

# 6. Advancing gender equality and social inclusion

The year 2007 was important for advancing gender equality and social inclusion in Nepal. Issues of political representation, citizenship rights, and specific needs of women and other excluded groups surfaced prominently in the preparations of the Interim Constitution, the Three-Year Interim Plan and the run up to elections to the Constituent Assembly. The provision of proportional representation in the Interim Constitution for women, Dalits, indigenous ethnic groups, Madhesis and other oppressed groups in state structures was a positive outcome of these advocacy efforts.

A decade of conflict has also awakened development planners and practitioners to look harder into issues of exclusion and inequality and the way in which they are related to development.

## UNDP's response

In 2007, particular emphasis was placed on integrating gender and social inclusion into all of UNDP's interventions. As a result, all new project documents and concept notes, regardless of their theme, were carefully examined through a gender and social inclusion lens to ensure that issues of gender inequality and social exclusion related to the specific thematic area were adequately addressed.

## Achievements

### Policy level:

- Gender Budget Audit Guidelines for Local Bodies were prepared by the Ministry of Local Development. Building on the work done in the area of gender budgeting in 2006, these guidelines, expected to be approved in 2008, are aimed at enhancing gender-sensitivity of the development plans formulated by local governments.
- 10 District Development Committees (DDCs) completed gender budget audits of their periodic plans.
- 42 DDCs allocated between NRs. 30,000 to 120,000 for mainstreaming gender issues as a result of continued advocacy in this area.

### Grassroots impact:

- All current UNDP-supported grassroots projects have clear affirmative targets to promote women and other marginalised groups' livelihood opportunities and participation in community development activities. In 2007:
  - Of the 8,163 entrepreneurs newly established through *MEDEP* in 2007, 81% were women, 18% Dalits, and 49% Janajatis (compared to 73%, 19% and 48% respectively in 2006).
  - Among the 4,372 new community organizations supported by *DLGSP* in 2007, 44% were headed by women, suggesting that a significant number of women are participating in community activities and are empowered to be active in the public domain.
  - The provision in UNDP-supported *Community Owned Primary Education (COPE)* Project to only recruit local female teachers and ensure at least 2 are women members in the School Management Committees of the 120 COPE schools has encouraged parents to send their daughters to schools in rural areas where these schools are located.
  - In *REDP*, the project model has been designed to ensure equal representation of both men and women from every household in the energy functional groups.

## Vision for 2008 and beyond

While more women and other excluded groups have become relatively more active and involved in community activities than in the past, their participation in planning and decision-making processes are still low as local elites and males tend to dominate local level decision-making entities and public interactions. This implies that initiatives targeting women and excluded groups are needed for their social, economic and political empowerment.

- In our future programmes, the emphasis will be on ensuring that women and excluded groups are specifically targeted in all UNDP-supported initiatives, especially in the areas of livelihoods, governance and HIV/AIDS. ■

## Box 18

## I have been one of those lucky ones.....



"It gives me immense pleasure to be able to share my knowledge with others. I get satisfaction when I see people of this village sending their children to school, constructing taps and toilets, getting new ideas for farming and taking initiatives for constructive purpose", says Anita Poudel, 30, social mobiliser of Decentralization Local Governance Support Programme in Banskharka VDC of Parbat district.

Anita became a social mobiliser eight years ago to serve the rural and backward communities. She went from house to house to teach people the three basic principles of social mobilisation: Organisation, Savings and Skills.

The support Anita received from her husband, who took care of children and household chores in her absence, enabled her to travel to remote areas and continue to work at the grassroots. "I believe that women should not be restricted to household chores, they can do a lot if they are given a little bit of support. They need exposure to progress and I have been one of those lucky ones....," says Anita.

## Working together for dignified living



A group of 17 poor and landless Dalit women and few men left in Kunathar of Bhalam VDC in Kaski district have formed a community organisation with support from the Decentralized Local Governance Support Programme. The chairperson, manager and majority of members of the organisation are women whose husbands have gone to India and the Middle East for employment for an average of one year.

The organisation has been carrying out both micro-credit and development activities in this poor Dalit community. The weekly saving of the members ranges from NRs. 5-25. The members of the organisation can access this revolving fund to get a loan at a low interest rate to start income generation activities such as vegetable farming, raising buffaloes, chicken or goat or for other household purposes. In the selection of grantees, priority is given to the poorest members of the community.

According to Usha Baruwal, social mobiliser of the village, "Earlier, these people were considered untouchable and not allowed inside the houses of brahmins and chhetris but now they do not face that kind of discrimination. The public tap is now also shared by everyone". The women of the community organisation say, "Earlier we never used to communicate with one another but now we sit together and discuss how we can have more facilities in this village. Earlier we used to survive by working for the upper castes but now we have started our own income generating activities. All of us are engaged in various micro-enterprises. All of us send our children to school."