

# WEE Nepal

Women Economic Empowerment

Issue 2, February 2016

## Project Updates

WEE-Nepal Project wants to contribute to Economic Empowerment of large numbers of rural women in Khotang, Udayapur, Sindhuli, Kavrepalanchok, Lalitpur and Dhading districts through energy based enterprise development and promotion of energy enterprises that are more inclusive, efficient and productive!

### Key Stakeholders Meet: Analysis on Market-Approach for Improved Cookstoves Promotion

Providing clean cookstoves to 3.4 million households by 2017 that are dependent upon traditional biomass resources has been a huge challenge. There is a growing realization among the stakeholders working in the biomass energy sector that by following business-as-usual approach, it will not be possible to achieve the national target. WEE-Nepal Project, as an alternative, promotes market-based approach for promotion of clean cookstoves. Compared to business-as-usual approach where cookstoves are promoted by NGOs with limited model options and services provided

by isolated Stove Masters, WEE-Nepal Project under the market-based approach is striving to create a market system for cookstoves by encouraging city and district centre-based private players as well as community based Stove Masters to engage with each other under business terms and conditions.

In this pretext, WEE-Nepal Project in coordination with Energy: Empowering Women, Uplifting Lives (Advocacy Project) organized a “Participatory Workshop on Market Based Approach for Improved Cook

Stoves Promotion” on 14 December 2015 to share the field experiences and discuss on the issues and challenges faced in the implementation of the market-based approach. The workshop was facilitated by experts from the Consortium Partner-Practical Action Consulting (PAC). The participants of the workshop represented key stakeholders in the sector such as Alternative Energy Promotion Centre (AEPC) of the Government of Nepal, Energy, Environment and Climate Change Section of the District Development Committees and their implementing partner organizations



Participants of the Participatory Workshop on 'Market Approach for ICS Promotion'

#### Inside this Issue

ENERGIA Monitoring Mission's Assessment	2
Last Mile Supply Chain Actors	3
A Resort to Power Cuts	3
Small Inputs, Big Impacts	4-5
Business Mentoring Fosters Growth	6
A Step Forward to Women Entrepreneurship	7
Simple Steps to Transformation	8

called District Service Centres from Khotang, Udayapur and Sindhuli districts, the World Bank, Winrock International and Rupantaran. Private sector players such as Ajummary Bikas Foundation Pvt. Ltd., Minergy Pvt. Ltd. and CB Urja Pvt. Ltd. also participated in the workshop. The participants discussed on various issues and suggested some intervention actions to address the issues.

Various projects and organizations are providing different amounts of subsidy to consumers to purchase cookstoves. Obviously such supports are not widely available. Even though, potential consumers tend to wait for subsidy support rather than self-invest to fulfill their pressing need. This has been a big challenge in promoting the market-based approach. The participants of the workshop agreed that concerned stakeholders should be sensitized for proper implementation of the guidelines put in place by AEPC and follow the existing rural and renewable subsidy policy.

The Centre for Rural Technology, Nepal (CRT/N) as lead organization along with National Association of Community Electricity Users-Nepal (NACEUN) and Practical Action Consulting (PAC) are implementing the project "Promoting Women-led Enterprises for Energy Access and Local Production: WEE-Nepal" from 1 September 2014 till 31 August 2017. The Alternative Energy Promotion Centre (AEPC)/Government of Nepal has been extending cooperation/coordination support for development and implementation of the Project. This Project is supported by ENERGIA the International Network on Gender and Sustainable Energy hosted by ETC Foundation, the Netherlands under its Phase 5 programme framework "Scaling up Energy Access through Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE)". Supported by ENERGIA, with funding from SIDA, NORAD, MoF Finland.

Another issue discussed was related to investment gap, particularly, to manage the working capital, being faced by the newly emerging supply chain actors – from national level supplier to district-based wholesalers to the community-based retailers. Inability of the private sector to make sufficient self-investment in the business has negative effect on smooth and bulk supply of the cookstoves and components of cookstoves. This is again hampering progress toward achieving the national

target in time. The private sector was suggested to approach the Central Renewable Energy Fund (CREF) managed by AEPC. However, CREF has yet to disburse credit support on cookstoves.

The participants of the workshop also discussed on issues relating to quality and standard of the improved cookstoves, reducing taxation and some other practical concerns.

## Keeping Track: ENERGIA Monitoring Mission's Assessment of WEE-Nepal Project

A high level team from ENERGIA comprising of Ms. Soma Dutta and Mr. Maurits van Tongeren made a Monitoring Mission Visit to Nepal in October 2015. The Mission Team aimed to explain ENERGIA's women economic empowerment programme

overview and understand how the business model is operational in Nepal, including achievements and challenges, and work plan for 2016. Apart from the detailed discussions held in Kathmandu with CRT/N Management, Project Team and

the Consortium Partners (CRT/N, NACEUN and PAC), the Mission Team visited Sindhuli and Kavrepalanchok districts to observe the progress of the field interventions.

Noting the impacts of the earthquake and severe fuel crisis and remoteness of the project areas, the Mission Team suggested the Project Team for the actions to be outcome orientated. On productive energy use component, more emphasis should be given on energy inputs/improvements at the women's enterprises. On Improved Cookstoves (ICS) component, the Project Team needs to revisit the cookstoves promotion strategy. Linking the woman entrepreneurs with financial institutions for credit should be given appropriate attention. Likewise, closer monitoring of the field activities and outcomes is essential. The Mission Team also suggested organizing a Participatory Market System Development (PMSD) workshop at central level to discuss issues in market-based approach of cookstoves dissemination.



ENERGIA Mission Team interacting with ICS Entrepreneur in Bhadrakali VDC, Sindhuli District

# Woman Stove Masters are Becoming the Last Mile Supply Chain Actors

"Now I understand what the importance of improved cookstoves in our kitchen is. But do I have to pay for the improved cookstoves?" This is a common question asked by the village community when we interact with them and motivate them to have improved cookstoves (ICS) in their kitchen.

Ms. Kalpana Rai and Ms. Bimala Rai of Udayapur district have similar experience as they started working in partnership as ICS entrepreneurs after receiving skill training in July 2015 jointly organized by WEE-Nepal Project and Winrock International Nepal Office. Before the training, Ms. Kalpana was a health worker and Ms. Bimala used to run a small shop in the street selling 'chatpate' – a type of spicy fast food. Ms. Bimala explains, "It is difficult to convince the users to buy ICS. As such, in the beginning, we

installed ICS in our own kitchens to demonstrate use and benefits of ICS. Then we started to expand our ICS business to the nearest neighbors and relatives."

In order to promote ICS in market based approach, Ms. Kalpana and Ms. Bimala have a formal understanding with a local cooperative called Sahayogi Saving and Credit Cooperative Ltd. for credit financing and joint promotion of ICS in the community. They have taken loan from the Cooperative of NPR 100,000 and placed an order of 200 units of metallic combustion chamber of fixed type composite rocket stove and 40 burner kits for fixed type mud chimney stove. WEE-Nepal Project has facilitated them to enter into formal business contract with Ajummary Bikas Foundation Pvt. Ltd., the national supplier of cookstoves.



Ms. Bimala Rai cooking on ICS constructed by herself at her home

Ms. Kalpana emphasized, "You need bigger heart to dare to take the loan, particularly, for ICS which is not yet considered as a commercial item. It is even more difficult for single women like us."

In this context, WEE-Nepal Project is working with woman ICS entrepreneurs and supporting them to establish in supply chain in various roles. So far, 185 women are trained as ICS entrepreneurs.

## Earthquake Relief PV System: A Resort to Power Cuts

The dual quakes of 25 April and 12 May, 2015 left more than 10 districts devastated. The WEE-Nepal Project reached out to hard-hit communities working with the Project by providing 24 community solar cell phone charging stations and 140 improved cookstoves. The target beneficiaries were communities served by the Project's partner Community Rural Electrification Entities (CREEs) in Kavrepalanchok, Lalitpur and Dhading districts, among the most affected districts as declared by the Government of Nepal (GoN).

Ms Apsara Bhandari, a member of Ranakalika CREE, shares a story of her new found resort to power-cuts due to collapse of electricity infrastructure.

"As there was no electricity after the earthquake, the villagers were compelled to keep their mobile phones switched off to save battery or they would need to go to highway shops, farther than a walking distance", she said. The villagers even had to stay powerless for four long days, she added. The community people were practically disconnected from the communications with the families, friends and authorities at district headquarters or in the capital city.

However, the scenario has changed after WEE-Nepal Project provided solar PV charging systems as an earthquake relief service to the CREEs. Ms. Bhandari is a manager of one of the charging systems. The village is instilled with better

communication network now and bears fewer problems of regular disconnection while making calls. People from neighboring villages are often seen at Ms. Bhandari's home, charging their mobile phones. They save their traveling time, plus harmony with locals has enhanced due to their increased number of visits in the village.

Ms. Bhandari's spouse, Mr. Indra Bahadur Bhandari is a technician of the same CREE. "It is important for me to keep my mobile phone in operation as technical faults in the community keep on arising. The provision of PV system has rid us off of any kinds of communication interruptions," he said. "We have also been providing same PV system for lighting in case of emergency cases for those staying in the temporary stalls/tents," he added. This new initiative has been a breath of relief for the locals and neighboring communities.

# Institutional Readiness: Small Inputs, Big Impacts



SWOT analysis done during the coaching in Lalitpur district

CREE Coaching is a two-day event conducted by WEE-Nepal Project to sensitize the Community Rural Electrification Entities (CREEs) on the importance of energy-based enterprises focusing on women entrepreneurs. Ensuring the participation of all executive members of the CREEs and local social leaders, the event organized at local level is expected to draw attention of the CREEs on importance of preparing their own business plan, assignment of a focal person to coordinate implementation of the business plan and establishment of a Woman Entrepreneurship Development Fund (WEDF) under the CREE's managerial framework. The following two cases highlight what actually has happened as a result of the CREE coaching events.

## Case 1:

### Provision of Credit Facilities at Concessional Rates

South Lalitpur Rural Electric Cooperative Ltd. (SLREC) has been managing grid electricity in rural areas of southern part of Lalitpur district.

The CREE coaching was conducted from 5-6 January 2015 at SLREC office at Chapagaun, Lalitpur district. Following the coaching event, SLREC has prepared a three-year business plan and reflected that plan in its annual work plan, assigned one of its staff members as the focal person to implement the business plan. Meantime, SLREC has allocated NPR 400,000 for Woman Entrepreneurship Development Fund (WEDF).

Since his appointment, the focal person has been actively participating at all enterprise promotional activities such as Training of Starting Entrepreneurs (TOSE), skill training,

business mentoring, promotion of improved cookstoves as well as coordination with other agencies. SLREC sees provision of a capacitated focal person as a sustainability factor after phasing out of WEE-Nepal Project.

So far, SLREC has mobilized the WEDF fund to provide credit to two of the woman entrepreneurs at subsidized interest rate of 12 percent (normal rate is 13 percent). The fund will be further mobilized to support woman entrepreneurs trained under WEE-Nepal Project and promoted by SLREC itself under its business plan. Furthermore, SLREC has encouraged other local financial institutions (LFIs) to provide credit facility to woman entrepreneurs on priority basis. As a result, eight other LFIs have already disbursed loan to nine of the woman entrepreneurs promoted by SLREC.

## Case 2:

# Inception and Expansion of Women Entrepreneurship Development Fund

Amilichhap Samudayik Bikas Samuha (ASBS) has been managing grid electricity in Kumpur Village Development Committee of Dhading district.

The CREE coaching was conducted from 1-2 March 2015 at ASBS office at Amilichhap village, Dhading district. After the coaching event, ASBS prepared a three-year business plan and assigned its Secretary as focal person for implementation of the plan. As committed in the coaching event, ASBS also set up a WEDF by allocating NPR 30,000.

In addition to facilitating WEE-Nepal Project activities in the area such as capacity building training, the focal person has also been supporting the Business Development Coordinator of the Project in extending business mentoring support to women entrepreneurs and progress reporting.

ASBS is sponsoring additional nine woman entrepreneurs from its own resources to participate in the skill training on poultry which is being organized by WEE-Nepal Project.

ASBS has a plan to double the size of WEDF by collecting matching fund from 19 woman entrepreneurs it has promoted so far. At the initial stage, the fund will be utilized to support the same woman entrepreneurs to meet their business financing needs.

As per the business plan, ASBS is working on to produce information, education and communication materials and conduct some awareness activities to promote productive use of energy.

## Our Publications

# समयको आवाज

ऊर्जामा पहुँच तथा स्थानीय उत्पादनका लागि महिला उद्यम प्रबर्द्धन

वर्ष १, अंक १, सेप्टेम्बर २०१५

## सामुदायिक विद्युतीकरण संस्थाहरूले व्यवसाय प्रबर्द्धन किन गर्ने ?



ची-नेपाल परियोजनासितको सहकार्यमा ६ जिल्लाका १५ वटा सामुदायिक विद्युतीकरण संस्थाहरू महिला उद्यम विकासमा लागिपरेका छन्। विद्युतीकरणमा संलग्न संस्थाहरूले महिलाहरूको उद्यम विकासमा चासो किन लिनु परेको होला ?

संस्थाहरूको आर्थिक पक्ष अति नै कमजोर रहेको पनि धेरै संस्थाहरूमा देखिएको छ। यहि आर्थिक पक्षलाई सबल बनाउदै संस्थाहरूको स्थायित्व सुनिश्चितता गर्ने एउटा उपाय हो ऊर्जामा आधारित महिला उद्यमहरूको प्रबर्द्धन।

सामुदायिक विद्युतीकरण विनियमवली २०६० लागू भएपछि ५१ जिल्लामा २५१ सामुदायिक संस्थाहरूको जन्म भैसकेको छ। यी संस्थाहरूले हालसम्म २०६,००० भन्दा बढी घरधुरीहरूमा विजुली पुऱ्याइसकेका छन्। सरकारको १० प्रतिशत र सामुदायिक संस्थाहरूको १० प्रतिशत लगानीमा सामुदायिक विद्युतीकरणको परियोजना सञ्चालन गरिन्छ। सामुदायिक संस्थाहरूको विद्युतीकरणले ग्रामीण भेगका धेरै जनमाजनसलाई अंधारोबाट उज्यालोतर्फ होऱ्याउँदै लगेका छन्।

### महिला उद्यमीको प्रवर्द्धन



समृद्धि हाँसिल गर्ने एक महत्वपूर्ण आधार भनेको ऊर्जामा आधारित महिला उद्यमशीलता विकास हो। परिवर्तनशील प्रविधि र रुपान्तरित अनि उन्नत समाज

विकासका लागि ऊर्जाको प्रयोग बढाउनु तथा मानवीय कार्यबोका घटाई ऊर्जाको माध्यमबाट व्यावसायिक उत्पादनको बृद्धि गर्नु आजको आवश्यकता र अपरिहार्यता हो। जब ग्रामीण क्षेत्र र स्थानीय स्तरमा महिला उद्यमीहरूको संख्या बृद्धि हुँदै जान्छ तब व्यक्ति, परिवार र समाज हुँदै राष्ट्रले विकासको काँचुली फेदै जाने गर्दछ। कुनै पनि परिवारमा रहेका महिलाहरूको व्यवसाय विस्तारसँगै रोजगारीका अवसरहरू बढ्दै जान्छन् जसबाट महिला उद्यमीको आर्थिक परनिर्भरता पनि घट्न जान्छ। पारिवारिक आम्दानीमा बृद्धि हुनुका साथै उनीहरूको शिक्षा, स्वास्थ्य, सञ्चार आदिमा पहुँच बढ्न जान्छ। जीवनस्तरमा सुधार र प्रविधीमा पहुँच बढेसँगै सामाजिक समृद्धिका ढोकाहरू खुल्छन्, समाजमा आर्थिक गतिविधिका नयाँ आयामहरू थपिन्छन् र आर्थिक विकासले फड्को मार्न पुग्दछ। यसबाट सामुदायिक विद्युतीकरणमा संलग्न संस्थाहरूले आफ्नो कार्यक्षेत्रबाट नियमित आय आर्जनका स्रोतहरूलाई बृद्धि गर्न सक्छन् जसले गर्दा संस्थाको दीर्घकालीन सञ्चालनमा समेत टेवा पुग्दछ।

### ऊर्जामा आधारित महिला उद्यमीको प्रवर्द्धन

ऊर्जामा आधारित महिला उद्यमीको महत्वलाई निम्न रूपले विश्लेषण गर्न सकिन्छः  
 क) सामुदायिक विद्युतीकरण संस्थाको दिगोपनाको आधार  
 > महिला उद्यमीको विकाससँगै सामुदायिक विद्युतीकरण संस्थाहरूको ग्राहक संख्या र विद्युत खपत प्रत्यक्ष रूपले बढ्दछ जसले गर्दा ग्रामीण विद्युतीकरण भएका क्षेत्रमा उद्यमशीलताको विस्तारसँगै विद्युत महसुल संकलनमा बृद्धि भई संस्थागत आम्दानीमा बढोत्तरी हुन्छ।

# Business Mentoring Fosters Growth of Women-led Enterprises



Participants during TOSE Training in Lalitpur district

**W**EE-Nepal Project has a target of promoting 500 woman-led enterprises in 15 Community Rural Electrification Entities (CREEs) located in 6 project districts, namely, Khotang, Udayapur, Sindhuli, Kavrepalanchok, Lalitpur and Dhading. It first enhances readiness of CREEs by motivating CREE executive members to develop enterprise promotion plan, creating a Women Entrepreneurship Development Fund (WEDF) and assigning a focal person to look after the enterprise promotion aspect. Once the CREE internalizes enterprise promotion as a function of the institution, the Project facilitates selection of enterprise system and entrepreneurs, capacity building of entrepreneurs, preparation of business plan and market mapping of each enterprise system.

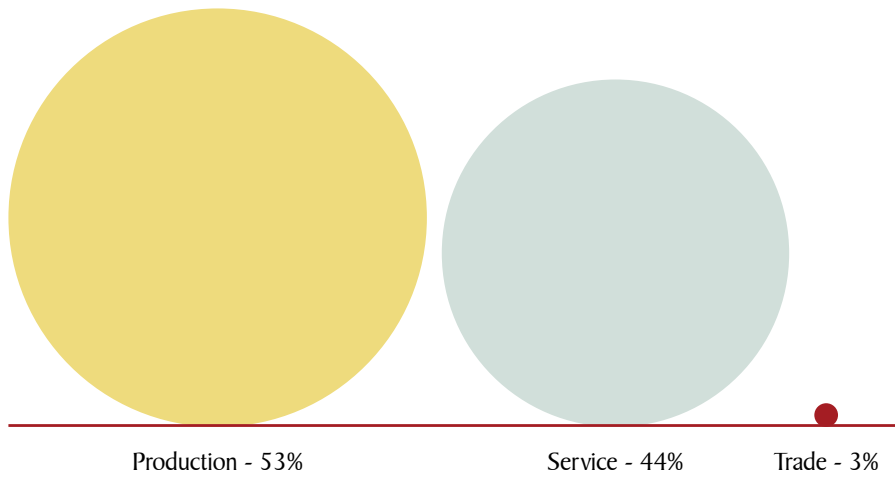
Each of these approaches has detailed method of execution. In order to ensure transparency and selection of right candidates, CREEs

call applications from potential entrepreneurs, performs screening of the candidates and select them ensuring their commitment. For the starting entrepreneurs, tailor-made Training of Starting Entrepreneurs (TOSE) is given. This includes orientation on WEE-Nepal Project approaches of business development support services, empowering the entrepreneurs through motivation and leadership, business planning and market mapping. Moreover, the training course provides insights on ways of developing linkages with line agencies such as Office of Cottage and Small Industry (CSIO) and Micro Financing Institutions (MFIs). Consequently, an action plan is prepared after training activities.

In this connection, two team members from WEE-Nepal Project participated in the Business Development Services (BDS) training organized by ENERGIA in collaboration with GVEP in Kenya in April 2015. The participants gained

insight knowledge and experiences on positive impact of business mentoring and different aspects of BDS. After the training, the Project has adopted business mentoring interventions by developing business mentoring tools, materials and approaches to apply in Nepalese context.

Under the business mentoring interventions, provision of intensive business advisory inputs such as, a follow up of business plans, identification and counseling on gaps/issues along with next action points of the entrepreneurs is done on periodic basis. This encompasses mentoring on enterprise management (general management and account keeping), encouraging registration of enterprises with concerned authorities, coaching on analysis of enterprise system and market mapping, business counseling and advisory input for business growth, and establishing institutional linkage with MFIs. Tracking income, expenditure and profit of



Types of Women-led Enterprises

the enterprises through database management and regular monitoring is an essential element of business mentoring approach.

The business mentoring approach provides various opportunities to the mentees (entrepreneurs) and mentors. Some of them are listed here (see box).

Integrating effective business mentoring in enterprises development cycle helps both the mentees and the mentors to

sustainably provide proper business development support services for growth of micro-enterprises. WEE-Nepal Project has given high priority in business mentoring interventions for value addition of positive impacts of women led enterprises. So far, the Project has been providing mentoring support to 332 woman entrepreneurs who are engaged in various types of production, service and trade related enterprises.

### For mentees (entrepreneurs)

1. Access to information
2. Creates awareness
3. Builds self confidence
3. Opportunity in updating business plan
4. Knowing financial health of enterprises
5. Demand and supply status of market
6. Making right decision in right time

### For mentors (project field staff)

1. Give and take appropriate information
2. Opportunity to empower entrepreneur
3. Monitoring and evaluation of enterprises
3. Help to resolve disputes
4. Increase confidence and credibility
5. Input for timely strategies
6. Preparing action plans

## Skill Training: A Step Forward to Women Entrepreneurship



Participants during skill training in Halesi VDC, Khotang District

**W**EE-Nepal Project has taken Training of Starting Entrepreneurs (TOSE) as first milestone to gain self-confidence, self-empowerment, business plan and self-visualization of micro enterprises suitable for local context. Moreover,

WEE-Nepal Project emphasizes identification and management of skill training to broaden knowledge, technical skill and experiences required for the effective running of the selected enterprise as the second major step. The second step constitutes identification of

appropriate skill training need using standard training need assessment tools and management of these skill training events in the respected areas. The training events are conducted on site or at nearest locations bringing the woman entrepreneurs doing the same business together in small batches. Locally available resource persons such as those belonging to Government line agencies and private training institutions facilitated the training as far as possible. In some cases, woman entrepreneurs may be sponsored to attend standard courses run by training institutions.

So far, 119 women are trained on seven advance skill training under production, service and trade related enterprises.

# Simple Steps to Transformation

**M**s. Purnima Ghalan, 35, is one of those many aspiring people who migrate in search of better life opportunities. She shifted from Sankhu village to Dalchoki village in Lalitpur district and started operating a small combined kiosk and tea-shop in order to make a living.

Her business was not in a good shape for about five years due to limited customer outreach in her small rented room at the Village Development Committee Office. Thereafter, she attended Training of Starting Entrepreneurs (TOSE) supported by WEE-Nepal Project and organised by South Lalitpur Rural Electric Cooperative Ltd. (SLREC) in September 2015.

During mentoring process, Mr. Rajendra Ghimire, Business Development Coordinator (BDC) of Lalitpur district has noticed rapid makeover of her business post-training. Mr. Ghimire said that her business skills and customer service has highly enhanced. He added, "She is nicer to customers and has started keeping and updating her business records regularly."

Additionally, with availability of electricity, she has been able to run her shop till late hours as well. Her shop opens till 9 PM boosting up her daily income.

In order to further expand her business, Ms Ghalan had taken NPR 75,000 loan from Janachetana Savings and Credit

Cooperative at 12 percent interest rate, and added NPR 25,000 from her own pocket to make necessary changes in her work. She excitedly said, "TOSE motivated me to place a flex board in front to add value to my shop. I have also included my contact number on the board. So even when the shop is closed, my customers directly call me to place order for goods."

Her husband who is a farmer by occupation, also sells his final produces at their own shop and gives a helping hand whenever at his leisure.

"I have future plans of buying a nearby plot of land, expand my business and hopefully build a new house with my savings. Life has started to seem a bit easier now," shares Ms Ghalan.



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