

Evaluation of Strategic Plan In Heifer Project International Nepal



**Submitted to:
Heifer Project International Nepal
Hattiban, Lalitpur
Nepal**

**Submitted by:
Binod Bhatta, Ph. D.
Alliance Nepal: Alliance for Social Mobilization
Pulchowk, Lalitpur
Nepal**

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Abbreviations

A/SP	Asia South Pacific
CF	Community Forest
CP	Country Program
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
CS	Cornerstones
CST	Cornerstone Training
DLSO	District Livestock Services Office
FGD	Focus group discussions
GDI	Gender related Development Index
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEM	Gender Empowerment Measure
GO	Government Organization
GoN	Government of Nepal
HDI	Human Development Index
HEI	Human Empowerment Index
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HMGN	His Majesty's Government of Nepal
HPI	Human Poverty Index
HPIN	Heifer Project International Nepal
INGO	International Non Governmental Organization
IRAP	Internal Review and Planning
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
PoG	Passing on the Gifts
PP	Project Partner
PPP	Public Private Partnership
PSRP	Participatory Self Review and Planning
SHG	Self Help Group
SIMI	Nepal Smallholder Irrigation Market Initiative
TYIP	Three Year Interim Plan
VBHCD	Values Based Holistic Community Development
VDC	Village Development Committee

Executive Summary

Heifer Project International Nepal (HPIN) program has been strategically trying and innovating its support to meet the mission, vision and goals of the organization in Nepal since its formal establishment in 1997. Slowly it expanded its program and currently serves over 25,000 families. HPIN operates through its four regional offices based in Nepalganj, Pokhara, Bharatpur and Janakpur and the Projects are implemented through 59 project partners. In 2004 HPIN prepared a Strategic Plan for the period July 2004 to June 2009 so as to direct its efforts strategically and achieve more in a stipulated time. As this plan was expiring soon and there was a need to prepare a new Strategic Plan, evaluation of the ongoing plan was carried.

The purpose of this evaluation was to provide an external perspective in evaluating the direction of strategic priorities, objectives and activities of HPIN and to determine how this has contributed to the achievement of Heifer's mission and three levels (ground, deeper and external levels) of impact in the community. Specifically the evaluation tried to answer some questions such as those related to the existing situation, trends, and processes, at various levels such as country level, country office level, project partner level and project level. It also made some observation related to 'triadic partnership model' and monitoring and evaluation practices. The evaluation followed document review, individual and group interviews, focus group discussions (FGD) and observation of the project sites as the main tools.

The findings of the evaluation are presented and discussed below under various headings.

Country Office: The country office practices shared leadership in its operation, which is one of the best forms of participatory style of leadership. It was noticed that shared leadership is well understood and highly valued by its senior management team. Once the senior practice such approach, it is quite natural for others in the lower hierarchy to accept and follow this.

The authority of the position is defined and the person is authorized to hold the final decision. However, the culture of the organization has been such that they jointly discuss and share their views and make decision in a participatory manner. The impact of shared leadership at Country Program level has been very positive and current success can largely be ascertained to this. The staff morale and motivation at all levels had been very high.

The budget and programs are developed in a participatory manner in a triadic partnership model, which strengthens the transparency and in turn accountability as well. The practice of appropriate and clear allocation and agreement on responsibility also increases accountability. The culture of general sharing and public audit, and Participatory Self Review and Planning (PSRP) at regular intervals has been strong tools to strengthen transparency and accountability.

Project Partner level: The partners of HPIN have been very supportive, highly motivated and committed. In other words had HPIN not been able to select and capacitate its partner at this level, they would not have been able to achieve what they have achieved today. The process of partner selection has been a very cumbersome but very crucial and critical process. The field team of HPIN collects information about various potential partners and share information about Heifer's program, process and values with them. Then the potential partners are short-listed based on their motivation and exposed to Heifer's cornerstone training (CST) and participatory self review and planning (PSRP) process. They are finally selected as partners based on their performance. This long process of partner selection has helped HPIN to have a team of partners fully committed to its values. All the partners were contributing to the three (ground, deeper and external) levels of impact and most of them appeared to have sufficient capacity to contribute to these aspects.

The frequency of communication with project participants is very intensive in the beginning and later reduces to as and when needed. The partners make sure that they are accessible all the time to the participants for their support. Though the partners receive training and cash support to implement the program for 2-3 years of the project, they continue their support to the participants even much longer as and when needed. This has contributed to the sustainability of the implemented program which is rare in any other development projects. The partners had very high commitment to cornerstones and VBHCD, which is demonstrated in the form of promoting Heifers' values to other donors and initiative to form the Heifers' Partner Club.

Project Level: Self Help Group (SHG) formation process has been a slow process, it goes through the process of self maturation. This process focus on women who are almost always put in the leadership positions. Though women-only SHGs were formed, the husbands (whole family) are considered as part of the group. This dimension of considering the family as unit is very important where man are also empowered through exposure through various training and exposure to support and assist their wife's role in the SHGs and in the family. SHG operate as an independent institution with its unique separate identity. Group empowerment has taken place through the social bonding and capacity building (training, mentoring, PSRP).

Tremendous impact of the program has been visible on the life and attitude of the members of SHGs as they have fully internalized and are practicing the 12 CS and values promoted by HPIN.

At the ground level the impact was visible in terms of increased income (physical and financial capitals) of the group members. At deeper level the impact was visible in terms very high level of social capital build up which is generally not common. At external level the impact was visible in terms of better hygiene and sanitation in the home and in the community, their ecology, gender equality and equity, increased quest for providing best education for their children and not differentiating between girls and boys. They have also been able to diversify their livelihood means and options.

Triadic Partnership Model: It has been another unique feature where the HPIN program staff, the project partner and project participant or beneficiaries jointly plan and make decisions on what to do, when to do, how to do, etc. It demonstrates the participatory spirit and this model has a significant contribution in the success of the program. Another important dimension in this model is ensuring accountability.

The overall mission, approach, and strategies are clear to the CP and PP staffs, to most project holders and beneficiaries, and “Passing on the Gift” have occurred almost 100 percent.

Findings in Terms of Some Indicators: The findings were looked at some indicators of program success such as relevance of the program, efficacy and efficiency of the program, sustainability of the program, program’s impact on poverty, gender equity in the program and it was found to be positively supporting all these indicators.

Government’s Development Priority and HPIN’s Opportunities for Development:

The three year interim plan, policy and programs of government of Nepal and budget speech 2008/09 provide ample development opportunities for HPIN’s programs, approach and practices. There may be possibilities of strategic partnership with various government and non-government organizations, which needs to be explored critically, keeping in mind not to lose the essence of its VBHCD.

However, the challenges are there in expanding its coverage and influence area. As there had been a limited coverage and reach, it is difficult to show impact at macro level to convince the government planners and senior administrators.

Conclusion: The HPIN’s program and approach are very good and sustainable, though it needs a lot of flexibility. The VBHCD model is a noble, innovative and successful approach to holistic development of the rural and poor community. Therefore, it must be continued without losing its identity and values while trying to expand and upscale this approach.

Recommendations:

- Adopt two pronged approach. The first one will be to continue the present learning process approach which will help in further innovations at different level. The second one will be to start partnering with other development agencies (government and non-government) for scaling up and scaling out.
- Get engaged in advocacy for the VBHCD model in the relevant development programs and potential future partner organization.
- Support advocacy with the government for the adoption of VBHCD in its livestock and agricultural development projects/activities.

1. Introduction

Heifer Project International Nepal (HPIN) program has been established with a formal agreement with Government of Nepal (then HMG/N) in 26 September 1997, though it initiated some assistance since late 1950s. HPIN has been strategically trying and innovating its support to meet the mission, vision and goals of the organization in Nepal since 1997. It also tried expanding its program slowly. In 2004 HPIN prepared a Strategic Plan covering the period July 2004 to June 2009 so as to direct its efforts strategically and achieve more in a stipulated time.

To date there are over 100 projects at active stage serving over 20,000 families. Heifer Nepal operates through its four regional offices based in: Nepalganj, Pokhara, Bharatpur and Janakpur. The Projects are implemented through 59 project partners.

The evaluation team was composed of one external national consultant and one Country Director of co-mentoring country (Cambodia). The focus of evaluation was more on the strategic level rather than on the minor details of daily activity implementation.

2. Evaluation Objectives and Methodology

The purpose of this evaluation was to provide an external perspective in evaluating the direction of strategic priorities, objectives and activities of HPI Nepal and to determine how this has contributed to the achievement of Heifer's mission and three levels (ground, deeper and external levels) of impact in the community. The evaluation team was expected to undertake overall assessment of socioeconomic situation of the country outlining opportunities and challenges. While the external consultant led and documented the process for preparing and carrying out an accurate and in-depth evaluation of the work performed by the Heifer International Nepal program, Heifer evaluation team member oversaw qualitative aspects of the program impacts at various levels. It is expected that the findings of this evaluation will help guide Heifer International Nepal and Asia South Pacific (A/SP) department in the development of the next strategic plan for Heifer International Nepal and further enhancing impact levels.

Specifically the evaluation tried to answer some questions such as those related to the existing situation, trends, processes, at various levels such as country level, country office level, project partner level and project level. It also made some observation related to 'triadic partnership model' and monitoring and evaluation practices.

Evaluation Methods – The evaluation followed document review, individual and group interviews, focus group discussions (FGD) and observation as the main tools. Thorough reviews of various pertinent documents were done. Country Program (CP) staffs, field staffs, project holders, and project participants were interviewed using check-lists and interview guide. The selection of participants for

interview tried to make the considerations such as interview as many as possible, capturing diversity as far as possible and practicable. FGDs were carried with CP staffs, Project Partner (PP) staffs, project participants using check list. Some selected sites were visited and observed, where interview and FGD with PP were also carried.

3. Findings

The findings of the evaluation are presented and discussed below under various headings.

3.1 Country Office

The country office level program was evaluated basically in three aspects namely, shared leadership, human resources management and transparency/accountability.

Shared Leadership:

It is a combination of joint leadership as well as decentralized and delegated leadership. It is one of the best forms of participatory style of leadership. In HPI it is believed that one person can supervise six sub-ordinates and organizational (supervisory) structure is constructed within this frame (i.e. one supervisor not exceeding 6 persons to be supervised).

In HPIN also this is fully practiced and internalized. It was noticed that in Nepal office, shared leadership is well understood and highly valued by its senior management team. Once the senior believe and practice such approach, it is quite natural for others in the lower hierarchy to accept and follow this.

In HPIN, both joint and decentralized/delegated leadership exist under the shared leadership. The authority of the position is defined and the person is authorized to hold the final decision. However, the culture of the organization has been such that they jointly discuss and share their views and make decision in a participatory manner. One example of shared leadership was that most of the decisions in the country program are taken in the management committee meeting (where senior level staffs of country program are members), though the authority and responsibility to make decision lies with the country director. Similar practice was also observed over other levels within the organizations including regional offices and field level staffs.

The participatory decision making process through shared leadership though takes longer time, it has been more rewarding in terms of owning the process and sustainability. They have even invented informal ways and means to facilitate participatory decisions during urgency when formal sessions may take longer time. Except for regular procedures, most of the administrative, financial and programmatic decisions are made through shared leadership.

The impact of shared leadership at Country Program level has been very positive and current success can largely be ascertained to this.

This concept of shared leadership was also illustrated in the case of A/SP council and most of the matters were shared, discussed and jointly decided.

Work Load Distribution: Job analysis and work-load analysis has not been done in a formal manner so far. However, it is done informally using some tools such as matrices. Depending on the nature of job and position of staff, tasks are assigned (occasionally some specific tasks are also assigned depending on the expertise of the person).

Staff Meeting: There are well structured formal committees such as management committee (team), strategic committee, Monitoring and Evaluation team, Training team. These teams meet in regular intervals which have been established based on the need and experience, and some committee meets every week and some may be monthly or even longer. Management committee meets every week and there is a monthly sharing meeting with all the staff. They manage extra meetings or informal meetings as and when needed. Though it appears to have a lot of committees and teams, they were quite comfortable and there was no confusion regarding the roles and responsibility (domain) of the various teams. The general impression that the evaluation team gathered was that though there are several meetings, everybody felt that it was time well spent during the meeting.

Project Approval Process: Projects are developed jointly with beneficiaries (members of Self Help Group, SHG), facilitating partners (NGOs) and HPIN's field staff (following a triadic model). Such projects are then forwarded to the project approval committee through regional program offices for approval. The project approval committee usually reviews and approves such proposals 3 to 4 times in a year.

Human Resources Management:

The existing human resources and various expertise and skills seem more or less adequate considering the requirement of the programs (though an intensive study was not done). There has been significant program expansion within last few years, and also an increase in organizational structure accordingly to cope with the requirement of the program.

It was amazing and worth praising that staff morale and motivation at all levels had been very high and it is a great asset for the organization. The demand for human resources is increasing as the program is being expanded. However, it is not easy to find/identify the right kind of person within a short period of time as the whole procedure of project operation is value based. There is a need for a longer preparatory period for every staff to be induced in the team. Sometimes, some of the staff members may even quit during the preparatory period not adjusting to the values of the organization. Therefore there is a crucial need for the human resources management and development plan considering the requirement of the organization and its programs. It was found that such plan is there in place.

Transparency/Accountability:

As the organization believes in participatory culture and positive thinking, several problems associated with transparency and accountability do not pop. The budget and programs are developed in a participatory manner in a triadic partnership model, which strengthens the transparency and in turn accountability as well. The organizational practice of appropriate and clear allocation and agreement on responsibility also increases accountability.

The organization practices general sharing and public audit at regular intervals which is one of the best means to establish transparency and accountability. Besides, the culture of Participatory Self Review and Planning (PSRP) being conducted periodically is yet another strong tool to strengthen transparency and accountability in the organization and program. Over all it was observed that there is a lot of flexibility built in and provided in the program and administration. Staffs are allowed to use their best judgment in the interest of the program.

Moreover, there is also a need to have regulatory process in place besides the supportive and facilitating environment. This is being practiced by zero tolerance policy for fund misappropriation and embezzlement which is strictly observed. This balances as well as strengthens the flexibility provided.

Another very positive dimension in the organization observed was the learning attitude and culture, which has supported significantly in adapting recommendations from co-mentoring visits, internal review and planning (IRAP), evaluations, exchange visits and others. The present model and level of success could be attributed to the impact of this learning process approach.

3.2 Project Partner level

One of the very important areas of success of HPIN has been its partners, who have contributed so much for the success of the program at this level. In other words had HPIN not been able to select and capacitate its partner at this level, they would not have been able to achieve what they have achieved today.

Selection: The first step in this process is selection of partners. This process has been very cumbersome but very crucial and critical. The field team of HPIN collects information about various potential partners working in the project area. From the collected information they sort out some of the potential partners who appear to be amenable to the HPIN's value. Then they establish contact with them and share information about HPIN's program, process and values. The Heifer field staffs also look into the field activities of the potential partners during this stage. Based on these appraisals the potential partners are short listed and exposed to Heifer's cornerstone training (CST) and participatory self review and planning (PSRP) process. After this training the potential partners are asked to form self help groups (SHG) or prepare the already formed SHGs for the HPIN's program. This process may continue for a few months to 6 months or even longer. Once such SHGs perform for this period without

any support from HPIN and its field staffs are convinced with the capacity and attitude of the facilitating organization, they start developing partnership with such organization. This long process of partner selection has helped HPIN to have a team of partners fully committed to its values. The interaction with several partner staffs gave an impression that most of them are even more committed and serious about the 12 cornerstones (CS) and Value Based Holistic Community Development (VBHCD) than the HPIN staffs. It was found that a few have even committed their life to this and changed their other career and future course of life. This aspect of HPIN should be considered as one of the highest asset and achievement.

Capacity: It was observed that various partners are not at the same level in terms of implementation capacity rather they are at different levels. It was also noticed that some partners are very efficient and innovative while some partners need capacity building to enhance their efficiency through various supports such as training, exposure and some mentoring from other partners. It was clear that there are ample potential to learn from other partners. However, the most outstanding part was the right attitude and very high level of commitment of the partners.

All the partners were contributing to the three (ground, deeper and external) levels of impact (as stipulated by HPIN) and most of them appeared to have sufficient capacity to contribute to these aspects.

Project Implementation Process: It was noticed that the frequency of communication with project participants is very intensive in the beginning and later reduces to as and when needed. The partners make sure that they are accessible all the time to the participants for their support. This was important for the success of the program as the participants need more support and guidance in the beginning and later they can perform on their own.

In general it was found that the community facilitators were very effective and efficient though there was a lot of variation among various persons and among various partners. Such variations often developed various styles and approach helpful to the community, some of them could be considered as innovative ones. Such experiences are shared among the partners and there is very high level of co-learning among project partners. Another important aspect which helps in timely and quality implementation of program and learning from each other is participatory and joint monitoring of the program, where intensive sharing with participants and other partners takes place.

The partners are in regular contact with the field team of CP. Besides they also have an annual sharing meeting/workshop together with the CP. These mechanisms ensure a high level of learning and sharing among the partners and with HPIN field staffs.

The partners receive training and cash support to implement the program for 2-3 years of the project. However, they continue their support to the participants even much longer as and when needed. This has contributed to the sustainability of the implemented program which is rare in any other development projects. The inculcation of values of HPI has brought this change and impact.

Transparency/Accountability: As there is a system of joint planning, it increases the transparency and accountability of the partners as the participants and HPIN field staffs have clear idea to question in future. Besides there are regular meetings and periodic public audit which are again strong tools to maintain transparency and accountability. The partners practice timely reporting which also contribute in developing transparency and accountability.

Another important aspect is that CP is prepared to face the challenges if any from the partners in terms of transparency or accountability through its field team. The triadic model also helps in it.

Heifer Values/Approach: As mentioned earlier, it was noticed that the partners (their staffs) had very high commitment to cornerstones and VBHCD. They also show high commitment to shared leadership. These commitments are demonstrated in the form of promoting Heifers' values to other donors and initiative to form the Heifers' Partner Club. Partners have been replicating Heifer approach in other non-Heifer projects (though at very low level) and trying to convince other donors about this by sharing information, showing the Heifer's project site, etc.

3.3 Project Level

The real work takes place at project level and clear impact has also to be demonstrated at this level. The project participants are the best expression and examples of the success of the project and intervention.

Self Help Group (SHG) formation: This process has been a slow process as it has to go through the process of self maturation. Interestingly one of the unique features of HPIN has been this aspect, where they are not at a hurry to complete the project within a very short stipulated time. Generally this process is unpredictable in term of time requirement as it depends on various aspects and dimensions in the society. In some SHG it may be faster and in some it may be very slow. In most cases (supported by other donors) this aspect is not considered seriously as they are strictly time bound and must complete the tasks within a short stipulated time. This is another important aspect of HPIN program and one of the reasons for its very high level of success.

Another important and interesting aspect of HPIN programs have been the focus on women who are almost always put in the leadership positions. This concept draws from the notion that the sharing among the women are quite high and if you put a man in the leadership position, you are preparing a person only whereas when you put a woman in the leadership position you are preparing a whole family and a community in this.

One of the important aspects of the HPIN programs had been that mostly women-only SHGs were formed but the husbands (and the whole family) are also considered as part of the group. This dimension of considering the family as unit is very important

where men are also empowered through exposure and various training, and assist their wife's role in the SHGs and in the family.

SHG Operation: SHGs operate as an independent institution with its unique separate identity. They are very keen on projecting and presenting this identity which is reflected in terms of their feeling to have a uniform for the group, working as a group to show the difference in the society and village they live. Group empowerment has taken place through the social bonding and capacity building (training, mentoring, PSRP). SHGs own their development process and continue its operation. This is reflected by the continuation of operation of many SHGs even after the HPIN and partners have stopped supporting them. Unlike many other SHGs formed through the help of various development projects, which tends to cease its operation and existence once the project is over, HPIN's groups continue its identity and operation years after the project is over. The learning that the group members have internalized during the course of project implementation and values they have accepted and adhered to provides them a unique identity and feeling and drive to continue what they have learnt.

It was noticed that the initiation for mobilizing the SHGs was taken by partners but later the group organized themselves and continue their operation. Depending on the community/group and the age of the SHGs, the group savings varies. Various groups have different levels of savings and the members are continuing the group savings as a perpetual activity of the group. The saving fund is mobilized in various ways, the major being for the economic promotion activities of the members. The members also borrow and use it during the crisis as loan. Such fund has made the group financially independent from the local money lenders who often siphon all their earnings through very high interest rates.

Impact: Tremendous impact of the program has been visible on the life and attitude of the members of SHGs. In almost all cases visited, it was observed that they have fully internalized and are practicing the 12 CS and values promoted by HPIN. It was amazing to see that they all gathered in groups wherever they got the information that the evaluation team is visiting them and those who arrived late felt that they missed quite a lot. All the members usually gathered thinking that they will have opportunity to share their experiences to the visitors and learn from the visitors. Even if they will not benefit anything else, they were happy with the interaction and the feeling of learning. It is also worth mentioning that each group felt proud when visitors visit their group and interact with them and they are able to pass on some gifts to them.

There were visibly three levels of impact (ground level, deeper level and external level) in cases of older groups. However, in case of younger groups deeper level impacts were not so visible yet.

At the ground level the impact clearly was visible in terms of increased income and its effects (such as better quality food consumption, increase in level of physical asset collection and build up, better management of livestock, improved care on personal and community hygiene and sanitation). These impacts were visible in terms of building up of physical and financial capitals of the group members.

At deeper level the impact was visible in terms very high level of social capital build up which is generally not common. The stories told by the group members from different groups about how the group members helped them during their desperate times were very touching. In one of the group, when a member fell sick and had to be in the hospital for several months where her husband attended her, and there was nobody in the family to take care of the kids. The sick person needed a lot of money which was not possible through the earning of the family as the wife was confined to the hospital and husband was taking care of her. Their economic status was so poor that they did not have any savings except what little contribution she made to the group fund. There was nobody to take care of her kids, her small farm, and her little kitchen garden. The group provided all the money for her treatment and care in the hospital from the group fund. The group members took care of the kids and livestock on rotational basis. The group members also contributed to till and manage her farms. It took her almost a year to be alright and for such a long period group members supported them. This is an extreme case of building up of social capital, which is far stronger than the financial or physical capital. Such example is rare in even most developed and rich societies.

Another important impact that is noticeable was the construction of toilet by every member household which provides so much of convenience and freedom to the women. Earlier they could only go to the toilet in open when it is dark. For this reason, most of the women use to take less water and liquid which contributed to several forms of sicknesses and disease in women. Building toilets have had made several deeper level positive impact, though indirect and unintended.

At external level the impact can be visualized in terms of better hygiene and sanitation in the home and in the community, good combination of agriculture, horticulture and livestock which increases income as well as the ecology, gender equality and equity, increased quest for providing best education for their children and not differentiating between girls and boys. They have also been able to diversify their livelihood means and options. Another example could be taken as the creation of a society where the males have stopped drinking or at least stopped drinking and misbehaving in the open.

These are some examples only. There will be a need to document seriously and sincerely all the impacts of the program in each community as many communities have unique experiences. The group members might not have been all rich (in terms of physical and financial capital) but they have definitely been tremendously empowered considering the social capital, natural capital and human capital. It is convincing that this situation has brought them out of poverty trap and any stress, shock or seasonality variations will not let them fall back again in the poverty trap.

3.4 Triadic Partnership Model

Triadic Partnership Model is another unique feature of the HPIN program operation, where the HPIN program staff, the project partner and project participant or beneficiaries jointly plan and make decisions on what to do, when to do, how to do,

etc. This is one of the best innovations in the HPIN program and it also demonstrates the organizations belief and adherence to the participatory spirit. This model has a significant contribution in the success of the program.

The need of the project partners (PP) in terms of their requirements for service delivery to the participants is being fulfilled adequately. Though, some partners expressed their concern that the support of only two years is not enough for the lasting impact and they have continued their support even without getting any support from HPIN. Now the program mode has changed to support the PP for three years and this problem would be resolved to some extent. Most of the PPs expressed that they were made fully capable to support the SHGs regarding the HPIN program.

Another important dimension in this model is ensuring accountability. Depending on the situation, the accountability related to the inadequate support to SHGs need to be analyzed and rectified. Joint planning and periodic joint review meetings ensure the proper functioning of this model.

Often the linkages with several organizations are visible when such programs are implemented in any community. It was observed that the program has a good linkage with district livestock services office (DLSO). Interestingly there was little linkage expressed by the participants with the forest offices though some linkages with community forests (CF) were expressed. Forests especially CFs could be major source for fodder and this linkage needs to be forged. Sometimes other agencies also support the SHGs depending on the nature of work and support available. There are some formal or informal linkages with some agencies in the area such as SIMI.

3.5 Project Implementation

It was noticed that the overall mission, approach, and strategies of the HPIN is clear to the CP and PP staff to a large extent and they are well translated into activities or actions. The overall objectives are clear to most project holders and to beneficiaries and “Passing on the Gift (PoG)” have occurred almost 100 percent. This process (PoG) might involve some burdens to the recipients if they are not well prepared or carefully selected. SHGs are fully involved in planning and carrying the PoG and they are the one to select and prepare the recipients for pass on.

Documentation of information related to training is done by training team of CP for partners and by partners for the SHGs members.

Documentation on participation, application of knowledge, observable behavior, etc are done mainly by the partners; (some of these are also done by HPIN staff). The original participants were selected from among the poorest group from among the large community when the project started. However, a lot of learning and modification have taken place over the time and now it has been realized that selecting all in the community based on their residence in a particular geographical location gives the best results.

3.6 Monitoring and Evaluation

It is important for the success of any program to have proper monitoring and evaluation system in place. It has been noticed that the program has enlarged significantly in the past years and several efforts were made to cope with this expansion. However, it was observed that no tracking or assessing of progress against objectives and activities stated in strategic plan is taking place in an organized manner but indirectly this is happening through PSRP. It was also found that generally process monitoring and some quantitative indicators are recorded.

Impacts due to Heifer's presence and work in the community mainly have been very positive on participant (several are out of poverty trap now and are with supporting and caring attitude) and negative impacts on participants were not noticed. There have also been some positive impacts on non-participants through learning from the participants and aspiring to be part of it. However, some negative impacts on non-participants were also observed such as they are a little unhappy and felt discouraged to be left out.

3.7 Findings in Terms of Some Indicators

The findings were looked at some indicators of program success such as relevance of the program, efficacy and efficiency of the program, sustainability of the program, program's impact on poverty, gender equity in the program.

Relevance: Project strategies were found to be highly relevant to the overall objectives of the project being implemented in the present context of Nepal.

Efficacy: In terms of efficacy it was found that the projects have produced the desired effects. Though the VBHCD model was being tried through various projects at many sites, in a short span of time it has proved to be very successful (even beyond the expectations at places) in terms of efficacy.

Efficiency: It has been observed that the projects have high level of efficiency in terms of cost if the sustainability of the project is also considered. However, it may appear that the projects are less efficient if only the implementation is considered as the project needs intensive support in the beginning. Besides, efficiency also appears to be low when the coverage and spread of the program is considered within the project period only. It is therefore, imperative to look at the program/projects from a holistic perspective considering the beyond project situation, its sustainability and self spreading nature as the groups supported by the project continue to form other groups and pass on the gifts on their own.

Institutional impact: The institutional impact of the projects has been very high considering its contribution in improving the ability of the project holders to use human, natural, financial and organizational resources efficiently and effectively. This is especially evident in the older groups which have been active and functional even long after the project support has not been there.

Sustainability: The projects have very high potential for sustainability as it has been reflected by the older groups which are sustainably active and functional long after the project support has been over. The key to this success has been the boosting and development of the attitude of the group members towards self-support, self-help, self-discipline and self-regulation over the project period. The interesting attribute of the SHGs formed and promoted by HPIN's program has been that the groups have developed the positive attitude towards their self development and learning to share and pass on gifts rather than seeking from others. They have basically developed their attitude only to seek knowledge and if possible skills from others. It was evident from most of the SHGs visited that they have already learned that their development is within themselves and outsiders cannot develop them. This is one of the best indicators of sustainability for any human and community development program.

Impact on poverty and the environment: The impact of the HPIN's program on poverty reduction has been highly positive, as it has significantly improved the livelihoods security of the group members. The group members have been highly committed to the corner-stones which also include improving the environment.

Gender equity: The gender equity in HPIN's program has been very high, considering the approach it has taken. It has tried to address the problem of men and women in disadvantaged positions by increasing their access to and control of resources and decision making. This program has truly focused on both men and women and considers family as the unit of development. This approach has helped in ensuring gender equity in its programs.

Animal Well-Being: As the basic income opportunity for the project participants have come from the animal rearing, they have realized that they must take good care of their animals in order to get best benefit from them. It has also been one of the cornerstones and the project participants have been committed to this. The participants have tried to improve their animal shelters, feed, pastures, and equipment needed as far as possible within their capacity.

3.8 Country level

It is imperative to have information at the country level especially the trend of socioeconomic development in terms of some key development indicators. Such information across the different parts of the country is also helpful especially in orienting and expanding the programs and planning the future coverage. In addition, the knowledge about government's development priorities also helps. It is always helpful to analyse the opportunities and challenges for the development.

Some of the important socioeconomic indicators are presented below.

- Irrigated land area 40.1 % of total cultivated land in year 2006 (NRB, 2006-07)
- Per capita income 383 USD at current prices (CBS, 2007)

- Per capita income 280 USD at constant prices (CBS, 2007)
- Annual growth of GDP 2.5 % 2006-07 (CBS, 2007)
- Population below poverty line 31 % (NLSS, 2004)
- Agricultural GDP 36.1 % growth rate 0.7 percent (NRB, 2006-07)
- Infant mortality rate 48 per 1000 live birth (CBS, 2007)
- Child mortality rate 61 per 1000 live birth (CBS, 2007)
- Average Life expectancy 63.7 yrs; Male: 63.3 yrs: Female: 64.1 yrs (CBS, 2007)
- Food consumption: 31.2 % have less than adequate (NLSS, 2004)
- Literacy rate 54.1 %; male 65.5 % female 42.8 % (CBS, 2007)
- Unemployment rate 3.8 % (NLSS,2004)
- Agriculture households: 78 % (NLSS, 2004)
- HIV prevalence rate 0.49 % in the adult population and this corresponds to about 70,000 people living with HIV in Nepal. Approximately one in three are women (NCASC, 2007)
- National Human Development Index (HDI) in 2004 was 0.527 (UNDP, 2006)
- National Human Empowerment Index (HEI) in 2001 was 0.463 (UNDP, 2004)

As the new Human Development Report for Nepal is not yet published, the data from the Nepal Human Development Report (2004) has been used to make comparison of situation in different regions of the country. The country's Human Development Index (HDI) slightly improved from 0.471 in 2001 (UNDP, 2004) to 0.527 in 2004 (UNDP, 2006). However, the HDI in urban areas (0.581) has been quite high compared to rural areas (0.452) where majority of the population lives (UNDP, 2004). Moreover, the HDI has been lowest in the mountains followed by Tarai and the hills. Similarly, the far western and mid-western development regions lag far behind the other regions (UNDP, 2004).

Substantial discrepancies also exist within and across regions in terms of Gender related Development Index (GDI), Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) and Human Poverty Index (HPI). The Human Empowerment Index (HEI) which is a powerful tool for identifying and addressing specific issues of exclusion, incongruities among the critical aspects of empowerment and multiple disempowerments in areas of concentrated poverty. The national HEI (0.463) in 2001 also stands close to HDI in 2001, and shows considerable regional disparity and mismatching among the three dimensions of empowerment – economic (0.337), social (0.406) and political (0.646). The high level of political empowerment is an indication of democratic practices, whereas the low economic empowerment gives an indication of low income, limited access to productive assets and a lack of gainful employment opportunities (UNDP, 2004).

3.9 Government's Development Priority and HPIN's Opportunities for Development

It would be logical to look for the possible niche area for expansion and further promotion of HPIN's VBHCD by analyzing the Government's development

priorities. After comprehensive peace agreement (CPA) in 2006, the country has been relieved of insurgency though there are some problems in certain regions. Following the CPA country had a coalition government of major political parties. During this period a Three Year Interim Plan (TYIP, 2007/08 to 2009/10) was developed, which laid the basic direction for the development of Nepal for three years. The goal, objectives, priority areas and target for economic growth are cited below from the TYIP.

“Goal: The main goal of this Interim Plan is to lay a foundation for economic and social transformation to build a Prosperous, Modern and Just Nepal.

Objectives: The main objective of this Plan is to generate an experience of a direct feeling of change in the lives of the general public by supporting in the establishment of peace and reducing the existing unemployment, poverty and inequality in the country.

Priority Areas: Investments will be increased to accelerate the pace of development through the inclusion of excluded groups, areas and gender in all mechanisms, spheres and processes of development. In order to revitalize the national economy, investments will be increased in physical infrastructures like hydropower, roads, irrigation and communication for supporting agriculture, tourism and industries. Investment will be increased in education, health, water supply and sanitation sectors for the development of human resources.

Target of Economic Growth Rate:

- Annual average economic growth rate for the Interim Plan is projected to be 5.5 percent, which will increase per capita income by 3.3 percent.
- Of the overall growth, the agriculture sector is estimated to grow by 3.6 percent and non-agriculture sector by 6.5 percent.”

Similarly, the Policy and Program of the Government of Nepal (GoN) for fiscal year 2008/09 (presented in the Constituent Assembly on September 10, 2008) highlights that the efforts of the government would be concentrated on making the country prosperous and self-reliant thus ending the unemployment, hunger, illiteracy, dependency and inequality.

The budget speech for the fiscal year 2008/09 point the following vision and basic principles which may be relevant to the HPIN’s area of operation:

- Rapid economic growth
- Ensuring social justice and security

The sixth objective of the budget speech 2008/09 states “Erecting foundation of a self-reliant and independent economy through optimally mobilizing the national capital and indigenous resources”.

These statements (TYIP, Policy and Programs of GoN and budget speech 2008/09) provide ample development opportunities for HPIN’s programs, approach and

practices. As HPIN is working in the areas of poverty alleviation, inclusive development and empowerment, overall development of the community, enhanced management of agriculture, livestock, forest and environment, it can continue its work in these fields and try to expand its coverage and influence area. There may be possibilities of strategic partnership with various government and non-government organizations, which needs to be explored critically, keeping in mind not to lose the essence of its VBHCD.

However, there are some challenges for HPIN in expanding its coverage and influence area. HPIN has had a limited coverage and reach so far, which makes it difficult to show impact at macro level to convince the government planners and senior administrators. This is also significant as the aspirations and expectations of the people are high and the government would like to show some quick benefits and results to continue the trust of the people. There may be very few people in the government who believe in 'slow and steady wins the race' and to support the HPIN's VBHCD. Besides, there are also very few development agencies which believe in value based development approach.

These conditions pose a serious potential challenge for promoting and expanding the HPIN's VBHCD. Nevertheless, there is an opportunity for advocacy and promotion of its proven successful approach to sustainable holistic community development.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion: Based on the review and field study, the evaluation team concludes that the HPIN's program and approach are very good and sustainable, though it needs a lot of flexibility. Besides, these programs cannot be envisaged in a tight time bound manner, rather they should have a flexible time period. The team also believes that the VBHCD model has been a noble, innovative and successful approach to holistic development of the rural and poor community. Therefore, it must be continued without losing its identity and values while trying to expand and upscale this approach. As the program has expanded significantly and expected to expand further in coming days, there is a need to enhance present monitoring and evaluation system.

Recommendations: Based on the above conclusion following recommendations are put forward.

- It is recommended to adopt two pronged approach. The first one will be to continue the present learning process approach which will help in further innovations at different level. The second one will be to start partnering with other development agencies (government and non-government) for scaling up and scaling out. In this connection, mature SHGs can be used as resource group as well as facilitating group for scaling out. Potential partners, who are more amenable to the VBHCD approach and whose nature of activities is somewhat coherent to the HPIN's work, need to be explored for scaling up.
- It is also recommended to carry advocacy for the VBHCD model in the relevant development programs and potential future partner organization.

- Initiate advocacy with the government for the adoption of VBHCD in its livestock and agricultural development projects/activities.
- Develop and design an efficient monitoring system considering the present requirements of the program and future needs of the organization in terms of data and information. This should also consider the need of information to support the advocacy program.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: List of sites/groups visited

List of sites visited:

S. No.	Name of the Group Visited	Address	District
1	Atut Mahila (Women) Samuha (Group)	Mushahar Basti, Bagahi VDC, Ward No. 6	Rautahat
2	Suryodaya Mahila Samuha	Khattar, Kamalamai Municipality, Ward No. 2	Sindhuli
3	Mishrit Bachat (Savings) Samuha	Dhakaalgaun, Kamalamai Municipality, Ward No. 5	Sindhuli
4	Mahila Miteri Samuha	Tulsipur, Khairahani VDC, Ward No. 7	Chitwan
5	Sayapatri Samuha	Tulsipur, Khairahani VDC, Ward No. 7	Chitwan
6	Himali Mahila Samuha	Pitaujhi, Mukundapur VDC, Ward No. 6	Nawalparasi
7	Narayani Mahila Bachat Samuha; Narayani Bhwanatmak Ekta Mancha	Pitaujhi, Mukundapur VDC, Ward No. 6	Nawalparasi
8	?	? Bhairabsthan VDC	Palpa
9	?	? Tansen Municipality	Palpa
10	?	? Chidipani VDC	Palpa

Appendix 2: Data collection instruments (Check-lists)

Check list for interview with Country Office level staffs:

Shared leadership:

To what extent is shared leadership internalized and practiced?

What is the process?

How is work load distribution done?

What is the structure and frequency of staff meetings?

To what extent administrative, financial and programmatic decision making practiced through shared leadership?

What is the project approval process?

What is the impact of shared leadership at CP?

Human Resources Management:

Are the existing human resources and skills adequate in terms of the program expansion that has taken place?

What is staff morale?

Is the human resources management and development plan in place?

What initiatives are taken?

What are the lessons learned from the past?

Transparency/accountability:

How has the CP put transparency and accountability into practice?

What are the processes?

How often are periodic PSRP, staff retreat, audits conducted? Is there compliance to various level policies?

What follow up actions are taken to the recommendations from co-mentoring visits, IRAPs, evaluations, exchange visits and others, and what is the impact on the program?

What are the communications mechanisms and how effective they are?

Check list for the interview with the project staffs:

How did you select the partners?

What were the criteria?

What was the process?

How do you inculcate the values of HPIN in partners?

Capacity:

Do you assess the capacity of the partner?

How?

Do you help in building the capacity of the partners?

How?

Is it easy?

Is it costly?

Is it time consuming?

Do you need to prepare partner for impact oriented performance?

Do you know the vision of HPI-Nepal?

What role do you expect from partners to fulfill the vision of HPI-Nepal?

What is the capacity of the partners to implement Heifer's projects?

What is the capacity to achieve the three levels of impact?

What are the capacity building needs?

Project implementation process:

What is the frequency of communication with project participants?

What is the effectiveness and efficiency of community facilitators?

Does co-learning take place among Project Partners?

What monitoring procedures are in place?

What is the mode of interaction/contact with the Country Program?

What support is received from the Country Program?

Transparency/accountability:

How are transparency and accountability put into place?

Is reporting timely and accurate?

What is the Country Program's responsiveness to challenges?

Heifer values/approach:

What is the commitment of the person to the Cornerstones?

What is the commitment of the person to VBHCD?

What is the commitment of the person to shared leadership?

How has this commitment been demonstrated?

Has Heifer approach been replicated in other non-Heifer projects?

Is there any information regarding collaboration with other agencies?

Check list for the Project Partners:

Why were you selected as a partner?

What were the criteria?

What was the process?

Do you know the value of HPIN?

Do you know what kind of organization HPIN is?

What should be done in future by HPIN? Do you have any suggestion?

Do you think you need support from the HPIN?

If yes, what kind of support do you need?

What kinds of impact have been there as a result of the programs of HPIN?

Do you think the current program trend should be continued? For how long?

Do you think the programs of HPIN are transparent?

Project implementation process:

What is the frequency of communication with project participants?

What is the effectiveness and efficiency of community facilitators?

Does co-learning take place among Project Partners?

What monitoring procedures are in place?

What is the mode of interaction/contact with the Country Program?

What support is received from the Country Program?

Transparency/accountability:

How are transparency and accountability put into place?

Is reporting timely and accurate?

What is the Country Program's responsiveness to challenges?

Heifer values/approach:

What is the commitment of the person to the Cornerstones?

What is the commitment of the person to VBHCD?

What is the commitment of the person to shared leadership?

How has this commitment been demonstrated?

Has Heifer approach been replicated in other non-Heifer projects?

Is there any information regarding collaboration with other agencies?

Check list for the Project level information:

SHG formation:

What considerations are taken into account while forming a Self-help Group?

Are women in leadership positions?

Are there women-only SHGs?

What percentage of all the Country Program's SHGs is women-only?

SHG operation:

How does group empowerment process take place?

Do SHGs own their development process?

Who is responsible for mobilizing the SHGs?

What is the situation of group savings? How this fund is mobilized?

Impact:

How have the three levels of impact been realized?

Service delivery:

What kind of support does the Country Program provide to Project Partners?

What is the adequacy level of this support?

What support do the Project Partners provide to the SHGs?

What is adequacy of this support?

Accountability:

Who is accountable for inadequate support to SHGs?

What system is in place to ensure the operation of this model?

Linkages:

Are there any other agencies providing service to the project participants?

What kinds of services are provided?

Are there any formal or informal linkages?

Appendix 3: Terms of Reference/Scope of Work

Evaluation of Strategic Plan in Heifer Project International Nepal

Heifer's early work in Nepal focused primarily on shipment of dairy goats, cattle, sheep, pigs and poultry. Nepal was among the first countries to receive the shipments together with Japan, Korea, China, Philippines and India in the Asia region. The A/SP program was born in the early 1980s as one of the four "Area programs" under International Program Division. By the 1980s the focus began to shift to working with poorer populations. Increased training and community development activities began to be incorporated into the projects, but shipments continued. With the increasing number of projects in the region, the concept of hiring local staff to monitor and manage was born, and country programs were opened in Philippines, Thailand, China, Cambodia, Nepal, Indonesia, and Viet Nam. The seeds of the values-based holistic development concept continued to sprout in the 1990s. Aligning with Heifer's core values and strategic priorities, A/SP countries embraced values based holistic community development approach as reflected in their strategic plan.

In Nepal Heifer started its operation in 1957 and country program opened in 1997. To date there are over 30 projects at active stage serving over 20,000 families. Heifer Nepal operates through its four regional offices based in: Nepalganj, Pokhara, Bharatpur and Janakpur. The Projects are implemented through 59 project partners.

The purpose of this evaluation is to provide an external perspective in evaluating the direction of strategic priorities, objectives and activities of HPI Nepal and to determine how this has contributed to the achievement of Heifer's mission and three levels of impact in the community. The evaluation team will be expected to undertake overall assessment of socioeconomic situation of the country outlining opportunities and challenges. While the external consultant will lead and document the process for preparing and carrying out an accurate and in-depth evaluation of the work performed by the Heifer International Nepal program, Heifer evaluation team members will oversee qualitative aspects of the program impacts at various levels. The team will provide recommendations for ways to improve the programmatic management of projects. The findings of this evaluation will help guide Heifer International Nepal and A/SP department in the development of the next strategic plan for Heifer International Nepal and further enhancing impact levels.

2. Evaluation Questions or Objectives

Country level

a) What is the trend of socioeconomic development of the country in terms of key development indicators (food security, poverty, employment, health and sanitation, education, environment, income distribution, social discrimination etc.) across different parts of the country? What is the government's development priority? What opportunities exist for development, and what are the key challenges?

Country Office level

- a) **Shared leadership:** To what extent is shared leadership internalized and practiced? What is the process? How is work load distribution done? What is the structure and frequency of staff meetings? To what extent administrative, financial and programmatic decision making practiced through shared leadership?– What is the project approval process? What is the impact of shared leadership at CP?
- b) **Human Resources Management:** Are the existing human resources and skills adequate in terms of the program expansion that has taken place? What is staff morale? Is the human resources management and development plan in place? What initiatives are taken? What are the lessons learned from the past?
- c) **Transparency/accountability:** How has the CP put transparency and accountability into practice? What are the processes? How often are periodic PSRP, staff retreat, audits conducted? Is there compliance to various level policies? What follow up actions are taken to the recommendations from co-mentoring visits, IRAPs, evaluations, exchange visits and others, and what is the impact on the program? What are the communications mechanisms and how effective they are?

Project Partner level

- a) **Selection:** What are the selection criteria and process?
- b) **Capacity:** What is the capacity of the partners to implement Heifer's projects? What is the capacity to achieve the three levels of impact? What are the capacity building needs?
- c) **Project implementation process:** What is the frequency of communication with project participants? What the effectiveness and efficiency of community facilitators? Does co-learning take place among PPs? What monitoring procedures are in place? What is the mode of interaction/contact with the CP? What support is received from the CP?
- d) **Transparency/accountability:** How are transparency and accountability put into place? Is reporting timely and accurate? What is the CP's responsiveness to challenges?
- e) **Heifer values/approach:** What is commitment to the Cornerstones? To VBHCD? To shared leadership? How has this commitment been demonstrated? How has Heifer approach replicated in other non-Heifer projects? Is there any information collaboration with other agencies?

Project level

- a) **SHG formation:** What considerations are taken into account while forming a Self-Group? Are women in leadership positions? Are there women-only SHGs? What percentage of all the CP's SHGs is women-only?
- b) **SHG operation:** How does group empowerment process take place? Do SHGs own their development process? Who is responsible for mobilizing the SHGs? What is the situation of group savings? How this fund is mobilized?
- c) **Impact:** How have the three levels of impact been realized?

Triadic Partnership Model

- a) **Service delivery:** What kind of support does the CP provide to PPs? What is the adequacy of this support? What support do the PPs provide to the SHGs? What is adequacy of this support?
- b) **Accountability:** Who is accountable for inadequate support to SHGs? What system is in place to ensure the operation of this model?
- c) **Linkages:** Are there any other agencies providing service to the project participants? What kind of services are provided? Are there any formal or informal linkages?

Project Implementation Details

- a) Overall mission, approach, and strategies: Are they clear to the CP and PP staff? Are they translated into activities/actions?
- b) Overall objectives. Are they clear to project holders and to beneficiaries?
- c) To what extent has “Passing on the Gift” occurred? Does the process involve any burdens to the recipients? What involvement do the SHGs have in planning and carrying out the Passing on the Gift? Who selects recipients for pass ons?
- d) How is information related to training documented? Participation, application of knowledge, observable behavior?
- e) How are original participants selected? (Focus more on how the project got started, out of a large community, how the participants were selected.)

Monitoring and Evaluation

- a) Assess progress against objectives and activities stated in strategic plan. This should happen in a Participatory Self-Review and Planning process (PSRP). How is monitoring taking place? What is the use and follow-up of information from these meetings?
- b) Review training plan. Do they have one? Do they use it?
- c) How does the country office monitor and evaluate?
- d) How does the country office deal with challenges relative to project holder performance?
- e) What impacts (positive and negative) have there been on the participants and non-participants due to Heifer’s presence and work in their community?

3. Elements to be covered in the evaluation

- **Relevance** – Is the project strategy relevant to overall objectives and indicators (in the strategic plan) in the context of the local and national situations prevailing in the country today?

- **Efficacy** – How well has the project performed in relation to achievements as compared with specified objectives? Are the objectives realistic and appropriate?
- **Efficiency** – Are the project benefits keeping with the extent of the inputs and their cost and timeliness? Can input provision be improved?
- **Sustainability** – Is there a stream of results that is likely to continue, and what are the potential risks?
- **Institutional impact** – Has the project contributed to improving the ability of the project holders to use human, natural, financial and organizational resources efficiently and effectively?
- **Impact on poverty and the environment** – Is there observable/measurable change in livelihood security and the environment attributable to project outcomes?
- **Gender equity** – How has the project addressed men and women in disadvantaged positions (in terms of increasing access to and control of resources, sharing project benefits, and decision making)?
- **Animal Well-Being** – Assessment in regard to animal well-being guidelines (shelters, feed, pastures, equipment, etc).

4. Evaluation Methods

- Interviews with CP staff, field staff, project holders, and project participants
- Focus group discussions
- Site visits to document the project work
- Document review (proposal forms, progress reports, PSRPs, strategic plan)
- Questionnaires/checklist