

Research Report

# **Sustainable Impacts of INF's Group Action Process Approach to Community Health and Development Work**





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# ACRONYMS

CD	Community development
CF	Community facilitator
CHD	Community health and development
DDC	District development committee
IG	Income generation
IM	Integral mission
INF	International Nepal Fellowship
FGD	Focus group discussion
GAP	Group action process
GO	Government organisation
HHS	Health, hygiene and sanitation
HIV/AIDS	Human immunodeficiency virus / acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MCH	Maternal and child health
NFE	Non-formal education
NGO	Non-governmental organization
PADRR	Participatory assessment of disaster risk reduction
PRA	Participatory rural appraisal
PWD	People with disabilities
SHG	Self-help group
TAI	Transform Aid International
UMN	United Mission to Nepal
VDC	Village development committee

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For the purpose of this research and report, a mixture of methods based on a participatory foundation were utilised for the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data, in order to gain well-rounded and comprehensive results produced by the active involvement of the stakeholders.

The first sections in the report are focused upon the explanation of the history and outline of both INF's Community Health and Development [CHD] work and the Group Action Process [GAP] approach. This includes an overview of the theoretical underpinning of this approach, comparing the previously utilised 'provisions' approach to the current 'process approach'. After acknowledging the groundwork done by the first project which utilised the process approach, namely the Surkhet Project Awareness Raising Cycle, the report proceeds to detail the past and present project areas which have used or are currently using the GAP approach as the foundation for work. In order to understand the results which follow, a detailed outline of the GAP approach is given in section 8.

Subsequently, the report looks closely at the results of the GAP approach, firstly in the ongoing Self-Help Groups [SHGs] in Myagdi District, and secondly in the Non-Governmental Organisations [NGOs] and cooperatives that were formed at the conclusion of the CHD projects. Within both these areas, it is evident that the GAP approach provided a solid foundation for sustainable community change, as community members were taught to work together, articulate their needs, form solutions, develop action plans, look to local and natural resources, advocate for their needs, access external resources and support, and utilise all these components to bring about both physical and social change in their area. Alongside this process, the programme is building health and environmental awareness, providing opportunities for income generation training and adult literacy, supporting the establishment of savings and credit facilities, and giving specialized training on relevant topics such as agriculture.

Following on from the programmes in all districts except Myagdi, INF supported the formation and registration of NGOs and cooperatives, composed primarily of former INF SHG members, which would ensure the sustainability of the community work and carry the communities forward into the future. During the research period, a total of nine NGOs and 10 cooperatives were visited across five districts in Nepal, and data was collected using a variety of participatory methods, including focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews. The data collected focused upon the ongoing work of the NGOs and cooperatives, including the target group and methods of inclusion, their current approach to community work and how this is similar or different to the GAP approach, the activities carried out within the communities, advocacy and lobbying, ability to access external resources, coordination with other organisations and government, and management of funds.

As a result of the data collected in these key areas, section 10 discusses the key concepts of sustainability and change within communities as they relate to the above outcomes. The key changes observed are categorised into focal points: physical, health, education, social, empowerment, economic, and environmental. This categorisation allows for the indicators to be understood in relation to the key areas, and contribute to a broader understanding of change within communities.

In conclusion, the report outlines the fact that this research is an ongoing project, with the next focus being upon the comparison of INF's GAP approach to the approaches utilised by other development organisations. The purpose of this forthcoming research is to contrast and compare with other organisations in order to make solid recommendations on the future of INF's approach to CHD work.

Overall, it is evident that INF's CHD work based upon the GAP approach is having significant beneficial and sustainable impact on communities across Nepal, as communities are empowered to unite, form practical and sustainable solutions to their problems, advocate for their needs, utilise available resources, and carry out activities for the betterment of their community.

# 1. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

For the past 17 years, the International Nepal Fellowship [INF] has carried out CHD work in many districts across Nepal utilising an approach named the Group Action Process [GAP] approach. This process approach, based on concepts of participation, empowerment and valuing local knowledge, was formed in response to the previous 'provision' approach, whereby programmes in communities were largely based around the provision of resources, thereby creating a form of dependency and bringing about short-term yet unsustainable results. Having worked through the GAP approach for 15 years, INF has seen very notable results in the communities and Village Development Committees [VDCs] where it has previously worked.

In 2013, however, one of INF's primary donors, Transform Aid International [TAI - formerly known as Baptist World Aid Australia], suggested that INF should undertake some research in order to substantiate the long-term sustainable effects of the GAP approach, and also to assist in shaping the practiced methods and planning for the future, thereby looking to maximise the effectiveness and efficiency of INF's programmes. As a result, TAI gave funding under the Mountain Livelihoods programme for the research to be carried out.

## PRIMARY RESEARCH QUESTION

- What are the long-term sustainable effects of INF's GAP approach to community health and development work in Nepal?

## MORE SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

- How was the GAP approach formed and why was this new approach necessary?
- What are the primary characteristics of the GAP approach and how is this an effective approach to CHD work in Nepal?
- How many 'sister organisations' have developed out of INF's CHD work in the past 17 years? How sustainable are these organisations, and what methods are their practices based upon?
- What is the continuing influence of the methods taught through INF's GAP approach on the sister organisations?
- What evidence of change is seen at the individual, household, community and VDC levels as a result of the GAP approach?

After finalising this report, it is intended that it will be a useful document for INF and stakeholders on many levels. Firstly, it is expected that the information provided in this report and the ongoing research will help to shape the future CHD programmes of INF, continuing with the positive, effective aspects of the programme whilst improving on areas of proven weakness. Secondly, it is hoped that the results within this report will be encouraging to all involved with INF, in recognising the positive impact that INF's programmes have had on the lives of Nepalis over the past 17 years. Lastly, it is also anticipated that this report will be beneficial for past, present and possible future donors of INF's CHD programmes, as the claims of long-term sustainable impact can be substantiated through the qualitative and quantitative data collected.

## 2. METHODOLOGY



PRA activity being facilitated with NGO committee members

For the purpose of this research, both qualitative and quantitative methods were utilized, underpinned by a participatory approach. This approach focuses on engaging the local community in the evaluations, giving them a role to play in the initiatives designed for their own benefit with the aim of greater sustainability through increased participation.

In line with a participatory approach, Participatory Rural Appraisal [PRA] techniques were utilised, including Focus Group Discussions [FGDs] and semi-structured interviews, as well as activities which included all interview participants and incorporated pictures and symbols of key elements of life in Nepal [for example healthcare, education, Income Generation [IG] skills, drinking water], and participants were able to articulate their community values and their approach to community activities by using these pictures.

During these interviews and FGDs, quantitative measures were also used to collect necessary data. Observation was also a key element of the research, as researchers were able to observe the way in which communities interacted and engaged. They were also able to observe the fruit of the independent community action taken by Non-Governmental Organisations [NGOs] and cooperatives since their formation, such as the observation of new school buildings built through community initiative, the IG activities of community members who have received loans from the cooperatives, and the office buildings of the NGOs and cooperatives that have received support from local government as a result of community advocacy and lobbying.

# 3. THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING

## 'PROVISION' VERSUS 'PROCESS' APPROACH

In the past, many projects were based on a 'provision' approach, whereby, in its simplest form, organisations consult with the community to ascertain their needs, and thereafter provide the resources required to fill this need, whether it be drinking water supplies, toilets, materials for building roads or materials for electricity etc. Although this approach was beneficial for communities in the short-term, there were no sustainable benefits from this work, and communities became largely dependent on organisations and donors, being merely 'recipients' of the provisions. Furthermore, the most disadvantaged and marginalised groups within communities were not necessarily having their voices heard or their needs met through this approach, due to their lack of participation, and decisions being made on their behalf by others.

In contrast to a 'provision' based approach, the 'process' approach emphasises participation, empowerment, local inclusive decision-making, and capacity building, all of which lead to communities taking ownership over their decisions and having control of their future, resulting in sustainable community transformation.

Programmes centred upon empowerment can often be linked back to a Freirian model, a methodology based on the work of Brazilian educationalist Paulo Freire who strived to develop programmes which uplifted the rural poor across Brazil. According to Freire, as long as communities fail to have a consciousness of their own power to address problems and bring about positive change, these communities will remain dependent on others. Therefore Freirian programmes focus on helping the marginalised become conscious of their power, and subsequently support them to become confident, creative and responsible in its use. Evidently, this approach involves a long process incorporating many different aspects in order to make the effects sustainable, hence the term 'process approach'.

# 4. BACKGROUND

## 4.1 SPARC: SURKHET PROJECT AWARENESS RAISING CYCLE

Prior to 1991, empowerment approaches to development had not been utilised in programmes within Nepal. Both INF and the United Mission to Nepal [UMN], another well-established health and development organisation working in Nepal, had based their community programmes upon provision approaches. However, in 1991 an evaluation was carried out on UMN's Surkhet Project, which reported that although positive short-term changes had been brought about, these changes had little to no impact on the poorest, most marginalised community members, and communities were also left feeling largely dependent on the continuing support of the project, particularly the provision of resources.

Recognising these weaknesses, UMN staff began to modify their approach to Community Development [CD] work, and developed a second phase to the project. This second phase was fundamentally different to the first, based upon four principle stages:

- social analysis and listening survey,
- group formation and problem definition,
- action planning and implementation, and
- organisational development

This was the first time this process approach had been used in the context of Nepal, and therefore it was largely experimental, however, with time, it proved to be a successful and effective approach.

## 4.2 DEVELOPMENT OF THE GAP APPROACH WITHIN INF

Although INF had been implementing health programmes for many years, from 1988 INF branched out into CHD work, starting with a CHD project in a very remote area of Baglung District. This project was founded on a needs-based provisions approach, however, while similar to UMN, the programme showed key weaknesses, such as a lack of inclusion of the poorest and most marginalised, and a lasting dependency on INF. Therefore, at a similar time to UMN, INF was also looking to modify the approach used within its CD programmes, from a provisions approach to a more participatory process approach.

Following on from the Freirian model and the demonstration of this approach through the UMN SPARC project, from 1997 INF began to utilise a new approach within its CHD work, known as the group action process. This focused on participation, empowerment and local ownership, with the aim of producing sustainable results in communities. The GAP approach is explained in extensive detail under section 8.

### 4.3 TIMELINE OF PAST INF PROJECTS USING GAP APPROACH

Since 1997, INF has implemented CHD projects utilising the GAP approach in the following districts and VDCs:

District	No. of VDCs	Project started	Project ended	NGOs formed after phase out	Cooperatives formed after phase out
Myagdi	5 VDCs	1992	1997	Interrupted by civil war so work was not properly completed. No NGOs or cooperatives formed after phase out.	
	8 VDCs	1997	2005		
Banke	Nepalgunj Municipality [17 wards]	1998	2007	Mahilaa Milijuli Bidhan NGO	Namuna Bahu Udeshya Cooperative [Multi-Purpose Role Model Cooperative]
				Janakalyan Samaaj Sudhar NGO [Janakalyan Improvement Committee, JSIC]	Mankhola Bahu Udeshya Cooperative [Active Multi-Purpose Cooperative]
				Ekataa Samaaj Suhdar Saansta NGO [United Society Improvement Organisation, USIO]	Shakriya Bahu Udeshya Cooperative [Active Multi-Purpose Cooperative]
				Shakti Bikaas Samaaj Sudhar Sasthaa	
Banke [Raptipari]	3 VDCs	2007	2011	Raptipari Samudayik Bikaas Saansta NGO [Raptipari Community Development Organisation]	
Kapilvastu	2 VDCs	2007	2011		Fulbari Cooperative [Hariharpur]
					Bishal Cooperative [Mahuwa]
Surkhet	2 VDCs	2008	2012	Participatory Inclusive Empowerment Centre NGO	Samaabeshi Bachat Savings and Credit Cooperative
Jumla	1 VDC	2008	2012	Rural Women's Development Centre NGO	Sahakarmi Mahilaa Bahudesiya Sahakari Limited Cooperative
					Samabeshi Bachata Tathtaa Loan Cooperative [Inclusive Savings and Credit Cooperative]
Dang	2 VDCs	2008	2013	Reconciliation Community Development Center [RCDC], Bela VDC	Paluwa Agricultural Cooperative, Bela VDC
				Community Resource Management Center NGO, Gobardiya VDC	Dhankhola Agriculture Cooperative, Gobardiya VDC
Mugu	2 VDCs	2007	2012	Progressive Community Development Organisation, Natharpu VDC	Digo Krishi Saharkari Sanstha, Natharpu VDC
				Sahayatra Bhee NGO, Bhee VDC	Bihani Savings and Credit Cooperative, Bhee VDC

#### 4.4 CURRENT INF PROJECTS USING GAP APPROACH

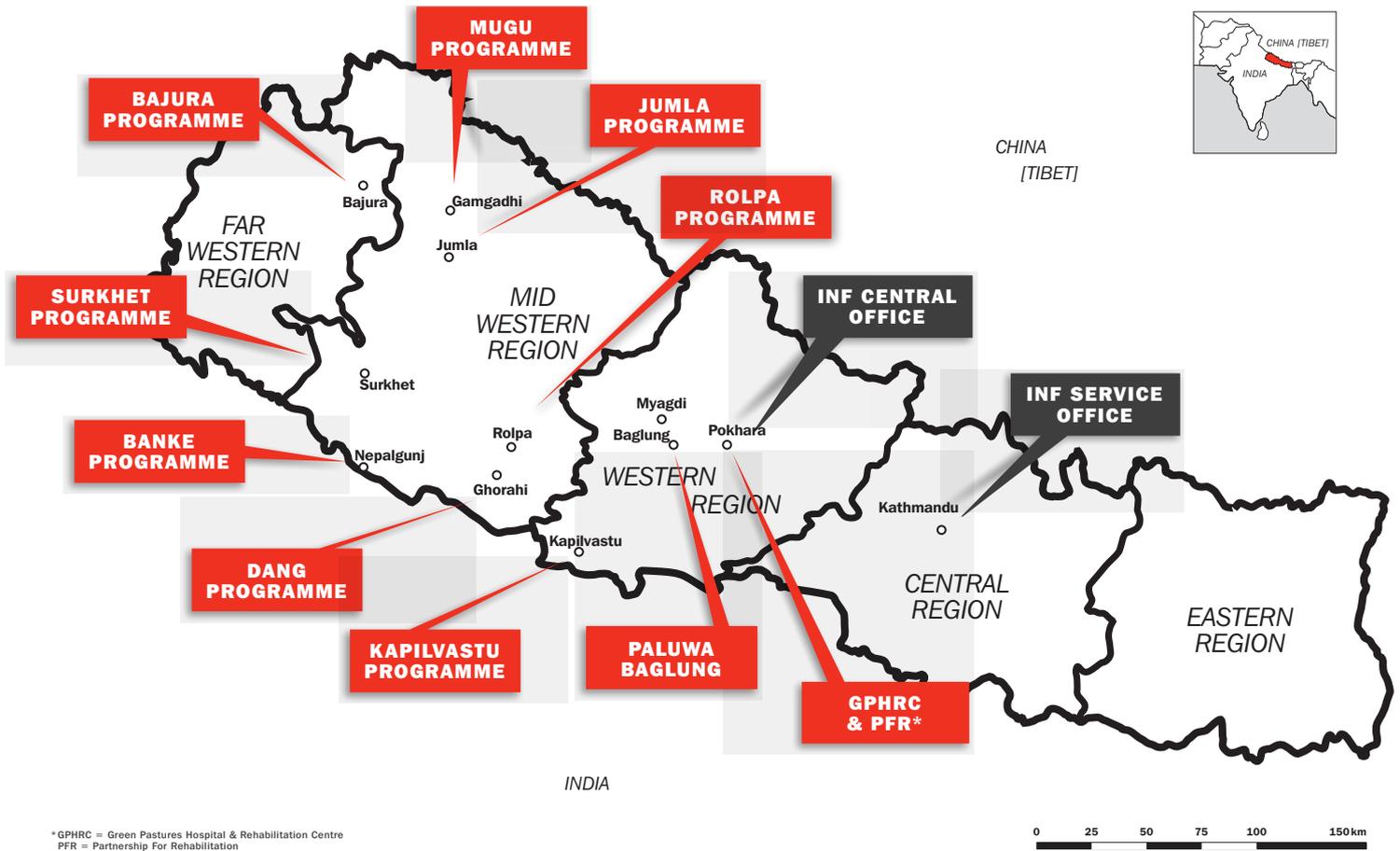


Figure 1: Map of Nepal showing current working areas of INF

The GAP approach is currently being utilised in INF CHD programmes in 7 districts across Nepal, including:

District	VDCs	Start date	Project period
Kapilvastu	Maharajgunj Balaramwapur	July 2012	3 years
	Rajpur	July 2011	5 years
Banke	Binauna Matehiya Narainapur		3 years
Surkhet	Lekgaun Gadhi	January 2011	5 years
Mugu	Khamale Sukadhik Hyanglu	July 2012	3 years
Jumla	Kundari	July 2010	5 years
	Kalikakhetu Tanti	July 2014	5 years
Bajura	Wai Jukot Sappata	July 2013	3 years
Dang	Thawang Uwa Seram	July 2013	3 years

# 5. THE GAP APPROACH IN DETAIL

As explained in section 4.2, INF first began utilising the GAP approach in CHD programmes from 1997. Outlined in the INF CHD Operating Manual, written in 2014, the GAP approach focuses primarily on action through group formation, aiming to enhance the ability of community members to analyse their situation, identify their problems and prioritise their needs, which in turn leads to the development of action plans to address the identified needs and subsequently the implementation of action.

## 5.1 INF'S CHD GOAL AND PURPOSES

The overall goal of INF's CHD work can be summarised as:

'Sustainably improved quality of life, especially for poor and marginalised people in the working areas.'

Within this goal, three key purposes have been outlined:

**Purpose one:** Empowered communities taking collective action through training, awareness, and facilitation, and enabling possible partnerships in working areas.

**Purpose two:** Improved livelihood status of the target groups through food security, skills development and provision of basic infrastructure interventions in working areas.

**Purpose three:** Improved health status of people living in project areas through the regular delivery of quality health services from the local health facility, and increased ability of people to use these services.

## 5.2 TARGET GROUPS

In working with a community, INF does not discriminate based on religion, faith, or political beliefs. The most marginalised and disadvantaged communities are those which INF focuses its work upon. Within these communities, all are encouraged to participate in community activities; however INF CHD work looks to ensure the participation of the following groups of people:

- the poorest and most marginalised
- people with disabilities and significant health problems
- dependent women [for example widows]
- illiterate community members
- Dalits

“Sustainably improved quality of life, especially for poor and marginalised people in the working areas.”

### 5.3 FIVE KEY PHASES OF GAP APPROACH

This process approach is carried out through 5 key phases, as outlined below:

#### Phase 1: Social Analysis and Listening Survey

Within this first phase, the focus is upon INF carrying out a community screening process for the purpose of gaining a clear understanding of the community. This includes such aspects as community structures, stratification, common lifestyles, numbers of households, the economic, social and political status of the communities. All this information helps to establish the foundation for which the programme can be developed, such as determining the number of SHGs to be formed, the location of SHGs, the number of project staff needed, and the key issues faced by community members.

This screening is carried out at both the district and the local level to determine the best use of INF's resources. Project staff also begin to form relationships with community members in order to build trust and rapport. A baseline survey is to be completed during this time in order to collect data which can then be used to measure change and progress.

#### Phase 2: Group Formation and Developing Capacity for Critical Analysis

During this second phase, initially SHGs are not yet fully developed, but community members are brought together and discussion is facilitated. This discussion centres on assisting community members to analyse their socioeconomic condition and identify the key issues and underlying causes within their lives, thereby bringing forth generative themes to focus on. This is facilitated through a number of PRA tools and games.

The Community Facilitator [CF] will not officially assist group formation until the community members come to a recognition and realisation of their need to form the group, and therefore they take ownership of the group as they have a desire to be a member and unite to work together. Subsequently, the members come to understand the concept and purpose of the group, and can develop their own group norms and rules. This stage normally takes around 4-6 months.



One INF SHG member utilising the tailoring skills learned through income generation training provided by INF

#### Phase 3: Situational Analysis, Problem Identification and Action Plans

In this third stage, the focus is primarily upon the transfer of skills and knowledge to enable SHGs to analyse their situation, identify their key problems and develop achievable action plans which can be implemented to bring about change. Group members are taught a systematic method for planning their action, known as the '5 k's' [in Nepali]: ke [what], kahaa [where], kina [why], kahile [when], kasari [how]. During the formation of action plans, groups are also encouraged to utilise local and natural resources where possible.

Through the inclusion and participation of the poorest and most marginalised citizens within these groups, the problems and solutions identified should be reflective of the needs of the entire community, not merely one dominant section. INF staff focus on building capacity within group members, particularly through training opportunities, including leadership training, group facilitation training, savings and credit management training, book-keeping training, accounting training, cooperative management training and others.

A significant aspect of this phase is teaching group members about accessing external resources to carry out their action plans, in order to ensure the work is sustainable. This includes looking for money and supplies from sources such as local government [for example from the VDC, the poverty alleviation fund, health posts etc] and other NGOs. INF also gives resources for the implementation of action plans, as long as the action plan and submission has been made properly by the group, including plans for drinking water schemes, community plantations, toilet building, retaining walls, road building and other initiatives.

Within this time, other key elements of the project include creating IG opportunities, improving agricultural production, creating awareness and action on climate change, and promoting health, both through strengthening the existing local health facility and raising awareness on hygiene and sanitation. These aspects are further outlined below.



INF SHG meeting in action

#### Phase 4: Strengthening SHGs

The focus of phase 4 is upon project staff identifying ways in which SHGs can be improved, and subsequently providing the necessary support in the form of training and workshops in order to strengthen the groups. Also during this phase, the project staff continue to support the development of networks and working relationships between different organisations and government agencies, thereby supporting the implementation of plans and access to external resources.

Throughout this phase, project staff gradually reduce their involvement in the groups as they work to strengthen SHG independence and ensure that group members are taking on all responsibilities, although regular follow-up and monitoring is carried out. However, project staff facilitate the important discussions surrounding the long-term functioning and sustainability of the group, with the agenda of joining with other SHGs to form a main committee and possibly registering as an NGO or cooperative [or both].

#### Phase 5: Forming Partnerships for Organisational Development

Phase 5 is only possible if the SHG and joint communities are willing to work together to register an NGO or cooperative, as this will provide the opportunity for a new partnership to be established between INF and the sister organisation that emerges. The primary difference between NGOs and cooperatives is that cooperatives are focussed upon managing the savings of its members and giving loans to the community, whereas NGOs are centred upon community cooperation and action; however, some NGOs also coordinate savings and loans for members.

Project staff play a role in supporting the registration of the NGO or cooperative, and a new partnership of 3-5 years is established, with the main intention of developing the organisational development capacity in the sister organisation in order to ensure sustainability.

Evidently, the main essential factor in this stage is the commitment and willingness of communities to continue with the work in the form of a registered NGO or cooperative. Further training is given throughout this period in order to support the successful functioning of the NGO or cooperative, including proposal writing training, office management training, book-keeping training and others. During this phase project staff continue to monitor the work of the sister organisations.

## 5.4 ADDITIONAL ASPECTS OF GAP APPROACH

As outlined above, INF also carries out extra work through the CHD GAP approach, including IG, savings and credit schemes, agricultural support, health support, disaster risk reduction and preparedness, climate change awareness and adaptation, and disaster relief.

### IG training and opportunities

Through the GAP approach, INF gives opportunities for IG training for SHG members, including animal rearing, tailoring, mobile phone repair, apple plantation, bee-keeping, bamboo furniture making and other training. INF also gives to each group an allotted amount of 'seed money', which is managed by the group and loaned out to group members to allow them to commence their IG activities, whilst the loan is repaid at a low interest rate. This then provides the example for giving loans through their own savings and credit mechanism within the group.

### Savings and credit scheme

Within the SHGs, project staff teach about the importance of savings, and provide the opportunity to commence this scheme through training group members in account keeping, and providing 'passbook' saving registers to all members. Each group decides on an amount which they will all contribute at each meeting [weekly, fortnightly or monthly], and low interest loans are given to group members from this savings. In some circumstances, groups give interest-free loans to SHG members to support them in establishing IG activities.

### Agricultural support

The majority of target groups are largely dependent on agriculture as the primary livelihood source, and therefore the CHD programme looks to support and improve agricultural production within communities. This is achieved through training sessions on various topics, teaching new specific skills such as compost manure production and farming on sloping land, providing seeds and plants to begin new agriculture production, and increasing access to irrigation facilities.

### Health

Health promotion is a key aspect of the GAP approach, and is divided into two parts.

- Strengthening the existing government health facility. This is achieved through improving the management capacity in the form of training and skill development workshops, and supporting the delivery of regular quality health services, particularly for Maternal and Child Health [MCH].
- Creating general awareness of health, hygiene and sanitation practices. This includes teaching on issues such as general health, hygiene and sanitation for example hand-washing, cutting nails, bathing, hygienic practices during menstruation etc, HIV/AIDS prevention, reproductive health, family nutrition, family planning, MCH, safe drinking water, and other topics.

### Climate change and disaster risk reduction and preparedness

Climate change awareness and action are an increasingly crucial aspect of INF's CHD work, and project staff therefore look to educate communities on the concept of climate change, whilst teaching options for action and adaptation. This is achieved through training, workshops, and general awareness campaigns in communities. Project staff provide teaching on the importance of looking after the environment by keeping it clean, creating environmentally-friendly lifestyles [such as teaching community members to use waste pits instead of burning plastic, and teaching group members how to build smokeless stoves in their houses], and conserving the community forest.

Groups are also taught about disaster risk reduction and preparedness, and are encouraged to jointly develop a disaster risk reduction preparedness plan. Project staff teach group members about practical activities that they can engage in, including building retaining walls, planting trees to prevent landslides, and stockpiling some non-perishable food for times of disaster.

### Disaster relief and humanitarian assistance

Where the need arises, INF is also involved in humanitarian assistance in the form of providing disaster relief. During times of disaster, INF partners with local government, local churches and other local NGOs to coordinate relief assistance.

# 6. FINDINGS

## 6.1 MYAGDI DISTRICT

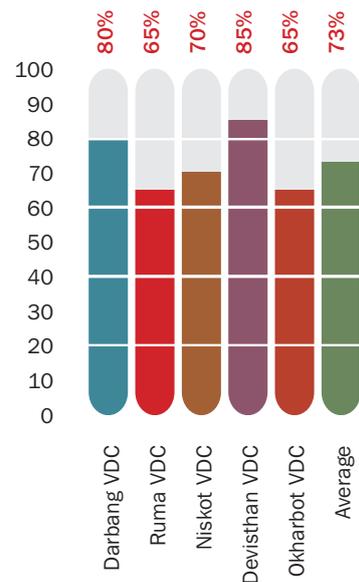
As mentioned earlier, the district of Myagdi, located in the western region of Nepal, was the place where INF first carried out CHD work utilising the GAP approach, beginning in 1997. For the first two years, as INF transitioned to this approach, the programmes still incorporated many aspects of the previous provision-based approach, and therefore researchers did not seek to gather data from the projects. From 1999 onwards the GAP approach was utilised, and, consequently, during the data collection period researchers only met with groups which had been formed from 1999 onwards and had taken part in the CHD work based upon the GAP approach.

During the field visit to Myagdi, researchers were limited in their ability to meet with SHGs for a number of reasons, including severe weather, recent landslides and the group members' commitments to planting rice. As a result, researchers met with four groups from three different VDCs, all of which were started in INF's CHD project 15 years previously. This data has been separated from the remaining data collected from sister NGOs and cooperatives, as it is categorised differently and cannot be compared with the other organisations.

During the initial project, INF facilitated the formation of 90 SHGs across five VDCs in Myagdi District. Although no exact data could be collected regarding the number of groups still functioning, researchers conducted semi-structured interviews with residents of this area to try to ascertain current numbers. Based on this information, it is calculated that an estimated 73% of original groups are still active and functioning, see figure 2.

Furthermore, researchers conducted a semi-structured interview with one original SHG member from Okharbot VDC. He stated that, although his group is now passive and not meeting on a monthly basis, when an issue arises they can easily come together as a group, discuss the issue and look for solutions, because of the foundation that they were given through the GAP approach. Therefore it is assumed that some other groups within the five original working VDCs are also passive, yet still rely on using the GAP approach techniques when issues arise that require community involvement.

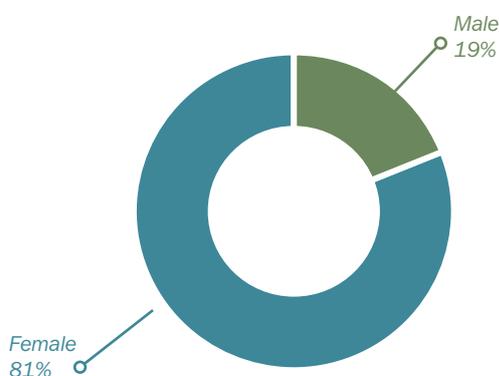
Figure 2: Estimated percentages of original SHGs still functioning in five working VDCs



### Basic information of groups interviewed

All groups are currently meeting on a regular monthly basis. Two of the groups interviewed had since branched out into forming more SHGs in their local area. All the groups were also running their own savings and credit initiatives, with group members each contributing between 10-100 rupees per month, and loans offered at an interest rate of between 1-2% monthly.

**Figure 3: Gender breakdown of SHG members**



As seen in figure 3, 81% of group members from these SHGs are female. 75% of the groups had male members.

### Previous work of INF in communities

During FGDs, SHG members were asked about their memory of the key aspects of INF's CHD programme in Myagdi. Although this is not reflective of the complete work carried out by INF, it demonstrates the components which were important, impacting and memorable for group members from 15 years ago. The main components mentioned include:

- Group formation
- Meeting facilitation
- Income generation opportunities
- Support for drinking water schemes
- Savings and credit training and facilitation
- Agricultural support
- Leadership / capacity building

### Influence of the GAP approach on current activity

With the groups that had been formed during INF's CHD project 15 years ago and that were continuing until now, researchers focused upon collecting data regarding the aspects of the GAP approach which were still being utilised in the groups to the current day. As already explained, all four groups continue to meet together on a monthly basis, and all groups stated that the meetings were facilitated for the purpose of discussing and prioritising issues and forming solutions. All the groups had also utilised this approach as the basis to carrying out action within their communities up until this time, as outlined below. In one group, none of the original members were remaining, however the foundational components of the GAP approach [primarily meeting together and discussing issues and solutions] have been passed down to the younger generation who now facilitate the group based on this same method.

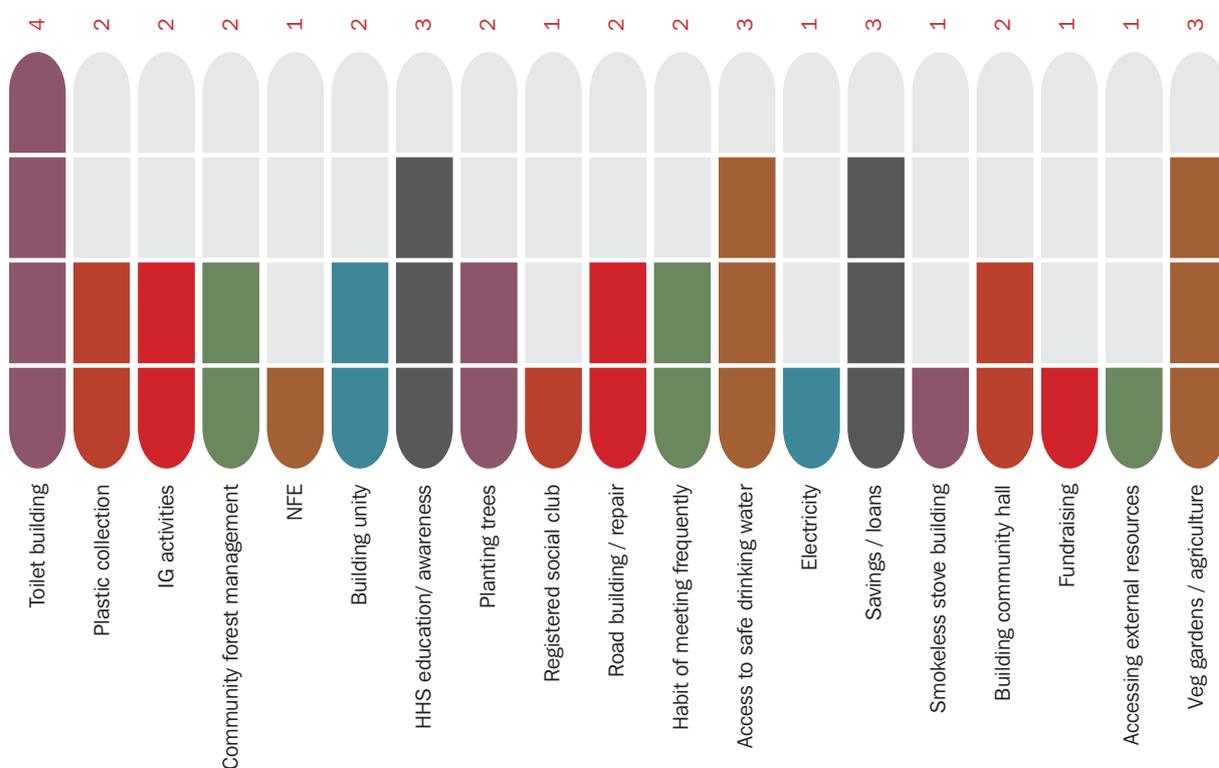
Evidently, this approach fulfilled its purpose in being primarily participatory and facilitated in a way which allowed the SHG members to take responsibility for the group and the activities. This fact demonstrates that the GAP approach will only be successful if it is not brought in to a community in a forced, top-down manner; rather it must be taught from the ground upwards and brought about gradually, until community members are ready, able and willing to be responsible for the group, and feel the need for the group to continue functioning, as it benefits them. One member from Salleri Bahudeshya Samuha in Devistan VDC stated, "We can achieve so much together because of our unity".

“We can achieve so much together because of our unity”

## Activities carried out by SHGs in the past 15 years

Through the utilisation of the GAP approach and the methods involved, the four SHGs interviewed have successfully carried out a number of activities within their communities. As represented in figure 4, groups were involved in a variety of activities. Each group revealed that the basis of their activity was the unity which they had built through group formation, regular meetings and discussions.

Figure 4: Number of groups [out of four] carrying out various community activities



One group member from Janasewa Krishak Samuha in Niskot VDC stated, “Without group unity, it is very hard to work”. Evidently, the most common community activities for the groups included building toilets, creating awareness and giving education on health, hygiene and sanitation, creating access to safe drinking water through building water taps, providing savings and loan opportunities, forming vegetable gardens and increasing agricultural production.

“Without group unity, it is very hard to work”

## Advocacy, lobbying and network coordination

Across the past 15 years, all four groups interviewed had successfully carried out advocacy and lobbying to the VDC, District Development Committee [DDC], Government Organisations [GOs] and NGOs, as seen in figure 5. During a FGD, one group member from Dhadkharka Saamudayik Ban Samuha in Darbang VDC aptly stated, “INF’s work was the foundation for us. This opened the way for us to work with other organisations over the past 15 years, because we already had the foundational structure which allowed successful community coordination and action.”

**Figure 5: Number of issues taken by four groups to various authorities for advocacy**



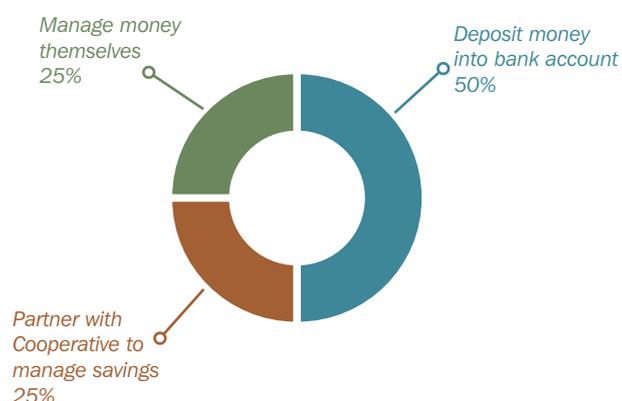
Advocacy and lobbying was successfully carried out by these four groups on a number of varying topics. These included support for physical infrastructure [drinking water taps, electricity, retaining walls, irrigation, building roads, dipping tanks, community hall], support for social infrastructure [formation of social and sports club], and support for training and education [child literacy classes, IG training].

When asked about the quality of coordination between the SHGs and VDC, DDC, NGOs and GOs, all four groups stated that there was no regular network coordination meeting taking place in the area; however all groups stated that they currently had a good relationship with local government, with group leaders occasionally being invited to take part in local government meetings. However, only two groups felt that they could confidently access the resources and funding available from the government.

## Financial management

As mentioned earlier, all groups interviewed were continuing to facilitate savings and credit through the SHGs. As seen in figure 6, one group manages the finances themselves, whilst two groups use bank accounts and one group has partnered with a cooperative to manage their funds. Registers and record keeping are done by all four groups. All groups interviewed were confident in their savings and loans schemes and their ability to manage their finances, and all groups stated that the opportunity to save money and access low interest loans has had a major impact on their lives, providing them with the means to start small businesses and IG activities as well as to take out loans for emergency needs, such as treatment for health problems.

**Figure 6: System of financial management**



“INF’s work was the foundation for us.”

## Sustainability

Upon being questioned about the issue of sustainability and ensuring the continuity of group functioning, groups interviewed gave a variety of responses. The fact that these groups have continued functioning independently for the past 13 years without the involvement of INF indicates that group members are making decisions which ensure the maintenance of group meetings and group action. As evidenced above, all groups are meeting on a regular monthly basis, and all groups responded by asserting the fact that across the years they have included new members in the group, particularly members of younger generations who will be able to carry the group forward as older members retire their involvement. As mentioned, the fact that some SHGs are today composed of entirely new members

in comparison to the original group members when INF first facilitated group formation is reflective of the fact that the group has been functioning sustainably all these years. Other aspects of sustainable action in groups provided by members during FGDs included maintaining meeting records, investing in and maintaining the local community meeting hall, and dividing group responsibilities between group members. Three out of four groups interviewed revealed that they utilise the profit generated from loan interest to invest in community activities and community needs.

Alongside these aspects of strength are also some key areas of weakness which would hinder the sustainability and effectiveness of these groups. Throughout FGDs with groups in Myagdi, it became evident that although SHGs were still meeting frequently, discussing issues and looking for solutions, some key aspects of the GAP approach were not being utilised. All groups admitted that accessing external resources was the biggest struggle for continuing community activities. The formation of action plans was only being carried out by two out of four groups, and none of the groups were accustomed to writing proposals. Furthermore, no groups interviewed were forming yearly plans or had set goals for their future direction, but were generally taking the perspective of simply dealing with issues as they arise.

### Summary of research in Myagdi

For the past 15 years, the four SHGs interviewed across Myagdi District, which were first facilitated by INF through the GAP approach, have been functioning successfully. Whilst the groups continue to be composed of predominantly female group members, male involvement remains and is a primary component of success and sustainability. Key aspects of the group action include meeting together regularly; discussing issues and forming solutions; running a savings and credit scheme and managing their finances; advocating and lobbying to the VDC, DDC, GOs and NGOs; and taking action within their community. The informed estimation of 73% of the original SHGs still functioning across the five initial working VDCs is a very positive indicator that the remainder of the groups are continuing to carry out a similar approach within their community.

There are certain important elements of the GAP approach which are not currently being utilised by all groups, such as forming an action plan and writing proposals, and therefore selected group members would benefit from a one-off 'refresher training' to re-teach these components and therefore improve the effectiveness of the community action [see Recommendation 1]. 13 years of independent functionality of these groups reflects the sustainability of the GAP approach, as groups have continued to rely on the methods taught through the GAP approach as the foundation for their ongoing community meetings and action.



Conducting a focus group discussion with SHG members in Myagdi

## 6.2 BASIC INFORMATION OF NGOS AND COOPERATIVES

During the initial research phase, researchers visited and collected data from a total of nine NGOs and 10 cooperatives across five districts in Nepal [as listed below], all of which developed from INF's CHD work implemented through the GAP approach, and are referred to as 'sister organisations'. It is crucial to gain a picture of the composition of these sister organisations, such as the number of years functioning, the number of committee members, frequency of meetings, and the number of SHGs associated.

NGO	Cooperative
Rural Women's Development Centre NGO	Sahkarmi Mahila Bahudeshya Sahakari Cooperative
Janakalyan Social Improvement Committee NGO	Samabeshi Bachata Thathaa Loan Cooperative
United Society Improvement Organisation	Mankola Multiple Cooperative Organisation Shaktiya Bahudeshya Cooperative
Shakti Bikaas Samaaj Sudhar NGO	Samaabeshi Bachat Savings and Credit Cooperative
Raptipari Samudayik Bikaas NGO	Namuna Bahudeshya Cooperative
Participatory Inclusive Empowerment Centre NGO	Paluwa Agricultural Cooperative
Mahila Milijuli NGO	Dhankola Agriculture Cooperative
Reconciliation Community Development Centre NGO	Bishal Cooperative
Community Resource Management Centre	Fulbari Cooperative

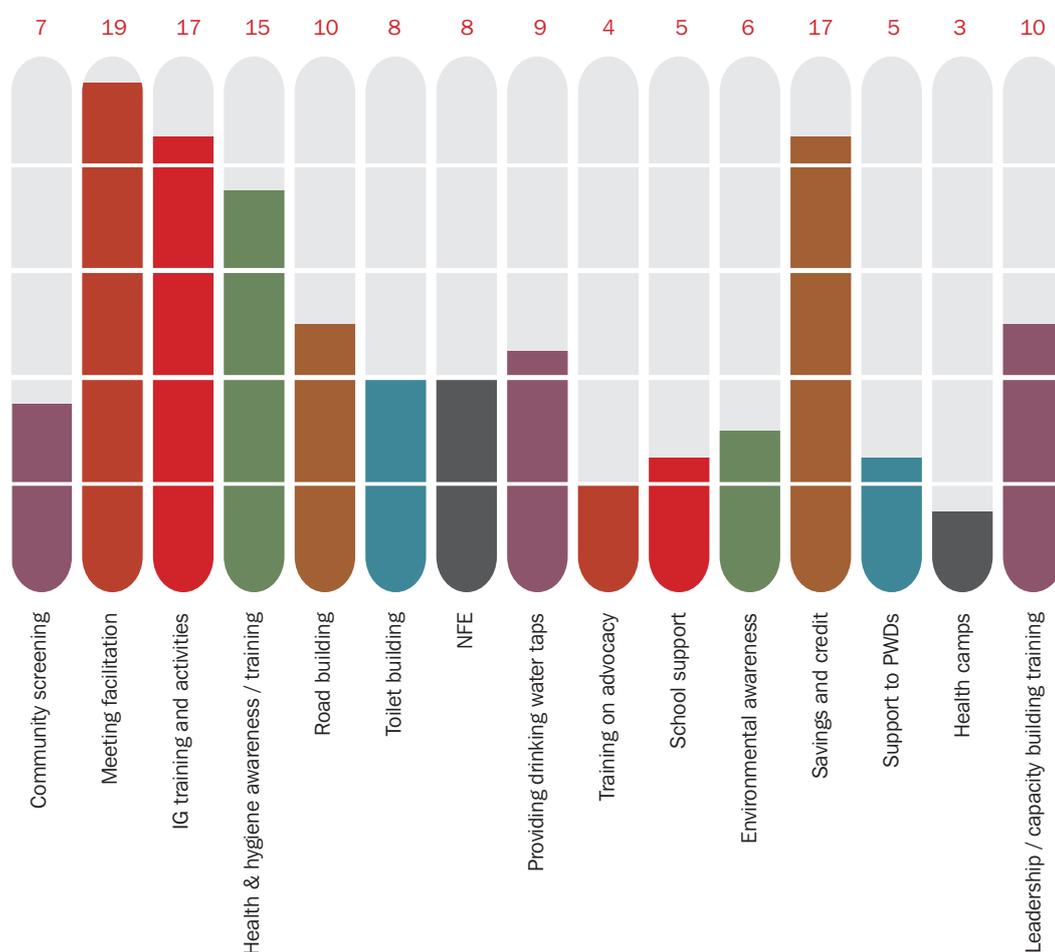
## NGO sister organisations

The nine NGOs interviewed had been registered for a range of time from 10 years to one year, with an average of 4.4 years per organisation. Within the nine NGOs, a total of 197 SHGs were represented, across 13 VDCs and 17 wards, with a total of 4,786 SHG members. The NGOs had an average committee size of 11 members and a combined total of 98 committee members, all of which were previously involved in the SHGs facilitated by INF. 64% of these committee members were female. From FGDs, it became clear that two committees were meeting fortnightly, six committees meeting monthly, and one committee only meeting annually. Of the nine NGOs interviewed, only four are formally employing staff, with a total of seven staff members.

## Cooperative sister organisations

The 10 cooperatives interviewed had been registered and functioning for a range of time, from 1.5 years up to seven years, with an average of 3.5 years. 193 SHGs were linked to these 10 cooperatives, with a total of 4,317 SHG members. Many of these SHGs were the same as those linked to the nine NGOs interviewed. Within these cooperatives there were a total of 2,419 shareholders, and a combined total savings of NPR 106 lakh [equivalent to approximately US\$109,000]. As opposed to the small number of NGOs interviewed that formally employed staff, all except one cooperative were employing staff at the time of research. Each cooperative had a committee with an average of 9 members, composed of 70% females, and, as above, all 92 committee members were previously involved in the SHGs facilitated by INF. Two committees were meeting fortnightly whilst eight committees were meeting monthly.

Figure 7: Previous work of INF in communities as perceived by sister organisations [number of groups]



### 6.3 PREVIOUS WORK OF INF AS PERCEIVED BY COMMUNITY MEMBERS

During the FGDs, committee members of the sister organisations were asked to describe the primary aspects of INF's CHD project when it was functioning within their community. As seen in figure 7, a variety of responses were given by the 19 groups, and it is important to note that this is not a comprehensive list of the complete work that INF's CHD projects focused upon, however this reflects the key aspects of the project that were important to SHG members at the time, and that have had a memorable and lasting impact on the community. Evidently, 19 out of 19 groups prioritised the formation of groups and facilitation of meetings, and other key areas included teaching on savings and credit schemes, providing IG training and activity opportunities, health and hygiene awareness and training, and leadership and capacity building training.

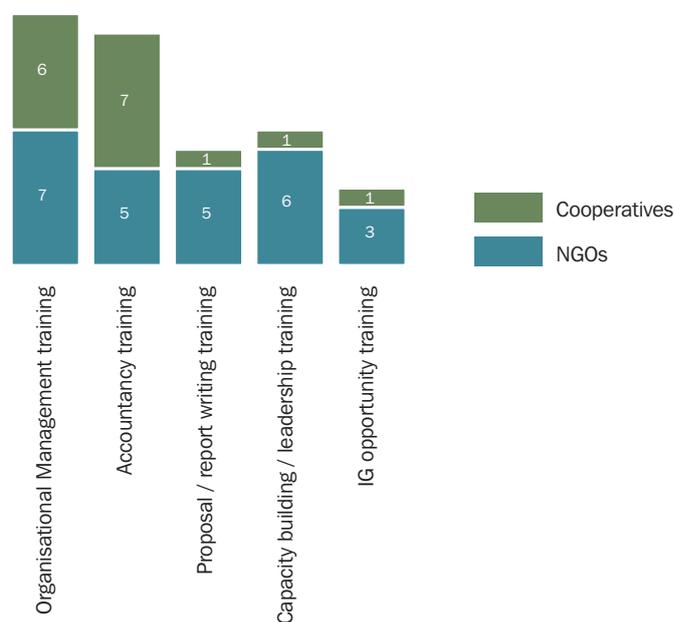
### 6.4 FORMATION OF NGOS AND COOPERATIVES

100% of sister organisations interviewed had been formed directly from the SHGs facilitated by INF's CHD work, with INF giving registration support to 100% of the NGOs and 60% of the cooperatives. 100% of NGOs and 60% of cooperatives interviewed formed a main committee prior to registration, by selecting representatives from each SHG and collaborating to form the new organisation with joint cooperation, and each community therefore had a 'link person' with the NGO. The majority of cooperatives revealed in FGD that their primary purpose for forming the new organisation was to ensure the correct management of savings, and also to be able to invest the savings.

### 6.5 INITIAL INPUTS FROM INF

In the initial stages of formation, INF gave various types of support to the sister organisations, both with physical inputs and capacity development. Figure 8 illustrates some of the primary inputs in the form of training given to both NGOs and cooperatives. Other training which was provided to various sister organisations included computer training, advocacy training, Non-Formal Education [NFE], disability awareness and support training, good governance training and office management training. During FGDs, many interviewees spoke about the way in which this training assisted greatly in the establishment of the organisation and gave them the foundational skills needed to independently and sustainably run the organisation. Some of the organisations who had not received certain types of training from INF, such as proposal and report writing, continued to ask if it was possible to receive this training in the future, as they felt they were lacking in these areas [see Recommendation 2].

Figure 8: Initial inputs given by INF to sister organisations [number of organisations]



In addition to these inputs, support was also given by INF in the form of physical inputs. Physical inputs to the nine NGOs and 10 cooperatives during the initial formation phase included office furniture, computers and printers, stationary, building / office support, bicycles, telephone, equipment for IG activities, money for community activities and staff salary [although each organisation did not receive all of these items].

Evidently, as well as facilitating a strong foundation for community action through the GAP approach within SHGs, the CHD projects have continued support of communities by assisting them through the process of forming a main committee, registering NGOs and cooperatives, providing physical inputs and capacity development to ensure the organisations are well established and equipped with the resources they need to be able to function independently and effectively into the future.

## 6.6 INPUTS FROM OTHER SOURCES

From the initial formation phase up until the time the research was carried out, 74% of the NGOs and cooperatives interviewed had received some form of support and inputs from other sources outside of INF, and the break-down of these sources is represented in figures 9 and 10.

These inputs included office furniture and supplies, IG activity equipment, support for building a new office including money, electricity and toilets, various types of training, irrigation pumps and drinking water taps. Evidently these NGOs and cooperatives have been successful in implementing the skills they learnt through the GAP approach within their SHGs, accessing external resources and utilising these for the benefit of their organisations and their community work.

Figure 9: Percentage of support given to NGOs from outside sources

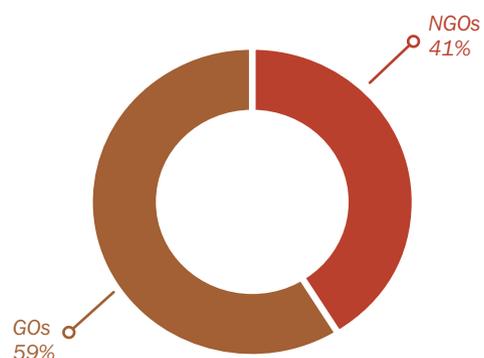
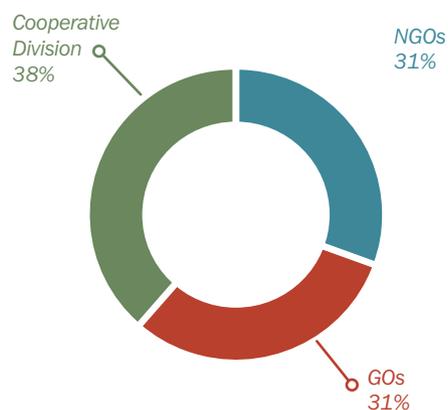


Figure 10: Percentage of support given to cooperatives from outside sources



## 6.7 TARGET GROUPS AND METHODS OF INCLUSION

During FGDs, NGO and cooperative members were given the opportunity to share about the target groups which their work aims to reach and serve, and subsequently the ways in which they are ensuring they are reaching and supporting these groups. As evidenced through figure 11, the majority of sister organisations interviewed focus their work on the poor, the marginalised, women and PWDs; to a lesser extent some organisations also aim to serve Dalit / low caste Nepalis, the illiterate, the indigenous, widows and those who are landless. The inclusion of these groups is done primarily through ensuring they are a part of the associated SHGs, after which time they focus on supporting them in a variety of ways [see figure 12], including providing access to savings and low / no interest loan opportunities, giving opportunities for IG activities, providing training on various topics and giving advocacy support. As one group member from Mahila Milijuli NGO in Nepalgunj stated during a FGD, “INF taught us and laid the groundwork for us to work with these types of target groups”. The primary target groups of INF’s CHD work have therefore also remained the target groups of these sister organisations that have developed, and these organisations exist to continue the goals which INF first set, which is to improve the lives of the poor and marginalised within Nepal.

Figure 11: Target groups of organisational work [number of organisations]

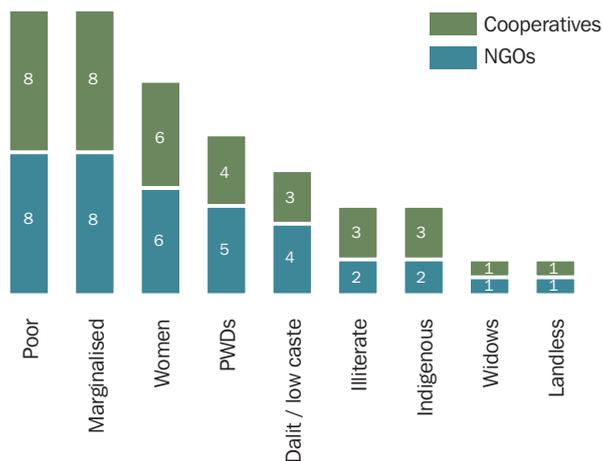
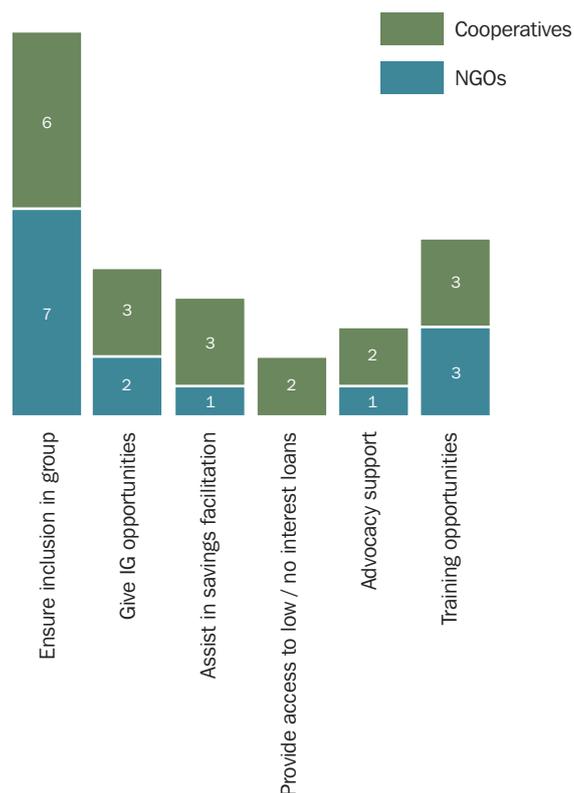


Figure 12: Methods of including and supporting target groups [number of organisations]



“INF taught us and laid the groundwork for us to work with these types of target groups”

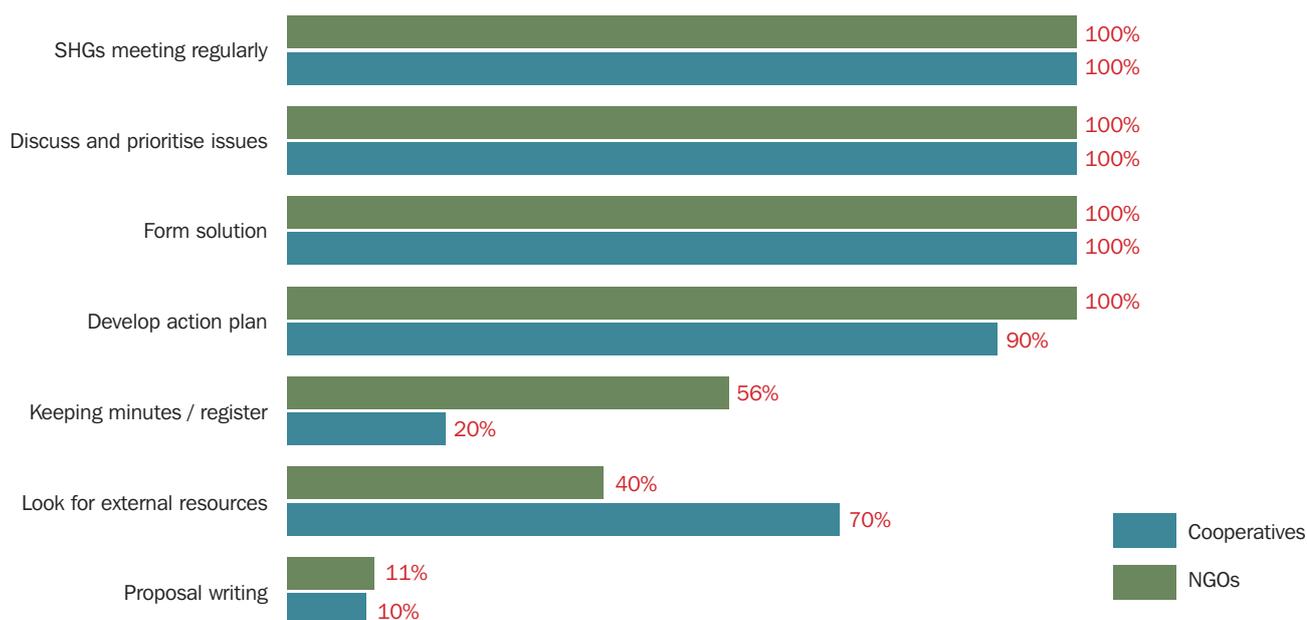
## 6.8 INFLUENCE OF THE GAP APPROACH ON CURRENT ACTIVITIES

Through the FGDs, researchers were able to gather data which indicates the influence of the past GAP approach method on the current work of sister organisations, particularly in relation to the implementation of community work. Committees were asked to detail the steps utilised in their process of work, and these were then compared to the key elements taught through the GAP approach. As seen in the steps listed in figure 13, the first three categories are being carried out by 100% of the 19 organisations interviewed: SHGs meet together regularly, SHG members discuss and prioritise their issues and subsequently form solutions, and 100% of NGOs and 90% of cooperatives are developing action plans. One committee member from Shakti Bikaas Samaaj Sudhar NGO in Rajhena stated, “We use exactly the same method we were taught by INF, so everything is still the same.” Similarly, one committee member from Bishal Cooperative in Kapilvastu affirmed, “We haven’t changed INF’s process at all.”

These are the key foundational steps of the GAP approach, as these methods form the basis of group action, unity, inclusion and joint decision-making, and therefore the fact that 100% of sister organisations still use this as the basis of their work is reflective of the fact that the GAP approach is a beneficial, effective and sustainable approach for community work in communities across Nepal. One group member from Mahila Milijuli NGO in Nepalgunj reflected on the importance of these foundational unifying steps in stating, “We used to think we didn’t need to rely on each other, but now we have recognised our reliance on each other. Before, we were not united, but now we have unity. We have recognised the power in numbers.”

However, whilst the 19 sister organisations are currently carrying out those initial steps, it is evident from figure 13 that other integral aspects of the GAP approach are not being carried out by all, such as keeping minutes and registers, and writing proposals for funding. A significant number of interviewees declared that they felt the biggest problem for their organisation was the difficulty in accessing outside resources.

**Figure 13: Percentage of organisations carrying out each step in the process of community work**



## 6.9 ACTIVITIES SINCE FORMATION OF NGOS AND COOPERATIVES

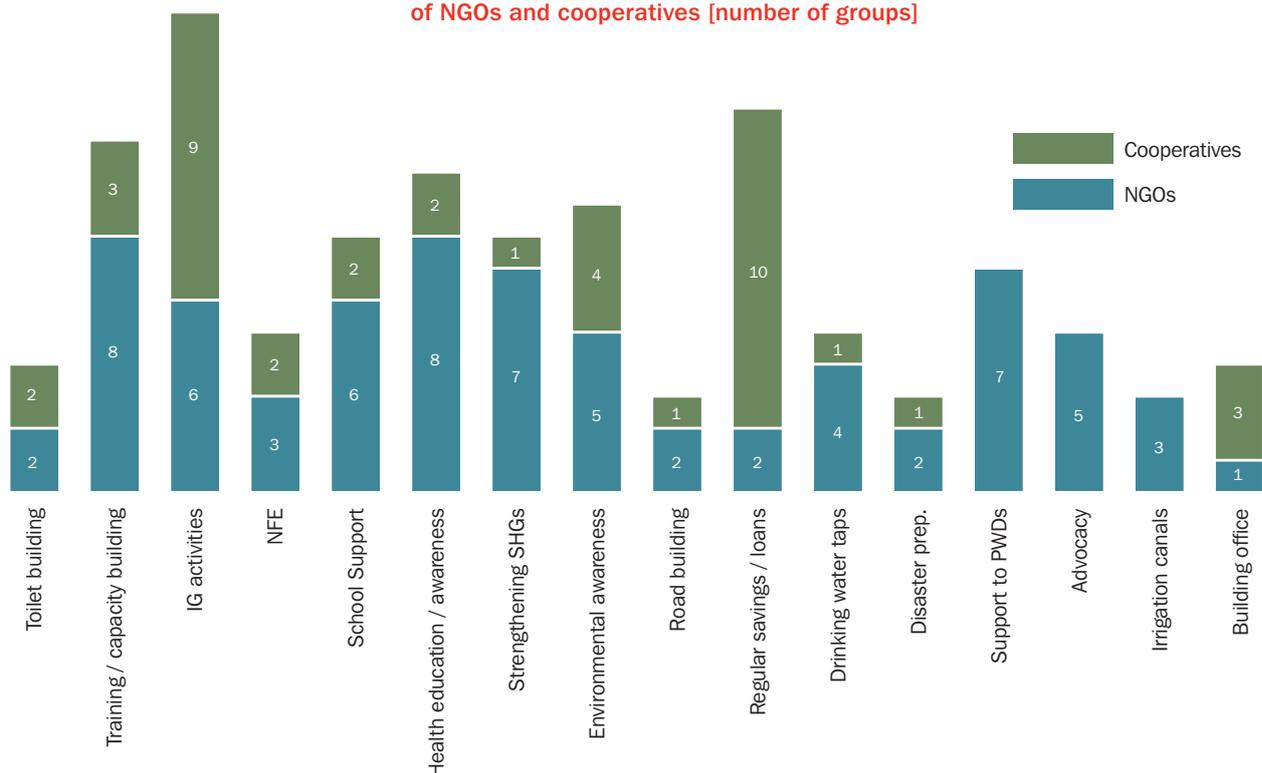
With the groundwork for community activities being set in the foundational principles of inclusive group meetings, discussions and the formation of action plans, the NGOs and cooperatives interviewed have managed to carry out a variety of activities since their registration and independence, as outlined in figure 14. The 19 sister organisations have utilised and applied the GAP approach to their work, and successfully brought about change in their communities and districts through the activities listed, as also discussed in Section 8.14. During the field evaluation period, researchers observed many of the fruits of the community activities, including income generating businesses, community plantations and drinking water schemes.

As seen in figure 14, a large focus of both NGOs and cooperatives has been training and capacity building linked to producing income generating activities, and this influence and focus was passed down through the work of INF in previous CHD programmes. In reflecting upon the community activities now being carried out, one group member from the Paluwa Agriculture Cooperative in Dang stated, “If INF did not work here, we could not do the work we do today”. Evidently, as opposed to a provisions approach which focuses only upon community activities being carried out during a specific project period, the GAP approach allows for the necessary skills to be developed in order for communities to continue carrying out activities independently, having formed the foundation for successful community action. This is the basis of sustainable community progress.



An income generating fishpond started through a loan given by a cooperative

Figure 14: Primary activities carried out since registration of NGOs and cooperatives [number of groups]



## 6.10 ADVOCACY AND LOBBYING

The ability to advocate for oneself, or on behalf of others, is a crucial aspect of ongoing community development. In reality, communities need the support and backing of others to allow their development to flourish, and in this context this includes support particularly from the relevant VDC, DDC, GOs and NGOs. One significant aspect of INF's CHD GAP approach is building capacity in community members and teaching them the necessary skills and knowledge to be able to advocate for themselves, lobbying various sources in order to receive support and access external resources to fulfil their community's needs. Through the GAP approach this is particularly carried out through phase four, whereby INF staff look to strengthen SHGs and more specifically assist in the facilitation of local networks and working relationships between different organisations and government agencies.

Within the sister organisations interviewed, 100% of cooperatives and 89% of NGOs [all except one NGO which had been running for less than a year] had carried out advocacy within their local area. As seen through figure 16, these groups advocated on a variety of topics, however the most common topic amongst the sister organisations was lobbying for support in the form of physical inputs, such as materials for building toilets, building and repairing roads, constructing irrigation canals, building drinking water taps, building retaining walls and building electricity infrastructure. Figure 16 indicates that the majority of lobbying was towards the VDC [65%], followed by NGOs [23%] and the DDC [12%].

Evidently, through the foundations laid by the GAP approach, community members have successfully learned the necessary skills and been empowered to carry out advocacy regarding a range of topics to various sources in their local area. Skills alone are not enough to carry out advocacy, as community members must first be empowered to take ownership of the needs of their community and subsequently work towards the sustainable implementation of community development activities. This is clearly what has occurred as a result of the methods and teachings of the GAP approach.

Figure 15: Percentage of lobbying carried out towards different sources by sister organisations

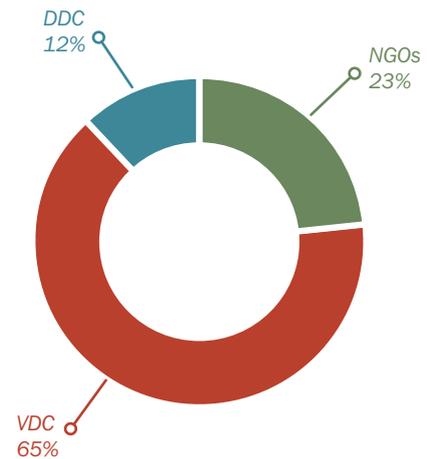
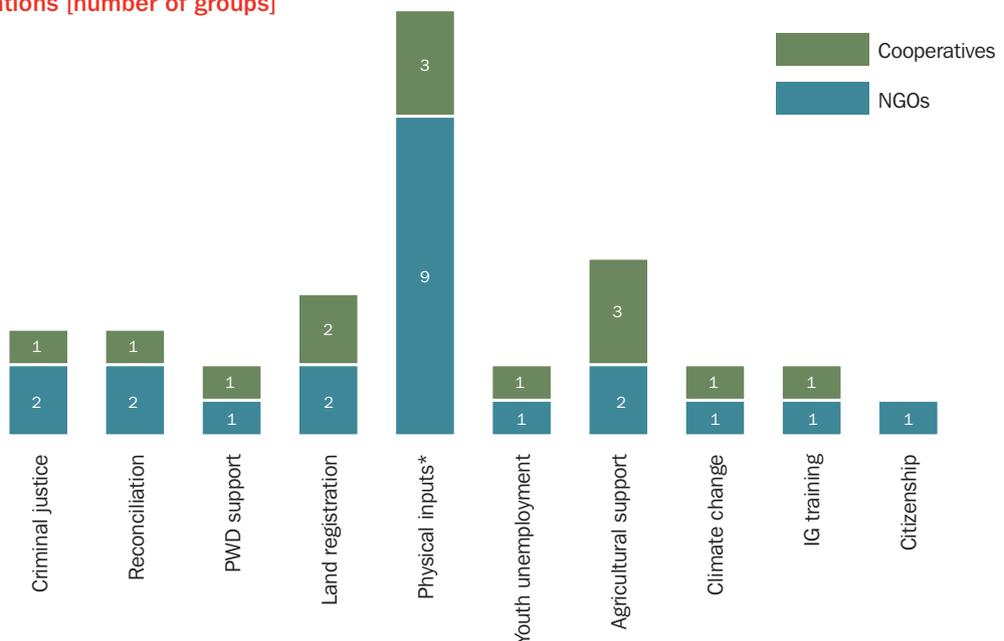


Figure 16: Variety of topics lobbied by sister organisations [number of groups]



## 6.11 COORDINATION WITH GOVERNMENTAL AND OTHER LOCAL ORGANISATIONS

To ensure sustainability and effectiveness within community development, it is crucial to develop relationships and coordination with other stakeholders in the local area, and in this context that includes primarily government stakeholders such as VDC, DDC and other GOs, and also other NGOs and cooperatives. As shown in figure 18, when questioned about their relationships with other local stakeholders, 70% of cooperatives and 67% of NGOs affirmatively replied that they have ongoing coordination with others. Figure 18 demonstrates the fact that 47% of the areas in which the sister organisations work have a regular network meeting amongst local stakeholders, whilst 21% have irregular network meetings and 32% have no network meetings.

With respect to coordination with local government, 70% of cooperatives and 44% of NGOs interviewed stated that they are invited to be a part of local government meetings, however only 40% of cooperatives and 22% of NGOs interviewed are in the habit of submitting their reports and their annual plans to the local government. Therefore, this is one area in particular which could be strengthened, as good working relationships with local government is a foundation for ongoing community activities, through having the ability to access external resources and gain support for the implementation of plans. Furthermore, the importance of regular network meetings within each area cannot be underestimated, as this ensures that all stakeholders are communicating successfully, working together, avoiding duplication of work, and pooling resources for maximum effectiveness in their locality [see Recommendation 3].

Figure 17: Percentage of previous project areas visited with regular, irregular and no network meetings

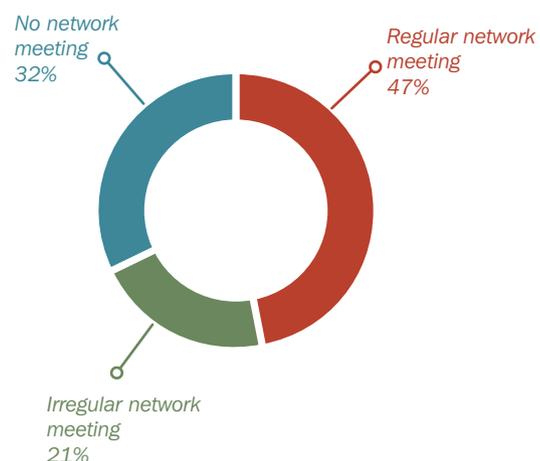


Figure 18: Percentage of NGOs and cooperatives coordinating with local stakeholders



## 6.12 FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Correct financial management is another crucial aspect of sustainability in NGOs and cooperatives. During the CHD project periods, INF staff place a large emphasis on correct and appropriate methods of managing finances. This includes finances given from external sources for the purpose of community activities, money collected from savings groups, loans given through credit schemes, and interest generated through loans. Financial management is one area which differs between NGOs and cooperatives, as the money is generated for varying purposes and used in different ways.

### NGOs

For small community NGOs, such as those sister organisations formed through INF, financial management focuses on adequately handling the money that is given for the purpose of community activities, overseeing staff salaries and managing the funds that are generated from IG activities. As seen through figure 19, 89% of NGOs interviewed were utilising bank accounts to keep and monitor their finances, whilst 56% were keeping separate financial records [other than bank statements] and 56% were setting yearly budgets and plans.

Setting yearly budgets is an important aspect which all NGOs would benefit greatly from, and therefore this is one aspect which project staff should emphasise through teaching and encouragement during the project period in order to increase the percentage of sister organisations incorporating this into their planning. Setting budgets allows organisations to plan strategically according to their finances, and also allows for monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of funds given according to the budget and activities set and the targets reached.

100% of NGOs interviewed were carrying out audits within their organisation annually, and therefore there is some accountability on the proper utilisation and management of funds. Overall, the NGOs interviewed were confident in the independent management of their finances and did not report any misuse of funding to date.

Figure 19: Percentage of NGOs interviewed carrying out aspects of financial management

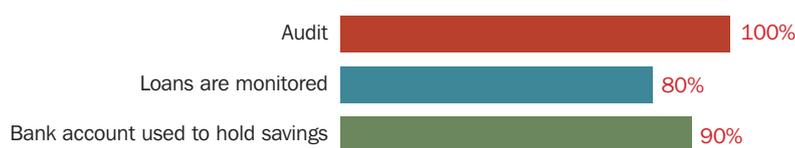


## Cooperatives

Within cooperatives, financial management focuses upon collecting and banking savings by individuals, giving loans and monitoring repayments, investing interest generated from loans, and managing staff salaries. As aforementioned, within the 10 cooperatives interviewed there are a total of 2,419 shareholders, and a combined total savings of NPR 106 lakh [approximately US\$109,000], which gives an average of 242 shareholders and NPR 10.6 lakh savings per cooperative [approximately US\$11,000]. Evidently, each cooperative is dealing with large sums of money, and therefore it is crucial that it is being managed correctly, as correct financial management is another foundational aspect of sustainably functioning organisations.

Within the 10 cooperatives interviewed, 90% were keeping money in a bank account and 80% were actively monitoring loans and the repayments made, as seen through figure 20. In a similar way to the NGOs interviewed, 100% of cooperatives were carrying out an audit annually, thereby ensuring accountability within the financial management of the cooperatives. All cooperatives were confident that they were financially managing their organisation in the correct manner; however, one cooperative admitted that it was becoming increasingly difficult due to the growing number of shareholders and the lack of modern technology to manage the savings, as accounts were all being kept manually in books, rather than using computer programmes. Evidently, some cooperatives are struggling to receive the physical inputs necessary to update their management systems to newer, more efficient technology, and this may be holding them back in their capacity to move forward as a growing organisation, being limited in the amount of shareholders and accounts they can properly manage with the current facilities.

**Figure 20: Percentage of cooperatives interviewed carrying out aspects of financial management**

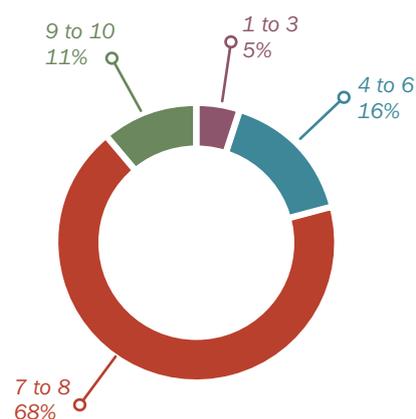


### 6.13 SELF-RATING

During FGDs and interviews, committee members of the sister organisations were asked to discuss with each other and give themselves a rating from 1 [poor] to 10 [excellent] based on how they feel their organisation is functioning, whether it is reaching its goals and serving its target population, whether the work has been effective and the committee is functioning well together. They were also asked to explain the reasons for their choice. As seen through figure 21, almost 80% gave a rating of 7 or higher.

The responses collected during this time are not particularly important for the evaluation, but it was most beneficial to observe the way in which committee members reflected on their own work, discussed the topic and came to a mutual conclusion. It was evident that many groups were unaccustomed to reflecting on their own work in a general sense. This was therefore positive in many ways, as committee members were able to recognise the important and successful work that they have achieved, and express their pride in their work. They were also able to articulate the reasons why they didn't give themselves a perfect 10 score, acknowledging that there is still work that could be done to improve some areas.

Figure 21: Self Rating



# 7. DISCUSSION

## 7.1 SUSTAINABILITY

In discussing the concept of sustainability, there are two separate but related components to consider. The first component is the sustainable impacts of the GAP approach itself, and the second is the sustainability of the SHGs, NGOs and cooperatives formed from INF's CHD projects. A thorough outline of the impact of the GAP approach on communities and the sustainability of these impacts is found in section 10.2, whilst the below text refers directly to the sustainability of the sister organisations.

The sustainability of SHGs, NGOs, cooperatives and their related community activities relies heavily upon some key elements, many of which were taught as a focus of the GAP approach. As mentioned before, these key elements include aspects such as: inclusion of both men and women, PWDs, lower caste and severely marginalised community members; groups and committees articulating for themselves their issues and working to find sustainable solutions with an emphasis on local and natural resources; frequency of meetings; groups and committees taking ownership of their situations and the changes that need to be made; and the ability to successfully advocate for their needs.

However, other key aspects of the long-term functioning of NGOs and cooperatives are intensely practical, and relate more to the practical ability of NGOs and cooperatives to continue operating effectively in their given circumstances. This includes the ability to access external resources, coordinating with other NGOs, GOs and cooperatives, carrying out annual audits, and investing finances into IG activities which will provide ongoing funding.

During FGDs, group members were asked to articulate the specific ways in which they were working to ensure the sustainability of their organisations. For the 10 cooperatives interviewed, the majority were focusing upon increasing the amount of shareholders in order to have a greater base of funding from which to give loans, and subsequently using the interest generated from these loans to invest in IG activities and provide ongoing funding for their cooperative. Other answers included strengthening and building capacity within the committee, coordinating with other organisations, monitoring and ensuring the repayment of loans, working to maintain unity amongst members, as well as developing policies and procedures which contribute to the smooth functioning of the cooperative.

Cooperatives interviewed expressed their concerns over the main issues which they believe would limit their sustainability as an organisation, and these included lack of trust and therefore lack of support from communities, lack of increasing shareholders and consequently a limited ability to give loans, and unresolved disagreements within committees.

Within the nine NGOs interviewed, the focus was primarily on coordinating with local government and other organisations in order to access external resources and funding for the ongoing community activities carried out through the NGOs. Other intentional aspects of sustainable action included carrying out annual audits and ensuring financial transparency, holding regular meetings and hearing the concerns and perspectives voiced by all, maintaining good records of meetings and work, renewing NGO memberships, striving to maintain unity and solve disagreements, and setting yearly plans and budgets and carrying these out as best as possible.

As with the cooperatives interviewed, NGOs also expressed their concerns over the primary elements which could hinder their sustainability. For the majority of NGOs, the key concerns related to a lack of sustainable funding, including a lack of external resources available and difficulty accessing any external resources, therefore significantly limiting their ability to carry out activities and action within communities. Furthermore, limited funding means that there is no ability to pay staff wages, and therefore many NGOs were struggling to find community members who had the time and ability to carry out the necessary work to help the NGOs function effectively, as community members were all busy with their own work in order to make a living for themselves, consequently leaving little time to volunteer for the NGO.

Evidently, whilst there are many factors which could cause the sister organisations to be unsustainable, the committee members interviewed were aware of these and were actively working to minimise these issues, whilst at the same time focusing on implementing actions which ensure sustainability and long-term functioning of their organisation. As mentioned before, there are certain inputs which could be given to these sister organisations to support the sustainability and address the concerns, such as providing training in proposal and report writing, which would improve the ability of organisations to access external resources and provide evidence of the success of previous community action in order to support future proposals [see Recommendation 2].

## 7.2 IMPACT ON COMMUNITIES

With INF's GAP approach having been implemented in districts across Nepal for the past 15 years, and sister organisations having functioned for up to 10 years, across time communities have experienced a significant amount of change and development. Ultimately, this is the most important factor in any CD work, as the primary goal is to see sustainable changes and improvements not only at the community level, but also at the household and individual level. Obviously, not all changes can be attributed solely to the work of the one particular NGO or cooperative working in each area, and development must be attributed to a number of different sources, including all the GOs, NGOs and cooperatives, working alongside other factors. However, the work of INF in these communities can also be recognised as a key aspect player in bringing about sustainable change.

Many of the changes that have taken place in the communities INF has worked in cannot be measured quantitatively, and for this reason data was collected using both quantitative and qualitative measures. In this situation, anecdotal evidence collected from focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews is vital to collecting a holistic picture of the change that has occurred. Key themes such as empowerment, confidence, unity, and reduction in gender and caste discrimination were constantly mentioned yet cannot be measured.

The results of this section will be presented categorically, with the key changes experienced through INF's GAP approach summarised into the following topics: physical, health, education, social, empowerment, economic, and environmental.

### Physical

#### **General improvement in standard of living:**

A gradual increase in living standards has been experienced by many community members, and this was mainly related to physical inputs such as improvements in housing, electricity infrastructure, safe drinking water, the use of smokeless stoves and other aspects.

### Health

**Improved hygiene and sanitation habits:** Another component of SHG meetings is the education and awareness of SHG members, particularly regarding ideas of health and sanitation. Often this is based upon simple yet integral behaviours, such as brushing teeth, cutting nails, bathing regularly, washing cooking utensils, using and cleaning toilets, and washing hands. During FGDs, many community members were able to articulate these behaviours that they have incorporated into their lives, as well as expressing the subsequent improvement in hygiene and sanitation that has resulted.

**General health improvement:** Due to a number of contributing factors, many of which are points listed above, an overall improvement in the general health of community members was expressed by many involved in FGDs and interviews.

**Increased use of health posts:** Whereas there used to exist a large reliance upon 'traditional healers' and 'witch doctors' within many communities in Nepal, through increased awareness and education there has also been an increase in the use of health posts and trained medical staff for the treatment of illnesses.

#### **Increased toilet use:**

Although INF's CHD programmes do not focus on the provision of physical inputs, the provision of materials for building toilets is one component which has been a part of the projects in many areas, as INF recognises the importance of toilet use for health and hygiene practices, and also looks to support the government's plan for Open Defecation-Free Zones. The provision of these materials is also a learning process for communities, as groups are taught to work together to develop a thorough action plan, write a proposal to INF and advocate for their needs, and must follow the correct procedures for accessing external funding. As a result, many households in previous project areas are now using toilets.

**Improvements in MCH:** Through education and awareness provided within the CHD programme, many improvements related to MCH have been realised. Many women are now visiting their local health post for the recommended ante-natal and post-natal check-ups. Due to awareness and improvements in infrastructure, staffing and equipment, many women are also choosing to give birth at birthing centres and hospitals instead of the traditional method of giving birth at home without trained birth attendants. This has led to increased rates of safe delivery across previous project areas. Furthermore, women are also receiving education regarding caring for their child, including topics such as taking children for vaccinations, preparing nutritious food, and utilising the local health post when children become sick.

## Social

**Increased unity within communities, ability to meet, discuss and work together:** Through the foundations laid by the GAP approach, the most common strength and change indicated by community members from previous project areas was the unity and group strength that resulted from the process. Whereas previously many community members were not accustomed to frequently meeting together, through INF's process communities have learned the strength that comes through unity and joint action. This unity has led to the ability to meet together on a regular basis, share and discuss their issues and concerns, work together to develop a joint action plan, including delegating roles, and then acting on this to produce results. This has truly laid the groundwork for successful, sustainable CD action into the future. As one committee member from Bishal Cooperative in Kapilvastu District stated, "INF gave us transformational skills, not provisions or materials".

**Reduction in practices of chaupadhi:** Chaupadhi is a cultural practice enforced in many regions of Nepal whereby during menstruation, females are made to sleep and spend each day in the household animal shed, as they are considered dirty, and it is thought they will contaminate the other household members. Through gradual education and awareness, this practice is slowly decreasing as community members understand the harmful nature of this practice, and females are taught improved hygiene and sanitation measures that they can take during menstruation.

**Reduction in migration:** The migration of adults [and sometimes teenagers] to other countries is a common occurrence in many previous project areas, as they go in search of work to earn a wage, and commonly send money back to their families in the form of remittances. Often these jobs are poorly paid and dangerous, with difficult working conditions. However, as a result of increased education levels, improved agriculture and new IG activities, rates of migration have been reducing in previous project areas, and during FGDs community members shared stories of how their fathers, brothers and sons are no longer forced to go abroad for work, as they are able to sustain their families on their new income sources.

**Increased awareness of child rights:** Through education and greater awareness, community members have gradually increased their understanding of child rights, leading to a decrease in harmful practices such as child labour and child marriage.

**Increased ability to advocate for rights:** Through empowerment and advocacy training, community members have learned to advocate for their rights and needs in many different areas. For one community in Jumla, for example, this meant advocating for criminal justice when a murder had been committed. For other communities, particularly those in the terai region who have a large number of displaced people, they have been able to advocate for both citizenship and land rights. Others have successfully advocated on topics of marriage registration and support for PWDs.

**Trust and respect for women:** The involvement and empowerment of women is undoubtedly one of the key focuses of the GAP approach. As women's confidence has been improved, they have lifted their involvement in community activities whilst also receiving many new skills and abilities, and community members have begun to increase their trust and respect for women. Women have been able to prove that they are a valuable contribution to society in many ways.

**Reconciliation within communities:** According to many community members interviewed, reconciliation after arguments used to be extremely difficult due to a lack of unity within communities. However, as the power of unity and cooperation has been recognised, communities admitted to working harder towards reconciliation during times of disagreement and quarrels.

**Coordination with other organisations:** As outlined previously, the GAP approach largely emphasises the development of networks between NGOs, GOs, cooperatives and local government. As a result, many sister organisations are also prioritising coordination with other organisations in the area, preventing the duplication of work and maximising the impact of their activities due to combined efforts.

**Reduced gender, caste and disability discrimination:** Through increasing awareness and education across time, many communities reported that they have noticed a reduction in gender, caste and disability discrimination. Through the lessons and skills taught in the GAP approach, communities have begun to realise the valuable contribution that all people can make, and the necessity of including all community members in the activities, whether they are female, marginalised, illiterate, classified as 'low caste', or PWDs. As a result of the reduced discrimination, community members have been able to recognise their part in society, leading to increased empowerment, confidence, and the ability to take part.

## Empowerment

### **Empowerment and confidence in their ability:**

One of the key focuses of the GAP approach is the empowerment of individuals and entire communities. Whilst the GAP approach includes both men and women, there is an added emphasis on the empowerment of women, as the Nepali context has traditionally undervalued the importance of women in community decision-making and problem solving. In every FGD and interview, women were able to articulate the way in which their lives have changed as a result of becoming empowered. Where women once were not even allowed to leave their homes, they are now key players in the development of their communities, with their opinions and inputs being heard and respected. They are now able to work together with men to identify and find solutions to their problems, access external resources and advocate for their needs. One female member of the Rural Women's Development Centre NGO in Jumla stated, "We may be illiterate, but we can run this NGO because we have been empowered". Obviously, empowerment is not something that can be measured quantitatively, but is demonstrated through the byproduct of healthy, thriving, developing communities that are working together to find sustainable solutions. The empowerment of individuals, especially women, coupled with the unity developed within communities, is the foundation for the sustainability of the community work into the future.

**Increased friendships with others:** As well as empowerment and unity, many community members articulated the growth in friendships that occurred through the GAP approach. Whereas some community members didn't previously trust each other or rely on each other, this process taught them the power of friendships and cooperating together, not only in matters of 'community development' but simply in doing life together.

### **Ability to advocate to relevant authorities:**

For CD to be sustainable, advocacy must be a key focus. Through the GAP approach, community members were not only trained and empowered, but were also taught the importance and method of advocating for themselves. As mentioned before in Section 9.10, sister organisations continued the foundation taught in the GAP approach by advocating for the needs of their communities through their NGOs or cooperatives, approaching VDCs, DDCs and other NGOs. This is undoubtedly a skill that will ensure their continued progress into the future.

**Personal responsibility:** One of the initial priorities of the GAP approach is leading community members on a journey to understanding their own needs and their own capacity, and also their own responsibility. Without recognition of their own responsibility in bringing about change, any changes would not be sustainable. As community members feel that sense of responsibility, they begin to take ownership of their decisions and their actions, and take control of their future. This has certainly happened through the GAP approach, evidenced by the ongoing independent work of so many sister organisations. Community members constantly expressed the way in which they recognised their responsibility to be involved in bringing about ongoing change in their community.

**Ability to access outside funding:** The ability for community members to access external funding and support is both a social and an economic change. Through capacity development, communities are now able to recognise their needs, and after utilising locally available resources, have the capacity to advocate for these needs and find support through different authorities. Now that community members are aware of the process involved, they have been, and continue to be, successful in receiving resources from external sources.



Male and female committee members working together with mutual respect and understanding

## Economic

**Self-employment through IG activities:** As mentioned earlier, IG skill development is a large component of INF's CHD work in communities. Examples of IG training provided through INF include the topics of animal rearing, veterinary skills, bee-keeping, grocery store / small business, fruit/vegetable farming for commercial use, tailoring, mobile phone repair and others. Through the training provided by INF, coupled with low-interest loans provided through the SHG savings groups, many individuals have been given the opportunity to commence IG activities. This has provided an income for their household and given them a greater capacity to improve their living standards, through improved housing, the ability to access health services, the ability to send children to school and even on to college/university, amongst other things.

**Diversity of skills:** Following on from the above point, IG training has led to the acquisition of new and diversified skills, meaning that many community members are no longer reliant solely upon their agricultural skills. For those previously dependent on agriculture, they were at the mercy of the environment which meant that any environmental shocks, such as floods or droughts, could have a devastating effect on their lives. Primary food sources would be destroyed with no 'back-up'. However, with the new IG skills, community members are provided with other sources of income, therefore increasing their resilience and their ability to 'stay afloat' during times of disaster and change.

**Ability to save money and access low-interest loans:** As a result of the savings and credit training given to SHGs, community members are assisted in managing their money and provided with the opportunity to save small amounts of money each month. Furthermore, the savings groups also provide access to low-interest rate loans, as opposed to the other option commonly known as 'loan-sharks' which exist in many communities and provide extremely high-interest loans to desperate people. Low-interest loans allow community members to feasibly start small businesses [such as those listed under the section on IG] and pay off the loan at a manageable rate. Some groups interviewed were also giving interest-free loans to PWD and those classified as 'severely marginalised', thereby providing new opportunities to those who may not otherwise be able to access loans.

**Mobilising and utilising local and natural resources:** Throughout the GAP approach, SHG members are encouraged to not only look to outside resources and funding, but to first think about the local and natural resources that are available to them within their community and district. This includes natural resources such as solar power and water, bamboo and stones for building, and also local capacity and manpower, including utilising local skill and knowledge when undertaking any activities. Furthermore, local partnerships are established through this process, leading to greater unity and cooperation. Not only is this more manageable and achievable, but it also makes the work of communities more sustainable, as they rely primarily on resources available locally and naturally. Many communities reported that previously they had not recognised the extent of the local and natural resources that were available to them. However, now they have been made aware of their capacity to mobilise and utilise these resources for the benefit and improvement of individuals and the entire community.



Observing an income generating activity in Banke District - chickens being reared and sold for profit. The chicken coop is made primarily from local and natural resources.

## Environmental

**Disaster awareness and preparedness:** Whereas previously many communities had a very low capacity to respond to disasters, INF's disaster preparedness work within SHGs and communities has meant that community members are able to work together to assess potential risks, and prepare a response in advance. Some communities collaborate to prepare a Participatory Assessment of Disaster Risk Reduction [PADRR]. One cooperative interviewed in Kapilvastu District, Fulbari Krishi Cooperative, has focused on disaster preparedness as one of their primary activities since registration one and a half years ago, working with the community to build a disaster 'food bank' where essential supplies of food, drinking water and medicines are kept. As a result, communities such as these are less vulnerable in times of disaster and have a greater capacity to be able to respond effectively when the need arises.

**Environmental protection:** Having received education regarding this topic, many community members are now aware of the importance of protecting the environment, and are beginning to act on this, making changes in their daily lives. These changes at the individual and household levels include using waste pits for rubbish, not burning plastics, using smokeless stoves, and not cutting down trees. Furthermore, at the community level, many communities have mobilised themselves and are acting together to protect the environment, including managing community forest land, forming community forest user group committees, organising monthly 'community clean-up days' for all to be involved, and building retaining walls to stop landslides and erosion. Many community members interviewed expressed their new understanding of the importance of environmental protection for the sustainability of their environment.

**Increased agricultural production and food sufficiency:** Through the inputs given during INF's CHD projects, particularly those that focused upon agriculture, some communities have experienced an increase in agricultural production, and consequently improved food sufficiency. Inputs included specialised agricultural training such as farming on sloping land for remote mountainous regions; improved technology including equipment, machinery and fertilizers; IG training related to agriculture such as the production of compost manure; as well as seeds and plants for vegetable gardens; and community plantations such as apple plantations. As with all of INF's work, the focus of these inputs has been on sustainable improvements within communities.



Committee members of the Janakalyan Social Improvement NGO in Udhrapur VDC, Banke, standing outside the local community forest, which they help to manage and protect.

## Education

**Increase in adult literacy rates:** Through the provision of adult literacy classes by INF, GOs and other NGOs, there has been an increase in adult literacy rates within past project areas. This has been an important factor for all. However, many women expressed the particular significance of this for females, as previously it was widely believed that women did not need to be educated and would remain illiterate. As a result, many women are now involved in the committees of the sister organisations and are contributing in important roles such as managing accounts, taking meeting minutes, and writing proposals for funding. Evidently, this factor contributes considerably to the sustainability of the sister organisations formed through INF's work.

**Increase in school attendance:** Many communities reported that as a result of a number of factors, there has been an increase in the number of children attending school, as well as an increase in the average number of years spent attending school, particularly for females. Some of these factors include the increased education of adults which allows them to recognise the importance of children's schooling, improved infrastructure of schools, increased capacity of teachers, increased ability of parents to pay enrolment fees and buy materials necessary for schooling as a result of IG activities, and increased advocacy for children with disabilities to be able to attend school. Furthermore, greater awareness and education regarding gender equality has meant that more females are attending school and staying in school longer, while changed hygiene practices allow females to attend school during menstruation.

### 7.3 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE WORK OF INF AND ONGOING RESEARCH

Through the comprehensive review above, it is evident that INF's GAP approach being implemented in the CHD programmes is having a significant beneficial long-term impact on communities, households and individuals across Nepal. As a result, it can be concluded that the basis and foundation of the GAP approach is allowing the CHD programmes to achieve the intended goal and purposes, seen through the qualitative and quantitative data collected through this research project. Consequently, INF should continue to base their CHD work on the GAP approach as this has proven to be relevant to the Nepali context and successful in bringing about sustainable change within communities.

It is recognised that this report has not been overly 'critical' of the work of INF and in particular the GAP approach. Whilst a few recommendations have been made under Section 12, this report has not made any attempt to shape the future of INF's CHD work. The reason for this is that the research is ongoing, and therefore this report summarises and presents the results from phase one of the research. A detailed strategy has also been made for phase two of the research, which looks to focus on the comparison of INF's GAP approach to the work and processes carried out by other community development organisations in similar contexts, whether in Nepal, other parts of Asia, or across the world. It is felt that until comparisons have been made between the CD work of INF and others, no solid recommendations can be made towards INF's work. As the research progresses, and once comparisons to other organisations have been made, researchers plan to produce a subsequent report which provides comprehensive information and gives recommendations on the future strategic plan for INF's CHD work. The researchers feel it is best to publish this report in multiple parts as the research is continued.

## 8. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this research has proved extremely beneficial in providing an opportunity to evaluate INF's past and ongoing CHD work which is founded upon the GAP approach.

In Myagdi District, it is evident that the impact of INF's CHD work based upon the GAP approach has had significant ongoing impacts. Although the first two years of INF's work in Myagdi was a transition period, whereby the project utilised a mixed 'provision' and 'process' approach to CD work, the following three years were based purely upon the GAP approach. Although INF finished implementing CHD work in Myagdi over 13 years ago, the ongoing impacts of the GAP approach are still seen, as many SHGs continue to function effectively. In some cases, none of the original INF SHG members remained within the groups, yet the method and approach to community action has been passed down within the groups over the years and remains largely unchanged. This proves that the GAP approach was a relevant and successful process which brought about sustainable change in communities.

The groups in Myagdi from which data was collected had all continued to meet together frequently. They continue to include both men and women, focus on and include the intended target group of poor and marginalised, articulate and analyse their needs, form action plans, access and utilise both local and external resources, advocate for their needs to the relevant authorities, and carry out community activities for their benefit and improvement. The majority of groups interviewed were also largely self-sufficient as they utilised the interest generated from loans to fund their community activities. The informed estimation is that 73% of SHGs facilitated by INF 15 years ago are still functioning throughout Myagdi District.

Data was also collected from another five districts across Nepal, focusing upon the nine NGOs and 10 cooperatives that formed out of INF's CHD programmes which utilised the GAP approach over the past 13 years. These sister organisations have been functioning independently for up to 10 years, with 100% of organisations basing their current foundational methods on those taught through the GAP approach. As shared by one committee member from Shakti Bikaas Samaaj Sudhar NGO, "We use exactly the same method we were taught by INF."

The data collected from these 19 organisations is evidence that INF's GAP approach has been successful in fulfilling its goals and targets. One committee member from Mahila Milijuli NGO in Nepalgunj stated, "Many different organisations have tried to work in our

area, but only INF's method has been successful and sustainable." Evidently, INF's unique and specialised approach to CHD work in Nepal is proving to be very beneficial for communities across the country.

As presented in the qualitative and quantitative data above, the 19 sister organisations continue to function effectively as independent NGOs and cooperatives. After the initial support and inputs provided by INF, these sister organisations have functioned according to their own goals and targets, while using the foundation of the lessons taught through the GAP approach. The committee members within the NGOs and cooperatives continue to meet together and identify their needs, and work towards implementing sustainable practical solutions to these needs by utilising local and external resources, whilst also lobbying for support from various sources and networking with other stakeholders. As a result, many activities and indicators have been achieved, as discussed in Section 10.2. As well as general improvements in health and living standards, other areas of change include increased disaster awareness and preparedness, environmental protection, increased agricultural production and food sufficiency, the ability to save money and access low-interest loans, self-employment through diversified IG activities, reduced migration rates, and increased adult literacy and school attendance rates.

The most significant area of change within communities has come in the realm of social improvements, including increased unity and friendships amongst community members, reconciliation of disagreements, the empowerment of women, trust and respect for women, reduced caste and gender discrimination, inclusion of PWD, and increased recognition and awareness of child rights. These elements are the key aspects which create sustainable change within communities, as it is not only physical changes that have taken place, but emotional and social changes. Evidently, this social change then forms the foundational for community members to continue working together, taking ownership of and control over their futures by working together to form solutions and meet their own needs.

As mentioned earlier, this research work is an ongoing project. As a result of this first report, researchers will now look to compare INF's GAP approach to the approaches utilised by other organisations carrying out CD. Having done this, researchers plan to make recommendations on the future of INF's CHD work, shaping the GAP approach according to all the results of the research process.

# 9. RECOMMENDATIONS

## 1. REFRESHER TRAINING FOR SHG LEADERS FROM MYAGDI DISTRICT

As mentioned, it is estimated that 73% [65 groups] of the original SHGs formed through INF's CHD work in Myagdi are continuing to function, however after 15 years some key components of the GAP approach are not being fully utilised within the community activities. Many groups are composed entirely of new members, and although the key aspects of the GAP approach, such as meeting facilitation and discussing issues and solutions, are continuing, other primary elements are not being utilised.

**Recommendation 1.1:** In order to ensure the ongoing sustainability of the groups and the ability of groups to continue carrying out community activities, the SHGs in Myagdi would benefit greatly from some SHG refresher training for the group leaders, particularly focusing upon the issues of forming action plans, proposal writing, and accessing outside resources. This could be a one-off activity within Myagdi District, but would give the SHGs a boost in their skills, particularly regarding the importance of accessing external resources through the use of action plans and proposals.

## 2. PROVISION OF FURTHER TRAINING FOR SISTER ORGANISATIONS

During FGDs, it was revealed that some sister organisations were not initially given some of the key training necessary for the successful functioning of NGOs and cooperatives, and were therefore requesting for INF to provide this training to staff and committee members.

**Recommendation 2.1:** INF staff should look to provide some basic training courses to sister organisations if they did not receive this during their initial formation phase. This particularly includes such training as proposal writing, report writing, computer training and accountancy training, as all of these will ensure that committee members and staff members have the capacity and skills to continue running their NGOs and cooperatives.

## 3. NETWORK MEETINGS WITH ALL STAKEHOLDERS

53% of previous CHD projects visited during the evaluation period areas either have no network meetings with stakeholders or only irregular network meetings. As outlined, network meetings are extremely important within districts, ensuring that all stakeholders are communicating successfully, working together, avoiding duplication of work and activities, and pooling resources for maximum effectiveness in their locality.

**Recommendation 3.1:** During the final phase of the CHD project, the work and activities should place a greater emphasis on the establishment and regular functioning of a network meeting, whereby all stakeholders in the district can communicate effectively and work together for the greater good of their area. INF project staff should play a role in the coordination and facilitation of this network during the project period, and facilitate it in such a way as to leave it functioning independently in a sustainable and efficient manner.

**Recommendation 3.2:** Many areas in which INF has previously carried out CHD projects would benefit greatly from support to establish a regular network meeting involving all stakeholders. INF could be involved in running a short training session incorporating representatives from each stakeholder organisation, helping to teach on the importance of the content of these meetings, and assist in facilitating the establishment of these meetings.





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