



# **‘Good Practices and Lessons Learned’ on Experiences of Interventions of Skills Enhancement for Employment Project (SEEP), Nepal**

A Report Submitted to the ILO Country Office Kathmandu, Nepal

By:  
Harihar Acharya, PhD  
Kathmandu, Nepal

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## 1. Introduction and Background

This report aims at capturing the key lessons learned and good practices that have been experienced by the cross-section of the stakeholders during the implementation of the Skills Enhancement for Employment Project (SEEP) in 5 (five) districts of far western region of Nepal namely Baitadi, Bajhang, Dadeldhura, Darchula and Kanchanpur. The Project is envisioned by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD) for increased livelihood options through improved employment opportunities. The project purpose has an inherent focus on *employability enhancement* through providing training to 1200 youth and establishment of one cooperative each in the target districts.

Specifically, the project has following expected outcomes

- Youth are trained and made employable as per the market demand in far western districts of Nepal.
- Model enterprises run in cooperative model by trained youth are in place and functioning well.
- Capacity of the technical training providers and collaboration among stakeholders improved.

### 1.1. The implementation approach of the project:

The overall implementation approach and strategies of SEEP have been based on 'Training for Rural Economic Empowerment (TREE)' methodology developed by Skills and Employability Department of ILO, which is conceptualized under the principles of community-based training. It promotes income generation and local economic development that emphasizes the role of skills and knowledge for creating new economic and employment opportunities for the poor, the underemployed, the unemployed and the otherwise disadvantaged towards sustained economic activities.

TREE consists of a set of components, which are distinct but coherently linked, to guide the process of income generation activities and local economic development. Starting with institutional arrangements and planning among partner organization at the national and local levels, these components aim to systematically identify employment and income generating opportunities at the community/local level; design and deliver appropriate training programs; and provide the necessary post-training support services, including a range of support measures to assist target beneficiaries to organize themselves into credit and savings groups. The extension of such post-training support services for sustained economic activities takes the action beyond the immediate community to lead them to broader local economic development.

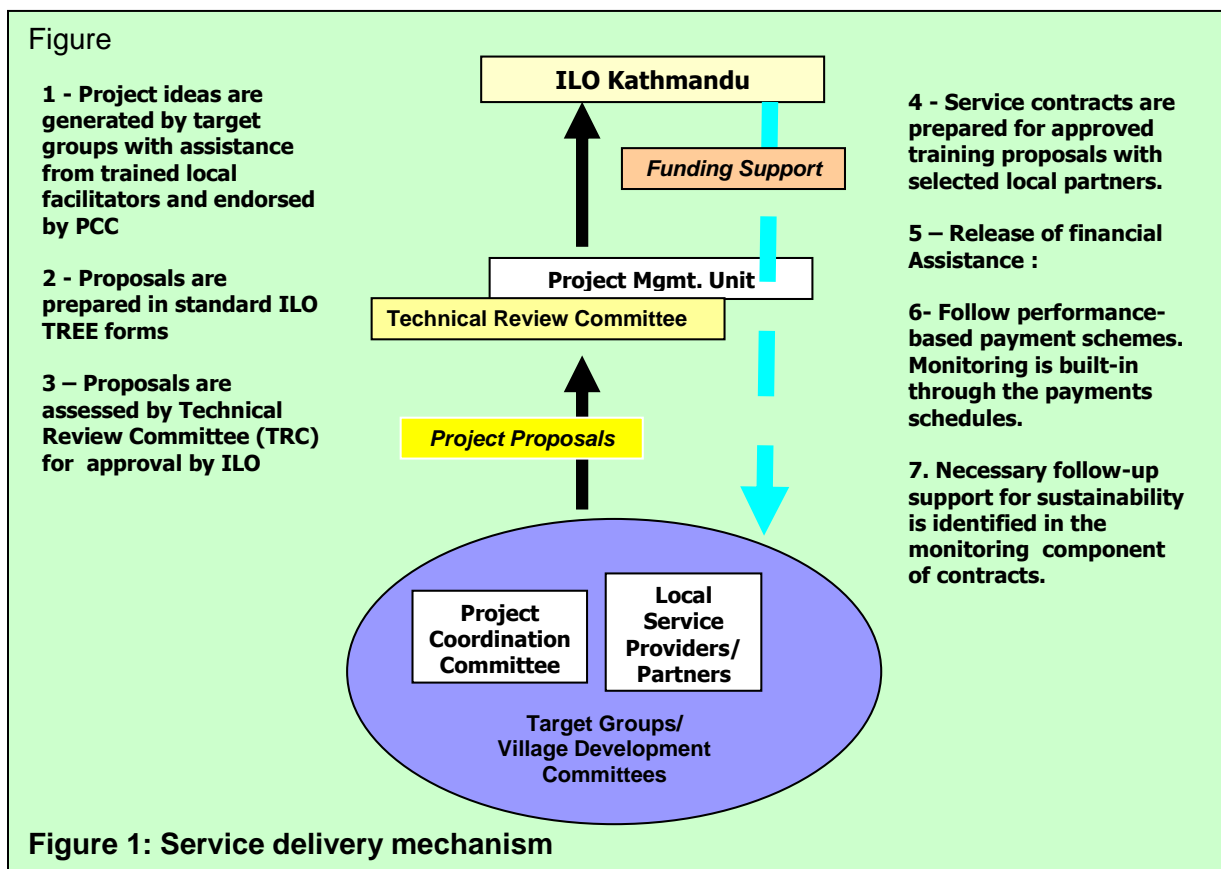
TREE combines, in one coordinated way, four key principles:

- I. mobilizing and empowering partner organizations at national and local levels,
- II. providing demand driven training,
- III. developing an integrated plan of post training support services and
- IV. promoting decent work and equal opportunity

As a whole, the project is conceived to be a program of *skills enhancement for employment, with a focus on youth* which is implemented by various selected institutions comprising of government agencies, employers' organizations and local NGOs/CBOs. The partner organizations are expected to provide support services for implementation of the project.

### 1.2. Service delivery mechanism of the project

The service delivery system of the SEEP is based on the operational requirements of the TREE methodology. The project mobilizes number of government institutions, employers' organizations, training providers and NGOs/CBOs at local and national level. The National Steering Committee (NSC) at national level provides overall guidance on project policies and implementation guidelines. The project Coordination committees (PCCs) at the district level support in field implementation and local partner organizations involve in direct project interventions at grass root level. The following figure 1 illustrates and captures the service delivery mechanism of SEEP Nepal :



The Service delivery involves very participatory approach from grass root level to national level. First of all, trained staff members of the local partner organization generate economic and employment project ideas with target groups using the tools and techniques of TREE particularly RCA and RAM tools. These ideas are systematically organized into skill *training proposals* using standard forms and formats. The PCC endorses training proposals at the district level through technical workshop with key stakeholders.

A Technical Review Committee (TRC) has been established to review the training proposal prepared by local organizations with target groups. The TRC comprises of representative of employer organizations (local chapter of FNCCI of the involved project district), representative from CTEVT, representative of TTPs and Chairperson of PCC and/or focal agency. After endorsement from TRC, the proposals are sent to ILO Kathmandu for approval.

### 1.3. Assessment of opportunities and training needs at community level

The Project adopted community planning tools and techniques of TREE to identify training opportunities leading to immediate income-generation through employment and self-employment in the following two stages:

- **Stage 1** – Rapid Community Appraisal (RCA): tools involve economic development profiling of the target area, gathering and analyzing data for possible training needs and opportunities. There are specific forms and formats devised to systematically present and analyze information.
- **Stage 2**–Rapid Assessment Meeting (RAM): Organizing and conducting participatory discussions with the villagers to identify and prioritize possible employment or self-employment using their own knowledge and the economic development profile of their area. In this stage, Training Proposals and their support documents are prepared and agreed/prioritized for possible financial and technical assistance from ILO SEEP.

The aforementioned tools are developed in view with local economic contexts of Nepal by the ILO international consultant holding series of meetings and workshops with key stakeholders and project officials.

There are total of 31 local partner organizations including government institutions, employers' organizations, local NGOs and technical training providers delivering the project activities in five project districts. Altogether 1245 youth have been provided various types of skill training in five districts of the project with the support from local NGOs, government agencies and employers' organizations.

Within the framework of ILO knowledge management, it was proposed that a team of independent consultants will be recruited to assess and document good practices and lessons learned of the current SEEP project focusing on experiences of project interventions adopting TREE Methodology.

Good practices in the area of skill and enterprise refer to the interventions that work in some way in generating local employment opportunities for youth, whether fully or in part and that may have implications for future interventions in this field.

Lessons learned refer to key learning (what does and does not work in the field of skill and enterprise adopting ILO's TREE methodology particular reference to local employment after skill acquisition and enhancement). They are one of the key building blocks of good practices.

## **2. SCOPE OF THE WORK**

The scope of the work is to develop two sets of documents dedicated to lessons learned and the good practices.

### **2.1 Set I: Identification and Documentation of Lessons Learned**

Lessons learned greatly contribute to knowledge building based on what does and does not work. Though very often specific to a project, lessons learned can be of relevance beyond the individual project. They can include noteworthy points or valuable guiding principles from which good practices can be distilled. Identified lessons learned are a key outcome of review and assessments as well as other initiatives with an evaluative or reflective perspective, such as progress reports, news articles, mission reports etc. They can also be reflections on on-going interventions, or a set of interventions for which could be able to derive learning that will be of use to the project and other interested individuals and agencies.

### **2.2 Set II: Identification and Documentation of Good Practices**

Good practices are identified and documented through a consistent but practical methodology as appropriate for variety of situations in which good practices emerge. They are patterns of positive experiences from a variety of similar interventions and programs on project interventions towards generating income and employment opportunities at local level among youth covered by the project. They are used for analysis and design of policy and program interventions in specific situations, and for developing program models or models of intervention that can be adapted to such situations.

### **2.3. Criteria for Identifying Good Practices**

A number of key criteria were considered independently or in combination while identifying good practices. They include:

- Innovative/creative
- Effectiveness/impact to purpose(negative and positive)
- Replicability

- Sustainability/ownership
- Relevance
- Responsiveness
- Efficiency of use of resources
- Benefit target group
- Create needed acceptance for new approaches
- Put into question common knowledge
- Attract wide social attention

#### **2.4. Technical Areas**

Attempts have been made to cover the following topics/technical areas of intervention in the analysis of the lessons learned and the good practices:

- Policy Development and influence at local level
- Post training support structures
- Capacity Building
- Creation of small and micro enterprises (SME)
- Vocational skills training
- Skill need assessment ( Rapid Community Appraisal)
- Community based skill training approach
- Apprenticeships and on the job training
- Local partnership and collaboration (Linkage to employment opportunities with local infrastructure projects and employers )
- Research and Knowledge Base

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

The assessment of lessons learned and good practices is based on a mix of methodologies including review of project documents and reports, interview with project staff, informal interaction with partner organizations and the target beneficiaries and observation of field activities of the youth trained by partner organizations. Field visits to all five project districts for about 4 weeks in total made it possible to conduct meetings and focus group discussion with project beneficiaries, project staff and staff of implementing partners of the project. These interactions are the source of bulk of the information contained in this report.

### **4. LESSONS LEARNED**

The following are the key lessons learned that will be elaborated and condensed in the final report:

#### **4.1 CTEVT Skill Tests for Vocational Training, opportunity missed.**

#### **4.2 Timing of the Training. During working periods (when linked with the programmes of other agencies, for example, GIZ) or appropriate seasons (for agricultural products).**

#### **4.3 Age bar in agriculture and livestock training not appropriate, these are joint family enterprises. In agriculture and livestock related trades, regular access to qualified technician is necessary for the farmers to receive advice on emerging issues of fertilizer use and pest management.**

#### **4.4 Provision for follow up, counseling, monitoring and technical and legal support are needed for some more time. Further support in developing risk bearing capacity, innovativeness, registration of the enterprises and marketing of products is needed. The trainees are novices, they will not be in high demand unless they receive some refresher and advanced training to sharpen their skills. They also need more opportunities to learn in a group setting different**

dimensions of their profession. Just for an example, those who are producing banana, would like to learn about preparing different items from banana, such as, chips, fibers, dried fruit, etc. They would also like to learn about the skills of doing business and calculating costs and profits.

- 4.5 TREE methodology has proved to be appropriate for the selection of the training, trainer and the trainees
- 4.6 Trainees need to be identified from scattered locations in trades (mason, carpenter) needing small number of artisans in an area
- 4.7 Time will be needed to gain experience and sharpen skills in the group for some more time rather than only during training.
- 4.8 Selection of training agencies need to be based preferably on the basis of previous and/or on-going programs in the area or at least in the district so contacts, follow up and support may continue even after partnership with SEEP is phased out.
- 4.9 Practical and on the job training on trades such as masonry, carpentry and electric wiring will be more appropriate if associated with some social infrastructure such as school, health post, drinking water, irrigation or rural roads.
- 4.10 Practical work for the trainees on masonry may or may not be available in the Food for Work Road Project implemented by GIZ as the section on which the trainee works may not need masonry work or the Naika (group leader) may assign the trainee any other job (Example from Bagthala, Bajhang). The more experienced people are assigned the task though the fresh trainees may serve as assistants.
- 4.11 Current students attending school and colleges may find time to attend training during holidays but they will not generally be able to use their skills for employment and income generation because their education demands more time from them (for example, carpentry in Bajhang and Masonry in Baitadi where some students received training during school holidays).
- 4.12 Monitoring of the technical quality of the training was generally missed even where monitoring visits were conducted by the PCC or the project staff or consultant. Specialists in the relevant technical fields could have been contracted to undertake monitoring and advisory functions on their specialized areas during the training sessions and the OJT. PCC role in monitoring has also remained modest and combined with other programmes in some districts while in some other districts the monitoring visits were made specifically for the project sponsored training and related activities though these were limited to observing that the training actually took place and that there were sufficient participants.
- 4.13 The implementation partners generally found the process of fulfilling the requirements for receiving funds from ILO to be unnecessarily lengthy and centralized. At times the delay in receiving payments caused significant delays in commencing and completing the training and retaining the motivation levels of the training participants and the trainers.
- 4.14 Short period trainings are more beneficial to those who have some skills on the trade from the past experience or training. Fresh trainees need more practice, experience and guidance to sharpen their skills and gain confidence.
- 4.15 Trainees who have elders from the family in the same occupation have tended to use the skill, learn from the guidance in the family and adopt the same occupation.
- 4.16 Trainees have fared better where the trainer has involved them in contracted work, provided them with guidance as needed, and paid them daily wages or share in the contracted amount of money.
- 4.17 During OJT, it would be better to do a complete work rather than only part of the work. If one works only on wall, the trainee tends to miss the relationship of wall with the foundation

and other parts of the structure. If one trainee works on plaster and another on wall alone, both will have only partial skills. Therefore, it would be appropriate to construct one full structure during the OJT. So is the case with motorcycle repair and maintenance. If OJT is based only on the problems brought to the workshop, the trainees miss to learn the relationships between different parts of the system. Therefore, practical training needs to address the complete system rather than just a few parts.

- 4.18 OJT linked with social infrastructures such as schools, school toilets, irrigation and road schemes have received social recognition of the trainees in addition to providing opportunities for practicing the new skills.
- 4.19 Job market in the rural areas is not highly specialized. People with only masonry skills will be in less demand than those who have mixed skills. If one is interested to build a house on contract, a combination of masonry and carpentry skills will be needed. To benefit from the jobs created by road projects, they also prefer to learn the skills of weaving gation wire boxes and filling them with rocks.
- 4.20 Focus on production still continues and the marketing problems are not addressed in equal measure so there could emerge marketing problems as the volume of production increases.
- 4.21 Need for technical backstopping on the trade as well as repair and maintenance of equipments and machines need to receive further attention at the time of planning a training as exemplified by the spice processing enterprises promoted in Baitadi and Dadeldhura districts.
- 4.22 Time frame of the training for new participants may be in need of extension to help them acquire basic minimum skills needed for receiving employment.
- 4.23 In some cases, interest in allowances/snacks money was more pronounced than the acquisition of skills. Further social mobilization and communication are needed to manage any misunderstanding and false expectations (e.g, expectations of payment from the GIZ food for work schemes during OJT in Baitadi and Bajhang districts).
- 4.24 Quality and environmental concerns need added attention in the production and processing of food items such as spices, vegetables, honey and bee hives. Spice making enterprises await registration with the District Cottage and Small Industries Office to be able to use a label for their products. The vegetable production involves some inputs of chemical fertilizers and pesticides that have implication to the health of the people, bees, and the soil. The production of bee hives removes trees of specific species from the environment while schemes for replacement planting and protection of these species has missed the attention in the training programme.
- 4.25 Provision of one cooperative in a district does not meet the investment needs of the trainees that come from different and scattered VDCs. In addition, successful cooperatives have their own growth process and gestation period. Any cooperative established from outside push within a short period of time without developing adequate level of local concern, demand, commitment, skill and leadership tends to become defunct soon enough. Finally, even in a single village, the savings generated by the cooperatives are grossly inadequate even to meet the capital requirements of one small enterprise.
- 4.26 The utilization part of the food or money received during training and employment has profound implications on the individual, family and the society. Utilization of income is as important a development issue as is the acquisition of qualification and earning of income. If appropriate life skills and value orientation are lacking, hard earned resources and valuable human life tend to be wasted in gambling, alcohol and drug abuse. When the level of consciousness is low and the attitude is negative, what appeals people is making quick money by any means rather than improving their skills and employability. It is still to be seen that self-employment and working in enterprises are considered inferior to government jobs

obtained from political connections. Youths in some rural areas still consider smoking and drinking alcohol as status symbols.

## **5. GOOD PRACTICES**

The following are the main good practices that will be elaborated and/or condensed in the final report:

- 5.1 The process of community planning including Rapid Community Appraisal (RCA) and Rapid Assessment Meeting (RAM) have been institutionalized to some extent by the partner organizations either formally or informally.**
- 5.2 Selection of the training, trainees and the trainers in systematic and participatory ways with transparent criteria have added to the appropriateness of the selection and reduced political interferences in the selection process. Partner agencies have increasingly institutionalized these good practices.**
- 5.3 Developing the training syllabus and budget with technically knowledgeable persons has made the training package more appropriate and realistic.**
- 5.4 The provision of equipment and materials needed for the training and for starting an enterprise directly contributed to the effectiveness of the training programme.**
- 5.5 Procurement process adopted by SEEP has been internalized by a number of partner organizations that did not have such a system before (for example, demand collection, three quotations, comparative chart and receipts rather than just invoices).**
- 5.6 The performance based contract to ensure that at least 70 per cent of the trainees are employed has consistently proved to be a strong motivating tool for the partner organizations to put extra efforts to see to it that the training quality is good and the trainees are actually employed.**
- 5.7 There are cases where trainers are involved in contracting or employing the trainees or buying and selling their products in bulk and providing needed follow up support including counseling and material inputs such as seeds and fertilizers. This is more likely to happen when the trainers are local to the district and have association with enterprises of their own or someone else. In some cases, the trainer takes certain contracts, employs the trainees and also guides them in their work.**
- 5.8 Middlemen are developing from among the trainees to collect and sell the products or services in bulk (e.g., Dadeldhura). This role is sometimes taken by the trainer or an enterprise where On the Job Training was conducted.**
- 5.9 Breakdown of training in five types depending upon the characteristics of the trainees and the objectives of the training have added to the relevance.**
- 5.10 Linking training with programmes of other agencies that create jobs, for example, jobs created by the Food for Work schemes implemented by GIZ. The trainees have been employed in schemes of road, drinking water, irrigation and school building construction supported under the Food for Work programme.**
- 5.11 Partnership with local implementing agencies having programmes in the district has enhanced the likelihood that follow on support in the form of counseling, information flow, and linkages with market, other programmes of their own or other support agencies will happen.**
- 5.12 The provision for post-training support has filled a pronounced gap and added to the motivation of the implementation partners, though the length of time for this tasks may need to be further extended.**
- 5.13 After the training, some people have started doing the business individually but they do work collectively. Innovative models that combine individual interests with collective**



initiatives are emerging. In Alital (Dadeldhura) six fish plus pig farmers send out one person to represent their interest or do marketing in the District Headquarters though they do their business independently. Another 6 people doing business in goat meat business in Amargadhi Municipality (Dadeldhura) procure goats individually and keep their income independently while they work together in slaughtering goats, selling meat, maintaining sanitation standards, owning the cutting implements and weighing scales, and maintaining and paying the utility bills of the common slaughter house.

- 5.14 Interest in skill and enterprise development has multiplied and opportunities for learning from one another are increasingly being utilized. Additional people are demanding similar training in all districts.

## 6 CONCLUSIONS

ILO SEEP has proved to be an innovative project that has introduced many useful tools and approaches in promoting skills and employability among the Nepalese youth. The community planning process including the selection of the training and the trainees, procurement procedure, performance-based contracts, categorization of training in five types and the selection of local implementing organizations in most cases and partnership links with GIZ are some examples that have added value to the project. These positive lessons would certainly prove to be valuable to any similar initiative targeting youth skill and employment in the future.

There still are some areas where further improvements would have made the project even more effective. The lessons learned suggest particular areas that deserve review and improvement. They include technical monitoring of the training, provision of follow up support, registration of enterprises, arrangement of skill tests of the vocational trainees at CTEVT, consideration of the natural growth process of cooperatives, expediting and rationalizing fund release procedure, emphasis on life skills and human value orientation, marketing of products, quality and environmental concerns, timing of the training and selection of place for on the job training.