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EVALUATION REPORT

UDF-NEP-07-181/ Enhancing Political Participation of Marginalised Women in Nepal

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All errors and omissions remain the responsibility of the authors.

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I. Executive Summary

(i) The project

This report presents the findings of the evaluation of the project **"Enhancing Political Participation of Marginalized Women in Nepal."** The project was implemented in five districts in Nepal over the two-year period from 1 October 2008 to 30 September 2010 by the Association of District Development Committees of Nepal (ADDCN), in collaboration with the World Vision Advocacy Forum (WVAF) and the National Indigenous Women Forum (NIWF). The focus of the project was organizing women into informal Women's Democracy Forums (WDFs) and building a culture of collaboration between marginalized women from different social backgrounds in five Nepalese districts across the country, namely Sankhuwasabah, Kavrepalanchowk, Lamjung, Banke, and Kanchanpur. The project had different target audiences:

- Marginalized women's communities representing different castes such as Dalit, Janajati, Madeshi, and Brahmin
- Civil society organizations (CSOs)
- Representatives of local authorities
- Representatives of political parties

And three objectives:

- Give women greater capacity to have a voice in the democratic process at the district and village level by providing information, education, and communication (IEC) materials and offering training courses on women's rights.
- Forge ties among local authorities, political parties, and marginalized women's communities, federated into the Democracy Forums, to foster a common culture of collaboration.
- Establish and strengthen networks of WDFs at the village level, and federated at the district level (D/WDFs), that are proactive and create space for women's political participation.

(ii) Evaluation of the project

This project was **relevant**, as it was firmly rooted in the current Nepalese context of consolidating peace and drafting a new Constitution. Addressing the longstanding issue of the political inclusion of marginalized women living in remote areas was particularly relevant to building a new foundation for nationhood. The method and content of the project's strategy for increasing the political participation of marginalized women were guided mainly by the concept of *the rights-based approach* and were consistent with the project's objectives.

The project was implemented in five districts of Nepal and was based on a sound logical approach that explicitly identified regional gender issues in the democratic process, proposing realistic steps to address them. Gender and social inclusion, manifested in such ways as women's political participation and representation, are universally recognized as intrinsically linked with the regional dimension of poverty in Nepal. As to social and cultural norms in Nepalese society, which is still male-dominated in remote areas, the identification of male and female beneficiaries from different backgrounds (such as indigenous women's communities, NGOs, local authorities, and representatives of political parties) was also appropriate, as it sought to jointly address the issue of women's political inclusion and create a common space for future collaboration in the local and political development agendas.

The project's mandate in Nepal complemented the agenda of the Nepalese authorities and their partners, who are jointly involved in the Local Governance and Community

Development Program (LGCDP). The **LGCDP** is a recent national program aimed at improving local governance and service delivery through better and more active community engagement with local government. One of the specific objectives of the LGCDP is to empower women's communities to become actively involved in local government. Thus, the project could be considered a pilot project for achieving LGCDP program outcomes for marginalized women and it provided evidence that Nepal must bolster the learning-by-doing methodology and set up strong monitoring and follow-up mechanisms to promote a demand-driven approach that derives from the beneficiaries themselves.

Regarding the project's **effectiveness**, all activities designed to meet the project's three specific objectives were successfully concluded and delivered results over and above expectations.

The project developed a multifaceted approach tailored to women's practical needs. In fact, project activities combined traditional and alternative means of communication, such as street theater. This oral mode of education was adapted to the needs of remote communities. By stimulating debate, it enhanced the beneficiaries' capacity to set up the WDF network. The project trained over 800 beneficiaries, including local trainers, to serve as leaders in all the communities to promote the political participation of women. More than 2,000 people, including women, watched the street theater. The project published and disseminated a variety of IEC materials, such as newsletters and pamphlets tailored to the target audience, in order to encourage discussion among the beneficiaries, especially during WDFs gatherings, and to raise public awareness. The project's visibility was also enhanced by the production of weekly radio programs; 72 episodes on the political empowerment of women and democratic processes were produced and broadcast over a six–month period. The radio programs were strategically important for relaying the messages of largely marginalized women. They provided women with an opportunity not only to raise their own voice but to become more self-confident and assertive about their rights in both the private and public arena. The programs also gave local citizens an opportunity to discuss what they had heard. Finally, the programs helped strengthen the capacity of local journalists and ensure that local radio stations remained appealing to citizens. All of these activities can be considered illustrative of good practice, since they were both innovative in these Nepalese districts and were skillfully carried out by the implementing team.

The creation of a strong organizational and logistical support mechanism by ADDCN and its partners (NIWF and WVAF) was strategically important and a key factor in the effectiveness of the project as a whole. The project focused on the direct engagement of the beneficiaries, including local resource persons, to reduce the widening gap between the central and local levels. Under ADDCN supervision, the beneficiaries were directly involved in activities as local trainers and monitors to gauge the overall progress of the project. Five grassroots facilitators and five focal points appointed by women's communities and local authorities were charged with monitoring and facilitating overall project implementation. The constant engagement of these resource persons contributed to the success of project activities by building a bridge between women's community groups and local and political representatives. This bridging helped overcome the usual absence of collaboration between women's communities and political representatives. The project took active steps to create a space for women's political participation by holding several consultations with local authorities, political parties, and WDF representatives at the district and village level.

In keeping with the project plan, developments in all project activities were shared and discussed with project partners, local authorities, political parties, and women's groups. Training activities were tailored to the women's needs, and 80 local trainers identified as trainers of trainees were selected from the target audience. This methodology of directly involving grassroots facilitators and focal points appointed by women's communities and local authorities was strategically important in facilitating a common platform for project

implementation, relaying information, and covering all remote areas. The goal was to develop guidelines for the creation of WDFs. This strategic approach fostered ownership among the beneficiaries.

The project was **efficient**. All activities were implemented at a reasonable cost. Sound budget management enabled the production of extra materials; more posters and brochures were produced, and the street play was performed 16 times instead of five. There was a small balance of unspent funds, which was put to good use during a dissemination workshop held on 3 March 2011, with UNDEF's prior permission. Good practices and lessons learned were disseminated widely to national and international stakeholders. The workshop sought to reach a consensus on the lessons learned and recommendations, strengthening the foundation for stronger WDF and D/WDF networks.

The project had a number of positive **impacts**, including the fostering of an enabling environment for the exercise of marginalized women's civil and political rights. The involvement of marginalized women substantially increased during the creation of the WDFs, which were federated into D/WDF networks. To date, WDFs have 320 members across the five districts. The project enabled several WDF members to assume important positions in local administrative and political bodies and both District and Village Development Committees (DDCs and VDCs, respectively) and to implement small projects for women's communities. For instance, several D/WDF representatives were invited to take part in meetings of the local council that prepares development plans and allocates the budgets required for their execution.

Local authorities and grassroots resource persons increased their commitment to the political inclusion of women. The project's core objective and pyramidal structure captured the interest of local authorities. In the most common scenario, it aroused interest in continuity or duplication; in the best scenario, it attracted local funds. As a result of the interest generated by the project, local authorities allocated approximately USD 13,000, via the DDC office, for the empowerment of marginalized women at the grassroots and district levels. Funds mobilized by WDFs at the village and district levels were invested to support income-generating activities.

The project clearly **added value** at a time when Nepal was engaged in drafting a new Constitution to further the peace process and create a new approach to citizenship. While sociocultural norms are very strong in Nepal, one of the comparative strengths of the UNDEF-funded project was that it relied on inter-caste cooperation. Its development strategies aimed at empowering marginalized castes, whereas women are commonly separated from one another in Nepal by caste identity. The project made sure that the main castes were represented at all levels. One of the major achievements of the project was getting the highest and lowest castes to cooperate with each other, which is normally a social taboo. Under this project, Brahmins worked with Dalits and Janajatis.

The project's **sustainability** is still up in the air. While the impact after project implementation was significant, the WDF and D/WDF network is still very fragile. Synergies between WDFs federated into D/WDFs still need to be strengthened, as do synergies between marginalized communities and key local stakeholders. Moreover, there is no real women's political agenda in the WDF and D/WDF network. In other words, the WDFs have not yet tackled the critical question of how to ensure the real participation of women in local Nepalese politics in the face of longstanding sociocultural norms. The project has not yet demonstrated that local politics and public policy design have clearly been influenced by marginalized women through the D/WDFs.

(iii) Conclusions

The project achieved a number of important goals to strengthen active political participation by marginalized women at the local level. It succeeded in mobilizing hundreds of stakeholders in this process. Numerous women, local authorities, and political parties received training, benefited from IEC materials, and were consulted about ways to increase women's participation in local policy-making.

The wide range of activities **boosted women's confidence, enabling them to raise their voices in the democratization process**. Moreover, the project helped forge closer ties among marginalized women, who are often isolated, and between women and key stakeholders, such as political parties and local authorities. While most people working in the field are aware of the need to take marginalized women into account in local policy-making, this has now become even clearer.

One of the project's strong points is that its strategy was built on the direct involvement of the beneficiaries. All progress was shared and discussed directly with the beneficiaries at the local and national levels. As a result, the methodological and operational project framework was adopted and adjusted with the direct participation of the target groups. This boosted the project's efficiency and **set a precedent for working in conjunction with women's communities, local authorities, and political parties – without regard for ethnicity or political ideology.** Women were working together, regardless of their caste or political affiliation.

The project strategy was also appropriately designed. The Participatory Rapid Situation Assessment (PRSA) of the sociopolitical situation was conducted with a sample of 1,224 women and used as a baseline study. **The PRSA helped the project collect initial data and information and track progress with measurable indicators**. The activities designed and developed by the respective implementing stakeholders were adjusted on the basis of this rapid assessment report. All stages were discussed with the beneficiaries to enhance ownership. This approach contributed to identifying grassroots capacity-building needs, developing adequate awareness and training materials, and forging ties between marginalized women and local authorities.

IEC materials were employing both traditional and innovative approaches; street theater and radio programs provided a framework for the discussions among stakeholders and heightened the visibility and impact of the project as a whole.

ADDCN's long-term involvement with local authorities contributed to the project's success by helping overcome public resistance to activities geared to empowering women, such as the radio broadcasts, activities to raise awareness, etc. The specific experience and knowledge of each implementing partner, WVAF and NIWF, within civil society contributed to strong joint work-plan development. The clear division of responsibilities between implementing partners contributed to the development and the delivery of high-quality outputs.

(iv) Recommendations

In order to consolidate the results of the WDFs and D/WDFs, the following are essential:

- ***ADDCN and its implementing partners should ensure the continuity of friendly advocacy*** to consolidate the capacity of WDFs and D/WDFs and capitalize on the

results achieved. The UNDEF project provided a valuable tool with the WDF networks, which need to be consolidated to enhance women's empowerment in local policy. Numerous beneficiaries declared that the project created networks that will enable them to continue to share ideas and undertake initiatives, even if funding does not continue. Thus, the sustainability is based more on human capital and relationships than on questions of funding. ***The WDFs and D/WDFs need advisory services*** and could benefit from ideas about collaboration with local authorities and other NGOs to set up a sustainable strategy for these local networks.

- ***A future intervention phase should allow the project's approach to evolve from centering on women's civil and political rights (with a focus on DDCs and VDCs) to the active political engagement of women's communities*** through WDFs and D/WDFs. The project should go beyond human and fundamental rights principles, or general gender-inclusion policies, to focus on specific aspects of citizenship in remote areas, local economics, and social governance. WDF and D/WDF members should develop their capacity but be cautious about limiting themselves to the funding of social projects. There is a thin line between local participation and political participation. The project has obviously encouraged women to master the former, which is already a considerable achievement in the Nepalese context.

Women talking about the project benefits as women, but also as Dalit women, in Baneshwor, a high mountain village in the Sankhuwasabah district

- ***WDFs should explore synergies with other networks that have a similar scope and organizations***. They should also pursue similar goals in other districts in order to share experiences on how to enhance the political inclusion of women in local decision-making processes. This would still be in line with the project's objective of fighting exclusion and would expand the geographical scope of project benefits.

- ***A greater effort should be made to integrate men in such project activities as training and discussions.*** The male participants in the project were officials, trainers, and project managers, but not ***community members from the target groups.*** While some women said they passed their newly acquired knowledge on to men in their family, the project should make sure that information reaches male community members to avoid any exclusion or loss of impact.

- ***The development of the WDF network is hindered by restrictive social and cultural norms*.** This is particularly true in a country like Nepal with large ethnic minorities and a strict social hierarchy (see picture above) and where economic and political inequality is reinforced by social and geographical divisions. Thus, a long-term approach remains a challenge. This is why the continuity and visibility of projects like this one are so important. As clearly seen during the final dissemination workshop with national authorities and international donors, this project was an interesting and important 'pilot exercise' for local and political work. The donors in charge of the LGCDP were interested in the project's learning-by-doing methodology. The LGCDP's grants to support gender inclusion at the local level could potentially sustain WDFs.

I. Introduction and development context

(i) Project and evaluation objective

This report is the evaluation of the project **Enhancing Political Participation of Marginalized Women in Nepal**, implemented from 1 October 2008 to 30 September 2010 in five districts in Nepal.

This project has three objectives:

- Give women greater capacity to have a voice in the democratic process at the district and village level by providing IEC materials and offering training courses on women's rights.
- Forge ties among local authorities, political parties, and marginalized women's communities, federated into the Democracy Forums, to foster a common culture of collaboration.
- Establish and strengthen networks of WDFs at the village level, and federated at the district level (D/WDFs), that are proactive and create space for women's political participation.

The project was implemented by the Association of District Development Committees of Nepal (ADDCN) in collaboration with the World Vision Advocacy Forum (WVAF) and the National Indigenous Women Forum (NIWF). The project focused on organizing women into informal WDFs, strengthening the capacity of women at the grassroots level, as well as local authorities and political party representatives, and building a culture of collaboration among those stakeholders through a variety of IEC media. The project had a total budget of US$325,000.

UNDEF and Transtec have agreed on a framework governing the evaluation process, set out in the Operational Manual. According to the manual, the objective of the evaluation is to gain a better understanding of what constitutes a successful project; this, in turn, will help UNDEF devise future project strategies. Evaluations also assist stakeholders in determining whether projects have been implemented according to the project document and whether anticipated project outputs have been achieved.

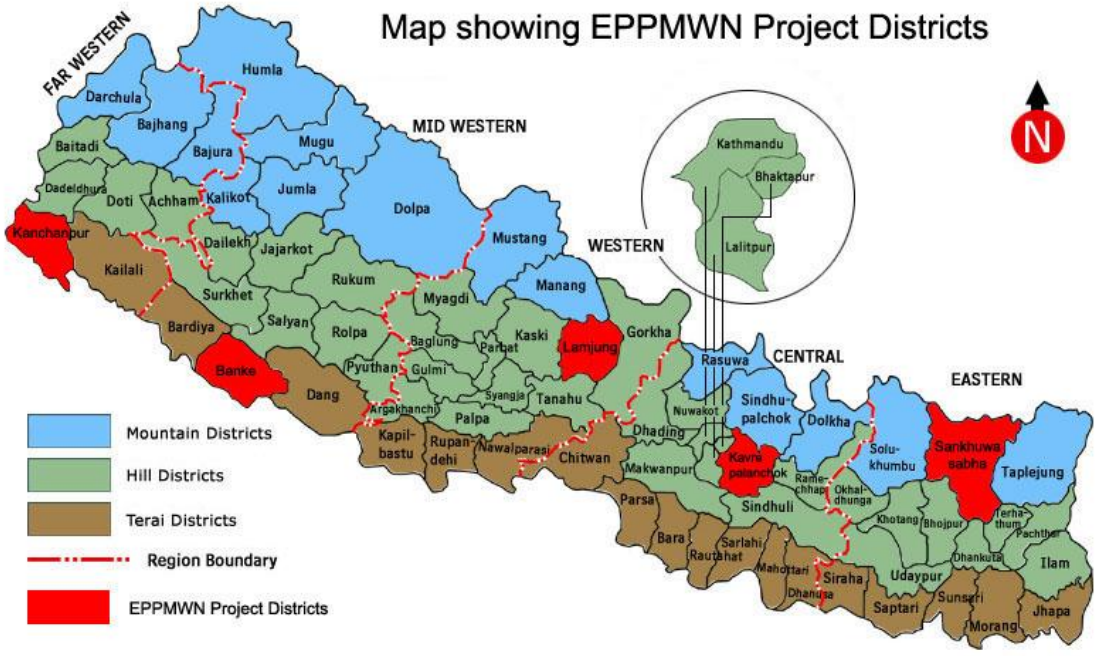


Figure 1: Map of Nepal showing the five project districts. Photo: ADDCN

(ii) Evaluation methodology

Two international experts conducted the evaluation according to the process agreed upon. A set of project documents was provided to the evaluators in February 2011 (see Annex 2, which contains a list of all documents consulted). On that basis, they prepared a Launch Note spelling out the issues to be considered during the field visit, which took place from 26 February to 4 March 2011. During their visit to Nepal, the evaluators visited Kathmandu, as well as the Sankhuwasabah district, where some of the project activities had taken place. The evaluators conducted interviews and held focus group discussions with a range of stakeholders (see Annex 3, which contains a list of people met), including:

- The project's lead organization (ADDCN): project coordinator, senior program officer, and financial manager.
- Project implementing partners: WVAF and NIWF, in charge of specific project activity development and implementation.
- Sample of radio program journalists who work at the national level with Radio Ujyaalo and those who work at the district and village levels.
- Sample of DDC participants, comprised of women, local authorities, and representatives of political parties (DDC in an urban area, Khandbari).
- Sample of VDC participants, comprised of women, local authorities, and representatives of political parties (VDC in a rural area, Kharang; and VDC in a remote area, Baneshwor).
- Grassroots Democratic Facilitators (GDFs) at the DDC and VDC levels, appointed by indigenous communities.
- District Focal Points (FPs), designated by local authorities.
- Representatives of the National Authorities (National Planning Commission of the Government of Nepal, Ministry of Local Development (MoLD), Constituent Assembly representatives).
- Representatives of international donors (UNDP Nepal, European Union).

The evaluation team took the impact of the various media outputs used during project implementation into consideration (e.g. brochures, pamphlets, quarterly newsletters, radio programs, etc.). The goal was to assess to what extent the project had delivered appropriate and adequate information to correctly targeted audiences and to assess how the media contributed to the dissemination of messages encouraging women to participate in politics. Finally, the evaluators assessed how innovative the project was in comparison with similar projects.

Content of Newsletter N°4
"Mahila Bichar"

- Violence against Nepalese Women: 42-point memorandum to H.E. the President and the Prime Minister for a New Nepal Constitution
- Space for Marginalized Women in the New Constitution
- Marginalized Women: from the VDC level (local) to the Presidential House
- News on Public Debate Program on Constitution-building in 5 districts
- ToT on GGAPH concluded
- News on Street Drama for Awareness

On 3 March 2011, the evaluators attended the dissemination workshop organized by ADDCN with its implementing partners. During the workshop, project achievements were discussed and disseminated to a large panel of local, national, and international stakeholders. The workshop also provided an excellent opportunity for participants to hear the opinions of the national authorities and to assess the extent to which the project was relevant for the government and other international development partners and how the project's best practices could be replicated/integrated in the long term into other national/international programs. At the conclusion of their visit, the evaluators held a debriefing session with representatives from ADDCN, WVAF, and NIWF.

(iii) Development context

With the end of the conflict in April 2006, the development space in Nepal has expanded considerably. The country is close to achieving several of the eight Millennium Development Goals by 2015, and 12 of the 14 targets could be met by 2015[1]. The percentage of the population living below the national poverty line dropped from 42% in 1996 to 25.4% in 2009. The Human Development Report (HDR) 2010 acknowledged Nepal as one of the top 10 performers in human development worldwide. Despite the progress made, however, Nepal is still one of the poorest countries in South Asia, and the Human Development Report stated that "Nepal has tremendous scope to improve human development."

Although Nepal has made considerable progress in education and health over the past 15 years, national averages continue to mask significant, and in some cases widening, disparities between ethnic and social groups, urban and rural households, men and women, and people from different geographic regions. One of the most critical development failures is the exclusion of castes and ethnic groups (e.g. Dalits, Madhesis, and Janajatis) – especially women – and certain regions (mid- and far-Western hills and the Terai) from the benefits of growth and human development.

Social exclusion has been a defining feature of Nepal's historical development and is entrenched in its political, economic, and social fabric. Despite the government's efforts to empower women in the democratic process, women in Nepal still face significant discrimination. The new Constitution, formulated after the establishment of multiparty democracy in 1990, described Nepal as a multiethnic, multilingual, and democratic state, and declared all citizens equal,. However, the government has been unable to effectively ensure more equitable political representation and inclusive development for marginalized groups. It allowed the Maoist insurgents to exploit social disparities to their advantage. The Maoist ideology of gender and class equality therefore appealed to a large number of women, such as the Janajatis.

Since the end of the conflict, a space for a more inclusive democracy has been established to provide an opportunity to address issues involving the social exclusion of marginalized women. The government has amended discriminatory laws and provisions related to gender inclusion. For instance, the Interim Constitution of Nepal (2007)[2] includes provisions that support gender equality and social inclusion.[3] The government has demonstrated its

1 *Nepal Millennium Development Goals Progress Report 2010.* Government of Nepal, National Planning

2 Government of Nepal, Nepal Law Commission, 2007. *Interim Constitution of Nepal 2063 (2007).* www.lawcommission.gov.np/index.php/en/constitution

3 The interim Constitution has a separate article for women's fundamental rights (Article 20) and is more inclusive toward Janajatis, Dalits, and Madhesis (the latter were not even mentioned in the previous Constitution). It establishes the right to equality and to protection against untouchability, racial discrimination, and exploitation (e.g., forced labor). It refers to the need for all groups to be proportionately represented in the State's structure (Article 21) and the right to education in one's mother tongue (Article 17). It also authorizes the State to implement measures for the "protection, empowerment, and advancement of women, Dalits, indigenous nationalities, and Madhesis" (Article 13).

commitment to gender equality and social inclusion by signing a number of international conventions. For instance, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was ratified by Nepal in 1991 without any restrictions. After the Beijing Conference, provisions were incorporated into the political and administrative sectors to ensure women's participation. The Government of Nepal formulated a national plan of action to address 12 critical areas of concern, including poverty among women, women's access to education and health services, women's participation in decision-making, and violence against women.

The government instituted policies to increase the representation of women and excluded groups in political institutions and the civil service. The **2007 amendment to the Civil Service Act** reserves 45% of vacant posts for excluded groups[4]. The **Constituent Assembly Member Election Act** allocates seats to women, Dalits, ethnic groups, and Madhesis. A provision was made to ensure women's representation of 33% in the Constituent Assembly. In the 2008 elections, women accounted for 32.2% of the elected body, compared to 5.9% in the 1999 elections. As a result, the Constituent Assembly now has 197 women. However, many of these women are extremely loyal to their party and have not been properly prepared for their legislative role.[5] They do not speak with their own voice and lack self-confidence.[6] Women's representation in political parties is also low, especially in the higher echelons of power. The **Local Self-Governance Act of 1999** introduced the mandatory representation of women in local government. In ward committees and municipalities, it is mandatory that 20% of the members be women. After the 1997 local elections, women members constituted only around 7% of the members of VDCs and DDC bodies. Policy decisions are made at the village, district, and national levels. The project echoed this scheme in the WDFs, which were bringing women together at the village and district level. This scheme sought to increase and facilitate women's interaction with politicians and local officials from their region who were concerned about, or at least aware of, the same issues that they were. However, these elected bodies have not been functional, since the term of the elected representatives ended in 2002. Local bodies are therefore only partly functional, with various types of appointed representatives, very few of whom are women. Despite provisions such as those mentioned above, women's participation in DDCs and VDCs is still token. In the local political sphere, women tend to be confined mainly to grassroots decision-making levels through voting. To summarize, marginalized women have limited access to local political processes. They have no opportunity to participate in the local and political development agenda or to share their views with local authorities or political parties. Regarding this situation, the project intends to increase the access of women, especially indigenous women, to decision-making positions at the VDC and DDC level.

Regional identity and geographical location are also strong determinants of gender exclusion and unequal development outcomes. Historically, the excluded regions (notably the mid- and far western regions) remain the home of most of Nepal's poorest and most disadvantaged people, both Dalits and Janajatis – and among them, especially children, women, and the disabled.

The country is going through a critical period in its history. The ongoing constitution-building process demonstrates that the peace is still fragile. Addressing the longstanding issues of local development and social and political inclusion of historically disadvantaged groups/communities, including women's political participation, is critical to maintaining the peace process and laying the foundations for new nationhood. These major issues are highlighted and addressed by the project's activities.

4 Vacant posts for excluded groups were allocated as follows: women (33%), ethnic groups (27%), Madhesis (22%), Dalits (9%), differently abled (5%), and backward regions (4%).

5 Inter-parliamentary Union, Women in Parliament in 2008, the Year in Perspective.

6 This was stated by **Anjana Shakya during a workshop held by BBC** for women members of the CA.

(iv) Other relevant initiatives

Donors other than UNDEF are providing support for capacity building among DDCs and VDCs, paying special attention to the inclusion of marginalized women. In this respect, the **Local Governance and Community Development Program (LGCDP)** is a recent national program, managed and implemented by the MoLD and financed by the Government of Nepal and its development partners.[7] The LGCDP seeks to contribute to poverty reduction in Nepal through improved and more inclusive local governance and service delivery. Specifically, key LGCDP outputs are (i) empowering citizens and communities for active engagement with local governments and increasing higher-level accountability, (ii) funding DDC-, municipality-, and VDC-led local development, (iii) developing local government capacity for effective service delivery, (iv) providing policy support for decentralization and local governance, and (v) promoting gender sensitivity and social inclusion in local government affairs.

Ten percent of grants are devoted to supporting women, 10% to programs that support children, and 15% to programs that support other disadvantaged groups. UNDP published guidelines under this framework in 2009; many of them served as a source of inspiration for the government's Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Strategy. Since 1995, UNDP has provided large-scale support to bolster the self-governance capacity of local bodies and communities and promote citizen participation projects. Among many UNDP initiatives, a similar project related to the drafting of the Constitution was implemented in 2009. Supported by 91 NGOs representing marginalized groups, the project set up an outreach program. These NGOs conducted over 2,000 democratic dialogues (*loktantrik sambad*) in some 1,500 VDCs across Nepal; these dialogues helped raise awareness of constitutional issues among more than 125,000 people, roughly half male and half female. Most of these meetings culminated in agreement among the participants about the priority issues for the new Constitution. This process resulted in 18 submissions that were subsequently presented to the Constituent Assembly's thematic committees.

(v) Targeted beneficiaries

The project, which operated in one district in each region of Nepal, had appropriate ethnic and geographical coverage. It covered a total of 25 VDCs in five districts, namely Sankhuwasabah in the East, Kavrepalanchowk in the Center, Lamjung in the West, Banke in the Mid-west, and Kanchanpur in the Far West.

The project targeted marginalized women, local authorities, and representatives of political parties, so as to address gender inclusion at the local level. When selecting its target beneficiaries, the project made sure there was representation of the main castes at all levels. It is interesting to note the Brahmins' involvement in the project, as they represent one of the highest castes in Nepal. This confirms how relevant the project was in addressing the need to change sociocultural norms and attitudes toward marginalized groups and gender discrimination. It also confirms how innovative this project was in stimulating cooperation between different castes.

A sociopolitical situation analysis of marginalized women at the DDC and VDC level (i.e., a PRSA) was conducted to collect baseline data and information and better identify marginalized women's weaknesses in the democratic process. In all, 1,224 women participated in the PRSA, and 75 discussions groups on the situation of women in local

7 The LGCDP development partners are UN agencies (UNDP, UNCDF, UNV, UNICEF, UNFPA and UNIFEM), ADB DFID, DANIDA, NORAD, CIDA, and SDC.

politics were held (15 discussion groups in each district). The main objective was to collect quantitative and qualitative grassroots data on specific issues, such as:

- **Knowledge of political and democratic processes and governance.** Field data revealed that only 18.8% of women (231 women out of 1,224 interviewees) had any knowledge of political parties, elections, state policy-making, vote casting, etc. Only 14.5% of women were able to explain the meaning of democracy. Democracy was viewed mainly as a precondition for freedom, peace, equality, and rights. Sixteen percent of women had a clear understanding of human rights. Only 2.6% had received training in political, democratic, and human rights issues.

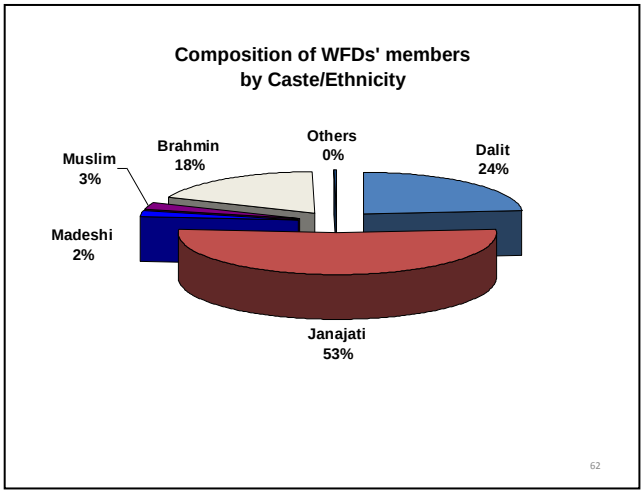


Figure 2: Representation of caste among WDFs

- **Ownership of and control over household property; participation in household decision-making.** Only 28% reported involvement in household decision-making on kitchen expenses, payment of children's school fees, ritual and festival expenses, etc. Almost a third (32.2%) of the women said they had endured discrimination at the hands of husbands, mothers-in-law, senior family members, etc. regarding the way they spend their own income, mobility, the right to speak to outsiders, and participation in public affairs.

- **Awareness and understanding of the causes of marginalization.** The field data revealed that 20.4% were able to explain the causes of their exclusion. These women said that their exclusion was due mainly to women's lack of education, tradition/customs, the law, and patriarchal male domination.

- **Access to information and public services for politics and democracy.** The majority of women had no knowledge of VDC and DDC mandates or public institutions such as post offices, schools, public health facilities, the police, and land revenue offices. Few of them had had the opportunity to participate in DDC and VDC meetings, and the majority of them had no knowledge of the VDC development planning process.

To summarize, the findings of the PRSA report showed that the marginalized women had a limited understanding of and access to local policy processes. They had no opportunity to participate in the local and political development agenda or to share their views with local authorities or political parties.

Table 1: Districts and villages benefiting from the project

	Kanchanpur	Banke	Lamjung	Kavre	Sankhuwasabah
1	Pipaladi	Indrapur	Sri-Manjyang	Dev Bhumi Baluwa	Kharang
2	Raikawar Bichawa	Bankatti	Bansar	Phalante	Baneshor
3	Rampur Bilaspur	Hiraminia	Nauthar	Simthali	Dhupu
4	Dekhatbhuli	Chisapani	Neta	Bekh Simle	Syabun
5	Shankarpur	Khaskusma	Dhuseni	Saping	Matsya Pokhari

II. Project objectives, strategy, and implementation

(i) Objectives and strategy

The table below summarizes the project's logical chain, from activities to results contributing to the ultimate development objectives. It is based on the results framework of the original project document.

ACTIVITIES	RESULTS	PROJECT OBJECTIVES	DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVE
-Human rights development and fundamental democratic principles training curriculum and Training of Trainer (ToT) sessions in 25 VDC and Kathmandu -Publication and dissemination of IEC materials on women's political rights and democracy -Production of radio program episodes	**Result 1: Improve women's capacity to strengthen democratic process at the local level** **Beneficiaries:** - 20 local trainers trained in human rights and fundamental democratic principles; - 625 marginalized women informed, including women from political parties and CSOs; - Women's awareness-raising on political and democratic processes (1,150 pamphlets, 2,300 brochures, 72 radio program episodes disseminated in all districts).	1. Improve women's capacity to strengthen democratic process at the local level; 2. Increase the capacity of CSOs and local authorities in empowerment through advocacy tools; 3. Establish and strengthen political networks that are proactive and create space for women's political participation.	**Strengthen the democratic process in Nepal and promote active political participation by marginalized women**
-Completion of PRSA analysis on the political situation of women in the project areas - Training for local authorities at the VDC and DDC level -Development of GSIA training curriculum and completion of ToT at the district and VDC level -Development of GGAPH training curriculum and completion of ToT at the district and VDC levels	**Result 2: Increase the capacity of CSOs and local authorities with respect to civic empowerment and advocacy tools and techniques**. **Beneficiaries:** ▪ Key local stakeholders: awareness-raising with the presentation of an analysis of women's political situation; ▪ 20 DDC representatives and political leaders and D/WDFs members selected as local GGAPH trainers and 150 local authorities, political leaders, and women trained in GGAPH; ▪ 20 women selected as local GSIA trainers, and 125 WDF members consisting of women from political parties and local authority representatives trained.		
-Public consultation meetings with political representatives, local authorities, and women's communities -Establishment of WDF guidelines at the VDC and DDC level -Public dialogue program 'Marginalized Women's Political Rights and Access to the Constitution-building Process' in Kathmandu and 5 project districts	**Result 3: Establish and strengthen the WDF network within political parties and the representatives of local authorities to create space for women's political participation and future collaboration**. **Beneficiaries:** ▪ Target communities informed in 25 VDCs; ▪ Establishment of 25 WDFs and 5 D/WDFs through 500 monthly meetings at the VCD level (20/village) and 30 quarterly meetings at the DDC level (5/district); ▪ Greater awareness among political representatives, CA members, and CSOs about the ongoing constitutional process through 5 public dialogues held in Kathmandu and each district (1/district).		

(ii) Targeted beneficiaries in the project strategy approach

The project strategy towards the target audience was designed to reduce the widening gap between the center (Kathmandu) and the periphery (five districts). The project approach focused on the direct engagement of the targeted beneficiaries, with the establishment of a supportive organizational and logistical mechanism in each DDC and VDC. Thus, the top-down structure from Kathmandu was combined with a bottom-up mechanism from the DDCs and VDCs to facilitate and monitor the project's progress. A strong support mechanism was set up as follows:

- Five FPs were identified by the project and assigned to appropriate local organizations in each DDC to facilitate project activities involving marginalized women's communities, political representatives, and the representatives of local authorities at the DDC and VDC level. In addition to their monitoring and facilitation roles, these focal points also advocated for the allocation of local budget resources to issues of importance to women.
- Five GDFs)– one per district – appointed by marginalized communities, were recruited by the project at the grassroots level. The GDFs were actively involved as frontline leaders in facilitating the creation of WDFs and D/WDFs. The GDFs also served as a bridge between WDFs, D/WDFs, and local authorities for the local empowerment of marginalized women.

All GDFs and FPs received guidance on project implementation processes and WDF guidelines. All issues related to project implementation were discussed by GDFs during monthly and quarterly D/WDF meetings.

Sixty targeted beneficiaries were selected as local trainers to conduct project training and disseminate IEC materials at the DDC and VDC level, as follows:

- 20 local trainers in human rights and fundamental democratic principles were selected
- 20 DDC representatives, political leaders, and D/WDF members were selected as local trainers in governance, gender auditing and public hearings
- 20 women were selected as local trainers in gender, social inclusion, and advocacy.

(iii) Strategic implementation

The strategy was based on three main objectives and designed to operate in three stages:

1. Strengthening the capacity of women in the community, local authorities, and representatives of political parties at the DDC and VDC level by producing IEC materials (pamphlets, brochures, radio programs); and training in (i) human rights and fundamental democratic principles; (ii) gender, social inclusion, and advocacy; and (iii) governance, gender auditing, and public hearings;
2. Establishing linkages among local authorities, political parties, and marginalized women's communities by providing logistical and capacity-building mechanisms at the DDC and VDC level to foster a common culture of collaboration among beneficiaries from different backgrounds;
3. Organizing and developing WDFs at the VDC level, federated at the DDC level (D/WDFs), by adopting a community organization pyramid to strengthen women's voices in democratic processes.

The project strategy made it clear that planned activities were to be supported by strong consideration of top-down mechanisms, with a bottom-up approach at the grassroots level. The bottom-up mechanism was translated into the adoption of the community organization pyramid, which included the direct involvement of GDFs and FPs at the different geographical levels.

ADDCN signed a separate Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the five selected DDCs to facilitate the logistical and organizational design of the project. The top-down mechanism translated into a strong strategic partnership between implementing partners. In November 2008, the lead implementing agency (ADDCN) signed an MoU with its respective partners, NIWF and VWAF. The two MoUs were designed as legal and financial management tools for the joint development of a detailed project work plan in which each implementing partner would contribute its specific experience/knowledge and respective network. Under this framework, management and partnership arrangements were established as follows:

- A Project Steering Committee was set up to review the overall progress of the project as well as the outputs/outcomes of WDFs and D/WDFs on a quarterly basis. The committee included members from each implementing partner.
- An ADDCN Project Coordinator was recruited to monitor the overall activities on a daily basis.
- A team leader for capacity building was recruited by WVAF.
- A team leader for gender and social inclusion was recruited by NIWF.

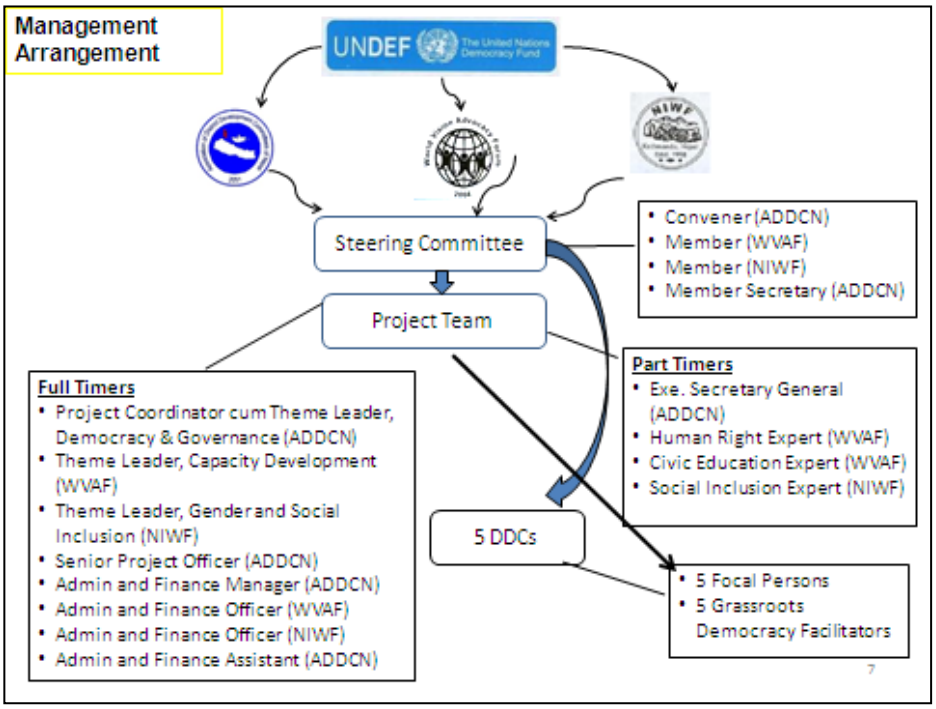


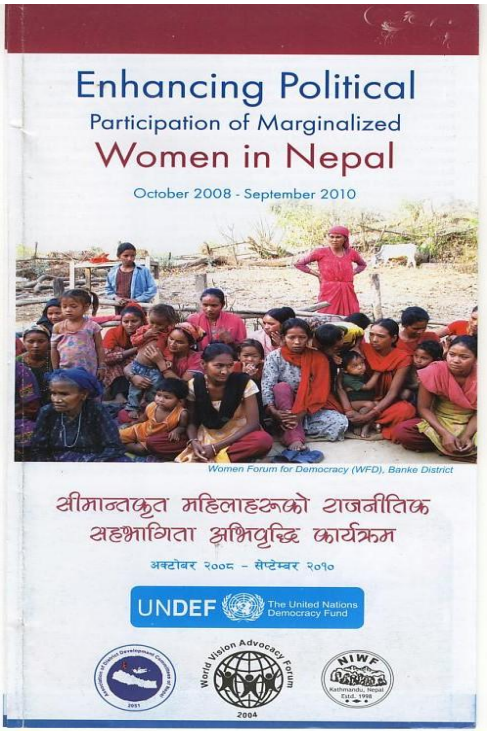
Figure 3: Management arrangement chart (Photo: ADDCN)

III. Evaluation findings

The evaluation is based on a set of evaluation questions designed to cover the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability, plus the issue of UNDEF value added. The evaluation questions and related subquestions are presented in Annex 1.

(i) Relevance

The project was in line with the Nepalese development context. The capacity of local authorities to address the social exclusion of marginalized groups has recently emerged as a core challenge on the Nepalese political agenda. The project interventions were assessed by both stakeholders and evaluators as being highly relevant to the local political and social circumstances. As outlined in the previous section about the Nepalese political context, there is an urgent need to develop the means whereby excluded remote communities – marginalized women in particular – can be included in mainstream society for nation-building and social progress free from strife. This is a crucial question for the ongoing constitution-building process to give Nepal's citizens equal opportunities, especially at the local level where the poverty indicators are highest.



It is also germane to relevance that the project strategy was conceived as a pragmatic local response. In a situation where top-down government approaches have failed to address social exclusion and the effective participation of marginalized women, the project combined a top-down strategy within a bottom-up approach at the VDC and DDC level. This was considered very relevant by all beneficiaries.

Similarly, the logistical and organizational mechanism for the inclusion of GDFs and FPs, appointed respectively by women's communities and local authorities, was useful in facilitating and monitoring project activities and creating a pyramidal organization. The mechanisms directly fostered target-audience ownership.

The evaluators also concluded that the identification of the target audience – including men and women and people from different backgrounds such as marginalized women, local authorities, and male representatives of political parties – addressed the need to change sociocultural norms and attitudes about gender discrimination. The evaluators concluded that all activities were designed to follow a logical approach:

- A baseline study on the sociopolitical situation of women,
- Development of activities responding to women's needs,
- Monitoring impact quality through measurable indicators,
- Creation of WDF guidelines to draft a women's agenda.

The PRSA was produced to better analyze the sociopolitical situation of the target audience. Through it, the project (i) obtained baseline information and (ii) was able to measure changes between the initial and final situations in the selected DDCs and VDCs.

The development and design of the activities were both relevant and effective. All activities were tailored to take women's practical needs, as identified by the baseline information collected, into account.

> "We broadcasted radio episodes for two years every Friday evening, 72 in all. When we ended the program we received many letters asking for new episodes. The program was famous and had a positive impact. Once, a woman came to our facilities; she had walked 5 hours to reach us and asked for help. Her husband and all her in-laws were beating her because her child had died while her husband was absent. Through the radio program she heard that this was not normal and understood she could get help. As a result of radio mediating with the police and local authorities, her husband had to make public apology and received an official warning, even though as a public servant he would normally have been immune from such punishment."
>
> **Shyam PRASAD, district reporter for Radio Khandari FM.**

A range of IEC materials was produced to increase the literacy of beneficiaries. Training in human rights and fundamental democratic principles; on gender, social inclusion, and advocacy; and in governance, gender auditing, and public hearings were particularly tailored to women's political situation. The project adopted a pedagogical approach specifically designed to enhance ownership by the target audience. The ToT in these subjects, designed to enhance women's capacity at the local level, selected local trainers from among a targeted audience. These trainers were in charge of disseminating the information at various geographical layers with the help of resource persons appointed by implementing partners. The creation of a pool of local trainers – selected among beneficiaries from different backgrounds – created a common platform for interchange and debate, aimed at creating the WDF network and strengthening a joint women's participation agenda. This tailored mechanism contributed to the establishment of the WDF network, creating a space for women's political participation and future collaboration.

Dissemination methods, including traditional and alternative means, were used to hold the beneficiaries' attention – whatever their level of literacy. In these programs, information on discriminatory practices closely matching the daily experience of marginalized women was disseminated; this sparked debates and public discussion in communities. Representatives of marginalized women's communities, as well as other stakeholders, identified street theater and radio programs as the most relevant media, when compared with brochures, pamphlets, quarterly newsletters, etc. However, the newsletter 'Mahila Bichar' was also suitably designed for a literate audience and widely disseminated. The newsletters were used during training sessions to encourage discussion and debate among trainees. The evaluators found that the pamphlets and brochures were used mainly for project visibility and publicity. Nonetheless, as perceived by the stakeholders, the education and information activities, as well as the advocacy tools, were of high strategic relevance in promoting active political participation by marginalized women to give them a voice in the local and national democratic decision-making process.

Khandari FM radio station studio (photo: A.Ferreira)

The project's goals were highly relevant to the need to consolidate the peace process in Nepal. They promoted the idea of equality across gender, caste, and ethnic lines. The approaches used were relevant to the context, making them highly effective as well.

(ii) Effectiveness

As would be expected from much of the above discussion on relevance, the project was generally very effective. All planned activities were carried out to a high standard, delivering better-than-expected results.

- More awareness-raising material than anticipated was produced, thanks to lower-than-expected brochure and pamphlet printing costs.
- The IEC materials produced and the alternative means of raising awareness proved very effective in achieving results. The quarterly newsletter was widely disseminated among project beneficiaries, WDF and D/WDF members, and other stakeholders. The newsletter provided detailed information about women's issues. Even though many of the people who received the newsletter were illiterate, women's issues appearing in the newsletters were discussed at WDF meetings, usually under the lead of the GDF. The publication itself enhanced the perception of the seriousness of the project. Five street plays were originally planned, but 16 were produced and seen by some 2,000 people.

Materials planned	Materials delivered	Average distribution per district (DDC)	Average distribution per village (VDC)
2,300 brochures	2,500 brochures	500 brochures	100 brochures
1,150 posters	1,300 posters	260 posters	52 posters
5 street plays	16 street plays	Around 3	Almost 1
7,800 newsletters	7,800 newsletters (1,300 per issue, 6 publications)	260 copies per district and per issue	52 copies per village and per issue

Table 2: Project deliverables expected at contract signature and achieved at project closure

- The beneficiaries of training expressed positive views of the content. Although the gender, social inclusion, and advocacy training and governance, gender auditing and public hearings training were held only once in each district, the project conducted training in all VDCs with local trainers. Documents show that these courses were carefully developed and planned in advance, using highly qualified external resources.
- As described above, radio programs were considered the best media for enabling women to make their voices heard. Participants who met with the evaluators remarked on the quality of the radio programs broadcast and the effectiveness of media outputs. The local journalists interviewed said that these programs had helped individual women realize that they were not alone in enduring discrimination. The broadcasts also conveyed the message that sharing experiences about discrimination is no longer taboo. The programs helped women gain self-confidence in both the public sphere and the private sphere with their husband and family.
- The beneficiaries also engaged directly in other activities, such as demonstrations for Women's Day.

The project was effective and progressively created the need to maintain WDF and D/WDF networks. At the conclusion of the project, 25 WDFs at the VDC level and five D/WDFs consisting of 320 members were fully functional. The WDF members who met with the evaluators commented on the quality of the WDF guidelines for developing a women's agenda to make women more confident, assertive, and vocal in public and in private.

WDFs have been much more proactive than expected in the Project Document signed between UNDEF and ADDCN. Good organization, good planning, and sound budgeting together enabled WDFs in Sankhuwasabah to conduct additional activities. In all villages, rallies were organized on 8 March, International Women's Day. The different WDFs also organized a special demonstration – coordinated through the radio program – to protest the status of widows. In Kharang village, the WDF opened its own Democracy Office, when it became aware that local funding was available. In the same village, it built a water tank for the distribution of drinking water. WDFs also organized a training course in sewing, cutting, and clothes-making and helped distribute food to mothers in the district hospital.

(iii) Efficiency

The project managed to achieve planned outcomes with fewer resources than programmed. This suggests that project management reduced costs and avoided waste, managing project activities with reasonable regard for efficiency. Quarterly meetings between implementing partners provided an opportunity to undertake joint financial control of the activities of each partner. Around 2% of the unspent funds were used to hold a dissemination workshop targeting a wide sample of national stakeholders.

Other factors contributing to the project's efficiency included:

- The quality of the relationship between ADDCN and implementing partner organizations (WVAF and NIWF). The project benefited from the ADDCN network at the DDC and VDC level, and from the specific skills of WVAF and NWIF with respect to marginalized women and media.
- The use of well-qualified project staff, who remained involved throughout the project, enhanced the project's credibility with both the representatives of local authorities and marginalized communities. The fact that FPs and GDFs were appointed by the target audience and selected by the project was also strategically appropriate and effective in enhancing target-audience ownership.
- The intervention logic was very coherent and efficient for monitoring and evaluating project progress. The PRSA was used pre- and post-project to assess the impact.
- The administrative and financial management of the project and the close supervision of activities from Kathmandu and at the local level also played a significant role. The MoUs signed between implementing partners, as well as between implementing partners and other stakeholders (national radio), were effective tools for anticipating potential changes to the initial work plan; they also permitted a clear division of responsibilities. Twenty-seven regular meetings between implementing partners were held during the project period, and document files seen by the evaluators show that each activity was given specific and documented attention.

(iv) Impact

Women from the WDF in Kharang village (photo: A. Ferreira)

Given Nepal's patriarchal context and women's sociopolitical ignorance, the project demonstrated the value of putting marginalized women together with local authorities and political parties to promote the political inclusion of women. Doing this had an immediate impact, helping to increase information and knowledge among all stakeholders. The target beneficiaries involved in project activities derived benefits and underwent a change in attitude. Marginalized women who met the evaluators said that they had experienced a change in mindset with their families and in the public sphere, because they were exposed to new ways of addressing women's rights and government provisions that encourage the exercise of those rights. The project helped marginalized women raise their voices about gender-related problem areas, such as property and inheritance rights, the right to education, marriage and divorce, human rights abuses, etc. The project therefore had a direct impact on women's self-confidence and created a positive dynamic. Several initiatives materialized at the local level as a direct result of the project, such as demonstrations on International Women's Day, charitable activities in hospitals, the creation of a Democracy Office in Kharang, etc.

All resource persons recruited by the project – local trainers, GDFs, and FPs – have had their skills enhanced and have begun to advocate for social change. Besides their active role in facilitation and monitoring, FPs have called on the representatives of local authorities for small grants to develop WDF activities. As a result of facilitation, DDC and VDC offices have begun to allocate budgets for the empowerment of marginalized women at the grassroots and district level. The funds mobilized by WDF and D/WDFs from DDCs and VDCs came to approximately USD 13,000 (Rs. 917,982 in all project districts in the past fiscal year). These funds were invested to support the demands of women's initiatives for income- generating activities.

> "Before the project, we could not appear in front of men or raise our voices to defend our interests. Now that we have received training on our rights, on budget opportunities at the local level, and on advocacy tools, we feel much more confident and are ready to demand our rights."
>
> **Woman interviewed in Kharang Village**

The project has also contributed to a shift in attitudes among government officials toward a greater understanding of women's concerns. The representatives from D/WDFs, as recognized by the local authorities, were invited to take part in the meetings of local councils and other local bodies (see Table 3 below) that formulate development plans and allocate the budgets required for their implementation. Although project participants from VDCs and DDCs have acquired knowledge on mainstreaming gender concerns, DDC and VDC offices have not yet adopted long-term measures to establish and adapt a mechanism for gender inclusion.

A critical mass of women is now motivated to demand women's rights through the WDF and D/WDF networks. Working against traditional sociocultural norms, the project demonstrated the importance of citizenship and civic activism in transcending caste, ethnicity, and political partisanship, especially in these critical times when the constitutional process is to give all Nepalese citizens a chance to contribute to the drafting of the Constitution.

However, despite strong commitments and motivation among people, there was no evidence that the new WDFs and D/WDFs have actually influenced political decisions on local governance, such as service-delivery mechanisms.

Table 3: Major Project Achievements: institutionalized representation of WDF and D/WDF members in local bodies after project completion

- 38 WDF members (out of 63) in Sangkhuwasava have been nominated as chair, secretary, & member of local institutions.
- The chair of D/WDF of Sangkhuwasava, Ms. Sila Shrestha, has been elected as Vice Chair of the Nepal Red Cross Society, Sangkhuwasava
- The Vice Chair of D/WDF in Banke, Ms. Sila Balmiki, has been elected a member of the Town Committee of the Nepali Congress.
- Two WDF members in Banke have been elected members of the School Management Committee.
- A D/WDF member in Kanchanpur has been elected a district committee member
- A D/WDF member in Kanchanpur has been nominated by women's groups as Coordinator of the Regional Network on Violence against Women. Ms. Kali Chaudhari, Chair of the D/WDF-Kanchanpur, has become the coordinator of a local NGO
- A WDF member in Rampur Bilasipur Kanchanpur, Ms. Mangala BK, has been elected as a Chair in Secondary School
- The Vice-Chair of the D/WDF of Lamjung, Ms. Parbati Tamang, has been elected a member of Nepali Congress district committee
- Ms. Loka Adhikari, a member of D/WDF, Lamjung, has been elected a member of the district committee of the United Marxist and Leninist Party (UML)

WDF members in Kharang Village in front of their newly opened "Democracy Office", a result of the training and information on budget received from the project (photo: A. Ferreira)

(v) Sustainability

Presentation of a recommendation on caste citizenship recognition to Prime Minister Madhav Kumar within the framework of the constitution-building process (photo: ADDCN)

Key advances in sustainability were made in relation to the WDF and D/WDF members, who gained self-confidence as a result of project activities. By the end of the project, 42 recommendations on the issues of marginalized women, collected from marginalized women in the districts, were presented in the presence of 150 participants, including the Chair of the Constituent Assembly, the Minister of Local Development, Constituent Assembly members (policymakers), and other stakeholders.

In addition, the WDF and D/WDF provided networking opportunities and an impetus for self-initiated grassroots initiatives. It was also encouraging that many initiatives were launched after the project by grassroots activists; for example, a water tank for the distribution of drinking water, training courses in sewing, cutting, and clothes making in Sankhuwasabha district etc. The local origin of GDFs and FPs proved to be very beneficial in terms of promoting well-targeted advocacy; as members of the community, both GDFs and FPs have a full understanding of local issues and decision-making processes.

It is hard to assess the sustainability of the capacity built in WDF and D/WDF networks and whether recognition of this network by local and political officials will last. The sustainability of these networks is already jeopardized by the lack of financial and organizational means at the VDC level with the D/WDFs. Since the project's end, several WDFs at the VDC level have not really interacted with other WDFs or the D/WDFs, which were supposed to federate all WDFs in each district. The pyramidal organization designed by the project is still fragile.

By the end of the project, all D/WDFs jointly submitted 42 recommendations on marginalized women's issues to Prime Minister Madhav Kumar for inclusion in the Constitution-building process. In the picture above, the woman speaking is requesting recognition of her citizenship and citizenship for her caste (categorized as the caste of sex workers). Nepali custom commonly recognizes citizenship through the father and refuses to grant it through the mother. This lady was requesting institutional recognition of the right to citizenship through the mother.

In addition, the evaluators found out that several WDFs and D/WDFs became funders for social microprojects, rather than operating as advocacy networks to promote the expansion of women's political participation. It was surprising, for instance, that the production of media (brochures, pamphlets, etc.), the preparation of training manuals, and the training of local trainers are not viewed as social capital to give women a greater voice in DDCs and VDCs.

At the end of the project, the evaluators, as well as ADDCN and implementing partner organizations WVAF and NIWF, felt that replication of the project modalities developed is necessary in most of WDFs to strengthen the capacities of those networks and increase the number of members for the sake of sustainability. The project has certainly laid the foundation for real change, but it needs to be backed by follow-up project activities. Otherwise, the benefits may be lost.

(vi) UNDEF value added

The project fell fully within UNDEF's mandate and contributed to the empowerment of marginalized women and democratic dialogue. While sociocultural norms are very entrenched in Nepal, this project involved itself in particularly sensitive areas when it selected its target beneficiaries, who represented all castes, including the Brahmin castes, as they are the highest castes in Nepal. The value added was also in project design and activities to improve women's political participation to make local bodies more responsive and accountable. Working with marginalized women, local authorities, and representatives of political parties was a sound strategic decision to raise awareness in general and boost analytical and technical capacity in gender inclusion.

UNDEF's mandate in Nepal helped complement the country's agenda and its main development partners involved in the LGCDP program. In this respect, the project could be considered a pilot project for achieving LGCDP program objectives for the protection and emancipation of marginalized women.

Evaluators were told that the UN brand helped attract funds for this project from other donors. At the time of the evaluation, WVAF was just starting a new project with European Union support. Implementing the UNDEF project reinforced WVAF's management capacities.

IV. Conclusions

The conclusions presented here represent a summary of the answers to the evaluation questions presented in the previous section.

(i) Women's demand for political participation has increased

The project helped give greater voice to women and taught them how to participate in local politics. It also encouraged women to demand inclusion in local and national policy programming. The project supported the country's democratization process for marginalized women and helped deliver high-quality activities through training, awareness-raising, and IEC material. It also helped forge ties among women and paved the way for them to organize themselves into an influential lobby through the WDFs. Moreover, the project's activities attracted the attention of key local stakeholders – especially local bodies, which are still male-dominated. Aside from the radio audience, for which an exact number is not known, over 3,000 people have been reached directly or indirectly by the project's activities.

(ii) The combination of top-down and bottom-up design was one of the keys to the project's success

The project strategy makes it clear that planned activities were supported by strong top-down mechanisms and implementing partners firmly rooted in a bottom-up approach, with the direct participation of the target audience. The adoption of the community organization pyramid, which involved the monitoring of all activities by resource persons appointed by beneficiaries, step-by-step consolidated the establishment of WDF networks. This strategy therefore created a space for greater collaboration among all stakeholders to mainstream women's political inclusion at the local level while remaining connected to Kathmandu.

(iii) The direct involvement of the target audience was one of the keys to the project's success

One of the strong points of the project's approach was the direct involvement of the target audience, with outputs such as training and advocacy tools. All progress was shared and discussed directly with the target audience at the local and national level. Thus, the methodological and operational project framework was adopted and adjusted with the direct participation of the target groups. Engaging the target audiences contributed to the project's efficiency and set a precedent for joint work with women's communities, local authorities, and political parties beyond ethnic lines or political ideology.

(iv) Project implementation was designed with a progressive demand-driven approach to empower the beneficiaries step-by-step.

The project strategy was designed to operate progressively in stages. The PRSA provided the project with an initial information database and allowed it to track progress with measurable indicators. The activities designed and developed by the respective implementing stakeholders were modified in accordance with the findings of this rapid assessment report. All stages were discussed by the target audience to encourage ownership. This approach helped identify related grassroots capacity-building needs, develop suitable awareness and training materials, and forge ties between marginalized women and local authorities.

(v) The long-term engagement of ADDCN with the local authorities and the extensive experience of partners contributed to the project's success

ADDCN, with its implementing partners' experience and networks, was able to overcome the potential resistance of local authorities to activities targeting women – such as the broadcasting of the radio program, awareness-raising activities, etc. The specific experience/knowledge of each implementing partner, WVAF and NIWF, led to the development of an effective joint work plan. The clear division of responsibilities between implementing partners led to the development and delivery of high-quality activities.

V. Recommendations

These recommendations derive from the conclusions of the evaluation. All but the last one are directed to ADDCN and its implementing partners, WVAF and NIWF.

(i) Long-term approaches are essential for consolidating results: the WDF network must maintain its activities and seek local funding. To consolidate the results of this project, it is important to focus on a long-term approach and follow-up. It is therefore recommended that ADDCN and its implementing partners seek technical support to consolidate the capacity of WDFs and D/WDFs and capitalize on the results obtained. The evaluators are optimistic about the feasibility of local fund-raising like this, because districts working with the project have already allocated public funds to the WDFs.

(ii) WDFs should be more focused on DDC and VDC mandates in order to influence the decision-making process

Any future intervention should shift from a focus on civil and political rights to DDC and VDC mandates. This would lead to the active and practical engagement of women's communities – WDFs and D/WDFs – and strengthen local government accountability.

(iii) WDFs should identify strategic partners

WDFs should search for synergy with other networks with a similar scope and organizations that pursue similar goals in other districts. The goal should be to share experiences in enhancing women's inclusion in local decision-making processes.

It would also benefit WDFs to have greater interaction with the LGCDP, which is primarily a national project designed to achieve a long-term impact at the meso-level. For this purpose, the stakeholders met in the LGCDP office. During the dissemination workshop, they said that they were interested in continuing this project to enhance the demand-driven strategy from the field.

(iv) Include men in the project's activities to raise awareness

A greater effort should be made to include men in such project activities as training and debates. The male participants in this project were officials, trainers, and project managers, but not community members within the target groups. Although some women said they passed their newly acquired knowledge to men in their family, the project could have made sure that information reached male community members to avoid any exclusion or loss of impact.

(v) The long-term approach to social and cultural norms remains a challenge

The visibility and continuity of this project are essential for consolidating project achievements. The evaluators believe that the ADCCN should make a greater effort to disseminate information about the project's main achievements to other development partners so as to sustain the WDF and D/WDF networks. The evaluators appreciated the great value to the beneficiaries of the participatory and ownership approaches at all stages of project implementation. Having representatives from all castes working together was also very innovative.

VI. Overall assessment and closing thoughts

The project was clearly relevant to UNDEF's mandate and suited to the democratization context and women. It was efficient and had a significant impact, thus representing a sound investment of UNDEF resources.

VII. Limitations, constraints, and caveats

Due to lack of time in the country during the mission, it was impossible to organize meetings with other NGOs involved in work similar to that of this project. It would also have been useful to meet with the development partners of the Social Inclusion Action Group, who have worked jointly on social inclusion for many years.

VIII. ANNEXES

Annex 1: Evaluation Questions

DAC criterion	Evaluation Question	Related subquestions
Relevance	• To what extent was the project, as designed and implemented, suited to the context and needs at the beneficiary, local, and national levels?	• Were the project objectives in line with the needs and priorities for democratic development, given the context? • Should another project strategy have been preferred, rather than the one implemented, to better reflect those needs, priorities, and context? Why? • Were risks appropriately identified by the projects? How appropriate are/were the strategies developed to deal with identified risks? Was the project overly risk-averse?
Effectiveness	• To what extent was the project, as implemented, able to meet objectives and goals?	• To what extent have the project's objectives been met? • To what extent was the project implemented as envisaged by the project document? If not, why not? • Were project activities adequate to make progress toward project objectives? • What has the project achieved? Where has it failed to produce the outputs identified in the project document and why?
Efficiency	• To what extent was there a reasonable relationship between resources expended and project impacts?	• Was there a reasonable relationship between project inputs and outputs? • Did institutional arrangements promote cost-effectiveness and accountability? • Was the budget designed, and then implemented, in a way that enabled the project to meet its objectives?
Impact	• To what extent has the project put processes and procedures in place that support the role of civil society in contributing to democratization or to the direct promotion of democracy?	• To what extent has the realization of project objective(s) and project outcomes had an impact on the specific problem the project sought to address? • Have the target beneficiaries experienced tangible impacts? Which were positive? Which were negative? • To what extent has the project produced changes and effects–positive and negative, foreseen and unforeseen – on democratization? • Is the project likely to have a catalytic effect? How? Why? Examples?
Sustainability	• To what extent has the project, as designed and implemented, created what is likely to be a continuing thrust toward democratic development?	• To what extent has the project established processes and systems that are likely to support continued impact? • Are the parties involved willing and able to continue the project's activities on their own (where applicable)?
UNDEF value added	• To what extent was UNDEF able to take advantage of its unique position and comparative advantage to achieve results that could not have been achieved had support come from other donors?	• What was UNDEF able to accomplish through the project that could not also have been accomplished by other projects, donors, or stakeholders (government, NGOs, etc.)? • Did project design and implementation modalities exploit UNDEF's comparative advantage in the form of an explicit mandate to focus on democratization issues?

Annex 2: Documents Reviewed

Project-related documents:
Project document (UDF-NEP-07-181), November 2008.
Progress report, 20 August 2009.
Progress report, 24 May 2010.
Milestone Activity Report.
Final project narrative report, September 2010.

Training of Trainers on Governance, Gender Audit and Public Hearings report, 17-21 March 2010.
Manual in Nepali on Training of Trainers on Governance, Gender Audit and Public Hearings, 2010.
Training of Trainers on Gender, Social Inclusion and Advocacy report, 10-14 November 2009.
Manual in Nepali on Training of Trainers on Gender, Social Inclusion and Advocacy, 2009.
Report on Training of Trainers on Human Rights and Fundamental Democratic Principles, 11-15 June 2009.

Newsletters in Nepali: *Mahila Bichar* (Women's Thought).
English translation of a weekly radio program produced by WVAF, transmitted every Friday from 7.30 PM to 8.00 PM, Ujjyallo National Network, April-July 2009.

Rapid situation assessment report: *Socio political situation of marginalised women in the project areas*, March-April 2009.
Second Half Yearly Review Meeting report, November 2009.
Third Half Yearly Review Meeting report, 30 April 2010
Fourth Half Yearly Review Meeting Review meeting, 28 September 2010

The evaluators also consulted files at ADDCN offices containing documents such as MoUs with WVAF/NIWF, financial reports, etc.

Documents on gender and social inclusion:
Asian Development Bank, Overview *of gender equality and social inclusion in Nepal*, 2010.

UNICEF, *Working for an equal future, UNICEF Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Girls and Women*, May 2010.

UNDP, Local Governance and Community Development Program (LGCDP) Project Document, 2009.

UNDP, Support to Participatory Constitution Building in Nepal (SPCBN) Project Document, 2008.

UNDP, *The Dalits of Nepal and a New Constitution*, September 2008.

World Bank and DFID, *Unequal Citizens, Gender, Caste and Ethnic Exclusion in Nepal* Gender and Social Exclusion Assessment, 2006.

Asian Development Bank, Country Gender Assessments, 1999.

Centre for Constitutional Dialogue (CCD) Local Self Governance, Nepal Participatory Constitution Building Booklet Series No. 4, 2009.

Documents on development in Nepal
Asian Development Bank, Practical Guide to Capacity Development in a Sector Context, ADB May 2008.

Nepal Millennium Development Goals Progress Report 2010.

UNDP NEPAL, Annual Report, 2009.

UNDP, *The Real Wealth of Nations: Pathways to Human Development*, Human Development Report 2010.

UNDP Nepal Human Development Report, State Transformation and Human Development, 2009.

UNDP, *Voices of the People on Development*, Government of Nepal, National Planning Commission/United Nations Development Program and United Nations Children's Fund UNDP, UNICEF, NEPAL, 2006.

Annex 3: Persons Interviewed

27 February 2011	
ADDCN	
Mr. Hem Raj LAMICHHANE	Executive Secretary-General
Mr. Nawaraj KOIRALA	Senior Program Officer
Mr. Raju SHRESTHA	Financial Manager
Mr. Dinesh SHRESTHA	IT Manager
Mr. Shambu DEV BARAL	Energy & Environment Expert
National Planning Commission, Government of Nepal	
Mr. Dinesh C. DEVKOTA	Member
Mr. Prem Bdr. KUNWAR	Member
Mr. Hem Raj LAMICHHANE	Executive Secretary-General, ADDCN
National Election Observation Committee	
Mr. Kapil SHRESTHA	Co-chair, political scientist, and human rights expert
WVAF	
Mr. Nava Raj ADHICARI	Executive Director
Mrs. Seeta GAUTAM ACHARYA	Senior Program Officer
Mr. Raj KUMAR SHAH	Drama consultant, actor consultant
Mr. Lokendra BHATTA	Assistant Radio Program Presenter
Ms. Man Maya KURUNG	Radio Program Presenter
Mr. Nawa Raj KOIRALA	Senior Program Officer
NIWF	
Mrs. Gyanu LUINLET	Gender & social inclusion expert
Mrs. Maina LAMA	Treasurer
Ms. Kamala GURUNG	Member
Ms. Laxmi CHAUDHARY	Grassroots facilitator in the Banke district
Ms. Sunita BASHUWA	Grassroots facilitator in the Kanchanfur district
Mr. Kishor LAMA	Admin & Finance Officer
28 February 2011	
Radio Ujyaalo 90 Network	
Mr. Gopal GURAGAIN	Executive Chair
Mr. Krishna GURAGAIN	Operations Manager
Mr. Dinesh NIRUALA	Assistant – first lecturer
Mrs. Sita GANTAM ACHARYA	Senior Program Officer
Ms. Man Maya GURUNG	Radio Program Presenter
Mr. Nawa Raj KOIRALA	Senior Program Officer
MoLD	
Mr. Gopi Krishna KHANAL	Under Secretary – in charge of LGCDP program
Mrs. Nirmela THAPA	Gender specialist
Local radio Sankhuwasabah	
Mr. Shyam PRASAD	District reporter
Mr. Krishna Raj SHAKYA	Station Manager
Mr. Bhola Man GURUNG	District Focal Point – Executive Secretary Sankhuwasabah
Mr. Basu BHANDARI	Accountant
1 March 2011	
Sankhuwasabah - DDC (urban area - Khandbari)	
Mr. Bhola Man GURUNG	District Focal Point – Executive Secretary Sankhuwasabah
Mr. Man BAHADUR LIMBU	NGO Federation Secretary
Mr. Dambar Bahadur SHRESTHA	CPN – UML – District member
Mr. Laxmipd NIRAULA	District member
Mr. Bhupal NIROULA	District member (LDO)
Mr. Bharat RAI	Chair, National Liberation Party
Mrs. Sabita KALAKHETI	WDF
Mrs. Neeta KOIRALA	WDF
Mrs. Gita B.K	WDF
Mrs. Laxmi DAR	WDF

	Mrs. Sita YAMPHA RAI	WDF
	Mrs. Goma DAHAL	WDF
	Mr. Shyam NIRAULA	District reporter
	Mr. Kumar BABU ADHIRARI	Member, Nepali Congress
VDC (rural area - Kharang)		
	Mrs. Renuka GIMI	Chair, WDF
	Mrs. Apsara RAI	Vice Chair, WDF
	Mrs. Regina SHAKYA	Secretary, WDF
	Mrs. Tulasa DHANDARI	Member, WDF
	Mrs. Nirmala SUNDASH	Member, WDF
	Mrs. Sankun GIMI	Member, WDF
	Mrs. Phulmaya TAMARY	Member, WDF
	Mr. Bhim Prasad BUATTARAI	CPN – UML
	Mrs. Surya Bdr ADHIKARI	Kharang 6 – WDF
	Mrs. Maya Devi RAYAMAGHI	Advisor member
	Mrs. Ram KUMARI RAI	Manager
	Mrs. Jhamala RIJAL	Social Mobilizer
	Mrs. Bima PAMADE	Kharang 1 – WDF
	Mrs. Bhimkula BK	Kharang 1 – WDF
	Mrs. Rama KAFLE	Kharang 1 – WDF
	Mrs. Tilotama BHATTARAI	Kharang 1 – WDF
	Mrs. Santa KATTUWAL	Kharang 1 – WDF
	Mrs. Dipa KAFLE	Kharang 1 – WDF
	Mrs. Laxmi NEUPANE	Kharang 1 – WDF
	Mrs. Sarada BHANDAI	Kharang 1 – WDF
	Mrs. Mana BANDHAI	Kharang 1 – WDF
	Mr. Nar BAHADUR RAUT	VDC Facilitator
	Mr. Thir Bdr. PANDE	Vice Chair, COF
	Mr. Dhan Bdr ADHIKARI	CBO Member
	Mr. Ganga Bdr ADHIKARI	CBO Member
	Mr. Bhagat RAI	CBO Member
	Mr. Baguati SHRESTHA	CBO Member
	Mr. Ganesh GIMI	Pragati CBO & CPN Maoists
	Mr. Nar Bdr BHANDARI	CPN Maoists
	Mrs. Ram KUMARI RAI	CBO member
	Mr. Hari RAM RAOT	CPN Maoists
	Mrs. Tara DARNAL	Grassroots facilitator
2 March 2011		
VDC (remote rural area, Baneshwor)		
	Mrs. Tara YANCHA	Vice Chair, WDF
	Mrs. Pabitra TAMANG	WDF secretary
	Mrs. Nannakumari RAI	WDF member
	Mrs. Nirmala YAKKHA	WDF member
	Mrs. Mina YAKKHA	WDF member
	Mrs. Sani Maya TAMANG	WDF member
	Mrs. Binita SUNDAS	WDF member
	Mrs. Nisha YAKKHA	WDF member
	Mrs. Usha YAKKHA	WDF member
	Mrs. Kalpana KHARRI	WDF member
	Mrs. Padam Kumar SHRESTHA	VDC local facilitator
	Mrs. Jhamala RIJAL	Social mobilizer
	Mrs. Tara DARNAL	Grassroots democratic facilitator
	Mr. Tulsi NEUPANE	Former Chair, Sankhuwasabah district & member of ADDCN
	Mr. Bhola Man GURUNG	District Focal Point
3 March 2011		
Dissemination workshop – Kathmandu		
	Hon. Dr. Jagdish Chandra POKHAREL	Vice-Chair, National Planning Commission

	Hon. Mr. Krishna Prasad SAPKOTA	Constituent Assembly Member
	Mr. Krishna GYAWALI	Secretary, MoLD
	Mr. Sharad NEUPANE	Assistant Country Director, UNDP-Nepal
	Mr. Somlal SUBEDI	Joint Secretary, MoLD
	Mr. Yamnath SHARMA	Under Secretary, Local Body Fiscal Commission/MoLD
	Mr. Badri GHIMIRE	Under Secretary, Local Body Fiscal Commission/MoLD
	Mr. Ganesh PANDEY	Under Secretary, MoLD
	Ms. Nirmala THAPA	Gender Expert, LGCDP/MoLD
	Dr. Neil A. WEBSTER	Decentralization and Local Governance Advisor, UNDP/UNCDF
	Mr. Saroj NEPAL	Program Officer, Royal Danish Embassy
	Mr. Prakash REGMI	Program Officer, Local State Building, SDC
	Mr. Khemraj NEPALl	Chair, Institute of Local Governance Studies
	Mr. Krishna Man PRADHAN	Chair, Rural Development Foundation
	Mr. Sarmila KARKI	Chair, Jagaran Nepal
	Mr. Taranath DAHAL	Chair, Freedom Forum
	Mr. Dayasagar SHRESTHA	Executive Director, NGO Federation
	Mr. Krishna Prasad SAPKOTA	Senior Program Officer, Freedom Forum
	Mr. Nawa Raj GELAL	Central Member, VDC Association in Nepal
	Mr. Parshuram Upadhyay	Executive Director, VDC Association in Nepal
	Dr. Shyam Krishna BHURTEL	Founder, Executive Secretary-General, ADDCN
	Mr. Ramchandra POKHAREL	Founder Spokesperson, ADDCN
	Dr. Bishnu Shankar POUDEL	Associate Professor, Tribhuvan University
	Prof. Dr. Prem SHARMA	Professor, Tribhuvan University
	Mr. N.K. SHARMA	FCA, NK Sharma & Company
	Mr. Basant LAMSAL	Local Governance Expert, Consultant
	Mr. Rishi Raj LUMSALI	Chair, ADDCN
	Mr. Madhav PAUDEL	Member, ADDCN
	Mr. Hem Raj LAMICHHANE	Executive Secretary-General, ADDCN
	Mr. Nawa Raj KOIRALA	LG Finance Expert, ADDCN
	Mr. Shambhu Dev BARAL	Energy and Environment Specialist, ADDCN
	Mr. Raju SHRESTHA	Admin and Finance Officer, ADDCN
	Mr. Rajendra SHRESTHA	Admin and Finance Associate, ADDCN
	Mr. Dinesh SHRESTHA	IT Associate, ADDCN
	Ms. Sharada ADHIKARI	Officer Secretary, ADDCN
	Ms. Rukmani NEPAL	Documentation Assistant, ADDCN
	Mr. Mukunda MAHARJAN	Support Staff, ADDCN
	Mr. Ek Bahadur GURUNG	Support Staff, ADDCN
	Ms. Basanti THAPA	Support Staff, ADDCN
	Dr. Tika POKHAREL	Chairperson, WVAF
	Mr. Nava Raj ADHIKARI	Executive Director, WVAF
	Ms. Lila TIMILSINA	TL, WVAF
	Ms. Pratima GURNG	Executive Treasurer, WVAF
	Ms. Sita G. ACHARYA	Senior Program Officer, WVAF
	Ms. Mayalu LAMA	Radio Program Presenter, WVAF
	Ms. Man Maya GURUNG	Radio Program Presenter, WVAF
	Ms. Shanti LAMA	Radio Program Presenter, WVAF
	Ms. Gita Devi ADHIKARI	Radio Program Presenter, WVAF
	Mr. Bel Bahadur GURUNG	Program Assistant, WVAF
	Mr. Lokenddra BHATTA	Assistant Radio Presenter, WVAF
	Mr. Raj Kumar SHAH	Director/Actor, WVAF
	Ms. Subarna NEWAR	Advisor, WVAF
	Ms. Karma MAHARJAN	PFO, WVAF
	Mr. Anmol TANDUKAR	Board Member, WVAF
	Ms. Mina RAJBHANDARI	Board Member, WVAF
	Ms. Soni LAMA	General Secretary, NIWF
	Ms. Sunita BASHUWA	Project Assistant, NIWF
	Ms. Laxmi CAUDHARY	Facilitator, NIWF

	Ms. Sabita GURUNG	T&M Officer, NIWF
	Mr. Shiva REGMI	Senior Reporter, Metro FM
	Mr. Krishna KC	Senior Reporter, Annapurna Post Daily
4 March 2011		
ADDCN debriefing		
	Mr. Hem Raj LAMICHHANE	Executive Secretary-General
	Mr. Nawaraj KOIRALA	Senior Program Officer
	Mr. Raju SHRESTHA	Financial Manager
	Mrs. Seeta GAUTAM ACHARYA	Senior Program Officer (WVAF)
	Mr. Nava Raj ADHICARI	Executive Director (WVAF)
European Commission Delegation		
	Mr. Christian TOUWAIDE	Attaché – in charge of peace-building programs
	Mr. Robbie FAY	Intern – Political Affairs and Elections
	Mr. Amber MAURALI	Press and Information Officer
Constituent Assembly		
	Mrs. Purna Kumari SUBEDI	Vice Chair of Constituent Assembly – CPN Maoists

Annex 4: List of Acronyms

ADDCN	Association of District Development Committees of Nepal
CSO	Civil society organization
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
D/WDF	District Women's Democracy Forum
DDC	District Development Committee
FP	Focal Point
GDF	Grassroots Democratic Facilitator
GGAPH	Governance, Gender Auditing, and Public Hearings
GSIA	Gender, Social Inclusion, and Advocacy
HDR	Human Development Report
IEC	Information, Education, and Communication
LGCDP	Local Governance and Community Development Program
MoLD	Ministry of Local Development
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NIWF	National Indigenous Women Forum
PRSA	Participatory Rapid Situation Assessment
ToT	Training of Trainers
UNDEF	United Nations Democracy Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
VDC	Village Development Committee
WDF	Women's Democracy Forum
WVAF	World Vision Advocacy Forum