

# ONE FOR ALL AND ALL FOR ONE

**SAMAGRA: A Rights Based Approach to Development, 2008-2011**





# ONE FOR ALL AND ALL FOR ONE

**SAMAGRA: A Rights Based Approach to Development, 2008-2011**

SAMAGRA BIKAS SEWA KENDRA  
Chabahil, Kathmandu

Tel.: 4469649, 2075103

Fax: 4469649

Website: [www.samagra-nepal.org](http://www.samagra-nepal.org)

Email: [info@samagra-nepal.org.np](mailto:info@samagra-nepal.org.np)

Photo credits: SAMAGRA

This publication may be copied and  
distributed as needed with proper credits to  
SAMAGRA.

Designed and Processed by  
WordScape, 5526699

## Table of contents

### **One for all and all for one 13**

#### **Introduction 13**

Strategic partnerships 16

Networks 16

Strategic approach 17

### **Rights based approach (rba) and samagra 21**

#### **Community organization and social families 27**

Empowerment approach 28

Social family structure 31

Governance structure and leadership 31

### **Rights based development on the ground 33**

#### **Overview of activities in 2008-11 34**

Marginalized people's empowerment program 34

Human Rights monitoring and advocacy campaigns 37

Social audits 38

Conflict resolution 38

Platform for nepali philanthropy 39

Self-reliance through organization 39

Livelihoods skills 40

Local infrastructure development and environment conservation 40

Drinking water 41

Environmental conservation 43

### **Financial overview or system 47**

#### **The road ahead 48**

Achievements 48

Challenges 48

#### **Annexes 51**

Annex-1: map of nepal with program coverage 52

Annex-2: activities: quantity and coverage 53

Annex-3: financial statements 57

Annex-4: samagra organogram 59



# Foreword



Sitting down to write this, I am very delighted to try to recollect how SAMAGRA has passed through the different ups and downs and how it has overcome the difficulties it faced in the process. I hope the readers of this report will get a glimpse of how the organization has been performing against its vision, mission and program objectives. Embracing a two-pronged empowerment strategy – Human Rights and livelihoods development – SAMAGRA has sought to address civil, political, cultural and economic empowerment of the marginalized and poorest communities of excluded groups. The programs are focused on assisting women, Dalits, Janajatis, Madhesis, and religious minorities who make up a majority of the Nepali population.

This publication reports on how SAMAGRA has been assisting marginalized communities to live with dignity. It also explains how the organization has adopted the national policies related to gender equality, good governance, peace building and environmental conservation at the local level.

SAMAGRA derives its organizational strength from “Social Families” it helps to organize. Its strategy stresses on empowering these Social Families to enable them to become self-reliant and take charge of their development. It seeks to assist the transformation of the voiceless/excluded people to become knowledgeable and vocal for claiming their civil, political, cultural and economic rights, and also for demanding their rightful share of public resources/services. This report illustrates how the

members of Social Families are taking leadership roles not only in the village and district levels but also as members of the Constituent Assembly.

I am, therefore, convinced that those seeking to implement the national vision of transforming post-conflict Nepal into a “New Nepal” that is inclusive, provides equal opportunities to all citizens irrespective of caste, class, ethnicity and religious beliefs, can take advantage of the lessons/experiences of SAMAGRA.

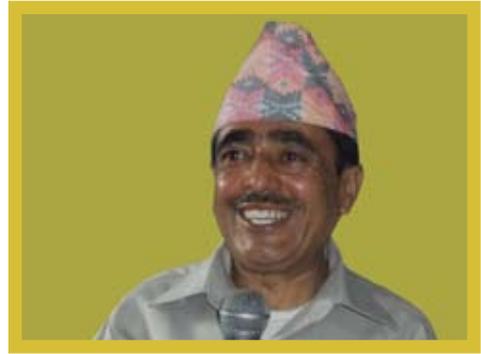
That said SAMAGRA’s achievements would not have been possible without financial and technical support extended by various external donors as well as its Nepali partners. I take this opportunity to thank all of them, particularly DanidaHUGOU, Practical Action, United States Agency for International Development (USAID) (Infrastructure For Income Project), the Poverty Alleviation Fund (PAF) and the District Development Committee of Lamjung (Local Governance and Community Development Program, LGCDP).

Finally, I also thank the people working at SAMAGRA (both at the center and in the districts) and volunteers. These are the people who are helping materialize the SAMAGRA vision of spreading the torch of self-help for development in Nepal.

Balkrishna Lal Joshi  
Chairperson



# From the Executive Director



An earlier SAMAGRA publication *Power to the People* had reported on the evolution of the organization and the spread of its programs from Palpa in central Nepal to Jumla in the Far-west and Shankhuwashabha in the east over a 10-year period (1996-2007). This is a follow up to that tradition of reporting back to stakeholders. This publication reports on the activities planned and executed by an organization that is made up of marginalized and vulnerable people seeking to support the empowerment of themselves and others who have been on the sidelines of Nepali society. This publication covers SAMAGRA's activities between 2008 and 2011.

This publication reports on how SAMAGRA has made efforts to identify the strengths of marginalized communities and channelize the energy for protecting their rights and for initiating activities that can help improve their livelihoods. It has assisted these groups to end untouchability and other unfounded social beliefs and customs to build societies that are inclusive, self-sufficient, independent and self-confident.

SAMAGRA believes that such support helps people take leadership roles and contribute

towards building creative societies where self-help and development are valued. SAMAGRA also believes that the people it works with are capable of resolving and transforming local conflicts and bring peace to their societies. They are also capable in identifying what best works for their societies, and activities and actions that are needed for supporting their quests.

This publication reports on the efforts of the villagers to educate their children, access public resources for development activities, build local infrastructures, and activities for raising incomes, all of which contribute towards building their self-confidence.

As means towards doing all of these, the villagers have organized themselves, and it is this collective strength that has helped them achieve what they want. Their organization is called a Social Family. Today there are over 500 Social Families in different parts of Nepal, in the mountains, hills and the plains. These Social Families bring together over 15,000 families, and among the members, 65 percent are women. Members come from

marginalized communities – women, Dalits, Adivasi Janajatis and the very poor. These are people who had not had an opportunity to try to make efforts to improve their lives. These groups now have committed leaders in their own Social Families, and many of them have also become members of the parliament. To the poor and excluded, the Social Families have proven to be a means for demanding and being assured of their basic rights.

The Social Families serve as platforms for carrying out training on different skills and also for re-starting basic education and information sharing. More than channeling development assistance to the villages, SAMAGRA has served these Social Families as a conduit of correct information, and that has helped many villagers to realize their rights, and access basic services from the state. This process has proven to be a more sustainable way of assisting the voiceless to access services and resources that are available locally but often remain unknown because of inadequate access to public information.

## Vision

SAMAGRA has also learnt lessons for organizational improvements. Based on feedback from social families, it has revised its governance systems, the statutes and rules of the organization. This includes an action plan for institutionalizing the Social Families, as part of its 15-year vision (2066-2070). SAMAGRA has prepared a strategic partnership program for the purpose. Accordingly, SAMAGRA will strive to attain six major outcomes and seek to expand its

programs to 25 districts from the 12 districts where it now has presence. The idea is to be present in all 75 districts of the country in the next 15 years.

The intended outcomes are attainable. At the local level the Social Families are engaged in Human Rights monitoring and advocacy campaigns and are claiming and exercising their rights through non-violent means and are also settling local conflicts and grievances. The villagers have established more Social Families that have been mobilizing resources and this has helped in enhancing their livelihoods. Their lives have become easier because of the local infrastructures they have built and are also engaged in environmental conservation.

## Partnerships

SAMAGRA believes that social change is not possible by working alone and instead needs the contributions of thousands of hands working together. It has been able to secure financial and technical support of DanidaHUGOU and moral support from Practical Action. It has also entered into partnership agreements with the government's Poverty Alleviation Program, the Lamjung District Development Committee (LGCDP) and the Local Development Office in the district. It has also been working with Village Development Committees in various districts. I take this opportunity to thank all the partners for believing in the SAMAGRA approach and for the financial and technical support they have been providing.

Journalists Krishna Murari Bhandari and Yadav Thapaliya have written about the activities of Social Families in different newspapers and helped boost their morale. Similarly, Youth FM has had a regular weekly program *Samajik Pariwar Sangh-Sanghai Rahanda* (Living with the social families). Likewise journalists working in different districts have written about Social Families and have helped support their activities at the local level. I thank all these journalists for helping us in our efforts to assist the poor and vulnerable to seek their fair share from society. I also thank Balkrishna Lal Joshi, chairperson of the executive committee, and members of the board for their continuous

support in our quest to assist the people in need of help.

Finally, I thank all the motivators working with the social families day-in day-out, the volunteers, regional supervisors and the staff at the central office. I also thank Binod Bhattarai for assisting us in preparing this report to tell the stories of hardworking people in the far-flung villages. I believe this report on their activities will help add to their confidence to continue the good work they have initiated.

Dornath Neupane  
Executive Director



# ONE FOR ALL AND ALL FOR ONE



## INTRODUCTION

SAMAGRA or Holistic Development Service Centre is a non-profit, and non-political non-governmental organization. Its vision is to contribute towards building a self-reliant, harmonious and just society based on individual dignity and Human Rights. Its mission is to empower the marginalized and poor communities to enable them to become capable of claiming, and exercising their basic rights.



*Social Family members at Tasarpu, Dhading learning to read and write.*

SAMAGRA has devised a unique approach for pursuing its mission, which involves forming and mobilizing Social Families for promoting Human Rights, community development, conciliatory conflict management, cultural harmony and coexistence. The Social Families are cohesive community groups of the poor, excluded social groups – women, Dalits, Adibasi Janajatis (Indigenous Peoples) and religious minorities – and the very poor. The Social Families are organized around a common motto: One for All and All for One. They also follow transparent and democratic decision-making processes, and are accountable to their fellow members and their communities.

SAMAGRA was founded in 1996 but its development philosophy was nurtured long before the organization took its present day form and structure. It is rooted in the swabalamban approach to development that emphasized self-help and promoted a work ethic that supported small-scale interventions to bring change. Dornath Neupane, the founder of SAMAGRA, initiated the development idea at Bagale village of Palpa District in the February 1985. Working as a field assistant for Integrated Development System (IDS), he organized a group of 27 poor households belonging to Kami, Gharti and Damai communities. He called the unit an Income Generating Group or IGG. He was the first of hundreds of self-help groups it was to form for changing the livelihoods of thousands of villagers in Nepal.

In 1985, Bagale was recognized as one of the dirtiest villages in the district. It was because people raised pigs in the open and there were droppings everywhere. The villagers did not have toilets and personal hygiene was non-existent. But the people had some basic skills: The Kamis of Bagale had the skill to work on metal and were well known for making copper *gagris* (water vessels). They also made agricultural implements of iron. Similarly, the Damais knew how to stitch clothes, a basic necessity for all villagers. What they lacked was productive assets and the self-confidence to use their skills to improve their lives.

The IGG provided the villagers a forum to discuss and plan what to do and how. The villagers were hard workers and



*A Social Family meeting at Govindapur, Siraha.*

motivated and therefore it did not take long to start bringing change. Some of their first activities were cleaning the village trail, starting to save money, giving up bad habits, and using the skills they already had on productive activities. They also began sending children to school. The youth and the elderly joined the adult education classes in the evenings. Soon they began growing vegetables in their fields and planted improved varieties of fruit brought from as far away as Bhaktapur with Neupane serving as the conduit.

The villagers then organized an exhibition of their produce at a local school. It was an opportunity for the Bagale villagers to exhibit their produce: clothes produced by the Damais, copper utensils and farm implements made by the Kamis and the radish grown by other villagers. The Magars from Maulathar, who were impressed by the IGG of Bagale, turned up for the exhibition with bamboo baskets. The radish produced in the village became popular overnight, not to talk about the already well-known gagris. Thereafter, IDS expanded the program to

12 village development committees (VDCs) of Palpa and more VDCs in Lamjung and Dhading districts.

In early 1990, a group of multidisciplinary professionals came together to form the Rural Self-reliance Development Center (RSDC), which adopted the idea started in Bagale and continued the program until the mid-1990s. The membership of RSDC included former IDS program staff and professionals working in different areas.

However, following the differences on development approach and project choices, 14 development experts, former RSDC members and field workers met to discuss the formation of a new organization - SAMAGRA. The meeting formed a seven-member ad-hoc committee required for registration, and a three-person advisory committee. The first meeting of the new organization was held on 13 May 1996. The meeting, attended by 74 individuals decided to grant general membership to 17 individuals and also formed a five-member Management Committee.

**The four main objectives of the SAMAGRA are:**

1. Excluded/marginalized communities are empowered to protect/claim their rights and are engaged in peace building activities through good governance and democratic practices.
2. Community-based groups/ Social Families are empowered to access services, resources and opportunities and are mobilized for sustainable livelihoods in a peaceful environment.



*A Partnership meeting at SAMAGRA's Kathmandu office*

3. Excluded communities are empowered socio-economically through self-reliant capacity development, and
4. The quality of life of the poor is enhanced through improved rural infrastructure/services and environment conservation.

### Strategic partnerships

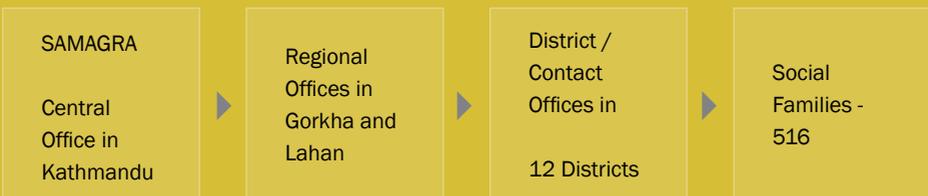
DanidaHUGOU and Practical Action signed a Memorandum of Understanding with SAMAGRA on 17 June 2009 as strategic partners for implementing its programs. Based on the MOU and Annual Work Plan and Budget (AWAB) 2009/10, DanidaHUGOU signed another agreement with SAMAGRA on 25 June 2009, effective 1 July 2009. Later in March 2010, Poverty Alleviation Fund (PAF) joined hands to make SAMAGRA its implementing

partner in Dhading district. Likewise SAMAGRA and Lamjung District Development Committee signed an agreement to implement the LGCDP in some village of the district in February 2011.

SAMAGRA has been able to establish effective networking and coordination with District Development Committees (DDC), Village Development Committees (VDC), Nepal Red Cross, National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), Community Forests Users' Groups (CFUG), and other local NGOs/development agents. One important element in SAMAGRA's approach that has helped generate unconditional trust of the local stakeholders is its practice of public auditing. The public audits cover both the financial and operational realms and draw a large number of people.

### Networks

Over the years, SAMAGRA's development approach has resulted in the building up of an organic organization with unparalleled grassroots reach and capacity to take its activities deep into the villages of Nepal. It has a central office in Kathmandu and implements programs in 12 districts. There are 18 fulltime motivators and 60 volunteers that motivate and mentor – while also continuously learning from – the 516 Social Families.



The Social Families are SAMAGRA's link to poor rural communities. The motivators work with Social Families assisting them to generate development ideas, develop self-confidence and build their capacity to form and run VDC level cooperatives. These Social Families implement all the empowerment activities related to civil, political and socio-economic rights. The VDC level Social Families are represented in the District Social Families and district level co-operatives, which oversee and implement district level empowerment activities in coordination with the SAMAGRA leadership in the central level.

The central office in Kathmandu liaises with the donor community and various like-minded organizations and seeks and mobilizes support on behalf of the Social Families. It also maintains dialogue with I/NGOs, government agencies, the NHRC and the UN OHCHR for sharing information and networking. The district offices maintain a similar relationship with district level agencies working to promote rights based development in the villages.

At the centre SAMAGRA has close working relationship with the Preamsar Foundation Nepal, (partner of The Prem Rawat Foundation, USA), and the Informal Sector Service Centre (INSEC). It also has exchanges with the Human Rights Alliance, Human Rights and Peace Society Nepal, Human Rights Network, Nepal National Dalit Social Welfare Organization and NGO Federation of Nepalese Indigenous Nationalities (NGO FONIN). In addition, it has worked closely with the Central Federation of Saving and Credit Cooperatives.

The district and the regional coordinators coordinate their activities with the district level Human Rights networks.

At the local level SAMAGRA has established significant partnerships with local government line agencies. With its support, in 2008 the Social Families were able to mobilize local support of NRs 41,620,230 in Fiscal Year 2008/09, NRs 39,858,580 in 2009/10 and NRs 11,625,680 in FY 2010/11 in eight districts. The fund was used for carrying out activities in education, skills development, livestock, electricity/energy, and water supply. These funds were allocated to the Social Families and SAMAGRA worked with the partner agencies to ensure effective implementation.

### Strategic approach

Article-6 of the UN declaration on the Right to Development states, "All States should co-operate with a view to promoting, encouraging and strengthening universal



Regional Human Rights training at Besisahar, Lamjung.

respect for and observance of all Human Rights and fundamental freedoms for all without any distinction as to race, sex, language or religion. All Human Rights and fundamental freedoms are indivisible and interdependent; equal attention and urgent consideration should be given to the implementation, promotion and protection of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. States should take steps to eliminate obstacles to development resulting from failure to observe civil and political rights, as well as economic social and cultural rights."

SAMAGRA has adopted the declaration as a base for its activities and therefore its work with the marginalized people, and assistance to empower them has not resulted from sympathy or kindness. Instead, it is an attempt to uphold their rights by making the State accountable for fulfilling them. This rights-based approach underpins all SAMAGRA activities in development as well as its campaigns.

In 2009, SAMAGRA developed a five-year (2009-2013) Strategic and Operational Plan (StOP) taking into account its experience and lessons learnt from its work in rural development. The plan recognized the need to ensure that the excluded/marginalized communities including women, Dalits, Janajatis, Madhesis, indigenous peoples and others enjoyed their rights and secured better, dignified livelihoods in an environment of peace. The StOP proposed six major activities and various sub-activities. The six main activities are:

- Monitoring and carrying out Human Rights and advocacy campaigns for fulfillment of these rights.
- Institutionally strengthening SAMAGRA for contributing to effective empowerment (organizing, awareness raising, mobilizing) of marginalized men and women to claim and exercise their rights.
- Promoting social harmony, non-violence and peaceful ways of addressing grievances, particularly in the Terai (plains).
- Promoting self-reliant community-based institutions (Social Families) and resource mobilization.
- Livelihood enhancement/ Micro-enterprise development, and
- Local infrastructure improvement/ development and environment conservation.

The work-plan outlined activities for 126 VDCs in 17 districts by mobilizing 875 Social Families supervised by the district and regional coordinators. The StOP proposed adding 20 VDCs from 8 selected mid-western districts.



*Women of the Social Family at Bhangaha, Saptari explaining what they do.*

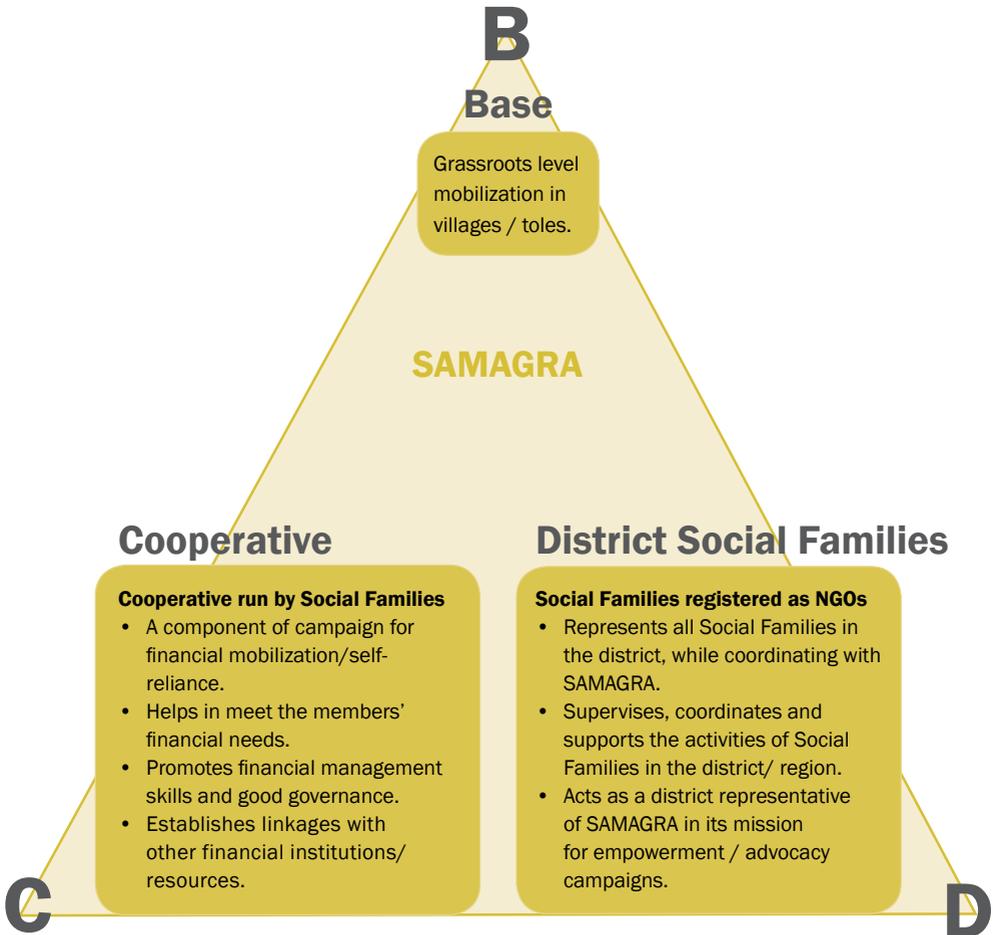
The diagram (page 16) further indicates how the SAMAGRA's core implementation partners at the grassroots level, the Social Families that are being strengthened by District level Social Families and cooperatives, become sustainable organizations.

At the operational level district Social Families are registered as non-governmental organizations, while cooperatives are formed under the Cooperative Act. The role of SAMAGRA is to facilitate the development of the three types of affiliates and help them to grow as viable local institutions.



Participants at a workshop on program implementation in Kathmandu.

The diagram below depicts the triangular inter-relationship amongst affiliates of SAMAGRA: (1) B stands for the Basic village level Social Families, (2) C stands for Cooperatives, and (3) D for District level Social Families.



# RIGHTS BASED APPROACH (RBA) AND SAMAGRA



Development is a basic human right and the realization of Human Rights embodies the outcomes envisaged by all development activities. Therefore, the core objectives of development are about Human Rights.

Respect for Human Rights is a necessary precondition for development as no development can occur in situations where the basic rights of people are violated. The emphasis on Human Rights in development helps to focus attention on the structural inequities that cause and maintain impoverishment and exclusion. Human Rights obligations are legally-binding and therefore their application in the context of development can strengthen development outcomes. The ultimate objective of any development activity must thus be the realization of rights.

*Initially*, SAMAGRA had adopted what it called the *swabalamban* or self-reliance approach to development. The self-reliance philosophy was first successfully implemented by the IDS in 1985 and by RSDC from 1991. In essence it was what was later called the social mobilization approach that helped participating villagers to organize and unite and demand public services rather than wait for handouts from the government and donors. The self-reliance approach assisted them in re-discovering their self-confidence to demand services, and also enabled them to take decisions to improve their lives. The approach helped villagers seek and obtain development support from public agencies.

It was also about organizing people by helping them to discover their confidence, enjoy

their rights, and be involved in improving their livelihoods and their communities. The activities promoted were typical interventions aimed at income-raising and social change. What was unique was that the activities were selected based on local needs and differed from community to community. The choice that people could make, rather than adopt development solutions planned elsewhere made the difference. The *swabalamban* approach was implemented through activities for agriculture improvements, horticulture, sanitation and hygiene, social activism, handicrafts, empowerment and infrastructure building.

### Right-based Approach

A major shift in the program implementation philosophy took place with the dawn of the new millennium. It began at a workshop of SAMAGRA's Board and staff for which the South Asia Partnership (SAP) Nepal had provided resource persons in 2000. After the workshop SAMAGRA decided to include the rights-based approach for attaining self-reliant development. It was a major shift in thinking from "helping" the poor to earn incomes and improve their livelihoods, to empowering people or making the poor and the marginalized able to realize their rights to have the access to the same opportunities and income-generating means available to more privileged members of society. Actionaid supported the implementation of this approach in 2001/02 and was continued with the support from DanidaHUGOU after 2004.

At SAMAGRA, the rights-based development approach is implemented in a two-pronged

## Box-1: SAMAGRA with the Kumals

When Bharat Prasad Shrestha, senior motivator and Sanumaya Shrestha, motivator from SAMAGRA had reached Kyamuntaar (Ward No. 8 of Borlang VDC), Gorkha about a year ago, the local residents had covered their faces and fled. They were wary about speaking to strangers. The Kumals residents of the village were not used to meeting outsiders. Their lives revolved around fishing in the river because agriculture was not enough to meet their basic food needs. Many spent the nights on the riverbank. This was the routine for generations; children did what their parents did and were largely unaware of basic services available to them through local government bodies and line agencies.

It was only after a local Paanmaya Kumal, who knew something about SAMAGRA, explained to villagers what organizing meant, did the villagers agree to form a Social Family of their own with Kamala Kumal, a mother of four – two girls and two boys – as chairperson. Through awareness programs and regular interaction among themselves and SAMAGRA staff, the Kumal in the community gradually began understanding the strength of organization.

Within months, the same people who fled when they saw strangers were travelling to the district headquarter, Gorkha Bazaar, to interact and make presentations in front of officers from district line agencies. “We are the very poor and make a living by fishing, now we have organized in a Social Family,” said Paanmaya Kumal. “Now we can express ourselves, come here and speak out our concerns. We have built toilets and sent our children to school.” She added that SAMAGRA had helped them learn new skills and had helped them obtain information on services that were available to them from public agencies.

The first Social Families in the village had only women members. Today, the men have also joined.

With information on what services are locally available, they have already convinced the VDC to allocate a budget for a drinking water system in their community. They have begun monthly savings and use the fund to support members to raise poultry or goats. (Adapted from SAMAGRA Bulletin. No 12)

approach through the mobilization and empowerment of marginalized communities by organizing them into Social Families for attaining two outcomes: (1) empowerment in terms of civil and political rights, and (2) empowerment in terms of socioeconomic,

cultural, development and environmental rights. In essence it is about livelihoods empowerment or helping the poor to access opportunities for improving living standards, by mobilizing people to demand and seek their rights.



## Box-2: The making of a leader

Adiklal Ram is a resident of Salokhair Tole of Sitapur VDC (Ward No. 1) of Siraha District. The 47-year-old is today a source of inspiration for many in the entire region.

He used to make a living by playing musical instruments during weddings and working as a wage-laborer. He was smoking and drinking or gambling when he was not working, and had become a cause of distress in the family and among neighbors.

All that changed after a meeting that was held in the village on 24 December 2005. He sat in a corner to listen to the discussions on forming a Social Family and inspired by what he heard, organized a Social Family of 19 households. The group also agreed on a set of rules: to stop smoking, chewing tobacco and drinking, oppose untouchability and other Human Rights violations, to unite for development and to seek and mobilize resources for becoming self-reliant and confident. The first “casualty” of the new rules was the chairperson – Adiklal.

But it was also a turning point in his life. He attended trainings on Human Rights protection and conflict management and encouraged his group members to attend similar training programs. He began seeking knowledge and information, and began interacting with others and also learnt to sign his name. Asked how he mobilizes resources, he says, “After we take a decision in the group I look for people to help with writing applications then I take them to all the concerned government line agencies and NGOs located in Siraha, the district headquarters.” And he never gave up: He had to visit the office of an NGO 17 times to get the first request approved.

Adiklal’s persistence has paid off. “I managed to obtain 22 foot pumps, 7 hand pumps and 45 goats and distributed to the members,” he said. “From the soil conservation and agriculture development offices I obtained 300 bamboo saplings, 1001 mango saplings, eight quintals of ginger and turmeric bulbs, 16 wire nets and eight tractor loads of boulders for use in river training and erosion control,” he added. He also obtained, and got his Social Family to plant, 6000 saplings of various species of trees on the riverbank.

The floods in the region had affected 25 households severely and 18 houses had major damages. After the floods he went to the District Administration Office and managed to bring back Rs.12,600 as support for 18 families. He also brought 50 kilograms of improved rice seeds and planted it in the village, and vegetable seeds, for 19 households. Besides such support he was also able to mobilize over Rs.1.11 million for various activities in the village.

He has also given up some of his habits. Adiklal does not smoke or chew tobacco anymore, and drinks only on some occasions. He says, “I think I have discovered a new life.” (Adapted from SAMAGRA Bulletin. No 18)

In June 2004 DanidaHUGOU assisted SAMAGRA in implementing a pilot project on the rights-based approach in Siraha and Saptari districts in Nepal's eastern plains. The two districts have the largest Dalit population among the Terai districts and were also among those where caste-based discrimination was widely practiced, resulting in

the systematic violations of the rights of Dalits. DanidaHUGOU provided Rs1.15 million for the one year project. The development objective of SAMAGRA's "Dalits/ Janajatis Empowerment and Advocacy Campaign" was to make "Dalits and Janajatis in the project areas more assertive of their rights to better livelihoods and dignity."





# COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION AND SOCIAL FAMILIES



Nepal is a country of isolated rural communities. The 3,913 VDCs represent the lowest unit of government. Within these villages there are sub-units, the wards, and even within the wards, there are communities who in some hill districts live at great distances from the VDC office. Many of these isolated communities comprise of settlements of Dalits, Janajatis, and other minorities or people who have faced discrimination and exclusion for centuries. Their development needs are exacerbated by their isolation.

The Janajatis and Dalit make up 37.1 percent and 11.8 percent of Nepal's population, respectively (Census 2001). However, a large number of people from these groups are lagging behind in terms of the Human Development Indicators, and are woefully under-represented both public and private sector institutions. Therefore, they also lag behind in terms of voice and participation in decision-making on matters that affect their lives.



*Members of Social Families from the hills meeting their counterparts in Sishvabani, Shaptari*

The ability of individuals and groups to voice their concerns and be heard starts with their access to and participation in decision-making. SAMAGRA has adopted participation of marginalized groups as an organizational value and their involvement in decisions and program implementation, as its governance ethic. This lies at the heart of its rights-based approach to development where villagers are encouraged to help each other and ultimately empower themselves as individuals and as a group for realizing both Human Rights as well as improvement of livelihoods.

### **Empowerment Approach**

At the core of the empowerment approach is imparting skills, information and knowledge to the excluded, vulnerable, voiceless groups through the Social Families. The Social Family concept predates SAMAGRA as it is rooted in the idea that was tested during the mid-1980s when villagers with common interests were brought together to form Income Generating Groups (IGGs). They were encouraged to set up their own self-reliant development fund, which was used to finance urgent household and social needs of members. The fund was also used to finance productive activities. For starters, SAMAGRA provided a small credit to the group. Later, the members themselves contributed small amounts each month to form their own fund for supporting income-generating activities of the members.

Alongside the shift of SAMAGRA's development approach, from primarily income-generation to

**Table 1: Social Families and cooperatives in 12 districts**

S. No.	District	No. of VDCs	No. of Municipalities	No. of SFs	No. of members in the SFs representing HHs				Total	No. of Cooperatives			
					Female	Male	Dalit	Janajati			Muslim / Chepang	Backward community	Others
1	Siraha*	15	1	61	923	651	1125	335	36	13	65	1574	8
2	Saptari*	17		88	1445	768	1565	466	16	15	151	2213	7
3	Udaypur*	7	1	30	535	230	285	365	35	0	80	765	4
4	Dhanusha	2		4	90	10	25	35	0	8	32	100	0
5	Mahottari	2		5	109	34	70	65	0	0	8	143	0
6	Dhading*	9		55	1017	470	418	999	13		57	1487	7
7	Gorkha*	8	1	42	1107	497	420	1135			49	1604	9
8	Lamjung*	8		34	807	346	647	234			272	1153	6
9	Bhojpur	14		122	1063	1809						2872	0
10	Shankhuwasabha	11		64	470	899						1369	0
11	Tanahu*	1		1	50	55						105	1
12	Jumla*	2		10	143	66						209	0
	Total	96	3	516	7759	5835	4555	3634	100	36	714	13594	42

\*The Income Generation Groups in these districts have yet to be transformed into Social Families. In early 2005 there were 1026 IGGs. Some of them have been transformed into Social Families while 911 IGGs remain to reorganize as Social Families in all the 12 districts.



*Leadership training at Rigaon, Dhading*

a rights-based approach, the IGGs also needed to be transformed, and that led to the evolution of Social Families. In essence thus, the Social Families have evolved from the IGGs following a greater realization of the strength of collective efforts for addressing common problems. While the IGGs focused on the individuals, the Social Families function as extended families within a community that respects all members as equals and affords every individual equal opportunity.

Social Families are cohesive and include all members of the community irrespective of caste, class or gender and comprise largely of women, Dalits, Janajatis and other minorities that work for empowering themselves and their groups. Unlike groups formed by other NGOs and aid organizations that tend to focus on specific thematic development areas such as livestock, vegetable production, irrigation, forest, good governance, Human Rights, etc. the Social Families focus on social interaction and bonding as the first step towards building solidarity for change.

The Social Families take up multiple problems as they emerge and consolidate the Community's social capital, while participating in activities to enhance the material wellbeing of individual members. The family members share each other's joys and also help each other in times of sorrow. The number of Social Families now operating in different parts of the country is given in Table-1.

The Social Families have proven that they can be "self-sustaining, holistic development agents" (SSHDA) in the VDCs because the local government units listen to and value their voices, and attend to their concerns in terms of allocation and use of public resources/services. Empowered Social Families are capable of implementing all types of development and empowerment programs through their groups, and in coordination with local NGOs, CBOs and other civil society partners. They have been carrying out different capacity development and awareness building programs and therefore provide an option for avoiding the creation of more community based organizations or thematic groups to serve as "development entry points" every time a new agency begins a new program in the villages.

The Social Families are capable of organizing communities for participating and benefiting from development activities. They have also proven themselves in mobilizing human and material resources for building new infrastructures such as mule trails, school buildings, drinking water systems and maintenance networks. Their activities include every aspect of development – community

development, income generation, political awareness and empowerment – all of which collectively contribute towards the national aspiration for building a New Nepal that is inclusive and provides equal opportunities to all citizens irrespective of caste, class, ethnicity and religious beliefs.

SAMAGRA has so far mobilized 60 volunteers for assisting the Social Families in their quest for empowerment and development. Thirty-four of these volunteers have been trained on different aspects of Human Rights and development and have been actively involved in the activities of their Social Families. These volunteers come from the Social Families and therefore belong to their groups. SAMAGRA has plans to mobilize more volunteers as part of its program to expand and deepen its involvement.

### Social Family structure

All Social Families are organized around one motto: “One for all and all for one”. The families are built on trust, and also function as a trust.



*Training of Volunteers on Social mobilization in Gorkha Bazaar, Gorkha.*

The members (25-60 households in one community/village) have to abide by certain ethical, moral and social values (abstaining from alcohol consumption, gambling and smoking). Members are also barred from discriminating against women and children and people from other social groups. All members are required to abide by and uphold group decisions on use of savings and to respect Human Rights and advocate equitable distribution of public resources. The Social Families are transparent in decision-making and are accountable to their members and communities. All Social Families have institutionalized public auditing as their main accountability tool.

The members help each other in times of difficulties. They are required to make financial and material contributions to help one another when there is death, illness and childbirth, and to support people affected by natural disasters and/or conflict. All members are also required to set aside one day each month for community development activities.

### Governance structure and leadership

SAMAGRA has a defined organizational structure with clear division of authority and responsibilities. There is no overlap between the Board and the staff. Under the principle of power separation and to avoid conflict of interest, SAMAGRA's regulations clearly indicate that a Board member cannot hold a salaried position. All institutional policies, rules and regulations are documented and practiced. Good governance is a core institutional value and is practiced at all



*Members and office holders of the Executive Committee talking the Oath of Office*

levels of the organization. The organization has a 32-member general assembly that elects a nine-member board every two years. The board elected on 9 October 2009 is as follows:

#### **Office holders**

Balkrishna Lal Joshi, Chairperson, Lalitpur  
 Laxman P. Gyawali, Vice-Chair, Gulmi  
 Durga D. Ghimire, General Secretary, Nawalparasi  
 Ms. Chameli Pradhan, Treasurer, Lalitpur  
 Ms. Rupa Bishwakarma, Secretary, Baglung

#### **Members**

Dr. Chheki Sherpa, Kathmandu  
 Sant Bahadur Tamang, Dhading  
 Durganand Sada, Saptari  
 Ms. Meena Devi Chaudhary, Udayapur

Women comprise 33 percent of the general assembly and 44 percent of the Executive Committee. Dalits make up 32 percent of the general assembly and 45 percent of the Executive Committee. The representation of Adivasi Janajatis in the two bodies is 32 percent and 33 percent, respectively. Other social groups make up 36 percent of the general assembly but their representation in the Executive is 22 percent. About three percent of the general members are differently-abled; their representation in the Executive Committee is 11 percent.

# RIGHTS BASED DEVELOPMENT ON THE GROUND



## Overview of activities in 2008-11

SAMAGRA has a range of activities under regular programs. The activities vary from community to community but fall into one or more of the following areas:

- Forming, empowering and mobilizing Social Families from local communities.
- Transforming existing Income Generating Groups into Social Families through capacity enhancement.
- Orienting/ training Social Families for forming and running local cooperatives.
- Capacity enhancement of targeted communities through training, workshops, orientations, field visits, etc.
- Campaigning for Human Rights and democratic values and practices.
- Construction of local infrastructures based on labor-intensive rural technologies and methods, and training local stakeholders.
- Providing skill development training and support to start micro-enterprise by providing seed money/materials and technical support, and
- Facilitating conflict resolution and resettlement of victims.

During 2008 and 2011 SAMAGRA focused its programs on six core areas that contributed directly or indirectly towards self-reliance. These include empowerment of marginalized groups, Human Rights monitoring and protection/ promotion, conflict transformation & peace building at local level, strengthening

community organizations (Social Families) for local resource mobilization, livelihood enhancement, and local infrastructures. The activities carried out in each of these areas are discussed in the following sections.

## Marginalized People's Empowerment Program

The program for empowering marginalized people has been implemented from 2004 in six districts of the Eastern, Central and Western regions of Nepal with support from Danida/HUGOU. It encompasses activities to strengthen SAMAGRA in terms of organizational skills, systems, procedures and governance practices. Under this program Social Families are strengthened and supported to carry out local level campaigns and advocacy against caste-based discrimination and other Human Rights violations, and to engage in local peace building processes. The communities are supported to enable them to identify their priorities, issues and needs and approach respective agencies/organizations to claim their rights. SAMAGRA provided matching support to Social Families or the self-reliant community-based institutions that could coordinate and mobilize local resources. Table-2 reports on the local resources tapped by Social Families during 2008-2011. The figures are in Nepali Rupees.

**Table-2: Local resources mobilized by SAMAGRA through SFs (2008-2011)**

District	Infrastructure	Livelihood	Skill Development and other Training	Drinking Water	Electricity / Energy	Education / Health	Others	Total
Siraha	4,684,000	1,516,700	180,000	1,941,000	11,48,000	3,19,000	1,055,000	9,376,700
Saptari	3,590,500	467,000	280,000	306,200	251,000	141,000	1,055,000	6,090,700
Udayapur	2,469,000	850,000	90,000	2,322,000	16,000	200,000	110,000	6,057,000
Gorkha	11,807,000	190,000	170,000	704,500	29,000	115,000	10,000	13,025,500
Dhading	23,860,000	2,324,432	272,900	165,000	160,000	250,000	25,000	27,057,332
Lamjung	16,878,600	974,000	488,500	412,000	25,000	75,000	15,300	18,868,400
Dhadusa			35,000					35,000
Mahottari	60,000		35,000					95,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>63,349,100</b>	<b>6,322,132</b>	<b>1,551,400</b>	<b>5,850,700</b>	<b>481,000</b>	<b>781,000</b>	<b>270,300</b>	<b>80,605,632</b>



### Box-3: Change from below

Anirudra Prasad Mandal Khatwe resides in the Sabaiya Tole of Bhangaha-4 of Saptari District. He comes from the Terai Dalit community. He established the Adarsha Dalit Social Family in his village on 7 September 2006. The Social Family has 26 members households. They meet once every month, discuss local issues, record the decisions and work towards implementing the decisions. “It is the responsibility of all Social Family members,” he said. The main objective of the Social Family is to make the lives of the villagers easier and less painful, and to educate their children.

The 48-year-old has a family of 10, including four grand children, two son’s and their wives and a daughter. The family has been living in the foothills of the Chure as “untouchables” for 11-12 generations. Anirudra does not remember any member of the community ever becoming rich and well off. Even though agriculture is their main occupation, their fields seldom produce enough food for the family and are forced to collect and sell firewood to supplement their incomes or work as wage laborers. Anirudra is a little different in this respect: he runs a small pharmacy in the village.

He remembered his childhood when he had been repeatedly asked to stay at a safe distance from others because he was “untouchable” and had always wanted to change that. But was helpless to challenge society alone. He became a Human Rights Campaigner after attending several trainings and began visiting district level line agencies and the VDC to raise funds for the activities of his Social Family. He raised Rs 37,000 from the VDC and used it for organizing an awareness building campaign, including a seminar on Human Rights. Some of the money was used to run a skills training for women.

He still remembers the days when members of his community could not enter the homes of the so-called upper castes, had to eat separately at local weddings, could not use the same well from which the so called upper castes drew water, and were often punished if they touched (and “polluted) the so-called upper castes. “Today we can live like other human beings,” he said. “We do not have to clean our cups after drinking tea at tea stalls and our children sit with other children at school.”

The Social Family has installed foot pumps, repaired wells and has earned respect of other villagers. The members have also taken up different income raising vocations. All 26 members of the Social Family meet every month and collect Rs.20 for the group fund. The collection now totals Rs.30,000 and is saved at a bank. The money is used to provide loans to members and the interest adds to the principal. All borrowers have paid back on time. The women members are also planning new vocations – vegetable and fruit farming of their own. As a group they have also been able to raise their daily wages.

Anirudra was also able to take a representative of the National Dalit Commission to his village to distribute identity certificates to 10 Dalits, which now qualifies them to compete for quotas set aside by the government for Dalits. This is one achievement he cherishes the most. (Adapted from SAMAGRA Bulletin. No. 17)

### Human Rights monitoring and advocacy campaigns

SAMAGRA trains members of Social Families on Human Rights and advocacy to prepare them for monitoring violations in the villages. These monitors then pass on the knowledge to their communities and also assist in organizing advocacy against violations. These groups have been instrumental in challenging untouchability and for demanding greater social inclusion. The volunteers and staff of SAMAGRA coordinate these activities and report to the center for national level

advocacy and support. A Joint Annual Review of SAMAGRA's program (2010/2011) reported a marked decrease in caste-based discrimination in the communities where the study was done. The members of the Social Families said their was no discrimination in their groups and that they had also organized rallies and demonstrations at times when the children of Dalits were mistreated in their schools. Regular meetings of the Social Families also serve as a platform for the community to share problems and discuss approaches for resolving them.

**Table-3: Civil-political and other rights claimed/exercised by Social Families (2008-11)**

Activities	Number	Remarks
Citizenship certificate acquired (persons)	26,917	This is a basic document for all citizens needed for claiming rights, more so in the plains.
Appointment/election to political and other offices (persons)	615	6 Constituent Assembly members we now have were previously members of Social Families.
Basic registration/certificates (birth, death, marriage & migration)	3,830	The registrations are needed for claiming many services and rights. Also help to improve public databases.
Primary school enrollment	5,919	Majority of children were not going to school because of caste-based discrimination.
Scholarships for Dalit students	5,051	The Dalits were made aware of the scholarships that were being diverted to non-Dalit students.
Old age/widow allowances	1,551	They were denied the allowance by the VDC as they did not have proof of citizenship.
Actions taken/ monitoring of human-rights violations (No. of cases/actions)	285	The Social Families took up issues related to restriction of entry to Dalits to temples/public places; inter-caste marriage, exclusion from social services, murder, abduction torture, and misbehavior of government officials.
Resolution of inter-caste conflicts	153	
Resolution of inter-family conflicts, especially violence against women	113	



*A social audit underway in Nepal*

## Social Audits

SAMAGRA has a methodology for social audits, which are held twice: once at the start of the project and one upon completion. These are done at the village, district or regional levels, as needed. The participants at the social audit are the concerned Social Families and other stakeholders including local government officials, NGO representatives, members of civil society, the media, representatives of political parties, local members of SAMAGRA and staffs. The first social audit focuses on passing information on the programs planned for the year, the expected outputs, the implementation process and the targeted beneficiaries. The sessions also include questions from the audience and responses from SAMAGRA officials. Where it may not have answers to the questions, SAMAGRA refers the individuals asking them to its district and regional offices.

The second social audit is held at the end of the program. At this, SAMAGRA presents to the participants the outputs from different interventions and reports on the use of the budget. It also reports on the impact the different training programs on the local

communities. It has also tried getting its achievements approved by the participants. Though it has not been easy to organize such audits, it has had an impact and many other NGOs are now under pressure to hold similar meetings about their programs. All of these activities can contribute towards greater transparency and accountability, and good governance.

## Conflict Resolution

Conflict resolution begins with selection of both the perpetrators of violence and the victims for training carried out by SAMAGRA staffs. The five-day training sessions are used to understand sources and causes of conflicts and how they can be resolved. It also deals with peace building. These trainings are hands-on and deal with relevant cases. The idea is that the trainees go back to their communities and pass on their learning. A follow-up training is held for those participants who have worked on resolving conflicts and are interested to do more in the area. These trainees are then provided with different DVDs on conflict resolution experiences both abroad and within Nepal, which they take to the villages for screening. One outcome of these efforts was seen after the Madhesi Movement where *Pahadi* (hill-origin) residents in the plains were threatened and chased away from many communities where SAMAGRA was not working. There was not one instance of Pahadis who were members of Social Families being forced to flee because their Social Families did not threaten but supported and protected them.



Members of Social Families from the plains interacting with counterparts in Khoplang, Gorkha.

## Platform for Nepali Philanthropy

SAMAGRA has also benefited from Nepali philanthropy. Satyabhama and Bihari Krishna Shrestha have set up a fund called *Choribata Chorilai* (Daughter to Daughter) for assisting women in Jumla district. SAMAGRA obtained NRs. 165,000 from the Satyahabogra Fund in 1998 for supporting women in two villages – Hatsija and Bota – for carrying income generation and other social development activities. SAMAGRA organized 104 women under four income generation groups for the program.

SAMAGRA provided the expenses for setting up an office and mobilizing a motivator. The motivator set up a contact office in Khalanga and coordinated support of various other organizations for the activities. SAMAGRA is grateful to the donor for the support that was instrumental in starting the initiative in the district, and believes that with more such donors, it can take its activities to many more villages of Nepal.

## Self-reliance through Organization

SAMAGRA has been implementing the self-reliant programs as a major activity since its establishment. The Income Generating Groups, Social Families and cooperatives are carrying out different local level activities in coordination with the local, district, regional and central offices. This program focuses mainly on coordination and collaboration for tapping resources available with local government and other such as the DDC, VDC, line agencies or NGOs. SAMAGRA assists the villagers by informing Social Families of the type or support available at local agencies and helps them to access the support. By doing this, it is indirectly contributing towards making public agencies and NGOs more accountable to their constituents. This is an example of the use of public information for empowering the people. The approach has higher-level outcomes because it contributes to improving governance of public funds and also helps bring people closer to resources. The funds have been used for a variety of income generating, social and community development activities all of which contribute towards making people more self-reliant and confident.

## Livelihoods Skills

SAMAGRA believes that exposure and training can play a very empowering role in changing lives, and this is evident in almost all of the Social Families in its network. While knowledge is empowering in itself, collective knowledge – when shared among group members – is more empowering. Similarly, training on vocational skills can help in bringing hope back to people who have been on the sidelines



*Disbursing funds for income generation obtained from the PAF in Dhading district.*

of mainstream development programs for various reasons, including exclusion. What is unique about the training programs carried out by SAMAGRA is that it comes up with seed money to support villagers to try out their new skills. Where external funding is not available, there is always support within the group (from group savings) to enable members to try out vocations they are confident of trying out. The seed money is part of a revolving fund that stays in the communities and has a multiplier effect because all group members get to use it at one time or another. (Please visit SAMAGRA offices for understanding the type of activities supported and how they have helped ease livelihoods in rural Nepal. The activities are location specific and therefore are not listed in this report.)

### **Local Infrastructure Development and Environment Conservation**

Social Families have so far built 15km of local roads (12km from Arkhet to Lapubesi in Gorkha and 3km from Namrung to Bharjam) in the central region. The villagers also earned around NRs 400 million as wages from the

road-building activity. This was made possible through the approach, which requires Social Families to be involved from the planning stages to completion and also in maintenance after the roads are handed over to the communities.

Earlier SAMAGRA had organized villagers in Gorkha to build a 92-km mule trail that was completed in December in 2007. The mule trails/roads, along with the construction equipment, were formally handed over to the local Maintenance Committees, mostly consisting of Social Family members, as part of the MOU between them, the DDC, and SAMAGRA. The committees are now in charge of the repair and maintenance of the infrastructures. Even in 2011, the mule trail in northern Gorkha is the only transport link between the northern and southern regions of the district and has contributed immensely towards the enhancement of the living standards of the people of the area. Some parts of the mule trails/roads were constructed with the financial assistance of the German Development Agency (GTZ) and the remaining part with the financial assistance from USAID / INFRIN using a fully environment-friendly /

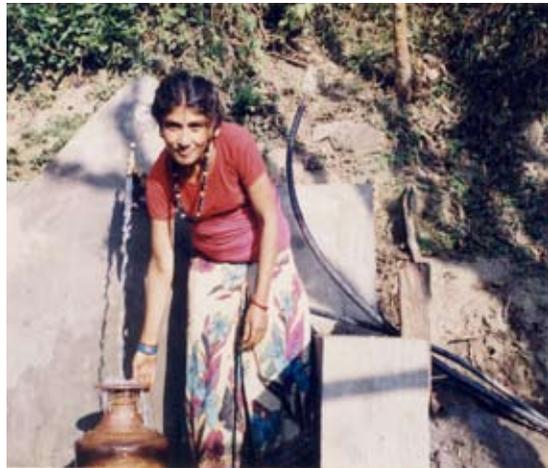


*A new trail connecting upper Gorkha with the Tibetan border has opened up local trade.*

## Drinking Water

The income generation groups and Social Families represent social capital that can and has been mobilized for various community development activities. So far these groups have built more than 200 drinking water schemes, both big and small. These include about 100 projects supported by SAMAGRA and another 100 built in partnership with other groups promoting rural water supply. In all, the organization has supported systems to supply clean drinking water to about 40,000 households. These include projects such as the Kurpajung Drinking Water in Fugel of Gorkha district, which was built in ninetees and still supplies water to 47 Dalit households. In another project in Kotbhanjyang of Dhading district the villagers have laid down nine kilometers of pipes to bring water to a Magar settlement. There are similar projects in other places that have helped in saving the time women spent on fetching water and thereby brought about noticeable changes in child health. The drinking water systems of the past were independently evaluated and received good feedback. In the plains, SAMAGRA has supported Social Families to mobilize resources

for installing tube-wells and for building wells. The Social Family members have learned the values of cleanliness, which they have passed on to their children. Most Social Families also have toilets and have begun stopped using fields and riverbanks for responding to the call of nature. They have built permanent toilets where support has been available; elsewhere the toilets built using locally available materials serve the purpose.



*A woman in Lamjung using water from a newly-built system.*

*Women at a Social Family meeting:  
Sharing Information is the first step  
towards empowerment.*



## Box-4: 'Marble Approach'

SAMAGRA had devised a unique approach to keep track of management and maintenance of local infrastructures. It had devised a system where the local stakeholders kept an eye on the infrastructures everyday. It involved the use of multicolored marbles that were placed by the villagers at the source and circulated among those with responsibility for checking the intake. Bihari Krishna Shrestha who later evaluated the project named the system the Marble Approach.

Here's how the system worked. Each household using the water supplied by the new system was responsible to contributing towards its upkeep and management. Different colored marbles were used for this. If the person who was responsible for visiting the source and checking the fittings placed a white marble at a designated spot the person who was responsible for the task the next day placed another marble of a different color and brought back the white one. The color of the marbles placed at the source is not disclosed to make sure that the person assigned to visit the site does it and brings back the marble that was left behind. If the person shows a different color marble than what was placed at the source the day before he or she would be caught for cheating. The white one was then handed over to the person responsible for the visit the next day. This way as long as the marbles circulated in the village, people knew that someone had gone up to the water source and checked the pipes and fittings.

## Environmental conservation

In its early years, SAMAGRA had partnered with the Centre for Rural Technology to promote fuel-efficient stoves in many villages. It was an intervention aimed at lowering the use of firewood through efficient use. The environmental conservation works during its early years included the pioneering of 'green roads' in Gorkha and Dhading districts. SAMAGRA has also assisted the installation and operation of micro-hydros, and the installation of biogas plants by Social Families and Income Generation Groups.

Since winter 1996 SAMAGRA has made local forest conservation an important activity for the Social Families. Many Social Families living near the Chure region have been supported since 1993 for conserving the

fragile range that separates the Hills from the plains. SAMAGRA has also been carrying out awareness programs on the need to conserve forests both in the Hills and in the Chure region, and has supported Social Families in their conservation efforts. The network of Social Families provides a vast resource for carrying out forest conservation in a scale that could contribute towards slowing down climate change at the local level, nationally and even globally. However, SAMAGRA has not been able to give as much attention to environmental conservation owing largely to other more pressing issues – poverty, discrimination, etc. – and also largely for lack of adequate funds to spare for conservation given the other more-compelling daily livelihoods needs of the poor and the vulnerable.

## Box – 5: An “External Review”: THE PRESS ON SOCIAL FAMILIES

**“What is a program? What is a budget? What is birth registration? Marriage registration? We knew nothing...” – Devi Sada**

“I was (pleasantly) surprised not just in Udayapur, but also in the Dalit villages of Siraha and Saptari districts in Sagarmatha Zone. I was surprised by the respect those who are not allowed to enter temples and are still discriminated against on God... Almost all Dalits – the same people who are not allowed to enter to pray in Hindu temples – have, when it came to naming their Social Families, named them after the Hindu Gods. Why, because they believed that starting something after invoking God could be successful...” (These groups have named their Social Families after Hindu Gods, while many in other districts like Lamjung, Dhading and Gorkha have more progressive names...).

There is a campaign now underway for social and development work through Social Families, of 25-30 or 50-60 members, in some of the most marginalized communities of Nepal.

The Social Family is an organization of marginalized families. The membership of women was over 80 percent. Possibly because there are more women members the groups have been able to abide by their tough rules – otherwise rules to end drinking alcohol and fighting and quarrels among themselves could have been easily flouted. The social mobilisers go to villages of Dalits and marginalized people and explain to them their rights as citizens, the responsibilities of the State, Human Rights, provisions in laws and regulations, the work being done by different government and non-government organizations in the district, the type of local funds allocated in the budget for the poor, etc. The budget allocation is compiled in booklets and distributed to Social Families. At training programs, they are made aware of which district level office can provide them what type of services and how people benefit from the support...

The Social Family members are also instructed on the modalities of democratic discussion and decision-making, where everyone is given a say. They are not allowed to speak at a time or shout others down, but have to take turns and make sure they do not hurt others while saying what they have to say. All speakers at group meetings have to greet others and also address the chair, and thank every one for listening to their views. All others have to listen and everyone gets their turn to speak.

After taking decisions, members of Social Families go to the district line agencies, local bodies and NGOs and do not just demand for help. They say they need particular support from particular programs... The Social Families wait for some time for their requests to be responded, and if the dilly-dallying continues they shift gears and begin activities to pressurize the officials to act... And there are already are signs of change.

Anju Khulal of Pipara VDC-3 said, “We were unable to even pronounce our own names. Now we can properly introduce oneself, our group and our village. “It was how we were able to get peanut seeds from the agriculture service center, 400 mango seedlings from the soil conservation department, seven foot pumps and two hand pumps.”



These groups do not only seek external support. They also save money every month and invest their savings among group members at mutually agreed interest rates. Also as members of Social

Families, they are required to stop smoking and chewing tobacco, gambling and drinking. Beating wives is also prohibited and if found violating this norm the Social Family meets, and ensures that the offender is brought to account. All Social Family members have to compulsorily send children to school.

Says Manmaya Khapangi, “Now we are finally aware about how we can realize our rights. We make sure we receive the piglets, fruit and vegetable saplings (meant for us), whatever it takes.” She added, “We realize we can get what we want if we unite, not if we are not united.”

Devi Sada, member of another Social Family said, “What is a program? What is a budget? What is birth registration? Marriage registration? We knew nothing.” She added, “Now I have citizenship certificates for myself and my children. I also understand that now I can get a share of my husband’s property even if he remarries.”

Sada added that she feels more knowledgeable now, that she has support when someone becomes ill in the family (from the group savings) and does not have to borrow from moneylenders at exorbitant interest rates. That she can learn from others in the group, that the husband’s lifespan does not decrease if you utter his name...

(Excerpt adapted from an article by Krishna Murari Bhandari that appeared in the *Annapurna* Post newspaper on 5th January 2011)

The rights based approach to development has resulted in significant progress in bringing change at the local level and also towards attaining the objectives of the organization. SAMAGRA's programs have contributed to building increased awareness against caste-based discrimination at the community level as result of which the practice of untouchability is decreasing in the villages where there are Social Families. The Social Family members have been capable of applying dispute management skills for resolving community disputes and conflicts. Human Rights promotion campaigns have also reached community pockets that were largely outside the debate and this has resulted in increased awareness that can contribute to social change.

Almost all school age children in the communities where a Social Family is active go to school regularly and women are no longer confined to household chores. Awareness of the basics of Human Rights has helped women to join community development activities, and also start new vocations by mobilizing local resources. In effect they are now a strong voice for social peace and harmony.

Assisted by the Social Families, many families that were displaced during various conflicts have returned home. Due to enhanced social

harmony and cohesiveness in Social Families, the Pahadi members do not fear about being displaced from their villages in the Terai-Madhes districts where the program has been underway. At the peak of the 'Madhes Andolan' and 'bandhs', the Social Families were able to carry out their work even in e highly volatile districts such as Saptari and Siraha. The recognition of Durga Prasad Mahato, Samagra's regional coordinator, as an excellent Human Rights Activist of 2009 by the Human Rights Network in Siraha district, is an acknowledgement of the work of both Mahato as well as SAMAGRA.

Members of Social Families in the Terai, including Board members, visited Kathmandu and other Hill districts as part of an exposure visit organized by SAMAGRA. During the visit they interacted with Social Family members in the Hills and also with Constituent Assembly members from their districts and other resource persons that were arranged by SAMAGRA. It was an activity aimed at fostering better understanding between different social groups, which SAMAGRA plans to continue in the future. In many cases where individuals had been abducted in the plains, SAMAGRA was also able to secure the release of some through local advocacy and networking. Some of the activities where the Social Families assisted villagers in claiming their rights are given in Table 2.

## Financial Overview

In addition to Social Audits in the field/districts and internal audits within the organization, an independent Auditor (Chartered Accountant) conducts the institutional audit of SAMAGRA every year. One remark made by an auditor said, "Based on the budget utilization and activities carried out within work planned, we are of the opinion that activities are implemented satisfactorily, efficiently, economically and effectively." (Final Audit Report of SAMAGRA, by JB Rajbhandary & Dibins, Chartered Accountants, 21 August 2005). Please refer to Annex-3 for financial statement of the last four years.

## The road ahead

### Achievements

SAMAGRA's activities on the ground have proven that the rights based approach to development is relevant and can produce the desired results. The approach has taken the organisation closer to the people and has therefore been able to focus on issues that matter to them. SAMAGRA believes its approach to development can result in synergies that can assist the poor and the disadvantaged to improve their livelihoods and also build stronger communities, which are prerequisites for both peace and democracy. Besides awareness about their rights, the SAMAGRA campaign has also resulted in better mobilization and use of locally available resources for development. The campaign, while dependent on donor support, also has a solid foundation of local savings that can help communities continue their activities in-between cycles of donor funding. This resource adds up to Rs. 400 million – Rs. 100 million in the Central Revolving Fund and

Rs. 300 million in the funds generated through monthly savings of income-generation groups and Social Families.

### Challenges

SAMAGRA has been carrying out empowerment / development activities within a Human Rights framework that seeks to empower communities to enable them to claim their rights and hold the duty bearers to account. It is not about an NGO going to the villages with solutions. SAMAGRA can be better described as a change agent that mingles with the villagers and assists them to discover their strengths and opportunities by working among them and with them. However, it has not been able to fully convey this at all levels, especially to local public officials and institutions that still view Human Rights as a donor driven agenda and not a requirement for community development.

Financing SAMAGRA's activities has always been challenging. Its firm belief in the development approach it promotes and the need to bring development with the involvement of the people does not always match with the timelines



*A play on the Human Rights situation  
in Besisahar, Lamjung.*

required by some donors who are still content with “counting” the number of beneficiaries rather than support a change process that is transforming entire communities. Further, since SAMAGRA’s activities are focused in the most far-flung villages and communities, not many donors and their agents get to see the changes that are taking place. SAMAGRA’s inability to communicate its achievements – again, because much of its membership comprises of the members of the different Social Families and communities – has also been a disadvantage in terms of being able to raise funds to support its activities. The government’s policy to send block grants to the local bodies has helped SAMAGRA raise finances for carrying out activities at the local level but the support is far short of that needed by the Social Families.

A practical difficulty has been recruiting and retaining staff to work in remote areas with harsh living conditions and at salaries that are not comparable to those paid by other

agencies. More so because staffs that have worked with SAMAGRA and the disadvantaged communities tend to be offered better packages by other organizations, which SAMAGRA has been unable to match. Retaining staff has remained a major concern, especially in the absence of as much donor support as it would have liked to have.

All the Social Families have aspirations to develop and improve their livelihoods. But SAMAGRA does not have the finances to support all of their ventures and therefore there is a danger of the motivation they now have turning into frustrations. The people are motivated and willing to work for change. Therefore, it is essential to support them in their quests to bring about development that is fair and sustainable. We invite donors wanting to be partners in our efforts to visit our offices, and program villages and join us in building a society where there are equal opportunities for all.

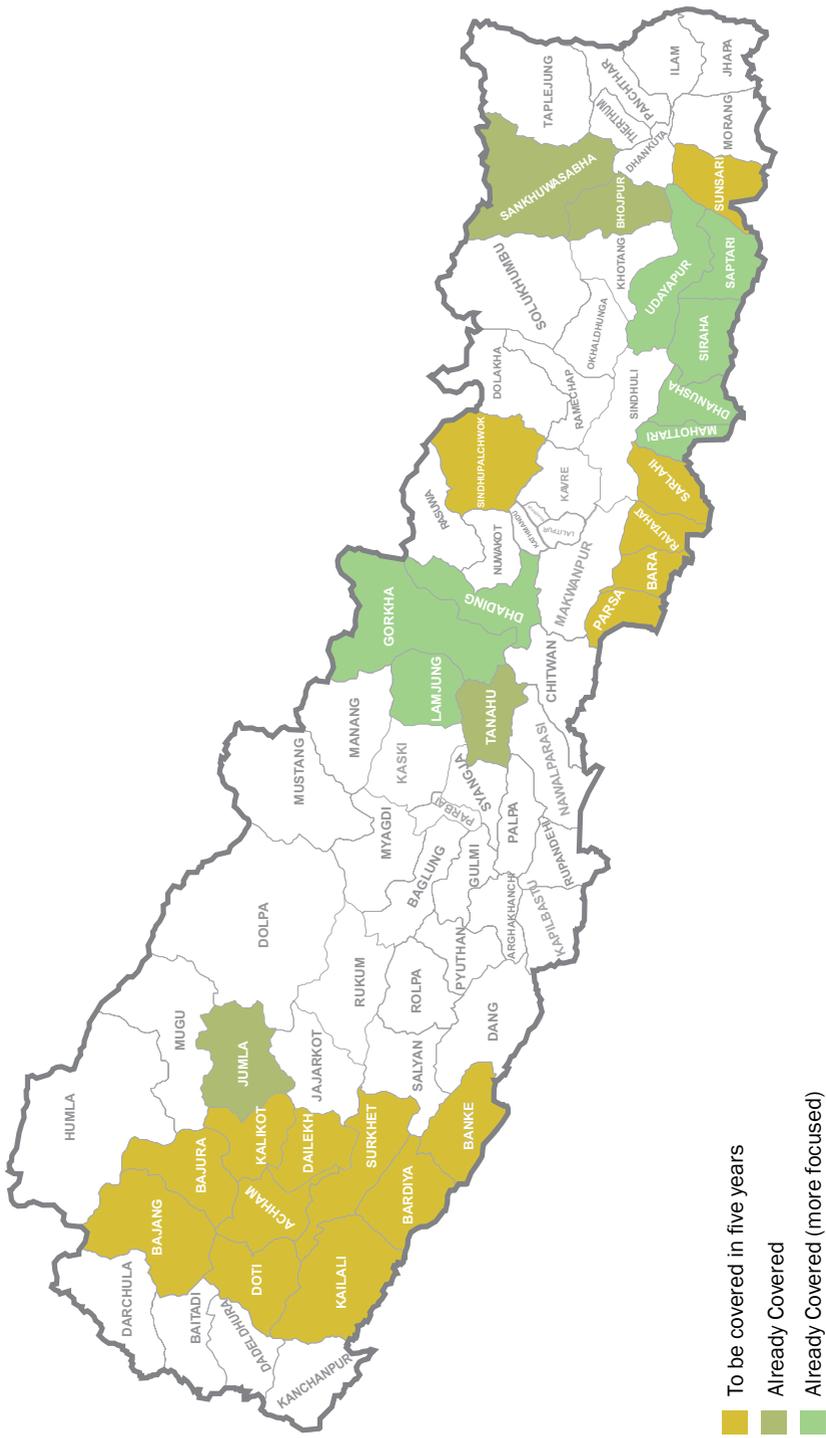


*Villagers from Rigaon, Dhading meeting to discuss a local dispute.*

# ANNEXES



# Annex-1: Map of Nepal with program coverage



## Annex-2: Activities: quantity and coverage

Outputs / Activities	No. of events / activities	Coverage					Organizations / SFs / HHS
		Dalit	Janajati	Others	Total	Female	
<b>1. Monitoring of Human Rights and advocacy campaigns</b>							
Monitoring of Human Rights at local/SF level	251	2777	1596	943	5316	3943	
National level advocacy activities to promote social inclusion	3	127	81	46	254	96	
Awareness campaign against Human Rights violation (Caste-based discrimination)	189	5174	3159	1918	10251	7293	
Public Audit / Public Hearing / Social Audit / Budget analysis.	26	987	694	851	2532	1254	
<b>Total, Output 1</b>	<b>469</b>	<b>9065</b>	<b>5530</b>	<b>3758</b>	<b>18353</b>	<b>12586</b>	
<b>2. Empowerment (organizing, awareness raising, mobilizing) of marginalized men and women to claim and exercise their rights.</b>							
Selection/formation and socio-political mobilization of SFs	319	4555	3634	850	9039	6033	
Pre- and post-implementation studies	38	0	0	0	0	0	38 VDCs
Central level workshop/training for Staff, EC & Committees members	4	47	37	27	111	37	
Regional level workshop / training (Human Rights ToT, conflict management, leadership, good governance and democratic practices, review and reflection)	24	499	344	214	1057	685	
District level training (on Human Rights including monitoring, conflict transformation & OD.)	5	45	67	41	153	71	
SF level orientation (Human Rights including monitoring, conflict transformation & OD.)	1015	15981	5608	4108	25697	17578	
Exposure visits for Social Families	10	219	142	142	503	109	
Publications (SF manual, monthly bulletin; Annual Report, brochure.)	28						
Linkage/networking and interaction/lobbying with resource/development agents.	25						425 organizations
Awareness campaign on constitution making / implementation process	148	1999	1114	961	4074	3261	

Outputs / Activities	No. of events / activities	Coverage					Organizations / SFs / HHS
		Dalit	Janajati	Others	Total	Female	
Awareness campaign for the fulfillment of civil/political rights (voter registration, citizenship certificate, national census, etc.)	135	1594	1014	559	3167	2466	
Participatory planning and resource mapping, identify priorities SAMAGRA's OD/ID	206	2487	483	792	3762	3706	
Updating of SAMAGRA's documents of policy, rules, procedures, etc.	6	0	0	0	0	0	
Accounting software & training/ refresher training	2				2	0	
Training / orientation to personnel involved in financial transaction & to EC members	2	6	8	4	18	8	
Research & documentation	3						
Capacity development of central level staff / international exposure	2				2		
Negotiation/ mediation skills	2				19	10	
Developing Human Rights monitoring tools	1						
Developing advocacy tools and techniques	1	1	0	1	2	1	
Media mobilization (Radio programs, newspaper article, interaction with media)	54						
Celebration of Human Rights related days	41	603	519	767	1889	1345	
<b>Total, Output 2</b>	<b>2070</b>	<b>28036</b>	<b>12970</b>	<b>8466</b>	<b>49491</b>	<b>35307</b>	
<b>Promotion of social harmony, non-violence and peaceful ways of addressing grievances, particularly in the Terai.</b>							
Inter-caste conciliation / Conflict management events (SF level)	193	3500	1481	829	5810	3963	30 VDCs
Interaction for peace building (VDC / District level)	30						28 SFs
Post-conflict re-conciliation events at SF level	28						
Event for peace and harmony at SF Level	75	1710	1250	595	3555	2832	
<b>Total, Output 3</b>	<b>326</b>	<b>5210</b>	<b>2731</b>	<b>1424</b>	<b>9365</b>	<b>6795</b>	

Outputs / Activities	No. of events / activities	Coverage					Organizations / Sfs / Hhs
		Dalit	Janajati	Others	Total	Female	
<b>3. Promotion of cooperatives and resource mobilization.</b>							
SF resource management (streamlining existing savings and disbursements)	22						230 SFs
Orient and facilitate SFs to affiliate to and/or registration of cooperatives	203						203 SFs
Training on cooperative management.	16	99	65	43	207	186	
Claiming rights/ resources	119	170	155	121	446	349	
<b>Total, Output 4</b>	<b>360</b>	<b>269</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>653</b>	<b>535</b>	
<b>5. Micro-enterprise development.</b>							
Vocational and skill development training (various training as per the detail worked out and local demands/needs)	36	188	159	50	397	236	
Provision of seed material / seed money from revolving fund to promote micro businesses	512	344	199	29	572	363	
Market promotion of local products – Networking/linkage between buyer, seller and mediator. Exhibitions.	12						12 organizations
Training on micro-enterprise development skills	11	91	53	9	153	93	
<b>Total, Output 5</b>	<b>571</b>	<b>623</b>	<b>411</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>1122</b>	<b>692</b>	

Outputs / Activities	No. of events / activities	Coverage					Organizations / SFs / HHS
		Dalit	Janajati	Others	Total	Female	
<b>6. Local infrastructure improvement/development (In collaboration with partners and Social Families )</b>							
Construction/renovation of foot/mule trails (9 km)	1						299 HHS
Construction/renovation of Green/local road (21 km)	5						1613 HHS
Construction/renovation of school building, community service building, health post, market places, etc.	36						203 HHS
Construction/renovation of Small Irrigation systems hand/foot pump	5						9039 HHS
Drinking water projects	34						2200 HHS
River banking / flood protection	1						
Awareness campaign on environment conservation	309						
Training/workshop on community forest and activities related to plantation	37						
Awareness campaign on basic sanitation and hygiene-SF level	185	4899	2479	1591	8969	6613	
Alternative energy (Solar, micro-hydro, etc.)	126						151 HHS
<b>Total, Output 6</b>	<b>739</b>	<b>4899</b>	<b>2479</b>	<b>1591</b>	<b>8969</b>	<b>6613</b>	
<b>Total (1+2+3+4+5+6)</b>	<b>4535</b>	<b>48102</b>	<b>24341</b>	<b>15491</b>	<b>87953</b>	<b>62528</b>	

## Annex-3: Financial Statements

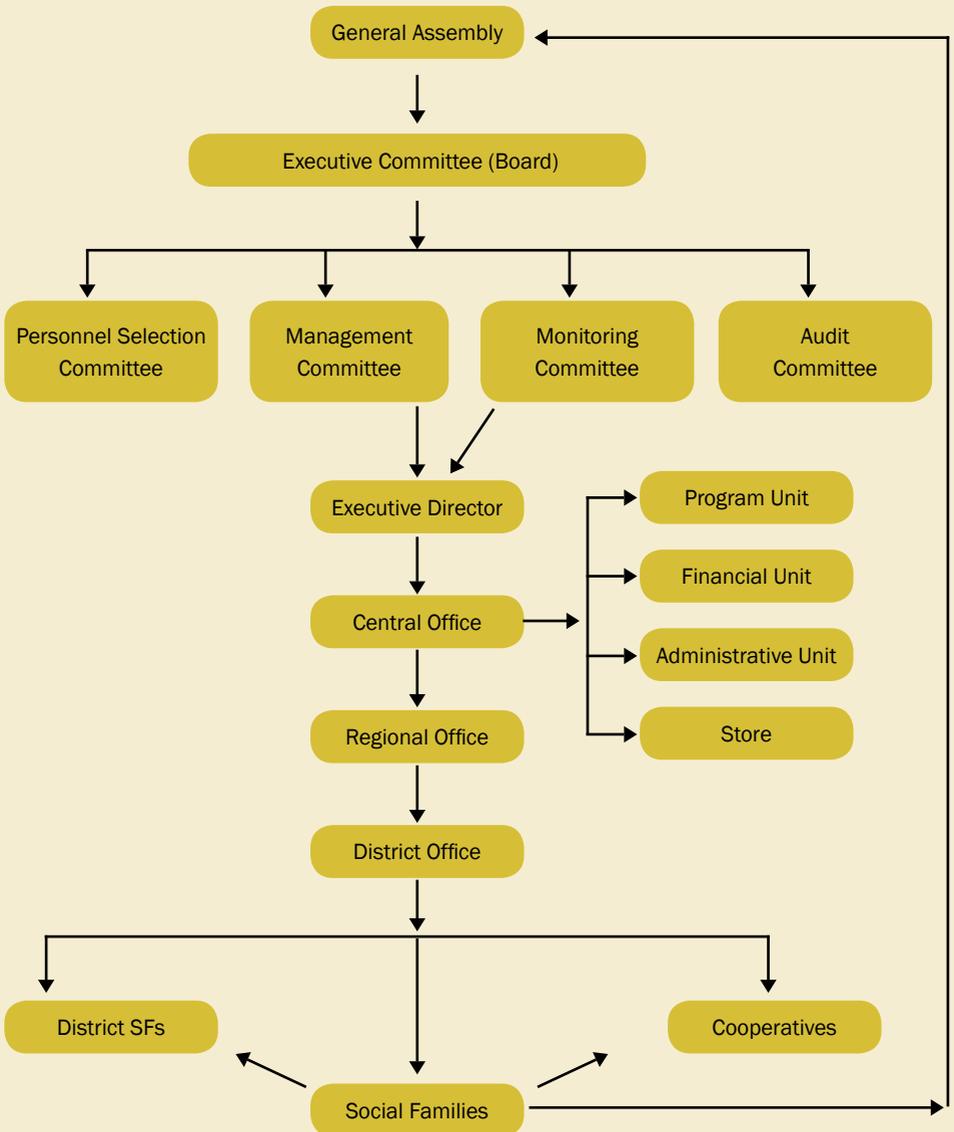
### (a). Income and expenditure (2008-2011)

<b>INCOME</b>	<b>FY 2007/08</b>	<b>FY 2008/09</b>	<b>FY 2009/10</b>	<b>FY 2010/11 (Non-audited)</b>
Program Grant Received	16,163,443.58	3,788,000.00	-	10,323,805.15
Basket fund Income		-	8,380,854.66	
Other Income	1,021,530.48	752,343.43	-	
<b>Total Income (A)</b>	<b>17,184,974.06</b>	<b>4,540,343.43</b>	<b>8,380,854.66</b>	<b>10,323,805.15</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>				
General Expenses	909,423.50	1,012,680.00		
Program Activities	16,915,630.99	3,789,992.40	-	
Depreciation	211,706.49	163,058.07	124,870.02	94,585.58
Basket fund Activities		-	8,380,854.66	10,323,805.15
<b>Total Expenditure (B)</b>	<b>18,036,760.98</b>	<b>4,965,730.47</b>	<b>8,505,724.68</b>	<b>10,418,390.73</b>
<b>Excess of Income over Expenditure (A-B)</b>	<b>(851,786.92)</b>	<b>(425,387.04)</b>	<b>(124,870.02)</b>	<b>(94,585.58)</b>
<b>Appropriation Account</b>				
<b>Surplus balance transferred to B/S</b>		<b>(425,387.04)</b>	<b>(124,870.02)</b>	<b>(94,585.58)</b>

## b. Balance Sheet

S.No	Assets	FY 2007/08	FY 2008/09	FY 2009/10	FY 2010/11 (Non-audited)
1	Current Assets:				
1.1	Advances & Receivables	12,000.00	12,000.00	26,000.00	54,000.00
1.2	Inventory				
1.3	Cash and Bank Balances	1,343,669.85	5,995,494.03	2,003,421.97	2,593,857.75
<b>2</b>	<b>Revolving fund utilization in districts.</b>		<b>9,755,089.54</b>	<b>9,995,400.00</b>	<b>9,995,400.00</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Non Current assets</b>				
	Fixed Assets	664,277.63	518,141.31	650,075.89	705,685.22
	<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>2,019,947.48</b>	<b>16,280,724.88</b>	<b>12,674,897.86</b>	<b>13,348,942.97</b>
<b>S.No</b>	<b>Fund and Liabilities</b>				
<b>1</b>	<b>Surplus &amp; Reserves</b>		<b>10,540,115.66</b>	<b>10,912,360.70</b>	<b>10,967,970.03</b>
1.1	Surplus		1,210,413.16	785,026.12	660,156.10
1.2	Addition during the year		(425,387.04)	(124,870.02)	(94,585.58)
	Total Surplus	1,210,413.16	785,026.12	660,156.10	565,570.52
1.3	Revolving fund		9,755,089.54	9,995,400.00	9,995,400.00
1.4	Capital Reserves (Basket Fund Assets)	-	256,804.60	406,999.51	
	<b>Total Reserves</b>	<b>9,755,089.54</b>	<b>10,252,204.60</b>	<b>10,402,399.51</b>	
<b>2</b>	<b>Project Funds:</b>				
2.2	Basket Fund Balance		5,000,000.00	382,267.34	724,836.19
2.3	Restricted Fund			152,446.00	
2.4	Internal fund			9,450.00	67,891.00
<b>3</b>	<b>Current Liabilities &amp; Provisions</b>				
3.1	Provident fund	656,633.20	602,707.10	1,009,921.70	1,294,343.63
3.2	Creditors & Payables Central	152,901.12	137,902.12	217,902.12	293,902.12
	<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>2,019,947.48</b>	<b>16,280,724.88</b>	<b>12,674,897.86</b>	<b>13,348,942.97</b>

## Annex-4: SAMAGRA Organogram



*A Buddhist monk inaugurating the  
32nd Annual General Meeting of  
Samagra.*







SAMAGRA BIKAS SEWA KENDRA

Chabahil, Kathmandu

Tel.: 4469649, 2075103

Fax: 4469649

Website: [www.samagra-nepal.org](http://www.samagra-nepal.org)

Email: [info@samagra-nepal.org.np](mailto:info@samagra-nepal.org.np)