

MEL Practice from ActionAid Nepal: Summary Findings of Evaluations

BACKGROUND

ActionAid is a global federation working to end poverty and injustice with thousands of communities and millions of people across the world.



ActionAid Nepal (AAN) has been working in Nepal since 1982. The mission of AAN is to end poverty and social injustice by facilitating the process of empowering and addressing basic need of the poorest and most marginalized people. AAN works particularly with women, children, Dalits, highly marginalized indigenous people, disaster affected community and among others. It is a locally rooted and globally connected organisation, which adopts human rights-based approach with an aim to enhance the capacity of the people living in poverty and exclusion to claim and exercise their rights to live a dignified life.

The Evaluation studies were carried out in LRP 33 - Bardiya and LRP 34 - Sankhuwasabha. Likewise, the mid-term evaluation of AAN programme was carried out by the Government of Nepal and the Holistic Audit was carried out in LRP 35 - Doti.

OBJECTIVE AND METHODOLOGY

The primary objective of the studies is to ensure the effectiveness of the programme/activities implementation, partnership, process and the impact they bring. Likewise, the general objective of the mid-term evaluation carried out by the government of Nepal was to check the effectiveness against the target and compliances mentioned under 5-year agreement (MoU) between government of Nepal and AAN.

The evaluations and holistic audit were performed using various instruments including but not limited to desk review, focused group discussions, interviews, observation, study of different types of reports, documents, SWOT analysis of the partner organisations, satisfactory rating, and

Most Significant Change Techniques were applied, reviewed and analysed. The mid-term evaluation of the government was led by an external team formed by the government and remaining evaluations/holistic audit were carried out internally.

KEY FINDINGS

Women representation in formal and informal institutions has increased and are representing in different local level government (ward and municipality level). AAN continues its activism to stop VAWG through capacity building initiatives and sensitisation programmes on VAWG, dowry and chhaupadi to raise awareness. As a result, in

“Women are the most exploited ones in a society, no matter where they live. Many lived in fear of their own family members and had no one to rely on in their entire lives. Such was the plight of rural women,” Kanta Devi Bhatt, a member of Women’s multipurpose cooperative and a health worker of the village. She further adds, “But by the changing times, now no unjust behaviour towards women will be tolerated at any cost.”

2018, 162 cases were reported in AAN’s working clusters, 86 of them got resolved through legal process. AAN formed Women’s Rights Forum has succeeded in declaring zero home delivery in Shikhar Municipality by establishing two roomed Urban Health Centre in Doti. Men are now helping women in their household works. Key intervention to address UCW to build women friendly infrastructure and alternative buildings such as Community Child Care Center, grinding mill, drinking water management etc. were done. The government representatives declared that they would bring the childcare center under the education policy of the local government. AAN has established 7 women friendly spaces (WFS) in Lalitpur area which has been facilitating to support women to cope with trauma, tension and violence through sessions such as, legal orientation and counselling training against

violence. Five-year plan for chhaupadi eradication

"If it weren't for continued support from agencies to groups like Women's Rights Forum, women would have never believed that they also have the power to reform their lives, they would've given up on the cause long ago," says Radhika Shahi, secretary of the MAM.

has been developed in Doti district by the government where Equality Development Center (EDC), our local partner played an important role technically and financially.

To implement minimum benchmarks in public schools and ensure quality education, model community school initiative was undertaken.



Further, promotion of

Child Centred Learning (CCL) supported to create better learning environment within the school along with an improved quality of education and creativity of the children. The Government of Nepal included Early Childhood Development (ECD) in school education after Eighth amendment of Education Act and AAN is promoting it with orientations and trainings to the teachers on CCL and support for CCL kits to raise learning interest of children. For ensuring quality education rights, AAN conducted mass conscientisation on Promoting Rights in School (PRS) to the children, parents and school authorities due to which learning achievement of public school increased from 40% to 60%. Engaging representatives of various stakeholders of the community to watch the quality of education is a good practice in Doti. Significant improvement in girls' school enrollments and reduction of their absenteeism at times of menstruation was noticed after gender friendly toilets in most of the schools were constructed with the provision of clean drinking water, first aid and sanitary pads. Youth-led tax power campaign for quality education was conducted in four Palikas (Gulariya, Rajapur, Geruwa and Badhaiyatal) of Bardiya with the slogan '*Sarkar lai kar tirau, saral sulav ra gunastariya sarbajanik sewa ka lagi khabardari garau*' (pay tax to the government, make them accountable for easy, accessible and quality public services).

AAN and its partner NGOs are also coordinating with the school and local stakeholders to conduct regular social audit of schools to ensure free education. Different activities like Disaster Management Committee (DMC) formation at school level, Participatory Vulnerability Assessment etc. were also implemented to promote safety and DRR in schools.

Increased number of women from the collectives are accessing financial services and getting aware of the legal bank procedures. AAN has been campaigning to address the issues of



landless, tenants and marginal farmers in the policies. As a result, the Ministry of Land Management, Cooperative and Poverty Alleviation finalised Land Policy, in which AAN's key advocacy issues of joint land ownership, land to landless, use right of public land for livelihood of landless, Kamaiya and Haliya rehabilitation has been addressed. So far, 10,714 Ex-Kamaiyas out of 10,797 Ex-kamaiya HHS have been rehabilitated. At the same time, the Food Security, Food Sovereignty and Right to Food bill has been implemented by the federal government, in which AAN's demands for securing food for all, access to and control over natural resources and access to all means of production has been incorporated.

Mahangi Tharu says, "we used to spend our time mostly in domestic work and labor work but these days we are involved in vegetable farming and other IG activities, we think we are becoming more independent and confident to start our own small income generations. We could manage the household expenses and even society is recognizing us now".

Weaving Allo cloth is one of the main income-generating sources in Sankhuwasabha after AAN promoted it in the district since the communities became aware on the effects of climate change. Series of capacity building initiatives on organic farming, soil and water management and procedures of making organic pest control

manures were organized for lead farmers to promote CRSA and ensure farmer's engagement in it. To raise the issue of working-class women, women in working areas are conducting fair and equal wage campaign and were able to raise daily wage to NRs. 500 (US\$ 4.5) which is now equal for both men and women. AAN/HomeNet Nepal (HNN) is focusing on women home-based worker into entrepreneurs where they analyze the requirement and the needs of the community, assess their capacity, market and develop long-term support mechanism for its sustainability.

AAN in coordination with National Reconstruction Authority (NRA), Government of Nepal conducted GESI focused livelihood trainings and material support to 240 community people of 6 earthquake affected districts. 12 disaster resilient schools with gender and disable friendly infrastructures (2 each in Sindhupalchowk, Kathmandu and Rasuwa and 3 each in Kavrepalanchowk and Dolakha) were reconstructed and handed over to the school authorities. Two schools of Chhathar, Terhathum and one of Chainpur, Sankhuwasabha prepared school based DRRMP after basic vulnerability assessment was conducted in them. AAN's local partner KMJS is playing role as District lead support agency (DLSA) and is supporting and facilitating in coordination with District Disaster Management Committee (DDMC) in updating the district disaster plan and its effective implementation. Local Emergency Operation Center (LEOC) has been established in coordination with Rajapur Municipality and DDMC Bardiya to enhance the early warning system since Rajapur area is one of the flood prone areas. Forty-two schools in LRP 34, have been trained and first aid box has been provided to the schools to remain prepared and minimize effects of natural disasters. Three places in Sankhuwasabha have been identified as open governmental space – regular drill for emergency preparedness.

THEORY OF CHANGE AND POWER SHIFT

Empowerment and building active agencies are key of our rights programme. Change is possible through working with people who are excluded, marginalized and discriminated to making people's active agency in their leadership. Hence, our human rights-based programme has taken it as an entry point. Based on this understanding, we have done empowerment and agency building work. For example, ReFELCT circle as learning

forum has been created, where people living in poverty (PLiPs) discuss on life affecting issues and alternatives for better solution to their problems. The empowerment of agencies has helped to shift the power and their access to decision making level.

With the effective leadership, women agencies like Women's Rights Forum (WRF) and women groups have been able to fight and confront against gender-based violence. Women groups along with WRF and their networks have been successful to tap local resource for various income generating activities and construct community building initiatives, emergency fund etc. Our approach is to keep women, young people and children at the center for the risk reduction initiatives. The evidences show that DMCs have become integral part of women leadership development platform and mobilisation at community that is complementing agency building process. KMJS Bardiya also has been piloting the mobile siren in Rajapur for emergency and connecting to combat violence against women as alternative building. Need of meaningful engagement with men and boys is necessary not only for women's empowerment, but also to transform the social and gender norms that reinforce patriarchy and inequality and harm both women and men. Our action has brought solidarity from different civil society, networks, local government and political parties to amplify women issues to address in policies and provision. As a result, the practice of discriminatory wages has been discontinued at many places across the working areas.

KI Singh Rural Municipality of Doti has passed the policy and programme from council to build 5 model schools by taking solidarity of our model school initiatives in Doti. Partners were engaged to reduce and redistribute the unpaid care work burden along with recognition of the work performed by women. Sound Speech Picture (SSP) teaching methodology has been initiated in Palpa as a new learning process in schools and as a result, 8 schools have increased learning achievements to 60%. Partners constructed community childcare centers in Bardiya, Doti and Tehrathum and have shared its best achievements with local government. Similarly, gender friendly toilets were also constructed in schools to minimize school absenteeism among girls and

promoting a provision of gender desk in schools has helped to share girls' SRHR issues. AAN has been promoting sustainable livelihood through agroecological approach by implementing CRSA as a major tool. For this purpose, the programme has been linked with local and national government with lobby and advocacy with them to increase public financing on agroecology, climate justice and prioritize it in research and extension. AAN responded Bara windstorm through women led humanitarian response. Our humanitarian signature-women leadership, shifting power and accountability to affected people were applied and successful during the response.

Campaigning against harassment of women and girls in public space through safe city campaign, talking openly on menstruation taboos, campaign against alcohol consumption, challenging gender roles that has restricted women's mobility and unrecognition of their effort on unpaid care work are some of the works we worked to bring the change and shift the power from house to society and nation, at large. The case of working with religious leaders in anti-child marriage campaign shows that how the communities we work are making visible power accountable and shifting the hidden power because religious leaders are influencing communities to stop child marriage. Engagement of men and youth were given priority especially in programmes and campaign to shift the invisible power relations.

CONCLUSION

The mission of AAN is to end poverty and social injustice by facilitating the process of empowering and addressing basic need of the poorest and most marginalized people. The entire programme seems to be effective and successful in bringing changes and building capacity of the people living in poverty and exclusion (PLiP) to claim their rights. The programme seems to be successful in organizing poor community people together into various groups/forums including women groups/forums, child clubs, etc. Since, shifting the power is an overarching theory of change of AAN to transform the social power relations and ensure the rights of PLiPs, our programme has consciously intervened to enable the poor, landless and smallholder farmers, especially women to claim their rights in various layers of government and make the visible power

accountable towards poor and marginalized farmers and youths. The landless, small holder farmers and marginal farmers were supported through different community forums like ReFLECT circle, demos and model farms to support the scaling up of agroecology. As a result, the practice of agroecology and CRSA has been well internalized and implemented. Various disaster risk reduction committees have been formed to cope with disasters.

Internal and external monitoring are carried out to monitor AAN's programmes by sharing reports in the board meeting as well as in the monthly staff meeting. External monitoring such as District and Municipality level Project Advisory Committee are also conducted where stakeholder and government personnel participate in the process. The team also gives feedbacks and reports of the visit.

RECOMMENDATIONS

AAN programme team should also ensure proper use of resources that the partners provide to the communities during their monitoring visits. Resource and benefit sharing within groups and communities should be more democratic, transparent and targeting the right person. Coordinated effort is required to minimise duplication of the activities and to capture the real poor of the communities. During the first meeting with women's collectives, most of the members just reflected on the income generation part. It would be better to focus on how gender roles are transforming in their communities. Before proceeding to the livelihood options, detail need assessment along with risk assessment had to be done. Market assessment about the potential or scope while providing income generation trainings could have been done.

Similarly, it is recommended to ensure the logo and visibility of AAN along with partner wherever applicable so that AAN is known in the district and working areas. Likewise, social movement and campaign work were very less observed in some of the partner's working areas where the potentiality for such initiatives were huge. To take forward the issues of Chhaupadi and other social evils, the proper coordination between WRF and adolescent girls' group in needed in Doti.