



## **Himalayan Project Nepal**

**A Nepali NGO dealing with Development Aid in Nepal**

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### **Runner Service Report No. 1 On Bakanje Women Empowerment Project by HIPRON Runner Service (RS) March-April 2012**

The purpose of Runner Service is to visit Upper Solu in order to give a practical service for the Organizations and donors who have development activities in Upper Solu. The service is provided by HIPRON basically every 3 months, but more according to the need. The service includes monitoring and reporting of the projects, as well as facilitation for the projects.

Upper Solu is a part of Solukhumbu District, defined as 5 VDCs; Beni, Bakanje, Takshindu, Thamakhani and Salleri.

Beneficiaries are the person, organizations or donor agencies, who take the Service for their project.

The services, which can be offered, are only limited by the objectives of HIPRON.

The main mission of RS in this spring (23 March – 04 April) is to set up office in Kenja -9, Bakanje for the Bakanje Women Empowerment Project (WEP) supported by Danish Embassy and to monitor and supervise the initial activities of WEP, as well as to make an appointment with Government Officials in Phaplu and Salleri to build cooperation for WEP.

Personnel:	Namgyal J. Sherpa, HIPRON Manager
Task:	WEP Office Set up, take part the WEP Inauguration, Project Meeting
Location:	Upper Solu (Bakanje VDC and Salleri VDC)
Departure:	23 March (Kathmandu – Bandar by 4WD Jeep)
Return:	04 April (Phaplu – Kathmandu by Plane)

Friday, March 23, I went to Kenja with full office stationeries and computers for setting up WEP office in Kenja. It was 10 hours driving from Kathmandu; I departed at 12PM and reached Dewrali at 10PM. Next morning I was driven 5 km further to Bhandar and same day morning 6 porters, who I called from Sagardanda, arrived to carry up the equipments so we could go to Kenja with all equipments same day on 24 march. I was in a bit rush to be in Kenja before WEP opening Ceremony that was held on 25 of March. Papa Kurt, chairman of Himalayan Project Denmark (HP) & Ambika Maharjan, WEP Coordinator & Saraswati Khadka, WEP Assistant had left for Kenja on 16 March, several days ahead for the preparation of WEP opening ceremony. In Kenja, they have rented 3 rooms for WEP Office on the first floor of Chhumbi Sherpa house and employed 3 Social Mobilizers locally. Moreover, there was well done preparation for the inauguration event.

When I arrived in Kenja, we sat together at office hired for WEP and handed over WEP equipments to Ambika. Afterwards, for update, we had discussion on the issue relating to supplier's bill and payment for WEP equipments - inclusive VAT or exclusive VAT in the price? The confusion arose mainly because Ambika gave purchase order without having proper information about the VAT and later suppliers didn't want to produce VAT bill for the payment. But Ambika acknowledged the mistake of her part and we decided that WEP should pay 13% VAT of total bill on purchased goods in order to obtain VAT bill, later all the complications were solved under guidance of WEP Accountant, Resham Sunar.

Sunday, March 25, Opening Ceremony started as planned; ceremony was in 2 phases - opening ceremony of the very Office at 9 o'clock with fewer women due to less space in the office. Women of Bakanje VDC came with garland one by one. Office was fully decorated with balloon, sign board candle at both side of office entrance. There was clearly seen amazing excitement among the women. Opening ceremony was held at exact time, it started when Papa Kurt cut the ribbon and lit the candle with big applaud by women. And then, we sat in the office for tea with the women and shortly after we walked for main ceremony where by then, all

representatives of women of Bakanje VDC and many from the whole VDC by own will had gathered. It started with cultural program along with impressive speeches from many women about their empowerment. It was very impressive to see how the women, who before usually remained silent in mass meetings, were expressing their feelings and their hopes clearly, fluently and with lot of enthusiasm.

I, for HIPRON, introduced Ambika Maharjan as Bakanje Women Empowerment Project Coordinator for 3 years in that very event and gave her the overall responsibility of the coordination of WEP officially while Papa Kurt highlighted the importance of WEP, around 200 women and 50 men were in this ceremony. Tea and biscuits were served throughout the ceremony while food was served by end. It was great event that was concluded at 3 PM.

Monday, March 26 there was parents meeting of Kenja School where school presented student progress report to the parents and sought suggestion from parents regarding the improvement of their children education. It was quite impressive that every year Kenja School is doing such program with rewarding to good students and putting emphasis on poor student together with parents. It is actually the only school in the area that is doing such program. HP, in last autumn, supplied some stationery for students of poor family background to make them come to school every day. We had talk with the headmaster of the school how it should be distributed - not to all but those students of poor family background whose parents can't afford the school stationery. We decided to continue the supply in the future as well. Papa Kurt gave a speech for teachers and parents where he emphasized the importance of WEPs School Empowerment Program (WEP-SEP) to create a good cooperation between the two parties.

Tuesday, March 27 I and Papa left Ambika and her team in Kenja and walked for Sete. On the way to Sete we had meeting at Chhimbu School about the school activities. We reviewed the list of the school activities that was produced together with Ulla Lair, PONA-Foundation, donor of Chhimbu School, one year ago. On the basis of review, it was concluded that School should carry out not only the activities duly agreed 1 year before to satisfy the donor for their continue support in future, but also should give strong school background for the coming WEP-SEP activities. We checked the physical condition of the school as school was built in 1999 and since then there had been some repair and extension of the school time to time. Recently Village Development Committee of Bakanje supported Rs.60,000 for internal renovation – better partition in the classrooms and wall ceiling in the office room which were done well.

After Chhimbu school meeting, we continued to walking to Sete for our comfortability but also to have talk with Ang Dawa, headmaster about Sagar Bakanje School Office rebuild plan, and have a talk with Susma about Bakanje Health Worker Quarter (which is under construction) and other health related programs in the VDC. HP has a plan to rebuild Sagar Bakanje School Office with support of Danish Rotary Club matching grant. Office rebuild is very necessary in due to very old and poor office building. Bakanje School was recently upgraded from class 8 for class 10. After the rebuild this school in the VDC will have received full physical upgrade. In this situation we emphasized that the school shall go into the WEP-SEP with all efforts to make this program effective and successful.

We spent 3 nights in Sete. And we, together with Ang Dawa, the headmaster, and Kami Chhiring, would be Contractor, reviewed rebuild plan of Bakanje School Office with measurement and budget. We also had very brief meeting about Bakanje Health worker quarter construction. Padborg-Krusa Rotary Club Denmark funded for this project. Sonam, contractor of the construction informed that construction was stop due to cold winter, but would be started very soon and completed before coming autumn. Until then only foundation part of the construction was completed. This facility will give a good support for WEPs health advocacy part.

We also checked the budget of Kenja Women Group's Meeting Hall proposed by Kenja Women Group and made some amendment according to the reality of local condition. Kenja Women Group has enormous interest in the meeting hall and so has WEP as Kenja is the market village where it is easy to gather all Women Groups from the VDC. HP is recently working on raising fund for the construction.

Thursday, March 29, Ambika and her team arrived in Sete as they have Sete Women Group Meeting next morning. Until then Papa Kurt was not quite sure whether he should stay in Bakanje with WEP team to observe WEP for some weeks and go back to Kathmandu via Jiri or to join me for Phaplu – Salleri and fly out from there, we were waiting for WEP team to decide. They decided that he should join WEP. So I left them in Sete and walked for Phaplu -Salleri. The reason I was going there is to have an appointment with Government Officials to have their cooperation in WEP in terms of their expertise.

Friday, March 30, I left WEP team and Papa Kurt in Sete and went for Phaplu. In Phaplu – Salleri, I visited offices of Horticulture Canter, District Veterinary Office, and District Agriculture for WEP with Ambikas's proposal for cooperation where she mentioned about the schedule, working plan and allowance they could have from WEP for their expertise. They showed very good sign of cooperation that they are ready to give

their expertise for WEP and agreed with proposed allowance. They advised that they need proper schedule and plan beforehand and regular communication in time to time from WEP side. So we, when Ambika is back to Kathmandu after first phase program of WEP in Bakanje, will work on full tentative schedule on whole WEP program and precise detail schedule on the specific activities and send as proposal for each expert.

I visited District Education Office (DEO) and District Health Office (DHO) as well; purpose of my visit to DEO was to discuss about the WEP-SEP and their cooperation with education expert in this regard. Unfortunately, they advised us to seek the education expert outside as DEO itself is in-sort of Human resources and we cannot expect such manpower from them for WEP-SEP. So, we shall work on finding external education expert for WEP-SEP.

As to DHO, There is rumour among the people of Bakanje VDC that DHO has plan to upgrade sub-health post of each VDC to Health post in Solukhumbu. With my discussion with DHO, I could obtain a lot of information regarding the issue that DHO has plan to upgrade all sub-health post to Health post with fully equipped structure and man power within 2017. There will be delivery centre and 6 staff under the Health Assistant in such health post which will be giving 24 hours service. But DHO has some demand that community has to make available 6 ropani of land close to existing sub-health post for extension of facility. Recently, DHO has upgraded Goli and Chaulakharka, and upgrade is done on the basis priority in terms of population. Bakanje VDC is not in priority list of upgrade due to less population compare to other VDCs in Solukhumbu. So, it is one of the issues of WEP to advocate for having Bakanje VDC in priority list upgrade. Back to Kathmandu, we had meeting with Mr. Nima Tendup of Himalayan Environment and Education Service Solukhumbu, he proposed us that we shall consider on upgrading Kenja Health Post instead of Bakanje Sub-health Post as road network is connecting Kenja to Bakanje VDC and other neighbouring VDCs.

During WEP meetings in Sete, Sagar-Bakanje, Sagardanda, Chhiringkharka and Kenja it apparently seemed less women showed up in most of the places than they did during Pilot-WEP, but probably it was due to the season, where many women are busy in the fields. Ambika did show to have good control over the groups during the meetings having full attention from the women. But it is little bit of my opinion that she gave too much responsibility and activity to the inexperienced Social Mobilizers. However, it seemed to be a good way of introducing them for the women. In my opinion they should, in future, more importantly step down from the staff level to the level of the Women Group. I found that the main project staff was somehow draw out of the main activities, especially Project Assistant was too less in action. And I was confused with this situation, as she also should be properly introduced to the Women Groups as she too is a new staff in the project. The activities of this first round seemed to be somehow not enough, but yet it is introductory and initial phase of the program so it can be reasonable. During the meetings there were some refreshing games. It was nice to see how the women enjoyed understanding playing games. But I also found that some games, where those who did mistake were out of game quite early and was sitting behind losing interest and feeling exposed. And also some dalits were not fully integrated as they were put somehow out by the other women, and the staff didn't take a proper care to involve them on an equal basis. Care should be taken off in future while design games, which integrates all during the whole activity.

At evening after the Women Group meetings there were held Staff Meeting for around one hour. It was very nice to experience the disciplined way those meetings were held in a very intense and serious way. No serious matter was left even it could be uncomfortable to express un-satisfaction with the performances. And praising was expressed as well. All took part of the analyzing process of the day's events.

When time was available there were given mutual training in reporting, speaking, focusing as well as next day's program was discussed and prepared with special focus on the individual Women Group.

## **Conclusion**

I think it is too early to give conclusion about WEP activities as it was initial and introductory phase. I am quite sure that staff of WEP will improve their performance and that all activities will be going well. I felt quite confident that WEP is under full control and coordination of Ambika.

It would be good idea if Ambika and I make some sort of reporting plan before we make telephone call each other for update.

**Kathmandu on 16, April 2012**

**Namgyal Jangbu Sherpa**

**Manager of HIPRON**