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The Asia Foundation

WOMEN'S ECONOMIC AND
LEGAL RIGHTS PROGRAM
FINAL REPORT

Grant Number: FAO-G-00-96-00002-00

GLOBAL
WOMEN
in
POLITICS

A Program



THE ASIA FOUNDATION

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**WOMEN'S ECONOMIC AND
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The Asia Foundation's Women's Economic and Legal Rights Program

The Women's Economic and Legal Rights (WELR) program was a partnership between the Women in Development (WID) Office, Global Bureau, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and The Asia Foundation (TAF). The goal was to enhance women's economic status by addressing gender-based inequities in the legal frameworks of Bangladesh, Cambodia, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. In addition to programs in those four countries, WELR included a regional component that conducted research on the problems faced by women subcontracted laborers across the region; developed and documented best practices and disseminated lessons learned; and pioneered a path breaking citizen budget advocacy project in the Philippines to increase government transparency and accountability to women on use of public resources. WELR began in October 1996 with a four-year grant of \$2,219,444 from USAID. In April 2000, the program was extended for one year, at no additional cost. This is the final report on the WELR program submitted to the WID Office December, 2001.

WELR Program Highlights: Pioneering Strategies to Increase Women's Economic and Legal Rights

Unified by clear objectives and a commitment to customer focus, WELR worked at a range of political and economic levels and in a number of socio-cultural environments. Participating women identified different barriers that prevented them from enjoying their legal rights and economic opportunities, how best to remove them, and in what order to address them. This diversity has resulted in a rich array of experience that can inform similar efforts in Asia and other regions. It has also considerably enhanced the body of knowledge about the relationship between legal rights related to economic opportunity and other rights, and therefore about the wide-ranging consequences of denial of these rights to women—particularly as they affect women's economic status.

As a result of the WELR program, constituencies for the protection of women's legal rights are broader and stronger, advocacy for change is more powerful, and tested, successful strategies for effecting positive change are more diverse. Program highlights include the following:

- The number of organizations and coalitions fighting for women's economic and legal rights is on the rise. Some WELR partner NGOs have expanded or refined the focus of their legal rights programs to address economic rights issues. For example, all three Bangladesh partners had prior experience providing legal services, but only one had worked on economic legal rights. Since WELR, all three have incorporated women's economic rights into their mainstream legal rights programming. In Sri Lanka, Agromart has begun programming more holistically, integrating legal issues, empowerment, and advocacy into its standard entrepreneurship programs. In addition to incorporating the views and experiences of rural WELR women into its national campaign to reform the law on land inheritance, CENWOR has taken WELR economic rights training into its other project areas. In the Philippines, partners have incorporated selected tools and findings from gender budget analysis into their ongoing work. Also, WELR stimulated the formation of new groups, such as a new NGO in Nepal using member savings to support

members' economic activities and advocating on gender issues; the Alliance of Empowered Women, a new legal entity in Nepal focusing on women's legal and economic rights; and the Women's Organization for Marginalized Women, a new association that identifies legal and social barriers and advocates on such issues as land reform and equal employment opportunities for women.

- Women are forcing policymakers in the public and private sectors at all levels—from legislatures, central ministries, and national trade associations to local government units, legal practitioners, and individual employers—to increase their attention to increasing and protecting women's economic legal rights. Issues under public debate range from inheritance rights reform and a national minimum wage for informal sector workers, predominantly women, to access to local government funds, programs, and other resources as well as private sector jobs. New coalitions, some of which have expanded to include men, are monitoring accountability at the local level, and linkages between national and local constituencies are becoming stronger. Internationally, WELR's five-country study on women and subcontracting in the global economy engaged representatives of international agencies, donor organizations, and bilateral aid agencies in assessing policy options.
- New legal strategies are challenging official policy and practice. Public interest litigation effectively increased enforcement in Bangladesh, forcing factory owners to abide by safety regulations and making them accountable for the consequences of failing to do so. For the first time, women victims and their families received compensation resulting from a factory fire. Public interest litigation is now a validated approach to resolving other regulatory and enforcement issues. At present, this strategy is being used to contest the court's ruling prohibiting the filing of criminal cases (for employer failure to answer or appear in court cases) under Section 20 of the 1965 Payment of Wages Act.
- Formal sector women workers are demanding their rights through the justice system. Bangladeshi women who successfully entered the formal workforce but were denied their workers' rights successfully challenged their exploitation through the legal system. Over 1,000 working women filed official complaints, primarily about dismissal, non-payment of arrear wages, and non-payment of financial benefits as prescribed by law. Over 20 percent were resolved through mediation before court filing, with employers recognizing and complying with their legal obligations. Of 347 cases filed with the court, 121 were settled through the court, 44 were decided in favor of the plaintiff, one was decided against the plaintiff, and 21 remain pending. The remainder were dismissed.
- Mobilization and advocacy can effect meaningful change outside the justice system for informal sector workers without official legal protections. For example, Cambodian women micro-vendors changed the policies and practices of the official market committees and municipal authorities, eliminating much of the exploitation to which they had been subjected and forcing

more transparent administration of policy and regulations. A burgeoning inter-market women's network holds promise for a larger and more powerful constituency. Pressure on various banks and local government agencies increased women's access to jobs, skills training, credit, funds, and product markets in Nepal. WELR women have also successfully advocated to eliminate informal sector wage discrepancies between men and women in construction and agriculture, and to ensure that Village Development Committees (VDCs) comply with the law requiring the allocation of funds to programs and services for women. An association of informal Bangladeshi women workers is successfully negotiating with subcontractors and agents on a variety of issues, such as fees, working conditions, and security. Through BNWLA, these workers also have access to health/life insurance for the first time. In Sri Lanka, WELR women are joining together to improve marketing and get better prices for their products, negotiate directly with wholesalers, and create their own sources of household and work supplies.

- Creative, innovative channels have increased women's access to legal assistance in order to claim their legal rights to advance their economic opportunities. These include linkages between legal providers and local elected leaders and trade unions; community-based legal watch committees that monitor justice system responses to rights violations and official complaints; fora enabling women to communicate directly with police and other justice system officials; and user-friendly publications that increase women's knowledge of their rights. For many previously disenfranchised women, this has leveled the playing field in terms of access to legal redress for violations in the economic sphere.
- Among the partners, WELR has helped leverage both funding and influence. For example, two organizations in Sri Lanka have secured additional funding from bilateral donors, one to replicate the WELR activities in a wider area and another to work on women's land and inheritance rights. One partner in Nepal received its first external grant from WELR and subsequently attracted other funding to support WELR women's economic activities. In Cambodia, the USAID Mission has funded the entire WELR program for an additional year, and a private foundation is supporting expansion to an additional market. Women from other markets, hearing about the impact of WELR, have asked the partner NGO for help, and the partner has requested official permission from the municipal authorities to work with micro-vendors in all markets in Phnom Penh.

Through a variety of entry points and strategies, WELR has heightened the visibility of women's legal and economic rights issues, created models with high potential for replication or adaptation, and increased the number of women who are pursuing the economic and legal rights to which they are entitled. The groundwork that has been laid will facilitate continuing initiatives that consolidate the constituencies and move to progressively higher levels of advocacy for change in the policy legislative, regulatory, and enforcement frameworks.

Program Objectives

The WELR program contributed to the achievement of two of WID Office's Strategic Support Objectives (SSOs):

- SSO 1: Gender-based constraints to economic growth policies and programs increasingly addressed
- SSO 3: Women's legal rights increasingly protected

WELR's objectives were to (1) expand access to economic opportunities for women by addressing the legal structures in each country that constrain women's full participation in the economy and (2) significantly improve women's ability to modify the legal structures that affect their economic status, enabling them to become full participants in the economy and equal stakeholders in the distribution of their society's resources and benefits. Trafficking of women and girls is a serious problem in three of the four target countries, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Nepal. The WELR program recognized the inherent link between women's economic opportunities and legal rights protection, and their vulnerability to trafficking, thus WELR initiatives complemented direct efforts to combat trafficking by addressing one of the prime root causes of trafficking--poverty.

Conceptually, the program addressed women's economic status through the lens of legal rights. It focused on legal and customary inequities that impede women's full participation in their societies, whether these inequities exist in the substance, the implementation and enforcement, and/or the environment or culture of the law. Both the concept and design of the program benefitted from extensive consultations with partner organizations and women participants in TAF's programs working towards women's empowerment and increasing women's political participation. Women customers in the four target countries identified three areas as critical to their full and equal participation in economic life. These areas became the foci for programming. They included:

- Property rights, including inheritance law
- Employment discrimination, including access to job training, hiring/firing policies, wages, working conditions, and employment benefits such as maternity leave and child care
- Business rights and capabilities, including access to credit

Because areas such as family law and violence directly influence women's ability to be full participants in and beneficiaries of economic development, the program concept focused attention to these issues where women cited them as barriers to full enjoyment of their legal and economic rights.

Evolution of the Program

WELR began at a time when the Asia-Pacific regional economy was enjoying a boom, and promise for women's increasing economic participation was high, particularly in the formal sector. As the program progressed and many countries in the region were severely affected by the general economic downturn, the windows of opportunity changed, and WELR's programming responded accordingly. While long-range goals remained the same, the program modified its immediate objectives as well as its strategies to capitalize on new windows of opportunity. This entrepreneurial response—crafted by the customers themselves—was a program strength. Because interventions and activities were consistent with the priorities of women seeking increased enjoyment of their legal and economic rights, and consistent with local economic and legal realities, they have high potential for sustainability and to lead to the major framework changes that WELR sought.

There was considerable variation among the country programs for two reasons. The first is because each country presents a unique environment in terms of its legal, regulatory, and enforcement infrastructure. Other factors that vary among countries include political stability, economic stability, access to and quality of justice, cultural attitudes towards women, the degree of development in the NGO sector, and the extent to which advocacy by civil society is a firmly entrenched tradition. The second reason lay in the perceptions of women regarding the priority of barriers to enjoyment of their economic legal rights. Some customers felt that other barriers, unrelated to the legal framework itself but directly related to women's equal participation in economic life and basic security needed to be resolved first.

Thus, different baseline conditions merited different responses:

- **Bangladesh**—A national constitution that guarantees equal rights for women notwithstanding, much of the legal framework remains discriminatory in terms of such issues as property and inheritance rights. Theoretically, women have access to credit and can sign contracts, but in practice, this access is limited. Labor laws extend equally to men and women in the formal sector, though there are no such protections for informal sector workers, either men or women. When the economy was expanding, increasing numbers of women were entering the formal sector, though many who should have been in that sector were exploited by employers; they were forced to remain casual piece-rate workers who by rights should have been on company payrolls and protected by labor laws. General economic problems have since forced many of these women back into the informal sector, joining the majority. Advocacy by civil society has a relatively long history, and there are well-developed, well-respected NGOs that advocate for the full spectrum of women's rights. The court system is structured, and there is opportunity to challenge the implementation and enforcement of the law.

Under WELR, women formal and informal sector workers supported direct initiatives towards changes in legislation, regulations, and enforcement, and TAF was able to partner with NGOs

already linked to these women and already working in the legal arena on behalf of both formal and informal sector workers. In addition to documenting further the barriers facing women in exercising their economic and legal rights, particularly in the informal sector, the WELR program focused on direct challenges in the courts to protect the rights of formal sector workers, and on extending legal protections to women working in the informal sector. Rights education, awareness and coalition building, mobilization and advocacy, and legal action combined to address policy, legal, regulatory, and enforcement constraints.

- **Cambodia**—After decades of civil war and turmoil, Cambodia achieved peace, wrote a new constitution, and passed key pieces of legislation that comply with international standards and guarantee full and equal rights to women. However, the regulatory framework remains undeveloped, as does the enforcement process. Decentralization is just beginning, allowing the potential opportunity for women to exert influence and advocate for their rights at the local level, where experience shows many women are most comfortable as they begin to participate in public life. However, a multitude of questions remain about how decentralization will actually play out. Corruption is a way of life, and few people, men or women, trust the system at any level. The court system is not independent, professional, or reliable. Legal challenge is not an option available to most people. Non-court mediation is the general practice, even for felonies. Violence against women is a major, pervasive problem, and one which many women cite as the major factor inhibiting their ability to enjoy all of the rights to which they are legally entitled. The NGO sector is young and vibrant, but not as strong as it is in other countries in the region that have been undisrupted by civil war. Civil society advocacy as a strategy for effecting system change is taking place, but it is a strategy that needs to be strengthened.

The women customers were micro-vendors in three Phnom Penh markets. Their priorities were in the regulatory and enforcement areas, but focused at the lowest level of government (market committees). The thrust was to make these committees, and the municipal authorities that oversee them, more accountable for enforcing existing policies and regulations. This process required increasing transparency about what the official policies and regulations are. The micro-vendors knew little about their legal rights, had no experience with collective action, and had little confidence that they could hold the market committees accountable for enforcing their legal rights in the market place. Through a mix of awareness raising, training and support in group formation and mobilization, and skills development for participation in facilitated confrontation and negotiation, the WELR market vendors were effective in putting pressure on the market officials for protection of their rights which enhanced their ability to expand their businesses.

- **Nepal**—Constitutional guarantees of equality are contradicted by discriminatory laws defining women's rights of inheritance, succession, land tenure, marriage, divorce, and redress for domestic violence, sexual harassment, and other security threats. The process for creating or amending legislation is drawn out and complex. In addition to legal barriers, women's equitable participation in national development and community life is constrained by a variety of societal

and political barriers. Women's representation in local elected office and government service remains substantially below that of men. Although NGOs and national advocacy groups have recently begun to address women's issues through a variety of interventions, and although political leaders have begun to cite the fundamental rights of women in their political slogans, a strong societal commitment to women's empowerment has yet to evolve in Nepal. Further, links between national-level advocates and the majority of rural women they try to represent are still relatively weak, and grassroots civil society advocacy as a strategy to effect change is still developing. As in Cambodia, decentralization is on the books, but many questions remain about implementation. The justice system suffers from corruption and lack of resources. Even those rural villagers who can afford the time and expense to travel to a district court are deterred by the bias and inefficiency they are likely to encounter.

The Nepal program worked in four rural districts. Women customers identified men's gambling and alcohol use as one of the main causes of domestic violence and domestic violence as one of the main causes of perpetuating women's oppression and constraining their participation in economic activities. The women asserted that most of their hard-earned income goes to their husbands' gambling and drinking rather than to support the household. For this reason, some WELR activities focused first on eliminating these problems and then more directly on securing and protecting women's legal rights and advancing their economic opportunities. After implementing successful strategies to resolve these immediate problems, the program successfully moved on to deal with issues such as unequal wages, discriminatory hiring practices and bank policies, government accountability for the use of special set-aside funds, and access to training and credit.

- **Sri Lanka**—Although Sri Lanka has ratified numerous international conventions on women's rights and the constitutional guarantee of equality, there exist many forms of gender discrimination at all levels. And despite constitutional safeguards, a high female literacy rate, and equal access to general education, equal participation of women in the economy has been constrained by general perceptions of gender and social structures which result in a lack of awareness of the multiple roles women play at work, at home, and in the community. Continuing internal disruption takes a disproportionate toll on women and seriously inhibits their political will to organize in support of securing their rights. Women cite violence in all forms as another factor that limits their ability to advocate for their rights. NGOs are active in traditional community development initiatives, but only a few are equipped to implement concerted advocacy as a strategy for change. Further, links between national-level advocates and most of the population are still weak. Despite a colonial legacy of a legal framework, a well established system of formal courts, and an internationally respected professional legal community and independent judiciary, two decades of conflict and the politicization of democratic institutions in Sri Lanka have had a negative impact on the justice system. Today's justice system is increasingly inaccessible to the general public due to the high cost of litigation, habitual postponements of cases, long administrative delays, large case backlogs, growing corruption in court

administration, and diminishing confidence in the independence of the judiciary.

As in Nepal, rural women customers cited a number of high-priority preconditions that required immediate attention before moving more directly to legal rights issues in the economic sector. Moreover, the volatile political climate both promotes violence and makes it difficult to deal with legislative issues such as property rights. Women see prevention of political violence, domestic violence, and other violence as a prerequisite to achieving their legal rights in economic life. They are also concerned with environmental and health issues that affect their families. Corruption is another major issue. For example, many women seeking legal protection (e.g., against forcible occupation or encroachment of land) are denied because the culprit is protected by a corrupt politician whom the culprit has aided to wrongfully secure election through vote rigging. In addition, women cite alcohol use by men as a major barrier, and prevention of illegal alcohol sales is hindered by kick-backs and illegal payoffs to police and state authorities. Thus, the WELR program involved a variety of entry points in the process of mobilizing women to advocate for their economic and legal rights and for laying the groundwork for improving the legal framework for better protection of these rights. Using mobilization and advocacy first to resolve the immediate problems, the women then focused the same strategies and approaches to advance their economic and legal rights, with impressive successes.

In all four target countries, TAF and its partners engaged in some form of needs assessment/baseline data gathering to refine the programming focus. These activities benefitted from extensive input from the target women. They also helped develop a picture of the environmental framework, including pertinent laws, policies, regulations, and relevant attitudes among communities, employers and contractors/middlemen, and government officials at all levels with respect to women's economic and legal rights as well as their participation—actual and potential—in the economy.

Table 1 summarizes key features of country programming. It illustrates the variety of responses to different environments and different target populations, with each country's partners choosing entry points and strategies with the most promise. Some programs modified their course over time, based on customer priorities, lessons learned, and changing targets of opportunity. All annual work plans received approval by the WID Office, and TAF submitted periodic progress reports as required.

Table 1. KEY FEATURES OF COUNTRY PROGRAMS

Country	Geographical coverage/target	Urban/rural	Economic sector	Industry/ies	Principal activities	# partners
Bangladesh	Women workers primarily in Dhaka and environs*	Urban/peri-urban	Formal and informal	Garments, home-based piece work**	Legal literacy training, legal representation, public interest litigation, advocacy for legal reform, mobilization, coalition building	3
Cambodia	Women micro-vendors in three markets in Phnom Penh	Urban	Informal	Produce, other market items	Savings/credit, group training and formation, mobilization, advocacy	1
Nepal	Women in four districts	Rural	Informal	Agriculture and various others (e.g., food stands, cutting and sewing, construction, candle making)	Legal rights training, business skills training, advocacy training, savings/credit group formation, group mobilization, advocacy initiation	4
Sri Lanka	Women in one agricultural settlement area and four districts in two provinces	Rural	Informal	Agriculture, coir (rope)	Awareness raising, leadership development, savings and credit, advocacy training, community mobilization, advocacy	4

*Surveys covered other areas, but program interventions occurred only in this area.

**Surveys covered additional industries, such as shrimp, construction, and bidi (cigarettes)

Regional Program Component

The regional component consisted of a multi-country study of women and subcontracting in the global economy and a gender budget project in the Philippines.

Women and Subcontracting in the Global Economy

The majority of women in Asia work in the unregulated informal sector and are not protected by even the most progressive labor laws. Few, if any, have social security schemes or other public safety nets. These problems have been exacerbated by economic globalization which has put pressure on employers to squeeze labor costs to remain competitive. WELR recognizing that in order to secure protection of women workers' economic and legal rights requires advocacy for policy change must be based on verifiable research. As a result, WELR commissioned a research report on "Women and Subcontracting in the Global Economy" to examine the policy implications for the problems that women face earning a living working outside the formal sector.

This project responded to the need for research to document women's work in the informal sector as well as the implications of their employment on the exercise of their rights in their families, their workplaces, and their societies. This laid a foundation for understanding the problems women face and the policies and laws needed to protect the rights of female workers in the informal sector. Research teams from India, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Thailand used similar participatory research instruments, allowing data aggregation. The case studies illustrate significant differences between and within countries in the circumstances of women subcontracted workers. The report contains recommendations in four categories: (1) advocacy; (2) organizing and capacity building; (3) public education; and (4) research and documentation. It has been widely distributed to economists and policymakers, and to women's rights groups in the U.S. and in Asia for use in their advocacy efforts.

Citizen Participation in Public Budgets

Women's economic opportunities and status are inextricably linked to how public resources are collected, allocated, and distributed. Indeed, use of public funds profoundly affects the lives of women and men, girls and boys. The majority of citizens, especially women and other marginalized groups, are frequently excluded from every aspect of the budget process and bear the consequences of inadequate and inefficient distribution of public resources to meet their needs. In most countries, entrenched interests—usually male-dominated—are able to channel funds to their priority interests, depleting public coffers for addressing the needs of other less powerful groups who are often the most in need.

The regional component of the WELR program pioneered an initiative that gave women (and men) in the Philippines tools for analyzing budgets—policies, procedures, and allocations—through the lens of gender to illuminate the unequal distribution of public resources, increase government

transparency—particularly at the local level-- and increase public accountability to women and their families. The WELR program took advantage of the convergence of a strong women's movement in the Philippines, decentralizing budget authority, a back lash against public corruption, and government interest in being responsive to women's needs. to enable women and women's organization to scrutinize macroeconomic policies for gender discrimination at one end of the spectrum, and how funds are distributed and used in their village on the other.

The budget project enabled women to assess how effectively the GAD policy set aside (5%) was delivering on the promise of better meeting the needs of women and girls. One of the things that became apparent was that the GAD budget was largely not integrated in general planning and budgeting cycles of government agencies. Lack of technical skills and political will were identified as reasons for the non-integration. Because gender budget work relies on information from government and legislators, the process requires and builds strategic alliances between reformers within political structures and advocates in civil society. The Philippines project strengthened cooperation between civil society and government to integrate gender into its planning and implementation of projects. The experience the women gained in organizing to influence budgetary decisions strengthened their ability to negotiate on other matters as well. Once they learned how to access and understand budget information and the budget process for one sector or issue, they recognized that the skills are transferable to other sectors and issues.

The Philippine budget project imparted critical skills to women and women's groups, and provided important experience that is already being used in other citizen budget initiatives. With funding from the USAID mission in Jakarta, The Asia Foundation is utilizing its experience with the WELR project in the Philippines to work with citizen groups to address urban poverty, thereby leveraging the impact of the WELR initiative. Increasingly, international donor agencies such as UNDP and the World Bank are recognizing the value of citizen budget projects in monitoring use of funds, including debt relief funds, to hold public officials accountable and to reduce corruption. The publication that emanated from the WELR regional project, Gender Budget Trail: the Philippine Experience, is a resource for citizens, NGOs, government bodies and reformers, and donor agencies, which has gotten significant public attention.

The Asia Foundation has been approached by a number of funding agencies, including the Ford Foundation and the Asian Development Bank to explore collaboration on additional citizen budget projects. As a result of its budget projects, The Foundation's Indonesia office secured a grant of \$20,000 from the Royal Netherlands Embassy, Jakarta, through its Netherlands Small Projects Funding Programme for Poverty Reduction (PKP+) program to increase gender-based public policies at the local level in three key regions of Java. The Foundation's Philippines office has submitted a proposal to the Ford Foundation to expand its budget project. The Foundation and its partners in this cutting edge WELR project are viewed as leaders and experts in increasing citizen participation in public decisionmaking—an objective of the US Government in its efforts to build democratic societies around the globe. In 2002, the Foundation will hold a conference for its own staff and partners on citizen

budgets to increase understanding about and utilization of gender analysis and advocacy to advance participation and government transparency and accountability to women and men.

Results

The SSOs of the WID Office remained consistent throughout the project period, as did the objectives of the WELR program. However, the WID Office introduced a detailed results framework with IRs and indicators well after the program was underway. Also, there were changes in several indicators (additions, deletions, and revisions) after the framework was established. Therefore, it was not possible for TAF and its partners to establish the baseline data needed to report on the quantitative elements of this framework. Further, documentation on selected qualitative elements had to be reconstructed for approximately the first half of the program. This was a difficult task that could not be completed in all countries for all applicable items. Therefore, this section presents the best available information, using the WID Office results framework for presentation purposes.¹ In most cases, cumulative quantitative data are not available. Narrative entries are illustrative rather than all-inclusive, focusing on the best examples of WELR's contributions to achievement of SSO 1 and SSO 3 and reflecting the diversity of the WELR program.

The information provided below is specific to the WELR program. However, it is important to recognize that many of the local WELR partners are using other support to work on allied and complementary programs. For example, CENWOR in Sri Lanka is spearheading a major national advocacy campaign to revise the Land Development Ordinance so that women have full and equal property and inheritance rights. Another example is the participation of BLAST in a large coalition to pressure Bangladeshi policymakers to amend the Oppression Against Women and Child Control Act. WELR and these types of initiatives bring added value to each other. They also contribute to greater sophistication among the partners, leaving in place greater capacity for strategic innovations to accelerate the protection of women's economic and legal rights.

¹Two indicators (IR 1.3, indicator 2 and SSO 3, indicator 3) apply specifically to USAID and/or the WID Office and therefore do not appear in this section.

SSO 1: Gender-based constraints to economic growth policies and programs increasingly addressed

Indicator 1: Number of countries in which the work of NGOs and other partners² results in increased national, regional, or local recognition of gender-based constraints to economic development

Four countries

- In Bangladesh, the partners engaged policymakers in government (e.g., Ministry of Labor and Manpower as well as Parliamentary Committees) and in the private sector (e.g., Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association [BGMEA] and SKOP, the workers-employees united forum) in discussions on workers' rights, especially women workers. The Parliamentary Standing Committee for Labor and Manpower has reviewed recommendations for enhanced compensation of accident-affected workers and their families (which will increase women's participation in the work force), and BGMEA has taken important steps to protect women workers in the work place (see IR 1.1, indicator 2). The campaign for a national minimum wage for informal sector workers, most of whom are women, has also gained the attention of legislators and policymakers.
- In Cambodia, market committees are official bodies that constitute the lowest level of government. In the three program target markets in Phnom Penh, annual advocacy workshops involving women micro-vendors, committee members, and representatives of the municipality, Ministry of Women's Affairs, and NGOs increased recognition of the constraints and barriers faced by micro-vendors, the vast majority of whom are women. Virtually all of the market committee officials as well as their contractors (e.g., for security and sanitation) are men. Concrete changes in policies and practices resulting from this increased recognition appear below in IR 3.1, indicator 3.
- In Nepal, WELR groups engaged representatives of municipalities, the Labor Office, other officials, and employers in identifying and eliminating discriminatory wage practices (see details in IR 1.2, indicator 1). In Bardiya, WELR women engaged lawyers and judges in discussions about various discriminatory legal provisions against women and called for their action on women-friendly bills. The women's cooperative in Surkhet has advocated against the

²The WID strategic framework refers in several places to "other partners." For purposes of this report, other partners include not only institutions, but also groups of WELR women who have organized—with varying degrees of formality—to take collective action. The complexity of the official registration process precludes many of these groups from obtaining official legal status.

discriminatory provisions of the recently passed property rights bill, joining a broad-based constituency working to publicize and resolve the inequities.

- In Sri Lanka, a WELR-supported public media campaign highlighted the situation of women in the coir industry. On a radio call-in show, listeners asked the Minister of Women's Affairs what steps the Ministry is taking to redress injustices faced by these women and what measures are taken to ensure the enforcement of labor, social, and welfare legislation for them. CENWOR's Seventh Annual National Convention on Women's Studies included a session on Women in the Economy, at which three papers were presented by WELR partners: *Women Subcontracted Workers in Sri Lanka*, *Enterprise Development and Leadership - the Sri Lankan Experience*, and *Agribusiness and the Rural Household*.
- The results of the gender budget analyses in the Philippines reached a broad audience of government officials, professionals, and the general public through presentations to journalists, radio and TV coverage, and magazine publications. These results highlighted the need to maximize national and local resources to address gender issues.
- A public seminar in Bangkok engaged representatives of international agencies, such as the United Nations Development Fund for Women and the United Nations Children's Fund, as well as national government officials and representatives of donor organizations, bilateral aid agencies, and NGOs in discussing the problems of women subcontracted (informal sector) workers in the region and reviewing policy recommendations for local, national, and international levels.

IR 1.1: Increased engagement of policymakers in addressing gender issues in economic growth (Policymakers include national, regional, and local senior government officials and business leaders)

Indicator 1: Number of fora established for dialogue among NGOs and other partners and host country government officials and business leaders (Fora include meetings, conferences, seminars, workshops, and other venues in which policy makers have been engaged in discussing women's issues.)

Approximately 200

- In Bangladesh, BLAST has established a variety of fora for dialogue with female Ward Commissioners, other NGOs, workers' union and federation leaders, judges (including labor court judges), lawmakers, other government representatives, and eminent bar association lawyers. Its breakthrough dialogue on "Duties and Responsibilities of Garment Workers" was influential in BGMEA's issuance of new guidelines for factory owners. All of these fora focus on workers' legal rights and how best to protect them. BNWLA organized almost 30 seminars and

meetings for policy makers, employers, and union leaders, using these fora for advocacy on behalf of informal sector women workers. These fora not only disseminate information, but also put public pressure on government and private sector leaders to improve the legal, regulatory, and enforcement environment.

- In Cambodia, annual, monthly, and ad hoc meetings between micro-vendors, market committee officials, and municipality representatives have established a forum for bringing women's issues to the attention of the authorities for resolution. For most women and most officials, these fora represent the first-ever dialogue, and the various groups are now engaged in defining and resolving gender-based problems together.
- In Nepal, networking meetings with successful entrepreneurs and officials of Cottage and Small Industries Offices, Skills Development Offices, and government increased women's access to skills training, credit, funds, and markets for their products. Local officials are enforcing policies that provide for this access.
- Dialogues between WELR women and Sri Lankan government officials resulted in a grant of 10 electrically operated coir machines from the Samurdhi Authority, and the Southern Development Authority has agreed to provide the necessary training. Both of these are significant achievements because the improved technology will help the women to increase the quality and quantity of their production. This venture will begin as soon as an appropriate facility is located. Previous policy and practice generally limited such opportunities to men.

Indicator 2: Number of activities initiated to address gender-based constraints to economic development

Approximately 200

- In Bangladesh, following concerted advocacy and litigation on behalf of women workers (including over 20 injured in a factory fire), BGMEA formulated rules for garment factories to have wider staircases, child care facilities, pure water, and separate toilets for women. BGMEA shares insurance costs equally with individual factory owners.
- BNWLA has facilitated the organization of over 2,500 Bangladeshi informal sector women workers into an association. Members now work in groups to negotiate and collect fees from subcontractors and agents. Other focus issues include working conditions and lack of security. The association also provides first-time access to health insurance, legal literacy training, and other non-formal education.

- With BLAST support, formal sector women workers in Bangladesh are attempting to organize and are collectively putting forward wage-related complaints and other issues to employers and lawmakers.
- Micro-vendors in Cambodia identified two key constraints to their participation in the economy: lack of child care facilities and inadequate access to affordable health care. There are now two drop-in child care centers, and two local health clinics offer subsidized treatment for the micro-vendors and their children. Another constraint was access to credit, and USG has helped organize access to low-interest loans through savings and credit groups.
- In Surkhet, Nepal, a WELR women's cooperative advocated with Agriculture Bank authorities regarding the misuse of a collateral-free loan fund allocated to small enterprises, especially those run by women and disadvantaged populations. The bank had been lending these funds to local businessmen on a commission basis. This complaint resulted in a temporary freeze on the fund. The bank manager pledged to implement the policy correctly, and these women have established themselves as a community watchdog body on this issue. WELR women also questioned local authorities on the status of public funds allocated for women. As a result, they received money for mushroom farming. The same women advocated again against the municipality's discriminatory practice of allowing only men into plumbing training programs, and the municipality will now accept women candidates. The removal of these constraints represents significant changes in the behavior of those who make and implement policy.
- In Sri Lanka, a WELR partner and the Empowered Women's Forum of Moneragala District made representations to all candidates at the October 2000 General Elections and held a mass public rally with 750 participants to protest the discrimination against women's right to own property under the Land Development Ordinance.
- In Moneragala District, the WELR women's group joined neighboring farm women in a novel strategy to sell their stocks of paddy, for which they have traditionally been unable to obtain a fair price. For the first time ever, they simply brought the product to the main road and stacked it by the roadside. The press was on hand to cover this event. The women also informed the Government Agent, who took immediate steps to purchase all the paddy at a higher price. This has become the regular practice.

IR 1.2: Increased effectiveness of NGOs and other partners in addressing women's economic issues

Indicator 1: Number of activities initiated by NGOs and institutional partners intended to improve women's economic status (e.g., providing women access to resources, higher income, and higher economic status)

Approximately 100

- In Bangladesh, the emphasis was primarily on changing the legal regulatory framework to improve women's economic status, so results are reported under other indicators. However, to facilitate these changes, the partners engaged in legal awareness training and mobilization of women workers in the formal and informal sectors, networking and building the civil society constituency for change, increasing public awareness of legal economic barriers faced by women workers, advocating for better legislation, and using public interest litigation (PIL) to strengthen enforcement.
- In addition, BNWLA persuaded a commercial insurer to provide health life insurance to informal sector women workers through BNWLA itself. If registration becomes feasible for the BNWLA-stimulated association of informal sector women workers, with a current membership of over 2,500, that association will become the channel for this insurance program. BNWLA also linked informal women workers with a government housing project ("Ashrayan") and the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee's housing for credit program, thus addressing the critical issue of housing for many women workers in Dhaka. This is part of a broader strategy to link different organizations behind issues of health, housing, and social security for women workers, especially those in the informal sector.
- In Cambodia, 434 vendors formed 51 micro-vendor savings and credit groups that have provided members with access to \$31,079 in low-interest (5%) loans from USG, as opposed to the 20-30% interest charged on loans from area money-lenders. A savings fund of \$3,153 allows micro-vendors to access funds to meet emergency needs. Business management training has enabled some micro-vendors to increase their income by changing from wholesale to retail operations, reducing transportation costs by selling at markets closer to home, using credit to buy additional equipment (e.g., trays to hold more goods), and diversifying the range of products they sell. Leading vendors from the three markets have begun to network, laying the groundwork for a possible federation with a larger constituency and more power to advocate and negotiate with market and municipal authorities.
- In Nepal, WELR women were elected as members of CIVICT-run Community Mediation Committees that mediate property cases, domestic violence cases, and other family and community disputes. The participation of women on these committees increases the likelihood of a fair hearing on women's claims.
- WELR groups lobbied Tikapur Municipality (Nepal) to end discriminatory wage practices in construction labor, and the discrepancy is now narrower. Previously, women got Rs. 40 per day while men got Rs. 60; now the comparable figures are Rs. 60 and Rs. 70. Massive advocacy in Surkhet changed the PERMA practice involving the exchange of in-kind agricultural labor. Previously, one day of a man's work was worth two days of a woman's work. Now,

the work of men and women is valued equally. In Jhapa, WELR women lobbied the Labor Office about discriminatory wages in agriculture and construction. Women and men now receive equal pay. In Jhapa, WELR women also collaborated with NGOs, the VDC, local police, and other community representatives to end gambling and combat alcoholism. Local police and authorities have declared one VDC in Surkhet as an alcohol-free zone.

- WELR has resulted in greater job opportunities for women in Nepal—in some cases providing these women with regular income for the first time. Two of the partner NGOs have hired WELR women as staff, as have another area NGO and several boarding schools. Other women have been hired by the District Education Office and Small Cottage Industries Office. Eight women from a WELR cooperative serve as paid resources to three other cooperatives, providing advice and training on accounting, auditing, management, loan management, and other aspects of cooperative operations. Women who received training from the VDC on sewing and cutting are now imparting their skills to others.
- WELR (Nepal) women advocated with the District Agriculture Office for access to training-of-trainers on agricultural issues so that they could be employed as Junior Technical Assistants. Their request is under consideration. In Jhapa, women received training and funding from the VDC and Small Cottage Industries office.
- In Bardiya, Nepal, WELR groups found the local vegetable market dominated by imports from India. To discourage this practice, they conducted a massive vegetable growing business in coordination with a local wholesaler. Plans are underway to institutionalize this initiative.
- In Sri Lanka, villagers traditionally had difficulty in obtaining fair prices for subsidiary crops (other than paddy). Middlemen were unwilling to pay a fair price, and government officers did not make timely purchases. During harvest period, WELR groups decided to send their own representatives daily to the nearest produce purchasing center and to other cities, including Colombo, to get current price information. Using this information, the groups transported their produce to the most profitable location, taking advantage of price fluctuations. Farmers in other villages have started bringing their produce to these groups for sale.
- In Sri Lanka, WELR-trained women are advocating to eliminate the inequality in wages for daily labor by men and women. While the work is the same, a woman's daily wage is Rs. 150, and a man's is Rs. 200.
- In Sri Lanka's Southern Province, women of two collectives participating in the WELR program have established a welfare fund and used it to start a wholesale shop to provide the members with groceries and other staple requirements. This has broken the cycle of bondage to the village middleman, who also owned the grocery shop which sold at higher margins. Plans are

underway to operate the shop as a commercial venture, with members receiving goods at slightly discounted prices.

- Women coir makers in the Sri Lanka WELR program have transformed their industry and vastly increased their profitability. Despite violent objections and threats of reprisal from traditional middlemen, they have developed relationships with seven new purchasing agents and expanded their product range. Previously stockpiling large inventories, they are now unable to keep up with the demand, and their income has increased tenfold. They implement their own quality control programs, and they have no difficulty in obtaining the highest prices for their products. They continue to maintain a personal savings scheme, setting aside 1/10 of the sales price of each item. The success of women in the pilot programs is a source of encouragement to women in program expansion areas.
- Women's legal action committees in Sri Lanka, developed through WELR, negotiated with the Dambulla Agriculture Product Wholesale Outlet and the Central Market in Colombo for prices and for the direct marketing of their products.

Indicator 2: Number of indigenous NGOs and other institutions working with G WID US partners that have increased their organizational viability (Viability is the organization's ability to carry out its mission effectively, independently, and sustainably. It includes a complex of management, structural, and technical factors. Ability to generate funding from more than one source may be used as a proxy.)

Approximately 30

- Prior to WELR, all three Bangladesh partners had experience providing legal services, but only one had worked in economic rights. Now, all three have incorporated economic legal rights into their mainstream programming.
- BNWLA and BLAST advocated for the establishment of a new unit called Policy Leadership and Gender Equality (PLAGE) under the Bangladesh Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs for inter-ministerial coordination, training, and research on policies related to women's rights. The WELR partners both benefit from and contribute to the work of PLAGE.
- In response to requests from micro-vendors at markets that did not participate in the WELR program, USG is requesting permission from the municipality to work in all markets of the seven Khans in Phnom Penh. This will expand coverage to women micro-vendors who sell on the streets or from push carts rather than from stalls inside the markets. At one market, micro-vendor leaders successfully solicited funds from a bilateral donor for lighting that improves market safety at night.

- In Jhapa, Nepal, a new NGO (Jyoti Mahila Samutra) has registered with the Chief District Office. Members are WELR participants. Monthly member savings are mobilized to support members' economic activities. The new NGO also collects donations and raises funds through various skills training programs, and is planning to seek external financial support. In addition to various social and community development activities, the NGO is implementing advocacy and awareness programs on women and gender issues.
- In Surkhet, Nepali WELR women collaborated with representatives of seven other NGOs to form a new association, the Women's Organization for Marginalized Women. This pressure group is a sister NGO to one of the WELR partners. Its objectives are to identify legal and social injustices and advocate against them. Setting the groundwork for moving toward advocacy for policy formulation, this group advocated against the recently passed property bill and pushed for its amendment. The group also met with INGOs and other development organizations protesting the preference for hiring male employees. The group requested that these employers amend their recruitment policies and reserve a quota of jobs for women.
- SAC in Surkhet received its first external grant from WELR and has received other funding to support WELR women's economic activities. SAC provided one WELR group a grant to start a weaving business to manufacture various clothing items.
- Agromart in Sri Lanka had a longstanding entrepreneurship program focusing solely on the economic aspects of establishing and running a new enterprise. As a result of participation in WELR, this NGO now programs more holistically, integrating legal issues, empowerment, and advocacy into its standard programs. The WELR approach has been introduced in new villages to mobilize women, and women's groups in WELR areas have demanded entrepreneurship training and the introduction of Agromart micro-finance programs in their areas. With this new programming, 25 women have started their own enterprises within the last year.
- In Sri Lanka, as a result of WELR participation, Vehilihini Development Center leveraged \$25,000 from the USAID Small Grants Program to continue working on women's land and inheritance rights, and Siyath Foundation received funding from the Royal Netherlands Embassy to replicate the WELR activities in six villages and to support the establishment of cooperatives.
- Using WELR economic rights training, CENWOR sensitized women outside the WELR project areas. These women have since mobilized and set up a sales outlet in their locality that makes direct sales to the wholesale market, no longer marketing their products through middlemen.
- In Sri Lanka, legal rights watch committee members have new access to entrepreneurship training conducted by district-based Agromart Societies and are using new advocacy techniques to address priority problems in the community.

- Vehilihini Development Center, one of the WELR partners in Sri Lanka, began in 1985 with a welfare orientation towards its membership which consisted solely of women widowed as a result of political violence. Since WELR, membership has expanded to include other women as well, and the orientation has shifted to advocacy for economic and legal rights.
- A new organization, the Alliance of Empowered Women, has registered its District Committee as a legal entity in Sri Lanka. This organization grew out of 58 women's groups formed initially to obtain compensation for the wrongful death of their spouses. As a result of participation in WELR, these groups have expanded their mission and their membership. Each group is represented on a Divisional Committee, and each Divisional Committee is represented on the District Committee. The apex body has a constitution, and the activity focus is on women's legal and economic rights.
- Drawing on the tools and concepts introduced in the WELR gender budget analysis project, IPG in the Philippines has enhanced its advocacy for mainstreaming gender in local development planning of local government units involved in its Barangay-Bayan Governance Consortium (BATMAN). The project also sharpened the focus of IPG's Women in Governance program.

IR 1.3: Increased knowledge and skills to deal with gender issues affecting growth

Indicator 1: Number of NGOs and other institutions working with G WID US partners that are using gender research in their programs

Approximately 10

- In Bangladesh, the partners drew on a variety of research to support their WELR program as well as other activities. This includes surveys on laws related to minimum wage and women's economic rights, issues related to protective legislation for women in the formal sector and to occupational hazards (like asthma and fungus among biri workers), piece-rate women workers in the informal sector, the situation of garment and textile workers, and the working conditions and social security needs of women construction workers. This research informed the advocacy strategy for a national minimum wage.
- CENWOR published a book entitled "Women's Rights in the Informal Sector - Mahaweli Settlements and the Coir Industry" based on research carried out under WELR.
- Philippine partners have incorporated selected tools and findings from the gender budget project into their ongoing work. Another NGO, the Center for Asia-Pacific Women in Politics, is interested in advocating for gender-responsive budgets among its Network of Elected Women for Good Governance.

Indicator 3: Number of peer-reviewed publications, research reports, and conference papers

- The WELR program did not involve formal academic peer review of publications. However, there were a number of program publications, many of which benefitted from review by other NGOs and/or government representatives. Publications include *Vendors' Voices: The Story of Women Micro-Vendors in Phnom Penh Markets and an Innovative Program Designed to Enhance Their Lives and Livelihoods*; *Legal Rights and Opportunities that a Community Should Know* (Nepal); *Lucanae in Labor Laws - Towards Timely Disposal of Court Cases* (Bangladesh); *Public Interest Litigation, Constitutional Issues and Remedies* (Bangladesh); *Existing Laws on Informal Sector for Women Labor in Bangladesh*; *Report on Situation of Piece Rated Working Women in the Informal Economic Sector* (Bangladesh); *Women and Subcontracting in the Global Economy*; and *Gender Budget Trail: The Philippine Experience*.

SSO3: Women's legal rights increasingly protected

Indicator 1: Number of countries whose laws are in compliance with commitments to human rights standards

Cambodia's laws, which are very new, are in substantial compliance with commitments to human rights standards, but the regulatory framework and enforcement mechanisms largely remain to be developed. In the other three WELR countries, there are inconsistencies between some laws and these standards.

Indicator 2: Percentage increase in legal cases resolved in favor of women (property, violence, custody, inheritance)

This indicator was introduced after WELR was underway, and there is no baseline for comparison. However, the number of legal cases resolved in favor of women was 176, including those settled after filing but without completing the entire legal process. As noted earlier, in some WELR countries, the justice system is neither reliable nor accessible; in effect, it is not a real option. Thus, community-based mediation is the predominant method for redress and dispute resolution. An additional approximately 80 cases, a large proportion of which were violence-related, were resolved in favor of women using this method. Illustrations of successful cases appear in IR 3.2, indicator 1.

IR 3.1: Support improved legislation that protects women's rights

Indicator 1: Number of changes in legislation to comply with international human rights commitments/standards

The WELR program included concerted advocacy for legislative change, but changes are still pending.

- The Bangladesh campaign for a national minimum wage (including benefits for informal sector workers), spearheaded by WELR partner BNWLA, has made headway toward legislative action. SKOP has adopted this as one of its major issues and placed a charter of demand to the government. The issue has also been addressed by the American Chamber of Commerce and the Bangladesh Institute of Labor Studies.
- CENWOR's campaign to amend Sri Lanka's Land Development Ordinance was informed and strengthened by the WELR program. During the course of WELR legal rights awareness programs, women in the Mahaweli area and in Moneragala District began to understand the consequences of not having direct ownership of the land they cultivate. The women brought letters from government officials regarding loan applications, input subsidy applications, and copies of deeds to CENWOR, illustrating the numerous constraints women face as a result of the ordinance. CENWOR subsequently used these specifics to better understand the broad range of implications the ordinance has for a multitude of women in Sri Lanka and to strengthen their argument for legal reform. Several WELR group leaders participated with CENWOR in dialogues with policymakers. CENWOR has drafted an amendment to the Land Development Ordinance's Annexure on Inheritance, which is presently being reviewed and discussed by officials of the Ministry of Lands. With a subsequent grant from USAID, Vehilihini Development Center took this initiative further and is working on land and property rights reform in Moneragala District.
- In Nepal, WELR partners and women's groups are collaborating with others to advocate against the recently passed property bill which still contains discriminatory provisions.

Indicator 2: Number of legislative actions taken to embody women's human rights in law (bills introduced, debated in committee, testified on behalf of, voted on)

One

- In Bangladesh, the proposed National Minimum Wage Bill was debated in a Parliamentary Committee. With the recent change in government, this process will have to re-start from scratch.

Indicator 3: Number of executive branch policy directives in support of legislative actions (decrees issued, new agencies formed, new enforcement mechanisms in place)

Approximately 10

- Following advocacy by BNWLA, BLAST, and other organizations, the government of Bangladesh constituted a National Minimum Wage Board to fix a minimum wage for workers.

- Market committees in Cambodia are government bodies responsible for making and enforcing market regulations. In response to complaints from individual micro-vendors and to advocacy by micro-vendor groups under the WELR program (sometimes mobilizing the press as well), market committees have made a number of changes in their governance practices. Examples from among the three program markets include disseminating part of the regulations on taxation for the first time, requiring tax collectors to wear name tags, standardizing tax collection, reducing monthly security fees by approximately half, returning improperly confiscated wares at no cost, returning confiscated market space, allocating space equitably and according to regulations, improving sanitation and security, and standardizing the sanitation fee.
- In Nepal, VDCs are required by law to allocate a certain amount of funding to programs and services for women. WELR women have successfully exerted pressure on VDCs to comply with this set-aside requirement. They have also gone beyond the set-aside, influencing VDCs to allocate other budget funds to areas of women's concern such as water works and roads.
- In Sri Lanka, WELR groups have worked to combat the politicization of state assistance programs, thus strengthening enforcement of program regulations. In one instance, regarding assistance granted by the state to women widowed by political violence, there was a protest against the award of a sewing machine to a woman who was unaffected by such violence. Vehilihini Development Center has advocated with provincial authorities to access decentralized state funds, which are often disbursed to further political advantage rather than for needs-based development. This practice has had a disproportionately negative effect on women, who were previously unable to advocate collectively for access to funds for development of roads, health and educational services, telecommunications facilities, and other factors related to their economic legal rights.

IR 3.2: Enhanced judicial sector capacity to interpret and enforce legislation in a gender-equitable manner

Indicator 1: Number of individuals reporting violations under the law

Approximately 1,200

- In Bangladesh, with WELR support, BLAST received 1,137 complaints from women workers at garment factories and other industries. Most of these concerned dismissal, non-payment of arrear wages, and non-payment of financial benefits as prescribed by law. Of these, 221 were resolved through mediation before court filing, 459 were rejected (because of failure to appear or provide appropriate documentation), and 110 were pending.

Indicator 2: Number of cases pursued through the judicial system

Approximately 400

- Of the 1,137 complaints received by BLAST, 347 cases were filed with the court. Of these, 121 were settled through the court (with judicial involvement subsequent to filing), 141 were dismissed (due to client absence or an order of the court declaring no criminal case can be filed under Section 20 of the 1965 Payment of Wages Act), 35 were decided in favor of the plaintiffs, and 50 were pending at the end of the project. Since that time, of the 50 pending cases, nine were decided in favor of the plaintiffs, one was decided against the plaintiff, 19 were dismissed, and 21 remain pending.
- BLAST is using PIL to contest the court's ruling prohibiting the filing of criminal cases under Section 20 of the 1965 Payment of Wages Act. It filed a writ petition in the High Court Division against the dismissal of 120 cases filed on behalf of women workers. It is also initiating PIL to demand recognition of informal sector women as workers with rights under the labor law.
- In Cambodia, USG helped WELR women pursue cases related to domestic violence as well as housing and land disputes.
- In Nepal, following the rape and murder of a woman by a factory owner, WELR women joined with other women factory employees to organize a rally and force the police to pursue the case in court; the accused was sentenced to prison for life. Mahila Awaaj (Women's Voice), a new organization formed by 18 WELR groups, took to the police a case involving a woman whose husband brought a second wife into the home. The group filed a complaint, and the police mediated the case before it went to court, ensuring that the first wife got fair treatment and all the rights to which she was entitled.
- In Sri Lanka, WELR women protested the handling of a sexual assault case. Neighbors apprehended a man who attempted to molest a woman who was alone in her house at night, but the mobile police patrol refused to take action, alleging that the woman was of bad character and the man had done nothing wrong. The WELR intervention compelled the police to implement the law.

Indicator 3: Number of mechanisms implemented for women's access to legal redress (e.g., women's bar associations, special courts, special police cells, increased numbers of women in the justice system)

Approximately 50

- In Bangladesh, BLAST has engaged women Ward Commissioners and trade unions in forwarding redress complaints to BLAST. BLAST is also training young women lawyers on

labor law, sensitizing them about the rights of women workers in both formal and informal sectors.

- USG enabled WELR micro-vendors to have access to legal services from the Cambodian Defenders Project and helped refer domestic violence cases to appropriate social and legal agencies. This was USG's first institutional link with legal defense providers.
- WELR-stimulated Legal Watch Committees in Sri Lanka (Mahaweli Settlement Program - System H), which have expanded to include some men, have become new sources of access to legal redress, acting as watchdogs and advocates. They have also helped many displaced persons obtain identity documents needed for access to facilities such as education for children. In addition, they have persuaded community benevolence associations to fine, penalize, and finally expel those members who continue to use alcohol and drugs. Since almost every family depends on these associations for assistance, this strategy was even more effective than attempts to take legal action against perpetrators of violence. Further, the committees have been effective in stopping the illicit felling of timber. Overriding area officers who are often in league with local politicians involved in this practice, they forwarded petitions and complaints to state authorities naming those involved. Since perpetrators generally fear investigation by higher authorities, they have either ceased their illegal activities or moved out of the area.
- WELR-facilitated community meetings in the Southern Province of Sri Lanka afforded the first opportunity for many women to interact with a police officer and understand the rudiments of the justice system. One woman subsequently lodged a domestic violence complaint against her husband. When told by the police officer that he would attempt to mediate, she insisted that the husband be arrested according to the law. He was, and remained in custody for several days. Domestic violence in her household has ceased. Also, these meetings have resulted in regular patrols in areas known for drug and illicit alcohol activity.

IR 3.3: Strengthened civil society organizations to advocate for women's legal concerns

Indicator 1: Number of NGOs at community and national levels advocating for human rights

Approximately 15

- The partner organizations of the Bangladesh Chapter of Global March, comprised of 60 organizations, adopted BNWLA's theme of "National Minimum Wage for Informal Sector Women Workers" as a demand of the 2000 Women's Global March held in New York. This demand was one of two adopted to address poverty alleviation and violence against women.

- In Kailali, Nepal, WELR groups formed a committee in collaboration with partner NGOs in a public program to address various issues related to women's human rights, legal rights, and economic rights, and appealed for community support in various initiatives to increase the status of women. Mahila Awaaj (Women's Voice), consisting of two representatives from each of 18 WELR groups, was unable to attain formal registration but is initiating advocacy on issues of domestic violence and women's social and legal concerns. In Bardiya, WELR women engaged lawyers and judges in discussions about various discriminatory legal provisions against women and called for their action on women-friendly bills.
- In Sri Lanka, the new WELR-stimulated Alliance for Empowered Women is advocating for human rights.

Indicator 2: Percent of NGOs with multiple funding sources

100 percent

All WELR partners have multiple funding sources. In some cases, partners have secured funding to expand and or extend WELR program activities. For example, in Cambodia a grant from the Levi Strauss Foundation is supporting expansion to another market and has resulted in a 40% increase in vendor participation. Also, the USAID Mission funded the entire program for one additional year. In Sri Lanka, two partners received funding from two bilateral agencies for WELR expansion activities, and one partner in Nepal has received funding to support women's economic activities.

Indicator 3: Number of NGOs submitting reports to national, regional, or international human rights monitoring bodies

None

Indicator 4: Number of legislative and/or policy actions taken as a result of civic advocacy

Approximately 25

- In Nepal, advocacy by WELR groups with government offices (such as municipalities, Labor Offices, and Cottage and Small Industries Offices), financial institutions, and private employers has strengthened compliance with existing policies in such areas as access to skills training and credit, wage discrimination, and regulations specifying the allocation of a certain portion of VDC funds to women's priority programs. These compliance actions have enabled women to benefit from these resources, in many cases for the first time.

- In Bangladesh, advocacy by WELR partners and others resulted in the issuance of new regulations by BGMEA, the umbrella association of garment factory owners, regarding safety measures such as wider staircases and the availability of child care, pure water, and women's toilets for employees. Also, as a result of advocacy on behalf of formal sector women workers' rights, many employers have changed their policies and granted women their entitlements to wage arrears and other financial benefits, preferring to settle out of court rather than go through litigation. In addition, broad-based advocacy in which the partners participated resulted in parliamentary committee discussion of a draft Minimum Wage Bill.
- In Sri Lanka, advocacy by WELR groups has de-politicized state assistance programs, forcing government officials to comply with rules and regulations in disbursing selected funds, especially those designated for women. One substantial gain was women's access to coir manufacturing machinery and training. In addition, at the community level, advocacy has resulted in changes in the policies of benevolence associations. These associations—a keystone of community life for all families—now penalize members who use alcohol or drugs. Graduated penalties begin with fines and culminate in expulsion.
- In Cambodia, municipalities and market committees have enforced existing policies and established new ones in response to actions by WELR micro-vendors. After disseminating part of the regulations on taxation, one committee ensured that assessments of tax and sanitation fees were standardized, and another took steps to allocate space according to the regulations. Complaints have also resulted in the return of improperly confiscated space and produce. New policies introduced among the markets include a requirement for tax collectors to wear name tags, reduced security fees, and procedures for improved sanitation and security.

IR 3.4: Increased knowledge of and receptivity to women's legal rights

Indicator 1: Percentage of women who understand the system for legal redress

The WELR program did no surveys to quantify understanding of the legal system. However, there is evidence that this understanding increased among the participating women and among women in neighboring areas. For example, in Cambodia, almost 1,500 women micro-vendors at a non-project market were suddenly asked to pay store rental fees where they had been doing business for a long time. These women turned to the WELR partner for assistance, and are planning to elevate their complaint to the National Assembly. Women from another non-project market asked the partner for advice in retrieving their spaces which had been taken by the market committee. After lobbying and advocacy, the spaces were subsequently temporarily returned. In Nepal, after learning about her right to her share of her husband's property, one woman and her group approached the VDC and obtained this share. In Bardiya, women take disputes related to their economic activities to the Small Cottage Industries members and then, if necessary to the District Bar Association; these actions involve both formal and informal redress. After learning about the importance of marriage registration to ensure their

claim on their husband's property, WELR women in Nepal convinced their husbands to register their marriages. In Bangladesh, BLAST has experienced a steady increase in cases of women protesting denial of their work place rights.

Indicator 2: Number of new channels for informing women about their rights

Approximately 50

- In Bangladesh, WELR supported a variety of new channels, including comic books, television spots, legal awareness programs in slum areas, and sensitization of women Ward Commissioners and trade union leaders.
- In Cambodia, the WELR partner obtained a partial listing of market rules and regulations, previously held closely by the market committee, and disseminated them through micro-vendor committee meetings and other avenues. Women micro-vendors presented loudspeakers and two tape recorders to one market committee for dissemination of information about these rules and regulations. A regular newsletter also informs women about the laws and rules governing the markets and how they can take steps to protect their rights.
- In Banke, Nepal, WELR women identified discriminatory legal provisions, listed them, and presented them at a Law Day program organized by students and legal practitioners, calling for action by legal practitioners, policymakers, and implementors to eliminate the barriers. A new organization formed by WELR groups provides a forum for educating women on their legal rights and related social issues. SAC distributed a book on the legal rights of women, the functions of local government, and opportunities for women to generate income. In Jhapa, a partner newsletter provided information on women's economic, legal, and social issues.
- In addition to publishing a set of booklets on rights, the Sri Lanka program used an NGO magazine to highlight legal economic issues faced by women in agriculture and the coir industry and to disseminate information on legal rights. Community meetings with an attorney provided an opportunity to discuss legal problems, mainly related to land disputes. At a subsequent discussion with the Chairman of the local Mediation Board, board members agreed to be available weekly to discuss disputes affecting community members, and to provide counseling and guidance prior to formal adjudication. Because efforts to access services from the Legal Aid Centre and the Human Rights Foundation have been unsuccessful, the WELR groups have established rapport with two young lawyers practicing in the Hikkaduwa courts who have agreed to provide legal assistance, including court representation, free of charge for urgent matters pertaining to the rights of women group members. These lawyers in turn persuade senior counsel to assist, free of charge, as necessary.

WELR Partners

Bangladesh

Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association (BNWLA)
Bangladesh Legal Aid and Service Trust (BLAST)
Centre for Development Services (CDS)

Cambodia

Urban Sector Group (USG)

Nepal

Nepal Community Development Center (NCC), Jhapa
Human Services Association (HSA), Kailali
Social Awareness Center (SAC), Surkhet
SAATHI, Bardiya

Sri Lanka

Center for Women's Research (CENWOR)
Agromart Foundation (Mahaweli Settlement Program, System H)
Siyath Foundation
Vehilihini Development Center (VDC)

Regional Programs

Multi-country Research on Women and Subcontracting in the Global Economy

This project involved researchers from the following institutions:

India: Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA)
Gujarat Institute of Development Research

Pakistan: Sustainable Development and Policy Institute
Pakistan Institute of Labor Education and Research

Philippines: PATAMBA (National Network of Homeworkers)
University of the Philippines

Sri Lanka: Centre for Women's Research (CENWOR)
University of Colombo

Thailand: Khon Kaen University
Ramkhamheang University

Gender Budget Analyses, Philippines

Development for Active Women Networking (DAWN) Foundation
Women's Action Network for Development (WAND)
Institute of Politics and Governance (IPG)
Ing Makababaying Aksyon (IMA) Foundation
Women's Feature Service (WFS)