

Emergent Struggles

*Local Activism and the 'Equal and Fair Wage' Campaigns in the Janakpur area, Nepal*¹

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Introduction

This evaluation research is set in Nepal, and is an investigation of a process of 'emergent' change, whereby sets of strikes against landowners initiated by solidarity groups resulted in a substantial increase in wage labour rates for over 13,000 wage labourers. This was the finding from a brief study conducted in mid 2010 that sought to tell an 'impact story' about some of the work of CARE Nepal and its partners that focused on the empowerment of women.² So how significant was this change, and perhaps more interestingly, how did it come about? It is these questions this research seeks to answer.

Following the end of a protracted civil war in 2005, Nepal is still engaged in an equally protracted peace building process. But whilst the macro environment remains in flux, with an interim Constituent Assembly still in place and a prolonged process of negotiation over a new constitution, there are already progressive pro-poor and minorities policies, and high levels of local activism.

Funding for this research has been received through IKM Emergent, a research program that explores information and knowledge processes within the international development sector. Key to the critical philosophy of the IKM Emergent program is the belief that 'development represents transformative change. There is no template or master plan to follow, and [engagement] will always involve innovation and risk. Beyond the inevitable unpredictability of life, the process of change will invariably uncover new insights and possibilities within the human environment being changed.'³

In its practice-based work, IKM Emergent is seeking to advance the following intents:

1. Work in relevant (local) language in all circumstances

¹ Funded by the Information and Knowledge Management – IKM - initiative

² 'A composite of impact stories relating to CARE Nepal's women's empowerment program', Mary Picard, WayFair Associates, July 2010.

³ IKM Emergent Leaflet 2, 2009

2. Value critical but empathetic support of diverse forms of local knowledge in order to underpin capacity for locally led development
3. Create models for planning, process management, monitoring and evaluation in a context of recognised and welcome unpredictability
4. Collaborate in building a development knowledge ecology as a global public good from which all may benefit and to which development organisations should contribute in an open manner
5. Create new models of accountability, involving accountability to the so-called beneficiaries as well as to donors, to replace assessment based on compliance with pre-existing plans.

The institutional host for the research, CARE Nepal, adopted a rights based focus to its work in the early 2000s, and especially since the mid-2000s has been highly activist in some of its core programming work. This has been facilitated in part by a broader initiative in CARE, that of shifting the organization from its traditional project focus to working with only a small number of long term programs in each operating context. In Nepal, this move to operationalise a ‘program approach’ remains a work in progress. The country office (CO) has two core programs, one focused on women’s empowerment, and the other on natural resource access and management and livelihood issues, both within an over-arching equity and justice framework. But perhaps more central to the ‘emergent’ processes we were seeking to explore, has been the evolution by the CO of a series of linked, core methodologies since especially 2008. This set of core approaches, outlined in more detail in the section on CARE context, are central to the enhanced role CARE Nepal has been able to play with its partners in local social change processes over the last few years.

Aims of Research and Relation to IKM Themes

The overall aims of the research can be set out as follows.

1. To understand how CARE Nepal’s work with REFLECT (Regenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowerment of Community Techniques) groups led to a process of ‘emergent’ change, whereby sets of strikes against landowners initiated by solidarity groups resulted in a substantial increase in wage labour rates for over 13,000 wage labourers.
2. To understand also the relative significance of these ‘equal and fair wage campaigns’ amongst the other activities and achievements of the solidarity groups.
3. To analyse how sustainable these changes have been/ are likely to be, and the implications for the set of core methodologies that CARE Nepal has been developing and utilising in its programs.
4. To explore how and the extent to which the social development practices identified exemplify some of IKM Emergent’s central themes.

It will be helpful to outline briefly what are some of these IKM Emergent themes. In supporting processes of change that are transformative in nature, but which emerge from change processes that are essentially local in nature – building in local knowledges, culture and initiatives, IKM advocates for what Chambers calls adaptive pluralism. This ‘demands

creativity, invention, improvisation and originality in adapting to and exploiting change'. IKM argues that 'for plurality of ideas, for counter-pull and for innovation, approaches of adaptive pluralism need to be better integrated into development'.⁴ As part of this, IKM is drawing upon and seeking to advance five core arguments.

- ***The development knowledge ecology.*** Whilst there are many disconnects in development knowledge, an ecological approach highlights the connections, and thus envisions development knowledge as a holistic system that encompasses all development-relevant knowledge. In particular, IKM argues for 'an endogenous approach to information and knowledge for development which is concerned with "human beings, decision-making processes, and encouraging the poor to make their own society through participatory and inclusive processes of development" (Mansell 2010)'.
- ***Connecting multiple knowledges.*** Development can be seen as a 'wicked problem' or even a series of interlinked, wicked problems. To solve wicked problems, resolution and connection between multiple knowledges is required; this is a critical source of how innovation takes place. Such resolution and interaction can take place in many 'locations', for example between the knowledge domains of practice and research but also at the interfaces between local, participatory knowledge and organisational knowledge.
- ***Local knowledge, local content.*** Local content is important and needs to be valued by both local communities and development organisations. The process of generating and validating local content is, at a local level, an important contribution to development in itself. Local knowledge can also play an important part in citizen engagement and civic driven change.
- ***Practice in organisations.*** Development organisations of all sizes are struggling with the implications of informational developments, namely the cultural, economic and technical changes in the handling, use and exchange of information, for their practice. Part of this struggle is a result of too large a focus on internal, organisational priorities with less attention being paid to the global knowledge commons to which they should be contributing.
- ***Information artefacts.*** Good information design – including both means of expression and means of reception – has the potential to strengthen greatly communication in all its senses. Many of the artefacts used to support development discourse – ICT systems, consultancy reports, journals, web 2 tools – have intrinsic characteristics which conflict with their developmental purpose.⁵

This evaluation research touches most of these themes. Threads will be seen throughout this report, and an overall pulling together of these will take place in the final sections of the report.

⁴ 'Emergent Issues in Information and Knowledge Management and International Development, Outline of an integrated, interdisciplinary, inclusive research programme', IKM2 draft proposal, July 2011.

⁵ Ibid

Nepal and CARE Context

Despite the end of a protracted civil war in 2005, Nepal remains a politically turbulent country. The mandate of a diverse Constitutional Assembly – its election one of the success stories of recent years – has continued to be extended because of the failure of the three main parties to agree on key provisions. The Maoists (UCPN-M) are the largest party in the interim assembly, but do not have a majority. A central sticking point has been who controls the army, and how (much) their cadres are integrated into it. Thus far the Prime Ministerial position in the interim government has tended to switch between United Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML) and Nepali Congress Party (NCP) candidates, but in August 2011 a more conciliatory Maoist candidate, their deputy chairman Baburam Bhattarai has assumed the position, and there is greater hope that he will both have the authority and ability to compromise that will be needed to finalise the constitution making process, and move the country forward economically.

Despite this prolonged period of indecision and hence uncertainty, Nepal nevertheless has a progressive policy environment that is pro-poor and outlines on paper the multiple forms of discrimination that occur in the country. There are considerable levels of local activism - 'everyone is political' we were told - owing especially to the role of the Maoists in awakening political consciousness.⁶

Within this context, CARE Nepal itself took an activist turn in the mid-2000s, with an ex-Action Aid Country Director that pushed CARE towards being more representative of the 'PVSE' – poor, vulnerable and socially excluded – groups whose voice and interests it sought to advance. As part of this, in 2008 the country office (CO) both consolidated the geographic locales it was working in, and then decentralised its management structures to these, in order to promote linkages with these groups and ensure their representation amongst staff and partners.

In 2009 a second reform process aimed to overlay these earlier initiatives with a program approach, whereby CARE Nepal's different projects would be grouped together in a limited number of longer term programs. This second change process remains however incomplete, largely because the CO senior management, which changed in mid-2010, has yet to work out how to reconcile the program and decentralisation strategies. Thus, initially each of the three regions CARE was focusing on wanted their own program, and initial designs of three programs have in fact taken place. But the program designs are built around 'impact groups', and the logic of these suggests the programs should be country wide rather than geographically focused. Moreover, one of the programs was designed with a focus on justice and equity, but this is at the heart of all the CO's work, and thus represents more of an overarching strategy.

Considerably more successful, however, has been the CO's efforts to develop a set of cross-cutting, core methodologies. These four core methodologies are:

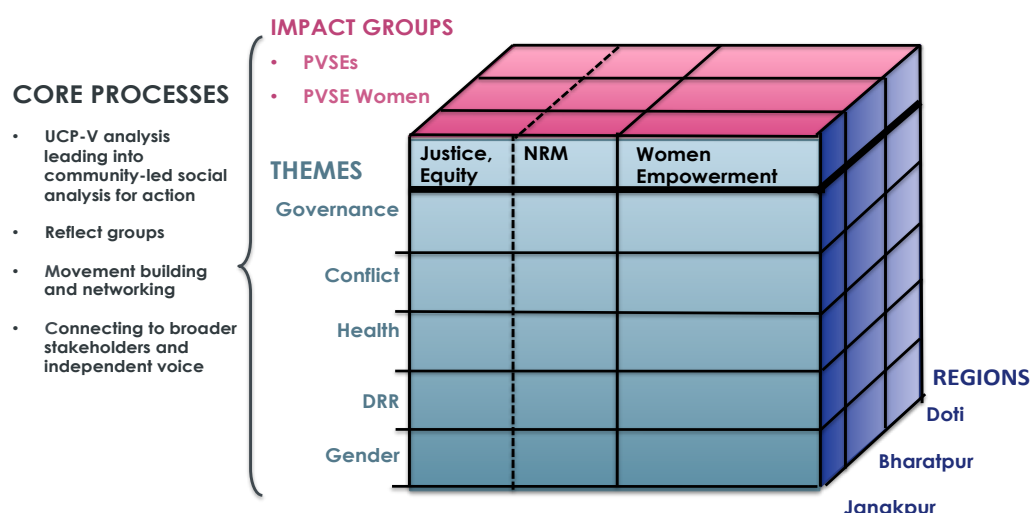
- Participatory, underlying cause analysis of poverty and vulnerability (and associated culture of inquiry);

⁶ Comment made by Krishna Paneru, who was our field work guide and helped us hugely in conducting the research.

- Use of reflect (or solidarity) groups to enable PVSEs to organize, mobilize constituencies and initiate action⁷
- Movement creation and networking to link reflect groups at district level, and to join with other organizations and networks
- Connecting to broader stakeholders and social movements, and developing independent voice, particularly at national level.

In two of the three regions, Bharatpur in the Terai lowlands, and Janakpur, in the borderlands between the Terai and the Churia hills, these methodologies are now deeply embedded. As our analysis will show, it is the commitment to these approaches that has led to most of what is exciting about CARE Nepal's work and achievements, at least in terms of its relevance to the IKM agenda.

All these different elements are illustrated in the Rubik cube diagram below, which highlights both the elements from which CARE Nepal's 'program approach' has been built, as well as the ongoing management dilemma over which dimension of the Rubik cube should be given primacy in the development of an organizational structure.



Research Methodology

This study involved a 6 day field work period in the Janakpur area of Nepal, and a further day and a half of follow up meetings and debriefing in Kathmandu. In Janakpur, the intent of the field research was to explore the genesis of the wage labourer solidarity actions, and to understand the linkages of this to the programmatic reforms that took place in CARE Nepal in the late 2000s. Since, one method that was instrumental to this process was the formation of 'reflect' groups,

The specific activities that took place were:

- Discussions with CARE Nepal staff and partners who have been responsible for this work to understand their perspective on the process that has taken place, and the

⁷ The REFLECT group methodology, based on Freireian adult literacy principles, was originally initiated by Action Aid

extent to which this was enabled (or not) by the organisational changes that have taken place.

- Exploratory meetings with members of two types of REFLECT groups themselves in the Janakpur 'cluster' area of CARE's operations, to understand their perspective on how the solidarity strikes against land owners came to be initiated, the process that lead to the increase of their wage rates, the related benefits to their own livelihoods that this has resulted in, and their views about the relative security of these changes. These more specific discussions took place in the context of understanding the more general processes whereby the groups had come to be formed, and the other initiatives that they had undertaken to address power inequalities and advance their own rights.

These groups were, firstly, the 'open village forums', or Lok Pathsalas (LPs), established by the Jiwan Kendra project from 2006. These are mixed groups in all senses, of men and women, and of different castes and classes. Meetings were held with two of these groups, both randomly selected, Hariharpur, which turned out to be the group that had initiated the equal and fair wages campaigns, and Digambarpur. In contrast, the second type of REFLECT group we interacted with were the Popular Education Centres (PECs), established from 2008 by the Chuli Project, which consist only of women drawn from the poorer and more marginalised social economic groups. The PECs we met with were Divya and Sahara PECs from Sarlahi District, and Indreni and Dhadkhola PECs, Tulsi VDC, in a combined meeting in Dhanusha District.

- Two case study interviews with a social mobilizer and facilitator from one Popular Education Centre, one of the REFLECT group types.
- Meetings with Action Aid staff to understand their utilization of the REFLECT methodology, and, as will be discussed with CARE too, the nature of any cross-organizational exchanges that take place, including through local partner organizations.
- Discussions with CARE senior staff of the implications of the early research findings for their ongoing programmatic work.

CARE's Activist Ethos and Approaches in Janakpur

From 2009-2010, over 12,600 poor households in 3 districts of CARE Nepal's Janakpur working area mobilized successfully to gain an estimated additional 148.3 million Nepali Rupees (2 million US dollars) in agricultural wages.⁸ Since that time, groups of poor women labourers across these districts have continued to mobilize wage action in even more VDCs within this area.

⁸ M Picard (2010).

We have already asked the question, how real and significant was this change? And how 'emergent' was this process? What our research showed was that for the men and women involved in these actions, additional wages were only one of a myriad of changes in their lives as a result of mobilizing into groups. For many, the most fundamental impact of this work has been realizing a new status and equal identity within families, communities and Nepal. Women were able to introduce themselves in community fora where they never had a voice; Dalits lost their untouchability and no longer took on the roles of second-class citizens; and poor villagers learnt their own histories as a village, a clan and a family.

This suggests the wage labour gains are just the tip of the iceberg, a change that has greater import in some communities, but in others is not the most significant change that has taken place. But the process overall all certainly is one of 'emergent' change, of groups of women, especially, discovering themselves for the first time, learning how to take more control over their destinies, and developing the capacities to initiate new forms of action. So, how did this change happen, and how sustainable might it be? In this section, the nature and evolution of the core methodologies that CARE Nepal has evolved is discussed.

UCPA Approach: Guiding Principles for Sustainable Social Change

At the heart of changes at personal, village and broader levels, has been the approach CARE Nepal has taken to facilitate emergent, rights-based and empowering processes. This model, most commonly called the UCP Analysis (UCPA) approach within the Country Office, is rooted in the participatory analysis of the underlying causes of poverty (UCP), which is then linked into the formation of REFLECT solidarity groups. A fuller and more accurate name for this process is however, an 'Underlying Causes of Poverty and Social Injustice Analysis', and it is designed specifically for social mobilisation purposes.⁹

During the analytical process a series of linked methods are conducted, with the aim of identifying 'poverty pockets' within a broader village development committee (VDC) area. Once identified, the more detailed analytical methods are carried out in these areas, and then if there are enough households, women are encouraged to form groups with a minimum of 25 members. At this point, a local NGO will usually be leading the process and will seek to employ a 'social mobilizer' from the community, whose task is to help with the formation of the group. Once formed, the local NGO, often with CARE staff to begin with, then take the group back to the analysis and lead the group through a more detailed social analysis, with this part of the process sometimes being described as a 'community led social analysis for action'.

The process is powerful. Indeed the first time one of the community UCP analyses was presented to us in 2010, the social mobilizer concerned stood up and presented the first diagram, which was an extremely detailed community map, as 'our power and institutional analysis'. An analysis that begins from and is presented as an examination of power relations is unusual and striking.

⁹ Santosh Sharma, 2011, 'Reflection of UCPA for Social Mobilization and its link with Advocacy Initiatives', CARE Nepal.

There are thus three key principles which can be identified as guiding this programmatic model: focus on partnerships, community-led analysis and action, and pro-poor commitment.

- **Focus on Partnerships:** An integral part of CARE Nepal's programming is its attention in selecting and cultivating relations with local partner NGOs, who in turn employ social mobilizers that themselves come from the local communities and are representative of CARE's impact group. Across its work, CARE Nepal has worked closely with partners to assess capacity needs and develop trainings and support to respond to identified needs. In investing in and collaborating with partner CBOs, CARE Nepal aims to cultivate people's organizations to mobilize action beyond the village level independently from the project.¹⁰
- **Community-led Analysis and Action:** Prioritizing and triggering action within and across groups, the basis of the UCPA approach is that analysis takes place with the local community. This begins with the initial UCP analysis that shapes where CARE will work and with whom. This initial analysis focuses on both informing programming as well as facilitating learning and critical analysis among villagers, themselves. Based on this analysis and further action research taken by groups, project participants prioritize key issues and develop plans for acting on them. While the project educates groups on the rights owed to them by law and other relevant topics (e.g. sanitation), the UCPA approach places emphasis on building from local knowledge from within the community.
- **Pro-Poor Commitment:** With the UCPA approach, CARE's commitment to working toward pro-poor social justice has been leveraged through a more purposeful, reflective and strategic way of working with the poor. The UCPA approach has enabled CARE to target poverty pockets for program initiatives, and mobilize groups of poor, vulnerable and socially excluded (PVSE) women. This approach places heavy focus on empowerment of poor women to build solidarity with one another, pride in who they are, and confidence in what they can achieve.

Evolution of the Approach

The development of this approach, has evolved over the past 10 years in CARE.



Foundations: The Action Aid Model

¹⁰ Jaladh Integrated Watershed and Natural Ressource Management Programme (JIWAN 2) Strategy Document, 2008, CARE Nepal.

Initially the REFLECT model was introduced by Action Aid in 1998. The original model works through partners to facilitate:

1. Participatory situational analysis for both building political literacy and identifying key issues in a given area.
2. The creation of REFLECT circles with groups that represent the poorest and marginalized segments of the population ('rights holders groups'). These groups are formed to advocate around key identified issues. While Action Aid has traditionally worked with exclusively women groups, the organization is now trying to integrate men.
3. Broader networking at the Village Development Committee (VDC)¹¹ level that involve community level groups like REFLECT circles and other community-based organizations to mobilize around different focus areas, such as Dalit rights or women's rights.
4. Linkages and mobilization through and across VDC-level networks for mobilization at VDC, District and higher levels. For stronger advocacy approaches, Action Aid created district and higher-level forums to strengthen linkages between networks to leverage mobilization efforts.
5. Participatory review/reflection and social audits to ensure on-going reflection throughout the course of the project. As a part of this, REFLECT circles, villagers and representatives gather to discuss action plans, results, new programs/policies and connect people's concerns with local leaders.¹²

SAMARPAN (Strengthening the Role of Civil Society and Women in Democracy and Governance): In 2002, CARE Nepal first integrated the REFLECT approach into its SAMARPAN initiative to marry popular education methods with social change initiatives. Through SAMARPAN, which ended in 2006, CARE began to engage more in facilitating groups to claim their rights and take part in political activism through membership in advocacy networks and forums for women's rights.

Building a Community-Led and Empowerment Focused Approach – Jiwan Kendra: Since 2002, CARE Nepal has continued to adapt the REFLECT model. With Jiwan Kendra (2006-2011), CARE used REFLECT methods in its development of open village schools or *lok pathshala* (LPs) focused on promoting natural, social and personal wellness. LPs act as both centres for organizing as well as learning through non-formal training on issues like sustainable watershed management, conflict management, rights and life skills. These groups involved women and men from across different segments of a community to discuss and address issues of livelihoods and natural resource management. With a focus on natural resources, Jiwan Kendra networked groups at the watershed level.¹³ In addition, LPs also focused on community-led approaches and resources as the basis of learning.¹⁴ One remarkable feature of the Jiwan training materials is that they evolved from ideas grounded

¹¹ VDCs remain non-elected bodies since local government elections in Nepal have yet to be held. They have been intended to follow national elections, once a new Constitution is finally agreed.

¹² Interview with Indra Gurung (8 Sept 2011); UD Banerjee (2005) *Using Rights-Based Approaches to Mobilize for Social Justice: The Action Aid Nepal REFLECT Process*. Chapter 11 of: *Lessons Learned from Rights-Based Approaches in Asia-Pacific Region: documentation of case studies*. UNDP and OHCHR. Available at:

<http://www.unescobkk.org/education/appeal/programme-themes/lessons-learned-project/llp-resources/case-studies/>

¹³ J Saxgren (2006). Jiwan Kendra Training, Demonstration and Life School Center: conceptual design & master plan. CARE Denmark and CARE Nepal.

¹⁴ J Jespersen (no date). Open Village Schools – What's That? Concepts and Experiences. CARE.

in the local history and cosmology of the peoples of the Terai, a population long subservient to the 'great kings' of Kathmandu.¹⁵

Developing a Pro-Poor Approach – UCP Analysis: While Jiwan Kendra evolved the REFLECT method to focus on community knowledge and empowerment, it did not specifically target the rights and interests of the poor. In 2007, CARE Nepal invested in learning how to take a more strategic focus on pro-poor programming. That year, the team worked with Social Development specialist, Brigitta Bode, to facilitate participatory learning and action methods to understand the underlying causes of poverty within the Terai region. The method used a set of social mapping and analysis exercises to understand local contexts and power relations as well as facilitate learning among participants. These methods also served as powerful tools to negotiate access to resources and rights.¹⁶

Linking UCP Analysis with REFLECT Approaches – CHULI Initiative: Seeing the potential and power in this approach, CARE Nepal integrated UCP analysis across multiple initiatives, including Jiwan. The pairing of UCP Analysis and REFLECT groups became the foundation for the Churia Livelihood Improvement Program (CHULI), which was initiated in January 2008. Through CHULI, CARE Nepal formed Popular Education Centres (PECs) within poverty pockets identified in analysis. These PECs comprised exclusively of poor, vulnerable and socially excluded women. With a stronger pro-poor stance, CHULI aimed to:

*Contribute to improved livelihood and gender and caste equity for the poor, vulnerable and socially excluded peoples living in Churia and central Terai areas including creating enabling environment where they can fulfill their rights.*¹⁷

Working through PECs, CHULI maintained a strong foundation in community-led approaches, with groups electing facilitators and social mobilizers to coordinate and lead PECs. With a stronger focus on reaching the poorest people in the poorest areas, CHULI was also more responsive to the interests of the poor, marginalized and excluded peoples within VDCs. As such, the nature of groups within CHULI markedly developed as centres for solidarity-building and activism among poor women at the village level. Through federations that linked to higher-level rights forums, PECs were networked to link to one another at the VDC level, and were linked to the Women's Rights Forum (originally developed by Action Aid) at district and national levels.

Wage Stories

At different times, both PECs from CHULI and LPs from Jiwan Kendra mobilized around the issue of wages as a result of group discussions and analysis of local livelihood priorities.

¹⁵ Jiwan training materials used with the Lok Pathshala groups.

¹⁶ Picard (2010); B Bode (2009). CARE Nepal: Underlying Causes of Poverty Analysis and Contributions toward a Program Approach.

¹⁷ CARE Nepal (2009). CHULI: program progress report.

The Beginning¹⁸

Work on “Equal and Fair Wages” was initiated in Hariharpur VDC in 2006. At the time the country was still at war, Maoists actively promoted the end of untouchability and monitored NGO activities to ensure their alignment with party principles.

Reflecting on livelihoods issues of the poor, members of the Hariharpur lok pathshala immediately raised the issue of wages. At the time, the poorest segments of the VDC comprised landless households who survived by selling agricultural labour for only 60 NPRs and 4 kg of paddy per day. For LP members who represented both landholders and landless labourers, however, this issue raised internal tensions for the group. What followed was a month of arguments, counter-arguments and analysis on stagnant wage rates and the rising cost of goods within the VDC. After the month, members of the LP agreed to take action on this issue.

With consensus and support within the LP, members launched a series of mobilization and negotiation efforts. In their struggle for higher wages, LP members campaigned to persuade neighbours to unite for higher wages, and gained the support of the dominant political party, the United Marxist-Leninists (UML). Together, they demanded a pay increase of 4 kgs of rice per day. Landholders refused. This spurred labourers to mobilize a strike against the landholders, with some then turning to sift rivers for the pebbles used in construction, as an alternative income in lieu of agricultural labour. As landowners then attempted to block labourers from sifting pebbles, labourers responded again by preventing landowners from hiring workers from outside or ploughing their own fields.

The conflict eventually shifted toward resolution when workers and landholders agreed to meet in a local school to negotiate new labour conditions. In an enduring 4-hour meeting facilitated by the LP, villagers discussed stagnant wages and inflation, and the inter-dependent relationship between wage earners and landholders. From the discussions, landholders and labourers agreed on a daily rate of 100 NPRs and 5 kgs paddy, in addition to breakfast and lunch. Further, landholders agreed to increase wages in line with inflation. Subsequently, daily wages in Hariharpur rose in 2007 from 100 to 150 NPRs, and again in 2008 from 150 to 200 to 250. What happened in Hariharpur set the precedent for a wider spread of changes for wage rates across the region. As one LP member described:

“The incident was like a volcanic eruption. The wage issue started here but the effects spread like lava, affecting all surrounding VDCs. When wage earners observe what is happening here, they also seek change.”

And so they did.

Since Hariharpur

Since 2006, 30 VDCs have now mobilized for Equal and Fair Wages across CARE’s working area of 50 VDCs in the Janakpur area. An unknown number of others have independently mobilized for higher wage rates.

¹⁸ Fieldnotes from meeting with Hariharpur LP members, Saturday 3 September 2011

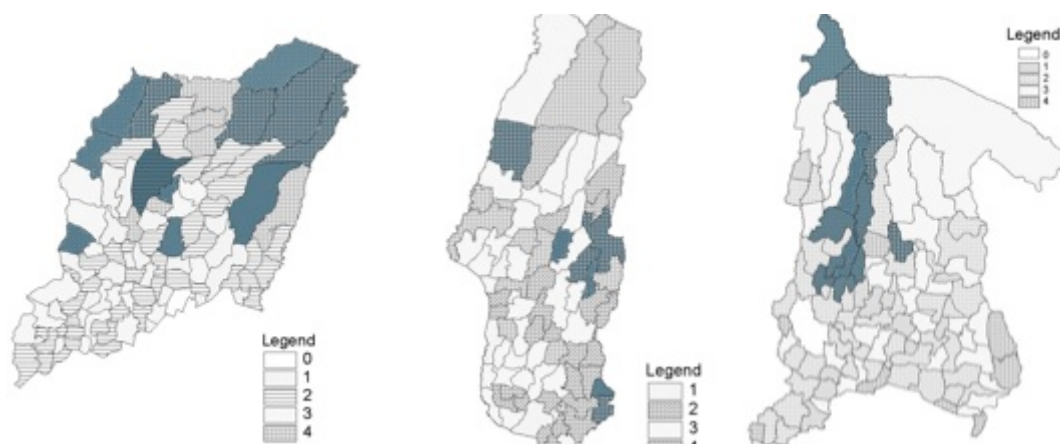


Figure 1. Shaded VDCs represent where groups organized wage Action in Sarlahi, Mahottari and Dhanusha Districts

Across the 2 LPs and 3 Popular Education Centres (PECs) we met with who mobilized wage actions, each account showed that the issue emerged and evolved in its own way.

Discussion and Analysis: For most, the discussion and decision to take on the issue of wages arose through the process of analysis that originated with the UCPA work of seasonal labour patterns, income rates, rising expenditures, differing work conditions between women and men, alongside district defined standards for minimum wage.

Agreement and Planning: For PECs, having reviewed the analysis, the decision to mobilize around wages came easily as all members relied on wage labour for their livelihoods. In LPs, however, the process of deciding to take action spanned longer periods of discussion in light of the caste and class diversity within the groups. For both LPs interviewed, the phase from analysis to agreement spanned a month or more as wage earners and land holders debated their positions within LPs. Upon deciding to pursue the issue of wages, groups planned the timing of campaigns to correspond to key planting and harvesting times, and outlined a code of conduct to guide the processes and ensure solidarity throughout the initiative.

Mobilization: In each instance, groups built a wider base of support by reaching out to members' husbands as well as campaigning door-to-door with other labourers within the VDC on wage issues. In Digambarpur LP, mobilizing efforts expanded to gain support from the Community Forest Users' Group, Land Rights/ Squatters Group and Maoist Political Party to campaign dually for higher wages and against gender-based violence.

Negotiation and Pressure Tactics: Mobilizing and campaigning raised the issue of wages and itself spurred dialogue. In some cases, this action led to a negotiation and resolution between wage earners and landholders. In the case of Tulsi VDC, where many men have emigrated for work leaving severe labor shortages, the members of all five PECs in the VDC did not even mobilize a campaign. They all simply agreed to demand uniformly a higher daily rate when approached for work, and landowners had no choice but to comply. In contexts like Tulsi though, the mental image one has of a 'landowner' we realised was also misleading. Here the landowners were really only smallholder farmers, using very limited labour and with limited profit margins. We shall discuss the implications of this later. In other cases, however, where landowners were more powerful, change did not come so easily.

Risks

In Parwanpur VDC, for example, the facilitator, mobilizer and members of Divya PEC took on considerable risk to campaign for equal wages between women and men. There, the group's leaders faced harassment from local landowners for inciting unrest within the village. The group's social mobilizer – as a Dalit woman organizer from the village – feared violent repercussions and reasoned with landowners using the groups' analyses to justify their actions.

After first taking action on the issue in 2009 and not making headway, in July 2010 the four Parwanpur PECs decided to take stronger action. To support one another through the course of the campaign, members agreed on a code of conduct across wage earners within the VDC, and distributed money from their emergency funds for the poorest group members throughout the course of the strike. It took 15 days of strikes before the group entered dialogue with landowners to renegotiate their terms of employment. Following negotiations, women gained equal wages as men for the same work. Women in Parwanpur are now paid 200 NPRs for a day's work rather than the 100 NPRs they earned for the same amount of work in 2009. Over the course of the coming year, the Divya PEC hopes to mobilize again for a raise in wages to correspond with price inflation.

Emergent Struggles

Speaking with groups, about what precisely happened – and how – to achieve such impact in only one year, it became apparent that the “Wage Story” was just one of a series of struggles for change pursued by households. For many poor men and women it was not the most significant.

When asked what issues the groups pursued as an LP or PEC, members listed a range of initiatives, as listed in the table below, that fell across issues in relation to:

- Public services and village infrastructure,
- Claiming equal human rights, particularly in relation to livelihoods, discrimination and gender equality
- Agriculture and natural resource management
- Citizenship and governance

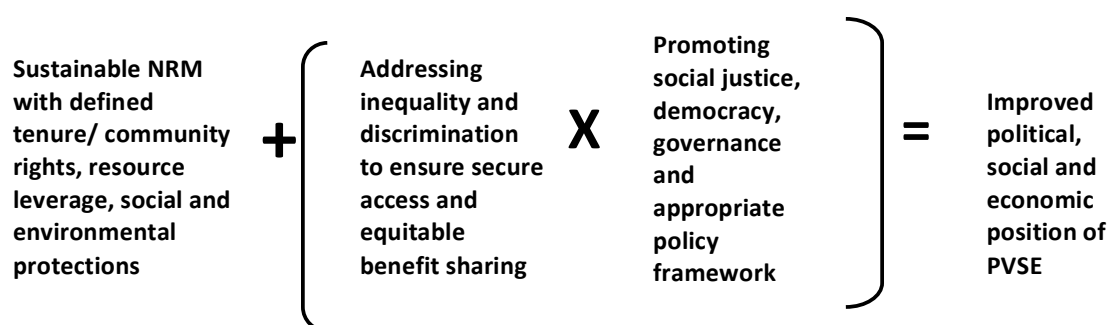
Services and infrastructure	Equal Human Rights	Agriculture and NR	Citizenship and Governance
<ul style="list-style-type: none">•widow funds•bus fare•health services•roads•electricity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•untouchability•violence / alcoholism•women's rights•land rights•child marriage, dowry•fair wages & Interest rates	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•irrigation ponds•cattle-raising•conservation•savings / credit	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•VDC access, participation•citizenship, birth register•marriage register•CFUG executive committee•School management committee

For some groups, the issue of wages was the top issue prioritized by the group, as a strategic livelihoods issue facing the poor. However, in other cases the gains from wage action were not an area of great struggle. For example, in Tulsi VDC, labour supply is scarce, with many men working abroad. In that context, taking on the issue of wages represented an easy ‘win’ for groups. The quick and early success on wage action within Tulsi clearly demonstrated to members the collective power of solidarity and organizing. The confidence gained among group members from wage action helped the PECs gain confidence to move on to demand women’s participation and management in the Community Forest Users Group (CFUG) and its executive committee – positions previously monopolized by men. This action designed to halt the illegal cutting and sale of timber by male committee members, involved a great deal more struggle. The PEC members attempted to force the CFUG committee to reveal its accounts, which the committee did not wish to show. Once it failed to be transparent, the PEC then campaigned to have a new executive committee elected. After three months of tussling they were finally able to get a new executive committee elected, for which 9 out of 13 members came from the PECs, and now there is transparent management of the CFUG.

For all PECs interviewed, members also recognized the wage action as an important initiative to demonstrate the worth and capabilities of women organizing at the community level. From the success in this campaign, many members reported that men became much more supportive of their participation in the group. Over time, members also mentioned that since wage action – along with the various issues undertaken by LPs and PECs – members gained more respect in public forums, and greater recognition within the village.

What has Changed: The Landless and the Landowners, LPs and PECs

The diagram below represents the theory of change for CARE Nepal’s Natural Resources, Environment and Livelihoods Program. A focus on addressing inequalities in power relations looms large.



The core project in this program has been the CARE Denmark funded Churia Livelihood Improvement initiative since the start up of the project and program in 2008. In its taking the addressing of power relations to heart with the UCPA and REFLECT methodologies, linked to wider networks for broader advocacy purposes, such change has certainly taken place.

Of the two main projects in the program, Jiwan, the initiating project, was much more focused on the first, NRM related domain of change; the CHULI initiative has strategically

targeted the second domain of change. Nevertheless there is a recognition across both initiatives that challenging and addressing unequal power relations is critical to bring about lasting improvements in the rights of the poor and excluded. Related to this too, is acceptance that this change will also require advocating for change in government policy and practice, albeit that the work of Jiwan Kendra in this regard is more focused at the regional level, whilst the CHULI initiative has engaged at national level too. In this regard the initiatives have complemented each other; however, although based in the same office it did appear that their active collaboration was muted.

The Landless

Dignity and Confidence:

We all understand the importance that feeling confident makes in our ability to move forward with tough challenges. But when your starting point is not even seeing oneself as fully human, especially compared with men and those from higher caste and class categories, coming to see oneself as equally human has life changing effects. The PEC members of Indreni and Dhadkola PECs said that the first thing they learned to do was how to introduce themselves to one another, as it was both a way to learn each other's names, and to establish an equal footing. Up to that point, even as women within the same community, many of them only knew each other as the wife of so-and-so.¹⁹

In knowing each other's names, they also gained a history separate from their husbands, and in gaining a history and an identity, they gained capability too: the capacity to act, with others, upon their own lives and make a difference. One such woman was Rita Biswakarma, the community facilitator with Divya PEC. At 15, Rita was married, and soon acquired two sons and became a prisoner in the household of her parents in law. She was neglected and dominated by her husband and his mother. She had no status and was not allowed to attend meetings outside the household. Her husband was a migrant worker in Kathmandu and had another woman. It was only when some other local people selected her as a facilitator for a literacy group for another organisation that she was able to escape her prison. Then once the social mobiliser working with the PECs in Parwanipur VDC had persuaded her parents in law that she should become the community facilitator with the new PEC, Rita could fully become herself. Now she says, from being a neglected person in her family she has become someone who is now loved a lot.²⁰

Having found their identities and their self-respect, what all these women are now able to do is to cross social boundaries that were previously totally walled off, and engage with men, land owning classes, and local political and social leaders. As the Tulsi women remarked of their local political leader, whom previously they would have been far too scared to visit, 'he is also a person'.²¹

Livelihoods:

Discovering the ability to act, and in particular the actions to improve wage labour rates, has also enabled the poor and previously marginalised women in the PECs to improve their well

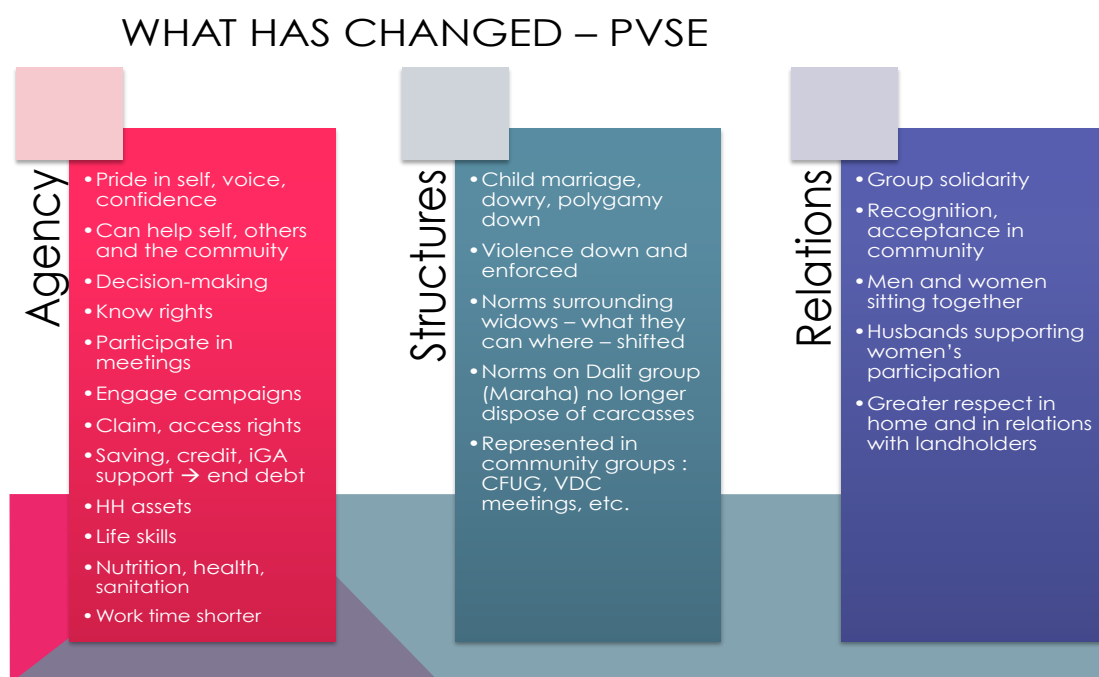
¹⁹ Fieldnotes from meeting with Indreni, Dhadkhola and Dharsar PECs, Tulsi VDC, 6 September 2011.

²⁰ Interviews with Bisangita Thapa, social mobiliser, and Rita Biswakarma, Divya PEC, Parwanipur, 7 September 2011.

²¹ Fieldnotes from meeting with Indreni, Dhadkhola and Dharsar PECs, Tulsi VDC, 6 September 2011.

being too. The wage labour action by equally benefiting men has also gained women the full support of their husbands for their solidarity group activities. Some livelihood benefits identified by women include:

- **Food security**. Secure food year-round. In PECs they discussed better hygiene/quality of food, and having more diverse meals (curry + dal + rice).
- **Access to low-interest loans**, income generating activities, savings and the end of debt. Moving from cycles of debt to cycles of building productive assets, participants noted they are now able to give loans to others, arrange for their children's marriage and send husbands/sons abroad for work. Another mentioned that their husband no longer had to migrate for work due to increased household income.
- **Rights and services**: Through LPs, groups accessed citizenship, allowances, learning (LP function) and community resources. In PECs, women have gained access to health services, particularly in relation to sexual and reproductive health. Groups also discussed gaining access to child's schooling and widow pensions.



The Landowners

There is another side though to the 'Equal and Fair Wages' Campaign, and this has been the effect of the campaign on landowning households. Land is a highly emotive issue in Nepal, because of the effect of landlessness on poverty, as well as the role it has played historically in maintaining the caste system and power structures within the country. The extent of landlessness was one of the root causes of the internal conflict. Yet, as the table below shows, some 75% of landowners have holdings of under 1 ha and only about 8% own more than 2 ha, with at the top end about 3% of farmers in 2002 owning approximately 17% of the land.

Table 1: Number and Area of Holdings by Size 2001-02

Size of holding (In hectares)	No. Holdings (1000s)	Holdings %	Cumulative (%)	Area (1000 Ha.)	%Area Ha
Holdings with no land	26.7	0.79	0.79	0.1	0.00
Holdings with land	3337.4	99.211	100.00	2653.9	100.00
Under 0.1	260.5	7.74	7.74	13.2	0.50
0.1 - <0.2	346.1	10.29	18.03	49.9	1.88
0.2 - < 0.5	972.3	28.90	46.93	327.1	12.32
0.5 - < 1.0	915.7	27.22	74.15	641.7	24.18
1.0 - < 2.0	588.6	17.50	91.65	792.0	29.84
2.0 - < 3.0	157	4.67	96.32	371.2	13.99
3.0 - < 4.0	51.6	1.53	97.85	175.7	6.62
4.0 - < 5.0	20.2	0.60	98.45	89.3	3.36
5.0 - < 10.0	21.6	0.64	99.09	139.8	5.27
10.0 and over	3.8	0.11	99.21	54.2	2.04

Source: CBS, National Sample Census of Agriculture 2001/02, in

The focus on inequality, as is stated in the same report this table is from, is because some 29% of rural households are landless, some 5.5 million people (2004 figures)²². Most of the landless are Dalits and other highly marginalised ethnic groups, who have been the subject of discrimination and exploitation for centuries under the feudal land system that existed under the monarchy. The first Land Reform Act was passed in 1964, but its lack of serious implementation helped fuel later conflicts and the popularity of the Maoists.²³

A further area of tension regarding land is with respect to public forest land that was nationalised in 1957 and occupies about 39.6% of the total land area (23% in the terai).²⁴ This land is now under the remit of community forestry user groups (CFUGs), but especially in the terai an issue has been larger landowners who have encroached upon these reserves. For one PEC we visited, Sahara in Sarlahi District, their conflict over land was with regard to their claims over public forest land that had been cleared. Local political leaders here from the United Maoist Party, a faction that combines Maoists with members of the UML, are arguing with the national government that landlords who have occupied this land should be evacuated and the landless be left. With only an interim government, this issue has been hard to resolve. In one incident in 2010, the government tried to evacuate settlers and 10 people were injured when shots were fired. Since then there has been a standoff.²⁵

Land thus remains a highly emotive issue, owing to the ongoing discrimination the landless still experience. With the favourable political environment for change, and in order to address underlying causes of the conflict and ongoing discrimination, particularly for women too, many NGOs have become more activist in nature over the last decade, Action Aid and CARE amongst them. But as we noticed during several meetings, including with PECs whose members were only drawn from the landless, there were nevertheless also landowners attending the same meetings. On asking them, it was acknowledged by the wage labourers

²² 'Land and Land tenure security in Nepal', 2009, Community Self Reliance Centre, Kathmandu

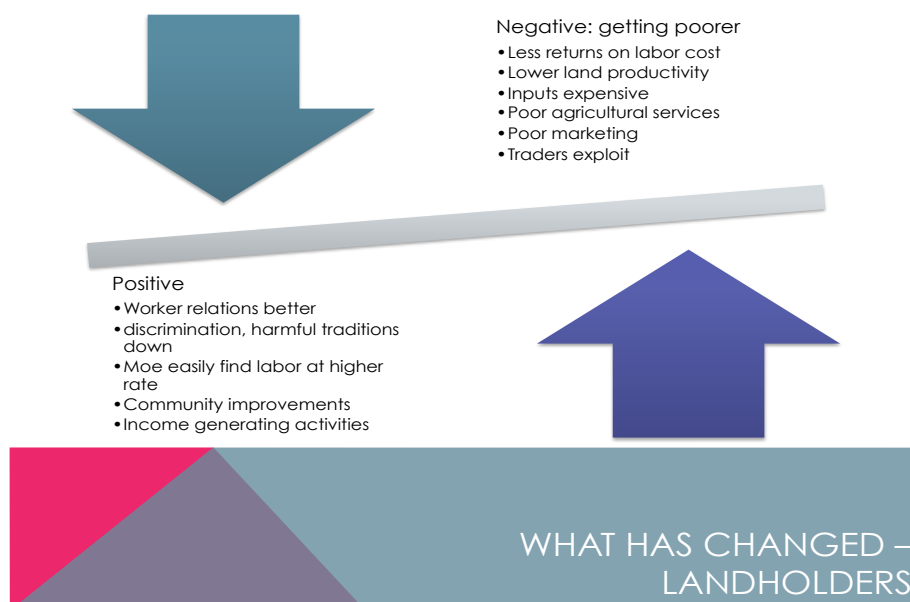
²³ Jagannath Adhikari, 2008, 'Land Reform in Nepal: Problems and Prospects', Action Aid

²⁴ 'Land and Land tenure security in Nepal', 2009, Community Self Reliance Centre, Kathmandu

²⁵ Fieldnotes from meeting with Sarhara PEC, Dhunghrekholha VDC, Sarlahi District, 4 September 2011

too that most of those they have been negotiating with in Dhanusha and Sarlahi Districts were only smallholder farmers, the vast majority owning less than 1 ha of land (1.5 bighas), and with only a few larger landlords with holding up to 4 bighas (under 3 ha).

This in fact means that many of these smallholders are themselves vulnerable, especially in a period, as they claimed, of falling profit margins, with any increase in prices being taken up by hiked input costs – and the cost of labour. With labour shortages owing to the level of economic migration that has occurred from these districts (to the Gulf, India and elsewhere), landowners have limited real options other than to acquiesce, once the wage labourers are able to show they are united in their demands. In Divya PEC, Parwanipur VDC, three smallholders present said that they were engaging with other land owners in labour exchange strategies. In Hariharpur, the site of the original wage labour strike, there used to be 10-20 larger landowners, with two having distinctly larger areas; this would help explain why their strike action involved a much tougher battle. But in Parwanipur, as in Dhungrekhol, both VDCs being in Sarlahi District, much of the land being farmed is public land, and thus the overarching dispute is perhaps with respect to the access to land itself.



Intertwining Issues

The equal and fair wage issue is thus tied up with a series of other related factors that are all critical to the future of Nepal's rural societies and relevant to the lives of the Lok Pathsala and Popular Education Centre members. An important part of the empowerment model followed in particular by the CHULI initiative is to encourage the women's PEC solidarity groups to link up with other networks that are relevant to the struggles affecting their lives. Thus the groups in Sarlahi are linked to the Land Rights Forum, supported by the Community Self-Reliance Centre, backed by other regional land rights groups. On women's rights issues, the PECs are linked to the Women's Human Rights Forum, supported by Action Aid (and other NGOs, including CARE), and on other rights issues, the Dalit NGO Forum also supports lower caste rights issues.

Intertwining Issues

			
Political context and Policy Environment: Not only has the political context facilitated increases in wages, but the general policy environment has promoted workers' rights	Agricultural Productivity: <i>Wages have increased but production has decreased, ... there should be a program to help landholders as well, instead of only imposing on them.</i>	Land Rights The government wanted to plant here but people said not until you find new places for us to settle.... we hope this issue will be solved once the government itself stabilizes.	Migrant Labor: With over 50% of households with men working abroad, there is a general scarcity of labor. Those who have stayed have greater negotiating power with landholders in relation to wages.

So in this sense, the empowerment methodology employed particular with the PEC women's solidarity groups is a powerful one. From being isolated individuals without being recognised even by their own names by their fellow women, they are now linked into activist networks that reach to national level.

Whilst being strong on the rights issues though, and remarkably so in furthering the rights and livelihoods of the some 6000 women PEC members²⁶, who had been without any form of status at the onset of the project, the project, the project has nevertheless not worked on agricultural productivity and value chain issues. It has seen these issues as falling outside the scope of interest of the landless labourers it is working with, yet, as we have seen, the degree to which the agricultural labour market can carry higher wages, is also dependent on reducing inefficiencies – and corruption – especially in input supply. It is of relevance therefore to compare the different group approaches of Jiwan and CHULI to look at their relative efficacy in addressing livelihood and empowerment issues.

Contrasting Groups: Inclusion- vs. Poverty-focused activism

The preceding discussion thus leaves us with the question, which methodology – the inclusive group methodology of Jiwan, or the more greatly poverty-focused activism of CHULI, is likely to lead to the most sustainable changes in livelihoods for the poor in the communities within which they are working?

Both the CHULI and Jiwan projects recognise the importance of power relations, and of having processes that address these to achieve empowerment, but they have different

²⁶ In mid-2011 there were a stated 6303 women members in the PECs, and 2889 men and women in the LP groups. (Santosh Sharma, 2011, 'Reflection of UCPA for social mobilization and its link with advocacy initiatives', CARE Nepal.

attitudes and approaches regarding them. Jiwan has a more environmental and cosmos focused approach that emphasizes the celebration of diversity and hence of having mutual respect for others. Jiwan stresses continuity too, especially in rural, village communities, 'this is the real mainstream of history'.²⁷ The model that Jiwan has worked with in the Lok Pathshala groups is one of eco-literacy, a working with nature model that respects and aims to build on farmers' and communities' existing knowledge. The ethos behind this sees natural, personal and social wealth as all being interconnected, and the individual sitting at the intersection of history and the future, and of the natural and social contexts.

Not surprisingly, this has led Jiwan to adopting a group approach which is inclusive. It leads to a very different dynamic compared with the PECs. An obvious implication is that it takes the groups longer to initiate action, but with the benefit of having more internal dialogue between different class and caste within the community, as well as men and women. In the two meetings we had with Lok Pathshala groups, the dynamics were quite different. The Hariharpur LP, which initiated the equal and fair wage action, see themselves as activists and are proud of this. At the time the group was initiated, the conflict was still ongoing and Maoist cadres came and sat in on early meetings and listened. They also examined the project documentation and noted that 'you are also working for the transformation of the poor, only our process is different'.²⁸

There was thus an incentive for the landlords within the Hariharpur group to be supportive of the process. In our meeting, landlords talked about the effect on profitability, but in many ways their real concern here was on falling production levels, owing in particular to the lack of irrigation facilities and then the erratic supply of inputs. Here, fertiliser supply especially is uncertain, the import of which is controlled by government – and involves corrupt relationships with the main dealers. So for the farmers, there are advocacy issues they have on their own agendas too. With regard to the issue of the wage labourers, the smallholder farmers in the meeting were part of the process when the livelihoods of the landless were analysed, as a follow on to the original UCPA work, so they are well aware of the difference the increased wages makes to their livelihoods. Thus for them, the issue is to find ways of tackling the wider range of factors that reduce agricultural productivity.

The atmosphere in the discussion with the second Lok Pathshala in Digambarpur VDC was much more downbeat. There was less energy here, and like Hariharpur the impetus for initiatives appeared to rest on the shoulders of a few group members. Many appeared less active, exacerbated by the fact that there was no clear rotation of members, or even in the nature of members' representation of different groups within the village. In Digambarpur, activities focused mostly on safer issues, usually around community level services and seeking to pressure service authorities to be more transparent and effective. Following the emergence of the wage issue in 2007, after the successful campaign in Hariharpur, it was discussed over a period of time in the LP, with resistance from landlords. Eventually a modest 20% raise in the daily rice ration was agreed (in lieu of wages), and a further increase was agreed in 2008 – but then it was also acknowledged that in several seasons landlords pay less than this, as for instance in 2010 there was a drought so they said they could only afford to pay 4kgs. In short, in this community the gains, and the changes, appear to be

²⁷ Jiwan training materials used with the Lok Pathshala groups.

²⁸ Fieldnotes from meeting with Hariharpur LP members, Saturday 3 September 2011

more limited. The group has at least spawned a Dalit women's rights activist, and there is much more recognition of the rights of minorities. There have been multiple small gains and women and Dalit groups have gained greater respect, dignity and voice in the community.

Compared with the Jiwan initiated groups, the CHULI project has a much more chiselled focus on power relations in terms of its methodological approach. The UCPV analysis is more central to CHULI's methodology and is the starting point for the formation of PECs, as has been explained. In this way, the founding principle of the groups is the understanding of issues around power relations and social injustice, and the multitude of ways in which the rights of the landless, and especially women, are infringed upon. The greater activist and empowerment focus comes across strongly in the energy, enthusiasm and humourous spirit of the women and was palpable in every meeting we attended. These women have come so much further in terms of their personal journeys.

In this emphasis on building solidarity between poor, vulnerable and socially excluded women, the majority of activities being initiated focused on their rights and on making duty bearers more accountable for providing services to the 'poverty pockets' in the VDCs too, and not just the areas where elites live. Because the benefits accrue to families, after initial scepticism by men of the time women were spending in the PECs, their husbands are now mostly supportive. Savings based activities have been crucial in turning around household's financial situations from one of indebtedness to having assets for the first time. The roles of women social mobilizers and facilitators, positions that do not exist in the same way in the LPs, have been crucial in building the groups' capacities and generating the self-belief and commitment of women.

One aim of the PECs has been for the women to be able to gain access to new spaces previously denied to them, such as the community forestry user groups and VDC meetings. This approach has meant a more confrontational approach with elites than that adopted by the LPs, where the discussions occur within the LPs, and in wider community meetings facilitated by them. The PECs engagement might be more strident, but it has undoubtedly also gained them greater respect and credibility in the rest of the community. As Rita Biswakarma, the community facilitator in Parwanipur VDC said, 'now political leaders, VDC secretaries and council members invite me to meetings'. This recognition, backed by the fact that thousands of landless (and not so landless) women are now behind it, is a massive social change.

Considerations

Analytical: Emergent Processes and the IKM Themes

One of the arguments of IKM is that 'development represents transformative change taking place in a context distinguished by *complexity*'. Development also involves 'innovation and risk', and it 'takes place in a context of time and place which involves people, history, culture

and politics’.²⁹ What the evaluation research in Nepal reminds us is that such complexity, innovation and risk taking involves also the challenging of the inequalities in power relations that prevent the knowledge, equal humanity and rights of marginalised groups in society from being recognised.

As the Jiwan philosophy of eco-literacy noted, history is a highly political phenomenon. ‘Some people’s history is made official history, others are simply not told [theirs], indicating that they are insignificant’.³⁰ In working in local languages and (re)capturing diverse forms of local knowledge, as IKM urges, the power relations that create the histories that suppress this knowledge, have to be challenged. In the inclusive Lok Pathshala’s a starting point for the groups was defining the history of the village, with all groups tracing and coming to know the names of their ancestors over three generations. This reclaiming of identity – important too in the PECs – was the starting point for reclaiming both knowledge and rights.

In this sense it is important to understand that efforts to reclaim ‘local knowledges’ do understand the plurality that this involves. Knowledge, especially as it is embedded in historical narratives, is rarely neutral, and thus is also subject to diverse perspectives and interpretations. The lok pathshala and popular education centre approaches are a good contrast since they show the respective value of different approaches. Jiwan in its ethos of mutual respect, CHULI in its stronger notions of capacity building and challenging power to demand that respect.

The other lesson for IKM is that emergent processes of change are essentially about empowerment too, and thus an emphasis on the forms of capacity building these entail. What is powerful in Jiwan and especially CHULI is the way local knowledge has been incorporated within their analytical methodologies, especially the UCPVA approach. Jiwan in the training materials it uses in the lok pathshala’s, which function also as ‘open village schools’, builds on local cultural and cosmological understandings too. This means their approaches are grounded in local perspectives and culture, but at the same time they challenge the inequalities and myths that are inevitably part of it. Being able to distinguish between the positive elements of local culture and knowledge, and then those elements that are ‘bad’ – that reinforce inequalities, or are distortions created by the powerful during the flow of history, is key to the Freirean nature of the analytical methods used by CARE Nepal.

Moving Forward in CARE Nepal

Much of the success of the CHULI initiative has been in its ability to capture the zeitgeist of the times, owing to some of the key staff who have been behind it and their dedication, commitment and activism. The use of the organisations four core methodologies, not just by CHULI and Jiwan, but also by the women’s empowerment program, is exemplary.

²⁹ ‘Emergent Issues in Information and Knowledge Management and International Development, phase 2: Outline of an integrated, interdisciplinary, inclusive research programme’, 2011, European Association of Development Research and Training Institutes.

³⁰ Jiwan training materials used with the Lok Pathshala groups.

A danger for CARE Nepal, however, is that this is merely a passing moment, championed by a previous country director who was herself an activist, but in turn left unresolved dilemmas in the country office structure that when we visited a year later were still being unpicked. One issue was with respect to the Rubik cube, introduced earlier, and the indecision of whether to give primacy to geography or impact groups in the country office structure. The lack of resolution to this issue has been debilitating, as has been the fact that a very flat (and expensive) structure at the top of the organisation, designed to reduce hierarchies and address internal power relations, in fact left decision making responsibilities and accountabilities for many senior staff unclear.³¹

We were extremely impressed with the synergies that have been built effectively across initiatives in both programs that CARE has, and that an attempt to improve impact monitoring is also starting to occur (even though this work on continuing to collect wage labour information needs to be broadened to include other areas of achievement by the solidarity groups). Yet this work is being under celebrated, under leveraged and under marketed in the organisation. Improving the clarity of the operational program structures, with clear responsibilities and accountabilities across the whole of CARE Nepal's geography, and which develop an ongoing sense of directionality for each program should help.

Most of all though, as we have tried to emphasize, the addressing of the power inequalities that cause and exacerbate poverty, vulnerability and discrimination requires enormous commitment. The efforts undertaken by CARE Nepal are intelligent, enlightened, and well constructed and networked. There has been a great deal of honing of the four, core methodologies at root of these achievements. Yet it is difficult for an INGO to maintain the kind of leadership support that is required for this kind of work to continue. It can only be hoped that there will be continued inspiration.

³¹ A meeting to resolve these issues was ongoing when we arrived in the country to commence the research. The issues had been identified as part of an organisational review we had undertaken fifteen months earlier.

Appendix 1: Key Changes Experienced by Respondent Groups

LPs	Marginal to zero land ownership (0-.016 Ha)	Smallholder (0.17-1 Ha)	Landholder (+1 Ha)
Women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Dignity: confidence, express ideas, happiness – Skills/Knowledge: write name, critical analysis, animal/cattle management, tailoring, awareness of sanitation/health – Claiming Rights: campaign, WR forum, men support participation – Livelihood security: saving money, wage increases, low-interest loans, debt-free, send sons/husband abroad (in one case husband's IGA enabled him to stay), IGAs, no hunger and better food, clothes – Assets: metal utensils, wooden cot, electricity, improved doors and roofing, mosquito net, television, fan, tube well, latrines, cycle, stove, mobile, goat, buffalo, ox – Comm dev/participation: contribute toward community development (electric pump, well), membership in other committees (health post, scholarship) – Services/rights: citizenship, child schooling, elder allowances, learning opps (seminars) – Cultural Norms: Not wearing veils, reduced untouchability – Gender Relations: sit with men, better relations with husband, treating boys and girls equally, more equal decision-making in HH – Solidarity: support in group and among neighbours – Recognition: invited to VDC meetings to represent Dalit interests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Dignity: confidence, express ideas – Skills and Knowledge: coordinating for funds at ward level, mediating disputes – Claiming Rights: campaigns and negotiations – Livelihood security: mulching, homestead mgmt, increased wages, savings, loans – Assets: wooden cot, latrine, tube well, electricity, television – Community dev/participation: take part in committees in VDC (road, conservation) – Services/rights: citizenship, child schooling, learning opps (seminars) – Cultural Norms: Not wearing veils, less discrimination – Gender Relations: Sit together with men, reduced gender-based violence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Dignity: confidence, faith in own capabilities – Skills and Knowledge: reading, writing – Claiming Rights: women's rights activities – Livelihood security: son's education for HH security, homestead mgmt, cattle mgmt – Assets: latrines, buffalo, oxen – Comm dev/participation: VDC committee membership – Services /rights: child schooling – Cultural Norms: Not wearing veils – Gender Relations: more space for decision-making, leads on domestic affairs – Solidarity: LP discussions – Recognition: gained people's faith/trust and respect
Men	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Dignity: dignity, local and personal history – Skills/Knowledge: sanitation, mediation, mulching, pest management – Claiming Rights: Organizing groups, negotiate rights (Dalit, single women, elder, disability rights), participate in LP despite taunts – Livelihood Security: low interest loans, wage increases, savings, IGA, homestead gardening – Assets: latrine – Comm Dev/Participation: contribute to comm dev (pond, electrification, road construction; coordinate committees (health post, conservation) – Services/Rights: citizenship, scholarship, schooling for son, elder allowance, learning opportunities (seminars) – Solidarity: Stronger bond with others, sharing among participants, social dedication – Recognition: gained respect in society, earned children's pride – Quit alcohol. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Dignity: Confidence to take part in social actions and development, local and personal history – Skills/Knowledge: veterinary skills, organizing – Claiming Rights: campaigning (citizenship, wages, elder allowance, dowry/child marriage, untouchability), represent LP in VDC network – Livelihood Security: low interest loans, wage increases, save/give loans, mulch, pest mgmt., food secure – Assets: cycle, cart, mobile, TV, latrine, electricity, tube well, wood cot, chairs, home structure, land – Comm Dev/Participation: community meetings, coordinate committees (pond, water management, electricity), community sanitation, – Services/Rights: citizenship, schooling for children, learning opps (seminars) – Cultural Norms/Gender Relations: arranged daughter's marriage – Recognition: social reputation, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Dignity: Self-satisfaction, learn personal and social value – Skills/knowledge: mobilizing and coordination, cattle mgmt, mulching – Claiming Rights: campaigning (citizenship, wages, elder allowance, child marriage/dowry, untouchability) – Livelihood Security: savings, IGA, homestead gardening – Assets: latrine – Comm Dev/Participation: community meetings, conservation committee – Solidarity: village solidarity, exchange, dialogue for social change – Services/Rights: citizenship, elder allowance, knowledge of services, schooling for children, learning opportunities (seminars) – Recognition: social reputation/respect

PECs

PEC Member (Husband at home) - 29	PEC Member (migrant worker HH) - 10	PEC Member (single, widowed) - 1	Non-member (Landholder) - 4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Dignity: introduce self with confidence, discuss with powerful in community – Skills and Knowledge: write name, sexual health, planning and discussing issues, sanitation and hygiene, – Claiming Rights: awareness of injustice/exploitation and rights, campaign on wages, raise voices on VDC and class issues, negotiate with service providers, campaigning and participation on WR Forum, CFUG, Land Rights, demand equal access to services, reporting violence against women – Livelihood security: food secure, IGA, maintain hygiene (shampoo, soap, latrine), saving, low interest loans, improved drew and food diversity – Assets: pressure cooker, stationery/school materials (bag, uniform, pencils, copies), oxen, housing material (front door) – Community dev/participation: raise concerns/questions in VDC and DDC meetings, attend PECs, – Services/rights: make use of services (health post, community forestry, free medicine), child schooling, widow pension – Cultural Norms/Gender Relations: equal treatment of daughter and son, husband helps her to participate in community / PEC meetings – Solidarity: share problems and difficulties within PEC, help others in case of need (e.g. help friend access medical care) – Recognition: negotiate with VDC officials and political parties, invited to public meetings in the village 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Dignity: introduce self with confidence, discuss with powerful in community – Skills and Knowledge: write name, sanitation and hygiene, cannot be misled, articulating priorities/ negotiation, facilitation, tailoring – Claiming Rights: raise issues with VDC, negotiated lower interest rates with landlord, husband supports participation – Livelihood security: hygiene (shampoo), landlord loan repaid, low-interest loans, saving regularly, no debt – Assets: stationery/school materials (bag, uniform, pencils, copies), goats – Community dev/participation: take part in PEC meetings and workshops, participation in community meetings (VDC, CFUG) – Services/rights: awareness and use of services (health, comm forest, VDC), child schooling – Cultural Norms: changed views on child marriage – Gender Relations: husband supports participation, equal treatment of daughter and son, HH decision-making power – Solidarity: share problems and difficulties within PEC, group solidarity and support, PEC members mobilize to help one another – Recognition: invited to public meetings (VDC) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Dignity: introduce self with confidence – Skills and Knowledge: write name, – Claiming Rights: attend PEC, – Livelihood security: maintain hygiene (soap, shampoo), higher quality of food – Services/rights: awareness and use of services (health, comm forest, VDC) – Solidarity: share problems and difficulties within PE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Livelihood security: difficult to pay more, started to exchange labor, rising cost of inputs, low production rate – Community dev/participation: – Solidarity: happy for poor women – Recognition: supported wage campaign, recognize necessity due to inflation

Appendix 2: Acronyms

CFUG:	Community Forestry User Group
CHULI:	Churia Livelihood Improvement Project
CO:	Country Office
IKM:	Information and Knowledge Management
LP:	Lok Pathsala
PEC:	Popular Education Centre
REFLECT:	Regenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowerment of Community Techniques
SAMARPAN:	Strengthening the Role of Civil Society and Women in Democracy and Governance
UCP(V)A:	Underlying Cause of Poverty (and Vulnerability) Analysis
UML:	United Marxist Leninist Party
VDC:	Village Development Committee