



Practitioner's Guide:

Method:
Social Inclusion



Example:
Social Inclusion in Development-Oriented Emergency Aid in Nepal



Social Inclusion

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Social Inclusion in Development Oriented Emergency Aid in Nepal

1. Background

Nepal is internationally considered as a Least-Developed Country with a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita of just USD 291 in 2006 compounded by high rates of malnutrition and widespread poverty. The decade long conflict between the Maoist Peoples Liberation Army and the then Government of Nepal (GoN) (1996-2006) resulted in a significant worsening of the situation. The remote districts of Rukum and Rolpa in the mid-western development region were generally considered as the "Heart Land" of the Maoists and one of the origins of the insurgency. These districts were greatly affected by the conflict and its consequences in regards to casualties, damaged infrastructure and adversely affected livelihoods, thus exacerbating the chronic poverty and food insecurity. The social and economic situation of women has especially worsened, foremost for widows with small children, orphans, Dalits, and other excluded ethnic groups. Dalits are "lower" caste people who have been traditionally regarded as "untouchable". About 90 % of them live below the poverty line and have little or no access to land. They generally work in the most menial and degrading jobs with few possibilities for upward mobility and lack opportunities to participate and represent themselves in public forums and decision-making processes due to exclusion. Under the present social structures and systems, women are also discouraged from participating in decision-making processes both in the household and at community levels. Similarly differently-abled persons and orphans are often marginalized too. They are in a high number due to the violent conflict.

(This document uses the political correct term "differently-abled persons" instead of the formerly known term of "disabled persons".)

In fact, development opportunities for the districts' population have been significantly restricted for over ten years due to conflict, leading to a feeling of diminishing human security. People still have limited opportunities to support their livelihoods due to their lack of skills and knowledge on modern and diversified agricultural practices and non-farm income generating activities.

German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) has been implementing a Food Security and Rehabilitation Project (FSRP) (2004-2008) in 31 selected communities (Village Development Committees, VDC) in Rolpa and Rukum districts.

The project aimed to:

- a. Improve the nutritional status of poor and conflict-affected households;
- b. Stabilise the economic and social living conditions through the provision of short and long-term employment and income opportunities, and
- c. Construct and rehabilitate productive and social infrastructure in the districts.

In order to remain impartial from both conflict parties, the project delivered its services through a direct implementation structure consisting of community based organizations.



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2. Conceptual Approach on Social Inclusion

The targeted groups lacked the skills, exposure, and opportunities to create sustainable livelihoods. In addition, they do not have access to the benefits from other development initiatives. The social inclusion strategy addressed target groups in development processes so that they could access opportunities to survive even in a protracted conflict situation. Opportunities that allowed them to actively participate and build their capacities helped them to realize their potential, and gave them confidence to voice their concerns and to make the necessary decisions both at household and community levels. Awareness raising and capacity building support during the project's implementation ensured quality participation. Provided the project addressed its needs and priorities, the target groups eventually took ownership of the project and initiated further improvements themselves for their own livelihoods.

To include marginalized people in mainstream development, the social inclusion strategy was adopted after successful testing from the very beginning of project activities in 2004. To socially include marginalized people in development, the FSRP applied the social inclusion strategy in two ways:

- a. **Indirect approaches for the removal of institutional barriers:** Social inclusion was integrated as a cross-cutting approach in all project outputs to enable the disadvantaged and marginalized groups to access equal opportunities and benefits:
 - ▶ Affirmative action such as scholarships grants and subsidies to the (special) target group (see page 6).
 - ▶ Inclusive and meaningful participation of target groups in the project cycle management and decision-making processes, focusing on Dalits and women.
 - ▶ Utilisation of social accountability and transparency tools to increase civic involvement and to instill greater transparency in the allocation and use of resources (e.g. public audit, working principles on transparency, participation, equality and accountability).
 - ▶ Equal representation and decision-making powers in supported community based organizations and self-help-groups (especially in established committees).
 - ▶ Equal treatment and payment for the same job performance (e.g. during road construction and food-for-work and cash-for-work schemes).
- b. **Direct approaches for social and economic empowerment of excluded groups to strengthen their capacities and abilities:** The causes and consequences of social exclusion were directly addressed through tailor made interventions. Based on the project's inventory and its targeting concept the specific needs of different target groups could be addressed. FSRP provided training in capacity development and both short and long-term income generating opportunities. It also aimed to improve the social status of marginalized people through various interventions, such as developing learning centres (see method on "Certifying Community Mobilisation: Learning Centers in Nepal").



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Regarding the method on social inclusion strategy, FSRP's activities primarily focused on the socioeconomic empowerment of its beneficiaries at the local level in different arenas (individual, household, and village/ community) and to a lesser degree on policy influence, reform and advocacy were also part of its approaches.

FSRP used a separate strategy and procedure for monitoring. During staff and management team meetings the project conducted regular reviews and reflections, and incorporated the lessons learnt during implementation (see "Participatory and Conflict Sensitive Impact Monitoring in Nepal").

3. Achieved impacts and respective indicators

Every intervention of FSRP included socially disadvantaged and discriminated sections of the society (target groups) at least in, but generally above, the proportion to their share of the population in the villages. The project's social inclusive implementation and targeting approach reduced gender and caste discrimination in the project VDCs. Moreover, it improved the economic status of the beneficiaries and supported them to improve their dignity, self-confidence and their ability to raise their voice. Hereby, the project contributed towards poverty alleviation and socioeconomic upward mobility by reducing exclusion as a reinforcing factor of poverty. This was achieved by:

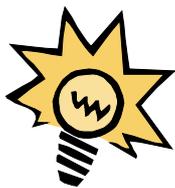
- ▶ Providing opportunity to geographically and economically disadvantaged and socially marginalized groups for their greater involvement in development processes.
- ▶ Providing access to economic opportunities and equal participation of in decision-making.
- ▶ Providing space to develop confidence to participate on an equal footing with the socially and economically better-off households.
- ▶ Promoting social cohesion within and between different communities, without discrimination in any form, thus reducing the potential for conflicts at local level.

The following specific indicators were developed to measured the project's impact upon social inclusion:

- ▶ Levels of participation of the target group members in every intervention at least at the level of their population ratio in the project areas.
- ▶ The gender and caste equality has increased, up to the level of satisfaction of the participants (participatory monitoring workshops)
- ▶ At least 50% of the participants from target groups improved their economic status (participatory monitoring workshops).



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Box 1: Social inclusion in road construction

A road construction project in Rolpa began in July 2004 (see also “Rural Road Construction Strategy: Constructing rural roads through community based organizations in Nepal”). Some Dalit men came to work on the roads, however it was a challenge for socially excluded Dalit women to come since many of them did not know whom to approach for work.

Eventually, a few Dalit women “dared” to approach two local road construction supervisors (out of the target group) who did not inform the district management team of FSRP. Breaching FSRP’s agreed working principle of equal participation and wages without any preconditions, the local supervisors sought private profit and gain and granted the women jobs on the road only when they would work on the supervisors’ private fields first (millet, maize, etc.). The women had no other option than to agree to work voluntarily on the supervisors’ land. After finishing the assigned task in the supervisors’ fields, they gradually started to work on the road construction receiving food and cash for work from FSRP. However, when FSRP’s district management team came to know of this incident, the cooperation with the respective local supervisors was terminated immediately and the findings of the case were made public. Once more, all beneficiaries and involved parties were oriented on the FSRP’s principles of equality and equity, making it clear that the project would not accept any misuses of power, nor allow any form of discrimination in the future.

Following this incident the Dalit women were able to meet and interact with FSRP overseers and intermingle with workers from other castes and ethnic groups. As they worked, and ate together with other workers, FSRP’s overseers suggested that these women encourage other Dalit women to come and seek work with out discrimination. As a result, the participation of Dalit women on the road construction work increased.

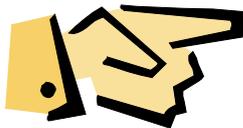
The women gained confidence while working with others and began to question the procedure of recruiting labourers. Therefore, they asserted their right to work on the project. After reviewing the participation of Dalit women in the project activities, FSRP decided to grant some Dalit women the responsibility of being group leaders. As a result, their (Dalit women) participation in the project further increased and encouraged FSRP to appoint and retain more Dalit women as group leaders. The following process was adopted to recruit and encourage Dalit women as team leaders:

- ▶ Dalits were included in mixed working groups (by caste, ethnicity, and gender);
- ▶ Four to five Dalits were included in each working group;
- ▶ FSRP identified and appointed some capable Dalit women as assistants to the group leader. Whenever the group leader was absent, the Dalit women had the responsibility to manage the group.

After enough experience, assistant group leaders were encouraged to lead a new group. At first, they were encouraged to lead smaller groups for easier jobs such as cutting stones or carrying soil. Later, some of these women were fully capable and appointed as full group leaders.



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4. Capacity Development and General Principles

Step 1: Social analysis and definition of target group

a) Social Analysis

In the case of Nepal, multiple social analyses on existing power relations and different types and variations of social exclusion were already in place. There was no need for the FSRP team to conduct a social analysis by itself. Nepal generally is referred to as an extremely divided and multicultural country. Moreover, the hilly and mountainous terrain of the country enhances its heterogeneity, with more than 100 different ethno-lingual groups live within Nepal's territory. In 1963, the caste system from 1854 was legally abolished. However, it had been widely practiced thereafter. Within society, it led to a complex pattern of social stratification based on multiple levels and overlapping social identities like caste, ethnicity, gender, language, religion, poverty, and geographical region (see selected readings).

b) Definition of general and special target groups:

After consulting local and district stakeholders as well as the concerned groups, FSRP defined its target groups as general or special. The Village Development Committees (VDCs) were selected based on correlating factors of social inclusion such as food shortage, poverty, accessibility and the effects of the conflict. During the implementation phases, FSRP added other criteria related to social inclusion as experience and local knowledge was gained.

In order to give an accurate and transparent definition of the beneficiaries FSRP's interventions were based on a targeting concept. This was also regarded as a precaution to avoid that better off groups who could capture the provided resources. In Rukum and Rolpa all inhabitants of the districts were affected by the conflict. FSRP defined its general target group as coming from poor, food deficit and conflict affected populations, with additional criteria, such as coming from families where:

- ▶ Family (members) whose relative(s) were killed in the course of the conflict;
- ▶ Family (members) whose personal property was destroyed/damaged or captured/seized;
- ▶ Family (members) whose social security and economic as well nutritional status have worsened due to the effects of war;
- ▶ Family (members) who have been abducted and abused by the conflicting parties and who have subsequently stayed with armed groups;



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Out of the general target group the following disadvantaged and marginalized groups were defined as special target groups:

- ▶ Dalits
- ▶ Orphans below 16 years because of war or natural causes
- ▶ Single women (widows) with small children because of war or natural causes
- ▶ Disabled because of war or natural cause.
- ▶ Unemployed youth

After the Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the Peoples Liberation Army and the GoN in 2006, FSRP also regarded returnees and internally displaced people (IDP) as well as ex-combatants and related personnel as general target groups. However, to promote social cohesion at local levels and to initiate a process of social transformation (establishing a “coalition of change”), better off sections of society were also involved in project activities. This led to the creation or support from FSRP for more mixed and integrated groups. This approach assisted to avoid animosities within the communities towards the project.



Step 2: Preparation of the inventory record and disaggregated baseline data

a) Inventory

In order to provide opportunities for excluded groups to participate in the development and decision-making processes of the project, and to gain access to economic opportunities and services provided by the FSRP, the district team prepared an inventory of the target group members living in the project VDCs. On the basis of the inventory, which tried to identify the special needs of different target groups, FSRP developed appropriate and tailor made interventions and support mechanisms to cater for the target groups' specific constraints and potentials (e.g. food-for-education for orphans, livestock raising and bee-keeping for single women and Dalits with limited access to land). The effects of the interventions were anticipated in the project's result chains (table 1).



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Table 1: Anticipated impacts of learning centres (LCs) on social and economic empowerment.

Main Activities	Output	Utilization of Output	Direct Benefit	Indirect Benefit
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Selection of area and centre ▶ Selection of participants ▶ Selection of facilitator ▶ Training of facilitator ▶ Starting and Implementation of LC ▶ Evaluation and monitoring 	<p>Local social problem solving measures supported</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Women and Dalits participate in LCs in a higher proportion than their representation in society. ▶ Special target groups (orphans, differently-abled) participating in LCs. ▶ Participants use their knowledge acquired in LCs to improve their living standard (e.g. starting kitchen gardens or planting fruit plants) & for social transformation (e.g. in overcoming gender & caste discrimination). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Improved social inclusion of woman and Dalits. ▶ Improved education. ▶ Decreased illiteracy. ▶ Improved health and nutrition. ▶ Improved income. ▶ Increased self-reliance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Increased enrolment in school. ▶ Improved relationships between citizens of the same area/ social cohesion. ▶ An improved living environment. ▶ Decrease of socioeconomic root causes of conflict (like socioeconomic deprivation and inequality)
Main Inputs	Indicator	Indicator	Indicator	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Stationary ▶ Solar lamps ▶ Food for work/ Cash for work ▶ Human resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 40 LCs established/ function regularly. ▶ 2,000 participants are trained on social inclusion, gender equality and local problem solving measures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ At least 50% of participants are women. ▶ At least 10% (Rukum) /20% (Rolpa) of the participants are Dalits (higher ratio as their share of local population). ▶ At least 50 orphans and disabled are participating in LCs. ▶ 50% of first year's participants of LC are able to identify their social barriers and overcome them first. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ At least 80% participants can write and read simple sentences. ▶ Gender equality has increased (participatory impacts monitoring). ▶ Caste equality has increased (participatory impact monitoring). ▶ People started to take initiative to resolve local problem at community level. 	



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While designing interventions, FSRP was also aware not to reinforce and maintain stereotypes of social exclusion. In this regard, women were provided vocational training on electric wiring, masonry and carpentry instead of focusing only on household based small scale activities with limited market potentials.

b) Baseline Study

Due to the tense security situation in the districts of Rukum and Rolpa during the conflict period, FSRP could only commission a baseline survey in 2005 in selected VDCs in Rukum. The Maoists Peoples Liberation Army denied the undertaking of a baseline survey in Rolpa district. Because of the similarity in the socioeconomic conditions in the two districts, the baseline data of Rukum was also utilized for project implementation in Rolpa.

The objective of the baseline survey was to generate and collate information on the:

- ▶ General socioeconomic situation of the households;
- ▶ Self-sufficiency in food;
- ▶ Nutritional status;
- ▶ Potential for food security related interventions;
- ▶ Status of widows, orphans, disabled persons and the identification of potential interventions for their betterment;
- ▶ Status of unemployed youth and conflict affected families and the identification of potential interventions for their improvement;

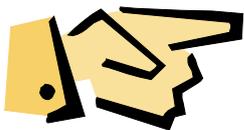
The baseline also provide an opportunity for the collection of information on several other issues such as on:

- ▶ **Consumption and income:** occupation, employment status and sources of income; size of land holdings and food sufficiency; agricultural practices; received skills and occupational training;
- ▶ **Health and education:** literacy and level of education; access to services; disease prevalence and sanitation conditions; food intake and nutritional status;
- ▶ **Equality, political participation and voice:** working hours of males and females; participation and representation in community activities (including problem solving meetings) of males and females; general membership in community organizations; decision making (household level, membership in executive committees of community organizations); and
- ▶ **Experiences of discrimination at community level.**

The baseline data was disaggregated by the categories defined by the targeting concept. Disaggregated data on “upper caste” members and Dalits as well as by men and women was additionally collated in order to evaluate the differences and similarities between these groups. The methodological approach of the baseline survey was based on a review of available secondary data, the collation of data at the household level through semi-structured questionnaires, the implementation of a nutrition survey as well as through focus group discussions with women, ethnic groups and Dalit utilizing the project adapted PRA-methodology (see also “Participatory Needs Assessment: Nutrition Food Security”).



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Step 3: Organizational Preparedness

a) Awareness raising and capacity development

Project staff members were oriented on the concept and strategies of social inclusion receiving training on social inclusion, gender equality and local social problem solving. The orientation and trainings aimed to

- a. make the staff aware and sensitize on the issue of social exclusion and the underlying processes,
- b. develop a common understanding of the aims and benefits of social inclusion and FSRP's approach on social inclusion,
- c. become enabled to continue and apply the inclusion process in all project activities.

Staff members' positive attitude and their responsiveness to the concerns of the target groups were of great importance for accelerating the inclusion process.

Likewise, at beneficiary level; three day orientation courses on social inclusion, gender equity and local social problem solving were rolled out by the FSRP's social team to the participants of the supported learning centers and self help groups committees. This training also included an orientation on FSRP's social inclusion strategy and its objectives.

b) Staff composition and policy on staff recruitment

The composition of FSRP's staff was assessed and evaluated by the categories of gender, caste, and ethnicity. In order to make its staff composition more inclusive and to remove institutional barriers within FSRP's project structure, the recruitment policy for new appointments was revised and made positive discrimination towards FSRP's local target groups mandatory. Moreover, a "trainee scheme" for on-the-job-trainees in the field of social mobilisation was applied in both project districts. At least three Dalit women or war widows with minimum reading and writing skills joined the project in each district for at least one year on a contractual basis. They joined regular training courses of FSRP staff and received additional trainings on social mobilisation, inclusion and gender equity. Based on the principle "learning by doing" they joined and assisted the senior social mobilizers of FSRP in their daily work. The aim was to build up their capacities so that they could be recruited as local staff at a later stage and become competitive in the local labour market.

c) Inclusive portfolio, program and budget planning

Staff members revisited and revised project documents through an inclusive lens and improved monitoring and reporting formats to take account of disaggregated and inclusive information. Since the principles of social inclusion varied according to the situation and context, the requirements of excluded groups and the number of beneficiaries among the target group were analyzed during the design of the activities. As mentioned earlier, members of the target groups participated in the whole process of the project cycle.



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This approach helped to include the beneficiaries' needs and anticipated impacts in activity plans, the project planning matrix (PPM), result chains and the overall budget of the project. On the basis of the PPM annual activity plans were developed clearly stating the number of beneficiaries from general and special target groups. The activities focused on the target groups and were designed in such a way so that privileges (e.g. decision-making power) were distributed to the target groups. In terms of budgeting, the allocation of funds was supposed to be as specific as possible, i.e. transferring funds directly to the target groups through FSRP's primary mode of delivery of food and cash-for-work. Additionally special subsidies in the context of economic empowerment and income promotion were granted. The needs of orphans and differently-abled persons were addressed, amongst others, through food-for-education schemes and the provision of scholarships and special skill development schemes.



Step 4: Impact monitoring and reporting

Based on the definition of target groups, disaggregated reporting and monitoring formats were developed. A separate section of the bimonthly activity report focused on the involvement of members of the general and special target groups in project activities. The disaggregated impact indicators and respective formats considered caste, ethnicity, and gender as dimensions of social exclusion. The different formats specified the number of special target group households that benefited from the project activities and included information like the changes brought about by the interventions in the economic and social empowerment of the excluded groups.

FSRP team members assigned to the districts were responsible for supporting participatory monitoring (see reference). The team monitored the targets, and the qualitative and quantitative achievements of the project. Besides the defined impact indicators the following additional indicators were also monitored:

- ▶ The number of excluded sections of the population adopting different types of interventions, disaggregated by gender, caste, ethnicity, and location.
- ▶ The number and types of changes after the interventions in terms of local conflicts, social dignity, income generation, health and hygiene.
- ▶ Food supplied and its impacts on food security and nutrition at the household level.
- ▶ Other benefits and impacts.

Learning centre facilitators, social mobilizers and staff of FSRP prepared monthly and six-monthly reports and submitted them to the district coordinators, who in turn compiled the reports and forwarded them to the project management.



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Step 5: Meaningful participation

The participation of the excluded groups was crucial for their social mobilisation and subsequent economic empowerment as well as the initiation of a sustainable social transformation process. The objective of social inclusion was achieved when there was active participation, decision-making and responsibility by the previously excluded groups in the planning, (identification, selection, planning of FSRP activities), implementation, monitoring and evaluation process of the project.

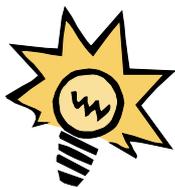
With the support of the local community FSRP first ensured participation by at least 50% women and a proportionate number of Dalits and other excluded groups in the project cycle. In addition, their participation in project activities was strengthened through necessary training and orientation courses. Participation was ensured in the following phases:

- ▶ Project orientation;
- ▶ Identification, selection and planning of programmes and activities;
- ▶ Users group orientation and formation of users' committee and management committees to implement micro projects;
- ▶ Group formation for learning centres (90% women and proportionate Dalits and other disadvantaged groups);
- ▶ Formation of income generation group and income generation support to the group;
- ▶ Implementation and monitoring of project activities. To ensure more participation and easy access by excluded members in the programme, most of the project activities are implemented in those areas where there is majority of excluded families due to geographical concentration or some social reason (e.g. Dalit community outside the common village).

These aspects were periodically updated through review and monitoring, and addressed accordingly.



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Box 2 Meaningful participation of women through policy provisions

Due to the continuous motivation of FSRP staff, the social conditions of women in the project VDCs has improved. Dalit women, single women with small children, and women in general are now more vocal about their needs and priorities. The following steps contributed to motivating villagers, especially women in:

- ▶ Mass meetings and orientations on the compulsory participation of women (at least 50 %) in all FSRP activities;
- ▶ Orientations on the importance and benefits of involving women in different users and management committees. FSRP also provided orientation on its policy of equal wages for men and women for the same jobs;
- ▶ Formation of mostly seven member users committees with at least 50 % women's representation. As well, at least one woman should hold one of the four decision-making posts within the committee structure (chairperson, vice-chairperson, secretary, treasurer). User group members were also encouraged to support and develop leadership skills and the overall capacity of women.

FSRP has encouraged users groups to include women in every aspect of project implementation. For example, it encourages the formation of women-only groups; promotion of women as labour group leaders; assignment of accessible working sites to women in the beginning; arrangement of flexible working hours for them; priority to women in Learning Centres and income generating activities; training for on-farm and off-farm skills development, and timely payment of women's wages. This approach resulted in the following major achievements that have empowered women:

- ▶ Creation of forums and an environment to share their experiences and feelings with their peers.
- ▶ Meaningful participation of women in all aspects of project work (more than 50 %, with women holding important posts).
- ▶ Women are able to voice their concerns when participating in construction work.
- ▶ The overall status of women has improved in society; their self-confidence and self-esteem has increased, while gender discrimination has been reduced.



5. Special targeting and selection of need based interventions

To ensure meaningful participation of the excluded and to address their needs and priorities, FSRP designed need-based special programmes with their active participation. Based on the local realities, FSRP has focused on two areas of support: economic/livelihood empowerment and social/mobilisation empowerment.



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5.1 Economic and livelihood empowerment

FSRP developed livelihood support activities for the target groups, focused on entitlements to assets as well as the creation of new assets, including:

- ▶ Bee-keeping and goat raising for the poor and excluded with special targeting to landless families;
- ▶ Small businesses like weaving bamboo baskets, making agricultural tools (blacksmithing), processing and value adding to local raw materials like herbs and fiber;
- ▶ Fruit and vegetable farming;
- ▶ Establishment of nurseries (e.g. vegetables, fruit trees);
- ▶ Short-term income from construction work;
- ▶ Employment and skill transfer through the involvement of persons from the target groups as staff or local support staff.

Capacity development:

It was observed that the lack of skills for self-employment or income generation, as well as the lack of opportunities to acquire or enhance skills as well as illiteracy were basic limiting factors for the economic empowerment of many of the excluded families. FSRP provided the target groups skills development training based on market opportunities and according to their abilities and interests. A new business creation training and support program assisted the target groups, to link their newly acquired knowledge and skills to income generation activities and business start-ups. Besides training on business literacy and management skills, the project also provided market related information and technical support in linking new products with the market.

Skills and knowledge linked with resources:

Since the target groups of FSRP were lacking sufficient financial and physical assets to utilise their acquired skills and knowledge, the project provided 75% subsidy to the special target groups and 50% to the general target group for materials and equipment that were necessary for income generation activities. 100% subsidies was provided for transportation of these materials and equipment (see also "Agricultural Income Promotion in Food Insecure Remote Rural Areas").



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5.2 Social and mobilization empowerment

Social and mobilisation support aimed to empower the beneficiaries to demand, influence, and take the institutions into account that affect them. Support activities included training, awareness raising and networking measures; equal representation and participation in supported local self-help and development groups (such as learning centers) and meaningful participation in project's decision-making processes. The process of social mobilisation helped them to analyze the systemic causes of their deprivations and social exclusion and to organise and capacitated the excluded groups to enable them to increase access to resources, services and to utilise the benefits provided through the range of development interventions.

In particular the establishment of learning centers for women (especially widows and women headed households), Dalits, orphans and disabled persons was supported by FSRP. A learning centre contributed to transforming its members socially and economically through their own efforts. It created opportunities for members to reflect and analyze sociocultural and economic factors that contributed to their exclusion and poverty. In addition, it provided a platform, so that the participants could develop their voices, express their needs, influence decisions, and ultimately improve their livelihoods. The learning centers helped to reduce caste and gender based discrimination at local levels, assisted in resolving local conflicts through community mediation and improved the nutritional status as well as the hygiene and health conditions of the participants due to training and orientation courses and respective actions (e.g. establishment of kitchen gardens and nurseries for improving nutrition and food habits, and the construction of pit latrines for hygiene purposes).

Local development groups such as learning centers and user committees have shown a great potential to improve local economic livelihoods and social mobilization as well as being a vehicle for resource transfers and service provision at local levels. However, a diverse and representative governance structure is also necessary to rule out "elite capture" of these organizations. Therefore, FSRP provided organizational manuals for establishing and operating these groups and made the inclusive staffing of executive committees and the appointment of target group members to leadership positions mandatory.



6. Scaling Up Empowerment Efforts and Policy Influence

- a) FSRP assisted the self help groups by promoting coalitions and linkages with other organizations and district line agencies in order to make them claim their rights for service delivery from local government and to broaden their access to resources. The consolidated learning centers were supported to register with the government and to apply for technical and financial support from different line agencies such as district livestock and veterinary offices, district agricultural offices, and district irrigation offices.



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- b) Mandatory policy provisions for the working modalities of supported self-help-groups contributed to and ensured leadership of excluded group members in self-help-group committees. They also contributed to the removal of social barriers at local institutional levels and built the foundation for institutional changes “within the system” towards more equity and equality.
- c) Capacity development and training to district level stakeholders (such as line agencies and local development officials) on social inclusion, gender equity and principles of socioeconomic reintegration of different target groups sensitized the personnel of local administration and government bodies and supporting changes of mind-sets within the “establishment”.

7. Lessons learnt

- ▶ Since social inclusion is a complex transformation process of deeply rooted social practices and beliefs, not all envisaged impacts can be achieved in the short term.
- ▶ Social empowerment should go side by side with economic empowerment; the latter depends on the interest and capacity of the target group and the market. Likewise, it needs strong financial capacity from the project.
- ▶ Support activities to target groups should cover both the short-term and the long-term benefits. Since these groups mostly depend on daily earning to sustain their families, programmes which do not cater their immediate needs take a long time to bear fruit.
- ▶ Programmes on social empowerment of excluded groups should focus on the building and strengthening of confidence and self-esteem.
- ▶ Even if one activity fails, the program intervention should be continued; otherwise the target groups may lose the program's confidence.
- ▶ The activities supported should be tailor made according to the target groups' specific situation, constraints and potentials. For example, learning centres could not address the educational needs of deaf beneficiaries. In these instances, FSRP decided to provide sign language training for 10 months to them. Therefore, an accurate and transparent definition and targeting of the beneficiaries is indispensable, otherwise better off groups will capture the provided resources.
- ▶ The allocation of key positions during the course of the project implementation, such as for group leaders of self-help-groups, to members from the target groups, helped ensure higher participation of those groups in programme activities.
- ▶ A demonstration effect is often necessary to motivate the target group. The groups targeted by the project often hesitated to join the programme in the initial phase. They are often only ready for involvement when they see immediate benefits from the project.



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- ▶ Programmes should not be targeted to the excluded groups only. This approach would have created additional tensions and conflicts within the community, and may have resulted in the local elite creating additional barriers for the implementation of the programme. Therefore, the programme needed to address the whole community, targeting should be inclusive, with positive discrimination being applied to excluded groups and transparently communicated to all.
- ▶ Continuous reflection by staff and beneficiaries and follow up was necessary to (i) assess whether the excluded groups have benefited from the programme, and (ii) to identify possible gaps in policy, criteria, programming and implementation. Flexibility also needed to be embedded in the project to correct and address such gaps to make policy and programs inclusive. This contributes to decreasing the likelihood of unintended negative impacts of project supported work.
- ▶ Planning should be conducted at the local level with the participation of the target group to make the plans practical and responsive to the community needs.
- ▶ The accommodation and long term availability of staff in the programme areas supported the building of trust and the gaining of knowledge on local issues. It also helped building better relations with the communities and groups and identifying their expressed needs and priorities. Regular interactions between staff and target groups enhanced the confidence and self-esteem of the target groups.
- ▶ The social inclusion strategy in the conflict-affected districts of Rukum and Rolpa supported the de-escalation of the existing conflict and contributed towards the transition to a more peaceful society.

Remaining challenges:

- ▶ Excluded groups were be less influential than better-off groups when it came to decision making and the staffing of leadership positions.
- ▶ Quality of participation, especially in terms of leadership roles, in group activities was still lacking in some cases.
- ▶ Meaningful participation had to be ensured without increasing women's workload.
- ▶ The main interventions applied by the project (food-for-work and cash-for-work) were not able to cater to all special target groups.
- ▶ Participation could be increased at the ratio of the population of the excluded, but there were still more efforts needed to scale up empowerment.
- ▶ It was difficult to organise special target groups in one specific place and design specific support mechanisms because their needs and priorities differed considerable from one another. Their needs and capacities also differed according to their geographic location.



Social Inclusion

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Links to related Methods and Examples:

Rural Road Construction Strategy:

<http://www.methodfinder.net/index.php?page=methods&methodID=83>

Construction of "Green Roads" through Community Based Organizations in Nepal:

<http://www.methodfinder.net/index.php?page=methods&methodID=83&cat=example1>

Agricultural Income Promotion in Food Insecure Remote Rural Areas in Nepal (Food For Work - FFW):

<http://www.methodfinder.net/index.php?page=methods&methodID=53&cat=example2>

Learning Centres in Nepal (Certifying Community Mobilisation):

<http://www.methodfinder.net/index.php?page=methods&methodID=75&cat=example3>

Participatory and Conflict Sensitive Impact Monitoring (Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment - PCIA):

<http://www.methodfinder.net/index.php?page=methods&methodID=60&cat=example2>