



Government
of Canada



WPD- Nepal

Rights and Economic Development for Nepal's Empowered Women (RENEW)

Project Brief -YEAR 3



Empowering women and transforming lives- Nuwakot RENEW women

Introduction

The living condition of Dalit's and most vulnerable groups of Nepal are socially, economically and politically marginalized. The state has declared the country as gender equality in all aspects but in practice it has not been followed. In the society, inequality between men and women and gender discrimination still exists. However, it is important to empower poor and marginalized women socially and economically to reduce gender discrimination and inequality between women and men.

RENEW is a fully gender equality four years' project which aims to enhance the socio-economic empowerment of women and girls, especially from Dalit and most vulnerable groups of Makwanpur and Nuwakot districts. The 5 major components of RENEW are climate change adaptation, micro- small enterprises, cooperative education, social inclusion and women leadership, human rights and gender equality. The ultimate outcome of the project will be achieved by bringing a human rights- based approach (HRBA) to economic and social growth – focusing on climate change adaptation (CCA), enhanced performance of micro/small-scale enterprises, increased access to the products and services required by these enterprises, as well as on the social empowerment of women and girls enabling them to effectively engage in their communities. The HRBA helps to promote a strong sense of community inclusion and sisterhood, which will boost women's and girls' aspirations, confidence, decision-making autonomy and leadership, and as a result women and girls can enjoy their human rights (HR). Furthermore, capacity building will enable to increase women's and girls' participation and leadership in community decision-making while better promoting and advancing human rights (HR) and gender equality.

Goal: To enhance social and economic empowerment of the women and girls particularly Dalit and most vulnerable groups in Makwanpur and Nuwakot, Nepal.



Women members of Makwanpur (Left) and Nuwakot (Right) participating in Knowledge sharing workshop

Objectives:

- To improve economic status of women and girls, particularly from Dalit and most vulnerable groups.
- To increase participation and leadership in community decision- making by women, particularly by Dalit and most vulnerable groups.
- To enhance exercising of human rights by women and girls, particularly from Dalit and most vulnerable groups.

Expected Outcomes:

1. Improved Knowledge and skills for climate change adaptation (CCA) through sustainable agriculture and environmental management among women smallholder farmers.
2. Enhanced capacity for micro and small- scale enterprise management by women and girls.
3. Strengthened skills of village women's groups to support the social and economic empowerment of women and girls.
4. Enhanced capacity among local partner NGOs to advance the social and economic empowerment of women and girls.
5. Increased community knowledge and understanding human rights issues affecting women and girls.
6. Increased agency of most vulnerable women and girls to advocate for their own human rights.

Target Area: 15 communities of Nuwakot and 15 communities of Makwanpur districts of Central Development Region (CDR).



Women members of Makwanpur in monthly meetings



Women members of Nuwakot in monthly meetings

Direct Beneficiaries:

- Total 900 Dalit and most vulnerable women and girls, 450 from Nuwakot and 450 from Makwanpur districts.
- Men and boys of the same households as the targeted women and girls
- Local stakeholders (Rural Municipality, ward members, teachers, women and youth associations)

Indirect Beneficiaries:

- The other community members from Makwanpur and Nuwakot districts
- NGOs, and community organizations
- Private sector



Local authorities of Makwanpur(Left) and Nuwakot (Right) district



RENEW Partners (Left) and Nuwakot women and men of target communities (Right)

The COVID-19 pandemic has continued to impact the lives and livelihoods of communities in Makwanpur and Nuwakot. Restrictions on movement have limited ability for communities to gather in person for training, meetings, and community decision-making. The lockdowns and restrictions have been fewer and farther between in this reporting period but have especially created challenges for women engaged in the informal sector which has been interrupted due to lack of access to markets and less access to inputs. There has been less impact on our programming activities this past year and trainings and activities have been implemented largely as planned, allowing us to catch up on some areas such as the facilitation of VWG savings and credit schemes and acceleration of income generating activities. With three years of managing with COVID-19 impacts, we have observed that participating VWG members have continued to

develop their digital literacy and communities overall have become more digital friendly. Our ability to communicate with local mobilizers and VWGs has continued to improve in this year which contributed to our ability to make progress on results despite continued limitations on in-person meetings.

Updates to Gender Analysis

Nepal continues to have one of the highest rates of child marriage in Asia, with 33 percent of girls marrying before 18 years and 8 percent married by age 15. Among boys, 9 percent marry before the age of 18. This situation worsened during the pandemic, as children were pushed out of education and families faced increased poverty. Reported cases of rape continued to sharply increase in 2021, but the police were often reluctant to register cases and investigations were frequently ineffective, resulting in widespread impunity for sexual violence. Following Nepal's Universal Period Review, the government began consultations to update the criminal code to better safeguard the recognized right to abortion. In relation to RENEW, this highlights the importance of continued focus on education and sensitization for Human Rights, especially for sexual and gender-based violence.

Outcomes Achieved:

Enhanced social and economic empowerment of women and girls particularly Dalit and most vulnerable groups in Makwanpur and Nuwakot, Nepal

Progress towards our ultimate outcome is being realized through the combined impact of participation in VWGs, development of capacity for improved agricultural livelihoods, including financial management capacity, and for understanding and advocating for human rights. Together, these strengthened capacities and increased community participation are supporting empowerment of VWG members within their households and communities.

The primary indicator we are using to monitor progress towards our ultimate outcome is the #/total VWG members reporting meaningful decision-making at the household level. This indicator recognizes that women's participation in decision-making is supported both by their increased economic role, which helps them gain legitimacy when engaging in decision-making about household finances, as well as shifts in attitudes towards gender equality, both among women and girls who must feel they have a right to voice their interests, as well as among household members, especially their husbands and sons, who must also recognize their right to an equal voice. At midline we had observed an 8% increase in the number of participating women and girls reporting meaningful participation in decision-making within their households.

Over the past year we have continued to observe positive signs of women's social and economic empowerment within their households, with VWG members sharing experiences of changing

attitudes within their families. VWG members credit these changes to their increased economic contributions to their households and to their improved confidence in voicing their views as well as an increased sense of sisterhood the support they have for one another and enhanced understanding of their own rights.

Some VWG members are even beginning to demonstrate their social empowerment through civic participation and leadership in their communities, putting into practice the skills they have learned through their VWGs at the community level.

Usha Kunwar, member of Anugraha VWG in Makwanpur was one of the victims of domestic violence. When she first joined the VWG, she expressed feeling dominated by the family including her husband and was also not trusted by the community. Despite her desire to speak and share her knowledge, she used to remain silent and only listen. Once she became the member of the group she began participating in training on understanding her rights. The group encouraged her to lead the group by asking her to be the motivator. Today Usha is one of the best motivators of RENEW who has been facilitating the group meetings and discussions to overcome gender discriminations and inequality. Usha has been appointed as the treasurer of Tol Bikash Samiti (Community Development Committee). Usha has been supporting the victims of domestic and gender based violence to file cases against the abusers. Usha also has multiple businesses today. She took a loan of Rs 30,000 from Rotary Club and bought 3 goats. She sold them at Rs 42,000 and again invested on goats and earned Rs 1,04,000. After successful goat raising she has diversified her work by initiating poultry and vegetable farming. Today she says her family respects her more as she is now able to take care of her family expenses. They also invite her in family discussions and ask for her input where she is able to express herself with confidence after gaining experience and peer support through her VWG. She has been hired as a facilitator for the Champions for Change (COC) program, a 14-month decision-making and leadership program organized by RWSC (Rural Women Service Centre) to strengthen gender equality among youth. Today, Usha is a confident woman who strongly advocates for her own and other people's rights.

Parbati BK, member Baisundhara VWG in Nuwakot, used to have a little say in the household decisions as she couldn't contribute financially. After getting involved in her VWG she participated in training and received inputs to begin her own economic activities and she built a plastic tunnel and started vegetable farming. She took a loan of Rs 10,000 and grew cucumber and earned Rs 16000. She has been growing seasonal and off seasonal vegetables under the tunnel. Because of this activity, she has been able to diversify her income source by adding buffalo raising. Today, Parbati reports that her family supports her now as she is able to contribute to household expenses. Parbati, who once hesitated to introduce herself now speaks during the monthly meetings and participates in discussion programs. After two and half years of involvement in RENEW she stood for local level election and got elected as a ward member of Shivapuri 7, Nuwakot. After holding the position in the local government, she initiated to allocate budget of Rs 3,00,000 for road construction from Asimuri Chowk to Chapabot her community.

She also influenced the local government to allocate budget of Rs. 2,000,000 to build a resting place for people attending funerals.

The experiences of both Usha Kunwar and Parbati BK provide excellent examples of how training, inputs, and peer support, are contributing to economic empowerment, and how this is translating into social empowerment within households and the broader community. We expect that their success will be similarly experienced by many more of their peers in the final year of the project and beyond.



Usha Kunwar, Anugraha VWG, Makwanpur Parbati BK, Baisundhara VWG, Nuwakot

Improved economic status of women and girls, particularly from Dalit and most vulnerable groups

Progress towards outcome is being realised through the investments in women's capacity for economic participation and contribution to household livelihoods. This is being achieved through investing in their capacity for climate adaptive agriculture, diversification of economic activities and the establishment of VWG savings and loans cooperatives.

The primary indicators we are using at this point to monitor progress is the % of VWG members who have established micro-enterprises in addition to farming – thereby diversifying their economic activities, and the % of VWG members applying new CCA and sustainable agricultural practices, contributing to improved incomes, and thereby improving their economic status.

At midline, we had observed promising results evidenced by 85 % of VWG members having successfully diversified economic activities, complementing their agricultural activities with micro-enterprises. Similarly, 99.5%/853 VWG members at midline reported applying at least one (1) new technique for sustainable agriculture and land management for CCA.



Sharmila, Urmila and Manisha Praja, Dolbari VWG(Left) and Bisnumaya Syangtang, Krishna mandir VWG(Right), Makwanpur



Parbati Pathak, Bhimsenthan VWG (Left) and Charimaya Tamang, Panchkanya VWG (Right), Nuwakot

We have continued to observe progress in improved economic status among VWG members participating in RENEW. Women consistently report that they are both increasing their agricultural incomes as a result of the new CCA techniques they have been applying since their trainings and that the complimentary incomes they are earning through new enterprises, including new agricultural-based enterprises, is enabling them to contribute significantly to their household livelihoods.

For example, the members of Godawari VWG in Nuwakot have collectively shifted to organic vegetable cultivation after they learned to make “Jholmol” organic fertilizer in their CCA trainings through RENEW. They have found that this new approach has begun to yield high outputs and they have been able to use the income generated (also because they have spent less in chemical fertilizer) to invest in new sources of income including animal husbandry (traditionally more of a male economic activity), poultry farming, and fish farming. These women not only report higher

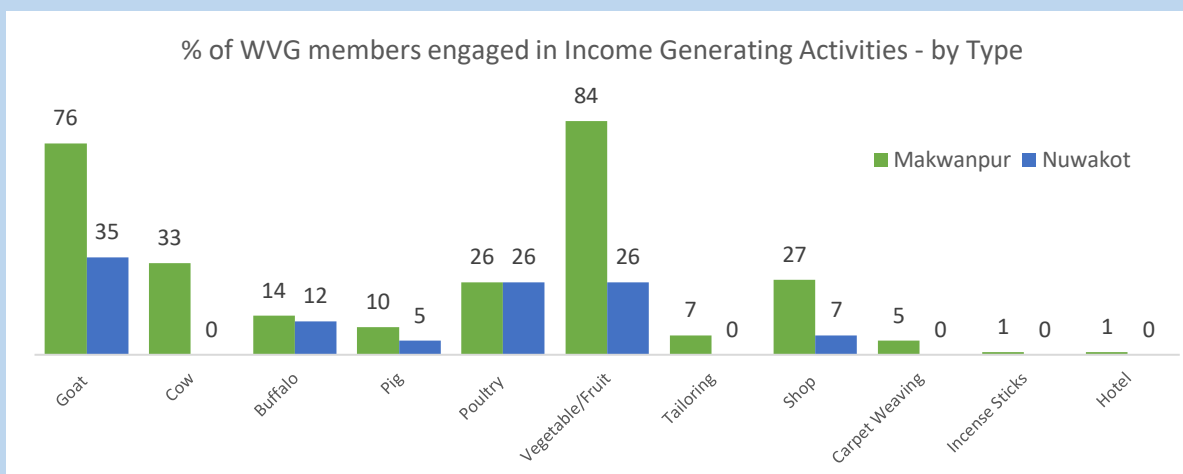
monthly incomes, but are able to provide tangible examples of the impact for their households, including the ability to send all their children to school. Their experience is shared by peers in nine other VWGs in both Nuwakot and Makwanpur, who have begun making “Jholmol” and are beginning to see positive impact in the quality and yield of vegetable crops. This example provides an excellent illustration of how uptake of CCA and diversification of incomes are complimentary and mutually reinforcing. The benefits of CCA result in improved income which, in turn, allows women to invest in other income generating opportunities. Together, these components improve livelihood security and improve household economic status.



Bhagwati Chepang, Namuna VWG, Makwanpur in her 'plastic tunnel', a CCA technique she learned through RENEW which is improving the quality and yield of vegetable crops

Another improvement we are observing is the widespread use of weather forecast data to inform planting, cultivation and harvest of crops. This is a skill that women learned in their CCA training which is minimizing the potential loss or damage to crops from unpredictable weather patterns resulting from climate change. This is complemented by the uptake of local landscape specific techniques taught in RENEW trainings such as the purchase and use of locally available botanical plants as cover crops, and the collection of household water to use for vegetable gardening in dryer landscapes.

We are observing that in addition to widespread uptake of CCA and new agricultural-based income generating activities, many VWG members are investing in other forms of enterprises. This has been enabled through the Start and Improve Your Business (SIYB) training, market readiness training and facilitation of VWG micro-credit schemes.



Our third indication of progress towards women's economic is the personal savings of VWG members. This is an important metric for determining whether project results will be sustained over time, indicating that women have developed their financial management capacity, have funds set aside to weather shocks to income sources, and will be able to continue to invest in livelihood diversification and expansion.



Junu Kumari Tamang, a member and motivator of Sayepatri VWG in Nuwakot at her new tailoring and retail shop

This year we have observed some positive behaviour changes after women completed their financial literacy training and the VWGs completed the training and set-up of their savings and credit systems. Women are observed updating their monthly savings and loans transactions in their passbooks, creating and maintaining their own records of monthly incomes and expenses, and are reporting the development of positive habits for monthly savings. This is modelled and reinforced through the savings practices of the VWGs themselves as they work to grow their savings and credit schemes. For example, during the reporting period, Kopila VWG in Makwanpur increased their group savings from Rs.100 to Rs.500. Anugraha and Phulbari VWGs save Rs. 1000 each once a year and Rs.100 every month in their group fund. Similarly, Nuwakot Bhimsenthan, Laxit, Gairabari and Juntara VWGs, have increased their group

savings from Rs. 50 to Rs.100.

The total group fund value in Makwanpur is now Rs. 26,65,092 and in Nuwakot Rs. 9,78,208. These funds are being used to support the most vulnerable group members first, loaned out for investment in income generating activities.

Efforts under 1100 went relatively smoothly in the reporting period. All activities were planned keeping in mind the local context and women's participation. For example, training modality

were redesigned when needed, keeping focus on how women could internalize knowledge and execute their plans both as individuals as VWG groups. As women continue to shoulder the majority of household responsibilities, effective time management was crucial to ensure that the schedules reflected their availability and did not interrupt their now expanded income generating activities. Fortunately, family members have begun to benefit from the improved livelihoods of participating women, we have been able to translate this goodwill into investments of support in the RENEW project. For example, the demonstration plot construction work required significant investment of time and manual work. As the women were unable to provide the time and labour required in the timeline, VWG member requested that their spouses come to help them build the plots. This is also a promising signal of shifts in women's social empowerment within their households.

Even more promising is the increased appreciation and gratitude for the project being expressed by local community stakeholders and local government. After three years of efforts to engage and involve these local partners in RENEW, the project is now accepted as having community wide benefits in participating villages. This recognition is translating into new linkages with organizations like Rotary clubs, banks, and cooperatives, who are providing loans to VWGs to expand their savings and credit schemes and accelerate results of the project.

Activity wise immediate outcomes achieved:

Improved knowledge and skills for climate change adaptation (CCA) through sustainable agriculture and environmental management among women smallholder farmers

The Target for the activity 1111 has been achieved with a total of 186 VWG members trained on environmental management practices to deal with CCA. They are continuing passing along their knowledge through demonstration plots. There is no new progress in reporting period other than visits to the demonstration plot and ongoing monitoring.

Likewise, the Target for the activity 1112 has been achieved with a total of 226 VWG members trained on agricultural services, technology, and practices, 59 trained in this year. Two training events were held in Makwanpur in June 2022 and another workshop specifically on organic farming took place in July 2022 in Nuwakot.



Women members of Makwanpur participating in Integrated Pest Management (IPM) and demonstration plot training



Women members of Nuwakot participating in workshop on organic farming and sustainable agriculture

Enhanced capacity for micro and small-scale enterprise management by women and girls

To-date, 133 VWG members have been trained in market-readiness technical training. During this year, 191 VWG members were trained in Start and Improve Your Business, with the remaining VWG members to be trained in the final year of the project. Trainings took place in May in Makwanpur and again in September in both Makwanpur and Nuwakot.

A total of 74% of VWG members have been trained on micro-credit loan management. In addition, the RSDC team visited with VWGs in Makwanpur in January 2023 and a business acquisition facilitation training was provided to 31 women members from 15 VWGs in Makwanpur in February 2023.

100% of VWG members have been facilitated in opening bank accounts, exceeding our target. VWG members have also been trained in financial literacy, and account management for small enterprises and cooperative savings and credit schemes. Financial literacy training was conducted in 13 VWGs in Nuwakot and 7 VWGs in Makwanpur in April 2022. Further, in January and February 2023, the COOP team visited with all 30 VWGs to monitor and update their accounting systems.



Bishnu COOP expert monitoring the accounting system of VWGs in Makwanpur and Nuwakot



Women members of Makwanpur and Nuwakot participating in technical training



Women members of Makwanpur participating in Business Acquisition training



Women members of Nuwakot and Makwanpur participating in Account Management Training

Increased participation and leadership in community decision-making by women, particularly by Dalit and most vulnerable groups

Progress towards intermediate outcome 1200 is being achieved through fostering confidence in contributing to community dialogue in the safe spaces of VWGs and through support for women's leadership in working collaboratively to address the social and economic needs of women in their communities.

The primary indicator we are using to monitor progress is the number of participating VWG members who self-report actively participating in community meetings. For the purpose of measuring progress, we have surveyed VWG members regarding their active participation in community dialogue at three levels: their participation in their respective VWGs, their attendance (participation) in other community meetings outside of their VWGs and their

contribution (speaking up, sharing, voicing an opinion) and community meetings outside their VWG. Women who report doing all three are considered to be active participants in community meetings for the purpose of this indicator. At midline, 45% of VWG members were active participants, which we expect will continue to improve towards our endline target of 75%.

Promisingly, we are observing evidence of the confidence developed through active participation in VWGs translating into increased civic participation at the community level. Supported by the training they received on leadership and social inclusion, and the opportunity to develop their leadership skills through their VWGs, the participation and leadership of women in community meeting and activities is increasing. By the end of this reporting period, a total of 58 women members from VWGs across Makwanpur and Nuwakot are working as Chairpersons, Vice- Chairs, Treasurers, Secretaries and members of different committees, including those for roads, temples, canal Irrigation, water supply, child networks, forestry, Chepang communities, peace and development organizations and school management in their respective communities. In addition, going



Rita B.K, Newarpani VWG,
Makwanpur

beyond what we expected to see within the project timeline, 15 VWG members (6 from Makwanpur and 9 from Nuwakot) participated as candidates in the recent local elections. From Makwanpur 3 women members, Sabitri Ghimire member of Ram mandir VWG (ward no.1), Rita B.K member of Newarpani VWG (ward no.19) and Ganga B.K member of Dolbari VWG (ward no. 4) won the election and got elected as a ward member. Similarly, in Nuwakot 3 women members, Sarita Nepali member of Bhimsenthan VWG (ward no. 8), Junu Kumari Tamang motivator of Sayepatri VWG (ward no.7) and Parbati B.K member of Baisundhara VWG (Ward no. 7) got elected.

VWG members are also becoming more active in other community events and activities. For example, Bhawani Pathak, Bandevi VWG, was awarded a cash prize of Rs. 500 for producing the best quality mustard greens and Maiya Devi Thapaliya member, Bandevi VWG was awarded a cash prize of Rs. 1000 for producing the best quality bananas during Agriculture Exhibition hosted on Women' Day by the local government of Shivapuri rural municipality, Nuwakot. Both Bhawani and Maiya used this platform as an opportunity to share their thoughts on why woman need to be socially and economically empowered to have a dignified life.



Manisha BK, Juntara VWG, Nuwakot

In another participating Nuwakot community, the local government invited women to participate in speech and running competitions. Durga Sunar, a member of Gairabari VWG received a consolation prize for participating in the speech competition, a foray into public speaking that speaks to the confidence women are developing in voicing their views in the public arena. Manisha B.k, a motivator from Juntara VWG competed in running and high jump competition and finished in first position in running and second position in high jump competition. Manisha shared her thoughts on gender equality during the closing ceremony of the event, again demonstrating the willingness that VWG members are developing to advocate for their interests at the community level as a result of their training and support they are receiving through their VWGs and the project.

Since receiving the Cornerstone training, VWG members are also demonstrating their commitment to sharing and caring for others, increasing the social inclusion of vulnerable members within VWGs (a key indicator for 1210) and beyond. This is observed in the way that they are supporting one another during difficult times. For example, the Bandevi, Thanapati, Jun Tara and Laxit women group raised funds to support the women and men in need. The women raised money to support the medical treatment of Tulasi Pandey, member, Bandevi and her husband Prem Prasad Pandey when both got sick. Similarly, when Bhawani Pathak and Sita Acharya, members of Laxit VWG became sick, the other group members came together to collectively plant and harvest crops such as millet and paddy. As a gesture of respect, women members from Darshan, Godawari and Ghaiyadanda in Makwanpur collected money as a group and visited the homes of pregnant women members, bringing them nutritious food and clothes for the babies. In Makwanpur, women have started attending funerals, when a family member of a group member passes away. The women members of Kopila VWG had visited the house of Goma Tiwari, a member of Kopila VWG, when her husband passed away, they also visited the house of Sushila Tiwari, another member of Kopila when her son passed away. They helped these women with the cooking and prepared food for the guests who attended the funerals.

In implementing activities under 1200, we experienced more challenges in the scheduling of trainings which were planned for this reporting period. There was a particularly heavy monsoon which not only made local travel difficult, but also required work on the part of women farmers to prevent too much damage to crops and impact on their incomes. Likewise, the outbreak of dengue affected the women as well as other people in the community as many people got sick with symptoms such as fever, cough and cold. The women had to take care of the sick people in the household, making it challenging for them to attend training and group meetings. However, the training and group meetings were scheduled according to the women's availability and work plan with some shifting, but no significant impact on the progress of the project.

As with activities under 1100, we were able to rely on the goodwill generated within households and the community to ensure that women were able to attend trainings and keep up with their participation in VWGs. The local VWG motivators communicated with husbands, soliciting their help in finishing the harvest and other agricultural work while their wives could attend training. This is a promising shift and further evidence of women's increased social empowerment within their families and the development of that sense of 'sisterhood' and peer support fostered through the VWGs. Initially, it was challenging to keep women of the target communities engaged in the training programs as they were not very comfortable to come to the trainings leaving household work unfinished. Also, the spouse and in-laws did not encourage the women to participate in trainings for long hours. Therefore, men were also included in the trainings where possible to raise awareness on gender equality and improve their economic conditions. After engaging in different levels of trainings the men understood the significance of the training and started assisting their wives with the household chores and sending them to the trainings and meetings.



Women members of Darshan VWG visited Manisha Praja and Shanti Praja (B) house with nutritious food and clothes for the mother and baby

Strengthened skills of village women's groups to support the social and economic empowerment of women and girls (disaggregated by age and caste)

857 women continue to meet once a month with their VWGs, exceeding our target.

A total of seven team-building workshops for experience sharing have been organized for women leaders and VWGs, including two in this reporting period. Workshops were held in both Makwanpur and Nuwakot in December 2022, engaging a total of 558 VWG members.

Joining in these experience sharing meetings were a delegation from Egg Farmers of Ontario and women egg farmers through our VWGs. Five Ontario egg farmers, including their Director of Public Affairs, travelled to Nepal where they visited with participating communities and shared knowledge about poultry rearing. This activity has supported efforts to strengthen knowledge and skills for CCA approaches to poultry rearing among participating women as part of improving incomes and contributing to sustainability of livelihoods. In addition, the visitors from EFO committed to sharing their learning and experience with audiences back at home, contributing to communications about the RENEW project.



EFO delegation visiting a VWG member poultry rearing and egg farm

Total 857 VWG members have been trained in leadership skills. This includes 354 trained during this year. In addition, a discussion program on social inclusion was conducted in Nuwakot in January 2023 and Makwanpur in February 2023, during which we continue to build on foundations established during the Cornerstone training and strengthen understanding and leadership for social inclusion within VWGs and beyond.



Knowledge sharing workshop with VWGs of Nuwakot and Makwanpur





RENEW partners, Local authorities and Women members of Makwanpur and Nuwakot participating in Gender equality and women empowerment workshop, Nagarkot



RENEW sharing meeting with Her Excellency Ms. Amanda Strohan, Deputy Chief of Mission of Canada



Women members of Makwanpur(Left) and Nuwakot (Right) participating in Social inclusion discussion program



World Accord and EFO team visit to Nepal

Enhanced capacity among local partner NGOs to advance the social and economic empowerment of women and girls

A total of six IEC tools have been created, including radio spots, newsletters and a mini-documentary, exceeding our target of three. In addition, 53 women from VWGs in Nuwakot raised awareness about gender equality through a folk song program in June 2022, and in this year, an additional Human Rights pamphlet and a manual on gender and climate change were developed to support awareness raising efforts.

A total of 190 representatives from local partners have been trained, exceeding our target. The training on social and economic empowerment was conducted in Makwanpur in June 2022 and in Nuwakot in July 2022, engaging local authorities, women human rights workers and VWG members participated in the program.

A total of 34 local community partners have been trained on Human Rights and GBV issues. After developing a manual for this program, this training was conducted in December in Pokhara and engaged RENEW partners, motivators, the Minister of Social Development of Gandaki province, the Chief of District Coordination Committee Kaski, Chief Secretary of Chief Ministry office and National Human Rights Commission.



Village Women Groups of Makwanpur (Left) and Nuwakot (Right) participating in Awareness program



Local authorities of Nuwakot and Makwanpur participating in public hearing program and Training on Human rights and SGBV



Training of trainers(TOT) on Women human rights advocacy to the partners and women members of RENEW



Training on Human rights and ESC rights to the partners and women members of RENEW

Enhanced exercising of human rights by women and girls, particularly from Dalit and most vulnerable groups

Progress towards this intermediate outcome is being realized through direct training for VWGs on human rights, sexual and gender-violence and opportunities and mechanisms supporting their ability to advocate for their rights. This is reinforced through the engagement and training of men and boys and civil society organizations in communities on human rights of women and girls and the important role they play in protecting and promoting those rights.

The primary indicator we are using to monitor progress towards this result is the %/total human rights issues raised within VWGs that are being reported to local authorities or service providers. At midline, 80%/total of the human rights issues raised in VWGs are being reported to authorities already significantly exceeding our target of 50%/total.

We have continued to observe progress in the exercising of human rights by VWG members since their trainings and sustained through ongoing discussion and peer support within their VWGs. This is evidenced both through the demanding of rights within households and challenging infringement of their rights, primarily domestic violence, as well as in public advocacy for women's human rights at the community level.

For example, after participating in various training and discussion programs on Women human rights the women members have become aware of their rights and the existing laws to support women suffering from gender based and domestic violence. Mina Nepali, a member of the Bhimsenthana VWG, was a victim of domestic violence. Jiwan Nepali, her husband, assaulted her. As a result, women members of the group, Pramila Nepali, Prem Kumari Nepali, and Denkumari Nepali, raised their voices by organizing a public hearing program to fight against domestic abuse. Sabita Tamang, a member of Panchkanya VWG was abused by her husband and his family members. All other women members went to her house and threatened her family members that if the violence continues Sabita will file a case against them. Meantime, the women VWG members in Nuwakot organized a song competition during one of the major festivals Teej, which they used as a platform for raising awareness and advocated about violence against women.

We are also observing many examples of VWG members using their voices to advocate at the community level as exercising of rights. Muna Katuwal a member of Anugraha VWG has inquired about the government's plan for distributing old age allowance to those who are unable to collect it themselves. Sarita Subedi, Motivator of Makhmali VWG raised the concern that the distribution of fertilizer and other seeds should be accessible to people at the time when they require it. Babita Luitel, motivator of Phulbari VWG has expressed her concern regarding the requirement of a proper collection center and storage home for vegetables, since majority of the farmers are involved in commercial vegetable farming. Ambika Paudel, motivator of Kopila VWG suggested that a list of free medicines that are being provided by the government to the citizens should be listed on the board of municipality office and health post. Likewise, she has suggested that many women group members are victims of micro finance and debt systems, leading to domestic violence. Therefore, it is important that the local authorities prioritize monitoring this issue. Srijana Bidari, motivator of Godawari VWG, questioned the availability of free condoms at health posts while women do not have access to free pads. Rekha Bishwokarma, member of Ram Mandir VWG, inquired whether the local government has made any provisions to provide shelter for single homeless women. Som Laxmi Praja, a motivator of Ghaiya Danda VWG expressed her concern regarding the inadequate supply of drinking water in their community. These are all positive examples of social empowerment and expression of rights and promising signals of changes at the community level due to the project.



Women members in Nuwakot participating in song competition during Teej



Gender equality and Social inclusion training with local authorities in Nuwakot

Contributing to an enabling environment for such advocacy, RENEW's trainings for local authorities on referral mechanisms and mapping system is strengthening community complaint mechanisms and has opened up dialogue with VWGs in both districts. As motivators and women team members have gained conceptual clarity on human rights violations and gender-based violations too, local authorities and officials are also now aware of the human rights-based approach (HRBA) system to support and strengthen a gender and human rights friendly environment with related stakeholders and teams.



Women members of Nuwakot and Makwanpur participating in Quarterly Dialogues and Public hearing program on Human rights and GBV

Increased community knowledge and understanding of human rights issues affecting most vulnerable women and girls

A total of 71% of VWG members have been in Human Rights and SGBV to-date. In May 2022, a training on identifying HR issues was held in Makwanpur, followed by a second in July. The same training was hosted in Nuwakot in November 2022 and another in Makwanpur in January 2023.

To-date only 6% of the approximately 2220 male family members of VWG members have been trained in HR and GBV. This represents 137% of the 100 men and boys identified for training in the PIP. Two events were held in February 2023, one in Makwanpur and one in Nuwakot. In addition, six more public hearings on HR violations and GBV were hosted during this reporting period, four in Makwanpur in August 2022 and two more in Nuwakot in September 2022.



Training to men and boys of Makwanpur and Nuwakot on Human rights and GBV

Increased community knowledge and understanding of how to advocate for human rights

To-date, progress has been made in this reporting period through workshops on creation of referral systems by mapping community institutions. Two were held in May 2022 in Nuwakot and another in Makwanpur in July 2022. Another three workshops were conducted in November 2022, two in Makwanpur and one in Nuwakot. These have been followed by two events on the formation of referral systems in Makwanpur in January 2023. These are complemented by training events focussed on referral systems for Human Rights lobbying and advocacy, three were hosted in May 2022, one in each district, another in Makwanpur in July 2022, and two more in November 2022, one in each district, and another was offered to VWGs, community-level networks and CSOs was conducted in January 2023. In addition, four community dialogues were conducted on HR and GBV in November 2022 and two trainings on HR and SGBV for local authorities were conducted in Nuwakot in August 2022.

A total of 748 VWG members have been trained in advocating for their human rights, including 512 in this reporting period. Three trainings were conducted in May 2022, one in Nuwakot and two in Makwanpur, two more were held in Makwanpur in November 2022 and another in Nuwakot in December 2022. These trainings focused on problem identification, actor referral mechanisms, and lobby advocacy.



Women members of Nuwakot and Makwanpur participating in Human rights referral mechanism training



Women members of Makwanpur and Nuwakot participating in advocacy on problem identification, act referral mapping and lobby advocacy workshop

Stories of Change: Sushmita Subedi

When we first interviewed Sushmita Subedi, she expressed frustration, *“I feel my voice is not welcomed in decision-making in my household as my husband and in-laws only participate in the discussions and have been making all the decisions.”* But, having already had a taste for what could be possible, through participation in her VWG, she also expressed hope for the future. *“I hope to see women taking leadership, having jobs and taking participation in decision making. I also hope to see women having access to financial institutions and being capacitated on micro-credit and cooperatives.”*



Sushmita is a mother of three who lives with her husband and in-laws in Makwanpur. Her family is involved in agricultural farming, while her husband works as a lawyer. Shushmita is a motivator for the Newarpani VWG.

When she first engaged with RENEW, she reported *“I spend my day doing household work like cooking, taking care of the children, sending them to school, washing clothes and so on. As my in-laws are busy with agricultural farming, I have to take care of all the household chores by myself. I feel that a woman faces challenges in every step of her life. A married woman is bound with many responsibilities and no one fully supports her to move ahead. Society makes women feel that her first priority must be her responsibility towards her house more than anything else. If she wants to do anything or needs to go anywhere, she has to first finish all the household chores. She needs to spare time if she wants to do anything.”*

Today Sushmita has a very different outlook and her experience as a woman in her household and community is changing.

On a personal level, she now reports “my family members help and support me in doing household chores and to take care of my children. As I have a small baby my mother-in-law and my husband do most of the cooking. My family members confirm with me before making any decisions. I have been sharing my opinions on land and household management. My husband always encourages me to share what I feel and makes me special. He makes me feel that I can make important contributions in the family decisions. Hence, we make decisions on our mutual understanding.”

When asked about what its like being a woman in her community, Sushmita says: *“The confidence of the women in my community has enhanced. The women are now actively participating in the community meetings and discussions, such as the drinking water meeting and Tol Bikash Samiti (Community Development Committee). Women are aware of their rights and responsibilities, and have started to lobby for a quota seat to ensure their participation in committees. The women are doing small businesses which are registered in their names. During the public hearing program, we women speak confidently and raise concerns there. The women are supported by their husbands in their daily household chores and in the field. The enhanced gender relations have made me capable of contributing more for my family and for the community as well.”* She also noted that she has observed changes in how women are treated by men overall in the community: *“After men and women participated in the training and discussion programs it has enhanced their knowledge on gender equality. After getting the knowledge I have seen men supporting their wives not only within the households but also in the farm. These enhanced gender relations have contributed to minimize the women violence cases in the community.”*

When asked about her experience in the RENEW project, she shared the following reflections: *“RENEW has made me a better person. I always observe through a gender lens, I am sensitive to women rights, climate change and I am more towards working in income generating work. During the public hearing program, I have started raising concerns about our rights and also inquired about how much money the local government had set aside for women and children. I am also able to request skill-based training for community women to improve their condition in my community. After my participation in the CCA training, I have started preparing Jholmol and practicing organic vegetable farming on my farm. The leadership training has helped and encouraged me to become a good leader for my women's group. I've been internalizing the good leadership qualities and skills I learned from the training while working with the women. During the monthly meeting, I also encourage the women members to actively participate in the discussion and make decisions in unity.”*

Story of Change: Laxmi Pathak

When we first interviewed Laxmi Pathak in August 2020, she lamented that women were not respected by men in her community: *“The men in the community do not have respect for women. They feel women are meant to cook and take care of the family. They do not like women giving suggestions as they feel women cannot give proper suggestions...I don't feel any man would like for women to give suggestions in her family or in the community. They think women do not know enough to give suggestions.”* She highlighted that this inequality impacted the daily life experience of women, sharing that *“a woman has less freedom than a man. A woman needs to manage time after finishing all the chores if she wants to go somewhere or attend something. It is only her responsibility to manage time by herself, whereas when it comes to men, they are free to attend or go anywhere they like without any extra burden. Due to this, many women miss attending events if they are unable to manage time”*.



Laxmi Pathak lives in Nuwakot with her husband and their two children and is the chairperson for the Laxit VWG despite the fact that before joining RENEW, Laxmi considered herself to be *“a shy person who lacked confidence to speak in front of people.”*

In reflecting back to her daily life before her participation, Laxmi shares: *“I was confined to the four walls of the kitchen and used to spend my days doing only household chores. I lacked confidence to speak in public.*

Moreover, I never had the opportunity to participate in the community and ward meetings. I was unaware about issues of climate change, market readiness, micro-credit loan, financial literacy, human rights, meaningful participation, gender equality and social inclusion. I had very little knowledge about saving, group loans and financial institutions.”

Now, however, things have changed. Speaking of today, Laxmi shares: *“My husband and I together spend time doing household chores, farming, and raising cows and buffaloes. He takes care of the house and the field and lets me to participate in various training and discussion programs whenever I need to go.”* Further, she comments: *“Before making any household decisions, my husband consults with me and considers my suggestions. Even when I'm not at home, my husband calls and consults with me before making any decisions related to household or business.”*

Laxmi feels her experience is reflective of changes she is observing in the community more broadly: *“It used to be difficult for women to manage their time in order to attend trainings and meetings on time because they had to complete household chores first. In the initial days, I also*

used to be late for training and meetings due to the burden of household chores. But, after my participation in RENEW, my husband has started supporting and helping me to complete the household chores so that I can reach the trainings and meetings on time. Similarly, we women of my community have been active in organizing awareness events on 'Women's Day' and 'New Year' to represent our solidarity. Moreover, women have also been taking loans and starting small scale businesses and becoming independent."

When commenting on the experience of participating in RENEW she shares: *"RENEW has been a turning point in my life because it brought me closer to the women of my community by developing sisterhood within the group. After being in the group, the women who previously did not speak have become like family. I am the group's chairperson, and I was encouraged to take out loans and start a small business. To become independent, I began doing animal husbandry and farming. I am equipped and capacitated with the knowledge of CCA, micro-credit, market readiness, human rights, cornerstone, leadership and GESI. I am no longer restricted to my home, as now I am aware of and participate in the community and ward meetings. As my self-esteem has grown, I can confidently present my views there. In addition, people in my community also respect and seek my advice before doing any work. This would not have been possible without the support of RENEW."*

Partners / collaborators / consultants

International partners

- Government of Canada (GAC)
- World Accord (WA)

Local partners

- Women for Peace and Democracy Nepal (WPD- Nepal)
- Informal Sector Service Centre (INSEC)
- Rural Self- Reliance Development Centre (RSDC)
- Microfinance and Cooperative Consultant, Bishnu K. Shrestha
- Environmental Management and Climate Change -Trainer, Sudesh Subedi
- Information Technology – Consultant, Hempal Shrestha

Collaborators / Advisor

- Shivapuri Rural Municipality, Nuwakot
- Manahari Rural Municipality, Makwanpur
- Hetauda Sub Metropolitan City, Makwanpur
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