

# Empowerment mobilisation for effective women's development

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The Women's Empowerment Program (WEP) implemented by Pact was launched in December 1997. The main goal of this project is to empower 120,000 women from 21 lowland districts in Nepal to increase their roles in household decision-making, increase income for family well-being, and engage in collective action for necessary changes in their communities.

Education Curriculum and Training Associates (ECTA), a Kathmandu-based local NGO, has introduced the **Appreciative Planning and Action (APA)** approach as part of the low cost empowerment package being developed and applied under WEP. APA has proven to be a very effective and powerful tool for community mobilisation and motivation and for bringing about positive changes within organisations. The APA methodology is now being used successfully within other large organisations in Nepal, including NGOs, INGOs, donor agencies, and a major 5-star Hotel.

## Women's Empowerment Program

The Women's Empowerment Program has developed three interventions:

- **Literacy.** Women study a self-instructional manual in-groups of two to twelve, achieving literacy for all members in about three months.
- **Economic participation.** Follow up to the literacy package with neo-literate material with an economic focus. Women learn best practices for saving, credit, and income generating activities. This component includes three self-instructional manuals which women study in their groups for about nine months (3 months per manual).
- **Rights, responsibility and advocacy.** This component, implemented by The Asia Foundation (TAF), includes a role for an outside facilitator since the material is a bit harder to understand than the literacy and economic packages.

Pact and ECTA do not provide facilitators, black boards, lanterns, or stationary which are normally supplied by other literacy programs, under the WEP principle that **'Dependency is not Empowering.'**

## The seven D's of APA

APA, as a starter methodology, does not take more than 2 hours to generate a feeling among women and their groups that they can do many things on their own and do not need to wait for outside aid or financial assistance.

First, a positive and happy tone is set among the members. For this purpose, they are asked to recall and draw: *What are the most exciting things they have done in their communities with their own efforts that make them proud even today when they remember them?* This process is called **'Discovery'**. Since most people tend to forget their successes and rather focus on their failures, they are encouraged to think about their successes, and to understand and appreciate them. Recalling their successes fills them with energy and joy.

The second step is called **'Dream'**. The question here is: *What do you want your village and your children to be like after about 10 years time?* Here, they draw their colourful dreams and enjoy them. One concept emphasised is that if they really believe in their dream of something and sincerely work to achieve it, there



Women gain literacy by studying together using their own resources.

Photo: Raju Sharma

is nothing in the world that they cannot achieve. Since these dreams are built directly on their own real accomplishments, they enable people to dream of things that are really achievable.

The third APA question encourages them to plan what they need to do in order to turn their dream into reality. If many needs are mentioned, they are prioritised according to necessity whilst focusing on the first among these. This they do by adding numbers to the pictures or expanding them to outline what is needed to pursue their project. This process is known as **'Design'**.

The fourth question is for each individual: *What will you commit to do in order to start to make your dream come true, to make your own or future generations' life easier and happier?* Here, each of the group members commits at least one thing she can do towards achieving their plan. After each member stands and makes her commitment the group celebrates by giving a big applause. This part is known as **'Delivery'**.

To further enhance the progress, the fifth question is put forward: *What can you do to initiate the project or the plan within 5-10 minutes time?* Here they will try to get started by making a detailed plan or drafting a needed letter. This is just to give a push towards their plan, and is known as **'Do it Now'**.

Before the end of the session, they are made to realise what was achieved that day. This is done by asking them to reflect on the good things that happened in the short meeting: *What was the best thing about today's discussion? Why was it the best part?* This is called **'Discuss/Dialogue'**.

**'Dance and Drum!'** is the end of the session with entertainment of 'Singing, Drumming and Dancing.' Here all are encouraged to dance and sing so that they leave in a very happy mood. ■

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