

# Bringing Women Out of Isolation

## Women's Groups Are a Vital Tool for Economic and Social Empowerment

By Shoba Shrestha

Gender-based income inequality is present in all parts of Nepal; many studies reveal that it is one of the major causes behind gender inequality. There is evidence that when women improve economically they are in a better position to secure their own and

others' rights, and their status in the family and society is recognized. Economic empowerment promotes the self reliance and self confidence of women.

One of the major strategies adopted by Women for Peace and Democracy (WPD) Nepal is to focus on empowering women and socially excluded groups economically by forming them into groups, and providing necessary skills and

training as well as connections to credit services and markets. The organization promotes development based on gender equity and equality, free of injustice and violence against women.

WPD has three major strategies: the socioeconomic empowerment of marginalized women, the political representation of women at the local level, and advocacy and awareness. In order to improve the

Country:  
Nepal

Organization:  
Women for Peace  
and Democracy  
(WPD)



Photos: WPD Nepal and Comunidad Segura.

socioeconomic status of women, since they are the most vulnerable in Nepalese society due to illiteracy, economic dependence and lack of awareness, WPD Nepal is implementing the “Socioeconomic Empowerment Program for Women and Marginalized”, one of its most important programs.

The socioeconomic program offers training in various areas, such as reading, writing and economic literacy; the development and management of organizations; organic vegetable farming; and vocational training. The women’s groups receive small grants for income generating activities. They meet monthly as a group and periodically with all local stakeholders, which include members of the district development office, the police, the health sector, schools and universities, civil society, and the media.

WPD believes economic development brings women out of the margins of society and into the mainstream. It encourages the



use of local technology, expertise and resources to alleviate poverty through community participation.

The women’s groups have been formed through the principle of social inclusion, identifying and selecting women who are marginalized and in need, while also including a few well-off families from the target communities. Our experience suggests it is best to not exclude any neighboring family in light of their social, economic, racial background or any other reason.

By including a few elite or well-off families in the group they can become an asset, helping development by providing their coordination and support to group activities, as well as to their fellow group members. Its also encourages

a feeling of uniformity among all members and reduces many forms of discrimination.

Success depends on the strength and motivation found among those groups. We have found that working with groups rather than with individuals is more effective in terms of conducting training sessions, organizing events, and more importantly, working together as equals regardless of economic and other backgrounds. They all unite, share, discuss, and have the same voice.

We have adopted as our main principles: the broad engagement of the community members in all project activities, decentralization and improved local accountability and decision making, the consideration of the needs and demands of women and socially excluded groups, the prevention of negative social consequences and negative environmental impacts through appropriate project activities, and enhancing the appropriate management of natural resources.

