

Sahakarmi Samaj

Programme Evaluation Report

**Strengthening Awareness and Knowledge
through Education and Empowerment (SAKTEE)
Programme**

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Executive summary

The Strengthening Awareness and Knowledge through Education for Empowerment (SAKTEE) programme was implemented by Sahakarmi Samaj during the ten year period from 1998 to 2007 in Banke district, Mid West Nepal. With funding support from Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and the United Protestant Churches in the Netherlands (UPCN), the programme was conducted in 18 VDC areas. The SAKTEE programme aimed to facilitate personal and collective capacity development for values based change.

The purpose of the external consultant-led collaborative evaluation was to distil the lessons from the SAKTEE programme so that these can be applied to Sahakarmi's current South Western Nepal Community Governance Enhancement Programme (SNCGEP). To encourage this learning and application Sahakarmi Samaj personnel were integrally involved in the evaluation process, and the outcome of three, one day workshops with Sahakarmi staff and the analysis of the Sahakarmi evaluation team members constitute key findings of this participatory evaluation. The evaluation methodology was developed in consultation with Sahakarmi Samaj evaluation team members. Focus group discussions were conducted with 36 community groups with 594 participants, along with in-depth interviews with local government officials and other stakeholders.

A key strategy to achieve the SAKTEE programme aim was through the organisation, mobilisation and strengthening of community groups and networks. As a result of the SAKTEE programme 334 Community Groups formed which were clustered into 18 Main Committees at the VDC level. The Main Committees in the same geographical area were federated into three regional Community Based Network Organisations (CBNOs).

The SAKTEE programme was implemented in an extremely complex social, cultural and political context. Sahakarmi Samaj aimed to work with the poorest and most marginalized communities in Banke district identified through their VDC Screening Process and Community Screening Process. The random selection of Community Groups, and feedback from other stakeholders indicated that Sahakarmi had successfully identified and worked with people who were very poor and marginalized.

Sahakarmi's work is premised on a belief in people's agency and their capacity to change their situation. The evaluation found that the process oriented approach of Sahakarmi Samaj is effective in facilitating the empowerment of marginalized women and men. Through the sustained and close support of the Sahakarmi facilitators, individuals developed self confidence and self esteem – or “power within” her/himself, increased their “power to”, that is, their skills and ability to do certain things and, through the formation of strong groups developed a sense of “power with” others, that is, the confidence to take collective action to solve their problems. Many groups have successfully made significant changes in their situation through their own efforts and have also successfully negotiated the provision of resources from government and non government agencies.

Sahakarmi has successfully facilitated the formation of three community led regional networks which effectively give voice to the concerns and issues of the community people who are poor and excluded and who comprise them. The process of group/institution formation at the community, VDC and regional level has promoted democratic and participatory planning, decision making and leadership practices. The capacity of the CBNOs and Main Committees to fully implement their roles and sustain their organisations in the long term with the support they are currently receiving from various agencies should be critically reviewed by Sahakarmi in collaboration with the other stakeholders.

The SAKTEE programme was effective in facilitating change for women which has enabled their active participation and leadership in a context where women typically are very constrained. It has also demonstrated effectiveness in decreasing conflict and tensions between people of different caste/ethnicity/ religion at the local level. Many examples illustrated people's increased confidence and capacity to resist and challenge oppression and injustice by land owners and government officials at the local level though collectively asserting their rights.

While not changing its position that it is the people themselves who should be informed, learn their rights and mobilise to act on their own behalf, Sahakarmi could reflect on how it manages the tension between its emphasis on self-reliant development with the need to address the structural causes of disadvantage which stem from unjust laws and systems and which require broader mobilisation of people to press for policy change. Now that it has established a solid foundation and understanding for mobilising and empowering communities to work together at the local level Sahakarmi could now further develop its strategy to engage with government agencies and officials to promote linkages and the development of more effective, long-term and democratically accountable resource delivery systems. Sahakarmi could further develop strategies with the CBNOs and Main Committees to use the power of their numbers to gain representation on decision making bodies and develop linkages and network beyond the District to work for structural change in favour of the poor.

Sahakarmi is mindful of the importance of consistency between what the organisation says and what it does. It has worked hard to institutionalise review, reflection and planning processes within the organisation strengthen accountability. Sahakarmi's investment, and success, in its staff selection process and ongoing capacity development is critical to its organisational capacity to facilitate participatory and empowering development processes in communities.

An area of need is for the organisation to further develop its capacity to develop theory from its practice. Specifically, to conceptualise and contextualise Sahakarmi's work and approach in the current development discourse, to articulate their theory of practice and to disseminate this.

Acronyms

CAT	Community Animation Team
CBNO	Community Based Network Organisation
DDC	District Development Committee
FFE	Food for Education
INF	International Fellowship Nepal
LWF	Lutheran World Federation
SS	Sahakarmi Samaj
SAKTEE	Strengthening Awareness and Knowledge through Education and Empowerment
SHEP	Social and Health Education Project
SWI	Social Work Institute
SNCGEP	South Western Nepal Community Governance Enhancement Programme
UPCN	United Protestant Churches in the Netherlands
VDC	Village Development Committee
WFP	World Food Programme

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1. Introduction

The Strengthening Awareness and Knowledge through Education for Empowerment (SAKTEE) programme was implemented by Sahakarmi Samaj during the ten year period from 1998 to 2007 in Banke district, Mid West Nepal. With funding support from Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and the United Protestant Churches in the Netherlands (UPCN), the programme was conducted in 18 VDC areas¹. The overall programme was a composite of two LWF funded projects, each in six VDC areas (the first starting in 1998 and the second in 2003), as well as two UPCN funded projects, initially in two, and later in an additional four VDC areas.

Sahakarmi Samaj's SAKTEE programme aimed to facilitate personal and collective capacity development for values based change. A key strategy to achieve this was the organisation, mobilisation and strengthening of Community Groups to analyse their situation, discern options and prepare and implement action plans, initially using their local resources. Community Groups were then clustered into Main Committees at the VDC level, and Main Committees in the same geographical area were federated into regional Community Based Network Organisations (CBNOs). As a result of the SAKTEE programme 334 Community Groups were formed in 18 VDC areas. All 334 groups are registered with the respective apex organisations. Main Committees were formed in the 18 VDC areas and three regional CBNOs were established. (See Annex 1 for details.)

The purpose of the external consultant-led collaborative evaluation was to distil the lessons from the SAKTEE programme so that this can be applied to Sahakarmi's current South Western Nepal Community Governance Enhancement Programme (SNCGEP). The assumption was that the integral involvement of Sahakarmi Samaj personnel in the evaluation process, their analysis of the communities' experience and their reflection on the impact of the programme would increase the likelihood that the lessons and issues that emerge from the evaluation would be incorporated into the organisation's ongoing work. (See Annex 2 for evaluation Terms of Reference.)

2. Background

At the time of the SAKTEE programme the vision of Sahakarmi Samaj was *“to enable the marginalized people to gain control over their life individually and collectively in order to improve their quality of life through a just, equal and interdependent society.”*²

The mission of Sahakarmi Samaj was “to facilitate a process oriented programme with marginalized people which will provide the opportunity for identifying and addressing their problems continuously by using their knowledge, skill and resources”.

¹ Village Development Committee is the lowest administrative unit of local government

² The vision and mission have since been amended. The current vision is: Disadvantaged and marginalised people in Nepal will secure justice and an optimal quality of life as equal and active citizens in an inclusive, interdependent, well-governed and sustainable society.

The mission is: To ensure that there is sufficient capacity amongst disadvantaged and marginalised people, as well as amongst the organisations and institutions whose purpose is to serve them, to initiate and sustain inclusive processes of governance oriented towards the just distribution of rights, opportunities and resources and an optimal quality of life for all.

The process oriented approach

Sahakarmi's process oriented approach followed clearly defined phases. Although presented as linear, in fact many of the steps in the process were iterative; for example, the ongoing cycle of reflection and action. The basic outline is provided here.

- Phase One: disadvantaged communities were identified through a *Participatory Community Screening Process*. *Listening Surveys* and *Social Analysis* were then conducted in selected communities.
- Phase Two: *Group Emergence* was supported during the course of a two-month process of *Community Vision Building* using participatory tools and techniques.
- Phase Three: *Problem Posing* and *Problem Analysis* were followed by participatory *Action Planning, Plan Implementation and Plan Evaluation*. Through a process of *Family Mentoring* (introduced into the programme in 2001) special consideration was given to the specific needs of especially vulnerable family units. Where these needs could not be satisfactorily addressed through collective action in the wider group, the concerned family units were helped to develop and implement a separate *Family Action Plan* with the support of the group.
- Phase Four, *Organisational Development* was undertaken to strengthen the community groups and to formally establish the apex organisations. The latter, referred to as the 'Main Committees' and 'Community Based Networking Organisations' (CBNOs) have a long term commitment to community development at the VDC and regional levels respectively.

The series of established organisational development trainings provided to all Community Groups in the SAKTEE programme typically commenced one and half years after the initial formation of the group, when it had already established its identity and membership. The three key trainings, provided over four to six months included:

- Community Group Strengthening Training (GST)
- Community Facilitator Training (CFT)
- Community based Organizational Strengthening Training (COST)

Ongoing support was provided by Sahakarmi Samaj's *Training and Consultation Unit*, which delivered advanced trainings in, for example, leadership, accounting, resource management, participatory monitoring and evaluation and management of volunteers.

Two key influences which are identified as shaping Sahakarmi Samaj's approach are:

(i) Freirean tradition, especially as outlined in the 'Training for Transformation' training guides (Hope, A & Timmell, S) and the understanding of 'false consciousness' in order to identify and address the causes of external oppression.

(ii) The humanistic person-centred counselling approach of Karl Rogers which highlights the importance of people identifying and overcoming the obstacles to growth within themselves. Other methodological influences include appreciative inquiry, group-work, participant observation, participatory learning and action, participatory rural appraisal and organisational development.

The context

The SAKTEE programme was implemented in an extremely complex social, cultural and political context. Banke district is in the Terai (plains) area of the Mid-Western Development Region of Nepal. Most of the communities comprise Tharus (indigenous people), Madhesis (people of north Indian extraction, among whom Muslims constitute a marginalised group), Dalits (such as Bardi, Chidimars, Kushbandhiya, and Mangata), ex-Kamaiyas (bonded labourers) and other Sukhumbasis (landless people) and Pahadis (migrants from the hills). These categories encompass a mix of religious, ethnic, caste and geographical attributes.

Some of the key factors contributing to the complexity are the impact of:

- the mix of different ethnic/caste groups and the hierarchical relationships between them³
- the mix of different religious groups and tensions between these
- the patriarchal structures which perpetuate unequal relationships between women and men in all communities
- the political violence associated with the Maoist insurgency and different political parties, culminating in the people's mass movement in 2006 and the end to 11 years of armed conflict
- continuing political uncertainty with regard to the agreement between the seven party alliance and the Maoists
- tensions related to Madhesi activism⁴
- disrupted and dysfunctional local government structures often pre-disposed to advance the interests of the wealthy and powerful

The poorest and most marginalised communities have long been exploited by a small number of powerful elites, particularly major landowners. Women have typically been confined to the home with little opportunity to participate in the wider community. Many girls do not go to school and underage marriage is common. In these communities people generally are unaware of their rights, and many do not have citizenship documentation. Despite their shared poverty and exclusion there is little sense of collective identity.

3. Evaluation methodology

The external consultant-led collaborative evaluation methodology was developed in consultation with Sahakarmi Samaj evaluation team members. While Sahakarmi Samaj personnel comprised the evaluation team and their reflections and analysis are a key part of the findings, the design of the evaluation process and the contents of this report were the responsibility of the external evaluator. The aims and objectives of the evaluation identified by Sahakarmi personnel were:

³ Dalits represent 20% of Nepal's population. Although caste-based untouchability was abolished in 1963, discriminatory practices continue. Social custom still prevents Dalits from touching containers of drinking water, milk, or cooked food, and from entering private houses, shops or cowsheds (Report of an International Fact-Finding Mission - The Human Right to Food in Nepal; International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development, Canada (2007).

⁴ Madhesi groups of the Terai, who have cultural and linguistic links with North Indian people, have "suffered historical and systematic discrimination by the Hindu Hill rulers ... Millions remain without citizenship certificates." (Ibid.)

- To review the aims/aspirations of the SAKTEE project and identify the social/economic/cultural changes in the community
- To find out the sustainability and effectiveness of the SAKTEE programme, the strengths/weaknesses of the methodology/programme and how it can be improved
- To identify criteria of success (e.g. women’s participation; ability to access resources; marginalised people can set their own agenda; participation in local government decision making)
- To assess the cost effectiveness of the resources input versus the outputs from the Sahakarmi process
- To know what stakeholders perceive/say about Sahakarmi and to investigate their criticisms of the Sahakarmi process and assess their validity
- To consider Sahakarmi’s organisational management capacity in relation to working in the community

Sample and coverage

- Three, one day workshops with Sahakarmi Samaj senior staff were conducted with 24-26 participants.
- The community evaluation sample, as shown in Table one below, included:
 - all three CBNOs (100%)
 - six main committees (out of a total of 18, i.e. 33%)
 - 27 community groups (out of a total of 334 i.e. 8%)

Table 1: Groups participating in the focus group discussions

	CBNO	Main Committee	Community Groups
1.	Jana Jargarana Samaj - Kajura	1. Sristhi MC - Raniyapur 2. Jana Shakri MC - Belbhar	1. Santi 2. Gau Sudhar 3. Kalika 4. Jana Kalyan 5. Samajik Kalyan 1. Harijan 2. Jyoti 3. Samaj Sewa 4. Jaya Gurudev
2.	Triveni Bikaas Samaj - Triveninagar	1. Sangam Bikas MC – Rajhena 2. Ekata MC - Kohalpur	1. Santoshi 2. Chetana 3. Samaj Paribartan 4. Siva Sankar 5. Laxmi 1. Srijana 2. Jagriti 3. Milap 4. Tol Sudhar
3	Jana Ekata Samaj - Herminia	1. Kanchanganga MC – Holiya 2. Gyan Jyoti MC - Bhawaniyapur	1. Ramjanmubarak 2. Krishna 3. Sibhasankar 4. Jaya Bageshwori 1. Chetana 2. Laxmi 3. Bikaas 4. Arati 5. Hariyali

From each of the CBNOs two Main Committees were chosen, one considered by Sahakarmi staff to be strong and the other regarded as weak. The 27 Community Groups were chosen at random. The names of all the affiliated Community Groups in the Main Committees were written on separate cards. Four or five cards were then randomly chosen from the pack. (This meant that, for each CBNO, nine Community Groups were selected for investigation.)

Table 2: Number of participants in the focus group discussions

Focus Groups	Number of groups	Women participants	Men participants	Total number of participants
CBNO	3	18	14	32
Main Committee	6	44	47	91
Community Group	27	267	204	471
TOTAL	36 groups	329	265	594

- **Other stakeholders**

Meetings with local VDC government officials were random, depending on the officials' availability and evaluator's time. These meetings were conducted by the external evaluator and an observer from The Social and Health Education Project (SHEP), an international learning partner of Sahakarmi Samaj. The NGO stakeholders selected for interview had some connection with Sahakarmi's work – either being partners in implementation, working in the same geographical location or having commissioned Sahakarmi to provide training to their staff. The list of stakeholders met is provided in Annex 3.

Evaluation team

The evaluation team of 12 people comprised three field teams, each of four Sahakarmi staff, with at least one woman member in each. The majority of those involved had worked on the SAKTEE programme but not in the VDC areas where they were engaged in the evaluation. The external evaluator (and interpreter), the SHEP observer and the Chairperson of the Sahakarmi Samaj Board accompanied each of the teams on a rotating basis. Two other Sahakarmi Board Members accompanied the evaluation teams for shorter periods of time. (The list of Sahakarmi staff evaluation team participants is included in Annex 4)

Methods

The first reflection workshop held with all Sahakarmi senior staff sought to ascertain their expectations of the participatory evaluation, to understand their objectives for the SAKTEE programme and to explore their prior learning on specific aspects of the programme. Further questions on the impact of the programme were put to the evaluation team members during the second one day workshop to prepare the methodology and develop the evaluation guide questions and translate these into Nepali. The third workshop probed Sahakarmi staff's assessment of some of the key findings and conclusions emerging from focus group discussions and interviews with the communities and other stakeholders. The process for the staff workshop is included in Annex 5.

Focus group discussions were held with 594 members (329 women and 265 men) of each of the 27 Community Groups (471 participants), six Main Committees (91 participants) and three CBNOs (32 participants), as indicated in the sample above. Key informant interviews were held with three VDC Secretaries, staff at three Health/Sub-health posts, staff at three schools, three DDC officials, and staff of nine international/Nepali NGOs. The guide questions for these interviews are included in Annex 6.

The external evaluator also reviewed a number of Sahakarmi's SAKTEE programme documents, as listed in Annex 7. The evaluation schedule is provided in Annex 8.

Data collation and analysis

In total the field work extended over a five day period, with most of the discussions with Community Group being held in the first three days, with the Main Committees on day four and with the CBNOs on day five.

Each evening the three field teams met to review the discussion questions and compile the profile of the Groups/Committees/CBNOs they had met that day, as well as the data collected. On the evening of the second last day the evaluation team identified gaps in the information being gathered and some adjustments were made to the process. For example, the question as to how easy it would be for a community member who was not participating in the group in her/his community to join at a later stage was explored by one person from each evaluation team going around the community on day five to meet and discuss with non-participants.

The data was analysed by the external evaluator under seven thematic categories, as described in the introduction to section four. They are: a) A focus on people who are poor and marginalized; b) Facilitating empowerment and self reliance; c) Ensuring sustainability through building capacity and community led regional networks; d) Social transformation – equality, justice and peace e) Democratic and participatory governance; e) Putting organisational values into practice; f) Skilled and professional staff. While these categories are not discrete and there is overlap between them, they do serve to highlight the key themes and outcomes of Sahakarmi's work.

During the workshop the Sahakarmi Samaj staff identified the objectives of the SAKTEE programme. These were also used as the indicators of success.

- Marginalised people will be organised and interdependent in communities with increased mutual help, cooperation, an increased sense of security and sense of self-respect.
- Marginalised people will have enhanced analytical and problem solving capacity (development of inner potential), therefore increasing their control over their lives.
- There will be leadership capacity among marginalised people for democratic and participatory decision-making and community members will fulfil their roles and responsibilities.
- Unhelpful perspectives on development will have been challenged and replaced
- There will be increased access to resources with increased identification and use of local resources; with external resources sought only as required (both are important).
- There will be opportunities for those who traditionally didn't have opportunities – (jobs, resources etc.) and the livelihoods and living standard will have increased so marginalised communities will secure their basic needs/rights – food, clothing, water, shelter.
- There will be good governance – the promotion of human rights and democracy.
- There will be social transformation and social justice with a decrease in discrimination and useful/constructive social values preserved. Marginalised people will be involved in the mainstream.
- There will be an institutional mechanism - a network - in place to deal with issues on a sustainable basis.
- There will be increased awareness of human rights.

limitations

The major limitation was time which restricted the sample size of the Community Groups and the number of stakeholders met. In particular there were limited discussions with local government officials at the VDC and District Development Committee (DDC) level which has meant that the understanding of the local resource availability and interactions between local

government staff and the various groups was not firmly established. The issues for CBNOs with regard to their funding partners, the deployment of their staff and their plans for establishing cooperatives were not fully explored. There was also limited discussion with Sahakarmi field staff to ascertain their confidence in their own and the organisation's capacity to implement all aspects of the programme.

4. Findings and conclusions

The objectives of the SAKTEE programme evolved over the 10 year period in correlation with the progression from the formation and focus on Community Groups to Main Committees and subsequently the Community based Network Organisations and institutional strengthening. Hence there was not a clear set of objectives against which SAKTEE programme outcomes could be assessed. In view of this, the participatory evaluation findings have been categorized under the following seven headings which reflect the essential objectives/components of the programme:

- 4.1 A focus on people who are poor and marginalized
- 4.2 Facilitating empowerment and self reliance
- 4.3 Ensuring sustainability through building capacity and community led regional networks
- 4.4 Social transformation – equality, justice and peace
- 4.5 Democratic and participatory governance
- 4.6 Putting organizational values into practice
- 4.7 Skilled professional staff

Under each sub-section there is a brief outline of Sahakarmi's espoused beliefs/ objectives. This is followed by the evaluation findings and conclusions.

The activities and changes in local communities described in this section cannot be attributed solely to the facilitating work of Sahakarmi Samaj and no such claim is being made. For example, many stakeholders mentioned the profound changes resulting from the Maoist insurgency and the transformation in the Nepali political landscape during this period. In addition, other agencies were also active in the same VDC areas. However, we did see that many of the changes noted in this report were less apparent in Sahakarmi's project areas where they have recently started work with the communities. This does suggest that in the absence of Sahakarmi at least some of these changes are not taking place. At the same time, the focus group discussion participants did frame the changes in their own lives and environment in terms of the actions of their group.

4.1 Focus on people who are poor and marginalized

Background

Sahakarmi Samaj aimed to work with the poorest and most marginalized communities in Banke district. To this end Sahakarmi conducted a VDC screening process. This comprised discussions with district level government officials, visits to various VDCs and meetings with VDC personnel, as well as discussion with non-government agencies, to produce a ranking of possible VDCs. During the meetings with VDC officials, Sahakarmi staff explained the goal and objectives of the SAKTEE programme. If Sahakarmi then received an invitation from the VDC authorities it would proceed to include this VDC in the screening process. Following identification of the potential VDCs a team of four community educators (two female and two male) conducted the community screening process in each VDC. They visited every ward and conducted ward meetings and, using criteria developed with the community people through participatory exercises, produced a ranking of the most marginalized communities in the VDC.

Objective: To identify the most marginalized VDCs of Banke district in order to identify the marginalized communities

Findings

During the evaluation, officials at the DDC and other stakeholders confirmed that Sahakarmi had targeted the most marginalized communities. The majority of the Community Group members who participated in the focus group discussions were Tharus (indigenous people of the Terai), Dalits (such as Bardi), poor Madhesis – particularly marginalised Muslims, poor Pahadis, and ex-Kamaiyas and other Sukhumbasi (landless) people.

Comparing the groups met, there were some where the members appeared to be better off than in other groups whose members were extremely poor and clearly struggling. The latter were frequently people who had no land, or land for a house and none for agriculture, or who were “illegally” staying on government land without any security of tenure.

The SAKTEE programme included Sukhumbasis as well Kushbandhiya (makers of stone implements), Chidimars (bird catchers) and Mangata (beggars) in the regular groups.⁵ However, Sahakarmi found work in these transient communities to be difficult in terms of people’s regular participation, even though in many cases at least some of the family members remain in the community. This required flexibility from Sahakarmi staff in arranging meetings at night when people were available, developing manageable action plans and working more at the household level.

The family coaching component of Sahakarmi’s work with group members, particularly those confronted with family problems (as well as with very poor families who were not in groups), developed the Community Educator’s relationship with the families and enabled participatory analysis of family issues and household-level problem solving. Complementing group work with family coaching is an important strategy to support families who are struggling, enabling them to continue as group members and not drop out.

⁵ In the areas where Sahakarmi worked in Banke there were not Sukhumbasis’ communities to work with.

Conclusion

The random selection of Community Groups indicated that Sahakarmi had successfully identified and worked mostly with people who were very poor and marginalized.

Sahakarmi is committed to working with the most marginalized communities such as Kushbandhiya and recognizes the need to strategise more in relation to policy/advocacy so that the communities themselves are able to work more on their distinctive issues. This could involve, for example, linking communities with similar issues across different VDCs and CBNOs, and connecting them with other agencies working on the same.

4.2 Facilitating empowerment and self reliance

Empowerment

Background

Sahakarmi's work is premised on a belief in people's agency and their capacity to influence their situation. Their expressed belief is that marginalized people are able to change themselves if an appropriate environment is created which enables and encourages people to reflect on and analyze their own situation, thereby increasing their critical awareness. The organization believes that self reflection makes people more committed to carry out change on their own behalf. The facilitation of these processes of reflection, analysis and action planning, in the context of forming and strengthening community groups and networks, aims to empower people – individually and collectively. At the same time, family coaching reinforces these processes at the family level and monitors people's feelings regarding their group.

Objective: To create the environment for the emergence of community self-help groups of marginalized people

Objective: To identify and reflect the common generative themes of the community people so that they become aware of their existing situation and be empowered in order to achieve the desired social change

Findings

The evaluation team saw and heard ample evidence that Sahakarmi staff have effectively facilitated empowerment of marginalized women and men and their institutions. Numerous women described how they did not leave their house and “could not speak” in public before Sahakarmi staff came and they were encouraged to participate in the Community Group. They talked of their personal transformation in becoming more confident and articulate and described the support they now got from their group, whereas previously they had been isolated.

The emergence of a leader

There are 18 households in Dhobitole of Saigaun VDC Ward no. 5. It is a mixed community of Kurmi, Barma, Dhobi, and Kamdiya. Most of the men are laborers and traditionally women do not go out of their home. If the females do go out they have to cover their face for the prestige of their family, and to preserve their culture. Women were not allowed by their family to gather at public places. If they went out and participated in any programme they were attacked by their husbands and other family members. Sabitri is one of the women in this community. She also used to cover her face while going out and talking with unfamiliar people.

In 2060 the SAKTEE programme started work in this VDC. Slowly, discussions and interactions were held in the community, but it was very difficult to convince them. However, as a result of continuous effort a Dhobi community

group was formed in 2061 (Nepali calendar). Slowly, Sabitri began to participate in the discussions and she joined the group. Eventually most of the women from each house came to participate in the interactions. After the training conducted by Sahakarmi Samaj (SS), they started to identify their problems and to discuss solutions. They started to make plans to mobilize local resources and to approach other organizations for resources. Sabitri represented her group in different interactions and in workshops organized by other organizations. Now she is the treasurer of the group. In 2063 she became a member of the Main Committee. Among the 200 Main Committee general members she can give a speech confidently, without covering her face. She has been a source of inspiration to other women in the entire VDC. Due to her efforts and that of her group a lot of activities such as vegetable farming, path construction and a sanitation campaign have been conducted by mobilizing local resources. The Community Group and Main Committee have established a relationship with other organizations too. This case study indicates that priority should be given to empower the community so that they can develop their communities themselves. External resources alone are not sufficient for community development.

SS personnel

The Sahakarmi staff identified a number of learnings with regard to facilitating empowerment of women. These included the following:

- the importance of house-by-house visits of the Community Educators and counselling of family members (particularly husbands and mothers-in-law) in order to increase female participation
- the essential maintenance of confidentiality concerning family and personal issues
- women are more comfortable to share their problems openly with female facilitators
- creation of an environment where people can interact
- provision of coaching
- women must be able to see their own situations reflected in the presentation and analysis of codes (problem posing material)
- when some women are involved in group discussions and training then other women are attracted and encouraged
- it is more effective to raise women's issues in the presence of both men and women; not just in the presence of women
- in order to empower women men should also be empowered and be clear about their roles and responsibilities
- if given responsibilities women are able to take leadership roles
- in order to support women suffering from domestic violence it is critical to work well and plan – they will be encouraged when activities are successful
- the staff working with the community should show good behaviour, attitudes, and honesty and they should have a balanced and neutral relationship with everyone

Many group members stated that being able to discuss and “to share their problems” was a key reason for being part of the group and that their group “is a friend to them” and helps when they have problems. Interviews with some very poor community members who were not involved in groups revealed feelings of loneliness and vulnerability; feelings which they thought would be diminished if they were part of a group. When they observed the groups they felt that membership would provide them a social network and security.

People have a feeling that they can achieve things when they work together. There is a drastic change in their thinking about development. The most important thing is the group feeling and the partnership.

*SS evaluation team member's view on the main success of the SAKTEE programme
As a result of their group people are less vulnerable; relationships are wealth.*

SHEP observer's view on the main success of the SAKTEE programme

Women and men stated that prior to the group the space and opportunity to discuss issues of critical importance to their lives was not available. (The simple codes used by Sahakarmi staff –pictures, role plays, songs etc – serve to highlight real concerns in the community and to stimulate discussion of the existing situation, analysis of why it is so, assessment of the implications of it remaining as such, and exploration of actions which can be taken to address the problem.⁶ It was evident in many of the focus group discussions that repeated practice in the processes of reflection, analysis, identifying alternatives and making action plans has created the culture and capacity within groups to discuss community problems and to take action to resolve these by themselves.



Group initiatives and problem solving

Madanpur Group in Manipur VDC ward no. 3 was formed in 2060 (Nepali calendar). The group discussed and identified the community problems. After the analysis of the problems, the Community Group decided to make a path to the community. After discussions and negotiations people along the route agreed to donate land for the path. The 500 metre path was made in coordination with the VDC and the community. The group contributed their labour. Because of the initiatives taken by the group their membership increased from 20 to 35. Slowly, the group members convinced the community about the group and their roles and responsibilities as members of the community. The relationship among the community members was enhanced and social discrimination decreased considerably. The group started to save NRs. 10/- each every month. They utilized the savings to solve the problems of the group/members. In 2061 one house in the community was destroyed by fire. The Group collected funds and food for the family. In coordination with the Community Forestry Users Group and other organizations the group helped to make a house for the victim. Now the group members are empowered to mobilize their resources, solve community disputes, develop leadership within the group, and make plans in the group and implement these.

SS personnel

Sahakarmi staff reflection and learning regarding what is needed for the facilitation of a critical consciousness in marginalised communities included the following suggestions:

⁶ At the time of the evaluation Sahakarmi had withdrawn from Banke (with the exception of support to the CBNOs), so it was not possible to see these processes in action. However, the external evaluator was able to observe the facilitation of a discussion with an emerging Community Group in Bardiya, one of Sahakarmi's new work areas. The Community Educator demonstrated a high level of skill in group facilitation on the topic of illiteracy and the importance of education. A simple picture of a person using his thumb to sign a document stimulated a lively discussion among the participants of their experiences of being cheated, humiliated and confused because they could not read and write. They analysed why they were illiterate, the importance of literacy for their children, the situation of their children's education (e.g. non-attendance, poor quality education) and reflected on the actions they could take to solve the problems (adult literacy classes, disciplining their children and making sure they attend school, meeting with the teachers, etc). The group decided that at their next meeting they would make their action plans. This example connected to descriptions by the group members in the SAKTEE focus group discussions and how they came to realize that the school was not for the teachers (because they get jobs there) but for their children and that the school is the property of the community.

- facilitators should create a secure environment in which marginalised people can come together, and where both male and female can participate equally
- facilitators should use local language
- facilitators should behave neutrally and equally and give equal respect towards all, and should establish a good relationship with the marginalised community
- facilitators should be give attention to, and be serious about the sensitivities of people in marginalised communities
- facilitators should create a good environment in which they can learn from marginalised people rather than teach them
- facilitators should create an environment in which people can analyse their issues of concern and can solve their problems, rather than themselves solving the community's problems
- facilitators should encourage community people to utilise their knowledge, awareness and capacity
- facilitators should facilitate newly formed groups to make manageable plans rather than make big, unrealistic plans
- in order to establish good institutional relationships, regular meetings and updating of information are essential
- facilitators should identify a suitable time for the marginalised community to meet and plan accordingly
- facilitators should get involved as participants in local cultural and social activities

Self-reliance and local resource utilization

Background

Another fundamental element of Sahakarmi Samaj's approach is an emphasis on the identification and proper utilization of local resources. Closely associated with this is increasing the communities' awareness and understanding of their rights and responsibilities.

Sahakarmi is convinced that it is crucial to instil in people a sense of being able and responsible, to help themselves from the local resources that are available to them rather than being dependent on external actors. So as not to distract people's attention from this core purpose, Sahakarmi does not provide any material or financial resources to the communities with whom they work, and staff make this very clear from the commencement of their engagement with communities. This does not mean the Sahakarmi personnel think that people who are poor and marginalized do not need resources, but they argue that in order for them to achieve their human development or capacity building aims and not lose focus, the provision of these material resources must be done by other organisations.

Findings

Before SAKTEE people felt that everything had to be done by the government or other agencies, whereas now they feel that they have to be involved and take responsibility. SS evaluation team member's view on the most important achievement of the programme

A number of stakeholders pointed to the difficulty of facilitating groups to become self-reliant and able to identify and access resources, and if they are repeatedly unsuccessful the failure being a potential threat to the group's survival. They suggested that even a small input could help to enhance the group's confidence, provide much needed assistance, and in some cases, stimulate the co-contribution of additional financial support from other agencies.

Discussions on this subject suggest that, whilst the above is true, it is also true that the expectation of even minimal material support (from Sahakarmi Samaj) has the potential to hijack the process. People could be motivated by future material gain rather than focusing on the group and what they can achieve together without waiting for outsiders. Sahakarmi's approach has developed in part in recognition of the limitations of mainstream development interventions which focus on the input of materials and infrastructure, typically through short-term projects, which communities are unable to sustain if their ownership of the activity and/or their capacity to manage it was neglected.

An example to illustrate the possibility of drawing on local resources is that almost all groups had initiated savings among their members which were then available as low interest loans to members. A large number of group discussion participants identified the availability of these loans as an important benefit of being in the group. Prior to this individuals would have had to take loans at exorbitant interest rates from, for example, a major landowner. An example given in one group was that of repaying 500 rupees for a loan of 100 rupees. The group funds have made them less dependent and less likely to get into debt.

Each and every one of the 27 Community Groups met by the evaluation team proudly stated what their group had been able to achieve in their community, both alone and in collaboration with other Community Groups and/or with the affiliated Main Committee to solve the community problems.⁷ Their activities included both physical and socio-cultural development and included:

- establishment of group savings and the provision of small loans at low interest; printing ledgers and passbooks for the groups
- sanitation campaigns to keep their homes and yards clean and construction of drying racks for kitchen utensils
- construction of roads and paths, or their maintenance; installation of culverts
- construction of toilets
- installation of water taps
- construction or maintenance of school buildings
- construction of a pound to control stray animals
- construction of drainage channels, an irrigation channel,
- construction of group meeting hall with own resources
- various activities to prevent flooding, for example making a dyke, or collecting rice to assist families affected by flooding
- installation of *dhikki* (treadle) pumps
- construction of ponds and dams
- establishment of home gardens; collective vegetable farming on contract land
- planting seedlings

“We used to eat only chutney and roti, but after being in the group we started to grow vegetables and we now eat roti and vegetables.” (Community group participant)

⁷ Sahakarmi Samaj has detailed village profiles of each VDC that were prepared at the start of the programme. These effectively provide baseline data which could be used to make specific comparisons of 'before and after' scenarios for each community. The purpose here however is to give an overview of the trends, given that in all the communities no Community Groups existed to mobilize community action before Sahakarmi started their work. One VDC official commented on the usefulness of the profile.

- sending children to school and for immunisation
- registration of citizenship and of births, marriages and deaths
- maintaining the documentation and minutes of the group activities
- making mats for meetings
- construction of temples
- transport and installation of electricity poles and wires
- campaigning during the constitutional assembly elections (in one group rice was collected from every house and sold to generate the funds to produce flyers)
- making a rule that dead animals must be buried far from the village whereas previously they were thrown in pits near the homes of Dalits
- construction of a small ashram for pilgrims and also a tap
- cleaning the place where religious rituals are performed

After group savings and credit, roads and paths were the most highly rated as being a key benefit and/or key achievement among the 27 Community Groups met.

A Positive Change

Janachetana group was formed in 2060 (Nepali calendar) during the implementation of SAKTEE programme. There were 24 women and ten men in the group. The community was composed of Pasi, Gadarva, B.K., Brahmin, Tshetri, Magar, and Thakuri. This was a marginalized community with no electricity, access path, irrigation or vegetable farming etc. before the formation of group. During and after the group formation the community slowly started to identify and discuss different problems in the community. The group made their own rules and regulations. They started to make plans to make a path, establish savings, start child development initiatives, electrify the community etc. Both women and men started to work together. Then the group tried to establish relationships with other organizations to access resources. They planted about 400 seedlings obtained from Agriculture Service Centre; they got one lakh from DDC to make a path; they got pumps for irrigation from the Irrigation Department; Plan Nepal and FORWARD supported the landless people by forming collective farming; they started collective saving. They also solved community disputes and, were able to minimize domestic violence. They supported members to obtain citizenship. They collected saving during the Tihar Festival. They controlled alcohol consumption in the community, and conducted trainings. Now the community people are proud of the changes and development activities they have done themselves within the past four to five years.

By SS personnel

Access to external resources

The evaluation found that many Community Groups/Main Committees have accessed resources from the VDC. In many groups participants indicated their knowledge and understanding of the VDC budget and allocation process and their right to claim resources. Almost all groups stated that they were recognized by the VDCs and that they had been successful in obtaining resources from them. It was also commonly stated that whereas in the past VDC funds had been used improperly (often misappropriated by local elites) there was now more transparency in the allocation of funds. A number of groups stated that they had taken action when they were not invited to the VDC Council meeting at the time when allocation of funds was to be decided.

People are more aware of the VDCs and how to raise their voice there. ... People know that they are equal to others and as a result discrimination has decreased.

SS staff member's view of the success of the SAKTEE programme

Asserting their right to public resources

The community groups in Banke Belbhar VDC ward no. 7, 8 and 9 managed to obtain funds from the VDC council by asserting their voice at the council meeting. With the funds the groups could gravel 2 km of path leading to the community. In this community SS formed five groups in 2061 (Nepali calendar). Before the formation of groups, the relation between the households was not good and due to the lack of road access people had great difficult in movement. The previous VDC representatives did not utilize the resources properly. After the initiatives of SS, community people started to gather and discuss community issues seriously; to analyze their situation and to make plans to solve their problems. One day they seriously considered the problem of road access to the community. After analysis of the situation the Group came up with the solution to gravel the road with financial support from the VDC. Then they went to the VDC for funds. The VDC called a council meeting but did not invite the group members. Then five members from each group went to the meeting without invitation. They raised their issues in the meeting. The council was obliged to allocate 50,000 NR/- budget for gravelling the road. The group members made a labour contribution to gravel the road. Finally, the VDC Secretary and other council members came to appreciate the work of the Groups.

By SS personnel

Community Groups/Main Committees/CBNOs also sought and successfully obtained external resources from other government and non government agencies. Community groups themselves visit potential organizations to request resources. While Sahakarmi, and later the CBNOs, provide advice, the understanding is that the Main Committees or Community Groups need to take the action rather than someone else doing it on their behalf. This process of claiming resources encourages communities to recognize that they have a right to a livelihood, to drinking water, and so on and instils confidence to assert their voice.

The resources obtained include gravel for paths, access to water sources, water taps, deep bored wells, toilets, electricity poles and wire, construction of dams, livelihood-related activities, vegetable farming training, seedlings (one group made a nursery on 2 *katha* of land and sold seedlings), electric transformer, construction of temple, treadle pumps, wall calendars, revolving fund, a bridge with the cooperation of 25 Groups; job oriented trainings (farming, driving, electric), provision of agricultural tools, culverts, construction of fish pond, electric motor, insecticide sprayer tank, books, educational materials, child development centres, madrassa buildings, relief fund distribution, adult education (such as literacy classes), and legal education. Training included the topics on human rights and particularly on children's and women's rights and the constitutional assembly election.

The range of organizations providing these resources (but not consistently) to the Community groups/Main Committees/CBNOs included: Plan International/Nepal, Western Terai Poverty Alleviation Programme, Nepal Water for Health (NEWAH), Rural Reconstruction Nepal, CEAPRED, BASE, Community Forestry User Group, LWF, IDS, DEO, Social Work Institute (SWI), SOS, JJS, BEE Group, Sathi Santha, Care Nepal, SEC Nepal, Forward, Awareness Against STI, HIV and AIDs (AASHA) Programme, Samaj Sudhar, INSEC, Dalit Sewa Sangh, Simi Nepal, District Administration Office, Water Induced Disaster Control Department, Nepal Electricity Authority, Drinking Water Supply Department, Irrigation Department, Nepal Red Cross and Raman Bank.

At the same time each of the Groups had a list of activities they were unable to complete or things they were unable to change due to lack of resources. A reality is that the local government institutions are not fully functioning and there are a limited number of other agencies from which

the Groups can readily access resources. A major limitation to accessing external resources – apparent during interviews with stakeholders – is that many organizations have their own project plans, criteria and processes and do not have the flexibility or orientation to respond to the expressed needs and priorities of communities. Some commended Sahakarmi’s long term engagement and the quality of the community based institutions they facilitated. However even in areas where these institutions existed the external organisations would often establish their own groups to meet their project needs such as working with a particular segment of the population or at a faster rate.

A 2004 evaluation of the SAKTEE programme Lutheran World Federation noted that the database of organizations where resources could be accessed was inadequate. It is clear that the database is now more comprehensive but this is an area where further improvement can be made to ensure the Groups are more aware of the presence of other development related institutions in the District, but also beyond the District at the regional or national level.

During the course of the evaluation two positions became apparent. On the one hand, it was said that there should be a greater focus on local resources and self-reliance because government agencies have limited resources and there were/are only quite a small number of organisations in the District which can respond to requests by the communities to provide resources. It was felt that trainings should be provided to CBNOs to encourage them to give higher priority to local rather than external resources which was perceived to be their current focus. On the other hand, it was also said that there has been inadequate effort to identify and mobilise external resources creatively and that trainings should be provided to the CBNOs on identification and allocation of resources. This apparent contradiction may be linked to the notion of responsibilities and rights. The former asserts that people have the capacity and the responsibility to help themselves and each other whereas the latter situates the state as the primary duty bearer to respect, protect, promote and fulfil the rights of all citizens. This is not an ‘either/or’ situation (responsibilities or rights) but ‘both/and’. (See section 4.5.) The desirability of an informal mechanism for CBNOs to meet and share information was identified in discussions with Sahakarmi staff.

Conclusions

The process oriented approach of Sahakarmi Samaj is effective in facilitating the empowerment of marginalized women and men. Through the sustained and close support of the Community Educators, and with the support and the care of their fellow group members, individuals develop self confidence and self esteem – or “power within” her/himself. The training and coaching provided by Sahakarmi Samaj has increased people’s “power to”, that is, their skills and ability to do certain things. The formation of strong groups, where members feel “power with” others, has provided them the confidence to take collective action to solve their problems. A key reason participants gave for being a group member was that together they could achieve things that they could not do alone.

The approach has effectively motivated and enabled people to recognise the local resources available to them and to realise their capacity and responsibility. Many groups have thus successfully made significant changes in their situation through their own efforts. The groups, and the Main Committees and CBNOs have also successfully negotiated the provision of resources from the VDCs, DDC and other government agencies, asserting their voices and claiming their rights when the situation demanded it. The approach has raised people’s

awareness of their rights – to non-discriminatory practices, to land, to an education for their children, to citizenship.

4.3 Ensuring sustainability through building capacity and community led regional networks

Background

Sahakarmi's aim is to ensure sustainability of capacity and people's institutions. This is to be achieved by facilitating processes and training which will increase marginalized people's awareness and knowledge, build their information base, and develop/strengthen the skills necessary for them to analyse their situation, determine options and formulate action plans, thereby increasing their access to and control over the resources needed to improve the quality of their lives. Sahakarmi staff facilitate intensive and extensive training and coaching with the Community Groups, Main Committees and CBNOs to build critical analysis and understanding of rights and responsibilities, as well as what is needed to build and maintain strong organisations.

Objective: To enhance the leadership skills of the community group members, and especially develop the community facilitator skills in each group so that they would themselves lead their group after SAKTEE exited the community educators from their VDC.

Findings

Group formation

Interaction with members of Community Groups, Main Committees and CBNOs during the evaluation indicated the efficacy of Sahakarmi's approach and process in group formation and strengthening. Both women and men members of all castes/ethnicities were articulate and confident in expressing their ideas and feelings. A useful comparison and measure of success is provided by contrasting the situation in three new groups in Sahakarmi's current programme visited by the external evaluator. In these newly emerging groups, now three to four months old, many of the participants, particularly women, were unable to speak their name due to shyness and embarrassment. In mixed groups of Pahadis and Tharu, most of the Tharu participants were silent, whereas in mixed groups in the SAKTEE programme area people of both the so-called 'higher' and 'lower' castes were able to speak confidently.

Sahakarmi has a clear process for forming and strengthening groups which is effective. Of the 27 community groups which were randomly selected across six VDC areas all were still functioning.⁸ Similarly, all six Main Committees and all three CBNOs were operational. There was however a spectrum of strength and vitality, with some Community Groups, for example, maintaining their saving and credit activities but not initiating new activities, while other groups were vigorous and proactive.

At the beginning people said that they were being robbed of their time by going to meetings; now their mutual relationship has become very strong; now they have good

⁸ This success rate can be compared to that of the earlier UMN Surkhet project (1992-1998) which was the forerunner to the SAKTEE programme, and to the approach and methodology further developed and refined by the Sahakarmi Samaj. An evaluation of the Surkhet project in 2000 indicated 30% of the groups were sustained. (Doherty, Paul (2000), "So what can we say about the Surkhet Project: Findings of an Impact Review on UMN Rural Development Department's Surkhet Project (1992-1998)". UMN, Nepal.

relations between different VDCs; now they have commitment that they will continue with their groups for ever.

SS evaluation team member's view on main impact of the SAKTEE programme

An analysis of the weaker Community Groups met during the evaluation did not identify any common characteristics or factors: some were established early in the programme, others later; some were mixed groups, others of the same ethnicity/caste/religion. They were under different Main Committees/CBNOs and therefore were facilitated by different staff. There was no correlation between a weak Main Committee and weak Community Groups. Even where the Main Committee was weak the Community Groups were strong. The analysis indicated that the particular circumstances of each group led to its weakness, such as: a dispute between the group and the community; displacement of the communities because of flooding which made organising difficult; the relationships in the group becoming weaker because the older, experienced people have been replaced by new people and so on. What is clearly essential for the survival of every group is good leadership and trust among the members.



Among the six Main Committees selected the Sahakarmi staff purposively selected three that were less active. Among these three there was at least one which seemed to lack energy to stimulate and support the Community Groups. To some extent this reflected what seemed to be a lack of clarity in their vision for the changes being sought within their VDC area. The “weaker” Main Committees tended to conceptualise their role as a conduit between the Community Groups and the CBNO, reflecting perhaps a lack of clarity in the planning process at the Main Committee level.

Again, the analysis of the weaker Main Committees did not reveal shared features.

Sahakarmi staff's reflection and learnings regarding what is required to facilitate strong institutions with marginalised communities included:

- facilitators must have the belief that every individual has the potential to resolve her/his problems - they just need facilitation for empowerment
- during needs identification and problem analysis the facilitators should have patience and an ability to face challenges
- the behaviour and attitude of the facilitators should be friendly so that local people can accept them easily and facilitators should establish good relations with them
- in discussions the facilitator should not have prejudged issues - s/he should be neutral
- facilitators should be up-to-date regarding the situation of organisations and communities
- during discussions and planning, priority should be given to positive aspects and strengths, rather than to drawbacks and weaknesses
- facilitators should focus on both process and product during community discussions
- there should be an open discussion of all the issues raised during interactions so that solutions can be identified
- if we allow local communities to analyse issues and problems they will be enthusiastic for change

- greater priority should be given to those people in the group who participate less
- in order to bring about positive changes in people's behaviour they should be given opportunities to practice what they learn from training
- facilitators should create an environment in which community people can achieve the outcome of their activities by themselves
- efforts should be made to mediate between the marginalised and the mainstream communities
- if the facilitator is able to facilitate the process properly, not only the marginalised but also other people can work to uplift the marginalised community
- communities should be encouraged to formulate policies, rules and regulations for their organisation that are based on their own experience, learning and capacity, rather than simply copying from others
- regular training and coaching is helpful for leadership development and every group should have the skills required for effective group management
- more priority should be given to people from marginalised communities
- there should be gender balance to make the groups more sustainable

Sustainability strategy: Community Groups

Background

In the initial year of engagement with new Community Groups, Main Committees and CBNOs Sahakarmi Samaj staff worked intensively with the groups/committees, facilitating the weekly meetings, keeping the minutes and so on. However, Sahakarmi had a clear exit strategy in place from the beginning, with a capacity building plan (see Section Two) and an expectation that the communities would be able to take over their role when they phased out. Along with step-by-step strengthening of the Community Groups, four group facilitators were identified in each Group who received sustained coaching to develop the facilitation skills needed in the group when the Sahakarmi Community Educator withdrew from the community. Federating the Community Groups into Main Committees and Main Committees into CBNOs was also a sustainability strategy as these Committees and Organizations were expected to take over the role of facilitator when the SAKTEE programme phased out.

Findings

Previously people weren't prepared to sit in groups or say their name – now these people are leading their groups; now these people are not only working in their groups but are also taking part in higher level meetings where they can put their views strongly.

SS staff member's view on main impact of the SAKTEE programme

Almost all the groups stated their expectation that their group would continue "forever". Some of the groups said that whereas previously they used to feel it was a "SAKTEE group" now they feel it is their own. The common reasons given for continuing the groups were the group provided a platform for them to discuss their problems, to fulfil basic needs and to develop their communities. Other groups spoke of how they formed the groups by themselves and that their capacity and leadership had developed and they had learned a lot of things.

Most group members stated that since the group was established they were more united; there is greater trust, a stronger relationship between the members and greater cooperation. They also stated that they have facilitators to run their groups and that the Main Committees as well as CBNOs are there to support them. The Sahakarmi staff stated that typically not all four trained

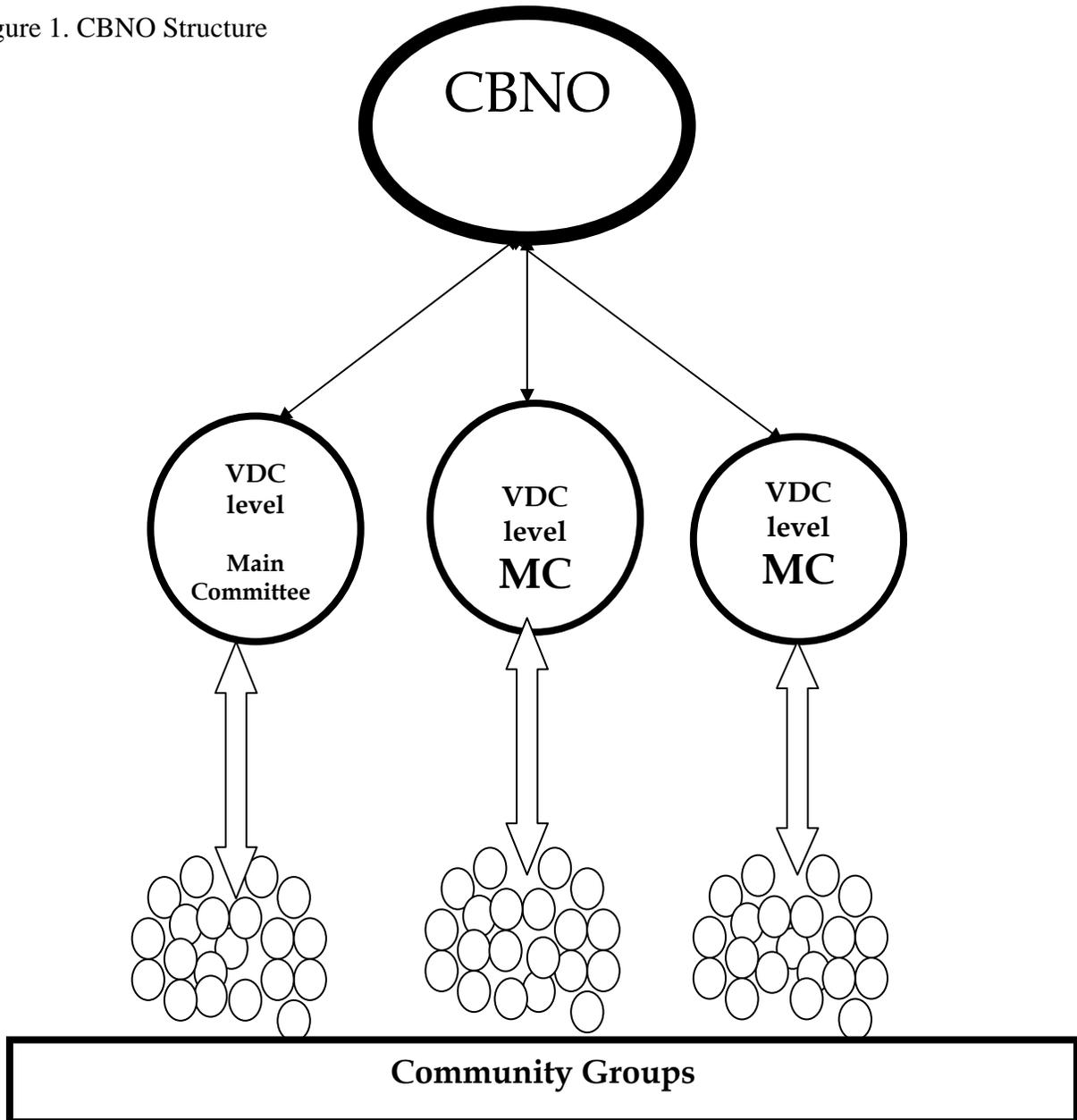
Community Facilitators remained active, with fewer women tending to put their skills into practice.

Sustainability strategy: Community led regional networks

Background

The creation of formally constituted regional Community Based Network Organisations (CBNOs) which federated clusters of Main Committees (MC), which in turn comprise federated Community Groups at the VDC level (as illustrated in figure 1), were nurtured by Sahakarmi. Sahakarmi's intention was to develop CBNOs capable of supporting and representing the Main Committees and Community Groups, linking them to external agencies and organising interventions and collective advocacy.

Figure 1. CBNO Structure



In the structure all members of a Community Group are Community Group Assembly Members. Two selected representatives of each Community Group form the Main Committee and CBNO Assembly Members. The Main Committee Executive board comprises one selected representative of each Community Group, while the CBNO Executive Board comprises 2 or 3 representatives elected by each of the Main Committee Assemblies.

Objective: To strengthen the institutions of disadvantaged and marginalized people with democratically elected, gender balanced executive committees, trained in management

Objective: To support the motivation and capacity-building skills of CBNOs to support and advance their own local advocacy effort.

Findings

At CBNO and MC levels discussion group members were asked during the evaluation to describe the processes of selection and participatory representation. In most cases they reported choosing the leaders through discussion and consensus. Only if there were two or more candidates and the members were unable to reach consensus would they vote and the candidate with the majority of votes would be endorsed. All the leadership has a two year term. Overall, Sahakarmi staff have a good understanding of the CBNO structure and linkages to the Community Groups and Main Committees. However, not all staff were clear about the finer details of the representational processes to the Main Committee and CBNO Assemblies.

For the 36 groups met during the evaluation 44 women and 64 men held the leadership positions. At the community level the ratio was 37 women to 44 men; at main committee level: 3 women to 15 men; and at CBNO level: 4 women to 5 men. Several people remarked that whereas the government has a 33% reservation for women and have been unable to achieve it, the representation of women in the CBNO bodies is high. In the Main Committees and CBNOs while women are well represented in the positions of treasurer and secretary, the position of president is held only by men at present.

Table 3. Analysis of women and men in leadership positions

Group	President		Secretary		Treasurer	
	Woman	Man	Woman	Man	Woman	Man
3 CBNOs	-	3	1	2	3	-
6 Main Committees	-	6	1	5	2	4
27 Community Groups	12	15	9	18	16	11
Total (36 groups)	12	24	11	25	21	15

The Main Committees and CBNOs expressed their ownership of the process and indicated that their organisation had been formed through their own efforts. Many stated that their skills and knowledge had increased, that they have their own rules and regulations and that they can run by themselves as “all the members are like minded and have a similar vision and a common goal”. Members understood the Committee/CBNO to be based on their needs and that it provided them

the platform to discuss, and solve, their own problems. They saw their role in decreasing discrimination, settling disputes, enhancing relationships and working for the development of the entire VDC, trying to be more interdependent than dependent. Main committees' reasons for being part of the CBNO was to get help to solve problems which they could not resolve and "to be more powerful" through being part of a larger group. "Now we can raise our voice at the VDC and the DDC."

It is clear that people see the need to be involved because they pay their own money to join the institutions; the change in their conception of development is also important. Now they are able to get resources from other organisations; they ask for support from SS but they give some funds to SS to facilitate their programmes.

SS staff member's view on main impact of the SAKTEE programme

The institutions have come to see SS in a new light; previously they thought SS should give them things; now they see SS as a partner as they try to achieve what they want to achieve; now the Community Groups, Main Committees and CBNOs are determined that other potential partners should follow their rules and regulations and only if there is like mind will they go together.

SS staff member's view on main impact of the SAKTEE programme

While expressing their desire and intention to sustain their Main Committee or CBNO the committee members also expressed their concerns regarding the cost of transport to attend meetings and workshops, the high expectations of their member groups, their limited time and subsequent constraints to meeting and monitoring the member groups, the difficulties they face trying to meet other agencies to access resources, in the distribution of these resources, and in disseminating information to the members. It appeared that some of the Main Committees were more in need of institutional strengthening than the CBNOs as the latter bodies were getting core support from a number of agencies such as LWF and SWI, as well as ongoing support from Sahakarmi's Organisational Capacity Building Team. Some of the Sahakarmi staff felt that although they were training the CBNO staff and members the follow-up practice was not sufficient to ensure that the CBNOs will be able to provide the necessary support to the networks. Others felt satisfied as indicated in the following quote.

The groups and committees are running smoothly even after SAKTEE phased out its presence there. People feel that the CBNO concept should be extended to other districts.

SS staff member's view on main impact of the SAKTEE programme

Several stakeholders from I/NGOs commented very positively on the long-term nature of Sahakarmi's strategy. Amongst the stakeholders visited there was a strong recognition of Sahakarmi's competency in organisational development. However, some felt that the CBNOs had reached a certain level but required further strengthening if they were to be able to network and coordinate beyond the district level, at the regional or national level. Some suggested that this required a clearer strategy or transition process.

Conclusion

Sahakarmi has successfully facilitated the formation of three CBNOs which effectively give voice to the concerns and issues of the community people who are poor and excluded and who comprise them. The board members of the regional networks are themselves the members, and elected representatives, of grassroots community groups. Sahakarmi has developed an effective process to develop the capacity of the members at all levels to sustain them. The process of

group/institution formation at the community, VDC and regional level has promoted democratic and participatory planning, decision making and leadership practices. It would be useful to undertake an inventory of the existing capacity of the Main Committees and CBNOs and the support that is being provided to them from various stakeholders including Sahakarmi - in view of the skills and capacities the members require to sustain these bodies.

Another possible concern is that there is no limit to the number of consecutive terms that can be served by a particular candidate. While continuing to select a strong and good leader is understandable there is a danger of leadership becoming entrenched, or of a small number of people in the group/committee acquiring knowledge and skills which could then set them above the other members and/or create dependency on them. To avoid this situation and to ensure greater equality among the group members, rotation of the leadership is important to ensure that more members develop leadership skills and have access to information.

4.4 Social transformation – equality, justice and peace

Background

Facilitation of the analysis of unequal and unjust social relations, and of processes which decrease discrimination and conflict between women and men, people of different religions, castes and ethnicities is a major focus in Sahakarmi's work.

The organization's policy is that staff live in the communities where they work. This involves renting simple rooms in the houses of local people for staff and office accommodation for the duration of the project. Staff travel around their area by bicycle.

Over the period from 1998 to 2007 Sahakarmi's documentation has reflected a growing organizational understanding of the rights based approach.

Objective: To increase the participation of women in the decision making process and create an environment for reducing gender and caste-based discrimination

Findings

Several of the stakeholders commented on Sahakarmi staff's ability to continue working in communities, even at the height of the political conflict in Nepal and in Banke District itself. A key to this success was Sahakarmi's way of working. The close relationships developed between communities and the Sahakarmi staff was identified by the staff, and by other stakeholders, as the reason which enabled them to maintain their presence and practice throughout the conflict while most NGOs had to withdraw to Nepalganj town.

Sahakarmi staff identified the following learnings with regard to working with different political/ethnic/religious communities in conflict situations:

- all political leaders and religious leaders should be involved in discussions and interactions
- facilitators should be neutral while dealing with political or religious issues; they should listen to all ideas and appreciate others' ideas and should not be influenced by particular ideologies or by particular pressure
- no activities should be undertaken in favour of a particular group

- if facilitators are able to help people take ownership of the programmes then they will be ready to work, even in conflict situations
- there should be regular sharing among the community facilitators so they can analyse the existing situation and be ready to face possible challenges
- facilitators should not allow situations to develop that have a negative effect on a particular community
- there should be flexibility in planning and implementation

Women's participation

The observed change in women's participation and their expressed experience of the change in gender roles within their families are remarkable. Numerous women spoke of the change within themselves and within their families. In many of the discussions with the Community Groups women related the changes in what they are able, and allowed, to be and to do. Women described how whereas before they would face a beating, scolding or abuse if they participated in activities outside the home now they are supported to do so. Women's participation in leadership of the Groups is discussed in section 4.3.

Women used to cover their faces; they couldn't talk to their father-in-laws; now males and females participate equally to solve community problems.

SS evaluation team member's view on main impact of the SAKTEE programme

Pateshwori became a community leader

Pateshwori is from the most marginalized community of Mangata. This community were very excluded to the extent that they could not talk in front of others.

Sahakarmi implemented the SAKTEE programme in this community in 2062 (Nepali calendar). Initially, when the facilitators went in the community to discuss their problems the people were not at all interested and they continued with their begging profession. They said many organizations had come there to make groups, but they hadn't taken part. So they just asked for money from the programme. During the meetings and discussions, the facilitators met Pateshwori. Initially she was shy and did not talk with them. However, because of their continuous effort to listen to and discuss their problems, slowly people started to gather and listen to the facilitators. The number of participants increased and Pateshwori also participated in the meetings regularly. Then a group was formed in their community and they discussed their problems. They discussed alternatives to the begging profession. They started to make a plan and to work accordingly. Pateshwori selected groups to take trainings conducted by the SAKTEE programme. After the training Pateshwori's level of confidence improved. She said, 'the training made me able to facilitate interactions. Now I can conduct group discussions'. Now, Pateshwori has become the leader of Janaekata Bikas Samaj which is the umbrella organization of 101 Community Groups groups and 7 Main Committees.

She is very regular and punctual at meetings. She raises issues of Mangata in different meetings and workshops. She attended a meeting held in Kathmandu on 'food rights' and raised questions and gave briefings about the situation of the Mangata community. After the meeting, the participants showed their sympathy to her, but she said that simply giving some money to her would not improve the situation of the entire Mangata community. Now she is able to lead other communities too. She is determined to make changes in her community and says, 'it may be difficult and it may take time but I will not be depressed as I work to change the community'.

SS personnel

Women, and men, described the changes in men's behaviour in sharing the responsibility for the cooking, cleaning utensils, taking the children to school, as well as now sitting in mixed gender

groups and discussing issues and making plans with women. Many said that the relationship between wives and husbands had improved. One group member stated: “Previously even if someone saw a husband beating his wife next door they did not care. Now they are more concerned about what is happening to others around them”.

Discrimination in terms of gender and different family roles has decreased: ... people have started registering births, deaths, marriages and transferring property to women.

SS evaluation team member’s view on main impact of the SAKTEE programme



Decreasing ethnic/caste/religious discrimination and increasing social cohesion

Background

Sahakarmi’s approach is to include poor people from the same geographical community in the one Community Group regardless of their different gender/caste/ethnicity/religion. The rationale for this inclusion of difference is that, through their interactions within the group, the social and cultural hierarchies created by gender, caste/ethnicity and religion will be decreased as mutual trust and cooperation grows. People who are marginalised face

discrimination in their day-to-day life in mixed communities – when collecting water, visiting people’s houses and so on. While in one-to-one interactions it is difficult for so-called ‘lower caste’ people to speak in front of ‘higher’ caste people, the group provides the opportunity for them to find their voice and to discuss their experience.

Findings

Evidence in support of this approach was found during the evaluation process. There were numerous mixed groups where women and men people of different religions (Hindus and Muslims), castes/ethnicity (Tharus and Pahadis) were actively engaging with one another. They spoke of eating and drinking together - whereas this was previously taboo - and joining in each other’s religious festivals and ceremonies. They expressed their experience of mutual cooperation and of the decrease in discrimination in their communities.



“At Dashain, Tihar and Holi the Muslim people participate and even receive tika and similarly the Hindu people participate in the Muslim festivals such as the festival of Tajiabara. We participate in each others marriage festivals.” (Community Group members)

I Enjoy Group Dashain Tika in Rajena

Ramjanaki Group was formed in 2055 (Nepali calendar) in Rajena VDC ward no. 8, under Tribeni Bikas Samaj. This group is based in the Tharu community. Before the formation of group this community was ruled by a few powerful people and the majority of the people were very marginalized. The Ramjanaki Group started their efforts by constructing a Ramjanaki temple in the village. They conducted a cleaning campaign in the community for sanitation. Then they gravelled the path with resources from the VDC. The members were encouraged by the result of their work and achievements. On the other hand, those people who used to lead the VDC started to criticize the group.

The group members went to the Survey Department in an effort to get back their land which had been seized by others. After continuous effort they were able to get back some of their land which the group decided to use as a plant nursery. To obtain seedlings the group were able to get R/- 105,000 from the West Terai Poverty Alleviation Fund in three installments. Slowly, people around were impressed by the initiatives of the group. Three more groups were formed in the surrounding communities. Now the group is more powerful in the community. The groups have conducted many activities in collaboration with others by mobilizing local resources and approaching external resources and everyone has started to appreciate the work done by the groups.

The group has organized a Dashain Tika receiving programme to enhance the relationship among the community members. Members from other groups also have been participating in this collective Dashain Tika programme. Even though the Tharu community does not receive Tika in Dashain, it has now become a common festival. This year they also organized the Group Dashain Tika program. They always invite the facilitators too. So it has become a habit for me and now I enjoy Dashain in Rajena VDC.

SS personnel

There are many kinds of development initiatives but they generally don't result in this kind of attitudinal or behavioural change.

Reflection by the external interpreter for the SAKTEE programme evaluation

Some stakeholders suggested that mobilizing people of the same ethnicity/caste with their particular experience of discrimination and exclusion could potentially lead to more focused advocacy and political pressure for change. The elimination of discrimination and injustice will not result from *either* the formation and mobilization of mixed groups *or* of groups of people of a single ethnic/caste, but rather from *both/and*; that is, there is a need for both mixed and single ethnic/caste groups to achieve similar outcomes of equality and justice, but through different means or processes.

Sahakarmi staff learnings regarding the facilitation of so-called 'lower caste' communities and the religiously/culturally marginalized include:

- It is important to involve both so-called 'higher' and 'lower caste' people during meetings, discussions and trainings, and to analyse common issues
- Priority should be given to focusing issues of discrimination
- Role play, drawings and exercises are useful mechanisms for addressing the theme of 'untouchability'
- Creative opportunities should be found to involve so called 'lower caste' people in different public occasions
- So-called 'lower caste' people should be informed about the laws on discrimination, helped to analyse these laws and they should be made aware of their different kinds of rights

- An environment should be created in which people can appreciate each other's religions and social values and a creative environment established so that they can sit together and eat together during local festivals
- Responsibilities should be assigned equally in public affairs
- Discussions, workshops, and interactions should be organised on community based issues
- It is more important to help people to identify solutions than to give them solutions

Groups gave many examples of increased social cohesion and mutual support such as:

- "If there is a marriage or death in any member's family, each member must give at least one kg of rice."
- "We help out with domestic activities and agricultural work if a member has problems."
- One group described how they had helped and supported a woman in their community who attempted to commit suicide to go hospital.
- In Raniyapur Bardi stated that, before, if they needed help they had to go to Nepalganj to meet other Bardi people who they could ask for assistance. Now, because of the group they do not feel so lonely and if they need help the group members will help them.

Justice and governance

People said that previously they lacked confidence to speak, but now they can share their thoughts and feelings openly; they give priority to group achievements rather than personal achievements. They know that in any situation they will struggle for their rights and development. Their power to challenge those who oppose them has been enhanced.

SS evaluation team member's view on main impact of the SAKTEE programme

The Groups gave many examples of being able to challenge and resist oppression and injustice by rich and powerful land owners, local government officials etc which they had previously endured because they were now organised and felt they had power. One example to illustrate this was a Community Group who raised funds so they could prevent further river soil erosion. Within 2 years the Group got 2 lakh from Water Induced Disaster Control Department, and 4 lakh from LWF. With the labour contribution of the community the Group planned to make a dam to stop flooding and soil erosion. However the CPN Maoists demanded a tax of 20 percent of the total budget. The people refused to give the 20% arguing that this was an initiative for the community to save them from floods. The CPN Maoist eventually accepted this and then also supported the Group.

Other examples were:

- (i) Previously landlords used to be violent and abuse people – for example, by shaving people's heads or ripping their clothes if the men wore long trousers; now the landlords are less powerful because of the groups and the people are united.
- (ii) Community Groups tackled labour rights violations such as exploitation and non-implementation of minimum wage provisions and discrimination in wage scales and providing food as payment for labour at unfair rates.
When the landlord said he would only give 50 rupees, two Groups said they would only do the work for 120 rupees. They got the wage they demanded. In another case two Groups got together and decided to fix their labour rate. The group members said that they would not work as builders labourers for less than 120 rupees whereas previously they were getting only 80 rupees. They also negotiated better working

hours. Before if they were slightly late they lost the whole days work, now they work from 7am until the evening.

- (iii) Pressurising land owners to give land for public roads and paths
“We made a path with seven other Groups but it was complicated. The land belonged to different landlords who acted against us and a police case was taken against us. Eventually the leaders realised the path was very important for the community and dismissed the case. If we collaborate we can do activities according to the will of the people. If we collaborate then we can even elect the VDC chairperson and achieve anything.”

Similarly the Groups had negotiated with or confronted local government officials over, for example:

- (iv) Access to the VDC resources which had previously been controlled by elites
- (v) Collusion in fraudulent or non-transparent land registration processes with land owners

Originally the land tax was 70 rupees. Then the VDC council and political leaders increased the tax to 130 rupees per bigha if the land owned was between 1-3 bigha. However, if a person had more than 3 bigha s/he did not have to pay the increased tax. This policy was clearly in favour of the landlords. Later on the Main Committee pressurised the VDC to decrease the taxes. All the Main Committee members went to the VDC meeting and raised their voice and said they would not accept the increase. The meeting continued for 3 days and finally they were successful. The tax was not increased.

- (vi) Citizenship registration without charge whereas before people did not know the regulation and had paid bribes or fees.
- (vii) Decisions made by the local government which adversely affected the local people.

The DDC gave a road construction contract to a contractor who employed Indian labourers because they were cheaper at 100 rupees/day. The Main Committee went to the DDC and the contractor and demanded they give opportunities to local labourers for 150 rupees/day wage. They said they would not allow the work to start. They snatched the tools from the Indian labourers and did not allow them to work in the project site. Finally the contractor had to change his decision and the Committee were successful.

Many Community Groups as well as the Main Committees and the CBNOs stated that they were recognised by government officials and were invited to the VDC meetings. In turn, they also invited government officials to their meetings. Some also reported that the representatives of political parties recognised them.

Sahakarmi staff and some Groups reported increased enrolment of children and improved quality of education where the parents had organised as a result of raised awareness on the importance of education in the Groups. However the very small sample of schools visited by the external evaluator did not confirm this. In the three schools visited the situation was very bad. Few students were at school, the buildings were dirty and dilapidated and the surroundings were littered with rubbish. The teachers were not of the same ethnic/religious group (Pahadi/Tharu; Hindu/Muslim) and did not speak the local language of the students. They complained that the

students did not participate and that the parents did not care. The teachers appeared to believe that they had no responsibility to change the situation. In these three cases they said they were not aware of the Community Groups. At the same time, the Community Groups in these 3 areas did not raise education as an issue. While this may have been an atypical sample, and the government systems are not functioning well due to the political situation it still indicates that there is more to be done with schools and education.

Conclusions

The SAKTEE programme was effective in empowering women both because of the programme's approach to working with men and extended family members as well as coaching and supporting the women themselves. The programme has also demonstrated effectiveness in decreasing conflict and tensions and transforming the relationships between people of different caste/ethnicity and religion at the local level. People have increased confidence and capacity to resist and challenge oppression and injustice by land owners and local government officials.

4.5 Democratic and participatory governance

Background

An underlying objective is that through people's familiarisation with participatory, democratic processes in their own institutions, their awareness and ability to demand just and accountable governance will be increased.

Findings

The CBNO is an exercise in participatory democracy. At each level, the Community Groups, Main Committees and CBNOs, the members described how they have selected their leaders according to the agreed procedures and processes. Members remarked on things such as the transparency of the group.

As people in the Groups have been provided information and better understood their rights, some have been able to take actions to claim these as outlined in earlier sections of this report. Asserting their demands at VDC meetings to obtain resources from the VDC budget was the most common example. It was in this area of advocacy that external stakeholders suggested that the full potential of the networks in mobilising large numbers of people to press for justice and change was not being realised. *"They are not exerting their power at the VDC and DDC level."* Some stakeholders perceived the issue to be weak linkages to human rights, the assertion of claims and missed opportunities for empowerment

There are a number of tensions and issues here.

1. All stakeholders commented on Sahakarmi's strong relationship with the communities. *"They are with the people and the people are with them. They maintain a low profile and are clear about their work."* Sahakarmi keeping a low profile and steady focus on the communities was a repeated comment. These qualities were regarded as important to Sahakarmi's success in empowering people and building community capacity and institutions.
2. At the same time some suggested that Sahakarmi needed to raise its profile in order for it, and the people it worked with, to advocate effectively for structural change. It was felt

that Sahakarmi has a deep understanding of the situation but was not sufficiently disseminating information to influence change.

3. There is also the tension between emphasising people's role and responsibility in bringing about change by themselves and not being dependent on external actors versus the emphasis on people claiming their rights and putting pressure on the government at all levels, as the primary duty bearer, to be fair and just in respecting, promoting, protecting and fulfilling the rights of all citizens.
4. At present local government is dysfunctional after the prolonged conflict and it is not clear what the state, DDC, VDC system will be. There is quite a high turnover of some local government officials and few accountability mechanisms for employees in schools etc. However, even with this scenario government resources are being allocated and policies – or lack of them – are impacting on people's everyday lives.

In response to some of these issues Sahakarmi staff argued that there is a spectrum of advocacy and working for change which does not necessitate starting with mass demonstrations, strikes or more visible action. They gave examples of people raising questions to government officials regarding the use of resources. VDCs are angry and complaining to Sahakarmi that people are raising questions. At the same time, VDCs have started to consult main committees and Community Groups. Sahakarmi regard people following procedures and putting forward their just demands in a formal way as also implementing a rights based approach.

While appreciating Sahakarmi's "democratic approach for the sustainable development of communities" the DDC Local Development Officer suggested that there is now more space for organisations such as Sahakarmi to develop mechanisms and work closely with the VDCs to improve the utilisation of VDC resources. Now that it has established a solid foundation and understanding for mobilising and empowering committees to work together at the local level Sahakarmi could now further develop its strategy to engage with government agencies and officials to help them be responsive to the different Groups. Sahakarmi could also look further at systematic linkages and interactions between the Groups and government agencies which would promote the development within these agencies of more effective, long-term and democratically accountable resource delivery systems. Sahakarmi is well positioned to document, with the affected people, the evidence required to influence policy development and change in favour of poor and marginalised people.

It is important that all Sahakarmi staff know, understand and can provide correct information on the key government laws, policies and relevant government ministries/departments which are pertinent to the situation of the people they work with (land, labour, disaster relief etc). People must know their rights if they are to be able to claim them.

Sahakarmi could further develop strategies with Groups regarding how they can use the power of their numbers to get representation of marginalized people on VDC councils, and to advocate for the establishment or representation on various committees such as: the forest user committee; irrigation user committee; drinking water user committee; school management committee; health post management committee; and church/temple management committee.

Conclusions

The CBNOs, at a regional/inter-VDC level, are genuinely rooted in local Community Groups and can articulate the concerns of poor and marginalised people. Sahakarmi should further

develop strategies to promote linkages and the responsiveness of government agencies to the Groups. In addition it can strategise with the CBNOs and Main Committees to use the power of their numbers to gain representation on decision making bodies and develop linkages and network beyond the District to work for structural change in favour of the poor.

While not changing its fundamental position - that it is the people themselves who should be informed, learn their rights and mobilise to act on their own behalf - Sahakarmi could reflect on how it manages the tension between its emphasis on self-reliant development with the need to address the structural causes of disadvantage which stem from unjust laws and systems and which require broader mobilisation of people to press for policy change.

Sahakarmi should further develop its capacity to conduct participatory action research and to work with the affected people and like minded networks to utilise this evidence to influence policy makers and those implementing programmes.

4.6 Putting organizational values into practice

Background

Sahakarmi Samaj identifies its main values as:

peace and justice; integrity; equality, interdependency, commitment, democratic practice, mutual respect, environmental sensitivity, creativeness, improvement in quality of life and understanding of rights and duties

Sahakarmi's strategy and process have aimed to reflect and put these values into practice.

Findings

A number of stakeholders remarked on Sahakarmi's integrity in terms of the organisation's "simplicity", "transparency", "willingness to share their knowledge and resources", and their "commitment to live and work with the communities". The values are evident in Sahakarmi staff's practice. One example is the successful efforts of staff to learn local languages as many people in their work area do not speak Nepali. As mentioned previously, staff living simply in the communities they work with and travelling by bicycle reflects the integrity of SS approach. Modelling of respectful behaviours was seen within the organisation, between management and staff, and also between the staff and communities.

During the evaluation field work the Sahakarmi staff modelled equality in the way they facilitated discussions, giving all people respect and an opportunity to speak, and in the way they related to women and men, and people of different religions, castes and ethnicity in the villages.

All the staff were able to articulate Sahakarmi's process and way of working and were clear about the objectives of the programme.

While women are quite well represented at the field level, their representation in senior positions in Sahakarmi Samaj remains low. Similarly the inclusion of people from different religions /ethnicity/caste is not as representative as desired by Sahakarmi itself. This in part reflects the difficulty of being able to find people of these backgrounds with the experience required.

A cursory look at the cost of the SAKTEE programme from 1998-2007 suggests substantial achievement with a relatively modest input.⁹

Sahakarmi had a clear plan and time frame to work for at least 4 years to complete the process with every marginalized community included in the programme, starting with the formation of community groups up to establishing and strengthening the CBNO. There were a number of procedures in place to ensure programme quality and organisational accountability. These included:

- weekly meetings of the community animation team (CAT) to reflect on their weekly activities
- preparation of a weekly report by the senior community educator which is sent to the programme director
- during staff workshops, conducted every three to four months, the community educators produced a written portrait of each community group and CBNO (referred to as “Group photo”), reflecting on the quality of the activities and the leadership and planning skills, commitment and participation within the group/committee.
- the CAT prepared semi annual group monitoring and annual household monitoring reports to monitor the progress of community groups and households
- to address programme concerns the Senior Community Educators and Senior Management staff met together between staff workshops meetings to discuss programme progress and the effectiveness of team management.
- the programme director prepared a semi annual and an annual programme report, as well as reports as per the request of the donors.
- monthly financial reports were prepared and sent to Sahakarmi Samaj and the respective stakeholders.
- before exiting the VDC the community animation team performed an exit evaluation.
- Sharing SS reports and documents with stakeholders, including the annual reports, financial statements and success stories.
- (a community newsletter is also produced in which the Community Groups and Committees write about themselves and their activities.)

This thorough, ongoing process of review, reflection and planning was instrumental in achieving high levels of accountability by the staff and the organisation as the various components were taken seriously by all involved. The process ensured a focus on progress of the Groups and the vulnerable households. In the latter years of the programme Sahakarmi introduced the participatory “Spider Analysis Tool” on a six monthly basis. The tool helps Groups to identify their own indicators of capacity development (such as leadership, resource utilisation, planning

⁹ The total budget from both LWF and UCN for the 10 year period was 53,150,076 NPR or 527,645 Euro. The cost can be further broken down quantitatively but its usefulness is highly questionable as it is not clear what kind of effectiveness is being measured. With that caveat, in terms of direct “beneficiaries” there is a total of 355 groups (334 Community Groups, 18 Main Committees and 3 CBOs) so the average cost per group is Euro 1,486. As the average group has 20 members (that is a total 7,100 members) this means a cost of Euro 74 per member. In terms of indirect beneficiaries each member/family has an average of 6 people per household (42,000) who stand to benefit from the activities such as the savings and loans, home gardens, improved relationships within the family, improved sanitation, increased attention on children’s education and so on. The population of the entire villages stand to benefit from improved road/path access, water supply, electrification, social cohesion, management of livestock etc implemented by the groups.

and participation). The Group is then asked to score their achievement on each indicator and to justify the score, thus assessing the strengths and weakness in their capacity.

To ensure effective management of the work over the ten year period the Sahakarmi senior management adjusted the organisation's staffing structure as needs emerged in the field or changed as the various stages of the process were passed through. For example as the CBNOs came into existence Sahakarmi reorganised to meet the new requirements of these bodies through developing the organisational capacity building section. (This aspect was not addressed in the evaluation.)

Many of the stakeholders visited described how their own programmes had been influenced through their interaction with Sahakarmi Samaj. For some agencies such as World Food Programme (WFP) and INSEC this was a consequence of their partnership with Sahakarmi on a particular project. For example, with WFP Sahakarmi became involved in "Food for Education" (FFE), a school feeding programme. Their remit was to raise awareness and motivate the parents' Food Management Committees at the school level which were largely inactive. WFP reported that Sahakarmi's work in social mobilisation was very good. Their initiative in forming a network of Food Management Committees, who got the contract from the District Development Committee Education Office to transport the food rather than a private contractor, resulted in a change in WFP policy for FFE implementation.

Agencies such as LWF, INF, INSEC and Nepal Red Cross described being influenced as a result of their exposure to Sahakarmi's programme and/or the training of their staff. For example, LWF reported modifying and applying the Sahakarmi empowerment approach to other LWF programmes in West and East Nepal. INF has adopted the community based organisational structure with the CBNO apex body but has modified the approach.

Most of the stakeholders visited expressed their appreciation of the Sahakarmi annual reports, as well as the success stories publication.

Conclusion

Sahakarmi is mindful of the importance of consistency between what the organisation says and what it does. It has worked hard to institutionalise review, reflection and planning processes within the organisation strengthen quality and accountability.

4.7 Skilled and professional staff

Background

Fourteen Sahakarmi staff involved in the SAKTEE programme remain with the organisation. Sahakarmi Samaj believes that the success of any programme depends upon the skills, attitudes and behaviours of the staff. A crucial attitude is a belief that local people have valuable experience and that their skills and capacity can be strengthened. Accordingly, the organisation invests significant time and resources in the recruitment and training/coaching of staff. A key feature of the Sahakarmi staff selection process was the participation of candidates in a 24 day intense residential training course on basic community development. The programme involved constructive feedback to participants on an individual level regarding their attitudes, behaviour, skills, etc. at the beginning, middle and end of the course. During the course the participants were

organized into teams who were responsible for cooking, cleaning, etc. as teamwork is an essential requirement for the staff when they live in the communities.

Ongoing capacity development of the staff working in the SAKTEE programme was achieved through two/three day workshops that were conducted every three-four months in order to enhance their skills and attitudes and to monitor programme progress. Staff were assisted to develop Performance Skill Development Plans. In addition SAKTEE Programme staff also participated in different trainings organized by other organizations such as Leadership Skill Development Training and Do No Harm Training.

Findings

Observation of the Sahakarmi staff involved in the evaluation and the facilitation of focus group discussions revealed that the organization has been successful in training large numbers of skilled facilitators. High levels of skill in group facilitation were consistently demonstrated throughout the evaluation process. This was reinforced by observation of three more staff facilitating Community Groups in Sahakarmi's current project. The staff demonstrated positive, respectful and equal relationships in their interactions with people from all social groups and with both women and men. Commitment and caring were also modelled by the Sahakarmi management in their

Looking back on my life

I got an opportunity to participate in a training organized by Sahakarmi Samaj in 2060 (Nepali calendar). I was a fresh MA in political science from Tribhuvan University. I used to think of myself as an educated person and that illiterate people were ignorant. I did not have much patience to listen to others and would interrupt them. I used to expect positive comments about me from others. But when I got 18 days' Basic Community Development Training from Sahakarmi Samaj I slowly began to change some of my ideas. I came to understand that every person has knowledge, skills, and experience on certain aspects but they just lack opportunities to promote their knowledge and skills. Then I came to know that I had knowledge and information only from books. After listening to others I realized that every individual has ideas, knowledge and skills.

I changed my understanding and perspectives on development. I came to know that people are poor due to lack of opportunities and the environment – in that the government did not provide the opportunities for them. I learned the skills of facilitation while working among the marginalized communities. There was an entire change in my way of thinking about knowledge resulting from the different games and exercises during the training. I came to realise that development is a continuous process. For sustainable development, change in ways of thinking and concepts are more important than physical development. I came to know that, unless the community people are aware and empowered, development is just impossible. If given opportunities and the environment every individual has a lot of potential. Now I am working with Sahakarmi with a better understanding of, and skills for, development learnt from the SAKTEE Programme. My main learnings from the programme are:

- Individuals should not think of themselves as ignorant because everyone knows a lot
- If given opportunities every one is able to take a leadership role
- There is power in unity/organization so there should not be discrimination
- Self empowerment is real development.
- Identification and analysis by ourselves is essential for sustainable development
- For real development we should not be dependent on others

SS personnel

interactions with all staff, as well as between the staff throughout the evaluation. Despite long days (7am to 10pm) not one of the staff shirked their responsibilities or complained.

Sahakarmi has been remarkably successful in retaining staff from the SAKTEE programme. This includes staff based in the field in the current programme, as well as the continuation of the Sahakarmi leadership. The case study illustrates the personal attitudinal and behavioural change that Sahakarmi aims to facilitate in its staff.

Conclusions

Sahakarmi's investment, and success, in its staff selection process and ongoing capacity development is critical to its capacity to facilitate participatory and empowering development processes in communities.

An area of need is for the organisation to further develop its capacity to develop theory from its practice. Specifically, to conceptualise and contextualise Sahakarmi's work and approach in the current development discourse, to articulate their theory of practice and to disseminate this. This was recognised by others. Consistent with the comments from several of the external stakeholders one NGO worker stated:

“Sahakarmi has done something very important to empower local communities when compared to other NGOs who work project by project”.

Another said:

“The Sahakarmi Samaj process can be a Nepali model. This needs further analysis.”

5. Commendations and recommendations

- (i) Sahakarmi has been successful and should continue its current process to identify the poorest and most marginalised communities. Sahakarmi should continue to explore how to work effectively with the most excluded, transient communities.
- (ii) Sahakarmi should continue its current processes of group work, individual and family coaching, and organisational development.
- (iii) Continue the programme's approach to women's empowerment in working with husbands/fathers/brothers and extended family members, as well as coaching and supporting the women individually and in groups.
- (iv) Continue the current approach to addressing conflict and tensions between people of different caste/ethnicity and religion at the local level and working with mixed groups. At the same time, strategise more in relation to policy/advocacy so that the communities themselves are able to work more on their distinctive issues. This could involve, for example, linking Community Groups with shared, specific issues across Main Committees and CBNOs to maximise the power of the network and/or link members of particular excluded groups to the other networks/agencies working on their specific issues.
- (v) Continue the formation of community led regional networks to give voice to the concerns and issues of community members who are poor and excluded.

- (vi) Conduct an inventory of the existing capacity of the Main Committees and CBNOs and the support that is being provided to them from various stakeholders including Sahakarmi in view of the skills and capacities the members require to sustain these bodies.
- (vii) As already acknowledged, establish an informal mechanism for CBNOs to meet and share information.
- (viii) Consider limiting the number of consecutive terms that can be served by a particular committee member.
- (ix) All the staff should have a clear understanding of the Sahakarmi philosophy, and the issues and tension between strengthening and promoting people's capacity to take responsibility for their lives and to maximise what they can do with what they have – and at the same time - empowering people to claim their rights from the state (as the primary duty bearer) for access to and control over resources, and just and accountable governance.

In particular, encourage further reflection and debate among Sahakarmi staff as to whether (a) the emphasis on individual and community responsibility and self-reliance is (b) constraining a full understanding that poverty and discrimination result from violations of human rights, and asserting that it is the responsibility of the government to respect, promote, protect and fulfil the rights of every individual and hold them accountable to address the structural bases of injustice and inequality which stem from unjust laws and systems.

- (x) Strategise with the CBNOs and Main Committees and their allies on how to harness the power of their numbers to get representation of marginalized people on VDC councils, and to advocate for the establishment and/or representation on various committees such as: the forest user committee; irrigation user committee; drinking water user committee; school management committee; health post management committee; and church/temple management committee, and to develop linkages and collaborate with networks beyond the District to work for structural change in favour of the poor.
- (xi) Further develop and share the database of agencies which the Community Groups, Main Committees and CBNOs can approach to obtain resources and lobby agencies at all levels to support the implementation of the communities' plans.
- (xii) Sahakarmi should further develop its strategy to directly engage with government agencies and officials to enable them to be responsive to the different Groups.
- (xiii) Sahakarmi could also further develop systematic linkages and interactions between the Groups/Committees/CBNOs and government officials/agencies which would promote the development within these agencies of more effective, long-term and democratically accountable resource delivery systems.
- (xiv) Further expand the knowledge and understanding of Sahakarmi staff on the key government laws, policies and relevant government ministries/departments which are pertinent to the situation of the people they work with (land, labour, disaster relief etc) and disseminate this information in appropriate forms to communities so they know and can claim their rights. This knowledge should be systematically built and shared more broadly within Sahakarmi beyond the Training and Consultation Unit.

- (xv) Sahakarmi should further develop its capacity to conduct participatory action research and to work with the affected people and like-minded networks to utilise this evidence to influence policy makers and those implementing programmes in favour of poor and excluded people.
- (xvi) Sahakarmi should continue its investment in staff selection and capacity development which is critical to its organisational capacity to facilitate participatory and empowering development processes in communities.
- (xvii) Sahakarmi should devote the necessary resources to conceptualise and contextualise its work and approach in the current development discourse, articulate its theory of practice and to disseminate this within the Nepal and internationally.

Annex 1. Community based network organisations

Community based network organisations (CBNOs)	Main Committees	VDC areas
Tribeni Bikas Samaj	Sangam Bikas Annapurna Namuna Ekata Samaj Sewa	Rajhena Ganapur Samsheganj Kohalpur Manikapur
Janajagaran Samaj	Shrijana Shristi Samaj Bikas Jana Bikas Jana Shakri Samaj Utthan Janahit	Sonpur Raniyapur Belahari Saingaon Belbhar Paraspur Indrapur
Jana Eketa Samaj	Kanchanganga Samaj Sudhar Jana Kalyan Jana Sewa Jan Vikas Gyan Jyoti	Holiya Betahani Hiriminiya Udayapur Piprahana Bhawanigapur

Annex 2. Evaluation Terms of Reference

The Social and Health Education Project

Evaluation of the SAKTEE Programme of Sahakarmi Samaj

*

Sumative Evaluation of Phase 1 of the South Western Nepal Community Governance Enhancement Programme

*

Process Consultation Support to SHEP, ICCO & Kerk in Actie and Sahakarmi Samaj

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Background

For more than ten years, the Nepalese NGO Sahakarmi Samaj has been conducting a group capacity building programme in Banke District, Mid-West Nepal. This programme – the SAKTEE Programme – was the first such initiative undertaken by the organisation. In accordance with its a newly developed strategic plan, and in partnership with SHEP and ICCO & Kerk in Actie, Sahakarmi Samaj is currently initiating a related programme – the South Western Nepal Community Governance Enhancement Programme – in Bardiya and Kanchanpur Districts. As it does so, it is seeking to apply learnings arising from the previous programme.

On behalf of the partnership, a consultant is to be appointed by SHEP to undertake three related functions:¹⁰

- a) To be external facilitator of a participatory evaluation of the SAKTEE Programme
- b) To be external evaluator of Phase 1 of the South Western Nepal Community Governance Enhancement Programme
- c) To be process consultant to SHEP, ICCO & Kerk in Actie and Sahakarmi Samaj

Deliverables

a) Participatory evaluation of the SAKTEE Programme

As external facilitator of a participatory evaluation of the SAKTEE Programme, the consultant will be expected to:

- Determine a credible participatory evaluation methodology in consultation with Sahakarmi Samaj
- Devise a data collection mechanism that will facilitate clear documentation of findings

¹⁰ Whilst it is anticipated that all three functions will be undertaken by the same consultant, it is possible that they could be disaggregated and undertaken by different consultants.

- Identify and select stakeholders to be involved in the evaluation
- Prepare selected stakeholders to participate in the evaluation
- Oversee field-based data collection
- Undertake data collection with certain external stakeholders
- Facilitate the sharing of findings and the determination of learnings
- Make independent commendations/recommendations in the light of the findings/learnings, providing feedback to Sahakarmi Samaj on programme strategies and ways to strengthen and consolidate its work.
- Conduct documentation in English – (including background, methodology, implementation schedule, findings, learnings, commendations and recommendations).
- Support documentation in Nepali – (N.B. assistance will be given in this area if the evaluator is insufficiently familiar with the Nepali language)
- Identify relevant organisations in Nepal and abroad with which Sahakarmi Samaj might usefully exchange experiences of working to enhance community governance.

b) External evaluation of Phase 1 of the South Western Nepal Community Governance Enhancement Programme

As external evaluator of Phase 1 of the South Western Nepal Community Governance Enhancement Programme, the consultant will be expected to:

- Monitor the learnings that emerge from Sahakarmi Samaj’s ongoing processes of participatory learning with specific reference to the evaluation criteria set out by Irish Aid in its ‘Guidelines for Reporting, Monitoring and Evaluation of Projects funded under the Civil Society Fund’ - (see Appendix One).
- Complete a short summative evaluation report based on an analysis of these learnings in accordance with the requirements set out in the Irish Aid guidelines.
- Submit the report before the end of July 2010.

c) Process consultation to SHEP, ICCO & Kerk in Actie and Sahakarmi Samaj

As process consultant to SHEP, ICCO & Kerk in Actie and Sahakarmi Samaj, the consultant will be expected to:

- Maintain ongoing contact with each of the respective partners.
- Promote communication between the partners.
- Mentor partners in relation to fulfilling their roles and responsibilities.
- Support the integration of learnings from the SAKTEE Programme.
- Provide external validation of the ongoing participatory learning mechanisms adopted by the partners.
- Alert partners to difficulties or shortcomings arising in the programme or in the partnership.
- Facilitate exploration and resolution of any such shortcomings or difficulties.

Time and Budget Allocation

It is anticipated that up to 21 days will be required in Nepal in Year One (2007-2008). Around 10 days will also be required in the consultant's home country. In year two, around 10 days will be required in Nepal and 3 in the home country. In year three, around 14 days will be required in Nepal and 5 days in the home country. Given the charitable and justice-oriented nature of the programme, it is expected that consultant's fees will be pitched at a level that is fair for both parties to the contract. All necessary travel costs will be provided.

Person Specifications

The following qualities will be sought in the consultant:

- Experience/understanding of empowerment-focused capacity development with marginalised groups in the Majority World
- Experience/understanding of humanistic community education (Freire, Mezirow, Rogers)
- Experience/understanding of process-led development (participatory situation analysis, action-planning, plan implementation, monitoring and evaluation)
- Experience/understanding of participatory evaluation
- Capacity to contribute a balanced external professional analysis
- Experience/understanding of process consultation
- Excellent inter-personal skills
- Excellent facilitation skills
- Excellent documentation skills in English
- Capacity and willingness to travel to rural parts of western Nepal

Nepalese language skills and experience in rural Nepal would be an advantage

Contact Details

For further details, please contact...

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Annex 3. List of stakeholders interviewed

NGOs

Katmandu

Jhabendra Bhatteari	Chairperson	Sahakarmi Samaj
Yadulal Shrestha	Advocacy Coordinator	Lutheran World Federation
Pramila Ghimire	Country Programme Coordinator	WFP
Nawaraj Silwal		Social Work Institute (SWI)

Nepalganj

Ashok Singh		SBCK/ODC
Janak Giri	Programme Coordinator	Plan Nepal
Budhdhi Thapa	Mugu Programme Manager	International Nepal Fellowship (INF)
Rupa Adhikari	Banke Programme Manager	INF
Sharad Paudal	Programme Development Officer	District Development Committee (DDC)
Narahari Baral	Local Development Officer	DDC
Ramesh Shah	Local Governance Project Officer	DDC
Gopal Nath Yogi	Director	Bee Group
Puskar Pandey	Programme Coordinator	INSEC
Bharjam Chowdhury	Field Supervisor	INSEC
Kamal Baral	Programme Director	Nepal Red Cross
Raj Kumar	Field Supervisor	Nepal Red Cross

Government

DDC
VDC Secretaries
Health post and sub-health post officials
School principals/teachers

Annex 4. Sahakarmi Samaj staff evaluation team participants

Janak Raj Awasthi	Organizational Development Facilitator	Male
Tika Rokaya	Organizational Development Facilitator	Female
Hira Lal Upadhaya	Organizational Development Facilitator	Male
Dipaka Raj Bhandari	Training Facilitator	Male
Netra Narayan Regmi	Field Program Monitoring Facilitator	Male
Indra Bahadur Khadka	Senior Community Educator	Male
Bhuwanesori Pandey	Senior Community Educator	Female
Prema Sapkota	Community Educator	Female
Khadga Prasad Sharma	Programme Coordinator	Male
Bakhat Bahadur Khadka	Senior Community Educator	Male (1 day)
Ram Bahadur Tharu	Senior Community Educator	Male
Champa Singh Bhandari	Programme Monitoring Facilitator	Male
Narayan Lamsal	Democracy Facilitator	Male

Annex 5. Sahakarmi Samaj staff workshop process

Process

1. Introductions
2. What were the aims/objectives of the project? What was SAKTEE Project trying to achieve? (Present from yesterday and add)
3. What is the purpose of the evaluation? What does SS want to know? - Brainstorm

From the staff perspective: (Group work)

4. In what ways did the SAKTEE Project succeed? What was SS able to do well?
5. What are the aspects which were less good –or - in what ways did the SAKTEE Project fail? Challenges or obstacles to success?

Exploration of how SS was able to achieve its intentions.

6. What has SS learnt about what is essential to effectively facilitate the empowerment of women
7. What has SS learnt about what is essential to effectively facilitate:
 - empowerment of people of lower caste
 - empowerment of religious/ethnic minorities
8. What has SS learnt about what is essential to be able to work effectively in conflict situations and build trust – between different political groups/religious groups/ethnic groups?
9. What has SS learnt about what is essential to really facilitate critical consciousness in marginalised people?
10. What has SS learnt about what is essential to facilitate strong institutions with marginalised people?
11. Individual reflection: Remember an experience in your own work with the SAKTEE project which led to a positive change – an experience of building relationships and trust, empowerment of marginalised/powerless people.
 - who was involved?
 - What was the context – place and situation
 - What happened? Why?
 - What was the result?
 - What did you learn from this experience?

Group work discussion questions

1. Poor people do need the inputs of resources (human and material) for their development.

Sahakarmi's belief is that the provision material/financial resources is incompatible with the process it is pursuing in facilitating people to analyse their situation and to identify their own resources and capacities which will enable them to resolve the issue. There is an assumption that if Sahakarmi provides resources then people would focus on getting the resources - and view these as the solution to their problems - rather than drawing on their own capacities and understanding that they themselves are the agents of change.

Does Sahakarmi's experience confirm its belief that a process approach and the delivery of material/financial resources cannot be done by the same organisation?

2. What were the learnings – if any - during the SAKTEE project which you feel/understand have led to some modifications in implementation/ways of working/approach in
 - (i) Phase II of the SAKTEE programme
 - (ii) in the Community Governance Enhancement Programme?
 What are these modifications?

3. The rights based approach understands that people, as citizens, have a right to education, food, drinking water, a livelihood, to their culture, freedom of religion, political beliefs and so on. The state is the primary duty bearer. People’s analysis of their situation and realisation that they are citizens with rights can lead to them being empowered to claim their rights from responsible government agencies.
 - What is the fit or compatibility of Sahakarmi’s “empowerment process” approach and the “rights based approach” to development?
 - There was some criticism of Sahakarmi that the community groups and main communities were not exerting enough pressure on government which meant the many groups were not successful in getting assistance from the government agencies. People did not assert their rights but asked for help and government agencies did not oblige. Do you agree/disagree with this criticism? Why?

4. Linking community groups and main committees to the resources of government authorities, I/NGOs, UN agencies at local, district and national level is a key issue in Sahakarmi’s plan. What is the method for doing this? Is Sahakarmi proactive in setting up the resource links? Is it effective? How can the mechanism be strengthened so that the main committee can effectively influence, for example, the VDC/village council and the allocation of resources according to people’s plans?

5. Sahakarmi’s mission states that it will “*enable the marginalized people to gain control over their life*”. Essentially this is a change in the unequal power relationships between people of higher/lower castes, minority/majority, women/men. In Sahakarmi’s experience, how does the power of the marginalised increase?

6. In the selection of marginalised communities Sahakarmi includes the most marginalised as well as less marginalised people. This can result in less empowerment of the poor due to the involvement of the better off people who have a higher status/are more powerful and therefore a stronger voice in the group? Do you agree with this? Why/not?

7. Is there evidence that community groups are dependent on the main committees and on the CBNOs?

Annex 6. Guide questions for focus group discussions and interviews

(i) Guide questions for Community Group discussions

Aims

- To learn about the groups' experience of the SAKTEE project and the changes that have taken place in their lives over the past 10 years.
- Through observation of the interactions between the group members assess if these reflect equality in the relationships between women and men, different castes/religious/ethnic groups

Questions

1. When did you become a member of the group?
2. How does being a member of this community group help you?
3. How did your group help you to solve the problems that you face? If they cannot help, where do you go for help?
4. What activities did you complete using local resources? Of these, which is the most important activity?
5. What is the planned activity that your group has been unable to complete? Why?
6. What do you select the leadership of your group? How long is the term of the leaders?
7. What difference do you find in the communities where SAKTEE was working and those communities where it was not present? Give examples
8. What is the situation in your community regarding tension and discrimination between people of different ethnicity, religions, communal groups, gender and political affiliation – before and after the formation of the community group?
9. How is the cooperation among people in your community group now?
10. What kind of human rights issues do you discuss in your group? Where do you get information on human rights?
11. What activities did you complete using external resources? Where did you get these external resources? What is the process of getting these external resources? Do you have a clear idea about where you can access external resources if these are needed to carry out your action plans?
12. What information do you have about the groups in your VDC? What activities did you do in collaboration with them? What benefits did you get from these activities?
13. Do you think that the SAKTEE programme support was sufficient in your VDC? If not, why?
14. How long do you think your group will continue to function? Why? How?
15. Do you and your family get any negative impact by being affiliated to the group?

1. Ask the group members to reflect on how their lives have changed over the past 10 years?

Compare now (2008) to 1998: Is the situation better, worse or the same?

Use a scale of 1-5. One is bad, 5 is very good.
participants in the group: ___

Total number of

Change in access to or control over	1998 score	2008 score	Key reason for situation getting worse/better/unchanged
- sufficient food			
- education for children			
- literacy for adults			
- health care			
- drinking water			
- an adequate livelihood			
- an adequate wage for labourers			
- infrastructure – roads, bridges, electricity etc			
- credit available at reasonable interest			
- sanitation – toilets, cleanliness in the village			
Relationships between/ with			
Your wife/husband at home			
Women and men in the community			
People of different religions			
People of different ethnic groups/castes			
Government officials at VDC and/or DDC levels			
Other			
- Your feelings of fear/security in your community			
- Feeling that other people look down on you and treat you badly in the community			
Confidence within yourself			
Feeling that you are able to do things that you were unable to do before			
Feeling that with the members of your group you are able to change things/able to solve problems			
(For women participants) As women, feeling more able to participate in the life of the			

community			
Feelings of hope/ hopelessness			
Occurrence of domestic violence in the family			
Occurrence of domestic violence in the community			
Women's experience of sexual harassment and violence in the community			
Consumption of alcohol			
Corruption by government officials in trying to access government services			
Occurrence of people living with HIV/AIDS in the community			

(ii) Main committee discussion guide questions

- To learn about the main committee's experience of the SAKTEE project and the changes that have taken place in the lives of people in their VDC over the past 10 years.
- Through observation of the interactions between the committee members assess if these reflect equality in the relationships between women and men, different castes/religious/ethnic groups

Questions

1. How long have you been a member of the main committee? What are the benefits for:
 - you personally
 - your communityWhat is the ethnic, religious, and gender composition of the members? Do all members of the main committee usually attend all the main committee meetings? How often does your main committee meet?
2. What is the role of the main committee?
3. Why are you affiliated to the CBNO?
4. How is the membership and leadership of the main committee decided? What is the term of main committee members?
5. What is the decision making process in your main committee?
6. What is the process of making plans and implementing them in the main committee? How does the main committee distribute the resources it obtains?
7. How many groups are there under the main committee? What kinds of activities have been implemented in collaboration between the main committee and the groups? How is the relationship between the main committee and the groups?
8. What do the community groups expect from the main committee? How does the main committee address these expectations? What does the main committee expect from the community groups? Does this happen in some/all/most/few cases?
9. What information do you have about other main committees near your VDC and how/what is the relationship between them?
10. What is the process for representation of your main committee on the CBNO? What is your relationship with the CBNO?
11. What are the positive and negative changes you/the main committee have been able to bring about in your VDC? List each of these and ask how the changes happened.
12. What are you – the main committee - most proud of? Give examples.
13. What are things/problems you have tried to change but have been unable to change? What were the main obstacles or barriers to change?
14. What are the activities your main committee has implemented using local and external resources? What is the process for accessing external resources? Do you know clearly where you can access external resources?
15. What kind of plans related to rights have you prepared and could you implement these or not? If not, why?
16. What are the main difficulties you face as a main committee?
17. What is your relationship with other organisations? What activities do you do in collaboration with other organisations?
18. Which organisations is your main committee responsible to? Why?
19. What is the difference between when you directly received support from Sahakarmi and now?
20. How long will your main committee continue? How will it do so?
21. Any other comments?

(iii) CBNO discussion guide questions

Aims

- To learn about the structures, representation and governance system of the CBNOs
- To learn about the planning process of the CBNOs and how they address community issues and support them
- To learn about CBNO future plans for organizational capacity development and sustainability
- To learn about the CBNO successes and the failures/challenges they face
- To learn about their relationships with other agencies

Questions

1. How long have you been a member of your CBNO? How has being a CBNO member benefited you (i) personally (ii) your community. Give examples.
2. What is the composition of the members on the CBNO in terms of their ethnicity/caste, religion and gender?
3. Why do you think it is important to have the CBNO when there is already the main committee? What are the different roles and responsibilities of the main committee and the CBNO?
4. In the CBNO Board there are men and women, people of different religions, ethnic groups, and castes. How do you make decisions together? Do all members of the CBNO usually attend all the main committee meetings?
5. What is the term of CBNO members?
6. How is the leadership of the CBNO decided? For how long can a member hold a leadership position?
7. What do the community groups and main committee expect from the CBNO? How do you address their expectations?
8. What does the CBNO expect from the main committees and community groups? Does this happen in some/all/most/few cases?
9. What mechanism/process have you developed to ensure that the main committees and community groups are accountable to the CBNO to fulfill their responsibilities?
10. What is your relationship with Sahakarmi, other partners, other agencies – UN, INGOs, NGOs, GOs?
11. As a result of your CBNO support what changes have you observed in the communities? Give examples.
12. What are you – the CBNO - most proud of?
13. What are things you have tried to change but have been unable to change?
14. What were the main obstacles or barriers to change?
15. Please provide examples of when you mobilized local resources to fulfil the communities' needs?
16. What activities have been completed with (i) internal and (ii) external resources? Do you know clearly where you can access external resources if these are needed to carry out the action points?
17. What plans did you make to work on rights? Could you implement this or not? If not, why? What can you do if the government official refuses to help you to when you ask for assistance in meeting the needs/rights of the community groups?
18. What are the main difficulties you face as a CBNO?
19. How do you mobilize resources to sustain your organization?

20. We heard that most community groups are mobilizing community funds according to their own ideas. What are your ideas/plans regarding the effective mobilization of community funds?
21. Do you have anything else to add or comments?

(iv) Stakeholders

Village level

- Village Development Committee Secretary, Health Post/Sub-health Post, school teacher(s), Agriculture Service Centre

District level

Other stakeholders in Banke District and in Katmandu

General

1. What is your relationship/interaction with community groups/main committees/CBNOs/Sahakarmi?
2. What is your feeling about the community groups/main committees/CBNOs/Sahakarmi? Do you think these institutions have had any impact on the standard of living of the members?
3. If you compare the villages/wards where there are community groups to those where the community groups have not been established – can you see any differences? If yes – what are the differences?
4. How have the community groups increased their access to and control over resources?
5. Do you have any suggestions about Sahakarmi Samaj could improve its work?

Village level

- VDC Secretary – relationship and interaction with Sahakarmi
- Health Centre in charge – Is there a change in the number of people accessing your service since the community groups have been established?
Is there a change in the sanitation and/or cleanliness in the village?
- School teacher – Is there a change in the number of students/girls attending school?
- Agriculture Service Centre – have the community groups and/or main committee come to the agriculture service centre for information on farming methods/technical assistance etc?

Annex 7. List of SAKTEE documents reviewed

- Sahakarmi Samaj, Strategic Plan, August 2007 – August 2013
- Strategic Planning Workshop, 20th–24th August 2006
- SAKTEE Program Progress Report (January 2003 - November 2004)
- SAKTEE - ii Programme Proposal, UPCN, Netherlands, May, 2004
- SAKTEE Programme Evaluation Report, December 2003
- SAKTEE-ii Programme Proposal, The Global Ministries, Uniting Protestant Churches in the Netherlands, November, 2001
- Doherty, Paul (2000), “So what can we say about the Surkhet Project: Findings of an Impact Review on UMN Rural Development Department’s Surkhet Project (1192-1998)”. UMN, Nepal.
- Irish Aid Civil Society Fund Application March 2006, SHEP

Annex 8. Evaluation Schedule

November 6 – 24, 2008

Date	Activities
Thurs 6 Nov	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Briefing with Paul Doherty, Katmandu ▪ Mr Jhabendra Bhattarai, Chairperson, SS
Fri 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mr. Yadulal Shrestha LWF ▪ Ms. Pramila Ghimire WFP ▪ Mr. Nawaraj Silwal Social Work Institute (SWI)
Sat 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Travel to Nepalgunj ▪ Update the working context of Banke district and discuss evaluation programme
Sun 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Discussion among evaluation team and SS senior management team at SS office Kohalpur ▪ Detailed orientation to SAKTEE programme
Mon 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Meeting with SS staff (senior mgnt. and senior community educators) ▪ Discuss aims, objectives of Saktee programme; impact observed and evidence of this; understanding/position on key issues ▪ Evaluation methodology, schedule, team composition, sample and coverage, logistics
Tues Nov 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Preparation with evaluation teams re process and questions for community groups, main committees, CBNOs, key informants, non participants in community groups
Wed 12 - Sun 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Group discussions with 27 community groups, 6 main committees, 3 community based network organisation (CBNO) in Banke ▪ Individual interviews with key informants (VDC secretary etc) ▪ 7.30-10.00pm debriefing and data collation
Mon 17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Analysis with evaluation teams
Tues 18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Visit stakeholders in Banke district
Wed 19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Visit community groups of CGEST programme area in Bardiya
Thurs 20, Fri 21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Prepare preliminary report on findings
Sat 22 Nov.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Workshop to present the preliminary findings to SS senior staff and stakeholders
Sun 23 Nov.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Report writing and final meeting with SS senior management
Mon 24, 25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continue work on report