar
6	Laxmipur Upasakha Samiti	Laxmipur
7	Siraha Sakha Samiti	Bishnupur Pra. Ma.
8	Maunabatti Irrigation Planning Committee	Arnama Lalpur
9	Baburam Uraha Khola Irrigation Sanstha	Kusaha Laxminiya
10	Labka Jamuwa Baandh Water Users Group	Khurkyahi
11	Govindapur Deep Tube-Well Water Users Group	Govindapur
12	Shri Bhagyoday Water Users Group	Padariya
13	Shri Janakalyan Water User Committee	Dhangadhi
14	Btaha Khola Irrigation Users Committee	Raghopur
15	Darmadev Water Users Committee	Bastipur

Irrigation groups, Saptari

S.N	Name of user groups	VDC
1	Khadga Irrigation Water User Committee	Kalyanpur-7
2	Koshi Irrigation Water User Committee	Kalyanpur-6
3	Koshi Pump Canal Dist. Sys. Sub minor Water User Committee	Maleth-7
4	Koshi Pump Canal Dist. Sys. Sub minor Water User Committee	Maleth-7
5	Dumarjor Irrigation Water User Committee	Hariharpur-6
6	Dumarjor Irrigation Water User Committee	Hariharpur-6
7	Dudhela Irrigation Water User Committee	Terhota-5
8	Dudhela Irrigation Water User Committee	Terhota-6
9	Chandra Canal Irrigation Sys. Water User Branch Committee	Bhagbatpur-9
10	Chandra Canal Irrigation Sys. Water User Branch Committee	Bhagbatpur-7
11	Chandra Canal Irrigation Sys. Water User VC Committee	Bairba-9
12	Chandra Canal Irrigation Sys. Water User VC Committee	Bairba-9
13	Chandra Canal Irrigation Sys. Water User Main Committee	Barmajhiya/ Bairba- 1
14	Chandra Canal Irrigation Sys. Water User Main Committee	Barmajhiya/ Kamalpur-6
15	Chandra Canal Irrigation Sys. Water User VC Committee	Badgama-5
16	Chandra Canal Irrigation Sys. Water User VC Committee	Badgama-5

17	Kajra Dhar Irrigation Water User Committee	Basbalpur-1
18	Kajra Dhar Irrigation Water User Committee	Basbalpur-2
19	Koshi Pump Canal Dist. Sys. Sub minor Water User Committee	Inrwa-6
20	Koshi Pump Canal Dist. Sys. Sub minor Water User Committee	Inrwa-6
21	Chandra Canal Irrigation Sys. Water User VC Committee	Bhardaha-7
22	Chandra Canal Irrigation Sys. Water User VC Committee	Bhardaha-7
23	Koshi Pump Canal Dist. Sys. Sub minor Water User Committee	Farset-5
24	Koshi Pump Canal Dist. Sys. Sub minor Water User Committee	Farset-5
25	Koshi Pump Canal Dist. Sys. Sub minor Water User Committee	Deurivaruwa-3
26	Koshi Pump Canal Dist. Sys. Sub minor Water User Committee	Deurivaruwa-3
27	Chandra Canal Irrigation Sys. Water User Branch Committee	Odraha/ Fattepur-4
28	Chandra Canal Irrigation Sys. Water User Branch Committee	Odraha/ Kanalpur-1
29	Surunga Irrigation Water User Committee	Haripur-4
30	Surunga Irrigation Water User Committee	Haripur-3

Irrigation groups, Sarlahi

S.N	Name of user groups	VDC
1	Laghu Sinchai Jal Upabhokta Samittee	Laxmipur - 7
2	Hathiyahi Jal Upabhokta Samitee	Haripur - 1
3	Jal Upabhokta Samitee	Farahadwa - 8
4	Shree Betani Daha Sinchai Samitee	Jabdi - 9
5	Deep Tube Well Jal Prabandha Samitee	Netragunj - 9
6	Dhodhiyahi Jal Upabhokta Samitee	Chandranagar - 7,8
7	Nav Janakalyan Sinchai Jal Upabhokta Samitee	Dhungrekhola - 6,7,8,9
8	Kisanpur Jal Upabhokta Samitee	Kisanpur
9	Bishesh Krishi Sinchai Samitee	Brahampuri - 7
10	Bhelhi Jal Upabhokta Samitee	Bhelhi - 6
11	Jingarwa Jal Upabhokta Samitee	Jingarwa - 2
12	Haripurwa Jal Upabhokta Samitee	Haripurwa - 4
13	Parsa Sinchai Ayaojana	Parsa - 9
14	Gamariya Sinchai Sanstha	Gamariya - 4
15	Krishi Sinchai Sangathan Sanstha	Bhaktipur - 9

Community forest users groups, Dhanusha

S.N	Name of CFUG	VDC
1	Kamaladhar CFUG	Paterwa (1,4)
2	Kamala Nahar CFUG	Hatthipur (8,9)
3	Kamala CFUG	Labtoli (4,8)
4	Akaura thakur Akhileswor CFUG	Devdiha (2,3)
5	Hardinath CFUG	Gopalpur (8,9)
6	Aurahibaba CFUG	Naktajj (9)
7	Sundari CFUG	Tulsi (1,4)
8	Kharsange Danda CFUG	Bengadawar (3,4)
9	Kemalipur CFUG	Dhalkewar (1)
10	Sidha Shanti CFUG	Hariharpur (9)
11	Danda Tole CFUG	Puspapur (8)
12	Bhatighari CFUG	Puspapur (3,5,6 & 8)
13	Maltol CFUG	Uma Prempur (1)
14	Quarter CFUG	Yagyabhumi (7,8,9)
15	Tallo Chaghariya Women CFUG	Bharatpur (2)

Community forest users groups, Sarlahi

S.N	Name of CFUG	VDC
1	Shree Mahabir Peti CFUG	Laximpur (2,3,8)

2	Shree Hariyali CFU Committee	Haripur (7)
3	Bihani CFUG	Janakinagar (3)
4	Madhu CFU Committee	Lalbandi (4)
5	Nandeshwar CFUG	Netragunj (7)
6	Pulchowk Gadhैया Shakha Nahar Mahila CFUG	Ghurkauli (5)
7	Shibeshwar CFUG	Dhungrekholā (3)
8	Pashupati CFUG	Karmaiya (5)
9	Kalika CFUG	Ranigunj (2,3,8)
10	Radha Krishna CFUG	Lalbandi (5)
11	Buddha CFUG	Sasapur (4,5,6)
12	Manakamana CFUG	Harion (1)
13	Dafe CFUG	Murtiya (1)
14	Balganga Janata CFUG	Ghurkauli (8)
15	Hariharcheetra CFUG	Karmaiya (4)

Community forest users groups, Saptari

S.N	Name of CFUG	VDC
1	Pataharu Daha CFUG	Sitapur (8,9)
2	Bhaluahi CFUG	Jandoul (8,9)
3	Amsot CFUG	Parasbani (6)
4	Khirbana CFUG	Khoksar Prabaha (9)
5	Sarha Saksal CFUG	Vangaha (5)
6	Rakta Mala CFUG	Fattepur (3)
7	Basantapur CFUG	Bakdhuwa (8)
8	Dharapani CFUG	Rupnagar (7,3)
9	Goverha CFUG	Pansera (5)
10	Sisbani Chaur CFUG	Malahanama (2)
11	Sukhalahi CFUG	Madhupatti (1,2)
12	Vediya CFUG	Hardiya (1)
13	Sakhuwahi CFUG	Khojpur (1)
14	Surunga CFUG	Kusaha (1,2)
15	Daulatpur CFUG	Daulatpur (3)

Community forest users groups, Siraha

S.N	Name of CFUG	VDC
1	Devi Daha CFUG	Taregana Govindapur-9
2	Bagaha Yuva CFUG	Karjanha-6
3	Mantha Devi CFUG	Rampurbirta-1,2
4	Pakdiyagadh CFUG	Bhadaiya-4
5	Shri Hatti Munda CFUG	Phulbariya-5,6,9
6	Churechaufal Saatpatre CFUG	Chandra Lalpur- 4,7 Chandra Udayapur - 5,6,7
7	Gagankhola CFUG	Lalpur-2,3
8	Mainabatti CFUG	Asanpur-8,9
9	Ramnagar Khoriya Jiba CFUG	Ramnagar Mirchaiya-5 Phulbariya-8
10	Ghurmikinara CFUG	Chandra Udayapur – 3,4
11	Jaubaha Prakritik CFUG	Chandra Udayapur- 1,2,8,9
12	Shri Dhamini Mai CFUG	Bishnupurkatti-1,4
13	Shivaganga CFUG	Phulkahakatti-1
14	Shahid Banbatika CFUG	Sukhipur-1,2,3,4,5
15	Birtali CFUG	Ayodhanagar- 7,8

Women's group, Dhanusha

S.N	Lead Group Name	VDC/Municipality	Ward No.
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1.	Namunabasti Mahila Samuha	Janakpur Ja.Na.Pa	14
2.	Thakur Mahila Samuha	Lohana	4
3.	Mandal Mlahila Samuha	Boharba	4
4.	Deupura Rupaita Samuha	Deupura rupaita	6
5.	Mahila Bikas Samuha	Ghodghas	3
6.	Mahila Bachat Samuha	Jhajokataiya	3
7.	Mahila Jagaran Samuha	Bashiya	3
8.	Adarsha Krishi Matsay Samuha	Phulgama	9
9.	Manakamana Mahila Samuha	Bengdawar	3
10.	Grihalaxmi Mahila Samuha	Therakachuri	6
11.	Laxmi Mahila Samuha	Ramdaiya	2, 4
12.	Chireswor Mahila Samuha	Mahendranagar	1
13.	Pancha Kanya Mahila Samuha	Dalkebar	2
14.	Tribeni Mahila Samuha	Shantipur	6
15.	Gayetri Mahila Samuha	Tulashi	3

Women's group, Sarlahi

S.N	Lead Group Name	VDC/Municipalpty	Ward No.
1.	Harihar Chetra Mahila Bachat Samuha	Karmaiya	4
2.	Bali Bikas Mahila Bachat Samuha	Ghurkauli	8
3.	Sunakhari Bahu Udeshya Sahakari Sanstha	Lalbandi	2
4.	Janasarokar Mahila Bachat Samuha	Jabadi	5
5.	Shristi Bachat Samuha	Haripur	9
6.	Naulaho Bihani Shamudahik Bank	Hariwon	1
7.	Milan Mahila Samaj Kendra	Barthawa	4
8.	Shruti Smiriti Mahila Bachat Samuha	Dhungerakhola	4
9.	Ram Janaki Mahila Ayaarjan Committee	Velhi	4
10.	Chamelimai Bachat Tatha Reen Samuha	Gamhariya	4
11.	Janajagaran Mahila Bachat Samuha	Shankerpur	9
12.	Ma. Bi School Tole Mahila Bachat Samuha	Rajghat	6
13.	Mahila Sashktikaran Samuha	Murtiya	3
14.	Ashwaray Smiriti Mahila Bachat Samuha	Netragunj	6
15.	Mahila Sachetan Samuha	Malangawa	9

Women's group, Siraha

S.N	Lead Group Name	VDC/Municipalpty	Ward No.
1.	Mahila Janashewa Samuha	Lahana	9
2.	Pratibha Mahila Kendra	Sonamati Majhaura	7
3.	Sharbajanik Mahila Bachat Samuha	Padariya	6
4.	Ram Janaki Mahila Samuha	Thotana	9
5.	Pragati Mahila Samuha	Shisabani	7
6.	Parbati Mahila Kendra	Bramahan Gochhari	9
7.	Naya Khoseli Samuha	Balkahawa	4
8.	Ekata Bchat Mahila Samuha	Asanpur	6
9.	Sharda Mahila Samuha	Vawanipur	9
10.	Gita Mahila Samuha	Pokarvindha	1
11.	Mahila Bachat tatha Reen Shakari Sanstha	Devipur	4
12.	Gulhab Mahila Samuha	Bathena	9
13.	Janakalyan Samuha	Pipara	3
14.	Mahila Bachat Samuha	Vadiaya	2
15.	Subha Mahila Samuha	Sukhipur	6

Women's group, Saptari

S.N	Lead Group Name	VDC/Municipalpty	Ward No.
1.	Saraswati Shamudahik Bank	Rajbiraj	7
2.	Jyoti Mahila Krishak Samuha	Boriya	6,7
3.	Bijulidevi Mahila Bachat Samuha	Jamuni	3
4.	Sunita Mahila Samuha	Rayapur	9

5.	Shramik Mahila Samuha	Jandaul	7
6.	Manakamana Mahila Samuha	Bakduwa	9
7.	Saraswati Shamudahik Kendra	Sitapur	1,2,3
8.	Srijansil Mahila Samuha	Rupnagar	2
9.	Thakuri Tarkari Bali Mahila Bachat Samuha	Kanchanpur	9
10.	Srijana Mahila Sahakari Samuha	Dharmapur	1
11.	Panchamuki Mahila Samuha	Teliya	1
12.	Kamala Pragatishil Samuha	Kamalpur	9
13.	Shivaparbati Mahila Samuha	Goganpur	1
14.	Antarsamiti Samuha	Jagatpur	5,7
15.	Subekchha Mahila Bahumukhi Sahakari Sanstha	Phattepur	3