

## **Chapter 6      *Nongovernment Organizations (NGOs) and Their Networks***

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### **A.      Legal Framework for NGOs**

The number of NGOs in Nepal has grown rapidly in recent years. As of April 1997, 5,324 NGOs were registered at the Social Welfare Council alone. In addition there were many more NGOs registered at district level all over the country. According to one source,<sup>73</sup> these NGOs may number 15,000 or more. NGOs have been recognized as an important channel for socioeconomic development. The Eighth Five-Year Plan and now the Approach Paper to the Ninth Five-Year Plan have put a considerable emphasis on the role of NGOs in development. This has provided a favorable environment for NGO growth.

According to the amended Association Registration Act (1977), any seven or more citizens may apply to register an NGO specifying the name of the institution, its objectives, names and addresses of the management committee members, sources of funding, and office address at all 75 chief district administration (CDO) Offices. The NGOs are required to present audited accounts each year for registration renewal. On liquidation, the Government may claim the property of the NGOs after payment of all obligations and dues.

A Social Welfare Council (SWC) has been established to coordinate, facilitate, promote and mobilize NGOs for social welfare activities under the provisions of the revised Social Welfare Council Act (1977). The Minister of MWSW chairs the Council. All international nongovernment organizations (INGOs) are required to obtain permission from SWC for working in Nepal. NGOs may be registered at SWC under this law or in the CDO office under the Association Registration Act. However, all NGOs/INGOs need to register with SWC to obtain tax or other facilities according to government regulations.

DDCs/VDCs are entrusted with the task of coordinating NGO/INGO activities in their respective areas, to provide grants to NGOs and to enter into agreements with them for conducting programs and projects (DDC and VDC Acts 1992). VDCs are authorized to demand the plans and programs of NGOs operating in their areas. NGOs are required to receive clearance for their projects from VDCs and, through them, from DDCs. They are also required to work in close collaboration with DDCs.

### **B.      NGOs and Women's Programs**

Most NGOs have women's programs while a few of them are registered as women's NGOs and work exclusively for women. Much larger programs are conducted for women by non-women specific NGOs. Notable examples are those of FPAN, IIDS, CSD, NIRDHAN, Red Cross, etc. (Appendix Table A6.1). Nevertheless, such programs — including those conducted by women-specific NGOs — are focused on involving women in project activities without specific efforts at impact analysis from a gender perspective. They lack gender perspective in general.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Diwakar Chand, *Alternative Sources of Funding NGO Activities* (Kathmandu, 1996).

<sup>74</sup> M. Acharya (1997b).

Women's NGOs are engaged in multiple programs, which include advocacy against trafficking, legal literacy, community development, gender training, and income-generating activity for communities. Of the NGOs registered at SWC in 1996, 467 were women's NGOs. Data on their investment activities are not available. An earlier listing (December 1994) which covered 42 such NGOs, indicated 81 ongoing projects funded by different funding agencies. Although all NGOs were established with specific aims, their activities depend more upon the availability of funds and priorities of funding agencies than on their own objectives and priorities. This limits their capacity for long-term planning. The majority of women-specific NGOs (62 percent) registered at SWC was involved in income-generation activities. However, only 4 percent of the investment was allocated to income-generation, which included small animal keeping, sewing, knitting, basket weaving, vegetable gardening, etc. Impact of these activities on women even at project level is difficult to judge, since very few NGOs have any monitoring and evaluation system. In spite of small investment, income generation seems to be the most popular strategy. Compared to other types of activities, income generation seems easier to attract women because of their time constraints and the direct benefits they receive. However, in the majority of cases, activities that have been encouraged and supported by NGOs are traditional and have very little market potential. NGOs have only limited resources, which precludes long-term investment in capacity-building for quality management, market research and marketing strategies. Hence, their interventions face the problem of sustainability.

In monetary terms, community development and health seem to receive the largest proportion of NGO investment registered at SWC (Table 6.1). However, "community development" should not automatically be presumed to cater to women's needs and interests. While community development facilitates women's development by meeting their practical needs, some community development activities such as road construction and drinking water facilities may even have a negative impact on women's employment if not backed by adequate gender analysis of impact and special provisions for involving women.

Larger women-specific NGOs — such as ABC, LACE, Shtrii Shakti and WOREC — have contributed more to advocacy than investment in individual programs for women.

**Table 6.1: NGOs Involved in Women Development Activities  
Registered at SWC  
(December 1995)**

Nature of Activity	Number of projects	Number of NGOs	Funding Agency	Amount in '000 NRs
Health	16	8	DIA, SWC, AA FA, CEDPA, OXFAM, UNFPA WATER AID	6,864
Education	13	11	SWC, DIA, FA, LWS, SWC, CEDPA, OXFAM	4,864
Community Dev.	16	12	OXFAM, SAP-Nepal, LWS, SWC, UNICEF, MS-Nepal, Helvetas, USAID, JICA	52,546
Income Generation	17	26	SWC, UNDP, Australian Embassy, CEDPA, SAP-Nepal, USC-Canada, UNIFEM	4,668
Clothing	4	4	SWC, Japan Nepal CO.SO	780
Shelter	2	2	SAP-Nepal, LWS	16,902
Total*	81	42		111,487

Source: Social Welfare Council, 1996.

\* includes mixed category not included above  
AA: Australian Embassy; FA: French Embassy

### C. NGO Networks

Several attempts have been made to improve the networking of the women's groups (Appendix Table A6.2). Many attempts have also been made for instituting an information center on women's issues. In the late 1980s, the Center for Women and Development (CWD) was funded on a substantial scale by USAID for this purpose. Currently, two attempts to institutionalize an information center for women are worthy of note: the Asmita Publishing House (a women's publishing house) and the Padma Kanya (P.K.) College within the Tribhuvan University System. While Asmita is working as an information pool for gender-related news events within the country, the P.K. Home Science Department is building a library on gender-related theoretical literature.

The Home Science Department of the P.K. College is conducting a one-year diploma course on Women's Studies. It started with assistance from Canada but charges sufficient fees to be self-sustainable. The first group of 38 students has already completed the course. A group of 35 students has joined the second batch. Since a women's college runs it, only women have been invited to enroll. The course uses the morning hours when the building is free from other regular classes. National and regional experts trained a group of P.K.College teachers from various departments before they started teaching the course.

In terms of advocacy networking, the Women's Pressure Group constituted by 84 NGOs and women's political organizations has been active, despite the serious political differences of Nepal Mahila

Sang (Nepali Congress allied) and Akhil Nepal Mahila Sangathan (UML allied). Another large NGO network seems to be constituted by the SAFE motherhood group. It is a loose confederation of 62 family and community support groups working particularly on health issues. Two networks, the National Network Against Girl Trafficking (NNAGT) and the Alliance Against Trafficking in Women and Children in Nepal (AATWIN) (20 NGOs), have been formed to work against trafficking. The Network Against AIDS (40 NGOs) is also working for the elimination of AIDS. Gender Watch Professional Interest Group (GWPIG) was active in the pre-Beijing phase, and remains active, particularly in disseminating information about the Beijing Conference and its Platform for Action.

Larger networks of women's groups are represented by sister organizations of the main political parties: Akhil Nepal Mahila Sangathan and Nepal Mahila Sang. They function as the women's political wing of their respective parties and could play significant role in advocacy, if properly trained.

Another network is constituted by the gender focal points of the funding agencies and INGOs. It is a loose platform to facilitate the exchange of information.

The Amstar Group constitutes a media network with 400 groups.