

Promoting Democracy through Strengthening of Grassroots Community Based Organizations

Final Report

(June 13,2000 to June 15,2001)

Submitted to:

The US Embassy under Small Grants Scheme

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June 2001

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Executive Summary

The "Self Reliant Development for Marginal Women in Rural Nepal" program, initiated by the Institute for Integrated Development Studies (IIDS) in September 1990, was specifically targeted towards women with an approach of "*Swabalamban*" i.e. self-reliance. The goal of the program was to raise the level of awareness and to empower the rural poor women, initiating a process of self-sustaining development which could improve their general living standard. The self-help group endeavor were to promote group organization of socially excluded women, motivate them and build their self-confidence to take initiatives for their socioeconomic well-being.

With generous financial support of Rs 344,740 from the US Small Grants Scheme, the program was successfully implemented in five Village Development Committees (VDCs) of Kapilvastu district, thus providing an opportunity to work with both hill migrants and terai communities. This final report reflects on the overall impact of the program, covering the period from June 13, 2000 through June 15, 2001.

Since last year, IIDS was involved in promoting democracy through strengthening the capacities of the grassroots community based women's organizations in five VDCs of Kapilvastu district. The program has helped the participating community members to identify the advocacy needs and the possible solutions for improving women's condition and position, parenting role for child development and institutional development in women's organizations. In the process, different types of skills and knowledge were imparted to the participating members through the organization of training, workshops and development and implementation of annual plan of action. Different activities such as door to door visits for awareness raising, performing street drama and other cultural programs, and taking advocacy actions against some pertinent issues were carried out by the women. Major issues on which advocacy actions taken were: discrimination between boys and girls in education, lack of parenting role in child care and violation of women and child rights.

In fact, the institutional support under this small grant eventually helped to institutionalize democracy and restore democratic culture within the communities by equipping the women members of the cooperatives with advocacy skills. So far, the participating women and their small groups were federated at the VDC level and have established their own cooperative institutions. These participating women have become able to identify different advocacy issues and the possible solutions. The majority of women in the community started sending their daughters to schools. Women now feel encouraged to undertake future community development activities with more participation. They increased contacts with different line agencies such as VDC, DDC, forest office and school for institutional development independently and was able to advocate against social discrimination and biased practices during the program period.