



WOMEN AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE THIRD WORLD

A Case Study
from Ghandruk, Nepal



Manaslu Gurung

WOMEN AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE THIRD WORLD

A Case Study
from Ghandruk, Nepal

Manaslu Gurung

Published by WWF Nepal Program Office, 2004

Any reproduction in full or in part of this publication must mention the title and credit the above-mentioned publisher as the copyright owner.

Price: Rs 500

Concept, design and compilation: Sangita Shrestha Singh

All Photographs: Manaslu Gurung

Design, Layout and Printing: Format Printing Press. Tel: 4428572, 4422160, Kathmandu, Nepal.

FOREWORD

The traditional practice of self-help has operated in Nepal from the historic past. However, a community development approach was introduced in the country only in 1951. In Nepal, many community development programs reflect outside agency's value and judgments on deciding and implementing the program. Mostly, they tend to be different from people's needs and aspirations and hence lack people's participation at the desirable level. There are some exceptions where community participation in the development process has become a role model for the world. Annapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAP), managed by the King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation, a Nepali NGO, is a pioneer in the community development process that has successfully integrated conservation with sustainable development and has gained much success.

ACAP, which has a focus on participatory rural development with nature conservation, shares conservation responsibilities with local people. The role of local people was already realized by ACAP in the earlier early days. Recognizing women's role and their importance, a mothers' group, locally known as Ama Toli, was formed during the 1990's. This was initiated in Ghandruk village by ACAP. These Ama Toli were successful in improving the socio-economic status and raising participation in managing and conserving natural resources. As such, it has become the leading progressive movement in women's development in the rural hills of Nepal.

As part of the team that designed ACAP in 1985/86 and later served as its director, I believe that local people are the key to the development of any particular area. Local inhabitants are the best managers of their environment as no one is as knowledgeable about their environment. Our feasibility study at that time also reflected the idea of managing the area by local inhabitants would be more effective than relocating 120,000 people who lived there.

A variety of books have been published regarding the role of women and the gender situation in Nepal. But, there has always been a lack of one that portrays women's role in conservation. This book, *Women and Development in the Third World Country: A Case Study from Ghandruk, Nepal* can be a useful resource for those working in the field of development. The book is the outcome of a dissertation by Ms Manaslu Gurung, depicting the integration of women and the environment for community development. It focuses on the women of Ghandruk, who have made significant contributions to the village. On behalf of WWF Nepal Program, I commend Ms Gurung for her perseverance in researching and preparing this book.

Chandra P Gurung (PhD)
Country Representative
WWF Nepal Program
July 2004

PREFACE

This monograph is based on my thesis submitted to the Graduate School of the University of Massachusetts, Amherst in partial fulfillment of the requirements for degree of Masters of Science in September 2000. In summer 1998, I spent six weeks doing my fieldwork for my thesis in Cultural Geography in Ghandruk. I revisited Ghandruk again in December 1999. During both visits, the village did not have any Maoist activity nor did the villagers seem concerned or afraid of possible Maoist attacks. The few men I spoke to in the village were confident that Ghandruk would remain free from Maoist influence. In late 2002, I received a report from Professor Stan Stevens of a Maoist attack on the Annapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAP) office in Ghandruk. I was shocked to hear that the Maoists burned the office building and looted all the valuable equipment, including computers.

In December 2003, I had to rethink my plan to visit Ghandruk again after reading an editorial in the *Nepali Times* about armed Maoist soldiers collecting 'donations' from tourists. Since I was bringing a few American friends on the trip, we went to Jomsom instead of Ghandruk to avoid any mishaps or dangerous situations. At the ACAP museum in Jomsom, I met, by chance, an ACAP employee from Ghandruk who I remembered from my 1998 fieldwork.

She was transferred to Jomsom only a few days earlier. I enquired about her experience in Ghandruk, the Maoist activity there, and about other ACAP staff and the villagers. She told me that all the ACAP field offices south of Annapurna (Ghorepani, Ghandruk, Lwang, Sikles, and Bhujung) were no longer operating and work in these areas was now being coordinated from offices in Pokhara, Bensishahar, and Kathmandu. Likewise, permit fees for tourists were being collected at the ACAP office in Kathmandu, and these permits were being checked at Simpani, just northwest of Pokhara. After the closing of these field offices, the permanent staff were relocated to the city offices or north of Annapurna, in Jomsom, Manang, or Lo Manthang. Temporary staff and those unwilling to relocate lost their jobs.

It was unclear what the motives and the demands of the Maoists were in Ghandruk, but she confirmed that the Maoists were present in the village and that they showed up periodically asking for donations and food from villagers when the Royal Nepali Army (RNA) soldiers were not in the vicinity. In her own words, she described it as the Maoists and the RNA "playing hide-and-seek". She was uncertain about the future of her village and the impact of these events on ACAP programs.

Much has changed in the intervening years between the publication of this book and my field-work in Ghandruk. My study looked into the role of ACAP in promoting women's groups known as the Ama Toli, which were highly successful in conservation and development efforts in the village. My study focused on a single Ama Toli from Ward 8 in Ghandruk, primarily on their history, their major accomplishments, and future activities. ACAP actively supported the Ama Toli throughout the Annapurna Conservation Area through specific programs for women. However, current events have jeopardized the future work of such successful programs.

A case study like this is important only if it can be seen in relation to the larger development picture. There is no contest among scholars in Nepal today that the social, political, and economic injustices and disparities in rural Nepal are the main causes of the Maoist insurgency. Hence, even though at a village level Ghandruk was self-sufficient, economically viable, and progressive in its development, it could not escape becoming part of a larger problem that requires national attention rather than a local solution. This shows how micro and macro levels are interconnected. Unless we determine or understand these linkages properly of how one level influences or impacts on the other, the future of any program, no matter how successful, is uncertain.

Unable to contact anyone from the village directly, I could not discuss the current situation in Ghandruk, and can only hope that the daily lives of the villagers has not been hampered or disrupted severely. As the future of Nepal hangs in the balance, and many Nepalese, on the Maoist side and that of the RNA die-both ironically for the same cause for a better Nepal and better lives for the people of Nepal-social science research is vital to first understand and then to inform about the historical root causes of such a violent uprising. Social science research must include accurate histories, as well as political, economic, social, and cultural analyses. This study is an attempt of such research at a micro level.

My hope is that this book will help celebrate the success of the Ama Toli and inspire women's groups in Nepal and other developing countries to believe in the power of solidarity. Although none of the women whom I interviewed will ever read this book, it is about them and seeks to tell their stories. They are the true authors of this book. I am indebted to all these women and the ACAP staff in Ghandruk and Pokhara and the King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation (KMTNC) office in Kathmandu for their help during my research work. Most importantly, I am grateful to WWF Nepal Program for sponsoring this publication. I would like to thank Dr Chandra Prasad Gurung and his staff at the WWF Nepal Program for their cooperation. Lastly, my sincere gratitude to Professor Stan Stevens from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst for his guidance throughout the course of this study.

Manaslu Gurung
January 2004
Kathmandu

CONTENT

FOREWORD	i
PREFACE	iii
ACRONYMS	ix
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
Purpose of the Study	1
Previous Research on Gurung and Ghandruk	2
Research Design and Methodology	4
Data Collection and Selection of Participants	5
Limitations of the Study	8
Study Organization	9
CHAPTER 2: RETHINKING WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT	11
Introduction	11
Women's Development: Third World Policy Approach	12
The Challenges and Struggles of Women in Nepal	17
CHAPTER 3: ANNAPURNA CONSERVATION AREA PROJECT (ACAP)	21
Introduction	21
The Annapurna Conservation Area	21
History	24
Philosophy and Objectives	25
1. People's Participation	26
2. Match-maker	26
3. Sustainability	26
Institutional Structure	27
Programs	29
Resource Conservation	29
Sustainable Rural Development	31
Sustainable Tourism Development	32
Conservation Education and Extension Program	33
The New Management Plan	34

CHAPTER 4: CASE STUDY, GHANDRUK	37
Introduction	37
The Physical Landscape	37
The Social Geography of the Village	38
Social Infrastructure	42
High School	43
Health Services	43
Electricity and Amenities	44
Forest Nursery and Agriculture Demonstration Farm	45
Women's Views on Development	46
General Profile	46
Household Profile	48
Gender Division of Labor within Household	51
Mobility and Empowerment	52
Views on ACAP and Ama Toli	53
PHOTOGRAPHS	59-76
CHAPTER 5: IMPACT OF ACAP IN GHANDRUK, A GENDER ANALYSIS	77
Introduction	77
Women's Development Program	77
Adult Literacy Program (ALP)	78
Scholarship for Girls	79
Day Care Center	79
Developing Women's Entrepreneurship in Tourism (DWET)	81
Ama Toli (Mothers' Group)	82
History	82
Accomplishments	84
Social Relations and Hierarchies	86
Key Decision-Makers	86
Participation and Benefits	87
Patron-Client Relationship	88
Collective Power and Individual Empowerment	89
ACAP's Future Role in Women's Development	89
CHAPTER 6: FUTURE DIRECTIONS	91
Recommendations:	92
Formal and Nonformal Education	93
Extension and Outreach through Ama Samuha	94
Inclusion of the Socially-Disadvantaged Group	94
Empowerment-Oriented Gender Training	95
Wider Consequences within ACAP and Nepal	96
The Challenges and Struggles of Nepali Women Continue	98
REFERENCES	99

LIST OF MAP, TABLES AND FIGURES

Map:	Annapurna Conservation Area	22
Table 1:	Women and Development: Third World Policy Approach	16
Table 2:	Profile of Respondents	47
Table 3:	Profile of Household	48
Table 4:	Type of Facilities	50
Table 5:	Gender Division of Labor Within Household	51
Table 6:	Perception Regarding Mobility and Empowerment	52
Table 7:	Views on ACAP and the Ama Toli	55
Table 8:	Ama Toli of Ward 8	85
Figure 1:	Institutional Structure of ACAP	28
Figure 2:	Landuse Pattern in the Annapurna Conservation Area	30
Figure 3:	Tourists Visiting the Annapurna Conservation Area	33
Figure 4:	Transect of Ghandruk	40

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACA	Annapurna Conservation Area
ACAP	Annapurna Conservation Area Project
ALP	Adult Literacy Program
CAMC	Conservation Area Management Committee
CDC	Conservation and Development Committee
DWET	Developing Women's Entrepreneurship in Tourism
GAD	Gender and Development
HMTTC	Hotel Management Training and Tourism Center
HYV	High Yield Variety
ICIMOD	International Center for Integrated Mountain Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
KMTNC	King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation
LMC	Lodge Management Committee
NGO	Non Government Organization
SAP	Structural Adjustment Program
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
VDC	Village Development Committee
WAD	Women and Development
WDO	Women's Development Office
WID	Women in Development
WWF	World Wildlife Fund

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Study

This thesis is inspired by the success story of the Ama Toli, a grassroots women's group in the village of Ghandruk located about 50km northwest of Pokhara in central Nepal. This documents how the Ama Toli emerged as a progressive force in community development with the help of a local NGO, the Annapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAP). This study also attempts to determine the role of ACAP in promoting women's role in development and whether these methods, experiences, and ideas are transferable to other villages. The aim of the study was to carry out an intensive analysis of this particular community to understand why and how a grassroots women's group has become so successful here, while they failed in other parts of Nepal.

Situated at an elevation of 2,000m above the Modi Khola Valley, south of the Annapurna Mountains, Ghandruk is predominantly inhabited by the Gurungs. "Gurungs form a distinct cultural group, along with a number of highland communities which have racial and linguistic ties with Tibet and can be called Tibeto-Nepalese, in contrast to the majority of Nepalese whose ties are to India and maybe called Indo-Nepalese" (Ragsdale, 1979:24). Gurung men are famous all over the world as fearless warriors in the Gurkha regiments of the British and the Indian Army. In recent years, Ghandruk has become a major international tourist attraction for trekking, and thousands of tourists visit annually. In addition, Ghandruk has become a model of village development through the success of ACAP. This has brought new opportunities for local development.

The villagers have been quick to profit from tourism. The high out-migration rate for Gurung men, increasing outside influence from tourism, and new development approaches influenced the Gurungs of Ghandruk to make social and cultural adaptations to the Indo-Nepalese majority while maintaining a strong sense of their own identity through language, kinship, and village structure. The inevitable changes brought about by the increasing outside influences have had significant effects on the villagers.

The women of Ghandruk formed a women's group known as Ama Toli with the help of ACAP to take advantage of these new opportunities to help develop their village. This thesis examines how Ama Toli started and how one such group has progressed, benefiting the village and the women themselves.

My personal ties to Ghandruk through my maternal grandmother, who was born there, facilitated my fieldwork. My grandmother left the village when she was a teenager and moved to Kathmandu in the early 1930s when she married my grandfather. She went back to Ghandruk only once and lived in Kathmandu all her life until she passed away in 1990. I grew up in Kathmandu and had never met any of my grandmother's relatives prior to my fieldwork, but when I arrived in Ghandruk, I found out that all the villagers in Ward 8 and a few from other wards were related to me and readily accepted me as part of the family. I was able to gather reliable information from my relatives easily and quickly, which shortened my stay in the village to six weeks in July and August of 1998.

Previous Research on Gurungs and Ghandruk

A number of previous studies have been done of the Gurung people, mostly by anthropologists, and I used some of them as background for my study. The most important contribution to the study of the Gurungs is made by Bernard Pignede, a self-trained anthropologist. His work *Les Gurungs* (1966) was written on the basis of his seven months stay in the village of Mohoria. Unfortunately, due to his tragic death soon after he returned home in France, his work was published under the direction of Professor Louis Dumont.

In 1993, Pignede's work was translated in English, *The Gurungs: A Himalayan Population of Nepal*, and it was edited by Alan Macfarlane and Sarah Harrison. Pignede's work is still considered to have the best-detailed account of the Gurungs. Alan Macfarlane conducted his fieldwork in the village of Thak and his work *Resources and Population: A Study of the Gurungs of Nepal* was published in 1976. His work focuses primarily on demography and the changes in Gurung economy and forest and land resources. Tod Anthony Ragsdale in his dissertation, "Ethnicity and Educational Change: The Gurungs of Nepal and the New Education Plan" (1979), discussed the impact of centrally planned educational reform on schools in the rural population, specifically on the Tibeto-Burman speaking Gurungs. Mary Katherine Des Chene wrote about the Gurkhas in her dissertation "Relics of Empire: A Cultural History of the Gurkhas 1815-1987" (1991). Her work discusses the history of the Gurkhas in detail, what this has meant to the Gurungs in the villages and how it has altered their lives. Stan Royal Mumford wrote about the religious practices of the Gurungs in *Himalayan Dialogue: Tibetan Lamas and Gurung Shamans in Nepal* (1989). Ernestine McHugh's dissertation "The Social, Cultural and Personal Worlds of the Gurungs of Nepal" (1985) and Ellen Andors's dissertation "Rodi: Women's Institution of the Gurungs of Nepal" (1976) are other notable contributions to the study of the Gurungs.

Among all these works on the Gurungs, only Ellen Andors's work explores closely how the old tradition of *rodhighar* enabled Gurung women from an early age to participate in village activities. *Rodhighar* was an institution where young Gurung girls of the same age gathered together every

night and discussed work they would do together the following day and they all slept in the same house. This same group of girls would actively participate as organizers and entertainers during festivals and special occasions in the village. These tasks often required help from the boys and hence the boys were also allowed to join *rodhighar* in the evening but went back to their own homes to sleep. This open interaction between girls and boys was viewed as immoral by outsiders who were non-Gurungs and Hindus. As the interaction with the outsiders increased, the *rodhighars* in Gurung communities quickly started to disappear. By the mid-1970s *rodhighars* were non-existent in many Gurung villages. Andors explains in her work why and how the practice of *rodi* disappeared but no one after her has looked into how the role of Gurung women has changed after the end of *rodi*. There are no *rodhighars* in Ghandruk today, but the similarity between the Ama Toli and the *rodhighar* is no coincidence. There is a significant parallel between the *rodi* and the Ama Toli, especially how they raise funds, organize village activities and form groups to do community development. Andors's work provides the background on Gurung women's organizational skills and explains to some extent why the Ama Toli in Ghandruk has been successful.

Since 1986, with the inception of ACAP, development efforts and change in Ghandruk has closely monitored and recorded by the project. The annual report of ACAP documents all the development activities and its implications. When the initial feasibility study of the entire Annapurna Conservation Area was carried out, Ghandruk was selected for the pilot project, and a lot of resources and efforts were invested for conservation and development that was based on co-management. The involvement of the local community with guidance from ACAP resulted in better management of the natural resources and improved the economic and social condition of Ghandruk. Besides ACAP, the International Center for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), a Kathmandu-based international NGO, has shown great interest in Ghandruk and carried out numerous studies. In 1995, Dibya Gurung presented *Tourism and Gender: Impact and Implications of Tourism on Nepalese Women* (1995). Her paper focused on women's involvement in tourism in the Annapurna area, and specifically in Ghandruk. A study on the impacts of tourism on local development was done by Shailendra Thakali in 1997. His paper, *Local Level Institutions for Mountain Tourism and Local Development: the Annapurna Experience* (1997) also focuses on Ghandruk. Similarly, a study on alternative energy for the Ghandruk area was carried out by Kamal Banskota and Bikash Sharma in their paper, *Case Studies from Ghandruk: Impact of Alternative Energy Technology in Reducing Pressure on Forest Resources and Contribution of Tourist Expenditure to Local Economy in the Annapurna Area* (1997). All these research and studies were funded by ICIMOD.

An earlier account of Ghandruk is found in the works of geographer Stan Stevens who conducted research in Ghandruk before and after the establishment of ACAP. His earlier work, "Sacred and Profaned Himalayas" (1988) documents the settlement history and local conservation practices

in Ghandruk that pre-dated ACAP. He describes and provides one of the earliest accounts of ACAP. His later work, "Annapurna Conservation Area: Empowerment, Conservation, and Development in Nepal" in *Conservation through Cultural Survival: Indigenous Peoples and Protected Areas* (1997) discusses in detail the reasons behind ACAP's success. According to Stevens:

Partnership between local communities and ACAP makes Annapurna Conservation Area one of the Himalaya's best example of a holistic, grass-roots-based approach to conservation and development. Conservation and development activities are based on principles of local empowerment, respect for traditional institutions and practices, locally set priorities, and local participation in planning, implementation and monitoring" (Stevens,1997:247).

Research Design and Methodology

The research method used in this study combines both quantitative and qualitative approaches. These included surveys, interviews, and focused group discussions conducted in Nepali and Gurung with the aid of two local research assistants, participant observation, and library research both in Nepal and at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

A general survey questionnaire was designed and carried out with the women in the village through interviews because of their inability to read and write. Semi-structured interviews helped to elaborate the participant's responses to the survey questions. Almost all the women were interviewed in Nepali. Most of the women felt comfortable talking about their problems and a few women showed appreciation for getting a chance to speak out. Some women felt they could express themselves better in their native Gurung language, and an interpreter helped with the interviews. My research assistants were Santa Gurung and Dil Maya Magar. Santa Gurung attended high school and she was able to give me information about the school although it was closed during the time I was conducting my fieldwork. Dil Maya, who was the same age as Santa, was not lucky enough to afford to attend school. She worked in a lodge as a cook and a helper. As the summer months are a low tourists season, she offered to help me with my research. Although her father was a Magar and her mother Chetri, Dil Maya spoke Gurung fluently. Both girls were very helpful because they knew everyone and had good reputations in the village. Santa was known as the smart girl since she was a very good student. Dil Maya was known as the hardworking girl since she was always a looking for extra work to support her parents and her three other siblings. With them I received a warm welcome in every house. Some former and current staff members of ACAP in Ghandruk, Pokhara and Kathmandu who had worked since the establishment of ACAP in 1986 were also interviewed.

Focus group discussions with women's group members and village elders were good for open discussions where more people got a chance to participate. However, the time of the fieldwork

coincided with the planting season. Farming is still based on rain-fed agriculture and the main agricultural season lasts throughout the monsoon, which starts in early June and lasts till early September. The villagers are extremely busy at this time of the year and only two small group meetings were organized.

The participant-observation method involved a village stay of six weeks where direct interactions with the various families were made by working with women from various households. These included working all day in the fields, collecting fodder for the cattle, taking care of the children, preparing meals, participating in the local festivities, and observing other household activities like wool production, weaving, and basket making.

The libraries in Kathmandu were very useful in terms of recent publications and discussions about the study area. The ACAP head office in Pokhara and the library at King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation (KMTNC) in Kathmandu were helpful sources for literature about Annapurna Conservation Area (ACA) and relevant materials.

There were several videos available at the ACAP office in Ghandruk, which documented the changes in the Ghandruk since the establishment of ACAP in 1986. More reports on Annapurna Conservation Area were available at International Center for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD). For the literature on Nepali Women and Development, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) based in Kathmandu was consulted. After the fieldwork, data compilation and analysis was carried out in the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

Data Collection and Selection of Participants

The ACAP headquarters in Ghandruk was the primary source of information for the demographic data. In 1995, an economic survey for the entire Annapurna region was conducted by Annapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAP). However, due to lack of funding, the collected data has not been analyzed by ACAP. The information collected from this survey was slowly being recorded in the computer at Ghandruk while I was conducting fieldwork I was able to obtain the demographic data from the same survey. The crude statistics included the number of households, number of family members in each household, family member's education level, number of cattle they owned, and the number of family members who live away from the village at least part of the year.

Data on the last topic was important in determining the economic status of the family because usually a family with a member working outside the village meant an external source of income. Since the mobility for women is low in the village, it is usually the male member who migrates to the city, leaving behind a female headed household.

Santa Gurung and Dil Maya Magar helped with interviews as translators, and together we interviewed 26 women and 6 men from Ward 8. The primary selection for the interview was done through the economic survey data obtained from ACAP. The economic survey data provided economic and ethnic backgrounds. In a village environment, one's ethnicity plays a crucial role, and often determines the economic status of the family. It must be noted, however, that this is not always true, and some people have successfully broken these ethnic barriers. I selected at least one woman from the 12 settlements within Ward 8 and made sure that non-Gurung women were also well represented. After the primary selection from the list, I visited each of the selected households and cross-checked the information in the economic survey data and made the final selection for the interview. Although most interviews were conducted in Nepali, initially my assistants would introduce me and explain the purpose of my visit in the Gurung language. After this formal introduction, I would start talking to them in Nepali. This strategy worked well with all the interviews, which were conducted at home or in the fields with the women. A few of the men came to see me at the lodge where I was staying so that I could interview them. This was interesting because women were shy and I had to approach them first, while the men were keen to express their views and insisted that I listen to what they had to say. The women were extremely hospitable and patient throughout the interviews, which sometimes lasted a few hours. Some women showed great enthusiasm for having an opportunity to speak out, and hoped their voices would be heard by the decision-makers in higher office. Contrary to stereotypes that women are suppressed by society and therefore cannot speak for themselves, I found my respondents amazingly articulate. They were not afraid or hesitant about voicing their personal and/or family needs. Unfortunately, this is not true during village meetings where the elderly and mostly men dominate the meetings and the younger members only listen. Interviews were either noted on site or tape-recorded.

Focus group discussions with women's group members and the village elders were also helpful in understanding how decisions were made and who played what role in the decision-making process. Although village groups now charge a fee of Rs 500 to Rs 1,000, which is equivalent to US\$ 19 to 16, for outsiders to attend the village group meetings, they allowed me to attend these free. This was partly because in the summer months due to heavy monsoon rain, there are fewer meetings and hardly any outsiders are present in the village. During the peak tourist season, there are literally thousands of visitors in the area, and many are interested in participating in village group meetings. The villagers got tired of conducting these meetings for the visitors, so about three years ago, they started charging the any tourist who wanted to attend the village meetings. This helped reduce the number of meetings that are conducted in the Nepali and Gurung language. Someone always helped to translate Gurung into Nepali.

Although Ghandruk is known as a Gurung village, only sixty percent of the villagers are Gurungs, and it is not as homogenous as one might assume. The income disparities among the Gurung

families and the presence of minority groups like the castes and Brahmins make Ghandruk a heterogeneous community. The artisan are considered a lower caste and are not treated on par with the others. The Brahmins are the highest caste in Hindu culture. The village of Ghandruk is made up of six smaller units or wards 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8. Twenty-six women (19 Gurungs, 3 artisan castes and 4 others) residing in Ward 8 were interviewed. A few men and ACAP staff in Ghandruk office were also interviewed. Of the total 36 people interviewed, 22 were Gurungs.

The rationale behind choosing Ward 8 was that it is one of the biggest among the six wards and represents all the different people living in the village. It was also quite a distance from the central area, where the ACAP headquarters, two health posts, the village high school, post office, police station and the only telephone were located. The rate of participation in ACAP programs are higher for wards 3, 4, 5 and 6, which are closer to the central area. The Ama Toli in Ward 8 worked more independently but was equally successful as the other groups that participated more in the ACAP programs.

The high success rate of the Ama Toli in isolation from the central area made Ward 8 more interesting.

My personal ties to Ward 8, where my maternal grandmother's house was located and where most of her relatives lived, made it easier for me to stay there. My grandmother's house was, empty because her younger brothers had moved to Pokhara. Although it was my first visit and I did not know any of my grandmother's relatives, there were two elderly women in Ward 8 who still remembered her. The villagers were very kind and readily accepted me, probably because of my grandmother or because I was also Gurung, or, perhaps, simply because I was a women interested in documenting women's work.

Many of the women I interviewed answered my questions openly because they felt comfortable with me. My personal background and my role as a researcher made me an outsider but the villagers accepted as an insider, allowing me to obtain detailed information that might not have been otherwise possible.

ACAP officials in the Ghandruk Headquarters and the Pokhara Head Office were also interviewed to get a better understanding of the history of the project and its future plans. The former officer of Women and Development Program, Jagan Gurung, who was one of the first people to promote the establishment of Ama Toli, provided an oral history of the groups.

Her successor, Hari Gurung, discussed the future plans of the Women and Development Program.

Other staff in Ghandruk and Pokhara office also provided valuable information.

Limitations of the Study

The primary limitation of a study like this one is time. I was in the village during the monsoon, which is a busy time for farming. Village activities are determined by seasons. For instance, the workload in the July is very different from December. Hence, it must be noted that this study reflects a sample population in a specific timespan.

Depending on the amount of time spent in the village, the data collected through observation might vary significantly.

Although it is a relatively remote village in a high mountainous region, Ghandruk constantly interacts with the outside world through tourism, and life in the village is changing very rapidly. Tourism and the out-migration of the male population are also influencing the village economy. However, since the majority of the villagers are still subsistence farmers, at the household level things have not changed as much. The division of labor within homes, local traditional values and cultural practices have remained the same at least for the women. In fact, the traditional culture has been promoted through tourism, and several Gurung museums, which display the traditional culture and practices of the Gurung people, have opened specifically to attract more tourists. Although opening a tourist lodge is an incentive for higher economic gain, the initial investment to open a lodge is too high for most of the villagers. The younger women have instead opted to work for lodges or to sell produce to lodges and handicrafts to the tourists.

Some of the questions in the questionnaire were not helpful because the women either did not have an answer or their answers were too vague. None of the women disclosed their age, and when asked would answer, "Oh! I am too old," or "I must be about thirty or forty." In Gurung society, like other Tibeto-Burman groups, age can be calculated by reference to the system of naming each year in a twelve-year cycle by its corresponding animal symbol. Although it would have been possible to calculate their age, it appears that age was not as important to them. People of all ages, worked together in the farms and life circumstances rather than their age group often determined people's work role. The concept of time is very different because the majority of them do not follow time with watches or conventional calendars. Gradually, I had to change my questions or ask different ones.

The in-depth interviews made it clear that ACAP economic survey data were biased in the direction of socially-desirable responses, probably because villagers wanted to please ACAP. Due to the high success rate of ACAP programs, the villagers look up to ACAP as a source of resources and help. During the interview, people were hesitant to talk about their land holdings and the specific number of cattle they owned, especially the ones who owned a lot. The poorer families were more open about what they owned.

The women I interviewed might have answered a few questions in ways meant to please an outside researcher. Rather than perceiving me as a neutral person, they might have felt the need to present a more positive picture of their village. It is not uncommon to find that villagers who take pride in their village try to impress outsiders. For this reason, I tried to talk with as many people as possible from all age groups and found that older people were more likely to paint a positive picture of their village than younger ones. Younger women were more also open about disclosing their discontent.

Study Organization

Following the introduction, Chapter II summarizes the relevant literature and stresses the significance of women's role in development in the Nepali context by outlining the challenges and struggles of Nepali women. This chapter further discusses development from the Third World women's perspective and analyzes the impact of development on women in this part of the world. It also discusses policy approaches such as Women in Development (WID), Women and Development (WAD), and Gender and Development (GAD), that is applied in much of the Third World.

Chapter III is heavily derived from the annual reports of ACAP. The annual report documents the yearly activities of ACAP and expresses the goal and the objectives of the project. These goals and objectives have changed over the years and this chapter identifies some of the significant changes.

Chapter IV is the case study. It introduces Ghandruk in detail with the help of the economic survey data and the survey questionnaire. It also describes the physical landscape and the social geography of the village. The last part of the chapter focuses on Ghandruk women's views on development.

Chapter V analyzes the impact of ACAP in Ghandruk from a gender perspective. It summarizes ACAP programs designed specifically to help women, one of which was the establishment of the Ama Toli.

This chapter records the history of the Ama Toli and focuses on the work accomplished by the Ama Toli of Ward 8. It also analyzes the role of social relations and hierarchies in determining participation and benefits from social activities such as involvement in the Ama Toli.

Chapter VI provides a few recommendations in light of the data presented in chapters III, IV, and V. It also returns to the theme of the first chapter and links the case study to the larger issue of women and development. I suggest that the case of Ghandruk is indeed unique, and that the challenges and the struggles of Nepali women are far from over.

CHAPTER 2

RETHINKING WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

Although the United Nation's Universal Declaration of Human Rights reaffirmed the belief in the equal rights of men and women in 1948, the progress towards equality for men and women has been minimal, especially in South Asia. The 1995 *Human Development Report* indicated that there are 1.3 billion people living in poverty, of whom almost half are in South Asia, and 70 percent of the poor were female. The number of women living in absolute poverty in South Asia has increased by 50 percent in the last decade as opposed to 30 percent for men (Carr, Chen, and Jhabvala, 1996:1). One of the reasons for this uneven development has been the problem of understanding and defining the term development itself.

Highly ideologically loaded, it (development) means different things to different people. Some see it in terms of a purposive and planned project; others prefer to talk of processes of social transformation. Some define it as the equalizing of opportunities; still others as redistributive justice. Some emphasize ends; others means; and still others focus on the interrelationship between ends and means (Kabeer, 1999: x)

These conflicting views on development have added to the problem rather than the solution. The viewpoints of the different unofficial actors in development, particularly poor women, have been left out from the mainstream development policy. Instead, economics as a discipline has played an influential role in shaping development thought. However, economists have generally ignored feminist concerns by simply assuming that gender biases do not exist. Orthodox economics identifies lack of economic advancement as the root cause of underdevelopment without considering other factors like class, and regional and cultural differences. This illustrates the gender-blindness of orthodox development. Here, issues of power and inequality are kept out from the mainstream development thought.

The orthodox school does not see deprivation as the result of unequal power between classes, regions and nations, but as resulting from deficiencies in economic functioning. ...[O]ne key concept and strategy of this school emphasizes economic growth as a way to eradicate poverty, which in turn can be subcategorized into two general developmental streams: growth first – trickle down later, and growth with equity (Sittirak, 1999:8).

Another school of thought that has driven development in the recent decades is the political economy school.

Political economists are more concerned with the nature of the process by which growth is achieved. The key characteristics of this school can be readily identified by applying Paulo Freire's question regarding the educational process to the development process: 'Are people (or classes) and nations objects of development under someone else's control or are they subjects of development, in control of their own destiny?' (Sittirak, 1998:8)

In both schools, "development has been about men, by men and for men...policymakers did not see women" (Kabeer, 1999: xi). Women's work was invisible to economists who equate productivity with a cash economy and, as a result, women's domestic work and subsistence food production are viewed as unproductive. And since the farm is owned by the head of the household, generally a man, most development programs were focused on men who owned the resources. This further increases men's control over resources.

Women's Development: Third World Policy Approach

Up until the 1960s, women were merely seen as quiet recipients and passive beneficiaries of development. The emphasis was on assisting women to become better mothers and this was met by providing food aid, measures against malnutrition and family planning (Moser, 1993:62). In the wake of the feminist movement in the First World in the 1970s, international development agencies were pressured by the Western feminists to make women visible as a category for research and policy. In 1975, the United Nation's International Year for Women, the UN declared the next ten years (1976-1985) the Decade for Women and this has come to be characterized as WID (Women in Development). "There was a conviction that if only planners and policy makers could be made to see women's concrete and valuable contribution to the economy, women would no longer be marginalized in the development process" (Kabeer, 1999: xi).

As a result of the Decade for Women, a great number of research and policy interventions have resulted in more information on women's lives throughout the world. Today, there are more statistics available on women, and most governments in the Third World have allocated specific programs for women's advancement. However, women continue to occupy a marginal place in development thought and policy. This is because WID received merely symbolic recognition and was unsupported by material resources and political commitment.

The mainstream development policies treat women as second class citizens and most development programs are still biased against women. This has further deteriorated women's

position in many societies. Poverty among women has increased even within the richest countries, resulting in “feminization of poverty” (Kabeer, 1999: 9).

Economists believed that economic independence is the only way “women can emancipate from the seclusion of the household and gain at last the chance to be full human being, exercising her mind and her talents in the same way as men” (Lewis, 1955: 422). The drive for economic growth, however, focused only on “modernization” of the underdeveloped world. Constructions of large-scale hydroelectric dams and major highways were some of the options to modernize and improve the economy of the Third World. This, however, resulted in deforestation, water pollution, loss of biodiversity, and an increase in poverty levels. It is almost certain that hardly any local people and no women were consulted when these large-scale infrastructures were developed. Instead there are numerous cases where the local inhabitants were displaced from their homeland by these large-scale development projects. One must remember that there exists disparity within the Third World too. The urban elites are the major decision-makers, and they often disregard the consequences of large-scale projects on the local population as long as they themselves benefit from it.

In female farming systems where women were the primary providers of food for the family, they enjoyed a considerably greater amount of freedom of movement and economic independence than in societies where they were confined primarily to reproductive work (Boserup, 1970). However, the modern agricultural schemes completely left out the women. Instead, modernization of agriculture in many countries increased women's dependent status and their workload. Modern farming technology focused only on the male population. Women usually did not receive any training or access to the new technology. In Africa, many rural development projects funded by a combination of international and national development agencies brought new resources and opportunities to men, but left women on the margins of development (Carney, 1995, Boserup, 1970, Kabeer, 1999). These projects often ignored the scale and significance of women's independent farming or income generation. Women's role in the farms is partly ignored or misunderstood because their work is largely invisible in the national statistics (Whitehead, 1990:62).

In India, the mechanized agricultural technology of the “green revolution” had even worse effects. The green revolution technology was available only to the wealthy farmers who could afford to buy high yield variety (HYV) seeds, fertilizers, irrigation water, and machinery such as tractors. This enabled the richer farmers to increase their crop output while the poor farmers continued to get poorer. Unable to compete with the richer farmers, the poor farmers were compelled to sell their land to the large landholders and became mere laborers in the big farms. However, the economic gain for the richer farmers were also short lived because excessive use of fertilizers and monocropping depleted the soil and contaminated water very

quickly. Once promised to alleviate hunger in India, the “green revolution” increased the number of poor and hungry people. The environmental and social cost of the “green revolution” was very high (Agarwal, 1995: 9; Shiva 1991: 51)

Industrialization for export continues to be the driving force of development in most of the Third World today. The free market global economy has tied the world market into a single web where large multi-national corporations run businesses at the expense of the poor and the destitute. Multi-national corporations are attracted to the Third World by the availability of cheap materials, resources, male labor, and docile female labor (Momsen, 1991). Industrialization of the urban sectors has benefited only men. Male mobility is higher than female mobility in most of the Third World.

Male out-migration from rural areas for wage labor has left behind women to take care of the family and the farm. This has greatly increased women’s work.

To make matters worse, large banks and institutions like World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) have taken the upper hand as moneylenders. The Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) designed by IMF and World Bank has increased the burdens of women because state spending in the social sectors like health services and welfare has been cut back. This cutback in social services means women will have to work extra hours to take care of their families. Women will have to provide health care in the absence of public clinics and educate their children as public schools deteriorate and private schools become inaccessible. The tightening of credit and money lending has also decreased women’s purchasing power (McGovan, Vosmek and Danaher, 1992: 2-5).

The “feminization of poverty” has forced people to rethink the development theory based on the idea that economic development alone would solve all the problems, because economic development neither automatically eradicates poverty nor improves women’s status. In addition, WID focused only on women and did not challenge gender inequality in anyway. Gender analysis is important to understand and to address the problems of women’s subordination. The problem of distribution and equal access to resources for both men and women is critical.

Only in the last decade, women’s development has received much attention in the Third World. There has been a proliferation of policies, programs, and projects designed to help Third World women. There are many national and international, governmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) involved in formulating these policies but a wide range of confusion still exists concerning both the definition and use of different policy approaches. It is important to understand and examine the theoretical base for each of these policy approaches from a gender planning perspective.

During the United Nation's Decade for Women (1976-1985), the economic role of women was suddenly "discovered", and in order to promote women's advancement, the WID approach was introduced. Its purpose was to gain equity for women in the development process (Moser, 1993:62; Jahan, 1995:20). The WID approach emphasizes participation and integration of women in development. It looks into women's role alone. In order to include women in development WID focused on women's projects, integrated projects, women's productivity and income, and women's ability to manage their household. Many feminists however rejected the goal of integration because they argued that women did not want to be integrated in an unequal and exploitative system, they wanted to change the prevailing system (ICIMOD, 1997:4).

Gender and Development (GAD) is the more recent approach, articulated by some groups of women in the Third World. The gender approach focuses on the socially constructed roles of both men and women and looks at women in the context of society. The GAD approach seeks to empower women through greater self-reliance and transform unequal relationships between women and men. It tries to understand the unequal power relationships (rich/poor, men/women) that prevent equitable development and women's full participation. The goal for GAD is equitable sustainable development where women and men sharing decision-making and power. GAD identifies and addresses short-term needs determined by women and men to improve their conditions. At the same time, GAD also addresses women's and men's long-term interests. It focuses on "the current and the potential role and responsibilities of both men and women and their access to and control over resources within a particular system" (Kabeer, 1999: 265). The GAD approach is, however, often criticized as being Western-inspired feminism and is unpopular except with the Third World women's NGOs and their supporters (Moser 1993: 74; ICIMOD, 1997:4).

An alternative way of viewing development has evolved out of grassroots experience. This alternative view is based on interactions at the local level, and ideas and policies are shaped by everyday practice rather than by the ruling dominant development theory. The local people know their interests and needs. The local people are capable of promoting their own development if their initiatives are recognized and supported. There are many examples that clearly show that these grassroots movements result in empowerment for poor women. This also proves that, in spite of extensive development policies and programs, poor women benefit most from their own development efforts. At the local level, when women come together to form a group, they are able to identify their needs and find ways to help themselves. The local NGOs have created space for women's voices either through participatory processes or by encouraging the women to challenge and change the development plans that are biased against women. Women should be targets of development; they have to be agents of development.

Table 1: Women and Development: Third World Policy Approach

Approach	Theoretical Base	Political Issue	Practical Action
<p>WID</p> <p>Premise: Women bypassed by Development</p>	<p><u>Liberal feminism</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modernization (industrialization) and human capital investment would raise women's status and living standards. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affirmative action • Minimizing and/or eradicating discrimination against women 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills training • Improved technology transfer • Appropriate technology for women • Income generation • Women's integration into development.
<p>GAD</p> <p>Premise: Women as change agents and not just recipients.</p>	<p><u>Critical feminism:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Links the relations of production to the relations of reproduction. • Recognizes class solidarities and distinctions but argues that patriarchy operates within and across classes to oppress women. • Stresses connection and contradiction of gender, class, race and development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women's emancipation • Role of state in providing women social services, childcare and healthcare • Women's legal rights • Structural and power shifts related to gender biases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizing women • Advocacy for transformation of gender roles and relations in the form of gender sensitization and similar workshops.

Source: Gender Training Resources in the Asian and Pacific Region (Reena Bhavnani, 1997: 37).

Some of the efforts of the grassroots NGOs in South Asia have had remarkable success. The Grameen bank of Bangladesh started as a poverty-eradication project in 1976. It started by lending primarily to men, but today it is best known for its success in reaching credit to poor and assetless women. Today, 90 percent of the borrowers are women (Kabeer, 1999:231). The Chipko movement in India is another good example of how local women came together to defend their forests from developers who had permission to cut down the trees for commercial use. The women as a group felt the need to protect the forest because their livelihood depended on it (Shiva, 1991).

SUTRA, an organization that promotes women's organizations in India, has been helping women to speak up and discuss domestic violence, rape, and alcoholism. Once the local taboos were broken by the women who worked for SUTRA and who were victims of domestic violence, other women opened up easily and shared their stories (Kabeer, 1999:234).

Deep-rooted beliefs about the sanctity and safety of the domestic sphere, the shame and blame that often attach to women who are beaten, and the male biases of most development agencies have long combined to ensure that this was an issue largely characterized by silence and non-decision-making (Kabber, 1999:233).

Even where women have been successful at decision-making at the community level and at certain aspects of household decision-making, the overall control of household, land, capital, and other valuable resources is still male-dominant in much of South Asia. The grassroots women's groups create space for women to come together and discuss immediate problems, and to seek help. The local level organizations are more aware of the local social relations and social hierarchies that determine one's access to resources. Although patriarchal views and structures oppress women all over the world, there exists a class hierarchy even among the women and not all women share identical interests. Organizing women's groups at the grassroots level has been most effective for empowering women at the local level and for bottom-up development.

The Challenges and Struggles of Women in Nepal

Nepali women are daughters, wives and mothers, but are not recognized as individuals with their own identity, despite the fact that they are as human as men. (Prativa Subedi, 1997:5)

In spite of WID, GAD, and progressive women's movements all around the globe, Nepal is slipping behind, unable to provide Nepali women their basic human rights. The country is obliged to ensure equality of men and women under the principle of international law and Universal Declaration of Human Rights, but in practice discrimination persists (Subedi, 1997; Siwakoti and Karki, 1996). The characteristics of patriarchal society in Nepali Hindu cultures and those of many other Nepali peoples have resulted in clear patterns and structures subordinating women. Religious and mythological beliefs and the structure of Nepal's many cultures and societies still define women's role while modern economic pressures increasingly modify their traditional picture (Subedi, 1997; Acharya, 1994).

The complexity created by differences in culture and tradition, language and religion make it impossible to generalize the status of women in Nepal, but it can be stated without reservation that the majority of these women are exploited and oppressed. Women's rights are often determined by religious traditions, customs and practices, some of which violate the fundamental rights of equality. The lack of education has further deprived women from recognizing even basic human rights.

Women have no claim over parental property in Nepal,¹ although some cultures are more egalitarian and men and women share properties equally. According to the "Muliki Ain" or the country code enacted in 1963, which forms the legal basis for almost everything in Nepal, parental property must be divided equally among sons, and a daughter can inherit her share only if she is 35 years old and unmarried. If she marries later, the property has to be returned to the brothers. Once a girl gets married, she basically loses all the ties with her parents. She belongs to her husband and has no rights to claim any property from her parents.

Nepal is the only country in the world where more than 90 percent of the population is Hindu. Nepali society is highly influenced by Hindu religion and culture, which also defines the role of women. Women are both glorified and degraded. In the Hindu scripture, "Manusmriti," we find lines like "the Gods rejoice where women are worshipped," and in another Hindu scripture, *Arthasastra*, women are described: "by nature a woman is deceitful and pushy, a liar foolish and greedy. She's impure and she is cruel" (Subedi, 1997:2). These contradictory ideas about women have confused both men and women about her image. Unfortunately, negative stereotypes of women have prevailed. The Hindu scriptures have also provided the basis for patriarchal society. The belief that God created man and woman, and that man was given the responsibility of taking care of the woman prevents any questions on male dominance.

Most religious customs are favorable to men... Most of the prayer rituals are performed by men. For example, the naming ceremony for a baby is not done by the mother but by the father, or one of his brothers. Furthermore, the presence of a male member of the family is obligatory in the ceremony. Hinduism dictates that marriage is for bearing children and, most important of all, to have sons (Subedi, 1997: 10).

¹ There are some cultures in Nepal like the Sherpa people in the Mount Everest area who are more egalitarian and daughters inherit parental property at the time of marriage. However, they do not get an equal share as their brothers and seldom inherit land.

In Nepal, housewives are often described as 'dependants' when in reality the entire family depends on them for food preparation, care and nurturing, and other household activities. In spite of the hard work women put in for the family, her work is not valued the same as the man's. Because women's work, such as house keeping, food production and other domestic work, do not have any monetary value, they are not considered productive. This reluctance to see women's work in the family as productive, economic activity rather than a natural and moral responsibility has further devalued women's role. Women are seen as economic burdens, and people are disappointed when a girl is born.

The subordination of women has concealed women's contribution to their communities. Although women are active actors of development at the grassroots level in many parts of Nepal, their contribution is either taken for granted or is not taken seriously. But an in-depth understanding of women's role in development paints a different picture. Women's active role in development has made a remarkable difference in some communities. However, limited decision-making power, mobility, control over resources, and access to training and capital continue to restrict Nepali women.

CHAPTER 3

ANNAPURNA CONSERVATION AREA PROJECT (ACAP)

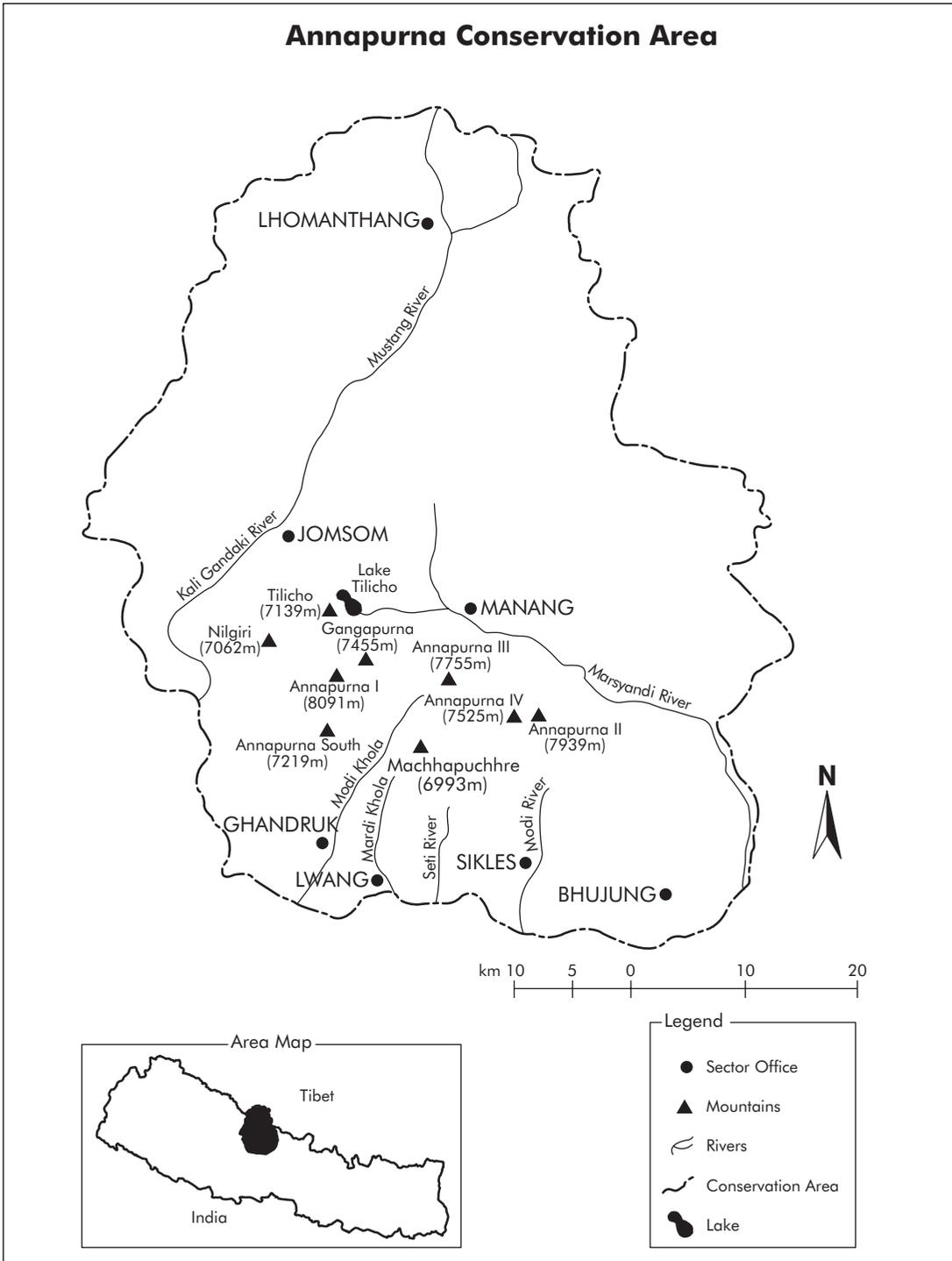
Introduction

The Annapurna Conservation Area Project is the first conservation effort in Nepal that has recognized local people's rights to use and make decisions about their homelands. It is an important example of grassroots conservation based on co-management (Stevens, 1997). From its inception, ACAP has focused on participatory rural development, along with nature conservation. Rather than displacing and relocating the local inhabitants to create a protected area or national park, ACAP instead shares conservation responsibilities with the local people (Stevens, 1997). This chapter describes the Annapurna Conservation Area, and outlines the brief history and progress of ACAP.

The Annapurna Conservation Area

Annapurna Conservation Area covers an area of 7,629 square kilometers that surrounds the Annapurna Mountains. This area constitutes 34.5 percent of the total area of protected areas in Nepal (KMTNC, 1998) (See Map 1). The Annapurna range includes the five peaks, Annapurna I (8,081m), Annapurna II (7,937m), Annapurna III (7,555m), Annapurna IV (7,525m) and Annapurna South (7,273m). The other famous peaks in the area are Machapuchhre (6,697m), Gangapurna (7,455m), Nilgiri (7,060m), Fang (7,647m), Tilicho (7,132m), Lamjung Himal (6,986m) and Hiunchuli (6,441m). This area is bordered in the east by the Marsyangdi River and the west by the Kali Gandaki River. There are numerous smaller river systems like the Modi Khola and Seti Khola that cut through the mountainous terrain. The Kali Gandaki River used to be one of the main trade routes between India and Tibet, and is also one of the deepest gorges in the world (Armington, 1997; Pye-Smith, 1988; Stevens, 1997).

The Annapurna range lies east-west, creating a vast rain shadow area north of the mountain range. The northern part of the mountains borders the Tibetan plateau and has a very dry desert-like climate. Low rainfall and cold harsh winters make agriculture very difficult in this area and as a result, this region is sparsely populated. On the other hand, the south side of the Annapurna is the wettest region in Nepal, receiving an average annual precipitation of 3500mm (ILCAA, 1995:18). Due to high rainfall, this area is lush with deciduous forests including rich rhododendron forests. The fertile river valleys provide good soil for farming and support large settlements. This north and south climatic variation, along with the high mountainous terrain



has made this fairly small area both geographically and culturally diverse, and very popular with foreign tourists:

One fascinating aspect of viewing the mountains is their changing mood with their interplay of light. Another interesting phenomenon about the mountains is the transformation of their shape and personality when viewed from different directions. If the Annapurna range presents itself as a dramatic wall of rock and ice and the limit of the northern horizon at Pokhara, the same mountain range is transformed into a massive hump of white mass as seen toward the south of Manang and the individual peaks take on an entirely different character. (Gurung, 1980:224)

The altitude varies from less than 1,000 m to 8,091 m within a short distance of less than 35 kilometers (KMTNC, 1998:7). Due to this extreme contrast in altitude and the consequent variation in climate, the region is characterized by wide-ranging habitats, which are home to diverse flora and fauna. Recent bio-diversity research recorded 1,226 plant species, 101 mammals, 474 birds, 39 reptiles and 22 amphibians (KMTNC, 1997:22). This included five of the country's six varieties of pheasant and over 100 species of orchids. Rare and endangered species include the snow leopard, musk deer, blue sheep, and the Himalayan thar.

The area is home to more than 120,000 people of 11 different ethnic, cultural, religious, and linguistic groups (Stevens, 1997:241). The high rainfall and fertile river valleys in the south has supported subsistence farmers for many generations. However, the rugged mountainous terrain restricted and minimized movement of people from village to village, which helped develop distinctive cultural enclaves. There are numerous peoples and castes who have made their home in this region, each having their own language, traditional dress, and religious and cultural beliefs (Stevens, 1997: 241). The 11 peoples living in this area are Gurung, Thakali, Loba, Baragaonli, Phuba, Narpa, Nyeshyangba, Gyalsomdoba, Magar, Tibetan, and the Hindu hill castes, mainly the artisan castes, Brahmins and Chettris. Aside from only one small airfield in Jomsom, the entire conservation area is accessible only by foot.

The magnificent natural and cultural diversity of the Annapurna Conservation Area (ACA) has made this area very popular for tourists. Out of 82,000 tourists who came to Nepal for trekking and mountaineering in 1997, almost 60 percent visited this area (ACAP, 1996:30). This number does not include the local guides, porters or thousands of pilgrims who come from India. The Muktinath temple located near the Mustang area is a pilgrimage site for Hindus. Hindus from as far as South India have been coming here for hundreds of years. The well-established trails, some of which were once trade routes between India and Tibet, serve as excellent trekking routes for the tourists today. Treks range from a few days to several weeks and range from moderate to more strenuous walking. These multiple options for trekking attract a wide range of trekkers of all ages, and as a result Annapurna has become the most popular trekking destination in Nepal.

History

As the popularity of the Annapurna area increased in the early 1980s, the number of outside visitors to the area also grew (See Figure 3). There are more than 250 small inns and lodges in the area that cater to trekkers (Stevens, 1997:243). The local villagers started to open small lodges and teashops along the trekking routes in the early 1960s (Stevens, 1988). This influx of outside visitors threatened the supply of natural resources like fuelwood and food in the area (ACAP, 1990; KMTNC, 1997; Gurung, 1995; CREST, 1995; Stevens, 1988). Since the tourists were ready to pay for these amenities and services, there was fierce competition between the lodge owners to provide cheap services at the expense of the natural environment. There was a sharp increase in fuelwood consumption, particularly to heat water for showers for trekkers. The forests surrounding the village were quickly depleted.

It was the fear that this beautiful land might turn into a total wasteland that motivated some conservationists from Kathmandu to ask the king of Nepal to consider this area for conservation and to control the access to natural resources. The Gurungs of the area had proposed a national park around Annapurna and Dhaulagiri in the early 1960s (Stevens, 1997: 244). The first proposal to establish a protected area in the Annapurna region was, however, presented by Karna Sakya, a leading conservationist and tourism promoter in Kathmandu in 1977. Then in 1982, he revised the proposal and proposed to establish the Annapurna National Recreational Area, stating that, “without the preservation of nature, tourism does not have any future for tomorrow, and at the same time, in a country like Nepal, where economic prosperity is closed and partially paralyzed, tourism is the only immediate answer to get finance for the costly operations such as conservation and preservation” (Sakya, 1982:1). From the very initial phase the central theme was management of natural resources for sustainable local and tourism development. Shakya’s proposal was realized only after King Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev visited the village of Ghandruk. The king gave the task to King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation (KMTNC), a Kathmandu based NGO, to consider turning this whole area into a national park. At this time the concept of conservation areas was unheard of in Nepal (Stevens, 1997: 244).

A team of three men, Mingma Norbu Sherpa, Chandra Prasad Gurung, and Broughton Coburn, conducted the feasibility study for establishing a protected area in 1986. Mingma Norbu Sherpa, the former warden of the Sagarmatha National Park, later became the first program director of ACAP. Chandra Prasad Gurung, a geographer from the Annapurna area, later became the second program director. Broughton Coburn, is a former Peace Corps volunteer and a development consultant (Stevens, 1997: 247).

Some parts of the Annapurna area were heavily settled and one of the team members, Chandra Prasad Gurung, was a local inhabitant. The team spent two months traveling and talking to the

locals, trying to introduce the idea of conservation and preservation. It was evident that the people were heavily dependent on their natural resources and that they had developed their own strategies of utilizing their resources without depleting them. They were knowledgeable about their environment, and because they depended on the natural resources for their livelihood, they took care of their surroundings. The team saw the locals inhabitants as the best managers of their environment and decided to use them in their conservation plan. This idea of a protected area with native inhabitants managing the park seemed more feasible than relocating some 120,000 people who lived here. In spite of some skepticism from conservationists and resistance from a few villagers, ACAP opened its first headquarters in the village of Ghandruk in Ghandruk Village Development Committee (VDC)² in 1986. Ghandruk was chosen as the pilot area for the project. By 1990, ACAP had expanded to 16 VDCs and at present it covers a total of 55 VDCs, making it the largest conservation area in the country (Stevens, 1997; ACAP, 1995; TNC, 1997).

Philosophy and Objectives

In 1986, ACAP was initially launched as an experiment towards an integrated approach in conservation and development. Even though the establishment of ACAP was initiated by a “top down” approach by the King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation (KMTNC) in Kathmandu, it is operated by “bottom-up” approach where local people are involved in all aspects of management.

The underlying philosophy in this model was that effective conservation of natural resources, and improvement in the circumstances in which the local inhabitants live, cannot be achieved without active participation of local community in all stages of a project, from planning through to implementation and evaluation (ACAP, 1996:2).

The most recently revised goals of ACAP is outlined as follows:

- (i) Mitigating negative or undesirable environmental impacts through promotion of local guardianship and making tourism or other development activities responsive to the fragility of the area.
- (ii) Generating and retaining tourism, and other sources of income in the local economy through skills development, increase in local production, and local entrepreneurship.
- (iii) Promoting linkages between conservation, tourism, and local development through a proactive approach in planning; ploughing back tourism revenue for local development, nature conservation and tourism development, and diversification of tourism products (ACAP, 1996: 3).

² VDC wards are referred in page 38.

The final goal of the project is to sustain itself from income generated by tourism within the ACA. In order to help the village communities to be self-sufficient, most community development programs require the villagers to contribute 50 percent of the project cost, either in cash or labor. This self-involvement of the people not only helps to run projects, but creates pride in their participation, making the project more likely to succeed. In order to involve the entire village, ACAP developed specific programs that are assisted by ACAP staff. Villagers can be involved in one or more programs, according to their choice and preference. For instance, more men are involved in the Lodge Management Committee and more women in the Day Care Center Program. Villagers are directly involved in planning, implementing, and managing the projects. This active participation at the local level helped to identify and address peoples' needs. This integrated approach to development considers the local people as partners rather than obstacles to conservation. To achieve the above stated goals, ACAP has adopted three guiding principles:

1. People's Participation

The active involvement of the local people from the very beginning is probably the key element in the success of the project. ACAP has utilized the existing traditional cooperatives at the grassroots level for community development. Villagers are invited and encouraged to participate in all ACAP programs right from the very beginning.

2. Match-maker

ACAP acts as a *lami* (matchmaker) between the ACA and outsiders. The success of community development programs have won ACAP the peoples' trust. The locals look up to ACAP as a source for funding as well as advice. This has helped tremendously in conservation efforts, because most communities who depend heavily on forest resources were not happy about forest conservation and thought their lives would be disrupted by restriction on tree cutting in the surrounding forests. However, co-management of the forest reserves has proven to be beneficial both to the local community and for conservation. Since ACAP does not have the resources to meet the needs of all the local inhabitants, the project acts as a bridge between the local communities and various national and international agencies, both for appropriate advice and funding. This role of a *lami* and a provider to the local communities has gained ACAP much respect among the local communities.

3. Sustainability

It was clear from the very beginning that conservation in its strictest sense or complete preservation of the natural environment was not advisable in the ACA. Hence, it was decided early on that sustainable use and management of the natural resources by the local people would be the best approach to conservation. Hence instead of pure preservation, ACAP promotes sustainable use of the natural resources such as harvesting fodder and other forest products, like mushrooms and fiddleheads (ACAP, 1996: 3).

ACAP hires mostly indigenous staff members at the village level, who are well informed about the local areas. The hiring of the local people bridges the gap between the villagers and the NGO (ACAP). ACAP has an advisory role and does not have the authority to make or enforce regulations. Only the local people, primarily the village elders who represent various development committees within the village, have the authority to make and enforce policies. The village elders, primarily male, have always been actively involved in local development and local politics, and are the most influential people in the village. ACAP, however, has a very strong administrative role and with the help of the local staff, ACAP has been highly successful in motivating communities, committees, groups, and individuals to endorse its guidelines for conservation and sustainable development (Stevens, 1997: 257).

Institutional Structure

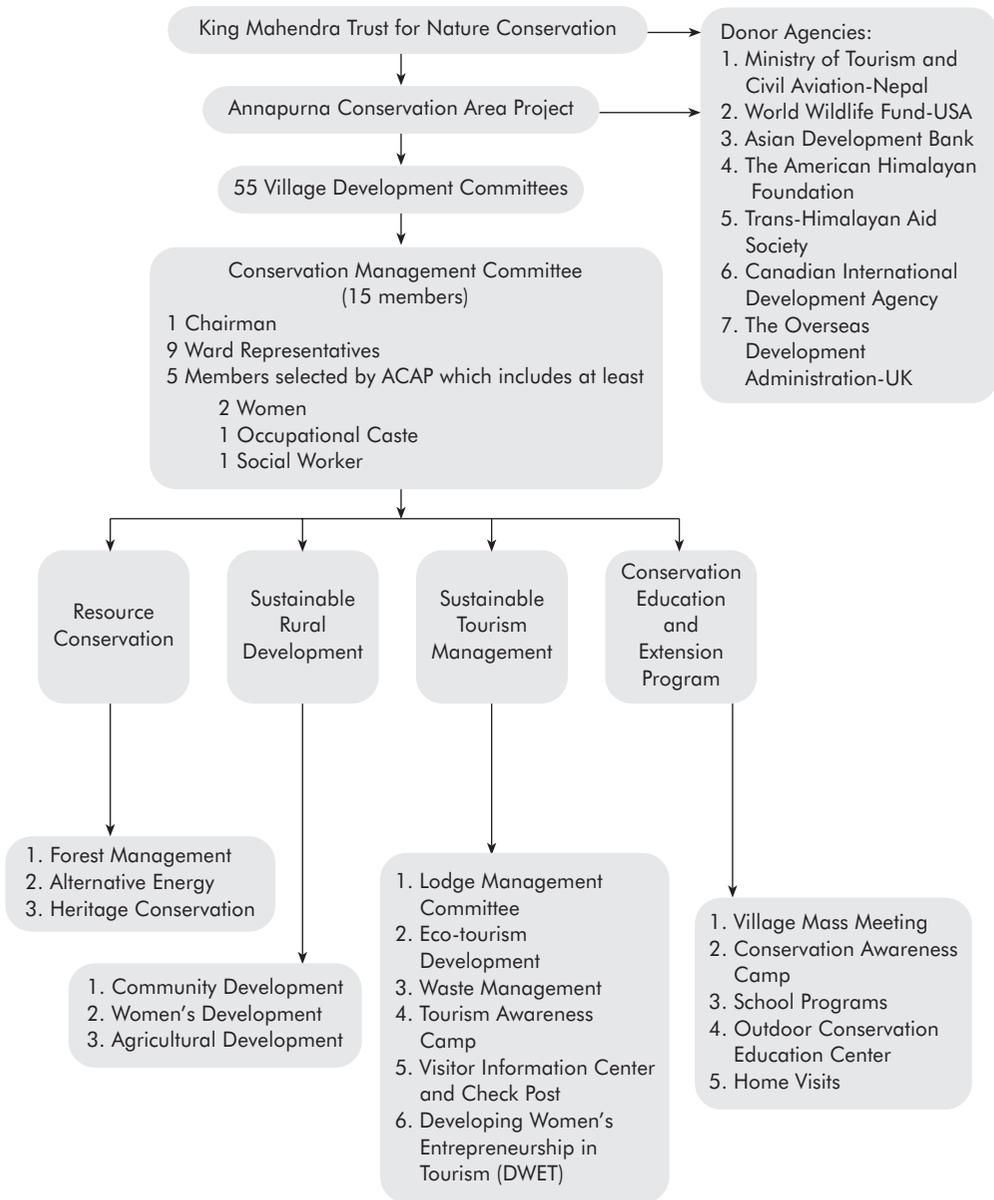
The rural communities in Nepal are grouped into wards for administrative purposes. Each ward is made up of a number of households, and can be an entire village or a part of a larger village. Nine adjoining wards are grouped into a Village Development Committee (VDC), which functions as a local government with one elected representative from each ward. The VDC democratically elects a chairman every five years. The chairman works closely with the ward representative and village elders. The VDC chairman is also responsible for working with the zonal and district level development offices for allocation of funds. The chairman, VDC members, and village elders plan and implement village level policy and community development programs. They generally help settle local disputes as well.

The little government funding that comes to the rural hills is received and managed by the VDC. For instance, each VDC is eligible for one health post assigned by the central government and the VDC decides where to locate the health post. Even though the ward representatives are the medium between the government and the villagers, they do not exercise much power because in a centrally controlled government, cities like Kathmandu receive much more favorable funding than rural areas.

ACAP has utilized the existing VDCs in its own program with significant changes. The 15 member Conservation and Development Committees (CDC) of ACAP include the existing nine VDC members and ACAP appoints at least two women members, one social worker and one person from a socially disadvantaged group. The ACAP staff in the Pokhara office express hope that the 15 member CDC will be renamed Conservation Area Management Committee (CAMC). The CAMC will serve as executive bodies in all 55 VDCs, and other grassroots organizations will work under them. The CDCs, with the help of ACAP, design and implement community development projects. Unlike the centrally planned development schemes, which rarely reach the remote villages, the planning done at VDC level is much more effective.

Figure 1: Institutional Structure of ACAP

Institutional Structure of ACAP



In order to manage programs in all 55 VDCs, which are in mountainous and rugged areas where walking is the only mode of transportation, ACAP established seven field bases in Ghandruk, Lwang, Sikles, Bhujung, Manang, Jomsom, and Lo Manthang. The main office is located in Pokhara.

Besides the revenues generated from tourism, ACAP programs depend on funding from KMTNC and other national and international donor agencies for its programs. The high success rates for projects have definitely made funding comparatively easily available for ACAP. World Wildlife Fund (WWF) has continued its support for wildlife conservation in the area from the very beginning. Other major funding sources are Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation-Nepal, Asian Development Bank, WWF-USA, The Netherlands Development Organization, The American Himalayan Foundation, Tran-Himalayan Aid Society, Canadian International Development Agency, and the Overseas Development Administration-UK (ACAP 1990, 1995, 1996, 1997). The monetary and voluntary labor contribution from the local villagers is also significant to ACAP programs. Local initiatives and participation promoted many development projects in the ACA.

Programs

The central goal of the project continues to be conservation of the natural environment without deteriorating the livelihood of the local communities who depend heavily on the natural environment for survival. Over the years it became clear that conservation was strengthened by development and development strengthened by conservation. "Conservation for Development" has become the goal of the project. The project focuses on four main core programs that are based on grassroots conservation and participatory rural development approaches.

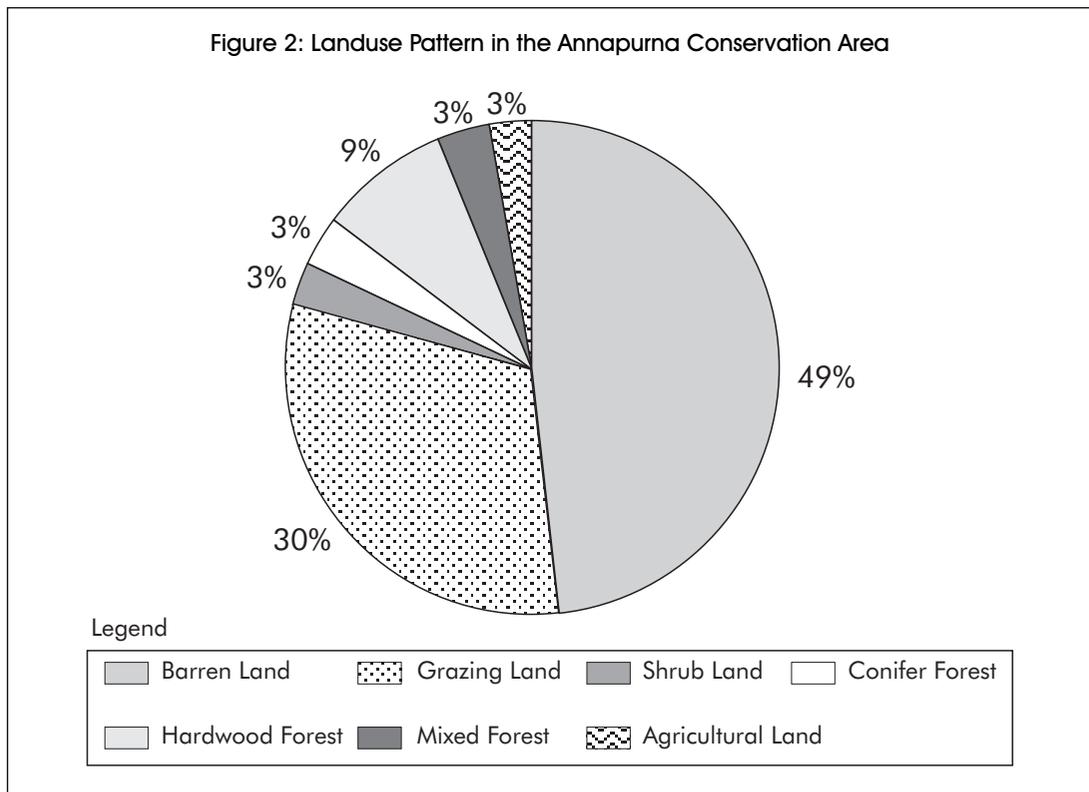
Resource Conservation

The Conservation and Development Committee (CDC) in each Village Development Committee (VDC) manages the resource conservation program. The land use patterns in the Annapurna Conservation Area are diversified by land type and altitudinal variation.

The management of such a diverse area is based on the multiple-land use protected area concept. The area is divided into five zones: the special management zone, wilderness area, protected forest/seasonal grazing, intensive management zone, and the anthropological zone (ACAP, 1986, Stevens, 1987) (See Figure 2). Accordingly, each zone has specific land use and resource extraction restrictions. The protected forest zone is the buffer between intensive management zone where most people live, and the wilderness area. The special management areas are areas with scenic beauty and areas with less than a 100 years of settlement history but facing ecological problems. Anthropological zones are areas where modern technology has not significantly affected the life

of the inhabitants. The number of tourists is strictly controlled in this zone. This approach has worked well in this region because local inhabitants continue to have access to and control over the natural resources even though some of the fragile areas are completely restricted. Providing alternative energy sources like kerosene, solar power, and electricity has compensated for restrictions on fuelwood extraction in some areas. ACAP hopes to continue to encourage alternative energy in the entire Annapurna Area.

The natural resources conservation program focuses primarily on forest conservation and alternative energy. ACAP has established community nurseries that distribute free tree saplings for afforestation in private and public land. To minimize the dependence on fuelwood as the primary source of energy, ACAP introduced energy-efficient back boilers or circulatory water heating systems. Lodges are discouraged from using fuelwood. In some areas where fuelwood is scarce, villagers decided to restrict lodges from using fuelwood, and ACAP has helped to establish kerosene depots. Some lodges even use gas for cooking, although supplies have to be brought all the way from Pokhara (Stevens, 1997; ACAP, 1996; KMTNC, 1997). The tourists end



Source: ACAP Management Plan 1997

up paying the extra cost for kerosene and/or gas. Solar energy was also introduced in some villages and a few lodges now use solar energy for hot showers for tourists. The high initial cost for solar panels was partly subsidized by ACAP.

ACAP has been instrumental in promoting micro-hydro power to produce electricity as an alternative energy. Micro-hydro power projects have been successful in a few of the wealthy villages. It is evident that many of the expensive projects in ACA have been possible through contributions from ACAP and donor agencies as well as through contributions from the local communities.

Energy saving devices like water heaters, pressure cookers and thermos flasks were either given to the villagers or subsidized. As of December 1996, ACAP had helped install 404 back-boilers and 42 solar heaters in the entire Annapurna Conservation Area. It is estimated that this would save 40 percent daily use of fuelwood on average (Banskota and Sharma, 1997). The alternative energy program has helped to reduce fuelwood consumption and preserve much of the forests.

In addition to nature conservation, ACAP has also focused on cultural heritage because in these rural hills of Nepal, where peoples' livelihoods depend so heavily on the natural environment, nature and culture go hand in hand. Likewise, the natural and the cultural landscape together make the Annapurna a unique place. People come to experience both the high mountains and the people who live here. ACAP has helped open museums in the villages. In addition, it is also involved in the restoration and preservation of old Buddhist monasteries in Manang and Mustang.

Sustainable Rural Development

This program focuses on enhancing the basic living standard of the local inhabitants through various community development programs. Since the majority of the people are subsistence farmers, agricultural development is crucial in the area. However, the local knowledge of the people seems to have not been utilized in the development of the area. ACAP hopes to encourage and help retain these local knowledge systems that seem to work best in each community.

ACAP has focused on health and sanitation improvement. It has helped provide clean drinking water, basic health care for most villages, and installation of toilets for each household. According to the villagers that I interviewed, many of these projects were made successful by the high participation rate of women. Since the early 1990s, ACAP has specifically focused on women's work and empowerment. It established the Women's Development Office (WDO) in 1992 to help address women's issues specifically. ACAP also helped mobilize the women's group known as Ama Toli or the mothers group, beginning in Gurung villages and later extending to the entire

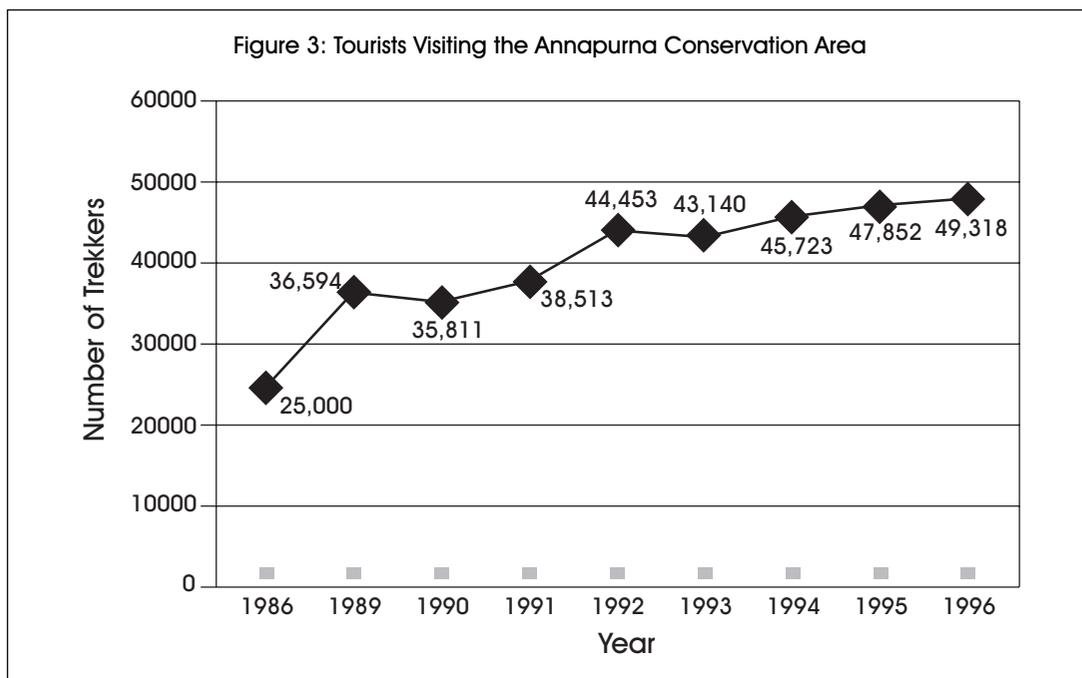
ACA. Ama Toli has become the leading progressive movement in women's development in the rural hills of Nepal.

ACAP also tried to include programs focusing on socially and economically deprived groups, but they have not been as successful as the other programs. Social taboos and superstitions are still very strong and well grounded. For instance, the social stigma against lower castes or untouchables still exists everywhere. In addition, the strong patron-client relationship has helped to maintain the social hierarchical system in the village and also restricted social mobility. Economic advancement and education might ultimately break these social barriers, but it is going to take time. ACAP is pushing education by helping open more schools, and also by facilitating Adult Literacy Classes in many villages. It is also helping the local people market their traditional skills and handicrafts to tourists, for extra income. ACAP has been good at organizing skill-training programs throughout the ACA.

Sustainable Tourism Development

In the early eighties, tourism was viewed as a threat to the local environment. The high volume of tourists in the area definitely put pressure on the natural resources, especially the forests. The local subsistence farmers were not able to produce enough crops to support this surplus population. It was mainly because of the heavy deterioration of this otherwise magnificent area that it received special attention from conservationists, who realized that if nothing was done soon, this naturally diverse and rich area would become another sad chapter in environmental history. Today one can argue that tourism is the primary force that enhances the socio-economic status of the villages. The influx of tourists also means inflow of income. This has provided villagers with more options than restricted dependence on subsistence agriculture. In fact, opening a lodge or a teashop is a more viable source of income than agriculture, which is both labor intensive and unpredictable.

The success of ACAP and its popularity has continued to increase outside visitors' use of the area, and it is of utmost importance that ACAP and the communities within the area maintain the cultural and the natural diversity of the area if it is to benefit from visitors. Through experience, ACAP has stressed eco-tourism. Education on environmentally sound tourism is regularly given to concerned people through tourism awareness camps. ACAP has helped to establish a Lodge Management Committee (LMC) in each VDC to organize and improve the quality of service to the tourists. The LMC has been involved in waste management programs, which were not an issue in the villages prior to tourism. At present, disposal of mineral water bottles is of a major concern in most areas. Each tourist uses 2-3 bottles of water a day, and in a year the area receives nearly 50,000 tourists, not including the local guides and porters. Another concern has been



Data Source: ACAP Annual Report, 1996

trash along the trail, mostly plastic wraps, paper and tin cans, all of which are not used by the local people. The LMCs have set up disposal areas where trash is collected and burned. In many areas the LMC has standardized the price and services to eliminate unfair competition among lodge owners. ACAP also provides special training on hotel management through the help of the Hotel Management Training and Tourism Center (HMTTC).

Conservation Education and Extension Program

The success of ACAP can be attributed to education. The initial phase of the project consisted of mass meetings in villages where a representative would talk to villagers about nature conservation and why it is important. These meetings allowed dialogue from both sides and both parties learned from each other. It was clear that people often destroyed natural resources without realizing the consequences. Awareness was critical and ACAP conducted many conservation awareness camps all over the area and continues to do so today. In Ghandruk high school, ACAP introduced environmental education as a separate requirement. It also opened up a conservation education center where people could come to learn about nature conservation and its long-term

benefits. ACAP soon realized that it was not only the villagers who needed to be aware of nature conservation but also the thousands of tourists who visit the area. It opened a few visitor centers where tourists can get information regarding conservation programs and also view videos about ACAP and its work in the area. The visitor center also keeps a suggestion book where visitors can contribute with any new ideas or programs for better conservation practices.

The New Management Plan

The success of ACAP has been extraordinary. It is a classic example that conservation and development can prosper only through total co-operation and understanding between the planners and the local inhabitants. What started as a small project to conserve the natural environment has today become the primary medium for progress and change in the entire Annapurna region. The initial phase of the project concentrated only on southern Annapurna and programs that were successful here were slowly replicated in the northern areas. But, as noted earlier, the existing natural and cultural diversity make it very difficult to plan and implement one idea in the entire area. Development and conservation projects have to be area specific and culture sensitive. This has been the continuing challenge for ACAP. For instance, efforts to protect the snow leopard in the Manang area has been very difficult. The local people view the snow leopard as a predator and do not understand why one should conserve such a vicious animal. In the southern Annapurna region, people realize and understand that conservation can be more beneficial than harmful, hence restriction on hunting has been very successful.

The inevitable changes brought about in the area by tourism and development has kept ACAP constantly reworking its policies and goals. The annual report documents yearly activities of ACAP and tries to re-evaluate its programs. It prepares a management plan every five years that incorporates the entire region and focuses on maximum benefit for the local people and the environment. The latest management plan was compiled in 1997 and with a few significant changes, it promises to continue to support and improve its ongoing projects. The new management plan lists the following as ACAP's top priority goals:

1. Capacity Building
2. Natural Resources Conservation
3. Sustainable Development of Tourism
4. Empowerment and Equality of Women
5. Alternative Energy
6. Community Development
7. Cultural Heritage Conservation
8. Multi-Disciplinary Management Research

This new management plan is a result of a participatory process, which includes village level meetings, analysis of land use patterns, field visits, and feedback from villagers, local leaders, ACAP field staff, and government agencies. According to the management plan, the budget for the next five years is estimated to be Rs 341 million which is equivalent to US\$ 5 million for the next five years or US\$ 1 million annually.

The substantial amount of foreign aid and revenues collected from tourism and contributions from the local people have made both conservation and development possible in the Annapurna area. There is a US\$10 entrance fee to enter the Annapurna Conservation Area for foreign tourists.³ With the annual total of nearly 50,000 visitors in 1996, the total fee collected was about half a million dollars. If the entrance fee is slightly raised and if the total number tourists increases, the entrance fee alone should be able to sustain the project. The final goal of the project is to hand over the entire responsibility to the local people to operate independently based on revenues collected from tourism. Although the final goal has not been materialized completely, the progress so far is promising. The ACAP model has already been replicated in, the Manaslu eco-tourism area which was established in 1997 and is now a designated conservation area. The enthusiasm of the local people and ACAP's support and determination will no doubt continue to improve the livelihood of the people of the Annapurna region and set an example for other areas in Nepal.

³ This excludes tourists from the South Asian Alliance for Regional Corporation (SAARC) countries, which are India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, and the Maldives.

CHAPTER 4

CASE STUDY: GHANDRUK

Introduction

Ghandruk became the pilot area for ACAP in 1986. Since then, the area has undergone many changes, mostly for the better. The success of ACAP in Ghandruk has attracted many researchers and conservationists to study why and how things have worked here. The successful implementation of development projects in Ghandruk helped to expand ACAP in a short period of time. The projects that were effective here have been carefully studied and replicated in other areas around the Annapurna region. This chapter describes the village in detail, and identifies specific characteristics of the village that might have enabled ACAP to be successful. It also examines the crucial role of women in Ghandruk in the context of development.

The Physical Landscape

The village of Ghandruk is located approximately 50 km northwest of Pokhara in central Nepal. The village is situated at an elevation of 2,000m above the Modi Khola Valley, south of the Annapurna Mountains. This mountainous terrain was once lush sub-tropical forest, and the Gurung people who migrated from the north were probably attracted by the forests for hunting and gathering. They also utilized the upper alpine grassland meadows for sheep herding (Stevens, 1988). Today, however, there are very few families in the village who still have large sheep herds. The majority of the villagers are subsistence farmers. The steep slopes have been skillfully cut into terraces. The lower elevation areas near the rivers are suitable for rice farming. The higher elevation fields are used for growing millet, corn, potatoes, and garlic (See Figure 4).

The remaining forests are still an important resource for the villagers, particularly for collecting dry fuelwood, fodder, and forest products like herbs, bamboo shoots, and mushrooms. Hunting and felling trees has been banned in these forests since 1986, when it was designated a conservation area by the local forest management committee, which was later renamed the conservation and development committee. When ACAP first talked about banning hunting many men were very upset even though only a few people depended on hunting for their livelihood. The majority of the villagers were ready to give up hunting in return for other benefits that the conservation area would bring to their community. With the banning of cutting wood and hunting, both the forest and the wildlife are slowly coming back. Wild animals like monkeys have become a nuisance in the farms and some people are talking about issuing hunting permits. In the summer season, farmers have to pay school children to watch the cornfield and keep the monkeys away.

ACAP is also considering hunting permits, but regulation could be quite difficult since some of these forests are big and in remote locations.

There are several streams near the village that provide drinking water and water for household needs. These streams are channeled into smaller canals and fed into traditional water mills called *ghatta*. They are used for grinding grains and making flour. Smaller, fast running rivulets are very efficient for washing sheep wool and nettle fibers⁴ that are used for weaving. The Chane stream at the south edge of the village is used to generate micro hydroelectric power for the village.

The hills on the north side of the village are the main source of slab stones. The villagers have been using these gray slates as roofing. The hills are prone to landslides and erosion. When such a catastrophe occurs, the rocks are naturally broken, making it easier for villagers to use them to pave the trails.

Perhaps the most important resource use of the area today is as a tourist destination. The location of the village high up in the lush green hills, the magnificent panoramic view of the mountains, and the interesting cultural setting has made Ghandruk one of the most beautiful villages in the country. Ghandruk also lies on one of the main trails to the Annapurna base camp and many trekking and mountaineering groups pass through this village. Since 1986, when Ghandruk became the pilot area for ACAP, the effort for conservation of the natural and the cultural environment has been highly successful. The village has received several international awards for conservation and this has attracted more outside visitors to the village.⁵ Tourism has impacted the local economies since the 1980s and will continue to do so as the villagers continue to show interest in exploiting tourism as an alternative source of income.

The Social Geography of the Village

The village of Ghandruk is the second largest Gurung village in Nepal. The village is comprised of six wards, and a total of 484 households. A typical neighborhood in Ghandruk is made up of similar houses very close to each other, and these houses usually share the same kinship. A number of such clusters are grouped together to form a ward. Usually, natural barriers like streams and ridges or farmlands and walking trails separate the wards. It is very common for a family to have a house in one ward and farms in a different one. In Ghandruk, a large population is

⁴ Nettle fibers are traditionally used to make durable sacks for storing grains, but this labor-intensive process is slowly dying out. Only two families in Ward 8 still make this fiber and cloth.

⁵ DRV Environmental Award presented by German bureau of West Germany (1989). Tourism and Tomorrow Award from the United Kingdom (1991). J Paul Getty Wildlife Conservation Prize of World Wildlife Fund (1992). United Nation's Environmental Program Global 500 Roll of Honor (1994).

concentrated in wards 3, 4, 5 and 6. These wards are fairly small and close knit and they each have only a few settlements. In contrast, Ward 8 is the largest ward in Ghandruk, with more than 10 different settlements and 129 households. Ward 8 expands over a very large area. Many families in wards 2,3,4 and 5 have farms and also use the forest resources in Ward 8.

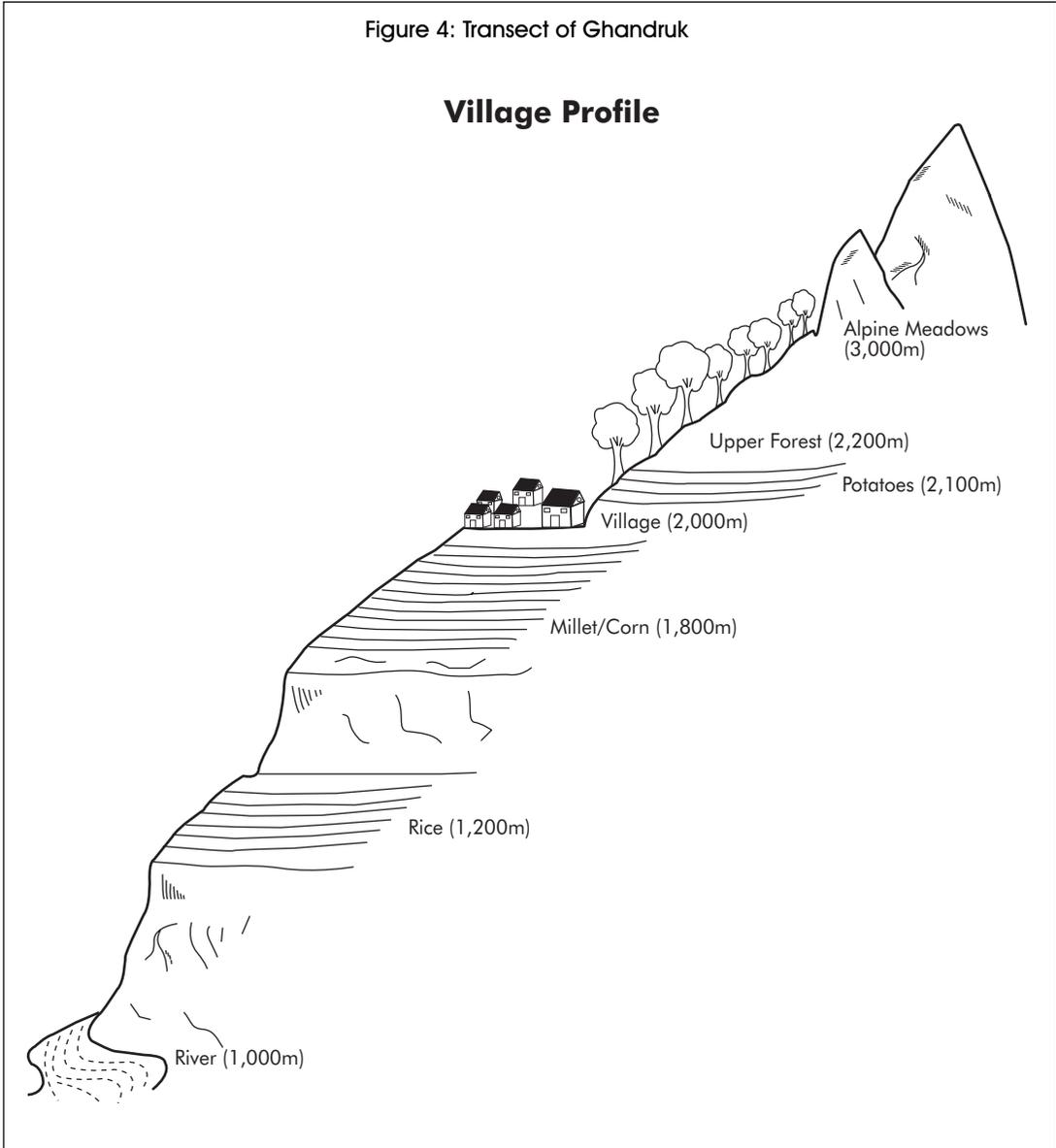
A typical Gurung home is a two-storey house and each floor is one long room. The bottom serves as the kitchen, family room, and bedroom for the entire family. The room upstairs is used for storing grain. Each house usually has an outside shed for one or two water buffaloes, goats, and chicken. Some houses have a small plot of land where they grow green vegetables. The farming fields are, however, not close to the house, but are sometimes a couple of hours' walk from the village.

Of 484 households, 62 percent of the population belongs to the same ethnic group, the Gurungs. Other minor ethnic groups are the Brahmins and Chhetris (15 percent), and the artisan castes (23 percent) (Uprety, 1998: 57). The artisan are considered as low caste and are not treated on par with other castes. It is said that the artisan castes, mainly *damai* (tailor), *sarki* (shoemaker) and *kami* (metal smith), were invited by Gurung families to settle wherever they established villages in order to serve the people. The changing village economy no longer demands the services of these castes. Villagers prefer to buy ready-made shoes and clothes from Pokhara. However, the traditional ties of patron-client relationships are still very strong and the artisan castes still continue to serve the village and villagers in different ways. The heavy migration of the Gurung men out of the villages has left women short of helping hands on the farm. Also, outside income has helped the Gurung families to improve their living standards and hence they can now afford to hire farm laborers. The men and women of the artisan castes are today the major work force in the fields, and sometimes the Gurung landowner never even visit the farm. The harvested crop is shared between the landowner and the farm workers. The farm workers see this as a favor from the landowners and are always grateful for the work. This gives more power, control, and leisure time to the landowners, and maintains the social hierarchy in the village.

The relationship between the landowner and the laborers is deeply rooted in history going back several generations. Even though the low castes are not content about the continued dependence on their patrons, they don't express their true feelings. They are very reluctant and sometimes afraid to talk about it because they don't believe that these social hierarchies can be challenged or even changed. The prevailing belief in Hinduism in Nepali society has further influenced them to have absolute belief in fatalism, where one feels that one has no control over one's life circumstances, since it is determined by a divine and powerful external agency (Bista, 1994:4).

Figure 4: Transect of Ghandruk

Village Profile



The Gurungs are traditionally a tribal society with a belief in shamanism, and they worship their ancestors. But with the high out-migration of men and the external influences brought in by them, and also by visitors, Gurung societies also practice Hinduism and Buddhism. The artisan castes belong to the Hindu untouchable group, and Gurungs are placed by the Hindu caste system above the occupational castes. Therefore, discrimination against the occupational castes based on Hindu customs are found in Gurung villages although it is not part of the traditional Gurung culture (Gurung, 1996, Ragsdale, 1979). In Ghandruk, a mixture of Hinduism, Buddhism and shamanism is found today.

The men from artisan castes often seem to take out their discontent and anger on their wives and family. Although this behavior cannot be directly linked to these various forms of dependency, these groups have often suffered from many family problems, such as gambling and heavy drinking. The ACAP staff also complain about the artisan castes not being very receptive to their programs and projects.

The heroic history of the Gurkhas in the Second World War, where four Gurung men were awarded the Victoria Cross, has created a belief in the village that there is nothing better than serving in the army, and that it is the best test of a man's courage. Any other occupation for Gurung men is not equally respected, including teaching. The retired headmaster of the Ghandruk high school talks about how everyone called him the “daughter” of the family when all his brothers joined the army and he decided to teach instead.

He believes this attitude has not changed much in the village, and, hence, the majority of the teachers in the high school are Brahmins and Chhetris.

The Brahmins and the Chhetris came to Ghandruk from other areas, sometimes from as far south as the Terai. Traditionally, they were the only groups who received formal education in Nepal, and they continue to dominate the educational arena. They came to Ghandruk to teach in the village schools. Given the high population of Gurungs in Ghandruk, any outsider who comes to stay for a period of time quickly learns Gurung because it is the everyday language spoken in the village.

Most Gurung men still serve either in the Indian Army or in the British Army, and some are recruited in the Singapore or Brunei police force. Recruitment for these posts is highly competitive because the number of places has decreased. The hand-over of Hong Kong in July 1997 by the British government to China completely closed the British Gurkha camp in Hong Kong, and many soldiers were sent home. The British government, however, distributed work permits to any Nepali who was born in the British camps in Hong Kong. Many young people between the ages of 18 and 30 who were born in Hong Kong have gone back to Hong Kong

indefinitely, with hopes of a better life. The returned Gurkha soldiers easily find work as personal bodyguards in the Middle East, Southeast Asia and India. Many now work in these countries. There is also a high demand for laborers in the Middle East, Japan, and Korea. Many men who could not join the army, particularly men from the artisan castes, go to these countries in large numbers. This out-migration of the male population has left behind a village with elderly men, small children and women. It has also forced a tremendous workload on single mothers. However, it also grants women more control over their home and farm. The men working abroad sometimes do not come home for several years, but send a little money to run the household instead.

Social Infrastructure

Ghandruk is one of the few villages in Nepal that can boast its own high school, a day care center, two health care centers, a police station, a post office, eight small shops, numerous lodges and teahouses, clean water supply, electricity and a telephone. The day care center is operated under ACAP and is supervised by the Ama Toli since its primary goal is to help mothers with small children. The police station and post office share the same building in Ward 3. Villagers from other wards have to come here to pick up their mail. The small shops, tea-houses, and lodges are scattered all over the village but are always close to the trekking trail. The small shops sell products like salt, cooking oil, sugar, matches, cigarettes, and soft drinks to the local people, and camera film, toilet paper, foreign chocolates, mineral water, beer and soda to the tourists. Water is directly piped from several springs and taps are located conveniently all over the village. Villagers collect water from these taps everyday for cooking and drinking purposes, and bring their clothes here for washing. The hotel owners channel water from these taps directly to their lodges.

The first and only telephone arrived in Ghandruk in early 1996. Prior to that, one could relay messages to Pokhara or Kathmandu from the ACAP office through a radio. The telephone is located in a lodge in Ward 3, close to ACAP office. However, the summer when I was conducting my fieldwork, due to heavy rainfall, the telephone tower was damaged and could not be fixed for an entire month. When the telephone is working, it's a very valuable amenity in the village. The villagers can now at least talk to their families living abroad. There was a promise of three more telephones by the summer of 1997, which gave use to disputes as to who should have them. It was logical that one should be in Ward 1 or Ward 2 and another in Ward 8 or Ward 9, since they were further away from the central area. Until the villagers decided amongst themselves, the telephones were not installed.

High School

The high school is located right next to the ACAP headquarters, and ACAP, in fact, is leasing space from the high school. The school is closed in the summer, which is the planting season and children are needed to help either on the farm or at home. School is free for everyone but uniforms and sometimes books have to be bought. Since this is the only high school, students from Ward 1, 2, and 9 have to walk a couple of hours each way to school. For instance, in Ward 9 there is only a primary school but no middle school, and children have to wait till they are old enough to travel to attend the high school.⁶ This means that from age five to eight, some of these children usually stay home. The reason parents don't send young children to the main high school is that the children will have to walk for two hours on narrow trails that are heavily used by cattle and mules, and can be quite dangerous.

School Leaving Certificate, or SLC, is a national level board examination that everyone needs to pass in order to complete high school. The high school students from Ghandruk have to go to Pokhara to take this examination. Students usually go in groups and stay in Pokhara for a month to prepare for the week long exam. Many villagers are reluctant to send their daughters to the city and some refuse to do so. This has reduced the number of girls taking the exam.

Health Services

There are two health services in the village, the Government Health Services (GHS) and the Community Health Post (CHP). These services are located right next door to each other. The GHS, provided by the central government, has one doctor who is appointed from Kathmandu, and two nurses, only one of who is from the village. They have a four-room building and operate from 9 am to 5 pm daily.

The CHP is run by one person from Ward 4. A tourist who visited the area several years ago provided the initial funding for CHP.⁷ The VDC has given one of its office rooms to the CHP. This fund, approximately Rs 2 lakhs or US\$ 3,000, is in a bank in Pokhara and the health post is operated with the earned interest. The person running the CHP has to make regular trips to Pokhara to buy supplies. The medicines are sold at half price to the villagers. This attracts more patients to the CHP than the GHS. Also, since a local runs this health post, villagers feel more comfortable coming to him. Sometimes, when there are too many patients, he has to refer them to the GHS next door. The CHP is open only until two in the afternoon and is closed on Saturdays.

⁶ Primary school in Nepal is first grade to third grade and high school is both middle and high school combined.

⁷ No specific information about this foreign visitor was available.

The problem of having both health services in one location is that not everyone benefits equally because these are the only health care facilities in all of Ghandruk VDC. For the villagers living in ward 1, 2 and 9, it's several hours' walk. The nurses and the doctor from the GHS do make regular trips to remote villages for vaccinations. In case of an emergency, however, the patients are expected to make the trip to the health post. The services provided at the health post are very primitive and serious injuries are often sent to Pokhara or Kathmandu hospitals via helicopters. This service, is not prohibitive, because of the high cost.

Basic care and medicines in the village cost only a few rupees and is quite affordable. During the summer months most of the patients are children with ear and skin infections, probably caused by playing barefoot in the rain. These infections are a common phenomenon in the village.

Another issue is the difference in the price of medicine. Everyone buys cheaper medicine from CHP. As a result, large amounts of medicine at the GHS expire and have to be regularly thrown. Since the medicines and supplies for the GHS are distributed from Kathmandu, people working in the villages do not have any say. They are just glad to receive any supply from the city, whether it is used or not.

Electricity and Amenities

One of the primary objectives of ACAP was to stop deforestation in the area. In the early 1980s, the Annapurna region was gaining popularity as a trekking destination and an increasing number of tourists were visiting the area. Areas like Ghandruk were not prepared to accommodate these large numbers. The resources, adequate to sustain the village, were exploited to meet the new demand, especially for fuelwood. A hot shower for a tourist, for instance, uses more fuelwood than a villager uses for cooking. It was clear that the economic gain from tourism was taking a heavy toll on the environment. With the establishment of the conservation area, and the adoption of new regulations by the local forest management committee, villagers were not allowed to cut trees anymore. They were permitted to collect forest products, fodder, and dry wood only. Construction timber for building purposes required a special permit from the forest management committee.

To cut down on fuelwood consumption, ACAP promoted an alternative energy program. Ghandruk became the first village in Nepal to build a 50-kilowatt micro-hydro power plant through local initiative. The villagers raised half the funds and ACAP and the British government provided the other half. The entire village was required to assist with the project. It took seven days of hard labor to build the reservoir for the power plant. Two families in Ward 8 who refused to help with the building of the reservoir did not receive electricity. They had to later appeal to the village elders for electricity, and they were each fined Rs 1,000. The cost of electricity is Rs 0.50/W, Rs 0.75/W and Rs 0.25/W per month for domestic, commercial and industrial (daytime)

consumers respectively (Jujeno, 1994: 29). In Ward 8, each house has only one dim bulb, which is not sufficient for the school children to do their reading. However, it has replaced kerosene lamps, which were more expensive.

In Ghandruk, the men who served in the army or worked abroad are the best storytellers. They bring home tales about distant lands and also strange gadgets like radios and cameras. A few households had transistor radios that allowed them to hear the news about the outside world. With the availability of electricity, a few homes bought televisions and with satellite dishes, they watch Western television programs. But Nepali television programs and Hindi movies seem to be everyone's favorite. A few mothers complain about their children being influenced by fashion trends on television. Other electrical gadgets like refrigerators, rice cookers, water heaters, etc. are found only at the lodges.

Forest Nursery and Agriculture Demonstration Farm

ACAP helped establish a forest nursery early on and distributed free tree saplings. Village elders encouraged everyone to plant trees, and high school students helped with initial tree planting campaigns. Soon, all the barren hills around the village were planted with young trees, mostly alder, which grow quickly. Since villagers were no longer allowed to cut trees in the village forests, they started to plant trees rich in fodder on private lands. In the village one family member spends at least three hours everyday fetching fodder for the cattle.

The water buffalo is the source for milk, *ghiu*⁸, and manure, which are all very important to village life. Families with outside sources of income who could no longer manage all their farmland left large portions unattended. These families have started to plant trees in these abandoned farmlands for future use. Currently there are patches of green forests between agricultural plots.

There is an agriculture demonstration farm, also managed by ACAP, which distributes green vegetable seedlings at a low price. The idea is to encourage villagers to grow green vegetables and sell them to the lodges. Most green vegetables such as beans, onions, eggplant, carrots, cauliflower, cabbage, radishes, and lettuce have been very successful. Only peppers and tomatoes don't seem to grow well and subsequently have to be brought from Pokhara. The staple diet of the villagers consists of rice, corn, potatoes, and beans. Goat and buffalo meat is consumed only during festivals and special occasions. Chicken farming has not been very successful here but families keep one or two chickens in the house. For the lodges, both chickens and eggs have

⁸ *Ghiu* refers to charified butter that is used for cooking instead of oil. Cooking oil, which has to be bought from the store is too expensive.

to be transported from Pokhara and these are the two most expensive items in the village. Locals have taken advantage of this demonstration farm and some manage to make extra income by selling vegetables to the lodges.

Women's Views on Development

I conducted a survey on women's views on ACAP, Ama Toli, and community development. The purpose of the survey was to analyze in greater detail the impact of development projects on women of different social classes and castes. It is not surprising that even in a village community, there is a distinct social hierarchy and those who benefit from development projects is not dependent on participation alone.

The survey was done in Ward 8, which was the largest ward consisting of a dozen small hamlets and a total of 129 households. A total of 26 women were interviewed. In addition, a few village men and ACAP staff in the Ghandruk and Pokhara office were also interviewed.

General Profile

The profile of the 26 respondents is given in Table 2. The majority of the women interviewed were Gurungs but there were also seven women from other social groups. There were three distinct age groups. The first group was women aged below 20, the second group consisted of mothers aged between twenty and their mid-forties, and the last group consisted of older women aged fifty and over. The exact age of the women was difficult to determine because they would not reveal it. It was difficult to tell whether they wanted to hide their age or genuinely did not know.

It was important to include different ages and ethnic/caste groups to see differences in perception and expectations of ACAP and the Ama Toli. Four of the women interviewed were single although two of them were over thirty. Of the 26 women interviewed, 12 were also head of the household because their husbands were away from the village for work or they were widows. There were only 10 households with both husband and wife present in the village all year around. It was interesting that in households where the men were present, women had less decision-making power. There were three older women whose husbands had died, one older woman who never married because she had poor health, and two young women whose husbands had abandoned them. This group of single women appeared to be more independent because they did not have small children to take care of and hence had fewer responsibilities. In households where men and grandparents were absent, women were in charge of making all the family decisions. There were only three households with grandparents because older people migrate to Pokhara where there is easier access to healthcare and doctors. Many Gurung men who serve in the army make enough money to buy and build homes in Pokhara, where they eventually move

Table 2: Profile of Respondents

1. Ethnicity	
Gurung	19
Artisan Caste	3
Others	4
2. Status	
Married and head of the household	4
Married and not head of the household	12
Single, divorced or widow	10
2. Age	
< 20	2
20 – 49	16
50 and above	8
3. Education	
No schooling	15
Few years of schooling/ Adult Literacy Class	11
4. Occupation*	
Subsistence farmer	20
Shopkeeper	2
Lodge owner	2
Housekeeper /no farming	5
Others**	14

* Some women listed more than one occupation.

** This included paid labor at farms and private homes.

their whole families. In 1998, when I was conducting my fieldwork, in Ward 8 there were at least a dozen homes that were empty because the family had moved to Pokhara. Some had a caretaker to look after the house.

All the older women interviewed had no schooling and were unable to read and write. The younger women had, however, taken advantage of the Adult Literacy Class facilitated by ACAP and learned to read and write. All the women could, speak both Nepali and Gurung. A few of them could also speak Hindi. They had learned the latter by watching Indian movies on television, a few had lived in India where their husbands worked.

The majority of the women list their main occupation as farming, collecting fuelwood and forest products, and taking care of children, grandchildren, parents, and the in-laws. They spend most of their time in the fields growing crops for the family and to sell and/or barter for other goods.

One woman ran a store with her husband. Two of the women interviewed were lodge owners. One ran a lodge with her husband. They also ran a small store in the lodge. The other woman was unmarried and managed a lodge with her two sisters. Five of the women interviewed were housekeepers.

There were two Rai girls who came from Jhapa in Far Eastern Nepal, and one Thakali woman who came from Jomsom. All of them had found a better life in Ghandruk and wanted to make it their permanent home. They had come to Ghandruk hoping to work in the tourist lodges, but instead they were taking care of empty houses of those who had moved to Pokhara. There were two women with young children from the artisan caste who were also working as housekeepers. Their husbands were working in the Middle East. All these women had lived in Ghandruk for several years and spoke the Gurung language.

Household Profile

Most of the women had young children at home. With a few exceptions, the children attended the village high school. Only one family used the village day care center. Each household had two to six members with children aged two to 15 years old. There were seven households with more than seven family members. The profile of the households is shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Profile of Household

1. Source of household income	
Family Farm	20
Army pension/ Foreign income	9
Family Lodge	2
Others* 14	
2. Total members in household	
1-2 members	7
3-5 members	12
6-9 members	7
3. Composition of households	
Children below 2 years	3
Children: 2-6 years	10
7-12 years	5
13 and above	10
Household without husbands and any adult male	11
Household with grandparents	3

Note: Household without husband refers to men working and living outside the village.

* Others refer to wage labor within the village and/or selling handmade goods to tourists and local people.

Out of the 26 households, 15 had at least one male member living either in India, Japan, the Middle East⁹, Hong Kong, or South Korea. Most families with outside sources of income were materially better off than those without. This was evident in the nice clothes they wore. However, there were a few women whose husbands had recently left for the Middle East and they had to wait at least a few years to enjoy the extra income. The initial cost to go abroad is quite high, and people usually borrow money from wealthy families. Until this loan is paid off, there is not much income to count on. While their husbands are away, life for poor families in the village is very tough. It was especially difficult for one *sarki* woman who had two small children. An elderly widow had hired her as a servant and let her live in the shed next to the cattle. Some of the older women live on army pensions their husbands had earned. However, they have to travel all the way to Pokhara to collect the pension at least twice a year.

The only men present in the village were older men, plus a few young men who had returned from foreign countries. Some had come back because they had lost their jobs and others returned because they felt they had earned enough and they wanted to be with their family. The latter was very rare. These men were involved in village politics and in ACAP programs even though they had been absent from the village for a number of years. It seemed the men automatically had better access to village politics than women. Men liked being involved in decision-making because it made them feel important. Their experiences outside the village also benefit them, as they are viewed as more learned and wise because of their travels. Hence the more out-migration help men increase their status further.

The two families who ran the lodges were definitely better off than most of the villagers. The income earned from tourism was evident in their homes and lodges, which were really nice by village standards. One family who owned the lodge had children attending schools in Pokhara, which are lot more expensive than the village school. There was one more family with children being educated in Pokhara.

All the women knew skills such as weaving, carpet making, and spinning. This was their source of extra income. They sell these handicrafts to tourists or exchange it for food with other villagers. A number of them made *raksi*, alcohol made out of millet, that was very profitable to sell to the lodge owners, who would then sell it to tourists and local travelers.

Most of the respondents owned their homes. The women who did not own the homes were either caretakers or looking after relatives' homes. The homes were built and/or maintained by homeowners with the help of family members and relatives through the traditional systems of co-operation and labor exchange. The materials for the houses, like wood and bamboo came from

⁹ Middle East here refers to Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Oman.

the forest. The walls were built with stone slabs neatly cut like wide, flat bricks. Stone slabs or slates were brought from nearby hills. The use of slate for the roof and also for paving the front yard has given Ghandruk a very distinct appearance. All the houses except one had electricity. That house owner lived in Pokhara and only a caretaker lived there without electricity. The caretaker said that the owners were planning to turn this old house into a historical museum.

Only the lodge owners could afford to bring piped water to their lodges. The rest of the villagers depended on common, public water taps located conveniently in many places throughout the ward. The water for the village taps is piped directly from the springs uphill, and is brought down by a gravity system. This spring water is quite safe for drinking, even though it is not treated. In order to guarantee that the water stays pure, the villagers built a large reservoir right at the source of the water and from there it is channeled to different locations.

Until the 1980s, the village had only a few toilets and they were excessively used. Men used to put their cap outside the toilet as a sign that the toilet was being used. The older women remembered how horribly it reeked and preferred using the open fields at dawn to avoid the public toilet. ACAP mobilized the Ama Toli to build toilets for every household and provided the necessary help. Today, all the homes have toilets, no matter how primitive (See Table 4).

All the homes still use fuelwood for cooking. Some also use kerosene stoves. Only the lodge owners could afford gas stoves. Although kerosene is easily available at the village store, they prefer fuelwood for specific reasons. All the houses in the village have wooden beams. The smoke from the fuelwood creates a black film on the wood which prevents termites from infesting the wood, thus protecting the wood and increasing the life-span of the homes. The ash left behind from burning wood is used for washing dishes since the ash absorbs oil and grease and cleans the utensils very well. Ash can also be mixed with water, made into a paste, and applied on the

Table 4: Type of Facilities

1. House has	
Electricity	25
Access to clean water	26
Toilet	26
Radios and/or television	12
2. Cooking sources	
Kerosene stove	3
Gas Stove	1
Electric stove	1
Fuelwood	26

outside of the cooking pots so that after they are used for cooking, it's easier to clean them. Ash is also used to clean sheep wool. When sheep wool is boiled in ash and water, the ash soaks up the dirt and oil from the wool. During the monsoon season, warm ash is used to kill leeches. Some people also use ash as bathing soap.

A number of households had a transistor radio, and a few had a television. On certain evenings, villagers would gather in a house that had a television to watch specific television shows. A weekly soap opera based on Hindu mythology appeared to be the most popular show in the village.

Gender Division of Labor within the Household

In Ghandruk there is a distinct division of labor within each household, and every family member has a distinct task. Table 5 shows the gender division of housework within the family. The table clearly shows that women's share of work is higher than the rest. Even among children, the workload and responsibilities are higher for girls. It clearly suggests that certain tasks like preparing meals and taking care of children are solely female responsibilities. Grandparents usually help to take care of small children and to feed the cattle.

The high male migration has further increased women's workload. There were four young women I interviewed who had young children, two of whom were Gurungs and two of whom were from the occupational castes. During the interview, this group of women expressed the hardships of being single young mothers in the village. It was difficult to manage all the household tasks, look after the children, and tend the fields alone. They were at the mercy of wealthier families who helped them when needed either by giving them food or a place to stay in exchange for small errands. Their husbands were gone indefinitely, and it appeared that the husbands were

Table 5: Gender Division of Labor Within Household

	Women	Men	Grandparents (M/F)	Children (G/B)
Fuelwood Collection	X	X		X (G/B)
Fodder Collection		X		X (G/B)
Meal Preparation	X		X (M)	X (G)
Taking care of the children	X		X (M/F)	X (G)
Fetching water	X			X (G/B)
Taking care of the cattle	X	X	X (F)	X (B)
Washing clothes	X			
Shopping	X	X		
Farming	X	X		

Note: M = Grandmother, F = Grandfather, G = Girls, B = Boys.

not sending back enough money to run the household. The living conditions of these women was very poor compared to the other households.

Mobility and Empowerment

Most of the younger women have never left the village since they arrived from their parental village after marrying their husbands in Ghandruk. The older women had been to Pokhara on occasion to collect pensions, visit relatives, and for medical purposes. Many older women agreed that Ghandruk lacked good medical care for old people. Men who made enough money working abroad have built homes in Pokhara and moved their entire families there. As mentioned earlier, this growing trend of moving to the city has left behind many empty homes, which are watched by relatives or caretakers.

The increased popularity of Ghandruk since the establishment of ACAP has increased property values and, although many families have moved to Pokhara permanently, none of them have sold their ancestral homes. These families use these homes mostly to store grain. The families return annually, either to collect or sell the grain and also to clean the house. When these houses are empty, they get damp and moldy, so when the homeowners come, the first thing they do is to burn wood in order to dry the house. Some older women were concerned that rich people

Table 6: Perception Regarding Mobility and Empowerment

1. Geographic Mobility	
Have visited nearby villages	20
Have visited a city	15
Prepared to move to the city	4
2. Reasons for going out of village	
Social visits	18
Medical	12
Shopping/Trading	6
3. Concept of self sufficiency	
“Village life has everything necessary for a good life”	18
“Whatever is available in the village is not enough”	8
4. Perception of empowerment	
Total control over household income	18
Power to make decision for family	15
Power to make decision for self	15
Low self esteem due to lack of formal education	20
Always dependent on men or others for advice	18
Under-value own work	22

from the city (Kathmandu or Pokhara) who are not Gurungs may soon come and offer good prices for these empty homes and rebuild them as luxury lodges. The villagers welcome income generated from tourism but they do not want non-Gurungs to come and do business here. They want to retain their village strictly as a Gurung village.

Older women who had been to Pokhara and Kathmandu did not like cities, where they think every transaction was made with money. They felt that in the city, money was more important than anything, and that this corrupted the people. They also complained about air pollution, and the excess of waste generation. They also expressed sadness at how everyone in the city spoke only Nepali, and not their native language. Many felt that there is really no sense of community in the city, where people don't even know the next door neighbor. Another drawback to city life is that people are dependent on others for daily necessities like food and water. Everything has a price tag and without money no one can survive in the city. But most importantly, the village elders expressed their sorrow that city people did not show respect for the elders, and educated people seem to worship money more than their cultural heritage.

The younger women's view differed significantly from that of the older women. Most of the younger women's husbands worked in big cities in foreign countries. To them cities represented wealth, the good life, and work opportunities. They were willing to move to big cities with their husbands, if they had the chance. Life in the village was too difficult for them. They did not wish their daughters to remain in the village and lead hard lives. But resources are limited and change comes very slowly in the villages. Lack of education was the major drawback for most of the women interviewed. The majority of them had no schooling at all, unlike their male counterparts who had at least a few years of formal education. This made the women feel inferior, and they always depended on men and elders to help them with major decisions.

Women's special skills and hard work are not accounted for, and are often taken for granted. For instance, taking care of the children is not considered "work" for women; they themselves say "I gave birth to this child so I have to take care of him/her," as though the father has no responsibility towards the child. Women's work in the kitchen is also not seen as real work.

Views on ACAP and Ama Toli

All the women interviewed agreed that ACAP was good for the village even though it altered some of the traditional practices. Prior to ACAP everyone in Ward 8 was free to cut trees from anywhere. In the old days, men got together and headed to the forests up in the hill to collect fuelwood. They cut down as many trees as they wanted without taking care to notice if the wood was dry and good for burning. They would cut the trees into good size logs, about a meter long. They would carry these logs to the edge of the hill, and after making sure that

there was no one downhill by shouting warnings, they would roll down the logs. The logs were later collected by the river where the men chopped them, and women and children helped carry back to their homes. The trees were not only randomly cut down but the process of rolling them downhill destroyed anything in the way.

Once Ghandruk and the surrounding area were designated as a conservation area, villagers moved to protect the forests and tree cutting was prohibited. The forests where villagers were allowed to cut trees were limited and they had to get a special permit from the conservation management committee. The villagers were allowed to collect only dry wood from forest floors and forest products like fruits and berries. With the restriction on tree cutting, people worried that they wouldn't have enough fuelwood and many protested the conservation plan. However, local conservation and development committees and ACAP continue to stress the importance of nature conservation and provided information on better management of natural resources. Today, everyone agrees that they have enough fuelwood. This shows that in the past people either wasted a lot of wood or that they are now utilizing alternative energy like kerosene and electric stoves.

The villagers do have to travel further to collect fuelwood. This village has a very interesting traditional practice known as *huri* where villagers work as a team. It lessens the work without compromising the final output. In the *huri* system, 10 or 15 houses get together carry out tasks such as collecting dry fuelwood. When one family gets all the fuelwood collected on that day, that family is responsible for providing an afternoon snack and dinner to the workers. Farming is also done in similar manner. *Huri* is not only collective work but also a way of socializing. It is a very lively activity where men and women tease each other amidst singing and joking. *Huri* has helped maintain reciprocal dependency among villagers, which in turn ties the villagers closer to each other. The team spirit found here is quite admirable and must be acknowledged for its contribution to community services.

ACAP helped to mobilize Ama Toli and got everyone involved in community service. The village women had always worked for the community prior to the establishment of Ama Toli, but now, through ACAP, their work was suddenly legitimized and valued differently. This helped to increase their self-esteem. Older women showed interest in being in charge of Ama Tolis, while younger women showed enthusiasm for learning new skills for self-promotion. The Adult Literacy Program (ALP) was highly successful in Ghandruk, and many younger women have directly benefited from the program. Being able to read letters from their husbands was a great accomplishment for these women.

Women also benefited through skill development programs like carpet weaving and vegetable farming. Carpet weaving is very popular among young girls because it is highly profitable. One

Table 7: Views on ACAP and the Ama Toli

Member of Ama Toli	26
Active member of Ama Toli	8
Participated in at least one program organized by ACAP	15
Tourism related	4
Conservation education and training	10
Adult Literacy Program	8
Skill development/ Income generation training	6
Health and Sanitation awareness training	6
Day Care Center	1
Would like to be more involved with ACAP programs*	16
Agree that ACAP had been a positive force in the village*	24
Regularly attend Ama Toli meetings	20
Regularly take part in Ama Toli activities	25
Is it as easy to collect fuelwood as before the conservation area was established ?	
Yes	2
No	4
Same as before	20

Note: Some women did not have any response to these questions.

woman interviewed had attended a training on raising rabbits. She was raising four beautiful angora rabbits. She hoped to use the fur to make nice, soft wool, but complained that the rabbits ate too much food.

All the women interviewed were also members of the Ama Toli but only eight of the women interviewed were active members. The chairperson and the vice chairperson/treasurer were two elderly women, and they appeared to be in charge of everything. The villagers showed great respect for these two women, who were also the wealthiest in Ward 8. Both of them were very enthusiastic and dedicated leaders. They were proud of the work their Ama Toli had accomplished. One of the two had donated her shed to the Ama Toli to conduct meetings and store equipment. These two leaders and a few other women expressed sadness that ACAP was no longer as effective as before. This Ama Toli had therefore boycotted involvement in ACAP programs because they felt it no longer treated everyone equally. One of the examples they gave was that certain wards were always favored by ACAP. At any programs or competitions organized by ACAP, only these wards or certain people from those wards won the prize. During peak tourist season, ACAP invites different Ama Tolis to their office to perform traditional dances for the tourists, who donate money to the Ama Toli in return. The members of the Ama Toli in Ward 8 were convinced that they were invited by ACAP to perform only when other Ama Tolis declined, or when there

are fewer tourists and not much money involved. They felt this was not fair on ACAP's part, so in recent years they have completely refused to take part in any group activities organized by ACAP. But the Ama Toli of Ward 8 has a good leader and are financially secure. They feel they have enough funding and members to work independently of ACAP.

PHOTOGRAPHS

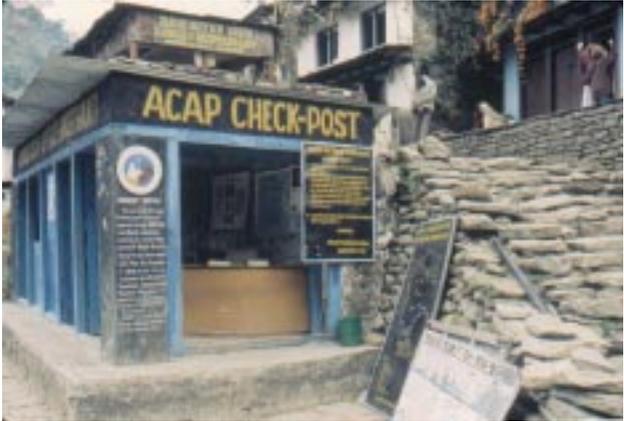
1. Annapurna South (7,219m) creates a beautiful backdrop to the village of Ghandruk.



2. Modi Khola (elevation approximately 1,000m)

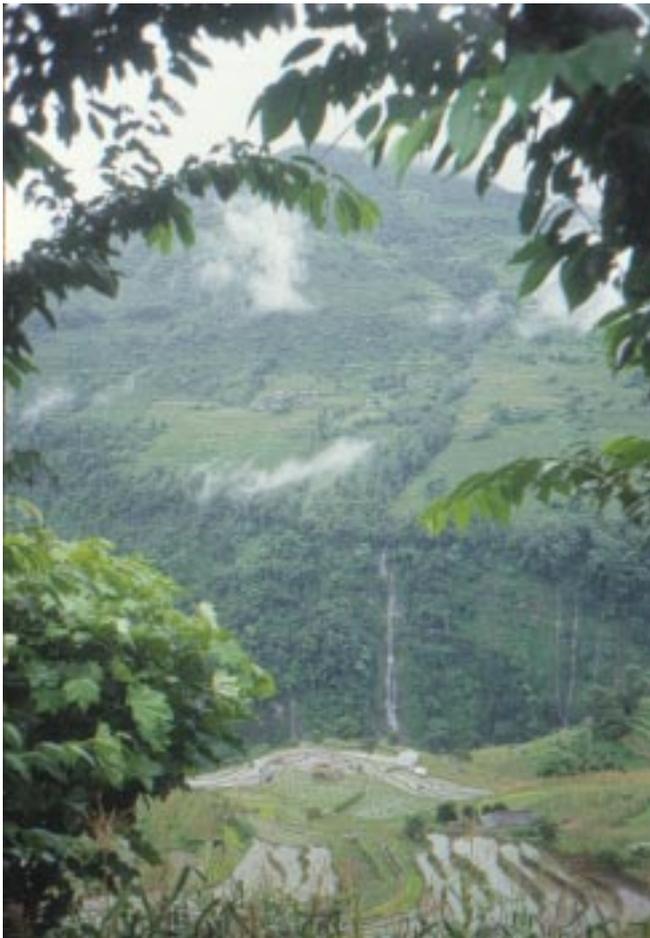


3. An ACAP check post near Birethanti in operation, 1998.

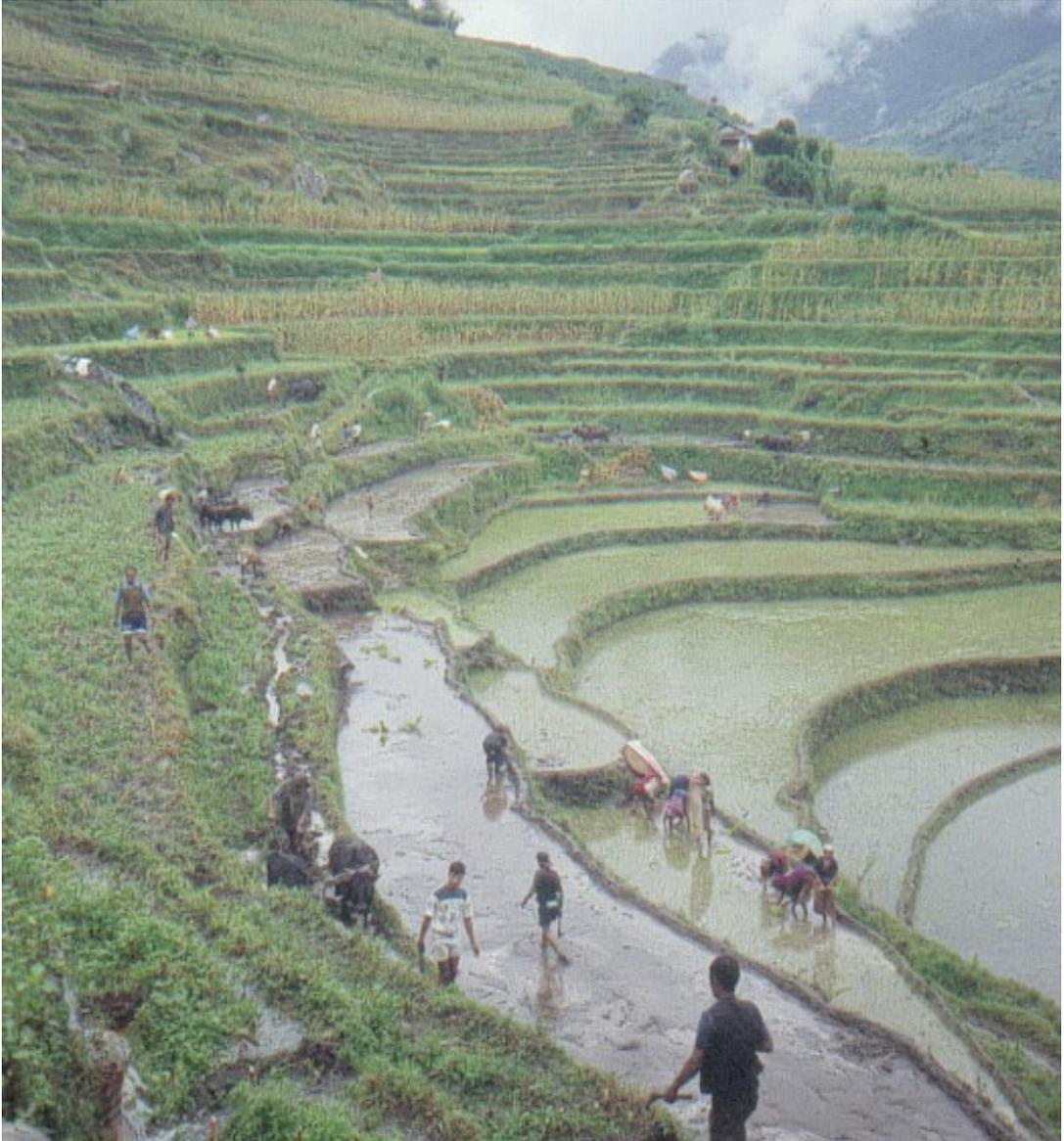




4. A temporary path to Ghandruk after heavy monsoon rain and a landslide blocked the main trail.



5. A picturesque view of the farms where primarily rice is cultivated. Numerous monsoon-fed waterfalls makes trekking to Ghandruk very pleasant.



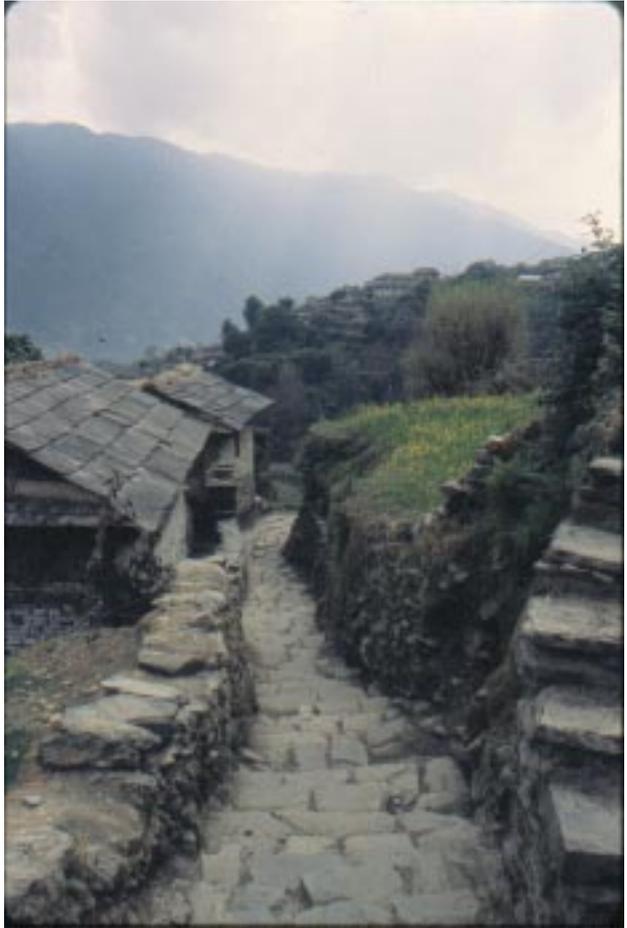
6. Rice fields are several hours walk from the main village. Farm laborers are primarily from the artisan castes, demonstrating the patron-client relationship between the wealthier Gurung families and the artisan castes.



7. Mules are the main mode of transport.



8. Paved slate pathways, typical of Ghandruk, are constantly dirtied with mule and cattle droppings, and are regularly cleaned by the Ama Toli.



9. A clean and well-maintained trail in Ghandruk.



10. View of Ghandruk from the north. The green forest in the foreground is one of the afforestation programs of the Ama Toli in Ward 8.



11. Another view of Ward 8 from the north with a lovely view of the terraced fields.



12. A typical kitchen belonging to a fairly wealthy family.



13. The only convenience store in Ward 8 is owned by an elderly man and is run by his young wife.



14. Several organizations share one office building in the village.



15. A modern edifice in Ghandruk, which many villagers, and ACAP staff, say is ruining the village landscape.



16. The tree plantation area of Ward 8's Ama Toli is secured by a stone wall.

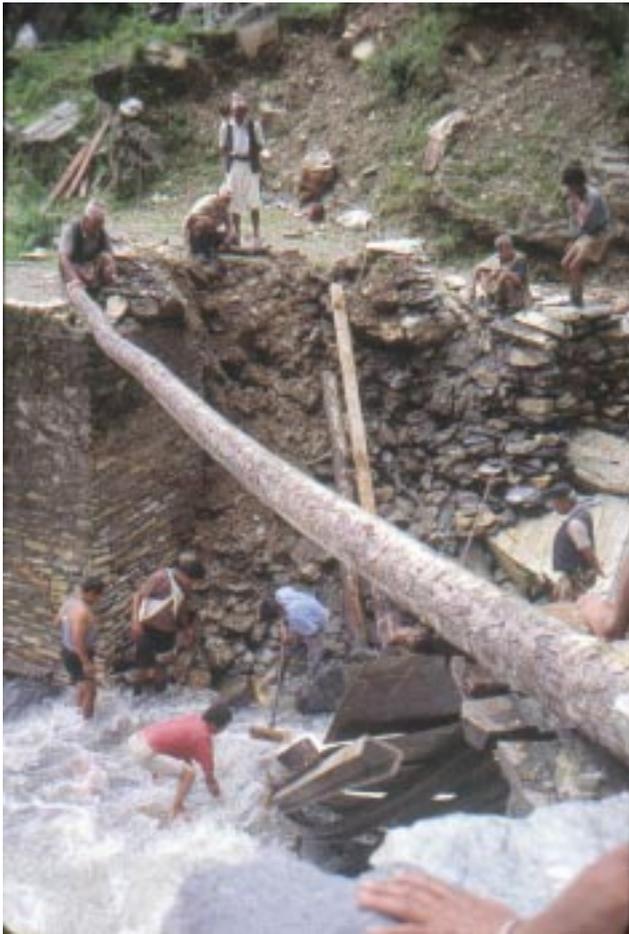


17. The shrine of Mishram Baraha, believed to be the ancestor of the Gurungs, was built by the Ama Toli of Ward 8.

18. During the monsoon, which is also the farming season, villagers are busy in the fields and trail damage caused by heavy rain has to wait a few days before it is repaired.



19. The monsoon rain washed away a bridge used for cattle in the summer of 1998.



20. The men of Ward 8 spent an entire day trying to save the usable parts from this washed-out bridge.



21. During the summer months, the village school is closed and children spend all day collecting fodder for cattle.

22. After bringing fodder home, these boys with other children play until dusk.



23. Basket making was a special tradition practiced primarily by men in Ghandruk.



24. The chairperson of the Ama Toli of Ward 8 sits by large pots and pans they collected over the years to use for Ama Toli events and to rent out for private family functions.





25. Vice-chairperson of the Ward 8 Ama Toli washing sheep wool at the main water tap of the ward.



26. The main tap of Ward 8 is a meeting place for women who come to wash clothes, sheep wool, bathe, or collect water for their homes.



27. Villagers in Ghandruk practice biannual crop rotation. Here women are seen planting millet, while in the field in the background corn is growing. The following year, they will plant corn in these fields and millet in the other.



28. Millet raksi (wine) is a main source of income for many women.



29. There was only one family in Ward 8 that still processed nettle fibers for weaving.
The craft has been more or less abandoned due to the long and tedious work of preparing the fiber.



30. Preparing nettle thread for weaving.
The bear hide underneath the women on the left is a remnant of hunting practices in Gurung culture, which has been banned in the conservation area.



31. The traditional Bhangra cloth being weaved.



32. This type of traditional thick blanket is no longer popular in the village because it requires great skill, takes longer to finish and is difficult to sell.



33. Carpet weaving is profitable. The small square seen here sells well with tourists. Villagers use natural dye from walnut trees to color the wool.



34. Young girls preparing sheep wool on the porch. In Gurung homes, most of the work is done outside the house since rooms have poor lighting, and domestic helpers are not allowed inside the house unless they are Gurung.



35. Garlic is another easily grown crop in Ghandruk.
Stones are still used as weights.



36. Many households in Ghandruk keep one or two buffalos for and to make clarified butter (*ghiu*).



37. Revisiting Ghandruk December 1999: The lush greenery of the monsoon looks dry and dusty in winter. Rice fields are left fallow during the cold season.



38. This close-up view shows the main cluster of Ward 8. Wealthier families tend to have longer houses.

IMPACT OF ACAP IN GHANDRUK: A GENDER ANALYSIS

Introduction

This chapter discusses the Women's Development Program of ACAP, which was established in early 1990 to help increase women's participation in development projects and consequently increase women's status. Programs introduced under Women's Development focus primarily on participation and direct benefit to the women. The chapter examines how the Women's Development Program has improved women's status and assesses whether this is effective enough to challenge and change the existing gender relations that are biased towards men. It documents the history of the Ama Toli in Ward 8 in order to chart the progress of the Women's Development Program and the Ama Toli and also identifies some critical issues concerning women and development that are not being effectively addressed in Ghandruk.

Women's Development Program

Women represent 51.1 percent of the population in the Annapurna region (Thakali, 16: 1997), and 52 percent in Ghandruk (ACAP, 39:1994). Although women's co-operatives in the form of *rodi* existed in the Gurung villages in the southern Annapurna region, the first official local women's group, the Ama Toli, was formed in Ghandruk in 1992 under the supervision of the Women's Development Program. Initially, the Women in Conservation and Development Program was introduced in 1990 with a central goal of encouraging and facilitating women's participation in conservation and development projects (Harrison, 1993). However, women were not involved in the processes of discussion and decision-making. Even in villages where women outnumbered men due to male out-migration, only men were seen at village meetings. ACAP established the Women's Development Program in 1992 to specifically increase women's voices in the decision-making process. This helped to change the traditional practice in which village men served as the main participants and sole decision-makers.

The success of ACAP programs can be attributed to the active participation of women, those who were thought to be good only for raising children and being housewives. Today, the same village men who once looked down on women agree that the amount of work they have done for the village is admirable, and agree that without them progress in Ghandruk would have been much slower. The four most important programs facilitated by the Women and Development Program are discussed in the following section.

1. Adult Literacy Program (ALP)

It is not surprising that in a developing country like Nepal, one's achievements in life are partly determined by whether you are born a girl or a boy. The traditional role of men as income generators automatically gives them an advantage from birth. Studies show that a male child receives better nutrition and care than a girl child. This is also true regarding access to education. Studies show that school drop-out rates for girls are much higher than the boys. The uneven national literacy rate for men (54 percent) and women (24 percent) confirms this (Acharya, 1994:37)¹⁰.

The development planners of ACAP and a few women in Ghandruk believed that a lack of basic education was the cause for women's suppression. For this, ACAP helped to facilitate Adult Literacy Classes (ALC), funded by the UNICEF. There are two levels of ALC, the basic and the advanced course. The objectives of these six-month-long programs are to help women attain literacy to increase their confidence, and ultimately to allow them to make decisions regarding their lives and their community. These classes are open to both men and women, but women's attendance has been significantly higher; almost 80 percent in the class are women (Ghandruk, Annual Progress Report, 1996).

In Ghandruk the graduates from earlier ALC were asked to prepare and design study materials for future classes. These Learner Generated Materials use conservation education as a central theme. The conservation book developed by previous ALC graduates helped to bring out local conservation issues for discussion. Additional support for the development of a book on conservation came from Save the Children-US Fund.

These classes are usually held in the evening when women can find some free time. Many women liked coming to ALC because it was more like a social gathering for women. They showed great interest in learning something different. Unfortunately, many of the women could not complete the course for various reasons such as marriage, pregnancy, migration, and in a few cases, because of harassment by men for attending classes. In 1994 and 1995, only 121 participants out of 217 completed the ALC in Ghandruk.

The limited funding and resources do not allow for ALC to be conducted in one village regularly. The program moves from village to village and it could be several years before the program comes back to the same village. For instance, the ALC in Ghandruk's Ward 8 was offered only once since 1990. Although more women in Ward 8 have shown interest in the ALC, it is highly unlikely that the program will return there soon.

¹⁰ The literacy rate as percent to the total population of six years and above.

2. Scholarship for Girls

All the elderly women in the village regret not having the chance to go to school. Today, they are in charge of running most of the community development projects that require gathering people, organizing meetings, and bookkeeping. Their inability to read and write has impaired their participation at national-level meetings and workshops where they could share their experiences with wider groups of women. Many agree that education is the key to success in today's world, as it opens doors of opportunity. With a few exceptions, all the children in Ghandruk attend village schools. Some wealthy families send their children to boarding schools in Pokhara and Kathmandu. However, the majority of the villagers cannot prioritise to education for their children and the drop-out rate is significantly higher among girls. It is surprising that the same women who wished they had gone to school are having their daughters and granddaughters leave school after fifth or sixth grade. When asked why this was happening, the women responded with the simple answer that the girls have learned enough. This is related to the local conceptualization of how females should be educated. In view of most people, a girl is considered "educated" if she is able to recognize numbers and to read and write a simple letter. Higher education is important only for boys because traditionally only men had the freedom to leave the village in search of better work while women are expected to stay home and take care of the farm, children, aging parents, and in-laws. The parents see educating a son as an investment while educating a daughter is viewed as a waste of money. In order to encourage parents to allow their daughters to continue school, ACAP has established a scholarship fund for girls. Each year, after recommendation from the school and from the Ama Toli, promising girls from poor families are given Rs 600 for textbooks and Rs 300 for a school uniform. Between 1993 and 1994, 20 girls in Ghandruk sector received this scholarship. In the entire ACA, 49 such scholarships were awarded (ACAP, 1994: 41).

3. Day Care Center

As ACAP's Women and Development program progressed, more women wanted to participate in village development. However, many women could not find the time for community service because of their heavy workload at home, including the care of young children. Primarily aimed at helping young mothers and assisting pre-school children (two to five year olds) in preparation for primary school, the Day Care Center opened in Ghandruk in 1992. The initial funding was provided by ACAP for stationary, utensils, toys, and for the construction of the toilet. They rented a house to run the day care center for the first few years. It was also decided that the mothers of these children would rotate responsibilities and run the center. However, this did not prove feasible because many complained that the mothers who were in charge were partial and did not give equal attention to other children. This was resolved by hiring one day care staff, whose monthly salary was provided by ACAP.

Children can come to the day care center as early as eight o'clock. Because the center is located right next to the high school, older siblings often drop off the younger brothers and sisters before going to school. In the summer months, when the school is closed, mothers usually leave their children on the way to work. The children spend their day playing, learning songs, and how to read. An older woman is in charge of cooking a light snack and tea for all the children. The food has to be supplied by the parents. Each family has to pay a minimal monthly fee and contribute two *manas*¹¹ of flour, two *manas* of lentils, and three *manas* of rice on the first day of every month, which is also the day for the monthly meeting at the day care center for mothers and the care-takers.

The rice, flour, and lentils are used for mid-day meals for the children. The artisan caste and poor children are not required to pay the fee or donate grain. In order to make it sustainable, ACAP and various Ama Tolis have helped in fund raising. A building was constructed for the day care center in 1995, with two rooms, a kitchen, a bathroom, and a small yard for the children to play.

In 1998, there were three local women who managed the day care center. Two of the teachers were younger women who attended the village high school, the other was an elderly woman who has been working since the day care center started. They all received training from ACAP staff. The younger teachers were also sent to Pokhara for further training. One potential problem with hiring and training young women is that once they get married they might have to move from the village. Additionally, young teachers may look for better opportunities elsewhere once they receive good training in the day care center. The salary for one teacher is provided by ACAP while the other two teachers are paid by the day center with revenues collected from fund raising.

In 1998, a total of 37 children between the ages of two to five attended the day care center. There were equal numbers of boys and girls. Eighteen were from the artisan caste. The monthly meetings at the day care center are attended by the mothers, a few Ama Toli members, and an ACAP representative. In this meeting they talk about finances and ways to improve the service.

Young mothers have really benefited from this center. They claim that they feel safe leaving their children there while they work on the farm all day. However, some older Gurung women are not ready to send their grandchildren to the day care center because of the fear that they might eat together with the children of the artisan caste, which traditionally is not acceptable in Gurung communities. However, the popularity of the day care center continues to grow and they always have more children than they can accommodate. With the success of this center, five more have been established in the ACA (KMTNC, 1998: 15)¹².

¹¹ A measuring unit equal to about two cups.

¹² As of 1998, there were two in Siklis, two in Manang, and one in Lawang. Including the one in Ghandruk, a total of 150 children aged two to six were taken care of at these centers.

4. Developing Women's Entrepreneurship in Tourism (DWET)

In traditional village life, women's responsibilities are in the house and on the farm. Until recently, women were very rarely involved in public affairs, like trade and commerce, that required interaction with people outside the family or the village. This, however, does not mean that women did not know how to conduct business. They have long traded farm and household items like grain, crops, and sheep wool among themselves. Hence, although the village economy is not based on monetary transaction, exchange of material and labor has always taken place. Sometimes this requires more skill, since items do not have fixed monetary values.

In the early years of tourism development, village men opened up lodges and teashops. Even though their wives, mothers, and daughters were involved in running the lodges, they were never quite as visible as the male owners. It was very difficult for a single woman to break this traditional trend and open a lodge on her own. Lodge and tourist businesses were always thought to be men's specialties and when more and more men became interested in opening lodges, the competition seemed too high for the women. However, the first Women and Development officer of ACAP, Jagan Gurung, took the initiative to open a small lodge. She received support from her brothers serving in the British army and sound advice on eco-tourism from ACAP. Many of the village men discouraged her, and some were jealous. She has, however, endured, and today her lodge, the Trekkers Inn, is listed as one of the best lodges in Ghandruk. She admits that her work at ACAP gave her an advantage in understanding eco-tourism. She hopes to share her knowledge and experiences with other women in the village so more women can benefit directly from the growing tourist industry.

In December 1991, the DWET program was launched by HMG with financial support from UNDP/ILO to train women to become entrepreneurs. The objective of the DWET program is to enable women to:

- 1 Present a business plan to a credit source for the purpose of a loan application.
- 1 Start a small business or income-generating venture.
- 1 Manage a small business or income-generating venture (ACAP, 1995: 32).

The program is constantly changed and modified according to the women's needs. Because many of the women have no formal education and lack exposure and experience, they require continued supervision and follow-up. Others are not ready to make changes in their traditional role as mothers and wives. In 1992, ACAP had loan money available for women interested in opening a carpet shop in the village. No woman would take the risk. Finally, a woman in Ward 7 took the chance. She became very successful, and soon many more women wanted to open carpet stores. Her leadership served to inspire other village women.

The DWET program also includes technical and skill development classes. ACAP has appointed four field-based training managers to regularly supervise and monitor the trainees, most of whom are from poor families. The training sessions have been quite varied over the years, including poultry farming, raising rabbits, nettle fiber weaving, and vegetable production. Between 1991 and 1994, 211 women were trained under DWET. Twenty-seven of them established tourism-related enterprises with help from ACAP. The total amount of loans provided by ACAP was Rs. 169,000, which is approximately US\$ 2,500 (ACAP, 1994: 45). Most of the women who have set up small enterprises like teashops, convenient stores, and goat raising have been quite successful. A few women have not been successful in their ventures, and this was partly due to family problems and economic constraints.

Ama Toli (Mothers' Group)

History

Ama Toli, which translates as Mothers Group, is a grassroots women's group that was established in Ghandruk in 1992. Prior to the Ama Toli there were women's groups in some Gurung villages in the southern Annapurna region. The main task of these groups was to organize cultural activities and raise funds for community development.

The new women's group so formed and registered with the project (ACAP) are those who are willing to work for conservation. They still go about arranging their cultural activities and dance performances, as these are very effective in raising funds. It also keeps their culture alive and dynamic... with the new awareness, the money is now being used more for conservation and community development work (ACAP, 1995:28).

In northern Annapurna, such women's groups did not exist. Therefore, more effort was required to convince and motivate the women in these areas to organize themselves into groups. Today, there are 288 registered Ama Tolis in the Annapurna region actively involved in community development and conservation (Thakali, 1997: 16). The formation of Ama Tolis at the village level allows for addressing problems at village level. This means keeping priorities specific to the village needs. Further, village level Ama Tolis allow less complex implementation and monitoring of projects (KMTNC, 1998: 16). Each registered Ama Toli has a core group with four or five active members including a chairperson, a vice-chairperson, a treasurer, a secretary and advisors. This core group usually comprises of older and wealthier women, who traditionally hold more power than other women. All the women from the village automatically become general members and at least one female member of each family must participate in all the activities organized by the Ama Toli. They hold meetings at least once a month where they discuss village issues. If a member fails to attend the meeting, there is generally a fine. In these meetings, community needs are identified and discussed, and necessary funds are collected for

community work. ACAP provides assistance in the form of subsidies and technical support to help the Ama Toli (ACAP 1995: 28).

Traditionally, Gurung men have left their own villages to serve in the Indian and the British Army as Gurkha soldiers. In recent years, the reduction in Gurkha recruitment in the British Army¹³ has resulted in migration instead to countries like Japan, South Korea, Kuwait, Oman, and Saudi Arabia, where men work as wage laborers. In the absence of their men, women in these villages have assumed the role of the head of the household, a practice that is rare in other communities in Nepal. Gurung villages are tight-knit communities where everyone is closely related and the village represents a large extended family. The remote locations of these villages make it important and necessary for households to depend on neighbors and relatives. Many of the farming and village activities have always been done in groups, which save time and are important social events within rural communities where every day is a working day. Villagers seem to enjoy working together, and work groups also serve to strengthen communities as one larger unit. Young children also help in farming and other household activities.

The success of Ama Tolis in Ghandruk has also been attributed to the tradition of *rodighar* in Gurung villages. *Rodighar* was an institution where young Gurung girls of the same age gathered together in one specific house every night to discuss the next day's work. They all slept together in this house. These young girls were also the main organizers of festivals and fund-raising for community service. But, as mentioned earlier, the influence of Hindu culture in Gurung villages viewed these female social activities outside the family as lax and immoral (Andors 1976, Gurung, 1996:47, Gurung, 1996: 87). In many villages where *rodi* disappeared, Ama Toli replaced them. It can be argued that the idea behind the name Ama Toli, which literally translates as "mothers group", was to give the impression that this group is comprised of married women and not young girls. However, not all the Ama Toli members are married and in recent years unmarried women have asked to change the group's name from "Ama Toli" to "Mahila Toli," which translates as "women's group." But, because the name "Ama Toli" has gained so much popularity, that it is unlikely that a name change will occur anytime soon.

ACAP envisioned the idea of forming a woman's group with the hope of exploiting the tradition of the cooperative institution of women for community development. Today, we find Ama Toli replacing the practice of *rodi*. It is clear that Ama Toli has derived power and strength from the transformation of pre-existing social institution of *rodi* (Gurung, 1996:87). While initially elderly women were in charge of the Ama Toli activities, over the years younger women have become increasingly involved.

¹³ When Hongkong was handed back to China by the British government in 1997, most Gurkha soldiers serving the British army were sent back to Nepal with minimal pension.

What began as a small grassroots women's group in Ghandruk spread rapidly all over the ACA. In Ghandruk VDC alone, there are 15 Ama Tolis. Large wards having more than one (KMTNC, 1997:39). Besides their own activities, the Ama Tolis also help ACAP. The entire Women's Development Program in ACAP is formulated by consulting the Ama Toli. ACAP has been very open to their ideas and inputs. Not surprisingly, projects planned after consulting the women in Ama Toli have been very successful. The high success rate of the Women's Development Program has further strengthened the program and empowered women by letting them voice their concerns and by directly giving them the power to make decisions.

Accomplishments

The establishment of the Ama Toli was not easy. Many elderly women had low self-esteem and thought they were not capable of managing a women's group. The men in the village did not take the idea of forming a women's group seriously and said it would never work. The traditional belief was that any work that requires organization and coordination was beyond women's abilities. To be associated with an institution like ACAP meant participating in meetings, which seemed impossible to women who could not even read or write. The women were hard working and they cared for their community. Their effort and determination was enough to start the group, and with constant support and supervision from ACAP, they soon made history in this village. Today, the men of the village are supportive and ready to assist in programs initiated by the Ama Toli. The Ghandruk Ama Tolis have become progressive groups, and are famous beyond Ghandruk and ACA. People from other areas in Nepal, as well as from abroad, come to learn from the women in Ghandruk.

The success of the Ama Toli can be attributed to the high rate of participation. The Ama Toli requires at least one woman member from each household to become a member and to participate in their activities. The core group, with assistance from ACAP staff, holds meetings once every month or as necessary. All the women have shown great interest in the group because, for the first time, they not only can come together and talk about their problems openly, but also have the power to make changes as a group. As with any organization, funding is important for starting a project and ACAP did not have a lot of money to give to the Ama Toli. Women's skills as singers and dancers, developed in the *rodi* days, became important. The Ama Toli would sing and dance at every festival and at important occasions like weddings. In return money was collected. Another important source of income was from tourists who would pay to see the traditional dances. In Gurung villages, the returning Gurkha soldiers are welcomed back with a feast. Ama Toli cleverly collected much needed funding from returning soldiers by providing entertainment during this feast. Gurkha soldiers are known to contribute generously anywhere between Rs 500 to several thousands to the Ama Toli. Ama Toli in some villages also raised funds by selling grass from community plantations. Another source of funds was the fines that

were imposed on those who broke prohibitions on drinking and playing cards in the village. Not surprisingly, these fund-raising activities were highly successful, and within a few years Ama Toli became financially independent of ACAP. Table 8 lists the accomplishments of the Ama Toli of Ward 8, and their current projects.

Ama Tolis in Ghandruk have carried out several types of projects. One of the first successful ones was the installation of toilets. In the past, people used the open fields rather than private toilets, and the few public toilets that were available were usually over-used. At the Ama Toli meetings, ACAP staff talked about sanitation and health, and soon convinced the villagers of the importance of having toilets. The Ama Toli and ACAP staff helped in constructing toilets for each household. Today, almost every house in Ghandruk has an outhouse.

The fund-raising from singing and dancing was quite substantial and the Ama Toli wanted to do something meaningful for the village. A large part of this money was used to repair and construct walking trails in and around Ghandruk. While the stone slabs for the trails had to be carried from as far as an hour away, both men and women helped. Some worked for minimal pay and others voluntarily. The readiness of the villagers to offer volunteer labor for such community work is admirable and is probably the key to their success. Once this project was completed, the women decided to keep the trails clean at all times. Again, Ama Toli took the initiative. Except during the busy planting season months of July and August, the Ama Toli meets twice a month to clean the trails. Every member must participate and contribute their time. If a member cannot come, she must send one of her family members in her absence, otherwise she will be fined. A member is excused only if she is sick or away from the village.

Table 8: Ama Toli of Ward 8

Work Accomplished	Current Projects
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Trail construction and maintenance. 2. Reforestation. 3. Construction of the temple of Mishram Baraha who was the ancestor of the Gurung people. 4. Construction of toilets in every household. 5. Raised substantial funds. 6. Purchase of huge pots and pans, party supplies and a tent for social event in the village. 7. Contributed funds and voluntary labor to ACAP programs. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Trail clean up at least once a month. 2. Guard and take care of the reforested area. 3. Maintenance of the small garden in the temple. 4. Fund raising. 5. Provide soft loans to village women. 6. Work as a support group for women. 7. Help group members for any emergencies in the village.

As there is no bank in the village, the Ama Tolis use a portion of the funds as soft loans to women who are in need. In fact, in recent years some of the Ama Tolis have even funded some of ACAP's projects. In 1995, for example, several Ama Tolis of Ghandruk funded the construction of the fence around the Day Care Center. Some Ama Toli have invested in party supplies like large cooking pots, steel plates and cups, and water containers that can be borrowed by any member for festive occasions and funerals. These are also rented out to people from other villages.

Another successful Ama Toli project involves the reforestation project initiated and funded by ACAP. Large plots of community land that was stripped of trees about a decade ago are once again forested with five or six years old *utis* (alder) trees planted by the Ama Toli. They hope to use the grass from the forest floors for cattle and dry wood for fuel. None of these reforested areas are ready for harvesting yet, but the young trees have added aesthetic value and stabilization to the once barren and eroding hills. The villagers agree that the village looks much better with these forests around than it did when increased fuelwood demand because of population growth and the influx of tourists took a toll on the forests. Wildlife such as monkeys and deer are also returning with the forests.

Perhaps the greatest achievement of the Ama Toli has been recognizing the work of women and giving them a respectable place in society. The role as a support group for women has helped to empower women. They have been keen students of conservation and development. They are also instrumental in influencing their communities to participate in conservation activities and have included songs about conservation in their fund-raising dances. The Ama Toli has taken the lead in changing the traditional roles of men and women. The women of Ghandruk challenged the traditional belief that women's work is worthless and that woman can never make a difference in the larger society. Ghandruk social service and village politics that was always the center stage for men, now must make room for women.

Social Relations and Hierarchies

It was evident from the interviews and field observation that membership in local groups is dominated by the local elite and village elders. Unfamiliar with the law and their rights, poor and younger women lack a voice in the local institutions. As a result, they often rely on these groups for advice and counsel, further strengthening the role of the local leaders. These social relations and hierarchies influence how decisions are made.

Key Decision-Makers

In Gurung communities, a person's power in household decision-making processes increases with age. Older women in the family have more power than younger family members. This is rooted in the belief that elderly people are wiser because of their years of experience

and their knowledge of traditional rituals. A grandmother typically runs a family, distributing resources among her children and grandchildren. Because of her access to resources and decision-making power, everyone is loyal to her. This further helps to increase her power and influence on the family. A few of these powerful women were in charge of the Ama Toli and initiated most of the programs. The rest of the women in the village could not disagree or disobey them. Questioning the elders is not a common practice in Ghandruk. Fortunately, the elderly women have been dedicated leaders and so far, have made decisions that has benefited the majority of the villagers. It is unclear how younger women feel about their lack of decision-making power. They simply choose not to talk about it rather than get into trouble by offending the elders. This brings out an important point about how and who measures the success of the village.

Participation and Benefits

Although programs implemented by the Women and Development Program have been instrumental in mobilizing Ama Toli and empowering women, there are a few women who feel they have been left behind in this process. This is particularly felt by non-Gurung women from the artisan castes because they are a minority group and are also considered to be of lower caste. They do not have much say in any of the village activities, including that of the Ama Toli.

It is clear that the low participation rate for these women in Women's Development Program and Ama Toli activities is not solely because they are a minority, but also because they are not made comfortable in village gatherings. It is still a strong practice in the village that Gurungs cannot eat together with the artisan castes in the same room, who are also not allowed to enter the home of a higher caste. Another problem seen in this group of women is that even when they participate in ACAP programs, they never seem to follow up on the training. This contributes to tension between ACAP and artisan caste as some ACAP staff feel that such women waste limited resources. It's not clear if ACAP has done their part in finding out why this is happening and whether it is linked to a heavy work load in the household or to other family problems. It is unfortunate that even though there is a distinct social hierarchy and uneven power relations, the ACAP programs have categorized all women as one homogenous group. The efforts to help artisan castes, like the free service to their children of the in the day care center, are questionable. First, such practices assume that only artisan caste families are poor and that all Gurung families are wealthy. Second, these initiatives serve to further the dependency of artisan castes. The female scholarship program seems to be more impartial, benefiting girls from every group. However, the program assumes that girls from all groups attend school.

ACAP has been successful in recognizing the integral role of women in development through its Women's Development Program. However, it is becoming increasingly clear that it is not enough to group all women together without consideration of ethnicity. There needs to be changes made

in terms of addressing specific groups of women. This, however, could be a very sensitive issue for many women, and it is not always easy to change the traditional value systems. ACAP needs to include women from various social groups in designing the Women and Development Programs.

Another important factor regarding participation and benefit is location. In my fieldwork, I found that there were considerably higher participation rates for women from Wards 3, 4, 5 and 6. This may have been due to their close proximity to the ACAP headquarters. All the village facilities were also within walking distance from ACAP headquarters and these wards. These facilities have provided jobs to the local people and a lot of interaction with tourists. ACAP visitors have also helped make these four wards visible and more successful. In the annual reports of ACAP, Ghandruk clearly shows this uneven participation rate. Some wards, particularly Wards 8 and 9, do not share benefits equally with the others, and not surprisingly, there have been a few problems between these wards and ACAP.

During the peak tourist season, from September to December, ACAP organized cultural programs for tourists, who in turn can make small donations. The Ama Toli from different wards are invited on different occasions to perform and they receive the money donated by the tourists. The Ama Toli of Ward 8 complained that they were invited only to perform for smaller groups of tourists, meaning they received smaller donations. They felt that other wards were being favored for the big programs. After this had happened several times, Ama Toli of Ward 8 refused to participate in ACAP activities because they felt they were being treated unfairly. The ACAP staff denied this allegation but could not explain why Ward 8 did not participate in ACAP programs.

Patron-Client Relationship

Although with tourism and outside income, monetary transactions are becoming more common, at the household level, reciprocal exchange is still a common practice. Favors and help are paid in grain or in reciprocal favors. Any help with agricultural activities is repaid with part of the harvest.

Although at least one woman from each household must become a member of the Ama Toli, not everyone has an equal say. This was particularly felt at a group meeting in the day care center where the women of artisan caste had no opportunity to speak out. Probably for this very reason, out of approximately 15 women from the artisan caste, only three *sarki* women showed up for the meeting. At this meeting, the elderly Ama Toli women complained that very few women from the artisan caste regularly attend the meetings and expressed that “all” of them were useless and lazy. The three women kept quiet and just listened. As these women work for the wealthy Gurung families and receive free child care from the Ama Toli, they cannot argue or talk back to their patrons.

Collective Power and Individual Empowerment

Perhaps the collective power of the Ama Toli is not unique to Ghandruk. There are many such examples all over South Asia where women have come together as a group to voice their needs and concerns. Women in this region have realized that what they cannot do as individuals, they can attain as a group. Their common problems and goals have promoted solidarity. The Ama Toli is a perfect example of how women can organize and bring about change in their communities. It is not surprising to the Ama Toli members that they have been so successful. To them, the only difference is that now they get recognition for the work that they did all along. Women in Ghandruk have long been taking care of the family and farms, and in their husbands' absences, have taken on responsibilities as head of household. It is rooted in tradition that nothing is more important than family and community. In both Hinduism and Buddhism, service to the community is a way of attaining merit for the afterlife. Religious factors have also made it easy to mobilize the Ama Toli for community development projects.

However, the high success rate for the community projects did not enhance personal growth for individual women. Women who were not active leaders of the Ama Toli did not see the community work as different or separate from their everyday life. They participated willingly without expecting any returns or social recognition. Rather, they saw this as an expected contribution as a responsible member of the village. While the village of Ghandruk has definitely progressed in the last two decades, the same cannot be said for individual women. They are still subjugated to male dominance, and a girl child is still of lesser importance than her male siblings. The drop-out rate of girls in the village high school is higher than of boys. When a family goes through financial struggle and there is a need to cut expenses, girls are the first ones to be taken out of school. My field observation also showed that only girls helped prepare food for the family and only they were given the responsibility for taking care of younger siblings. Although the boys also have specific chores in the family, most of their tasks are done outside the home; for example, gathering fodder for the animals. From a very early age this distinct division of labor determines that a woman's place in the community is restricted to her home and family. Women's workload at the household level has not decreased, nor has their status improved. Women are still restricted to their home village, with little evidence pointing to changes in their opportunities in the near future.

ACAP's Future Role in Women's Development

In 1997 ACAP prepared a management plan with eight management goals to be implemented in a five-year period. Management goal four is, "To empower women in decision-making processes and enhance their status in conservation and sustainable development" (KMTNC, 1997:39). It was evident from field observation that women's status in Ghandruk has improved with the establishment of ACAP, Ama Tolis and the Women's Development Program. Women's

participation rate has greatly increased in community development projects, and women are recognized for their contribution to the community. The management plan classifies women under one criteria and fails to recognize the socio-economic disparities among them, therefore ignoring the minorities and the socially disadvantaged groups. The increase in women's status does not necessarily mean that the pre-existing gender relation has changed. It is crucial to recognize that all these changes are occurring in Ghandruk in the absence of men. It is difficult to determine what would occur if men were to return to the village. Would women continue in their roles as planners and community workers or would they once again be pushed back into their homes? The main issue of empowerment is not being fully addressed in Ghandruk. Formal and non-formal education is required to help these women realize that they, as individuals, are equal to their male counterparts and that the existing gender relations that promote the subordination of women can and must be challenged. The men in Ghandruk must also be involved in bringing about these changes. Gender training, which is receiving great attention in South Asia, might not be effective in Ghandruk if the men are not there to participate. Only targeting only women and improving their status does not guarantee women's empowerment. The initial phase of improving women's status has been successful in Ghandruk. However, it must be continued with more emphasis on women's empowerment. Rather than simply replicating gender training from other areas, I think it is important to talk to the women of Ghandruk and gain an understanding of what empowerment means to them, and how they want to achieve gender equality.

CHAPTER 6

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

This study focused on women's role in development in Ghandruk and how it has changed in the last decade with the establishment of the Ama Toli. The Ama Toli has broken some of the gender barriers and has successfully become a progressive force for development in the village. Their involvement in community development projects has brought benefit to many villagers. But the distribution of benefits across social groups and class has not been equal. There is an intrinsic link between participation and benefit, and participation is sometimes determined by ethnicity or economic status. This is why the wealthier villagers continue to benefit more than the poorer artisan castes who are socially disadvantaged and unable to participate in all the programs. This study showed that in spite of their low status, the artisan castes are an integral part of the village because they are the main labor force on the farms. In the absence of the Gurung men, both sexes of the artisan castes help Gurung women in food production.

One of the main concerns that the elderly Ama Toli members expressed was the fear that none of the younger girls are likely to take on their roles once they retire. From the beginning, the elderly women were in charge of the Ama Toli and made all the decisions exclusively. The younger women always took orders from their elders and never had any say in decision-making. Today, the younger women lack the knowledge and the organizational skills to lead the group. The elderly members, however, fail to recognize that the social structure of the village, where younger people do not question or disobey their elders, has created an environment where younger women come across as submissive and lacking in leadership qualities. In reality, the younger women are more educated and exposed to the outside world than their elders since tourism picked up in this area in the late 1980s.

When the time comes for them to take charge, I believe they will prove to be more effective. The much-needed changes to break the ethnic and gender barriers will be possible only through the younger generation who no longer cling to old, traditional values as strongly as their mothers and their mother-in-laws. Younger people in the village appeared to be more open to change and prefer to adopt urban lifestyles, which was overly reflected in their clothing. Unlike the elderly population, the younger people in Ghandruk do not wear traditional Gurung clothes. With proper guidance and caution, one can mobilize this group of young women to bring some real changes to Ghandruk.

With the establishment of ACAP in 1986, Ghandruk has found itself a place in both national and international levels as a model village of conservation and development. Once known to only a few adventurous and independent foreign trekkers, Ghandruk today attracts a large number of tourists. People working for development agencies come to Ghandruk to learn from villagers what they do differently here. Ghandruk is gaining popularity even among the Nepalis in Pokhara and Kathmandu. The filming of a popular Nepali movie a few years ago probably helped to bring this village to everyone's notice.

Ghandruk should take advantage of this popularity, both among foreign and domestic travelers, and expand its development goals. Like any development process, although a lot has been accomplished in Ghandruk, the work is far from complete. The initial goal of ACAP was to initiate and to help with conservation and development programs for the first 10 years, and slowly hand over complete responsibility to the local villagers. It was hoped that money generated from tourism would be sufficient to carry on conservation and development programs. However, nothing has been discussed about this final goal recently.

The establishment of the Ama Toli was an achievement for the women of Ghandruk. In the beginning, the village women were shy and lacked the confidence to start a group on their own. But every time ACAP proposed a community development projects like trail repair, toilet construction, or afforestation, the village women were always the first to volunteer help. The people in ACAP were confident that, with a little guidance, the village women could be organized as a group for community service. The initial phase involved planning, consultation, and lot of interaction among the women and ACAP staff. When the Ama Toli got started in the early 1990s, there were plenty of projects at hand and everyone got involved. Today, the 40 Ama Tolis of Ghandruk Village Development Committee (VDC) have collected a substantial amount of money through fund-raising. The collected money is loaned to the members of the Ama Toli. This helps women in need, and the fund remains secure.

In spite of their successful past and enough funding available at present, there were no immediate plans to utilize this fund. This indicates that the Ama Tolis are experiencing a stagnant period. Whether this trend will improve over time and whether the Ama Tolis will once again become active is hard to tell.

Recommendations

These are some policy options and recommendations for the Ama Toli, ACAP, policy-makers and development agencies that are concerned with village development, equitable distribution of socio-economic benefits, and women's empowerment. They recommendations are based on

my field experience and interviews with women from Ghandruk and do not represent all the Gurung villages or the entire Annapurna area.

1. Formal and Non-formal Education

It is clear from interviews that younger women who participated in the Adult Literacy Program were more articulate and had higher self-esteem than those who did not. The Adult Literacy Program helped the women to talk about their problems openly and share their experiences with others. Although not all the participants completed the course, they all learned basic reading and writing skills. Women who did complete the course were asked to help write the course outline for future classes.

None of the women from the artisan castes that I interviewed participated in the Adult Literacy Program. ACAP's annual report does not break-down the participants by ethnicity. Clear, in Ghandruk, the wealthier families have better access to the Adult Literacy Program. The women from the artisan castes said they felt they were not smart enough to learn, and did not wish to make a fool of themselves in front of others. The workload for these women is also higher because they have to take care of their own household and work as farm laborers too. The heavy workload allows them very little time for activities like attending the Adult Literacy Program.

The link between higher literacy rate and lower birth rate is no coincidence. Literacy together with better health services has been shown to reduce birth rates in most developing countries. This was evident in Ghandruk. Generally, women without access to formal or nonformal education had large families. From my interviews, women without access to education had more than four children, while the norm is between one to three. ACAP staff who had tried to talk to these women about family planning were usually confronted by their husbands who refused to try any family planning methods. It is important to educate these women about their reproductive rights so that they can have a better chance of making the right decision for themselves.

All the elderly members of the Ama Toli regret not having a chance to go to school. Today, they are in charge of running community projects that require book-keeping and attending ACAP meetings. Their inability to read and write prevents them from spreading the success of their work to other villages. Many of the women feel comfortable speaking only in Gurung and get nervous speaking in Nepali at meetings conducted by ACAP. They all agree that education is the ladder to success. With the exception of a few, nearly all the village children attend the village school. However, ACAP's report shows a high drop-out rate for girls after fifth grade. It was surprising that the same women who wished they had gone to school were having their daughters and grand daughters leave school so soon. When asked why this was happening, the simple answer was that the girls had learned enough. The whole idea behind educating a girl in the

village is learning to recognize numbers and being able to read and write simple things like personal letters. Higher education is important only for boys because they can leave the village and find better jobs in the city. A girl, however, is confined to her own home and village until she gets married. Once a girl gets married, she is responsible for taking care of the husband's parents and not her own. Therefore, most parents see educating a son as security for their old age while the education of a daughter is considered waste of money.

Equal educational opportunities will help girls and women become on par with their male counterparts. Education in the village context could be just awareness or skill development, or formal schooling. The decision-makers in the village should encourage any of these educational tools that can help promote women's empowerment.

2. Extension through Ama Samuha

One of the main problems the Women and Development Program of ACAP is facing is the inability to bring together all the Ama Tolis of Ghandruk VDC. Today there are over 40 Ama Tolis in Ghandruk VDC. There was some effort to create an Ama Samuha, or "Mother's Group Collaboration", where the leaders of each Ama Toli would meet regularly to discuss and share each other's experiences. This, did not materialize because there is no networking among the Ama Tolis in different villages. Some of the Ama Tolis do not fully understand the significance of sharing success stories with each other. There was even hostility between some groups and they preferred to work independently. The Women and Development Program of ACAP had hoped to help with coordinating the Ama Samuha and offered the ACAP office as the meeting-house. But there was a very low turn-out for the monthly meetings, and soon everyone stopped coming. One of the reasons might have been that the ACAP office was too far for regular visits, particularly for wards 1, 2 and 9, where it meant a couple of hours walk each way. It might work better if the Ama Samuha plans their monthly meetings at a different ward each month. This will save some women-a time and also allow more women from that ward to participate in the meeting. But it must be noted that not all Ama Tolis are equally equipped to organize and run meetings, and under such situations ACAP can intervene with help. This collaboration of the Ama Samuha will further enhance women's place in the village. I expressed this view to the ACAP staff but was unable to get any definite response from them.

3. Inclusion of the Socially-Disadvantaged Group

Although Ghandruk is primarily a Gurung village, one cannot ignore other ethnic groups, some of whom have lived here as long as the Gurungs. Unfortunately, the artisan castes by birth have a lower status than the Gurungs and are socially disadvantaged. ACAP has tried to incorporate this social issue in their programs to help this particular group but the effectiveness of these projects are questionable. For example, the day care center has 45 children and more than half are from the artisan caste families, who are eligible for this service free of charge. This allows

the mothers more time to work in the field and to do other household chores. But this does not break ethnic barriers. A visit to the day care center during lunch time makes it clear that the real issues are still left out. The traditional belief that Gurungs are higher caste and therefore cannot eat with members of a lower caste is still very strongly practiced in Ghandruk today, as it was many generations ago. The children at the day care are separated during lunch. This notion of one group being superior than the other is introduced to children from a very early age, and they are made to believe that this is the only way it is. Young children from the low caste accept this as their lot, and hardly express their ill feelings when they are asked to eat separately or are not allowed to enter a Gurung house.

However ridiculous these practices are, they are difficult to change. These local taboos and local beliefs are so rooted in tradition that even though it is unclear how it got started, no one in the village, especially the elderly, are ready to change. “The *kami*, *damai* and *sarki* are now going to the city and even to the Middle East to find better lives, they make good money too. In the city no one can tell that they are untouchables so they get what they want, we do not complain about that. If you (city people) want to accept *kami*, *damai* as equals, feel free to do so, but it will not happen in our village,” is how one elderly woman puts it. Does this statement express the sentiment of the entire village? Unfortunately, it represents the views of the important decision-makers and the village elders, making it even more difficult to address the issue. This statement also reflects that since the *kami*, *damai* and *sarki* men are moving out from the village, their wives and children are left behind without anyone to defend them. These women are at the total mercy of Gurung landholders and the elderly who can either protect or exploit them. This has made women of the artisan caste a true underclass in the village.

4. Empowerment-Oriented Gender Training

It is clear from the case study that even at a village level, there is a great variation in the degree of decision-making, mobility, participation, benefit, and status of women. But in all the cases women are less educated, less mobile, and have fewer opportunities than men. The major decisions in the village are still made by male village elders. The older women, although very active with the Ama Toli, rarely participate in village politics, and do not hold any VDC-level political positions. Hence, in spite of the success of the Ama Toli, at an individual level, the women of Ghandruk are still bound by old traditional value systems where women are viewed as less knowledgeable than men when it comes to major decision-making. It is crucial that women must be trained, and encouraged to challenge the patriarchal gender relations that reinforces their subordination. They must be given more access and control over resources like education, practical skills, and decision-making. The Women and Development Program of ACAP can facilitate empowerment-oriented gender training, where women can be helped and encouraged to bring about changes that will promote equity for both men and women.

Wider Consequences within ACAP and Nepal

This thesis attempts to understand and analyze the functioning of a successful woman's group, the Ama Toli of Ward 8 in the village of Ghandruk in Nepal. This study is site-specific and focuses primarily on one ethnic group, the Gurungs. The analysis provided in this thesis should not be applied throughout the Annapurna region, where many Ama Tolis were formed on the Ghandruk model, although the success of the Ama Toli in Ghandruk can be shared with the others. The key, therefore, is to compare and analyze why and how the situation in Ghandruk is distinct from other areas in Annapurna and to deduce a working framework that can be applied towards more specific local analysis.

The analysis of Ghandruk found that it is indeed a unique case where the social structure of the village allowed women to become actively involved in community work. The out-migration of Gurung men provided women with the decision-making power in the household. The population of women living permanently in the village is significantly higher than men. Although, it was not possible to show quantitatively, there is a strong indication that the higher proportion of women and the success rate of development projects in this village are correlated. The participation rate was also granted by the economic status of the Gurung families. The remittance sent by their husbands and sons significantly improved the household economy of most families, which allowed women to participate in community work. The income generated through tourism also helped women improve their economic status. Therefore, one question is, will the Ama Toli be as successful in other villages where the economic status may not be as high as in Ghandruk?

Another important factor that played a significant role in promoting conservation and development in Ghandruk is tourism. As discussed in Chapter 3, ACAP was established to conserve the diverse flora and fauna of the Annapurna area, and to manage the high influx of tourists coming to the area who posed a threat to the natural environment, especially due to fuelwood consumption. Tourism exposed Ghandruk to the outside world and directly influenced the village economy. The villagers quickly opened lodges and teashops to accommodate the visitors. This helped to supplement their income. The increasing inflow of tourists was very beneficial to the village at large, but the benefits are not equally distributed.

The negative impact of tourism has, however, affected everyone. Those in the hotel business have started to build concrete buildings identical to the ones found in Pokhara. All building materials like cement, tin roofs and furniture are brought from Pokhara on mules or carried by porters. Once happy with farming and a simple life, Ghandruk today is driven towards modernization. This is slowly changing the cultural landscape of the village. Almost all the young women I interviewed wore some form of non-traditional clothing, like T-shirts and batik sarongs from Southeast Asia sent by their husbands. These women also expressed their longing to settle down in Pokhara or Kathmandu where modern amenities were easily available.

Although these changes are occurring slowly, it is clear that with the introduction of television, telephones, and a proposed road extension from Naya Pul to Syauli Bazaar, change will not stop with a couple of concrete buildings. Whether these inevitable changes are good or bad for the village is not clear yet. But how has impacted women's role in the village is important, because there are many other areas in Nepal which are popular for tourism and will probably experience similar situations. The benefits of tourism, such as an increase in income level and more job opportunities for women, should be exploited to promote the economic status of women.

During the interviews, I was able to detect that the women were afraid to start anything new that challenged the traditional value system. In the old days, women were not even allowed to talk to strangers freely: the elders carefully monitored their actions. So, when ACAP wanted to help any woman who was willing to open a carpet shop, no one volunteered. Opening a shop meant they would be dealing with strangers and tourists, so the women were reluctant. Finally, after much coaxing, one woman took on the challenge. It was such a success that soon more women wanted to participate or open their own shops. Today, during the monsoon when schools are closed, many young girls weave carpets that they sell to the carpet shop or directly to the tourists and make a healthy profit. This self-earned income has greatly increased women's confidence. Three of the women I interviewed in Ghandruk were in their early thirties and single. They owned and managed big hotels, which they opened with the help of their parents and brothers who worked abroad. None had any intention of getting married. This is unusual in Nepal, because girls get married as early as 15. Twenty-five years old is considered late for marriage. This signifies that women are becoming economically independent and no longer depend solely on their husband to provide for them.

In the larger Nepali context, this study suggests two things. First, it clearly shows that even at the village level, there is a great variation of class, caste and ethnicity and that these play a pivotal role in decision-making, participation, and benefits. This variation is even greater when we look at the entire country.

It is, therefore, impossible to group all the women of Nepal as one single homogenous group. Until we identify these distinctions among the women themselves, any kind of policy aimed at women and development will not be as effective. Second, in spite of the differences among women, the root of the problem is the same. Nepali women across Nepal are subjugated to male dominance and are not viewed as equal to their male counterparts. Their duty as daughters, daughter-in-laws, mothers, and grandmothers has not changed much over the years. Even in Ghandruk, it was evident that the girls had a lot more responsibilities than the boys. The workload of women continues to grow in spite of "development", primarily because development in Nepal is still defined primarily by men. Women's voices are still missing in the planning stage. Women are only participants in the implementation process. Nepali women are good at carrying out instructions when handed down from above, and to question authority or one's elders is still not accepted well in Nepali society.

The Challenges and Struggles of Nepali Women Continue

The progress of a village or a group cannot be equated with progress of women. The overall development of a village does not necessarily mean that women's status has also improved. In fact, as discussed in Chapter 2, many development processes have adversely impacted women and created worse situations for them.

In the case of Ghandruk, and Nepal at large, the theoretical framework for development has been the WID approach where modernization and human capital investment are believed to raise women's status and living standard. This is attained by integrating women in development through skill development and by transferring improved technology (Bhavnani, 1997:37). This approach has been very successful in Ghandruk because of ACAP's involvement in encouraging women to participate and facilitating many skill training courses specifically for women. This approach has helped women to be actively involved in community development but has not impacted women at an individual level, nor has it broken any significant gender barriers.

The women in Ghandruk have made such significant contribution to the village that they must be recognized as agents of change rather than just recipients. The new approach to women and development that is gaining popularity in much of the Third World today is Gender and Development (GAD). This approach stresses connections and contradictions of gender, class, race and development. It focuses on organizing women to transform gender roles and relations in the form of gender sensitization (Bhavnani, 1997: 38). It is clear from this study that in Ghandruk, the GAD approach must be enforced for real change. Only when women are included in any development planning from the very beginning can the results be fruitful. It is common sense that women should plan and design development schemes for women, and this is possible only when they are recognized as individuals capable of making decisions and not merely as someone's wife or daughter. Empowering women to make decisions for themselves and for their villages will enhance progress. However, the reality of Nepali women is still very grim. There are numerous NGOs in Kathmandu that work towards these goals but progress is slow and the focus seems to be primarily on urban areas. There is much work to be done in the rural sectors of the country where lack of accessibility has discouraged research. Ghandruk, now a fairly accessible village, is still quite remote for Kathmandu dwellers and it is not surprising that many women the capital have never heard of the Ama Toli. This lack of connection among the women themselves has slowed them down. But success story of the Ama Tolis of Ghandruk has encouraged many villages in the Annapurna area to establish their own groups. Women from Ghandruk who migrated to cities like Pokhara have formed Ama Tolis there, but it is worth enquiring whether they are motivated by activities like real community work or only socializing.

REFERENCES

- Abraham, M. Francis and P. Subhadra Abraham (Eds.) *Women, Development and Change: The Third World Experience*. Indiana: Wyndham Hall Press, 1988.
- ACAP *Annual Report*. Pokhara, 1994.
- *Annual Report*. Pokhara, 1995.
- *Annual Progress Report*. Pokhara, 1996.
- *Annapurna Conservation Area Management Plan*. 1997.
- Acharya, Meena. *The Statistical Profile on Nepalese Women: An Update in the Policy Context*. Kathmandu: Institute for Integrated Development Studies. 1994.
- Adams, W.M. *Green Development: Environment and Sustainability in the Third World*. London: Routledge, 1993
- Agarwal, Bina. "Environmental Action, Gender Equity and Women's Participation," *Development and Change*. New Delhi: Vol.23, 1997. (pp. 1-44).
- Andors, Ellen. "The Rodighar and its Role in Gurung Society," *Contribution to Nepalese Society*. Vol. 1, No. 2, June 1994, pp. 10-24.
- APDC. *Asian and Pacific Women's Resources Action Series: Health*. Kuala Lumpur: 1990.
- *Asian and Pacific Development Resources Action Series: Law*. Kuala Lumpur: December 1993.
- *Asian and Pacific Development Resources Action Series: Environment*. Kuala Lumpur: December 1992.
- *Gender Training Resources in the Asian and Pacific Region : A Selected Bibliography*. Kuala Lumpur: December 1997.
- *Issues in Gender and Development*. No.8/August 1995.
- *Issues in Gender and Development*. No.9/August 1997.
- *Women in Economy: A Select Annotated Bibliography of Asia and Pacific*. Malaysia: 1991.
- Arizpe, Lourdes, M. Prescilla Stone and David C. Major, eds. *Population and Environment: Rethinking the Debate*. Colorado: Westview Press, 1994.
- Armington. Stan. *Trekking in the Nepal Himalaya*. California: Lonely Planet, 1997.
- Banskota, Kamal and Bikash Sharma. *Case Studies from Ghandruk: Impact of Alternative Energy Technology in Reducing Pressure on Forest Resources. Contribution of Tourist Expenditure to the Local Economy in the Annapurna Area*. Kathmandu: ICIMOD, 1997
- Bennet, Lynn. *Dangerous Wives and Sacred Sisters: Social and Symbolic Roles of High-Caste Women in Nepal*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1983.
- Bhatt. Nina, Laju Shrestha, Barbara Thomas-Slayter and Indira Koirala. *Managing Resources in a Nepalese Village: Changing Dynamics of Gender, Caste and Ethnicity-Case Study*. Kathmandu: Institute for Intergrated Development Studies, December 1997.

- Bisilliat, Jeanne and Michele Fieloux (translated by Enne Amann and Peter Amann). *Women of the Third World: Work and Daily Life*. New Jersey: Associated University Press, 1987.
- Bista, Dor Bahadur. *Fatalism and Development: Nepal's Struggle for Modernization*. Calcutta: Orient Longman, 1994 (6th Edition).
- Blaikie, Piers and Harold Brookfield. *Land Degradation and Society*. New York: Methuen, 1987.
- Black, Jan Knippers. *Development in Theory and Practice: Bridging the Gap*. Colorado: Westview Press, 1991.
- Cameron, Mary M. *On the Edge of the Auspicious: Gender and Caste in Nepal*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998.
- Carr, Marilyn, Martha Chen and Renana Jhabvala, Eds. *Speaking Out: Women's Economic Empowerment in South Asia*. New Delhi: Vistaar Publications, 1996.
- Center for Resource and Environmental Studies. *Tourism for Mountain Community Development: Case Study Report on the Annapurna and Gorkha Regions of Nepal*. Kathmandu: ICIMOD, 1995
- Coburn, Broughton. *Nepali Ama: Portrait of a Nepalese Hill Women*. 2nd Ed. Singapore: Tien Wah Press, 1991.
- Des Chene, Mary Katherine. *Relics of Empire: A Cultural History of the Gurkhas 1815-1987*. Ph. D. Dissertation. Stanford University, 1991.
- Dunlop, Joan, Rachel Kyte and Mia MacDonald. "Women Redrawing the Map: The World after the Beijing and Cario Conferences." *Developing World: Annual Editions*. Connecticut: Dushkin/Mcgraw-Hill, 1998/99.
- East, Patricia, Kurt Luger and Karin Inmann, eds. *Sustainability in Mountain Tourism*. Delhi: Book Faith India, 1998.
- Fisher, James F. *Sherpas: Reflections on Change in Himalayan Nepal*. California: Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1990.
- Friedman, John and HariPriya Rangan, eds. *In Defense of Livelihood: Comparative Studies on Environmental Action*. Connecticut: Kumarian Press, 1993.
- Getubig, I., J. Remenyi and B. Quinones, eds. *Creating the Vision: Microfinancing the Poor in Asia-Pacific: Issues, Coonstrains and Capacity-building*. Kuala Lumpur: ApDc, 1997.
- Gurung, Chandra P King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation Annapurna Conservation Area: A Briefing. Kathmandu: 1989.
- Gurung, Dibya. *Tourism and Gender: Impact and Implications of Tourism on Nepalese Women*. Kathmandu: ICIMOD, 1995.
- Gurung Jeannette. *Alternative perspectives: Gender Dimensions of Traditional Environmental Management*. ICIMOD, 1996.
- Gurung, Harka. *Vignettes of Nepal*. Kathmandu: Sajha Prakashan, 1980.
- Gurung, Om Prasad. *Customary Systems of Natural Resource Management among Tarami Magars of Western Nepal*. Ph.D. Dissertation, Cornell University, 1996.

- Harrison, Bridget. *The Role of Women in Development: A Case Study: The Annapurna Conservation Area Project Nepal*. Dissertation for BA. University of Manchester: 1993.
- Heyzer, Noyleen. *Gender, Population and Environment in the Context of Deforestation: A Malaysian Case Study*. Kuala Lumpur: Asian and Pacific Development Center, 1996.
- Heyzer, Noyleen, ed. *Women Farmers and Rural Change in Asia*. Kuala Lumpur: Asian and Pacific Development Center, 1987.
- Heyzer, Noyleen and Gita Sen. *Gender, Economic Growth and Poverty: Market Growth and State Planning in Asia and the Pacific*. New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1994.
- HMG National Planning Commission Secretariat. *Women in Nepal: Some Statistical Facts*. Kathmandu: Central Bureau of Statistics, 1999.
- ICIMOD. *A Report of a National Seminar on Mini and Micro-hydropower Development in the Hindu Kush-Himalaya Region: the Nepal Perspective*. Kathmandu, Nepal 1-2 September 1994.
- *Integrated Planning for Environmental and Economic Development of Mountain Areas: Report of a Regional Meeting of Planners and Experts*. Kathmandu; July 22-24, 1996.
- *Newsletter*. No.29. Winter 1997.
- Informal Sector Service Center (INSEC). *Women in Politics: National Conference on Women 1996-Report*. Kathmandu: INSEC, June 1997.
- Institute for Integrated Development Studies. *Managing Resources in a Nepalese Village: Changing Dynamics of Gender, Caste and Ethnicity*. Kathmandu: IIDS, 1997.
- Jack D.Ives and Bruno Messerli. *The Himalayan Dilemma: Reconciling Development and Conservation*. Tokyo, : United Nations University, 1989.
- Jackson, Cecile. "Doing What Comes Naturally ? Women and Environment in Development." *World Development*. Vol.21. No.12. 1993, pp. 1947-1963.
- "Environmentalism and Gender Interests in the Third World," *Development and Change*. New Delhi: vol.24, 1993, pp. 649-677.
- Jahan, Rounaq. *The Elusive Agenda: Mainstreaming Women in Development*. London: Zed Books, 1995.
- Jayasuriya, Shanti and D.C. Jayasuriya. *Women and Development: The Road from Beijing*. New Delhi: Har-Anand Publications, 1999.
- Jones, Janet. *An Investigation into the Effects on the Lives of the Women of Ghandruk in Western Nepal by their Involvement in the Annapurna Conservation Area Project*. University of Derby, 1996.
- Jones, Rex L. and Shirley Kurz Jones. *The Himalayan Women: A Study of Limbu Women in Marriage and Divorce*. Palo Alto, California: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1976.
- Kabeer, Naila. *Reversed Realities: Gender Hierarchies in Development Thought*. New York: Verso, 1999, 3rd Ed.
- Kipp, Eva. *Bending Bamboos, Changing Winds: Nepali Women Tell Their Life Stories*. Delhi: Book Faith India, 1995.

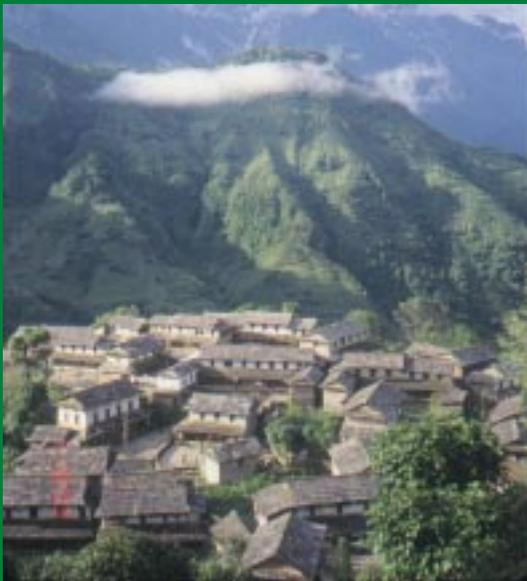
- KMTNC. *Annual Report*. Kathmandu: KMTNC, 1997.
- *Annual Report*. Kathmandu: KMTNC, 1998.
- *A New Approach in Protected Area Management: A Decade of Conservation for Development*. Kathmandu: KMTNC, 1996.
- Lama, Wendy Brewer. "Valuing Women as Assets in Community-Based Tourism in Nepal." *Cultural Survival Quarterly*, Vol.23, Issue 2, Summer 1999.
- Leonard, Ann, ed. *Seeds: Supporting Women's Work in the Third World*. New York: The Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 1989.
- Maguire, Patricia, *Women in Development: An Alternative Analysis*. University of Massachusetts, Amherst : 1984.
- Macfarlane, Alan. *Resources and Population: A Study of the Gurungs of Nepal*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976.
- MANUSHI. *Women and Environment in Nepal; Success Stories at the Grassroots*, Kathmandu: 1994.
- March, Kathryn S and Rachele L. Taqu. *Women's Informal Associations in Developing Countries: Catalyst for Change ?* Boulder: Westview Press, 1986.
- McGowan, Lisa, Sharon Vocmek and Kevin Danaher. *Women and the Global Economy*. San Francisco: Global Exchange (pp. 1-7).
- Merchant, Carolyn. *Earthcare: Women and the Environment*. New York: Routledge, 1996.
- Messerschmidt, Donald A. *The Gurungs of Nepal: Conflict and Change in a Village Society*. New Delhi: Oxford, 1976.
- Mies, Maria and Vandana Shiva. *Ecofeminism*. New Jersey: Zed Books, 1993.
- Mishra, Shanti. *Voice of Truth: The Challenges and Struggles of Nepalese Women*. New Delhi: 1994.
- Momsen, Janet Henshall. *Women and Development in the Third World*. New York: Routledge, 1993.
- Moser, Caroline O.N. *Gender, Planning and Development: Theory, Practice and Training*. New York: Routledge, 1993.
- Mumford, Stan Royal. *Himalayan Dialogue: Tibetan Lamas and Gurung Sharmans in Nepal*. Madison: the University of Wisconsin Press, 1989.
- New ERA. *Socio-Economic Profile of Bhujung, Lamjung District*. Kathmandu: New Era, 1999.
- Poudel, PC. "Mountain Tourism and its Socio-cultural Impact in Ghandruk VDC Annapurna Region, Nepal." *The Himalayan Review*. Nepal Geographical Society Vol. 29, 1998, pp. 37-52.
- Pietila, Hikka and Jeanne Vickers. *Making Women Matter: the Role of United Nations*. New Jersey: Zed Books Ltd., 1996.
- Pignede, Bernard. *The Gurungs: A Himalayan Population of Nepal*, English edition by Sarah Harrison and Alan Macfarlane. Kathmandu: Ratna Pustak Bhandar, 1993.

- Pye-Smith, Charlie, G.B Feyerabend. and R. Sandbrook. "Nepal: Annapurna Conservation Area Project." *The Wealth of Communities: Stories of Success in Local Environmental Management*. London: Earthscan Publication 1998.
- Ragsdale, Tod Anthony. Ethnicity and Educational Change: the Gurungs of Nepal and the New Education Plan. Ph. D. Dissertation, Duke University 1979.
- Redclift, Michael. *Development and the Environmental Crisis: Red or Green Alternatives?* London; New York: Methuen, 1984.
- Regmi, Murari Prasad. *The Gurungs: Thunder of Himal. A Cross-Cultural Study of Nepalese Hill Tribe*. New Delhi: Nirala Publications, 1990.
- Sachs, Carolyn E., ed. *Women Working in the Environment*. Washington, DC: Taylor and Francis, 1997.
- Sakya, Karna. Annapurna National recreational Area or Rashtriya Prakritik Manoranjan Sthal; A Proposal Kathmandu: 1982
- Salter, Jan & Harka Gurung. *Faces of Nepal*. Kathmandu: Himal Association, 1996.
- Sharma, Pitamber. "Approaches to Promoting Mountain Tourism for Local Development: Experiences from Nepal." *The Himalayan Review*. Nepal Geographical Society Vol. 29, 1998, pp 20-36.
- Shiva, Vandana. *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Development*. New Jersey: Zed Books, 1989. (2nd Edition)
- Shiva, Vandana. "The Green Revolution in the Punjab." *The Ecologist* Vol. 2, No. 2, March/April 1991.
- Shrestha, Pushpa. *Educated Women in Urban Nepal*. Delhi: B.R. Publishing Corporation, 1995.
- Sittirak, Sinith. *The Daughters of Development: Women in a Changing Environment*. New York: Zed Books, 1988.
- Siwakoti, Gopal Krishna and Madhavi Basnet Karki. "Women's Position in South Asia: A Case Study on Nepal." *The Milestone*. Vol. 3, No. 2, March/April 1996.
- Stevens, Stan, ed. "Annapurna Conservation Area: Empowerment, Conservation, and Development in Nepal." *Conservation through Cultural Survival: Indigenous Peoples and Protected Areas*. Washington DC: Island Press, 1997, pp. 237-261.
- "Sacred and Profaned Himalayas." *Natural History*, Vol. 97, No.1, 1988, pp. 26-35.
- "Sherpas, Tourism, and Cultural Change in Nepal's Mount Everest Region." *Journal of Cultural Geography*. Vol.12, No.1, 1991, pp.39-58.
- "Tourism, Change, and Continuity in the Mount Everest Region, Nepal." *The Geographical Review*, Vol.83, No.4, October 1993, pp.410-420.
- Stevens, Stan and Mingma Norbu Sherpa. "Tourism Impact and Protected Area Management in Highland Nepal: Lessons from Sagarmatha National Park and Annapurna Conservation Area." Paper presented at the IVth. World Congress on National Parks and Protected Areas. Caracas Venezuela: 1992.

- Subedi, Prativa. *Nepali Women Rising*. Kathmandu: Sahayogi Press, 1997. (2nd Edition).
- Thakali, Shailendra. 'Local Level Institutions for Mountain Tourism and Local Development : the Annapurna Experience.' Report to ICIMOD, Kathmandu, 1997 .
- The Mahbub ul Haq Human Development Center. *Human Development in South Asia 1999: The Crisis of Governance*. Pakistan: Oxford Univ. Press, 1999.
- Uprety, Hari Krishna. "Eco-Tourism with People's Participation for Sustainable Development," *The Himalayan Review*. Vol. 29, 1998, pp. 53-63.
- Watkins, Joanne. *Spirited Women: Gender, Religion and Cultural Identity in the Nepal Himalaya*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1996.
- Whyte, Robert Orr and Pauline Whyte. *The Women of Rural Asia*. Colorado: Westview Press, 1982.

The early 1990s saw many government, non-government and international organizations attempting to include women's issues in their development plans. As a result, many "women's programs" were created during this period. As part of this trend, in 1992, a women's group known as the Ama Toli was formed in Ghandruk, a Gurung village in central Nepal, with help from a local non-government organization, the Annapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAP). Ama Toli emerged as a progressive force in village development and their success stories spread rapidly all around the Annapurna Conservation Area. ACAP has since received international recognition for their innovative work on co-management of natural resources and integrated rural development, drawing the attention of many social scientists and conservationists to the Annapurna area.

This study attempts to determine the role of ACAP in promoting women's empowerment through programs like the creation of the Ama Toli. This study further looks into specific Gurung cultural characteristics and socio-economic conditions of the village that were influential in making the Ama Toli a success.



MANASLU GURUNG, born in 1972 in Nepal, studied Geography and Environmental Studies at the University of California Los Angeles. She has worked as a teaching assistant to Professor Stan Stevens at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst in the field of Cultural Geography. She currently she works as an assistant to Professor Sangeeta Kamat at the Center for International Education at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. She is active in teaching and studying scholarly debates of Third World Development.



WWF is the world's largest and most experienced independent conservation organization, with almost 5 million supporters and a global network active in more than 90 countries.

WWF's mission is to stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature by:

- conserving the world's biological diversity
- ensuring that the use of renewable natural resources is sustainable
- promoting the reduction of pollution and wasteful consumption

WWF Nepal Program
PO Box: 7660, Baluwatar
Kathmandu, Nepal

Tel: 4434820, 4434970, 4410942
Fax: 977-1-4438458

email: info@wwfnepal.org
www.wwfnepal.org