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## United Nations Literacy Decade

### EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

Presented at the UNESCO sub-regional Conference *Addressing Literacy Challenges in South, South West and Central Asia: Building Partnerships and Promoting Innovative Approaches*. (29 - 30 November 2007, New Delhi, India)

**Programme name: Nepal Women's Poverty Alleviation Project (WPAP)**

**Implemented by: Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) Nepal**

#### Basic facts

Country: Nepal

Starting/Ending year: June 2004 – May 2007

Outreach: 5500 women per year in four project districts

Target Population: women (15 - 49 years) in rural areas, mainly from marginalized castes and ethnic groups

Language of instruction: the facilitators use the local language, but the books are mainly in Nepali.

Operating in: Kavre, Bara, Banke and Dang Districts of Nepal

Facilitator/Beneficiary ratio: 1/30

Main Funding: European Union

Website: [www.adranepal.org](http://www.adranepal.org)

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#### Brief Description

Nepal is among the least developed countries in the world. Within Nepal, there are significant gender, caste, ethnic and geographic disparities. Nearly 40% of the total population fall below the poverty line and significant inequities emerge when comparing the various regions of the country. A major problem in the targeted groups in all four districts (Kavre, Bara, Dang and Banke of Nepal) is that of illiteracy and the poor quality of life among rural adult women and their children resulting from it. Girls in rural areas have less opportunities to receive education. Often their only opportunity for education is through non-formal education and adult literacy. The status of women is extremely low, and they are underrepresented in government

and in social and economic development structures. Women suffer from a lack of education opportunities, and female employment is largely limited to low-skill jobs. Huge efforts still need to put in the literacy sector. In addition to this, disadvantaged caste/ethnic groups have higher gender gaps, lower literacy rates and fewer economic opportunities, and are further marginalized as a result.

### **Rationale**

Illiteracy is a major problem which results in a poor quality of life among rural adult women and their children. Girls in rural areas have less education opportunities which are often to non-formal education and adult literacy programmes. The status of women in rural areas is extremely low, they are underrepresented in the government and in social and economic development structures. Women have no control over the money and the property. In addition, disadvantaged casts or ethnic groups have higher gender gaps, lower literacy rates and fewer economic opportunities, and are further marginalized as a result. The Nepal Women's Poverty Alleviation Project gives girls access to technical education and vocational training directly related to future jobs and to creating income. Saving credit schemes and livelihood training linked to market opportunities which help increasing the income for the poorest are two of the major components of this programme.

### **Objectives**

The project's overall objective is to contribute to the alleviation of poverty and poor health through the empowerment of rural women by improving literacy, health education and sustainable livelihood activities and by strengthening their development capacities.

### **Conceptual Model and Methodology**

ADRA implements its women's literacy model, which has been tested and implemented for the last 15 years, at three levels. The Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) tool is used for planning and selecting literacy classes and facilitators. A local level management committee is involved in the planning process. ADRA implements the programme through its local NGO partners. In each location, a committee of 5 to 7 members is formed as a management/support committee, which is given a three-day training regarding participant's selection, supervision and monitoring of classes and management. Contact centres are established in the programme areas to ensure logistical support. The programme activities are monitored and supported by the field assistants. All women participating in the programme have access to Basic Level Literacy (BLL), Post Level Literacy (PLL) and to the Life Orientated Continued Education Component (LOCEC).

Saving and credit practices, training on accounting and book-keeping procedure, the formation of saving groups, vocational livelihood training, market center establishment, kitchen gardening training and seed distribution, natural resource management, toilet and biogas installation and support for investment through group savings for livelihood development are integral part of the programme and an important step towards economic self-sufficiency.

### **Innovative features**

The integration of livelihood trainings at all three programme levels - BLL, PLL and LOCEC – has a great impact on retaining the interest and literacy status of the beneficiaries. The project does not only focus on reading and writing but helps women to improve their livelihood and builds their leadership capacity.

In order to regularly monitor the implementation of the programme and to assess the outcomes, Participatory Review Meetings are organized. The meetings are a creative process that involves the project beneficiaries, the literacy facilitators, project stakeholders (e.g. government line agencies), donor representative and project staff.

Indigenous socio-cultural practices need to be promoted rather than trying to implement something new. This reality opens the room for the inclusion of traditional wisdom into the development plans and helps generate feeling of ownership among the beneficiaries and link development processes with their everyday life.