**MONITORING REPORT FORMAT**

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| Irish Aid Reference Number: **CSF065-0702**  Name of the Organisation: **Sahakarmi Samaj (partner of SHEP)**  Name of the project: **South – Western Nepal Community Governance Programme**  Sector: **Community Development**  Country: **Nepal**  Location: **Bardiya and Kanchanpur Districts** | | |
| People met (this may also be annexed)  **Please see annex 1** | | |
| Date of Monitoring visit | From:  7th August | To:  8th August |

**Financial Data**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Irish Aid Funding** | **2007** | **2008** | **2009** | **Country** |
|  | €103,868.00 | €104,543 | €115,176 | **Nepal** |

**Summary of Key Findings of Monitoring Visit:**

The South – Western Nepal Community Governance Programme appears to be politically and socially relevant to the Nepal context the project objectives have been mainly achieved, in some cases, targets have been exceeded. The Irish Aid monitoring team was impressed with the in-depth community development approach used and the contribution by Sahakarmi Samaj to addressing complex social, economic, and health issues in Bardiya and Kanchanpur districts. The strong focus on the empowerment of marginalised and disadvantaged communities was evident. Although participation in the programme is not stimulated by any material incentives, the communities seem to have benefited from their involvement by becoming more united and confident. This has resulted in them seeking and obtaining the provision of resources and services from governmental and other service providers.

The monitoring team identified three areas that could be addressed more carefully within the project. Although there is strong recognition of gender related issues within the programme, this could be reflected more in the organisational structure which is heavily male, particularly at management level.

Secondly, consideration could be given to some areas of the model with the view to refining it further. For instance, one issue here is the risk of group take-over by vested interests (elite capture). As their work progresses, SHEP and SS are encouraged to test the model by visiting groups with which SS work has ceased, to see to what extent group unity and benefits are being sustained over time.

Thirdly, it is recommended that SHEP and SS consider further how this approach could be replicated within other organisations. Training on the approach is conducted for organisations which request it, but progress in the national learning network has been limited. Given that the model appears, from external evaluations and from this monitoring visit, to be valuable, further consideration on how the model might be disseminated is recommended.

1. **Introduction including Project Summary and Context**

The Social and Health Education Project (SHEP) is an Irish organisation that provides personal and organisational capacity building services through training and psychotherapy across the counties of Cork and Kerry. It is mainly funded by the Health Services Executive. In September 2006 SHEP established a partnership with Sahakarmi Samaj (SS) and was approved in 2007 for three year project funding (€323,587) from the Civil Society Section of Irish Aid towards the South – Western Nepal Community Governance Programme.

The project is implemented by Sahakarmi Samaj which is a community development organisation that has worked on community empowerment projects in Nepal since 1998. The main aim of the organisation is to strengthen and mobilise community groups and networks in order to address social, health and economic challenges. To do so, it uses the FEST (Facilitation for Empowerment and Social Transformation) approach which is based on a belief that people themselves can bring real change to their lives and that the role of a supporting NGO is to create an enabling environment. Within this approach, communities independently analyse problems and plan and implement responses appropriate to their situations. To date, two separate external evaluations of the CSF project have been conducted (2008 and 2010), both of which recognised the value of this approach in empowering communities.

The project monitored by the Irish Aid team is the: *South-western Nepal Community Governance Enhancement Programme* that aims to ‘support the development of inclusive civil society organisations that are capable of justly and effectively managing community affairs at local and district levels through the sustainable mobilisation of local resources and through constructive engagement with governmental and non-governmental organisations’. The project is based in the Terai districts of Banke, Bardiya and Kanchanpur, which face various social, environmental, political and economic difficulties. Currently SS operates in seven districts, 60 Village District Committee areas, with 65 community groups, and with ten external organisations.

The strategy used by SS comprises the following elements with communities: group and network formation; building problem solving skills with the community groups; development and capacity building of community groups; the creation of learning materials and the creation of a database of local service providers and available resources for use by community groups. During the process Participatory Rural Appraisal tools are used extensively. The support is individually tailored to the specific groups. SS usually works for three to four years directly with each community group. Community groups go through the organisational development process and form Community Based Networking Organisations (CBNOs) which act as higher level networks for the community groups.

In addition to the direct community work, SS provides training and consultancy services to NGOs and local government bodies on community development. This is also serves as an income generation activity for SS.

1. **Methodology, including Visit Limitations:**

The purpose of the monitoring visit was to assess the progress and effectiveness of the work of SHEP and its partner Sahakarmi Samaj within the Irish Aid-funded project. The monitoring visit was conducted by three staff members of Irish Aid over the course of one and a half days. This report is based on information gathered during this field visit, and is further informed by various documents including the CSF application form, project progress reports and two external evaluations of the project which SHEP shared with Irish Aid. The following interviews and meetings were held during the visit:

* Three members of the management team assisted throughout the whole visit and provided a two hour introductory session including detailed power point presentations.
* A one hour discussion with the office staff was held including detailed discussion with the finance officer.
* A one hour meeting with five field staff representatives was held.
* The monitoring team participated in two group meetings held with community groups in Pragati Samauha and Siyon Bikas Samuha
* Two meetings were held with CBNOs in Triveni Bikas Samaj and Mainapokhar

While good discussion time was available on this visit with Executive Committee members and with community members, there was insufficient time for in-depth discussions with field staff.

1. **Relevance of Project to Context and Targeting of Project Activities**

This project is based around community development and, in particular, enhancing the collaboration within communities to achieve better lives, individually and collectively. Discussions with group members demonstrated that the project is highly relevant. Group members reported feeling very disjointed before the project, related in part to the nationwide conflict situation, and consistently reported feeling united after the work of Sahakarmi Samaj.

The way that the work is structured also enhances its relevance while providing in-depth group development and training activities, SS does not direct community groups which issues to focus on in their subsequent work. Thus, by definition, community groups choose the issues of most relevance to their situations.

As regards poverty focus, groups visited were clearly living in poverty and reported many challenges related to livelihoods and the provision of basic services.

In terms of targeting communities within which to work, during the first six to eight months, SS approaches the District Development Committee to ask which the most disadvantaged villages in the district are. SS visits ten to twelve of these villages, out of which they choose approximately four to work with. They inform the communities of their approach. A key aspect here is that they must be invited by communities to work in the area. There has only been one case where the community leaders in question learnt about the work of SS and did not invite them to work in their area.

In terms of targeting individuals, SS does not engage at this level of targeting directly as the communities select their own group (in effect it appears that group members volunteer for selection) after learning about the process. Having said that, as part of an in-depth groundwork, household level, process, SS focuses on identifying the most disadvantaged community members and tries to encourage their inclusion in the group process.

Since group members essentially appear to volunteer themselves for selection, the approach allows for the possibility that wealthier community members may join the group. In this case, given that no inputs/loans of any sort are given to groups, this does not seem to be problematic and members met certainly appears to be living in poverty. However, it is advisable that SS continue to make efforts to ensure that marginalised people have the opportunity to join the groups. SS do make efforts in the formation process to ensure that the most disadvantaged and poor people are encouraged to join the groups. Nonetheless, it will be important for SS to continuously guard against the risk of benefits accruing to those with the strongest social and political networks, as this has been a problem with such groups in other parts of the world. In other words, having a model for tracking social inclusion/exclusion is valuable.

Group members, in effect, are often women. In one group visited there were 24 women and two men. There was a mixture of religions evident in the groups.

In conclusion, the monitoring visit indicates, as backed up by the evaluation report, that the relevance of this project to the context appears to be high and that targeting appears to be appropriate to ensuring the inclusion of poor and marginalised people, particularly women (reference figures below on gender ratios).

1. **Project Progress based on agreed objectives/results/targets, including challenges faced and efforts to overcome these**

The project aims to achieve greater empowerment of community members, especially those who are marginalised, through community development actions. The project period ended in September 2010 and the final report is due by December 2010. The project progress was monitored against the following objectives:

**Objective 1: At least 180 community groups comprising disadvantaged/marginalised people in 14 VDCs in 2 Districts (Bardiya and Kanchanpur) will have identified, analysed and mitigated shared problems through inclusive democratic deliberation, planned collective action and the effective mobilisation of local and external resources.**

According to the evaluation undertaken in 2010 there have been 146 community groups established in Bardiya and Kanchanpur Districts; and the total number of members is 4,062. The majority of the members are female (83%), and 50% of the members come from ethnic minorities and ‘lower castes’.

According to the external evaluation and the final report (2010) collectively there were 1900 actions taken by these groups towards resolving issues of different size and importance. Some were direct actions by the groups, and some were a result of their mobilisation of external governmental or non-governmental resources, as a result of the training and contacts provided by SHEP. Different communities benefited from various economic, social and infrastructural initiatives including the building of roads, the installation of electricity, the building of sanitation systems, the setting up of microcredit instruments, income generation activities, increased forestation etc.. Groups also reportedly contributed to less tangible impacts such as a decrease in road accidents and increased inclusion of marginalised people.

The monitoring team visited two communities in Siyon Vikas and Pragati Samauha. The team spent approximately an hour and a half with each community where they discussed their experiences in relation to the project and the support they receive from SS. The following observations were made:

**Siyon Vikas** community group has 26 members out of which 24 are female and two are male

* ***Social integration***. In general, the community group was very enthusiastic about the project. Members reported that they felt they were more united and, in particular, that the marginalised members, e.g. women, had been given a voice. They also grew more confident as a group and developed the ability to seek resources and support from local government, NGOs and different organisations. The group believes they have developed good habits in relation to the personal hygiene and sanitation as a result of the project. There has been also more agreement and harmony between the community members, for example females used to fight and now they support one another.
* **Tangible achievements**. The sanitation situation has greatly improved in the community; the community built 26 toilets and two water pumps which has lead to the elimination of diarrhoea. In addition, members started harvesting together and also making canals and roofs together; they were also awarded 70 pieces of timber from the local authorities. They also acknowledged the importance of different health issues including HIV/AIDS and during their sessions with SS looked for ways of addressing them. The biggest challenge for the community is to obtain resources, the group used to get support in relation to this from SS but it is not necessary anymore as they have become independent, they have learnt how to use the database and access recourses on their own.

The second community the monitoring team met with was **Pragati Samauha**. It has 19 members in the group, 18 female and one male.

* **Social Integration.** The community reported that the relationships between members have improved, that they have gained confidence and that they learnt how to access resources at district level. They also reported that they learnt how to facilitate and manage team meetings.
* **Tangible achievements.** The community gained skills in income generation, and individual members are able to get financial support from the community fund that they established from regular savings. One person used the money to send her sons abroad for employment, one women received a loan of 8,000 rupees (€80) for poultry farming and generated 18,000 rupees (€180) which allowed her to send her son to college. Individuals also use savings to get medical treatment. The community still gets support from SS and every week somebody comes from SS to observe meetings and give feedback.

The monitoring team observed that the communication was clear and smooth within the community groups, roles and responsibilities were clear and, in general, the groups were strong and supportive towards their members. There was no conflict or strong disagreement observed. Furthermore, the relationship with the SS staff seemed positive and open.

**Objective 2: At least 120 community-based organisations (CBOs) will have become formally constituted and be demonstrably capable of autonomously initiating and sustaining justice- and wellbeing-oriented change through clear, inclusive, democratic and accountable procedures of governance, programme implementation, and rights-based advocacy.**

The project aims to facilitate the creation of community based organisation that will become independent and autonomous. According to the office and field staff members met during the monitoring visit each CBO has to register at local and district levels. All of the CBOs (146) have their own management committee which is elected by the members which exceeds the initial target of 120. There is a strong emphasis placed by the Sahakarmi Samaj on organisational training including community based organisational strengthening. Group facilitators are also trained to enable them to conduct group meetings independently. The evaluation report of 2010 states that the CBOs are well managed, they have written policies and procedures and hold weekly meetings. The monitoring team observed this during the visit. The group meetings were well structured and managed; each group had its chair, finance person etc.. The groups work independently from SS, they look for resources independently. The group facilitators presented at the meeting seem competent in their roles and have a good understanding of their role as a facilitator.

The area of ‘rights-based advocacy’ is one which may need more attention within the groups, if indeed this is a valid objective at this level. Groups met by the monitoring team are certainly advocating for resources and services for their communities, but ‘rights-based advocacy’ implies advocacy on structural causes of poverty and marginalisation and this was not evident within the groups. This is perhaps where the linkage with the CBNOs (see next section) becomes relevant.

A final comment in terms of group functioning is that, while the monitoring team visited well-functioning groups, in other contexts, there can be a tendency over time for groups to be taken over by vested interests. It would be useful for SS/SHEP to consider how they will mitigate against this risk, particularly when they are at the stage of disengaging from particular groups.

**Objective 3: 14 VDC-level networking committees and 3 regional community-based networking organisations (CBNOs) - (two in Kanchanpur and one in Bardiya) will have been formally constituted and be demonstrably capable of autonomously initiating and sustaining justice- and wellbeing-oriented change through clear, inclusive, democratic and accountable procedures of governance, programme implementation, and rights-based advocacy.**

According to the application form, the Community- Based Networking Organisations and Main Networking Committees aim to represent CBOs at a higher level, provide opportunities for shared learning, facilitate links with external services and provide technical assistance to CBOs. According to the second year report there have been three CBNOs established and in addition the monitoring team met a new fourth CBNO. They are self-governing bodies that are able to obtain financial and non-financial resources from different organisations. The monitoring team met two CBNOs.

The Triveni Bikas Samaj CBNO, has been well established and it operates in an urban area which helps in making connections with other organisations, authorities etc. This CBNO works in 5 Village District Committee areas in Banke District and has 104 members. It cooperates with Lutheran World Federation, Social Work Institute, Sansthagath Bikas Sanjal, District Livestock Service Office, Triveni Community Library, Agriculture and Veterinary Service, and Sahakarmi Samaj. The committee has established an agricultural cooperative and livelihood centre where people seek and receive advice. A library has been established in Triveni where information about HIV/AIDS, different services, and basic life skills is given, and where book readings for children are held every Saturday. In addition, a women’s committee which addresses literacy problems among women has been established at this library.

The second CBNO the monitoring team met, Mainapokhar CBNO, was a newly established CBNO, which had been only in existence for three months. To date the group had been able to organise a meeting at a district level and had met with governmental and non-governmental representatives. The group was very enthusiastic and spoke highly of the support received from SS. The work of this group may be more challenging as they are based in a rural area.

Both CBNOs consisted of women and men and included people from different religious backgrounds. Sahakarmi Samaj provides ongoing organisational capacity building services to newly established CBNOs. As with the community-level groups, what is particularly positive is that the main role of SS is to facilitate the establishment and development of CBNOs through capacity building as opposed to directly implementing the services themselves. SS’s Organisational Capacity Building Unit is responsible for this and has provided several training sessions to the CBNOs on the improvement of organisational planning and governance.

Two areas were unclear to the monitoring team regarding the higher levels groups. One is that there was only evidence of two levels of work: community groups and CBNOs. The third level of ‘Main Committee’ was not evident or mentioned by any group or CBNO members.

Secondly, the precise linkages between community groups and CBNOs were not as expected. The CBNOs did not appear to consist of representatives from different community groups.

In addition, similar to the community groups, the ’rights-based advocacy’ element of CBNO work was not evident. It appeared to the monitoring team that CBNOs link to existing resources and services. They may have potential to serve as agents for change and to move towards more advocating for structural changes such as influencing policies and resource allocation that would benefit communities, however it would appear that this would need considerable additional support from SS.

Similarly, it seemed as though the Triveni Bikas Samaj CBNO had become a beneficiary of LWF projects and it was not clear if the CBNO also influenced the direction and focus of these projects, or whether the CBNO were only engaged at implementation stage. This may be an issue that SS/SHEP may want to explore further.

A final point in relation to CBNOs relates to their access to resources and services. The first CBNO met was based in an urban centre and had clearly benefitted a lot from the support of NGOs such as LWF. The second CBNO, on the other hand, was clearly based in a much more rural area with less access to resources and services. It would be useful for SS to consider, if they have not already done so, how the support needs of such diverse CBNOs might vary.

**Objective 4: The capacity of at least 150 government officials and development workers from at least 20 agencies to work in ways that promote justice- and wellbeing-oriented governance will have been enhanced through participation in significant programmes of training and organisational development.**

Taking into consideration information gathered during the visit and from different documents this objective has only been partially achieved. According to the management team, 10 external organisations, including United Mission to Nepal, International Nepal Fellowship and World Vision International participated in different trainings facilitated by SS on their development approach. According to the evaluation the training was provided to several hundred staff from the NGOs and 24 VDC secretaries and 41 representatives of district level. The trainings undertaken were mainly in capacity building, monitoring and evaluation, human resources, group formation, and participatory methods in development. In addition, according to the annual report, SS has provided programme evaluation support to the International Labour Organisation. In addition, several training sessions were provided to VDC and DDC representatives on community cooperation.

While this aspect of SS work is promising in that their community-driven development approach is being disseminated, there are obviously limitations in ascertaining the impact within the target organisations of such trainings. This limitation is inherent in any ‘consultancy’ style work. However, it is positive that SS are using these trainings to generate income.

**Objective 5: A national learning network will have been established through which relevant learnings are disseminated and peer-support provided for all organisations working in Nepal to offer facilitative interventions aimed at enhancing personal, collective, organisational and institutional capacity for justice- and wellbeing-oriented participatory governance.**

This objective has not been achieved. In relation to the establishment of the national learning network the management team reported that there were several difficulties. The largest obstacle is apparently a lack of commitment by other organisations to the long-term participatory approach that SS aims to promote. SS joined a national network, the Art of Collaborative Leadership Network (AoCLN), even though this network is not working on SS’s precise approach, the organisation is making a strong effort to contribute to the work of the network.

**Objective 6: A range of Nepali-medium resource materials will have been produced concerning the facilitation of personal, community, organisational and institutional capacity-building in disadvantaged and marginalised communities, which will have been made available at an appropriate cost to interested organisations.**

There have been several materials produced by Sahakarmi Samaj some of which include newsletters, village profile reports, annual reports and training materials. The monitoring team had an opportunity to see one of the training materials a ‘book of codes’ which is used during the problem identification phase to generate discussion in the community. This book seems like an excellent training resource. The monitoring team does not have a clear sense of how widely these materials have been disseminated.

**Objective 7: Learning from the SAKTEE programme will have been derived through an externally validated participatory evaluation and disseminated to all network partners and other agencies with an interest in institution building in disadvantaged or marginalised communities.**

To date there were two external evaluations conducted 2008 (Dr. Moira O’Leary of ActionAid, Myanmar) and 2010 (Mr Mal Simmons). The management board appreciated the reports and detailed with the monitoring team how they have tried to implement some of the recommendations. Both evaluation reports were shared with Irish Aid.

1. **Organisational Capacity and Systems**
2. ***Financial Management (include procedures, systems and capacity)***

The Irish Aid funding to SS accounts for 55% of their budget, while other 40% comes from ICCO (a Dutch NGO) and 5% comes from other sources including training income.

The monitoring team found that SS has a comprehensive financial procedures’ manual and were able to describe a robust financial management system. The manual contains procedures in relation to payroll, cash management, budgeting etc..

The person responsible for finance within the organisation previously worked with the government and was also as an auditor in the private sector.

At the end of each year, financial planning and budgeting is prepared by board members. There is an annual operational plan completed for all activities and staff members are also involved, especially in the activity planning and operational aspects of the plan.

Under Nepalese law all NGOs must prepare an annual external audit. The last external audit was conducted in July 2009 and findings were positive. The financial manager reported that there is also an internal check completed by the Board each year and any problems that are uncovered are subsequently dealt with.

SS installed a software accounting package two years ago on the recommendation of the external auditors which has greatly improved the capacity of the organisation to manage their budget.

SS provide quarterly financial reports to SHEP. SHEP provides annual narrative and financial reports to Irish Aid. When representatives from SHEP HQ visit, they carry out an inspection of the financial systems and procedures.

1. ***Governance and Human Resources***

According to the CSF application form, SHEP has a Management Committee in Ireland (board) that meets once a month. Additional meetings are occasionally called to address specific issues. The Management Committee has a number of sub-committees and advisory groups which meet periodically. Amongst these is the International Partnership Programme Advisory Group, which meets approximately every six weeks, and discusses the project in Nepal, which is SHEP’s only international programme linkage.

In relation to Sahakarmi Samaj, its general assembly has 45 members and the board has seven members (four female and three male), there is also an Executive Team consisting of the Executive Director, the Team Leader and the Programme Leader. The monitoring team met one board member in Kathmandu who appears actively involved and who has relevant experience in the sector.

There are currently 49 people employed by SS in five different sections working within the organisation: Organisational Capacity Building, Administration and Finance, Training Consultation and Research, and Human Rights, Peace and Reconciliation.

Human Resources have been given considerable amount of attention by the organisation. There is an innovative and well thought-through recruitment process for the community workers – rather than a typical interview process, applicants participate in a training workshop, after which the best candidates are selected. This process fits with SS’s strong emphasis placed on inter-personal skills and on staff members’ ability to empathise with community members. The ‘hands-on’ recruitment process assists to find the best people in this regard. The employees enjoy a good number of benefits including sick leave, 30 days annual leave, insurance cover and regular training. There is a performance management mechanism in place. Field staff reported that they are happy with their working conditions and support from the office.

However, there are some difficulties in maintaining gender balance in the organisation as there is a problem in retaining female staff members. In 2009, the organisation lost six female employees due to family issues.. Each community has one female and one male facilitator. It was noted by the monitoring team that there are two female staff members in the office, however there are none at senior positions. While efforts have reportedly been made to retain female staff, it is recommended that SS/SHEP give increased attention to this area of ensuring gender balance within the organisation, perhaps giving increased consideration to flexible working arrangements for women when required etc. .

1. ***Technical Capacities (as relevant for the project)***

Sahakarmi Samaj staff appears to have the requisite technical (i.e. community development) skills for the implementation of the project. The Executive Committee (management) have extensive experience in the ‘FEST’ approach, (the precursor to the approach used by SS). As mentioned, there is also a thorough recruitment process of community facilitators which helps to ensure that appropriate people are recruited. Furthermore, there is a fairly extensive system of training and shared learning for staff, with quarterly meetings and retreats.

1. **Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Systems and Capacities**

There are good monitoring practices in place at various levels within SS. Field staff sends progress reports each month to the office and field staff meet every three months to review progress. There are bi-monthly field visits by executive committee members. In addition to this, field staff members meet office staff members every 6 months where they have an opportunity to exchange information and learning.

SS staff maintains close contact with communities. Community members have an opportunity to speak to SS staff during weekly visits, which decrease to being monthly as groups become more independent. Although there has certainly been a commitment to monitoring observed, there are a few areas that need further strengthening in this regard. The monitoring team has identified a need for a stronger monitoring system that is based on results and outcomes, rather than outputs. For example, the capacity building of government officials and other development workers is only being reported on in terms of training sessions conducted, but this does not tell us about the impact of this investment. There is a need for SS to come up with ways to assess the extent to which information from training sessions is being used

In terms of evaluation, two external evaluations have been conducted during the three year CSF project. These evaluations were welcomed by staff and the executive committee members and detailed learnings and changes that have been implemented as a result of the evaluations. These evaluation reports were also sent to Irish Aid.

In terms of learning, the quarterly meetings and retreats provide opportunities for learning. In addition, executive committee members have undertaken exchange visits, e.g. to India, to visit similar projects in Bangalore and Lahore.

1. **Relationships with Stakeholders**
2. ***Linkages with Government Policies and Structures***

There are no formal linkages to the government at national level; however SS provides training and capacity building to government authorities at local levels. The trainings have been provided at village and district levels. SS provides information to community members on services available from local and national government in a database. One of the remarkable features of the project is that, this database is shared with community groups, but SS does not accompany group members on any meetings with government officials. This helps to ensure that communities take the lead in these interactions and gain confidence to interact with government officials. It is of course important for SS to monitor the outcomes of these meetings to see if additional support is required, which the monitoring team felt was being done in cases of groups that are still developing (some groups have become independent and no longer require support from SS in this regard).

1. ***Partnership with Local Organisations (as relevant)***

Community groups and CBNOs are created as a result of the long-term community development process described earlier. They become independent organisations and receive ongoing (although declining) support from SS through capacity building and training provision. SS does not influence decision making or the way that groups function. SS does not have direct partnership with other NGOs or community development organisations, however it works with them on capacity building and training provision as mentioned above (e.g. World Vision International, United Mission to Nepal).

1. ***Participation of, and Relationships with, Community Members/Intended Beneficiaries***

Community members are clearly the owners of the project work. The approach used by SS focuses on empowerment and developing capacity of individuals and groups in order to address issues identified by the community. Communities are fully involved through the whole project from targeting to identification of the problem, to designing an intervention strategy, to the final evaluation. The community members have opportunities to provide feedback on the work of facilitators and the progress the group is making, for example during weekly visits from the field staff.

Although there was no indications of any problems to date, SS may want to give further consideration to ensuring that risk mitigation measures are in place in cases where one of their facilitators might not be performing well. It is important to ensure that sufficient channels exist for community members to have sufficient channels to feed back to SS staff apart from the facilitator directly involved with their group.

1. ***Protection of Children and Vulnerable People throughout Project Activities (as relevant)***

There is no formal policy in relation to the protection of children and vulnerable adults. The nature of the project, e.g. not involving the transfer of any resources, is such that risks are not as high as they may be in other types of projects. However, it is recommended that SS and SHEP be continually vigilant in this regard.

1. ***Capacity Building***

Capacity building is one of the main components of the project and it is aimed both at community members and at external organisations. SS equips community groups in facilitation, team building, communication skills and, as mentioned above, it provides training to CBNOs, NGOs and local authorities. The organisational strengthening support for community groups includes community leadership development training (3 days at the beginning), group facilitators training (4 days after 6 months); community development strengthening (4 days). In addition, SS provides ongoing organisational support for CBNOs. The SS staff appears to be qualified and experienced in training provision. The organisation is recognised in Nepal for its community development expertise and is often used by other organisations for training.

1. **Consideration/Incorporation of Cross Cutting Issues**
2. ***Gender***

There is a significant consideration given to gender issues within the project. Gender issues are mentioned in the problem analysis guide (book of codes) produced by SS. Gender based violence (GBV) is recognised as a community problem. Issues such as domestic violence, multiple wives, and female children not receiving education are also openly discussed at group level. 80% of community group members are women and the monitoring team saw and were informed that women feel more empowered and have stronger voice in the society as a result of their participation in the groups.

1. ***HIV&AIDS***

The instances of HIV are increasing in Nepal. There has been attention given to HIV&AIDS issues within the project. The prevention of HIV and other STIs is discussed with the community groups and CBNOs. Facilitators work with HIV affected people within communities and provide counselling and referral to HIV&AIDS testing centres.

1. ***Governance***

See discussion on advocacy above.

1. ***Environment***

There has been some attention given to environmental issues by SS, mostly via the priorities set by community groups. Improved sanitation in the communities is seen as one of the main benefits of group initiatives and was mentioned regularly by the groups visited. This lead, in the case of one group, to improved health conditions particularly in young children.

Deforestation was identified by communities as a key issue and is part of the ‘book of codes’ used by SS for facilitation. To date, several community groups, including one visited, have taken initiative to address deforestation through the planting of trees and protecting existing resources.

1. **Support from International Partners/Head Office**

Support from SHEP is highly appreciated by SS. SHEP visits the project at least once a year. SHEP provides SS with encouragement and technical support and a staff workshop takes place during the SHEP visit. Two Executive Committee members and a board member of SS visited the SHEP offices and projects in Ireland in 2009. It is evident from discussions with the SS staff that the relationship with SHEP is collaborative and based around mutual respect and learning.

1. **Volunteering Procedures**

There is no formal volunteering programme at the moment. SS is considering using volunteers in the future and they will use SHEP’s advice in relation to establishing a volunteering programme.

1. **Conclusion and Recommendations**

SS is undertaking important work effectively and with commitment. It can be seen as creating the groundwork for other NGO and government interventions to work better, as communities are informed and empowered to seek and demand resources and services.

Below are some areas that the monitoring team recommends further consideration of for further development of the project.

**Recommendation 1**: It is recommended that SHEP/SS give further attention towards gender equality issues within the organisation including staffing practices.

**Recommendation 2**: It is recommended that SHEP/SS consider certain areas in the further refinement on the model, including:

- giving further attention to tracking social inclusion/exclusion of poor and marginalised people, addressing the potential risk of elite capture of groups,

-the prospects for rights-based advocacy by groups, including the potential of groups to influence the policy and resourcing decisions of governmental and non-governmental organisations.

**Recommendation 3** It is recommended that SHEP/SS give further consideration on how the SS model can be disseminated to other organisations.

**Recommendation 4** It is recommend to strengthen the results framework and monitoring system with emphasis on how results/outcomes can be achieved and measured, e.g. within the area of the training of the government officials and other development workers, ensuring that approaches which people have been trained on are then being used.

**Organisation’s Management Response**

Name of respondent:

Date: