

Final Report Year 2 Rural Women's Leadership Project in Nepal and the Philippines January 2011 – January 2012

I. Introduction:

This is the final report of the “Rural Women’s Leadership project implemented by WOCAN in Nepal and the Philippines, and serves as the final report of this two-year project.

In the Philippines, the project was implemented in partnership with PAKISAMA, a national confederation of organizations of small-scale women and men farmers, fishers and indigenous peoples, and the AFA member in the Philippines; in Nepal, local partners were the national level federations of women’s groups, HIMAWANTI and Astha. This report summarizes the activities, major findings, results and recommendations.

II. Objectives and Major Activities

The following summarises the major activities and outputs of the project according to the objectives:

Objective 1:

Strengthen the capacities and competencies of rural women, of their associations at all levels and of their professional organizations so that leaders and members are able to express themselves, choose their leaders appropriately and hold them accountable, and manage their own organizations effectively.

Activity A. Build regional/country capacities to train and mentor rural women leaders

Planning meetings: In 2010, two planning meetings were held to determine common curricula, tools and approaches for the “Rural Women’s Leadership” training. These curricula and tools were then adapted to suite the contexts and educational level of participants in Nepal and the Philippines.

Nepal:

Training of trainers (ToT): In 2010, a 5 day Training of Trainers’ workshop was held for 15 women and 6 men farmers and 2 staff of partners HIMAWANTI, ASTHA and ANPFA.

Monitoring and Evaluation workshop (M&E): In 2011, an M & E workshop was conducted for 18 previously trained staff and members of HIMAWANTI and ASTHA by the WOCAN Lead trainer together with WOCAN Nepal staff. The participants reviewed their progress and revisited their action plans for the rest of the year. The participants were also provided a short refresher training to clarify their queries on the training.

Activity B: Prepare women members of producer organisations as leaders and change agents in their organizations.

Nepal:

1. Selection of leaders/change agents: WOCAN selected 15 women leaders and trained them on Women's Leadership and Organisational Change. These women were the main focal points for rolling-out of the leadership training within their groups at the local levels.

2. Leadership Training: Between 2010 and 2011, HIMAWANTI and ASTHA with the backstopping support of WOCAN provided leadership training to about 300 women from 6 districts: i) HIMAWANTI trained about 280 women in 5 districts (Kavre, Chitwan, Lalitpur, Nawalparasi and Makwanpur) and b) Astha trained about 115 women in one district (Sindhuli).

3. Sensitisation/training of women leaders:

Gender Mainstreaming and Organisational Change workshop: a three day training workshop was conducted by senior trainer from WOCAN for 18 staff and members of HIMAWANTI and ASTHA.

Thematic inputs: Three day's national level Gender & Climate Change conference organised. Policy makers and practitioners were invited to interact with the women leaders from HIMAWANTI and ASTHA. 54 women and 20 men participated.

4. Mentoring and Coaching of Rural Women Leaders:

Mentoring/coaching was at three levels:

a) *By Lead WOCAN trainer to 5 selected rural women leaders*– through workshops, field visits, one-on-one coaching; and exposure visits and linkages to global information and learning. Six different visits were made by the Lead WOCAN trainer to coach/mentor these rural women leaders.

b) *By WOCAN Coordinator to selected Rural Women Leaders:* Six rural women leaders were mentored/coached on one-to-one basis; support was provided on a regular basis to HIMAWANTI and ASTHA through workshops (on organisational vision; organisational change and gender mainstreaming and reflection); 3 day organisational visioning workshop was conducted for HIMAWANTI to review their organisational structures and identify areas for action.

c) *By rural women leaders to 10 other women* of their respective organisations in Nepal.

Activity C: Foster enabling environments within these organizations for gender sensitivity and women's leadership

Nepal:

ANFPA (All Nepal Peasants Federation) participated in the initial leadership training, as this national federation was the strategic partner for the project. ANFPA was included in the key events of WOCAN, such as the GAFSP (Global Agriculture and Food Security Programme) civil society consultation meeting supported by AFA (Asian Farmers Association) and facilitated jointly by WOCAN and ANFPA ; gender and climate change workshop; WLC (Women Leadership Circle) meetings, to enhance its gender sensitivity. Over the course of the project period, an increase of women and women leaders in ANPFA's activities was

observed; however, due to the political mandate of ANPFA (division of positions as per the political parties and most of the party leaders/decision makers are men), women leaders within the organisations still found it difficult to voice their opinions and generate access to decision making processes and positions.

Activity D: *Create a sustaining network of allies of women leaders*

Nepal:

1. Women's Leadership Circle: WOCAN initiated the Women's Leadership Circle (WLC) as a new platform to develop women's leadership, promote regular dialogue between women officials/professionals and women farmers/entrepreneurs, and to create new spaces for rural women's voices to be heard at policy levels. A network of about 20 women representing different professions, policy makers, media and grassroots/farmer women held their first meeting in January and have committed themselves to meet every two to three months.
2. Formation of a men's network: 12 men were identified and oriented to form an informal network of men to support women's leadership. Two meetings were held to organise the network.

Objective 2: Support to enhance the quality of training and policy advocacy

Activity A. *Promote the lobbying capacity and involvement of women farmer organisation leaders in national, regional and globally policy processes*

Nepal:

At the national level, 25 women farmers from HIMAWANTI, ASTHA and Women Farmer groups participated in the Civil Society Organisation consultation workshop on GAFSP (Global Agriculture and Food Security Programme) for Nepal, organised by the Asian Farmers Association. 15 women from HIMAWANTI, ASTHA and Women's Farmer organisations participated in a Gender and Climate Change workshop organised by WOCAN. At the global level, 5 professional and 4 grassroots women leaders participated in: World Food Summit, Rome; CBD-COP 10; COP 15, COP 17 and the Farmers Forum of IFAD.

Philippines:

Project participants held a dialogue with Ms. Conchita Calzado, President of a provincial organization of indigenous peoples belonging to the Aeta tribe, called SAGIBIN, which is a PAKISAMA member. Last year, she was appointed as one of the Commissioners of the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples. The dialogue centered on her experiences as a woman leader. The session also was an opportunity for some of the participants to discuss with Nanay Conching some of their members' issues on mining.

Objective 3: Document and disseminate best practices and project level training

Activity A: *Research*

Nepal:

- a. **Leadership narratives of rural women leaders:** Stories of 10 women leaders from ASTHA and HIMAWANTI were collected and documented. The stories mainly addressed four key questions: i) what motivates women to lead, ii) what are the key challenges of rural women leaders, iii) how did change happen, and iv) what are the opportunities for rural women to lead? (see attached report)

Philippines

- a. **Completion of Interviews and their Transcriptions for the Gender Responsive Outcome based Research.** During this period, the Lead Researcher conducted interviews with six members of the Trainers' Team, using the research framework previously designed. A total of sixty (60) respondents were interviewed, comprising of 45 females and 15 males. The interviewees were selected among the 239 women and 88 men involved in the training activities conducted during Year 1 of the Project. Through the purposive sampling procedure, the representation of participants from the training activities held in the 10 provinces was ensured.
- b. **Conducted a Validation Workshop for the Gender Responsive Outcome based Research.** From among the research respondents/interviewees, eight women were selected to participate in this validation workshop. The women were selected based on their significant leadership moments, challenges and enabling environment they shared during the interviews and their availability for the said activity. The validation workshop aimed to deepen the reflection on women and leadership, as well as to get lessons learned on women leaders' motivations, styles and perceived changes brought by the WOCAN training.

At the end of the session, a "Summary of Lessons Learned", based on the first draft of the Research report as well as the results of the Validation Workshop was presented by the Lead Researcher.

A research report was produced based on the results of the interviews, validation workshop and comments from AFA members. (see attached)

Activity B: *Production of two videos showing best practices and lessons learned:*

1. 20 minute film *Change Through Women's Leadership* from Nepal, capturing the motivation of rural women of HIMAWANTI and ASTHA to become leaders, who describe their challenges and the lessons they have learned (<http://wocan.org/resources/change-through-womens-leadership>)

2. 19 minute video from the Philippines entitled *Women Farmer Leaders as Agents of Change*, featuring the leadership moments, challenges and enabling factors of nine women. (<http://wocan.org/resources/women-farmer-leaders-agents-change>).

Activity C: *Final Learning Workshop* (January 23, Kathmandu Nepal).

The purpose of this workshop was to share knowledge generated by this pilot project with about 40 representatives of donor and international organizations, national policy makers and organizations engaged with agriculture and natural resource management. Three staff of IFAD's office in Nepal attended, along with Annina Lubbock from IFAD's Gender Division in Rome. The Trainers' Team and national management of PAKISAMA selected the four participants from the Philippines to attend this event: one farmer per island region (from Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao) and one Trainer. From Nepal, two farmer leaders from ANFPA, five from HIMAWANTI, and two from ASTHA were selected to attend.

The showing of the two videos was followed by a lively discussion of the participants. The women farmer leaders of both countries presented their recommendations to the participants, and put forth concrete ideas for activities and programs they would like to see implemented in the future.

III. Main Outputs

- a. Film on “Rural Women’s Leadership” from Nepal, capturing the motivation of rural women of HIMWANTI and ASTHA to become leaders, who describe their challenges and lessons they have learned.
- b. 19 minute audio-visual presentation from the Philippines, “Women Farmers as Agents of Change”, featuring the leadership moments, challenges and enabling factors of nine women.
- c. Gender and Leadership Narratives of 45 women and 15 men, who participated in the training activities last year in the Philippines. Ten leadership stories of rural women in Nepal were also documented.
- d. Research Report entitled “Women and Men Farmers as Agents of Change on Gender Equality: Leadership Moments, Challenges and Enablers”, capturing the main findings and lessons learned from the leadership stories collected in the Philippines. Similarly, 10 leadership stories of rural women were compiled in the case of Nepal.

IV. Major Findings

A. Key Lessons Learned

1. **Selection Criteria:** The selection criteria of the participants of women’s leadership training programme are key in producing and strengthening women leaders. The two year RWL Project showed that the most effective women leaders are those who: a) are already practicing some form of leadership whether it is at household, community or institutional levels, b) women who have interest and passion to lead or take leadership positions and c) women who have experienced and are aware of the “pain” they have gone through.

For example, one of the training participants, who is a focus of the film said that the biggest contribution of the training was to make her realise that the type of leadership that she was practicing (non-masculine/relational/ with empathy) was a legitimate type of leadership. The training helped her in re-affirming her leadership practice and made her more confident.

1. **Re-contextualizing the Training Methodology: A central focus of WOCAN’s training approach is locating points of behavioural and institutional change processes.**, This central theme was not articulated too evidently in the roll-out trainings by those trained to become trainers as it was difficult for local trainers to conceptualize and reproduce the more subtle and nuanced components of effective facilitation. As a result, the training had to be re-contextualized, and rigorous follow-up training and coaching from WOCAN Lead Trainer was necessary for the selected lead trainers and local WOCAN staff. In the Philippines, there was difficulty of going into women’s leadership training with participants who had not had basic gender sensitivity training. Basic concepts of gender had to be introduced before leadership itself could be.

The following points summarise what was learned about the methodology for effective implementation of the women's leadership training:

- Methodology has to be very participatory and flexible; the provision of systematic backstopping support for modification should be in place. For example, both HIMAWANTI and Astha leaders felt that the strong focus of RWL training on self-reflection and analysis at household, community and institutional levels played a key role in making them confident and informed leaders. This methodology helped women to bond and enhance their networks.
- Trainers have to internalize the process and be skilled in the methodology which focuses on the practice of reflection, understanding human relations and empathy.
- Training content has to be contextualized based upon the demand and capacities of participants. For example, the participating women leaders said that the self-reflection and story-telling method of the training programme was very powerful in making them open up, share and bond. This gave them confidence and a feeling of solidarity (sisterhood).
- Training has to be supported by rigorous follow-up training and reflection/mid-term review.
- On-site, one to one and group mentoring and coaching is very effective.

3. **Women Mentors with Transformative Agendas:** At the professional level, women that are committed to transformative agendas are effective in mentoring rural women and mobilizing them to assume and make claims to leadership positions. Having such women as mentors provides rural women with direct and easy access when in need of support.

Women's Network: A system or a platform to link professional women with rural women contributes significantly to accelerating the leadership of rural women. For example the "**Women's Leadership Circle**" a platform of professional women, women decision makers and rural women, helps in providing direct links between professional women, women decision makers and rural women. Rural women's voices can be directly heard and supported at national fora, and the professional women can provide direct information and support to the rural women.

4. **Resource Mobilization at local levels:** For both HIMAWANTI and ASTHA women leaders, their ability to mobilize the local state and non-state resources for women's issues was considered the most important outcome of the RWL project. Between 2010 and 2011, both the organisations were able to mobilize about Nrs. 400,000 (USD 4,546) from the District Development Committees, District Agriculture and irrigation office, District forest office and community forestry user groups. Though these organisations have specific policies and mandates to invest in women and social activities, in reality these allocated funds usually are expended on large infrastructure projects such as roads and micro-hydro projects.
5. **Men's role in supporting women's leadership:** Engaging men to support women's leadership was found to be very helpful in strengthening women leaders. The RWL Project showed that women's household work was one of the major factors hindering rural women in taking up leadership roles. At the household level, women found it most useful when their husbands and household members supported and understood them. Similarly, at the community and institutional levels, where men supported and gave women the opportunity to participate and lead women were found to be effective leaders.
6. **Documentation:** In every training, a process observer can be assigned. The trainers can maintain a diary; ideally, a process narrative (verbatim) should be done, as one of the outputs of the training.

B. Challenges Faced by Rural Women in Taking Leadership Roles:

Constraints were:

- **Balancing women's reproductive/household responsibilities and outside/community/professional work:** Almost all women, both rural and professional stated that balancing household and outside work was one of the key issues that hindered them from taking up responsibilities or participating meaningfully. There is limited understanding, support and encouragement at the household level for women to engage in these activities outside the home. There is a limited recognition and value of women's "reproductive role". Though workloads have been reduced with the introduction of appropriate time saving technologies, the sharing of household work by other household members is still not commonly done.
- **Time constraints and missed opportunities:** trainings, key meetings for decisions (such as VDC council meetings) etc. are usually held during the time when women are busy with their household work. The decisions in the VDC council usually end late at night. As a result, women find it difficult to seize upon opportunities
- **Restrictions in Mobility** (cultural, exposure to technologies and infrastructures): Restrictions at family level and household responsibilities were observed as major challenges. Limited skills and limited access to technologies was another challenge. Though the road networks/infrastructures have improved, women are not able to make optimum use of these. For example, several rural women stated that they were mostly late in reaching the local/district level offices or had to leave early before the decisions were made in the meetings to be home on time to cook dinner. Men have it easier as they have motorbikes, but culturally, for women even to take a ride on the back of a motorbike is not appropriate.
- **Limited networks and systematic exclusion of women:** Women have limited networks (particularly to sources/platforms related to resources and traditional/mainstream networks). They are unable to actively participate in even those few networks that they are linked to, due to lack of time, limited education and skills, infrastructure constraints, culture etc.

In the majority of networks linked to resources, such as the VDC council, women are systematically excluded from meetings because: 1) women were not properly and timely informed about the meetings; and 2) the organization of the meeting did not allow women to participate effectively. For example: the main decision makers of the VDC council do not come for the meeting on time and after they come they prolong the meeting deliberately until late at night where the actual decision takes place. Women obviously cannot stay late and hence cannot take part in the decision making processes.

- **Poor access to information and communication:** Due to limited networks, time, mobility and knowledge, women are usually deprived of information. Women are also found to be informed only at the last-minute, making it difficult for them to plan, participate and use the information for their benefit.

- **Limited access to local level resources:** Despite women-focused/friendly policies that have the provision for women- focused plans, programs and even budgets, rural women are unable to access these resources. The major reasons are: elite capture, politicization and rural women’s inability (due to a lack of information/knowledge, timely information, lack of local level preparation/planning) to grab these resources.

Besides, the above mentioned reasons, most of the women did not have financial resources for transportation to attend meetings, trainings and other events outside of their villages.

- **Recognition/acceptance of women as leaders by the community and men:** In most of the cases, women have to work very hard and prove themselves to be accepted as leaders. This is even worse for the socially excluded groups such as dalits and the economically poor women. The hard work and commitment put in by rural women leaders are seen with suspicion. For example, they are always accused of getting financial incentives from the external agencies for the volunteer work they put in.
- Recognition and space for women farmers/groups within larger men’s groups is an issue. Women within larger groups have limited access to resources and decision making processes, such as in ANFPA, where women leaders in the name of their party are not allowed to decide and access the resources as per their need and demand.
- **Weak institutional capacity at district and local levels to address gender issues:** The understanding and recognition of gender issues and the capacity to address these at the district and local levels are weak. The investments in the district and local (village) level resource persons and institutions are very poor, yet they are expected to implement major programs/activities.

C. Recommendations:

1. Re-focus on rural women’s needs and strategise to balance women’s household work and leadership roles. The Project showed that women’s household work (time) still remains the major barrier for their leadership.
2. Create spaces or platforms to link rural women with professional women by creating space in decision-making forums to share knowledge/ information and connections/networks to resources. For example, invest in the formation and strengthening of “Women’s Leadership Circles”
2. Establish a multi-donor trust fund (“Kick Start Fund”) to help women’s groups gain power and skills to tap into existing funds that exist at the decentralised level in both Nepal and the Philippines. Some of the funds, which are currently earmarked for women are either underutilised or misused for other activities. Resources for women’s groups are always insufficient to support the organisational and capacity development, to facilitate women’s

abilities to claim such resources, even when these have been created through government and donor policies.

D. Results: Some important contributions of the project.

Nepal:

- a. **Self-awareness:** One of the most important outcomes of the training was the increase in self-awareness among the trained women leaders and their respective group members, particularly on issues of exclusion and discrimination within households and at community/institutional levels. Women leaders said that they were able to identify and understand the different forms of exclusion and discrimination which helped them to better deal with it.
- b. **Resource mobilization and ability to make demands:** The training helped women leaders and their groups to be proactive and access local level resources allocated for women as well as other resources for their benefit. Women were found to be taking more interest in community level activities. As a result they became more informed and were able to actively participate, voice their opinions and make demand for services and resources.
- c. **Strengthening of networks:** With the increase in self-awareness and knowledge on community level activities, women's networks within their groups and with both state and non-state service providers became stronger. The establishment of the Women Leadership Circle (WLC) further helped these rural women to network with national level women professionals and policy makers.
- d. **RWL-Project learning integrated by IFAD's new agricultural programme in Nepal:** The design process of the Government of Nepal's and IFAD's new agricultural programme, "Kisan kalagi Biu-bijan Karyakram (KBK-Seeds for Farmers Programme - 2012) has integrated the learning from the RWL-Project. Some of the major gender components of the KBK-Programme are women's leadership building and special fund for women. This Programme has also included a separate gender advisor to ensure the mainstreaming of gender in the programme.

Philippines:

- a. The Project led to a new appreciation of gender issues by participants. The Project was PAKISAMA's first project on gender, since 2002. The trainers and participants were excited to do follow up activities and trainings. The trainings responded to the need for formation by members. They will be good to replicate and should be integrated in training activities of PAKISAMA. Leadership training courses are basic and form the foundation of PAKISAMA's strength; gender sensitive leadership trainings will make PAKISAMA even stronger. The challenge is how to come up with modules that will create impact and create a core group of trainers.
- b. The PAKISAMA regional coordinators who were also the Trainers' Team were able to bond with each other as they rolled out the training in 12 provinces. They learned about each others' hard and soft lines, feminine and masculine sides. This fostered better understanding among the senior staff of PAKISAMA, and contributed to increased camaraderie and teamwork.

- c. The training energized some PAKISAMA member affiliates to conduct more activities to respond to their women members. In Mindoro, for example, the women participants endeavored to conduct their feasibility studies on the marketing of Philippine Lemon. In Aurora, the leaders there pursued their negotiations with the Department of Agrarian Reform re: debt structuring of their loan for a rice mill. In Bukidnon, the leaders there conducted a para-legal training on agrarian rights.
- d. PAKISAMA was able to identify new potential women leaders at the national level . This is very important for the successor generation.
- e. We have sixty leadership stories, many of which can be used for our advocacies on several issues related to gender equality.

E. Moving Forward: Plans of Action

Nepal:

- a. Establish and regularly organise WLC (Women Leadership Circle) meetings between grassroots women leaders and national level women professionals and policy makers.
- b. Analyse the 10 stories of change of women leaders and publish it.
- c. Submit a proposal on gender and leadership which can help follow through activities in Nepal.
- d. Share the RWL lessons learnt in key forums such as the AWID in Istanbul; Bhutan +10: Gender and Sustainable Mountain Development in a Changing World.

Philippines:

- a. Produce a short, online version of the final research report.
- b. Produce a coffee-table book of the best 25 stories on gender and leadership, in time for PAKISAMA's 25th year in August 2012.
- c. Submit a proposal on gender and leadership which can help follow through activities in Philippines and expand the implementation of RWLP in other countries, particularly, Cambodia, Indonesia, and Bangladesh.
- d. Work with the IFAD Philippines Gender Network for follow-up activities with Pakisama.