



Women for Peace and Democracy- Nepal

Uniting passion for building a Peaceful and Democratic Nepal

Issues XI 2023

1. Socio-economic Transformation Program for Women and Marginalized (SEWAM)

The SEWAM Program, supported by World Accord, Canada, began its thirteenth year this autumn. The SEWAM program, the very first project of WPD-Nepal, has been able to empower 307 women socially and economically till date. For over a decade, SEWAM has been a light of hope for these women, developing leadership, strengthening their unity, and ensuring their safety through economic opportunities. Today, it serves seven marginalized women's groups of Chitwan, Sarlahi, and Dhanusha and continues to provide guidance and support to five old groups, established at the beginning of the SEWAM. This year, the SEWAM program was able to capacitate and change the lives of 182 women within the communities of these three districts.

SEWAM provides women with valuable skills through trainings, vocational programs, income-generating activities, agricultural development, while also educating them on crucial topics like gender equality, social inclusion, health, climate change, and women's rights. From cornerstone training to activities like goat raising, vegetable farming, poultry farming, economic literacy, cooperative education, tailoring, to name a few, these women have gained insightful knowledge. With the seed money from trust funds and micro-credit loans, women are not only running businesses but also investing in their dreams.



Today, 103 women are involved in small-scale businesses ranging from goat raising and vegetable farming to poultry farming, tailoring, and more, all funded by these trust and group funds. Not only skill-oriented activities, SEWAM also believes in the power of shared experiences and learning from one another. Thus, it conducted interactive programs covering topics like women's participation in local governance, constitutional rights, gender-responsive planning, and government funding for community development and also arranged exposure visits for women from all seven groups, promoting the exchange of knowledge and ideas.

The mission of the SEWAM program is to build a peaceful and harmonious society where women and marginalized groups can enjoy economic opportunities, respect and peace and with each passing year, SEWAM takes steps toward its vision of a more prosperous and equitable Nepal.



SEWAM women in Orientation program in Chitwan



SEWAM women participating in Cornerstone training



SEWAM women in Awareness on Climate change and gender program

2.Nepal Earthquake Rebuilding Program (NERP)



In 2015, a devastating earthquake shook Nepal, leaving a trail of destruction, shattered homes, and shattered lives. Among the hardest-hit areas were Sindupalchowk and Nuwakot where the earthquake's scar remained visible even after two years. Isolated and often forgotten, the marginalized ethnic groups were mainly the ones who suffered the most. They received little help or support, and their homes remained in ruins. Thus, in order to help rehabilitate the marginalized, WPD-Nepal initiated the Nepal Earthquake Rebuilding Program (NERP), supported by HOPE International Development Agency.

From 2015, NERP has been serving 500 Dalits and vulnerable women of 25 women self-help groups of Sindupalchowk and Nuwakot districts. NERP has been supporting women to get back on their feet by enhancing economic opportunities. It has been conducting capacity building activities on agriculture, livestock, micro-credit, small scale businesses and awareness and education on emerging issues in the target communities for the 500 target women. It has been empowering these women with the tools they need to rebuild their lives. Women have been provided with trainings from cornerstone, group management training to activities like training on doll cushions, handicrafts, goat raising, poultry farming, buffalo raising, vegetable farming, awareness on gender and climate change, to name a few.

Likewise, since the mission of NERP is to economically empower these women, it provides seed money in the form of trust funds, providing opportunity for the women to run small-scale businesses. Today, 365 women are empowered who are actively involved in small-scale businesses such as goat raising, buffalo raising, pig raising, vegetable farming, poultry farming, shop, cow raising, and even carpet weaving. Similarly, it also provided tunnels and seasonal seeds for vegetable farming and distributed animals, including buffaloes and goats, to the women's groups to help them become self-sufficient. Today, these women are not only implementing their knowledge and skills; they are rebuilding their lives, contributing to a chain of empowerment that's making a significant difference in their communities.



NERP women in Awareness in Climate change and gender program



NERP women of Pokhare, Sindupalchowk in Doll Cushion training



Sarswoti Shrestha, member of Milijuli SHG weaving carpet

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

The living conditions of Dalit 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. Inequality between men and women and gender discrimination still exists in society. However, it is important to empower poor and marginalized women socially and economically to reduce gender discrimination and inequality between women and men. Thus, RENEW, a fully gender equality four years project supported by World Accord, Canada was initiated to enhance the socio-economic empowerment of women and girls of Makwanpur and Nuwakot districts.



For the past three and half years, RENEW has been serving a total of 857 Dalit and most vulnerable women and girls of 30 VWGs from Nuwakot and Makwanpur 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. RENEW has been providing knowledge and trainings focusing on these components to women of Makwanpur and Nuwakot districts. It has been continuously advocating for human rights and development of capacities for the empowerment of women. Not only this, it has also been investing in their capacity for climate adaptive agriculture, diversification of economic activities and the establishment of VWG savings and loan cooperatives. It has been providing financial literacy training, market readiness training, basic account management training, Start and Improve your business (SIYB) training, Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) training, gender equality and social inclusion training, awareness on gender and climate change, training on Human rights and GBV,



Parbati Pathak, member of Bhimsenthan VWG in her vegetable farm

knowledge sharing workshop, annual discussion with VWGs and local stakeholders, and many more. Opportunities to develop leadership skills are also provided to motivate women to participate in community meetings and activities. Today, women members are demonstrating 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. A total of 58 women members from 30 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. Likewise, a total

of seven team-building workshops were also organized for experience sharing for women leaders in both Makwanpur and Nuwakot where a total of 558 women members participated.

Moreover, through the CCA training, women members have had a sustainable approach to agriculture. They have shifted collectively to organic vegetable cultivation after learning to make 'Jholmol' organic fertilizers. Similarly, the knowledge they have gained has not only resulted in healthier produce but has also provided a new source of income for the women members. Through new CCA techniques, women have initiated agriculture-based enterprises and are significantly contributing to their household livelihoods. Knowledge is power, and through financial literacy training, women members have become the financial architects of their group. They have been managing the financial transactions in the group, creating policies, updating their monthly savings and loan transactions in their passbooks, and are reporting the development of positive habits for monthly savings. Thus, RENEW has done more than empower, it has promoted a strong sense of community inclusion and sisterhood among women members. The aspirations of women and girls' have soared, confidence has been nurtured, and decision-making autonomy and leadership skills have blossomed.



Laxmi Bartaula, member of Kopila VWG in Knowledge Sharing Workshop



RENEW VWGs in HR and ESC rights training



RENEW VWGs in Micro and Small Enterprises technical training



RENEW VWGs of Makwanpur participating in poultry farming training

4. National Co-operative for the Empowerment and Sustainability of Group-Knowledge Sharing Workshop

A one-day national co-operative for the empowerment and sustainability of group-knowledge sharing workshop was organized under RENEW Project by WPD-Nepal on June 15th, 2023 at Hotel Yellow Pagoda, Kantipath, Kathmandu. The workshop was attended by women members from the Makwanpur and Nuwakot groups, partner organizations, representatives from Manahari and Shivapuri Municipalities, Dr. Sumitra Manandhar Gurung, Chair of Swabalamban Laghubitta Bittiya Sanstha, Ms. Goma Acharya/Khulal, Manager of Deepjoyti Savings and Credit Cooperative Ltd, Mr. Shiva Pd. Bashyal, Executive Director, RSDC, Mr. Prahlad Man Mali, Cooperative and Microfinance Expert and Dr. Narahari Dhakal, Microfinance Expert.

A total of 69 participants participated in the workshop where a discussion on progress, and achievement of women groups, empowerment and sustainability of group through legalization in the cooperative system was done, success case presented of Deepjoyti Savings and Credit Cooperative Ltd., empowerment and sustainability of women groups covering options for group transformation, available resources, issues, challenges, group amalgamation options, and models selections.



5. Seminar on “Killer Robots: The lethal Autonomous Weapons (LAW)- A threat to humankind”

A round table seminar on ‘Killer robots: The lethal Autonomous Weapons (LAW)- A threat to humankind’ was organized by WPD-Nepal on March 23rd, 2023 at Himalaya Drishya Resort, Dhulikhel. The seminar was attended by local governments and local stakeholders and women groups from Makwanpur and Nuwakot and representatives of civil society organizations along with the Board members of WPD-Nepal. The seminar was organized with an objective to create awareness on how Killer Robots can impact the identity of humanity and the urgent need to Stop the Killer Robots to save civilian lives and protect humankind. A discussion focusing on “Challenges of Killer Robots” was moderated by Shobha Shrestha Pradhan, Executive Chair, WPD-Nepal where participants shared their perspectives on Killer Robots. The seminar was then concluded with a signature campaign and meaningful talks about how these robots might affect developing nations like Nepal. The seminar was extremely effective in providing a better understanding of the new term ‘Killer Robot’ among the participants. The seminar’s outcomes provided appropriate guidelines for further advocacy and propagation of the emerging and existing issue of ‘Killer Robots’.



Local Authorities of Nuwakot signing the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT)

6. HOPE International Visit to Nepal

HOPE International Development Agency conducted a 5 days monitoring visit to Nepal to assess the situation of women and marginalized people supported by HOPE International. The team led by Anna Baumgartel visited Tindhara, Kuwapani, Deurali, Dobato, Chapdada, Kamaldada communities of Sindhupalchowk and Basbari, Majhi community of Melamchi and interacted with the women groups, where women shared their stories and changes that has taken place in their life after the support from HOPE International. The team (Anna Baumgartel, Simone Ruth Hurwitz and Daniel Campani) also visited Indrawati ward-9 and met with ward chair Mr. Babu Ram Lama and other ward members. The team was happy and inspired to listen to the success stories of the women and their achievement.



7. Internship

WPD-Nepal welcomed two interns this year, Ruby Thapa Magar and Aayusha Kharel. Ruby and Aayusha currently completed Bachelors of Social Sciences (BoSS) at National College, Kathmandu University. They were with WPD-Nepal for a three-month period. While they were at WPD-Nepal, they were involved in different volunteering activities and assisted WPD staff. They both worked diligently, gaining experience and expanding their understanding of social work. Today, Ruby is working as Documentation and Communication Officer at WPD-Nepal.



8. World Accord (WA) and Egg Farmers of Ontario (EFO) Visit to Nepal



World Accord and EFO conducted a 14 days' visit to Nepal in December, 2022 to assess the situation of women poultry farmers supported under the RENEW project which was funded by Global Affairs Canada (GAC) and World Accord in Nuwakot and Makwanpur. The WA representatives; Kristin Leigh Douglas, Executive Director, Mary Diane Pearson, Treasurer and EFO representatives; Donna Leigh Lange Hubert Joseph Schillings, Cynthia Joanne Schillings, Scott C Graham, Laurie Marsh Graham and City line representative Adele Newton visited two RENEW

project working districts of WPD-Nepal i.e. Nuwakot and Makwanpur. The team interacted with the women groups of respective districts, where the women shared their stories and changes that had taken place in their life after the project support. Similarly, the women also shared about the situation of poultry farming in their community. The team was happy and inspired to listen to the success stories of women and their achievement.



9. High Commission of Canada in India in Nepal

The High Commission of Canada in India organized a three-day visit to Nepal to conduct midterm review and assess the situation of women groups of Nuwakot and Makwanpur after the initiation of the RENEW project. The GAC team included Amanda Strohan, Deputy Chief of Mission of Canada to India, Stephanie Bergron, First Secretary of Canada Fund for Local Initiative, Dr. Buddha Basnyat, Honorary Consul of Canada and Ian Fraser Hirschfield, Representative of Canada. On 5 September, 2022 a RENEW Partners sharing meeting was conducted with Amanda Strohan, Deputy High Commissioner of Canada to India, Local authorities of Manahari Rural Municipality and Shivapuri Rural Municipality, field supervisors, representatives from 30 women groups, RENEW project partners and WPD staff. The meeting was facilitated by Shobha Shrestha, executive chair, WPD-Nepal. The RENEW partners presented progress updates, and women members shared their personal stories and the positive changes they've experienced in their lives after implementation of the RENEW project.



Stories of Change

10. SEWAM



Mina Chaudhary, aged 30 lives in Khairahani - 12, Kumroj, Chitwan. There are five members in her family; father-in-law, mother-in-law, husband, son and herself.

Before joining SEWAM, Mina was a shy person who lacked confidence to speak in front of people. She was confined to the four walls of the kitchen and used to spend her days doing only household chores. She lacked confidence to speak in public and never had the opportunity to participate in the community. She did not have decision making power in her household and most of the decisions were only made by her husband and in-laws. Similarly, she was also unaware of the importance of the group or how the group worked.

When SEWAM was introduced in her community, she became a member of the Namuna WAG. After joining the group, she became equipped and capacitated with knowledge of cornerstone and economic literacy and participated in various trainings such as goat raising, coordination meeting, awareness on climate change, awareness on gender and interaction program. She is now no longer restricted to her home and her decisions are respected by her family. She can now confidently express herself in public and present herself. She is now involved in goat raising and buffalo raising. She has taken a loan of Rs.5, 000 to make an improved goat shed. She sold 2 goats and made a profit of Rs. 20,000. Likewise, she also sells 5-6 liters of buffalo milk every day for Rs. 65 per liter from which she earns a profit of Rs. 10,000.

“After being involved in the group, a lot of positive changes have happened in my life. I have developed confidence and I feel empowered. I am able to take loans in low interest, start a business and save money after meeting all the expenses of my family. I am thankful to World Accord and WPD Nepal for bringing women empowerment projects like SEWAM in our community.”

11. NERP

Nir Kumari Dhungana, 53, resides in Pokhare, Sindhupalchok. Her husband, son, daughter make up her extended family of four. Her family's main source of income is agriculture. She was extremely shy and insecure before joining SHG which was formed under the NERP program. All the household decisions were made by her husband. She had very little influence over any household decisions. She received training such as adult education, goat rearing, cornerstone, and poultry farming after joining the SHG which enhanced her self-confidence.

She received a plastic tunnel from the project after completing a vegetable cultivation training. She planted a variety of veggies underneath the plastic tunnel, from which she made a profit of Rs. 30,000. She took a loan of Rs. 50,000 from the trust fund and added additional Rs. 50,000 of her own money and purchased a buffalo. From the buffalo she earns Rs. 15,000 in every 15 days by selling its milk. Nir Kumari is making good profit from buffalo rearing and vegetable farming.



According to Nir Kumari, her self-confidence has grown as a result of joining a women SHG and participating in various trainings. She can now speak up for herself and others in the family and at the community level. She now has the same decision-making authority as her husband at home. She is satisfied with her accomplishments and grateful for all the support she has gotten from WPD Nepal and HOPE International.

12. RENEW



Laxmi Pathak lives in Nuwakot with her husband and their two children and is the chairperson of the Laxit VWG.

Before joining RENEW, Laxmi was a shy person who lacked confidence to speak in front of people. In reflecting back to her daily life before her participation, Laxmi shared she was confined to the four walls of the kitchen and used to spend her days doing only household chores. She lacked confidence to speak in public and never had the opportunity to participate in the community and ward meetings. She was unaware about issues of climate change, market readiness, micro-credit loan, financial literacy, human rights, meaningful participation, gender equality and social inclusion and had very little knowledge about saving, group loans and financial institutions. Now, however, things have changed. Speaking of today, Laxmi shares that her husband and her spend time together doing household chores, farming, and raising cows and buffaloes. He takes care of the house and the field and lets her participate in various training and discussion programs whenever she needs to go. Furthermore, before making any household decisions, her husband now consults with her and considers her suggestions.

When commenting on 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.

Vision: A Just Society Where Nepalese people can live in Peace and Prosperity.

Mission

Promote equitable access to resources and economic opportunities to end poverty and hunger (SDGs) and ensure that all targeted communities can fulfill their potential in dignity and equality in a healthy and secure environment.

Ensure all women and marginalized can enjoy prosperous and fulfilling lives and that economic, social and technological progress occurs peacefully.

Promote sustainable consumption and production, manage natural resources sustainably, and reduce the effects of climate change.

Advocate for peaceful, just and inclusive society, which is free from human rights violations and armed violence.

Objectives

Empower women and marginalized to improve their own wellbeing by enhancing their access to resources and livelihood skills.

Promote economic opportunities for the women and marginalized which enhance their capacities and consider their needs and aspirations.

Strengthen the capacities of women and marginalized so they may participate in peace building measures actively and constructively.

Lobby with the key stakeholders to use the resources effectively and efficiently for the enhancement of security within the society.

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