

**Reflecting on REFLECT in Sikles, Nepal:  
a dialogical inquiry into participation,  
non-formal education and action-oriented research.**

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements of Liverpool John Moores University for the  
degree of Doctor of Philosophy

**May 2005**

## Abstract

This thesis draws on the author's experience of a community in a mountainous region of Nepal; namely the Sikles sector of the Annapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAP). ACAP is an Integrated Conservation and Development Project that aims to promote conservation *for* development. Participation and education are central to the ACAP approach.

The research is divided into two phases. The first phase (1995-1998) provides a critique of the ACAP's Conservation and Education Programme and concludes that the demand for non-formal education was not being met in the study area. Further it highlights that social barriers were excluding people from attending evening classes and participating in ACAP's programmes. In the second phase (1998-2004) the researcher facilitated the introduction of REFLECT, a structured participatory learning process centred on people's critical analysis of their environment, into the study area in order to address these issues. The research is therefore grounded in the principles of Action-Oriented Research (AOR).

This thesis evaluates the success and challenges of REFLECT in the study area over a six year period. The author critically reflects on REFLECT as a participatory approach to education and makes recommendations for other practitioners. Further the thesis examines the dilemmas and challenges of doing AOR in a rural community in Nepal. It stresses the importance of reflexivity in order to locate the researcher explicitly within the research process. Insight is provided into the potential of action-oriented research as a means of engaging in a dialogical inquiry. Embedding local control in the research process is stressed and the need for ongoing training and evaluation is highlighted. Further, this thesis supports the calls for 'participatory development' to be reconceptualised and reclaimed as a locally embedded, transformatory and equitable process in order to prevent any further co-option. It suggests AOR has a positive role to play in this reconceptualisation.

## Acknowledgements

This thesis would not have been possible without the support and help of many people in many places over a long period of time. In Nepal it is the people of Sikles who have shared their thoughts, hopes and aspirations with me that has led me along the path that has resulted in this thesis. Special thanks goes to the facilitators and participants in the Chalphal Kendras (Discussion Centres) and the people in the community that have given their support to these women, and men, in their endeavours to create a space to meet and learn together. For their friendship and hospitality I am indebted to Suraj Kumar Gurung, Bir Kumari Gurung, Grandma and Yuba Raj, Maile and her family, as well as my 'mithini' Suba Gurung and her children Bobbitta, Kumar and Umesh.

Thanks is also due to 'activists' in Nepal working at many different levels. Thanks to Shailendra Thakali and Hum Gurung and their families for their humour, insight and friendship. Also thanks to the participants from Nepal who went to the First Global REFLECT Conference in India in 1998, especially Manvi, Teeka and Sumon, for a source of inspiration and for making me feel so welcome. Thanks also to staff from CERID for being part of an exchange programme that has enabled ideas to be shared.

Words cannot express my gratitude to the three people in Nepal who have made the whole action research process such as rewarding one. The support, commitment and friendship of Hitman Gurung, Laxmi Dhital and Kiran Bohara has been invaluable. Dhanyabhad tapaiko samaya ra maya ko lagi saathilai tapaikolagi dheri gharo bhayo (thank you for your time, love and commitment friends like you are hard to find). Thank you not only from me but also from the people in Sikles to whom this thesis belongs.

In Liverpool I'd like to thank my supervisors who have endured my journey with me, not only mentally but sometimes also physically as we have trekked up to Sikles together! Thanks to all of them for their guidance and support, to Ian for his support not only as my supervisor and boss but also as my friend and for believing that one day I would finish it, to Rose for her encouragement to act upon our research findings and her continuous support ever since and to Conan for his advice and for keeping me calm in the face of adversity. Thanks to Andrea for encouraging me to keep going. Special thanks to Caroline, who was going through a similar process to me, for her support and wisdom. A big night out is due to you all.

Last but by no means least thanks to my family. To my mum and dad for supporting me in so many ways and for giving me the opportunity to go to Nepal in 1986. But more importantly for their belief in me and for their constant love and encouragement in helping me follow my dreams. And to my boyfriend, fiancé and now husband Bob who has always been there and supported me through the times we have spent apart and more recently for looking after our beautiful children so wonderfully while I have been buried in books and on the computer burning the midnight oil. And although Jamie and Maya have no idea why mummy has been so busy or so tired big hugs kisses and thanks are due to them for being the best children a mother could wish for. Jamie has been to Nepal four times (twice before he was born) and Maya once. I look forward to us all going there again in the near future. At the end of the day this thesis belongs to the people of Sikles and is dedicated to them but also

..... to Jamie & Maya may you be as proud of me as I am of you and may all your dreams come true.

|       |  |    |
|-------|--|----|
| 1     | INTRODUCTION.....  | 1  |
| 1.1   | OVERVIEW.....  | 1  |
| 1.2   | THE ANNAPURNA CONSERVATION AREA PROJECT.....   | 1  |
| 1.3   | STRUCTURE OF THESIS.....   | 5  |
| 1.4   | SETTING THE SCENE: THE SIKLES SECTOR OF ACA.....   | 7  |
| 1.5   | THE RESEARCH PROCESS AND BEING CLOSE TO THE FIELD - END NOTE.....                                | 12 |
| 2     | CHAPTER TWO. THE ANNAPURNA CONSERVATION AREA PROJECT: PARTICIPATION AND EDUCATION REVISITED..... | 14 |
| 2.1   | INTRODUCTION.....  | 14 |
| 2.1.1 | <i>Background context of Nepal.....</i>  | 14 |
| 2.2   | THE ANNAPURNA CONSERVATION AREA PROJECT, NEPAL.....  | 20 |
| 2.2.1 | <i>Context of the ACAP.....</i>  | 20 |
| 2.2.2 | <i>Participation and the role of CAMCs.....</i>  | 24 |
| 2.3   | EDUCATION AND ACAP.....  | 31 |
| 2.3.1 | <i>CEEP.....</i>   | 31 |
| 2.3.2 | <i>Non-formal education within ACAP: insights from the field.....</i>                            | 34 |
| 2.4   | RESPONSE FROM THE FIELD.....   | 42 |
| 2.4.1 | <i>The importance of feedback – closing the loop.....</i>  | 42 |
| 2.4.2 | <i>Institutional response – ACAP.....</i>  | 43 |
| 2.4.3 | <i>Grassroots response.....</i>  | 46 |
| 2.4.4 | <i>My response to the feedback process – getting involved.....</i>                               | 50 |
| 3     | CHAPTER THREE. PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT AND REFLECT.....  | 53 |
| 3.1   | INTRODUCTION.....  | 53 |
| 3.2   | PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT.....   | 53 |

## Contents

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| Abstract .....  | i         |
| Acknowledgements .....  | ii        |
| Contents .....  | iv        |
| List of Appendices .....  | vii       |
| List of Tables, Boxes and Maps .....  | viii      |
| List of Figures, Photos and Diagrams .....  | ix        |
| List of Acronyms .....  | x         |
| <br>  |           |
| <b>1 CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION.....</b>  | <b>1</b>  |
| 1.1 OVERVIEW.....   | 1         |
| 1.2 WHY NEPAL? WHY ME? A PERSONAL STATEMENT .....   | 2         |
| 1.3 STRUCTURE OF THESIS .....   | 5         |
| 1.4 SETTING THE SCENE: THE SIKLES SECTOR OF ACA.....  | 7         |
| 1.5 THE RESEARCH PROCESS AND BEING CLOSE TO THE FIELD - END NOTE .....  | 12        |
| <br>  |           |
| <b>2 CHAPTER TWO. THE ANNAPURNA CONSERVATION AREA PROJECT:<br/>PARTICIPATION AND EDUCATION REVISITED.....</b> | <b>14</b> |
| 2.1 INTRODUCTION.....   | 14        |
| 2.1.1 <i>Background context of Nepal.....</i>   | <i>14</i> |
| 2.2 THE ANNAPURNA CONSERVATION AREA PROJECT, NEPAL .....  | 20        |
| 2.2.1 <i>Context of the ACAP.....</i>   | <i>20</i> |
| 2.2.2 <i>Participation and the role of CAMCs .....</i>  | <i>24</i> |
| 2.3 EDUCATION AND ACAP.....   | 31        |
| 2.3.1 <i>CEEP.....</i>  | <i>31</i> |
| 2.3.2 <i>Non-formal education within ACAP: insights from the field.....</i>                                   | <i>34</i> |
| 2.4 RESPONSE FROM THE FIELD.....  | 42        |
| 2.4.1 <i>The importance of feedback – closing the loop .....</i>  | <i>42</i> |
| 2.4.2 <i>Institutional response – ACAP.....</i>   | <i>43</i> |
| 2.4.3 <i>Grassroots response.....</i>   | <i>46</i> |
| 2.4.4 <i>My response to the feedback process – getting involved.....</i>                                      | <i>50</i> |
| <br>  |           |
| <b>3 CHAPTER THREE PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT AND REFLECT .....</b>  | <b>53</b> |
| 3.1 INTRODUCTION .....  | 53        |
| 3.2 PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT .....   | 54        |

|            |  |            |
|------------|--|------------|
| 3.2.1      | <i>The rise of alternative approaches to development - changing paradigms?</i> .....         | 54         |
| 3.2.2      | <i>The emergence of participatory approaches to development</i> .....                        | 57         |
| 3.2.3      | <i>Paulo Freire and conscientization</i> .....   | 61         |
| 3.2.4      | <i>Robert Chambers as a key actor</i> .....  | 70         |
| 3.2.5      | <i>Multiple meanings – typologies and continua</i> .....                                     | 71         |
| 3.3        | <b>PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH – FROM RRA AND PRA TO PAR</b> .....                                | 76         |
| 3.4        | <b>PARTICIPATION AS TYRANNY - THE NEED TO RECONCEPTUALISE</b> .....                          | 84         |
| 3.4.1      | <i>Co-option and loss of meaning</i> .....   | 85         |
| 3.4.2      | <i>Reconceptualisation of participatory development</i> .....                                | 87         |
| 3.5        | <b>REGENERATED FREIRIAN LITERACY THROUGH EMPOWERING COMMUNITY TECHNIQUES (REFLECT)</b> ..... | 89         |
| 3.5.1      | <i>Origins and principles of REFLECT</i> .....   | 89         |
| 3.5.2      | <i>Spread of REFLECT</i> .....   | 95         |
| 3.5.3      | <i>REFLECT in Nepal</i> .....  | 102        |
| 3.6        | <b>OVERVIEW AND SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES</b> .....  | 108        |
| <b>4</b>   | <b>CHAPTER FOUR METHODOLOGY</b> .....  | <b>110</b> |
| <b>4.1</b> | <b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....  | <b>110</b> |
| 4.1.1      | <i>Action-oriented research – defining the research approach</i> .....                       | 111        |
| 4.1.2      | <i>The need for reflexivity</i> .....  | 117        |
| 4.1.3      | <i>Challenges of PAR - overcoming the dilemmas ?</i> .....                                   | 119        |
| 4.2        | <b>ITS ALL PART OF A PROCESS - MY RESEARCH JOURNEY</b> .....                                 | 120        |
| 4.2.1      | <i>Understanding and entering the field -1992</i> .....                                      | 120        |
| 4.2.2      | <i>Preliminary research phase</i> .....  | 123        |
| 4.2.3      | <i>Engaging with the field - the main research phase</i> .....                               | 131        |
| 4.2.4      | <i>The role of feedback</i> .....  | 141        |
| 4.3        | <b>WIDER ISSUES – FLUIDITY AND ACTION ORIENTED RESEARCH.</b> .....                           | 144        |
| 4.3.1      | <i>My changing role</i> .....  | 145        |
| 4.3.2      | <i>Changing political situation</i> .....  | 146        |
| 4.3.3      | <i>Ethical Issues</i> .....  | 147        |
| 4.4        | <b>SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS</b> .....   | 153        |
| <b>5</b>   | <b>CHAPTER FIVE REFLECT IN THE SIKLES SECTOR OF THE ACAP</b> .....                           | <b>154</b> |
| 5.1        | <b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....  | 154        |
| 5.1.1      | <i>Supporting networks and logistical issues</i> .....                                       | 154        |
| 5.1.2      | <i>Introduction of REFLECT into the Sikles sector of the ACAP</i> .....                      | 156        |
| 5.2        | <b>PARTICIPATING IN CHALPHAL KENDRAS: INSIGHTS FROM THE FIELD</b> .....                      | 158        |
| 5.2.1      | <i>Spread of Chalphal Kendras</i> .....  | 158        |
| 5.2.2      | <i>Overall participation</i> .....   | 159        |

|          |   |            |
|----------|---|------------|
| 5.2.3    | <i>Reaching the marginalised - issues of inclusion</i> .....          | 166        |
| 5.3      | COMMUNICATION AND POWER - FROM LITERACY TO LIFE LONG LEARNING .....   | 173        |
| 5.3.1    | <i>Literacy and numeracy skills</i> .....                             | 173        |
| 5.3.2    | <i>Other forms of communication - oral and visual</i> .....           | 175        |
| 5.3.3    | <i>Keywords - more than just words</i> .....                          | 182        |
| 5.4      | FROM COMMUNICATION TO ACTION .....                                    | 184        |
| 5.4.1    | <i>Individual actions - changes in confidence and behaviour</i> ..... | 186        |
| 5.4.2    | <i>Community level actions</i> .....                                  | 188        |
| 5.5      | REFLECTIONS ON EXCLUSION.....   | 193        |
| 5.6      | REFLECTIONS ON AUTONOMY AND SUSTAINABILITY .....                      | 196        |
| 5.6.1    | <i>Formation of a CBO</i> .....                                       | 196        |
| 5.6.2    | <i>Participation in the CBO</i> .....                                 | 202        |
| 5.6.3    | <i>Changing political context</i> .....                               | 203        |
| 5.7      | LESSONS FROM THE PROCESS .....  | 204        |
| 5.7.1    | <i>The first challenge - getting involved with REFLECT</i> .....      | 205        |
| 5.7.2    | <i>To visit or not to visit</i> .....                                 | 207        |
| 5.7.3    | <i>Changing political and personal circumstances</i> .....            | 209        |
| 5.7.4    | <i>Working with others- support network</i> .....                     | 212        |
| 5.7.5    | <i>Anonymity revisited</i> .....                                      | 215        |
| 5.7.6    | <i>Ke bhayota – so what?</i> .....                                    | 217        |
| 5.8      | OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS.....   | 217        |
| <b>6</b> | <b>CHAPTER SIX CONCLUSION</b> .....                                   | <b>218</b> |
| 6.1      | OVERVIEW OF THESIS.....   | 219        |
| 6.2      | REFLECTING ON REFLECT IN SIKLES.....                                  | 220        |
| 6.2.1    | <i>Lessons from the field</i> .....                                   | 220        |
| 6.2.2    | <i>Is REFLECT a model for ICDPs?</i> .....                            | 224        |
| 6.3      | REFLECTING ON ACTION-ORIENTED RESEARCH .....                          | 226        |
| 6.4      | REFLECTING ON PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT.....                          | 229        |
| 6.5      | FINAL REFLECTIONS.....  | 233        |

## Appendices

|  |  |     |
|--|--|-----|
| Appendix 1.1   | Overview of personal web site  |     |
| Appendix 2.1   | Overview of political events and environmental policies in Nepal 1950 – 2005                           | 4   |
| Appendix 2.2   | Overview of ACAP structure and institution   | 12  |
| Appendix 3.1   | Key word formation using Freirean (phonetic) approach  | 34  |
| Appendix 3.2   | Overview of terminology associated with participation  | 73  |
| Appendix 3.3   | Overview of the evaluation of REFLECT Archer & Cottingham 1996b  | 74  |
| Appendix 3.4   | Alternative visual diagrams of literacy and REFLECT  | 129 |
| Appendix 3.5   | Overview of REFLECT in Nepal from Riddell 2001   | 134 |
| Table 4.4 Overview of field visits in the main research phase and methods used |  |     |
| Appendix 4.1   | Full details of research visits  | 165 |
| Appendix 4.2   | Overview of interview schedules  | 166 |
| Appendix 4.3   | Selection of interview transcripts (1996-2004)   | 176 |
| Appendix 4.4   | List of Monitoring & Evaluation workshops and photos   | 180 |
| Appendix 4.5   | Detail of media used at different stages of the research process for feeding back information to Nepal | 187 |
| Appendix 4.6   | Sample of annotated emails from Laxmi & Kiran  | 189 |
| Appendix 5.1   | Participation by gender in Cycles 1 – 5 1998 -2003   | 200 |
| Appendix 5.2   | Participation in all cycles by caste   | 201 |
| Appendix 5.3   | Ranking exercise – value of REFLECT to local participants (April 2000)                                 | 202 |
| Appendix 5.4   | Examples of material produced by litho machine   | 203 |
| Appendix 5.5   | Summary of visual material produced by each centres  | 207 |
| Appendix 5.6   | Overview of key words produced by Chalphal Kendra 1998-2004  | 213 |
| Appendix 5.7   | Example of members of a Chalphal Kendra Management Committee, CBO members and photos                   | 263 |
| Appendix 5.8   | SWOT analysis produced by Laxmi & Kiran September 2004   | 267 |
| Appendix 5.9   | Photos of Women’s Day Celebration 2004   | 290 |
| Appendix 5.10  | Women are judge themselves newspaper article   | 292 |
| Box 3.4 Serving tea – tensions and insights                                    |  |     |
| List of Maps   |  |     |
| Map 1.1  | Location of ACAP and Sikkis Sector within Nepal showing VDCs   | 8   |
| Map 1.2  | Sikkis Sector of the ACAP showing VDCs and location of Sikkis & Parche                                 | 8   |
| Map 1.3  | Wards of Sikkis & Parche showing ward names and numbers  | 9   |
| Map 1.4  | Ethnic composition of wards of Sikkis and Parche – by caste  | 11  |
| Map 2.1  | Nepal’s protected areas  | 16  |
| Map 2.2  | Annapurna Conservation Area  | 21  |
| Map 3.1  | REFLECT in Nepal   | 105 |
| Map 5.1  | Map showing Chalphal Kendras and date established in Sikkis & Parche                                   | 159 |



## List of Tables, Boxes and Maps

### List of Tables

|           |   |     |
|-----------|---|-----|
| Table 1.1 | Research phases   | 4   |
| Table 1.2 | Distribution of ethnic groups in Parche and Thumakodanda VDC                | 10  |
| Table 1.3 | Socio-economic and education indicators of Parche and Thumakodanda VDC      | 12  |
| Table 2.2 | Non-formal Conservation Education Programme - July 1996                     | 34  |
| Table 3.1 | Overview of terminology associated with 'participation'                     | 73  |
| Table 4.1 | Methods employed in preliminary research                                    | 124 |
| Table 4.2 | Overview of people consulted in the research process                        | 129 |
| Table 4.3 | Techniques employed and sources of data                                     | 136 |
| Table 4.4 | Overview of field visits in the main research phase and methods used.       | 137 |
| Table 5.1 | Summary of participation by age and gender                                  | 165 |
| Table 5.2 | Overview of Caste groups and participation in Chalphal Kendras              | 166 |
| Table 5.3 | Differences between traditional literacy approaches and REFLECT             | 176 |
| Table 5.4 | Examples of key word generation in Dhaprangthar, Sikles                     | 180 |
| Table 5.5 | PAR activities and the actions that they can lead to - examples from Sikles | 187 |
| Table 5.6 | Implemented actions and support received                                    | 189 |

### List of Boxes

|         |  |     |
|---------|--|-----|
| Box 1.1 | Why Nepal? Why me? Personal reflections                                    | 3   |
| Box 2.1 | 'Dirty areas' - 'lazy' people reflections from my field notes              | 27  |
| Box 2.2 | Building toilets for the 'dirty people' - reflections from my field notes  | 28  |
| Box 2.3 | Reflections on visiting the ACAP literacy class                            | 40  |
| Box 5.1 | Reflections from attending the Chalphal Kendras April 1999 & April 2000    | 163 |
| Box 5.2 | Reflection from Parche - April 1999  | 167 |
| Box 5.3 | Reducing the 'useless expenses' - from Chalphal Kendra to community action | 190 |
| Box 5.4 | Serving tea - tensions and insights  | 194 |

### List of Maps

|         |  |     |
|---------|--|-----|
| Map 1.1 | Location of ACAP and Sikles Sector within Nepal showing VDCs           | 8   |
| Map 1.2 | Sikles Sector of the ACAP showing VDCs and location of Sikles & Parche | 8   |
| Map 1.3 | Wards of Sikles & Parche showing ward names and numbers                | 9   |
| Map 1.4 | Ethnic composition of wards of Sikles and Parche - by caste            | 11  |
| Map 2.1 | Nepal's protected areas  | 16  |
| Map 2.2 | Annapurna Conservation Area  | 21  |
| Map 3.1 | REFLECT in Nepal   | 105 |
| Map 5.1 | Map showing Chalphal Kendras and date established in Sikles & Parche   | 159 |

## List of Figures, Photos and Diagrams

### List of Figures

|            |  |     |
|------------|--|-----|
| Figure 5.1 | Overview of participants in Chalphal Kendras           | 159 |
| Figure 5.2 | Overview of participants in Chalphal Kendras by Ward   | 160 |
| Figure 5.3 | Participation in Chalphal Kendras 1998- 2003           | 166 |
| Figure 5.4 | Age range of participants by ethnic group - all Cycles | 169 |

### List of Photos

|           |  |     |
|-----------|--|-----|
| Photo 3.1 | River of literacy in Nepal   | 102 |
| Photo 5.1 | Social Maps of Dhaprangthar - April 1999 & Yangjakot April 2000          | 179 |
| Photo 5.2 | Material displayed on the walls being used in the Discussion Centres     | 180 |
| Photo 5.3 | Meeting hall in Dhaprangthar and the participants studying in the centre | 192 |

### List of Diagrams

|              |   |     |
|--------------|---|-----|
| Diagram 2.1  | The Components of the ACAP Approach   | 23  |
| Diagram 2.2  | Components of CEEP  | 33  |
| Diagram 2.3  | Feedback from the field   | 42  |
| Diagram 3.1  | Timeline of 'participatory development' an overview of key theories, activities and issues                            | 58  |
| Diagram 3.2  | Simplified model of key components of model proposed by Freire (1972)   | 63  |
| Diagram 3.3  | Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation  | 72  |
| Diagram 3.4  | Intervention or research process and degrees of participation   | 74  |
| Diagram 3.5  | Continuum of research from RRA to PRA   | 78  |
| Diagram 3.6  | Action research cycle   | 79  |
| Diagram 3.7  | Wheel of community participation in research  | 80  |
| Diagram 3.8  | Overview of REFLECT process   | 91  |
| Diagram 3.9  | An alternative visualisation for REFLECT  | 100 |
| Diagram 3.10 | Sketch map of photo   | 102 |
| Diagram 3.11 | River of REFLECT in Nepal   | 104 |
| Diagram 4.1  | How my research fits into the participatory continuum   | 111 |
| Diagram 4.2  | Feedback from the field   | 122 |
| Diagram 4.3  | Overview of 'stakeholders' in the research process  | 123 |
| Diagram 4.4  | 'Stakeholders' within the REFLECT process in Sikles sector of ACAP according to 'locality' and involvement in process | 133 |
| Diagram 5.1  | Support network of REFLECT process in Sikles sector   | 155 |
| Diagram 5.2  | Reasons for participating in the Discussion Centres - April 1999  | 162 |
| Diagram 5.3  | Overview of images displayed in centres   | 177 |
| Diagram 5.4  | Actions arising out of REFLECT process  | 184 |
| Diagram 5.5  | Actions arising out of REFLECT process  | 185 |
| Diagram 5.6  | Overview of formation of Chalphal Kendra management committees  | 196 |
| Diagram 5.7  | Headed paper of MWDO showing logo and registration number   | 199 |
| Diagram 6.1  | Web of participation  | 229 |
| Diagram 6.2  | Comparison of ACAP's CEEP and REFLECT Web of participation  | 229 |

## List of Acronyms

|         |   |
|---------|---|
| ACA     | Annapurna Conservation Area                                     |
| ACAP    | Annapurna Conservation Area Project                             |
| AFES    | Asia Forum for Education and Society                            |
| AOR     | Action-orientated research                                      |
| AR      | Action Research   |
| BAICE   | British Association for International and Comparative Education |
| BZMR    | Buffer Zone Management Regulations                              |
| CA      | Conservation Area   |
| CAMC    | Conservation Area Management Committee                          |
| CAMD    | Conservation Area Management Directive                          |
| CAMR    | Conservation Area Management Regulations                        |
| CBO     | Community Based Organisation                                    |
| CDC     | Conservation Development Committee                              |
| CEA     | Conservation Education Assistant                                |
| CEEP    | Conservation Education and Extension Programme                  |
| CEO     | Conservation Education Officer                                  |
| CERID   | Research Centre for Educational Innovation                      |
| CPN-UML | Communist Party Nepal - United Marxist Leninist                 |
| DARG    | Developing Areas Research Group                                 |
| DDO     | District Development Office                                     |
| DFiD    | Department for International Development                        |
| DNPWC   | Department for National Parks and Wildlife Conservation         |
| DSA     | Development Studies Association                                 |
| HMGN    | His Majesty's Government of Nepal                               |
| HR      | Hunting Reserve   |
| ICDP    | Integrated Conservation and Development Programme               |
| ICIMOD  | International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development        |
| IIED    | International Institute for Environment and Development         |
| IISD    | International Institute for Sustainable Development             |
| INGO    | International Non Governmental Organisation                     |
| IPRAD   | Institute for Policy Research and Development                   |
| IUCN    | International Union for the Conservation of Nature              |
| KMTNC   | King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation                     |
| LGM     | Learner Generated Material                                      |
| NC      | Nepali Congress   |
| NGO     | International Non Governmental Organisation                     |
| NNGO    | National Non Governmental Organisation                          |
| NP      | National Park   |
| ODA     | Overseas Development Administration (now DFID)                  |
| ODA JFS | Overseas Development Administration Joint Funding Scheme        |
| OIC     | Officer in Charge   |
| PAR     | Participatory Action Research                                   |

|         |  |
|---------|--|
| PLA     | Participatory Learning and Action  |
| PRA     | Participatory Rural Appraisal  |
| REFLECT | <b>RE</b> generated <b>Freira</b> n <b>Literacy</b> through <b>Empowering</b> <b>Community</b> <b>Techniques</b> |
| RRA     | Rapid Rural Appraisal  |
| SEACOW  | School for Ecology Agriculture and Community Works   |
| SNGO    | Southern Non Governmental Organisation   |
| SPACE   | Society for Participatory and Cultural Education   |
| TPA     | Totally Protected Area   |
| ULF     | United Left Front  |
| UWC     | United World College   |
| UWCSEA  | United World College South East Asia   |
| VDC     | Village Development Committee  |
| WDO     | Women Development Officer  |
| WR      | Wildlife Reserve   |
| WWF     | World Wide Fund for Nature   |
| HDR     | Human Development Report   |
| HDI     | Human Development Index  |
| WB      | World Bank   |

### **Nepali terms**

|                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| Abikasi         | 'Not developed'  |
| Ama Toli        | Mother's Group   |
| Belukako paudne | Evening classes  |
| Bikas           | 'Developed'  |
| Chalpal Kendra  | Local name give to REFLECT circles   |
| Didi            | Elder Sister – term of endearment  |
| Gaunko keti     | Village Girl   |
| Ke bhayota      | So what!   |
| Ke garne        | What to do ?   |
| Lali Guras      | Rhododendron Flower  |
| Lali Guras Fund | Scholarship scheme establishing in Sikles to provide opportunities for 'disadvantaged' children to attend school |
| Lami            | Match maker  |
| Naya Gareto     | New Path   |
| Rhodi Ghar      | Gurung social institution based on cooperative work and socialising  |
| Rithi thithi    | System of customary rules and regulations that are developed by a council of 'village leaders'                   |
| Tamu            | Gurung   |
| Thar            | Ward   |
| Thulo manche    | Big/important person   |

# 1 CHAPTER ONE Introduction

## 1.1 Overview

This thesis represents a culmination of over ten years engagement with a remote mountainous community<sup>1</sup> in Nepal. The research questions have evolved from a process of participatory inquiry into the successes and challenges of the Annapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAP) in Nepal. In particular it represents a dialogical process of inquiry into the effectiveness of the non-formal education programme within the Annapurna Conservation Area (ACA), with a particular focus on the Sikles sector of the ACAP. Through feeding back my findings to the 'field'<sup>2</sup> and by discussing the innovative approach to literacy entitled REFLECT<sup>3</sup>, I became involved in a process of action-oriented research through which I helped to facilitate the introduction of REFLECT into the Sikles sector of the ACAP.

This thesis has two main aims. Firstly, it will critically examine the capacity of non-formal education programmes to meet the demands of local people within the context of the Sikles Sector of the ACA, Nepal. In particular, it will explore the extent to which REFLECT offers a more inclusive, appropriate and autonomous model of education in the study area. Secondly, it will critically assess the author's research in order to gain insight into the potential of action-oriented research to promote research based on the principles of autonomous development. It proposes that such research should endeavour to reduce inequalities wherever possible and practical<sup>4</sup>.

Conclusions and recommendations will be made at two levels: firstly, suggested policy recommendations for Integrated Conservation and Development Projects (ICDPs) and similar organisations engaged in the process of promoting participatory development; and secondly, a discussion of the complexities of action-oriented research in the context of developing areas leading to the identification of further guidelines for research of this kind.

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<sup>1</sup> Within this thesis it is acknowledged that 'communities' are rarely, if ever, distinct homogenous entities. Within the 'participatory development' movement they are often 'celebrated' and complex power dynamics and inequalities are often ignored (Burkey 1994, Cleaver 2001, Guijt & Shah 1998, Mohan 2001, Williams 2003).

<sup>2</sup> The term 'field' is used within this thesis to refer to the area where primary research was undertaken by the author in Nepal. In particular it refers to the Sikles sector of the ACAP.

<sup>3</sup> REFLECT (REgenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques) was launched in 1998 by ActionAid UK. Full details will be provided in Chapter 3.

<sup>4</sup> As suggested by the Developing Areas Research Group (DARG) Ethical Guidelines (2002) which can be found online at <http://personal.rhul.ac.uk/unfa/001/dargethics.html>.

This PhD thesis draws on a wide body of literature and brings together the practical experience of the ACAP's non-formal education programme and REFLECT with the theory of 'participatory development'. Specifically, an understanding of the relationship between non-formal education and empowerment will be developed, with local knowledge and local experiences being placed at the heart of the analysis. The thesis concurs with Edwards (1993: 90) when he states that "the aim of intellectual enquiry ... is to promote the development of people denied access to knowledge, resources and power for hundreds of years" and that the most effective way to do this is "to unite understanding and action, that puts people at the very centre of both". Edwards stresses the need for researchers involved in this process "to make our own values and objectives explicit so that they can also be criticised and 'deconstructed'" (ibid.). Therefore, in order to make my values and objectives clear, it is important to reflect upon how I became involved in a process of action-oriented research.

## **1.2 Why Nepal? Why me? A personal statement**

This thesis has arisen out of a process of longitudinal research in Nepal, in particular in the village of Sikles, located in Western Nepal, from 1992 to 2004. Sikles is a Gurung<sup>5</sup> village that falls within the boundaries of the Annapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAP), an innovative ICDP established in Nepal in 1986 by the King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation (KMTNC), one of the largest National Non Governmental Organisation (see Chapter 2 for details). Through comparing the experience of the Annapurna Conservation Area Project's Conservation Education and Extension Programme (CEEP) with the REFLECT programme in the context of Sikles, insight can be gained into wider dimensions of development, participation and empowerment within Nepal.

Crucial to any researcher engaging in action-oriented research is the need to be critically reflexive (Dove 1999, England 1994, Maxey 1999, Rose 1997). This involves exploring the motivation and context in which the research question has emerged, in order to evaluate the extent to which the process has evolved from the local level and if it 'genuinely' represents a process of collaborative research. A full discussion of these issues is found in the methodology chapter. The following account (Box 1.1) provides an important insight into how I approached the research process and highlights the long term of engagement that has resulted in this thesis.

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<sup>5</sup> The Gurungs are one of the many ethnic groups in Nepal (see Section 1.4 below for detail).

### **Box 1.1 Why Nepal? Why me? Personal reflections**

*When exactly the research started is hard to identify. I first visited Nepal and the Annapurna Area in 1986 after completing the International Baccalaureate at United World College South East Asia (UWCSEA) in Singapore. Along with fellow students and staff I completed a 21-day trek around the Annapurna Circuit. This visit had a great impact upon me as I was overwhelmed by the scenery and diversity of the country. In many ways I was swept away with the 'romantic notions of Shangri-La' yet was also aware of the poverty and inequalities that were present. This experience served to heighten my interest in the field of 'development' that had been stimulated in my education at school and familiarity with South East Asia. During my undergraduate studies in Geography at Leeds University I pursued my interest in development through opting for all the development modules. On graduating, I was keen to gain some further insight into the nature of development and also some practical experience of working overseas before enrolling for a Masters in Development Studies. To this end I first of all became a research assistant at the Centre for Urban Development and Environmental Management (CUDERM) at Leeds Polytechnic. A year later I left this position to take a course in teaching English as a Foreign Language after which I taught English for a year in London. In 1992 I read an article about 2 ex-students from UWCSEA who had volunteered to teach English in a local school in a place called Sikles in the Annapurna region of Nepal. In 1990 UWCSEA set up an initiative called Global Concerns through which links had been developed with the Annapurna Conservation Area Project in Nepal. Through this link I secured a voluntary post teaching English in the local high school in Sikles.*

*On May 2nd 1992 I arrived in Nepal to begin this post and found myself both working with local teachers and staff of the Annapurna Conservation Area Project. I lived and worked in Sikles for six months and kept a detailed diary and notebook that has since proved an invaluable source of information on which to reflect and help make sense of what became a long and personal journey. I was inspired by the ACAP approach, the enthusiasm and commitment of the staff and by the receptiveness at the local level in Sikles to the project that aimed to support people in a process of self-development. However, whilst living in Nepal, I also became concerned about inequality and exclusion, as I could see less wealthy members of the community being excluded from certain activities and processes. The starkest example of this was the group of 'lower caste' women sitting outside a house where a literacy class was taking place, peering through the window into the poorly lit room in an attempt to learn how to read. They were not allowed to enter into the households of the Gurung families due to the social customs in place and this made me feel saddened and concerned but also uncomfortable. This was in essence the start of my research into the role of education in rural communities faced with the opportunity and challenge of being part of a progressive alternative approach to conservation and development policy.*

*By returning to the UK and undertaking an MSc in Development at Bath University I gained the opportunity to explore in more detail the role of non-formal education in the promotion of participatory development. Through my Masters' thesis I explored the potential role that Freirean approaches to literacy could play in empowering communities. The thesis drew upon case studies from India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka yet was inspired in many ways by my experience in Nepal and the importance vested in participation and education by the ACAP. Unfortunately a field study was neither encouraged nor supported as part of my studies, so when I was given the opportunity to develop my research potential whilst employed as a Geography lecturer at Liverpool John Moores University, the natural 'field of study' was to revisit the ACAP and Nepal to look at the changes that had taken place since 1992. This enabled me to start to explore the extent to which the ACAP was living up to its aims of promoting both conservation and development and to revisit Sikles to talk to people about their views on this. Since 1995 I have been back to Nepal nine times spending nearly a full year in 'real time' in Nepal. The frequency of my visits to Nepal along with my contacts from living in Nepal has led me to become involved in a complex process through which I helped to facilitate the introduction of a new approach to education into the villages of Sikles, Parche and Yangjakot and it is a process in which I am still involved. This thesis reflects on that process and the outcomes.*

Being given the opportunity, by the School of Social Science at Liverpool John Moores University, to develop my research potential played an important role in facilitating 'genuinely' collaborative research. It provided me with the funds and time to revisit Nepal and to 'engage' in the field but, more importantly, it left the research focus totally in my hands. This enabled my research to evolve from the local level, through an open-ended process of action-oriented research. The research for this thesis fell into two distinct phases. The preliminary research was undertaken from 1992 - 1998 based on principles of 'Participatory Rural Appraisal'<sup>6</sup>. The main research phase, from 1998 - 2004, was grounded in the principles of action-oriented research. Table 1.1 provides an overview of the phases of the research process. Research conducted before 1998 forms the background for the thesis and played an important role in the evolution of the research questions and processes. Research from 1998 onwards was more focused on responding to the findings of my initial research.

**Table 1.1 Research phases**

| Research Phase                      | Period of research     | Issues / focus of research and where discussed in this thesis.  |           |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------|---|-----------|
| Preliminary Research<br>1992 - 1998 | 1992<br>↑<br>↓<br>1996 | Became immersed in Nepal and Sikles through living and working in Sikles.<br>Revisited Nepal in 1995 and 1996 to explore successes and constraints of ACAP.<br>Undertook research into role of education within the ACAP.<br>Gained experience in using participatory tools for research to explore local issues and concerns in-depth.   | Chapter 2 |
|                                     | 1997<br>↑<br>↓<br>1998 | Fed back research to the field and made recommendations regarding CEEP to the ACAP both in person and in a report written for ACAP & KMTNC (Parker & Sands 1997).   |           |
| Main research<br>1998 - present     | 1998<br>↑<br>↓<br>2005 | <b>REFLECT introduced into Sikles sector of ACAP.</b><br>Explored the experience of REFLECT in the Sikles sector of the ACAP.<br>Engaged in a process of 'ethical' 'action-oriented research'.<br>Examined issues being raised through the medium of evaluation workshops that were integral to REFLECT programme.<br>Critically reflected on engaging in process of action-oriented research<br>Wrote thesis to consolidate findings and draw conclusions. | Chapter 5 |

<sup>6</sup> As outlined by authors such as Chambers 1983 see Chapter 3.



### **1.3 Structure of thesis**

It is widely acknowledged that action research is a messy process that creates challenges to those involved when writing about the experiences and outcomes (Cook 1998, Mellor 2001, Robertson 2000, Wadsworth 1998). Here, a standard format for presenting the theory followed by details of the methodology has generally been followed with findings, reflections and conclusions coming towards the end. Chapter 2 discusses the context of the ACAP and highlights the centrality of participation and education within the ACAP approach. It moves on to provide a critical analysis of the non-formal education component of the ACAP based on research undertaken by the author between 1992 and 1998. Preliminary research suggested that there was a need for more non-formal education programmes within the study area. Further it suggested that a more inclusive and participatory approach was needed, such as that offered by REFLECT. Chapter 5 explores the reaction from a variety of stakeholders within the field to the findings of the research undertaken in 1995 and 1996. It draws upon research visits to Nepal in 1997 and 1998 and interviews with both the staff of ACAP and local people living within the ACA. This chapter discusses the difference in response from different stakeholders to these findings. It moves on to examine the consequences of this response and the subsequent impact upon my research in Nepal. Further, it describes how REFLECT came to be introduced into the Sikles sector of the ACAP. Critical reflections are made on this process, drawing extensively on field notes taken during visits to Nepal in 1997 and 1998. These findings raise questions about the nature of 'participatory development' that are then taken up in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3 provides a critical analysis of the discourses of participation. The spread and co-option of participatory development approaches has led to an emerging discourse that argues the term 'participatory development' is on the verge of becoming rhetorical (Cleaver 1999, Cornwall & Jewkes 1995, Rahnema 1992, White 1996). This backlash has led to the question: is participation the new tyranny? (Cooke & Kothari 2001). Engaging in this critical analysis of participatory discourses emphasises the need for participatory development to maintain its radical conceptualisation if it is to avoid becoming depoliticised and meaningless within the communities in which it is promoted.

This Chapter provides further support for the view that participatory development needs to be embedded in processes of reflection, inclusion and transformation (Carmen 1990, Freire 1972, Korten 1990). Empowering non-formal education programmes are essentially seen as having the potential to increase the capacity of communities and individuals to

participate more actively in managing and defining livelihood needs and strategies. The potential for non-formal education programmes to empower communities is explored and in particular the work of Paulo Freire (1972) and Robert Chambers (1983) is discussed. ActionAid (UK) has played a pivotal role in bringing together the work of Paulo Freire and Robert Chambers by piloting an alternative non-formal education programme called REFLECT. The REFLECT approach is also outlined in Chapter 3.

Chapter 4 details the research methodology and provides a justification for the approach I have taken in field research in the Sikles sector of the ACAP. Ethical issues are addressed within this chapter and it is argued that action-oriented research based on the principles of 'participatory development' has a vital role to play in enabling researchers to engage in research that aims to reduce inequalities wherever possible and practicable as suggested by DARG (2002). This chapter stresses the importance of reflexivity in order to locate the researcher explicitly within the research process. The methodology chapter provides a clear overview of what research was done, when, and who participated in the process and explains the process by which the methodology shifted from being one of participatory research to that of action research. The introduction of REFLECT into the research area in 1998 enabled the research process to become much more focused on the concerns of local stakeholders.

Chapter 5 focuses explicitly on the findings from the main research phase (1998-2004) and in particular the experience of REFLECT in the Sikles sector. Insight is gained into the outcomes and impact of REFLECT at the local level through examining a number of factors, such as who has participated, what key issues have been discussed, what issues have emerged as being of local importance and what differences there are between the centres. In particular it examines the extent to which the REFLECT approach is meeting the needs expressed in the Sikles sector for more non-formal education programmes. Issues of inclusion and exclusion are also explored. Additionally, this chapter considers the capacity at the local level to evaluate and sustain the programme when external support is withdrawn. The formation of a local community based organisation (CBO) has been central in enabling the programme to be run autonomously. Conclusions are drawn on the effects of the CBO on the impact and the sustainability of the REFLECT approach within the Sikles sector of the ACAP. Of equal importance, Chapter 5 also critically reflects upon the process of action research and the successes and challenges of this process. The extent to which the process lives up to the demanding expectations of participatory development discourse is explored.

Chapter 6 draws together the findings presented in Chapters 5 with the theoretical stance outlined in Chapters 2 and 3 in order to determine whether REFLECT provides a model for non-formal education within the ACAP. The extent to which the experience of Sikles reflects the wider experience of REFLECT is assessed and the potential implications for organisations pursuing the ICDP approach to conservation and development are reviewed. Conclusions are drawn regarding the potential for REFLECT to contribute to and complement the ACAP approach. Further, recommendations are made for researchers engaging in action-oriented research.

#### **1.4 Setting the scene: the Sikles sector of ACA**

In 1996 there were 55 Village Development Committees (VDCs) in the ACAP with a population of approximately 120,000 (IPRAD 1999<sup>7</sup>). Seven of these VDCs comprise the Sikles sector of the ACAP with a total population in 1996 of 24,227 (IPRAD 1999). As the majority of research for this thesis falls within the Sikles sector of the ACAP (Map 1.1) it is pertinent to provide an overview of this area. The Sikles sector of the ACAP covers 458.6sqkm, has 213.5sqkm of forest and 37sqkm of agricultural land within its remit. Due to the importance of agriculture to the local economy, with over 70% of the population being dependent upon subsistence agriculture, ACAP focuses its work here on its Integrated Agriculture and Development Programme. It also supports and promotes eco-tourism in this area (Gurung & DeCoursey 1994).

This study focuses on three main villages, Sikles and Parche<sup>8</sup> (both within Parche VDC) and Yangjakot (Thumakodanda VDC). Each VDC is divided into 9 wards<sup>9</sup> (Thars). The village of Sikles is comprised of 5 wards and the village of Parche is comprised of one ward<sup>10</sup> (Map 1.3). The villages of Sikles and Parche are found at an elevation of 2000m on the southern slopes of the Annapurna Himalayas and an 8-hour walk from the main town of Pokhara (Map 1.1). Yangjakot is by comparison only a 1-2 hour walk from Pokhara and therefore more accessible (Map 1.2). Only three of the wards in Yangjakot fall within the study area namely Pokhari, Chapatole and Danda Gow (ward numbers 1, 3 & 5 respectively).

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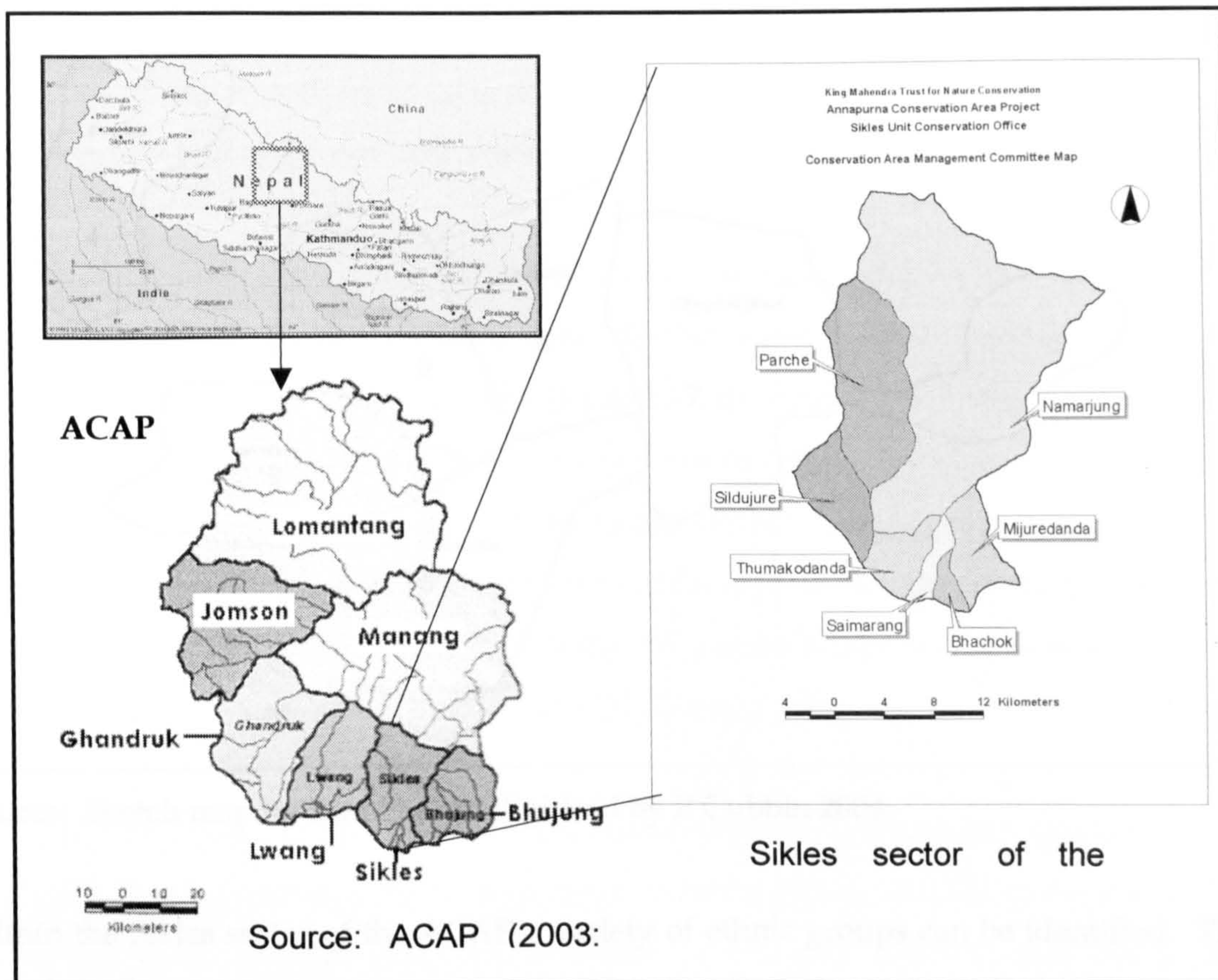
<sup>7</sup> Institute for Policy Research and Development (IPRAD) undertook a baseline survey for ACAP 1996-1999.

<sup>8</sup> Parche is both the name of a village in the study area and also the name of the VDC – when the VDC is being referred to it will always be suffixed with the term VDC to distinguish it from the village

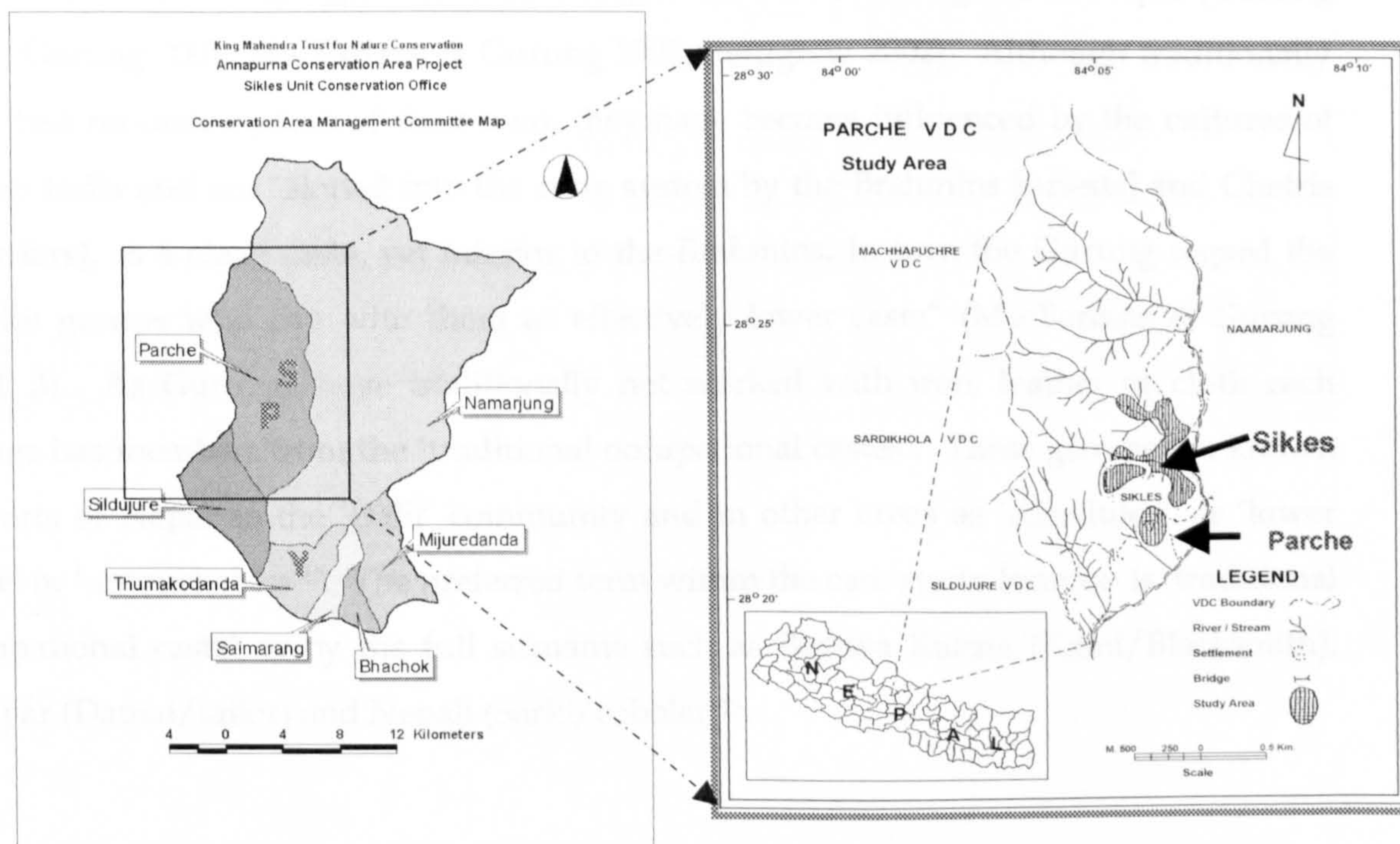
<sup>9</sup> Seddon (1993) notes that in Partyless Panchayat System unified concepts of village communities often ignore economic, social and cultural divisions. However, within the context of the study they do provide distinct units around which communities organise.

<sup>10</sup> The other three wards of the Parche VDC are outside the study area found in the village of Khilang.

**Map 1.1 Location of ACAP and Sikles Sector within Nepal showing VDCs**



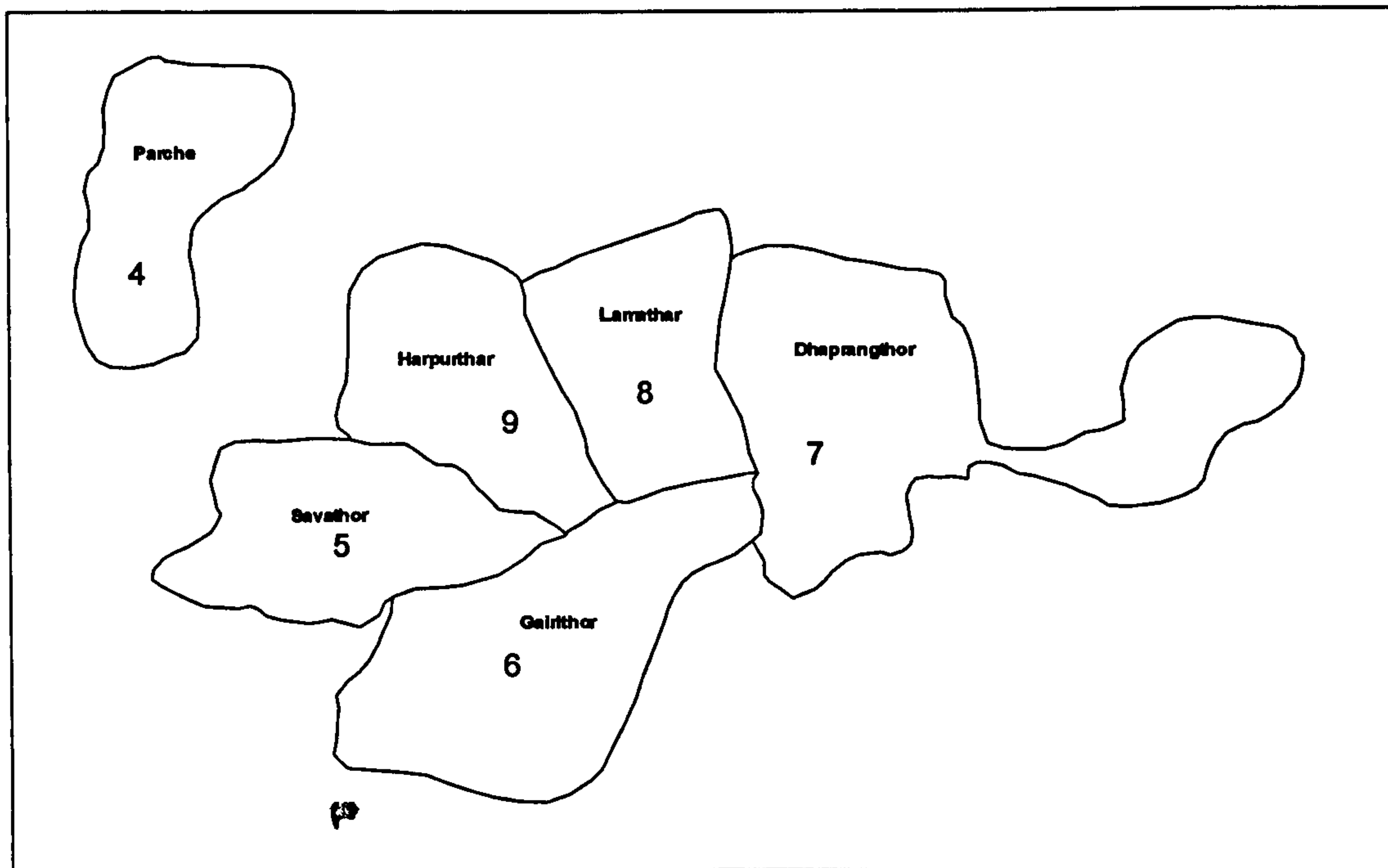
**Map 1.2 Sikles Sector of the ACAP showing VDCs and location of Sikles & Parche**



Key: S Sikles P Parche Y Yanqiakot

Source: adapted from ACAP 2003, Nepal Map House Kathmandu 1999 & emailed maps

**Map 1.3 Wards of Sikles & Parche showing ward names and numbers**



Source: Sketch map by Sara Parker, digitised by P Cubbin 2004

Within the Sikles sector of the ACAP a variety of ethnic groups can be identified. These include in the more mountainous communities the ethnic Gurungs tend to dominate. The Gurung<sup>11</sup> people, one of the many ethnic groups in Nepal, are of Tibeto-Burman origin and are predominantly agriculturalists living in mountainous regions of Nepal (Gurung 1993, Gurung 2001, MacFarlane & Gurung 1992, Pettigrew 2002). Although traditionally they had no caste system of their own, they have become influenced by the cultures of Aryan India and are “slotted into the caste system by the Brahmins [priests] and Chetris [warriors], as a clean caste, yet inferior to the Brahmins. In turn the Gurung regard the service groups who live with them as effectively lower caste” (MacFarlane & Gurung 1992: 3). As Gurungs have traditionally not worked with iron, leather or cloth each village has members from the ‘traditional occupational castes’. These groups are known in parts of Nepal as the ‘Dalit’ community and in other areas as ‘scheduled’ or ‘lower caste’ or ‘untouchables’<sup>12</sup>. The preferred term within the case study location is ‘traditional occupational caste’ or by the full surname such as Bishwa Karma (Kami/Blacksmith), Pariyar (Damai/tailor) and Nepali (Sarki/cobbler)<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> Gurung is the Nepali name for the group. In the Gurung language they are known as Tamu-mae (Gurung 1993, Macfarlane & Gurung 1992, Pettigrew 2002 Pignéde 1966).

<sup>12</sup> See Bishwakarma (2003) for an overview of the caste system in Nepal.

<sup>13</sup> Within the villages of Sikles and Parche they are the only non-Gurung residents apart from those seconded there such as ACAP staff or school teachers.

Issues of caste however are not as clear-cut as these categories may suggest. Some authors have noted a caste division within the Gurung community (Pignéde 1966, McFarlane 1993). However there is debate about the validity of the divisions that have been suggested. It is argued that within Gurung society there exist two tiers of 'clan' with some being from the 'upper' 4 clan and others from the 'lower' 16 group. The '4' clan of Gurungs originate from the more 'noble' classes of Kings, Priests and Administrators. Members of the '16' clan originate from the labourers within Gurung society. My experiences support the idea that there is indeed a division within some Gurung societies yet many people contest that it has any relevance in today's 'modern' society. In some places people deny that these divisions exist, further blurring the boundaries. The introduction of democracy in 1990 and spread of wealth within the Gurung society seems to be breaking these divisions down as economic wealth brings with it prestige within the local community (MacFarlane & Gurung 1992, Gurung 2001).

The two VDCs differ in their ethnic composition (Table 1.2) with Thumakodanda having over 40% of its' population in the high caste Brahmin group (40.92%) compared to 2.44% in Parche VDC. Parche VDC is dominated by Gurungs (66.79%) and has a higher percentage of people in the 'traditional occupational caste' group (27.4% compared to 19.69% in Thumakodanda). Thumakodanda has a slightly lower level of dependency upon agriculture as the main occupation (57.4% compared to 61.91%).

**Table 1.2 Distribution of ethnic groups in Parche and Thumakodanda VDC**

| VDC                 | Distribution of ethnic groups |       |       |       |         |        |
|---------------------|-------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|---------|--------|
|                     | Gurung                        | Kami  | Damai | Sarki | Brahmin | Other* |
| <b>Parche</b>       | 66.79                         | 13.16 | 7.2   | 7.04  | 2.44    | 3.37   |
| <b>Thumakodanda</b> | 22.63                         | 15.11 | 4.46  | 0.12  | 40.92   | 16.76  |

### Key

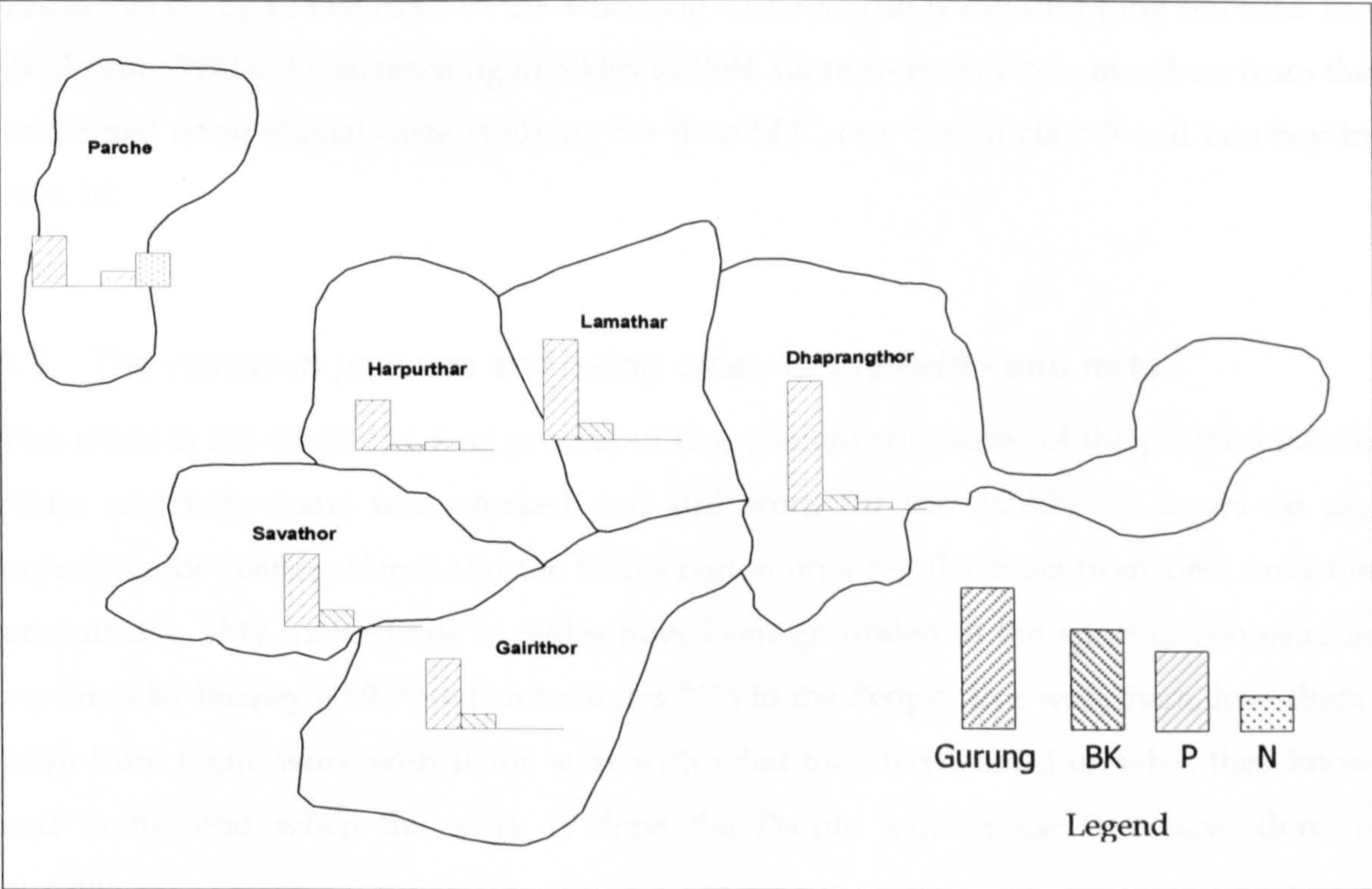
| Caste        | Also known as  | Associated occupation |
|--------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| Gurung       | <i>Tamu</i>    | Various               |
| Bishwa Karma | <i>Kami</i>    | Blacksmith            |
| Pariyar      | <i>Damai</i>   | Tailor                |
| Nepali       | <i>Sarki</i>   | Cobbler               |
| Brahmin      | <i>Baun</i>    | Priests               |
| Other*       | <i>Various</i> | -                     |

\* Including Chettri (warrior) and other ethnic groups

Source: adapted from IPRAD (1999).

Sikles is one of the largest Gurung villages in Nepal, with over 400 households, and has rich social and cultural traditions (see Gurung 2001 for details<sup>14</sup>). A household survey was also conducted by the Discussion Groups<sup>15</sup> to supplement the data available from ACAP via the IPRAD (1999) report. This survey showed that the main ethnic group in Sikles and Parche is Gurung (78.27%), other groups include Bishwa Karma (11.21%), Pariyar (5.06%) and Nepali (5.47%). Hence nearly 22% of the population in Sikles & Parche are from the 'traditional occupational' castes. This compares to a national average of a 'Dalit' community of 15% (DFID 2003). Table 1.3 demonstrates that both areas have out-migration levels of over 14%. Educational indicators serve to highlight the comparatively higher levels of illiteracy amongst females and low levels of population attaining the School Leaving Certificate (SLC). However, as Map 1.4 demonstrates, the caste composition within the different wards of Sikles is varied with some wards, such as Parche, being less dominated by the Gurung population.

**Map 1.4 Ethnic composition of wards of Sikles and Parche - by caste**



B = Bishwa Karma P = Pariyar N = Nepali

Source: Sketch map by Sara Parker, digitised by P Cubbin 2004

<sup>14</sup> Available via my personal web site at [www.staff.livjm.ac.uk/socspark](http://www.staff.livjm.ac.uk/socspark)  
<sup>15</sup> A household survey was conducted in Sikles and Parche by the REFLECT support workers Laxmi and Kiran in 2000. The data collected covers caste, population and literacy information.

**Table 1.3 Socio-economic and education indicators of Parche and Thumakodanda VDC**

| VDC          | Population<br># | Household<br># | illiteracy rates |        | SLC<br>% | Migration<br>% |
|--------------|-----------------|----------------|------------------|--------|----------|----------------|
|              |                 |                | Male             | Female |          |                |
| Parche       | 3772            | 620            | 18.6             | 30.4   | 2.2      | 18.05          |
| Thumakodanda | 4870            | 854            | 16.6             | 26.5   | 2.7      | 14.39          |

SLC – School Leaving Certificate

Source: IPRAD (1999)

Further, the survey showed that approximately 30% of Gurungs in Sikles and Parche classed themselves as being illiterate compared to over 50% in other ethnic groups (Table 1.3). This is higher than the national average for rural areas of 22% (NRC-NFE 2003). This may reflect differences in the perception and measurement of illiteracy. Those who have classified themselves as ‘illiterate’ in the household survey may actually be able to read and write a few simple words and hence not be classified as illiterate by other social surveys. It does however highlight different educational levels between the different groups and is supported by the fact that there are proportionately less children from the traditional occupational caste in the schooling system, with many dropping out after the third year. Whilst I was teaching in Sikles in 1994, there were only two members from the traditional occupational caste studying for their SLC, one boy in class 9 and one boy in class 10.

### **1.5 The research process and being close to the field - end note**

This thesis is the result of a long process of engagement with some of the people I met in Sikles and with some who worked and still work for the ACAP. It draws on my experience of visiting Nepal and the Sikles region on a regular basis from 1992 until the present day. My interactions in Sikles have been grounded in the spirit of cooperation captured by Burkey (1993<sup>16</sup>) when he states “Go to the People, live with them, love them, learn from them, work with them, start with what they have, build on what they know and in the end when the work is done the People will rejoice: ‘We have done it ourselves!’”

The desire both to learn from, and with, local people and to act upon the information shared, were central to my field research. The need to disseminate research findings and information at both the local level, as well as to a wider audience underpins this thesis.

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<sup>16</sup> Taken from the inside cover of the text.



Hence a variety of appropriate media have been used. Newsletters in English and Nepali, academic papers, presentation slides and reports, along with a draft copy of my thesis, have all been made available in Nepal in hard copy. In addition to this, in order to share the stories from Sikles with a wider audience, a range of material has also been made available on my home web page under my 'research' section available at [www.staff.livjm.ac.uk/socspark](http://www.staff.livjm.ac.uk/socspark) (Appendix 1.1). It is hoped that this web site will enable a process of dialogue to be established between interested parties and myself. The ethical and logistical issues surrounding this process are considered within Chapter 4.

Underlying my commitment to this research has been the provision of training for local people in a new approach to non-formal education: REFLECT was chosen as a method because it seemed to offer an appropriate model for me to respond to educational demands expressed at the local level. This thesis has provided a space where I can discuss and critically reflect upon my experience of engaging with action-oriented research. Through reflecting on the successes and challenges of this process, lessons are drawn for others wishing to set out on such a journey. This thesis now turns to explore the experience of non-formal education in the ACAP.

## **2 CHAPTER TWO. The Annapurna Conservation Area Project: participation and education revisited**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The aim of this chapter is to review the role of non-formal education within the ACAP in promoting conservation *for* development. It provides an overview of the aims and objectives of the Annapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAP) within the socio-political context of Nepal. It highlights the emphasis placed upon both participation and education by ACAP in the pursuit of promoting conservation *for* development. The discussion then moves on to explore the successes and constraints of the ACAP approach, with particular reference being made to the non-formal education component of the Conservation Education and Extension Programme (CEEP). Finally, the response to the issues raised, from both ACAP and local people, are discussed in detail and the implications for this on my research process outlined.

#### **2.1.1 Background context of Nepal**

Nepal is a landlocked country with three clear geographical regions: Himalayan mountains in the north, hills and mountains in the middle and plain land in the south. Administratively, it is divided into 5 regions, 14 zones and 75 districts with 3913 Village Development Committees in the country (Thapa 2003). The population is estimated at 21.5 million and growing at around 2.5% per year (ADB 1999, 2002, Pearson 1999). Images of Nepal are largely based on the romantic notion of a Shangri-la 'Heaven on Earth' due to the vast socio-cultural and geographical diversity that is found within a relatively small region. Yet the reality is that Nepal is an extremely poor country that despite four decades of development remains one of the poorest in South Asia with two out of three Nepalese people living in poverty (DFID 2003). Over half of the population lives on less than US\$1 a day (Pearson 1999). Per capita income of only \$220 per head leaves Nepal ranked as the 12<sup>th</sup> poorest in the world and the poorest country within South Asia (World Bank 2002). It is ranked at 140<sup>th</sup> on the Human Development Index (HDI 2004).

The majority of the population live in rural areas and depend upon subsistence agriculture for a livelihood. Forests meet over 90% of Nepal's energy requirements and the consequent environmental problems in Nepal are well documented (Blaikie *et al.* 1980, Metz 1991, Seddon 1993). According to the World Development Report (2000),

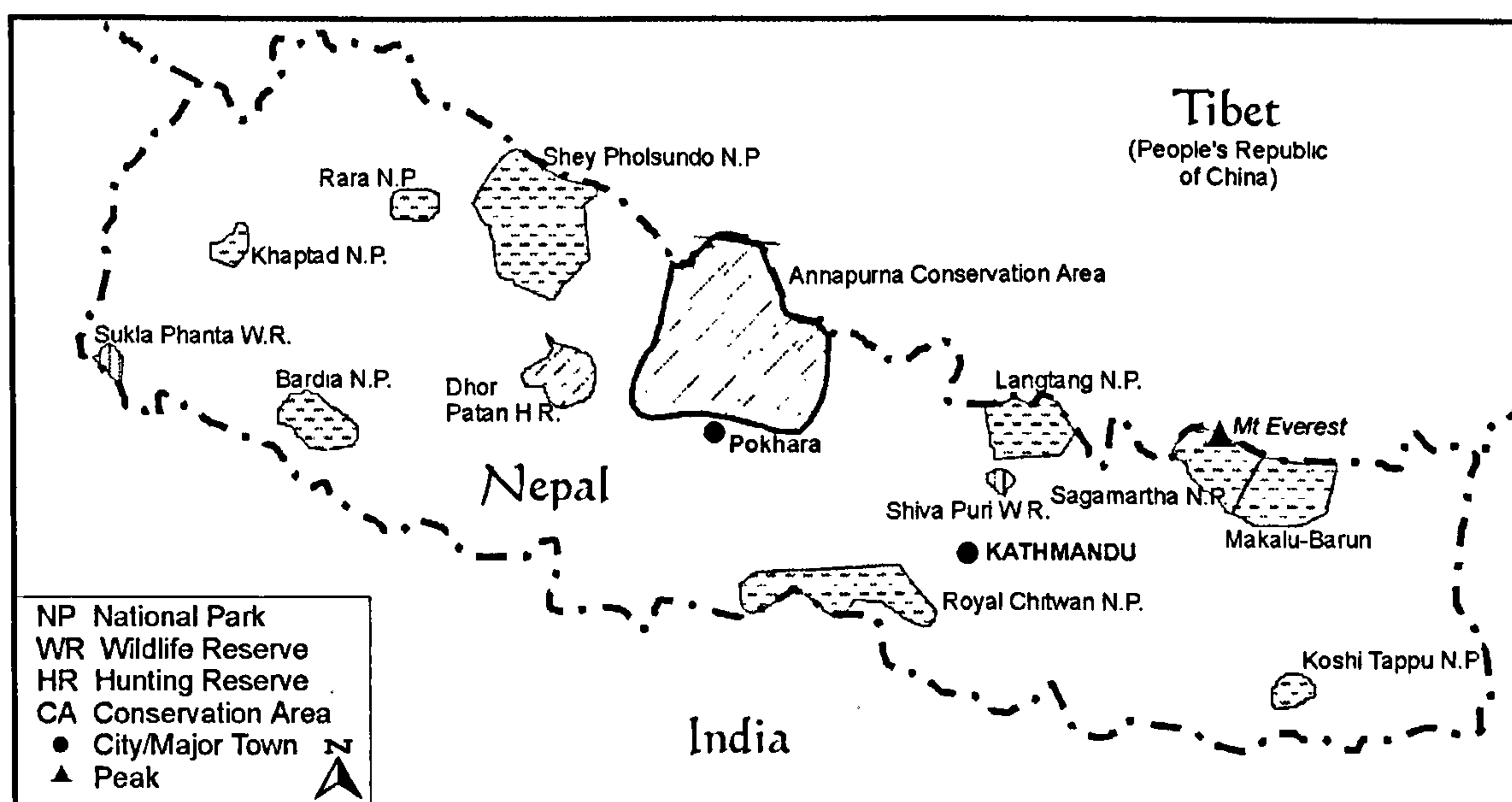
agriculture accounts for 67% of GDP. Tourism has become the country's leading foreign exchange earner, with international arrivals increasing from 6000 in 1962 to almost 260,000 by 1988 (Wells 1993). Tourism accounts for 7.8% of GDP within Nepal creating over 629,000 jobs (WTTC 2003).

Despite GDP average growth rates of 5% per year, inequalities appear to have increased over the past two decades (DFID 2003). There is a stark contrast between urban and rural areas with poverty rates ten times higher in rural areas than in the Kathmandu Valley and Human Development Indicators (HDI) being as much as 30-40% lower in rural areas (DFID 2003, HDR 2004). Women and children living in remote areas are considered to be the most marginalised and excluded. Gender inequalities are highlighted by the fact that Nepal is one of the few countries where female life expectancy is lower than male (HDR 2004). The literacy rate is estimated at 41.7% with gender and regional disparities being clearly evident (DFID 2003, Thapa 2003). Despite an increase in the enrolment rate of females within formal schooling the drop out rate is extremely high (USAID 1998). Female literacy rates are as low as 22% in rural areas of Nepal compared to a male rural literacy rate of 51.9% (NRC-NFE 2003). Those without land in rural areas, such as the 'untouchables' in the Far West, are particularly vulnerable (Pearson 1999). Although legal restrictions based on a caste system have been abolished, many discriminatory attitudes and practices persist to the detriment of Dalits, indigenous ethnic groups and women (Bishwarkarma 2003, DFID 2003). Dalits<sup>17</sup> is the collective term used within Nepal for the 'lower castes' that are estimated to comprise about 15% of the population (DFID 2003). There are 59 indigenous ethnic groups, identified on the basis of linguistic and socio-cultural distinctiveness from the dominant Hindu caste population, and these groups comprise about 37% of the population (ADB 2002).

The complex political situation in Nepal falls into three main eras: the pre Rana Regime, the Panchayat era and the current democratic era. The pre-Rana regime was characterised by monarchical rule. Under this system individuals and communities managed resources although all land was considered as property of the state. Land was often granted to soldiers and individuals who provided vital support for the monarchy. By 1950 almost a third of agricultural and forestlands were granted to private individuals (Upreti 2004). According to Basnet (1992) during this period the relative isolation of Nepal and the establishment of Hunting Reserves played a role in the conservation of natural resources

(Basnet 1992). However, with the end of the Rana Regime in 1951 the Government nationalised all forests. Following the dismissal of the Government by King Mahendra in 1960, the Partyless Panchayat System was established. The Government began to further regulate natural resource management in order to generate revenue for the country, raise productivity and control resource use. A number of nationalisation acts were passed such as the Forestry Nationalisation Act in 1961, and the National Park and Wildlife Act in 1973<sup>18</sup>. These measures have contributed to Nepal being seen as “a leader among developing nations in the promotion of enlightened conservation legislation and practices” (Heinen & Yonzon 1994: 61). This is in the main due to the fact that by 1992 10% of the land in Nepal was under designated status rising to 18.5% by 2000 (ACAP 2002, Pimbert & Pretty 1995). Since the National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act was established in 1973, 8 National Parks, 4 Wildlife Reserves, 1 Hunting Reserve, and 2 Conservation Areas have been designated (Map 2.1). Wells & Sharma (1998) provide a useful overview of the socio-economic and political aspects of bio-diversity preservation in Nepal and acknowledge the importance of tourism to the maintenance of protected areas.

Map 2.1 Nepal's protected areas



Source: adapted from KMTNC 1994.

<sup>17</sup> Although the term ‘lower caste’ is used regularly in the study area the author feels uncomfortable with this term. Within the context of this study the Dalit group are referred to either by their full name or by the collective term ‘traditional occupational caste’ as a result of feedback from the field.

<sup>18</sup> A more detailed account of conservation policies and government acts is provided in Appendix 2.1 along with an overview of key political events since 1951.

However, these policies were not without their problems. The limitations of designating protected area status are becoming increasingly evident on a global scale, as evidence of people-park conflicts are reported and questions raised over the effectiveness of National Parks to promote either bio-diversity or sustainable development goals (Ghimire & Pimbert 1997, Furze *et al.* 1996, IIED 1994, Pretty and Pimbert 1994 & 1995, Wells & Brandon 1992). It is generally accepted that under the Panchayat System resources were depleted due to the pursuit of industrialisation (Hobley & Malla 1996) and due to conflict between local villagers and forest guards (Sousaan *et al.* 1991, Upreti 2004). Paralleling global concerns surrounding the effectiveness of National Park Policy as a means of preserving the environment and enabling development to take place there is a growing body of literature concerned with the limitations and problems of National Park policies in Nepal (Brown 1994, Heinen & Kattel 1992, Heinen & Yonzon 1994, Hough & Sherpa 1989, Parker 1997, Pye Smith & Feyerbrand 1994, Sah 2002, Wells 1993). During Panchayat period forest loss has undoubtedly occurred in Nepal. It has been argued that the “long-term causes of this loss of forest resources has been primarily the direct result of government policies rather than high population densities” (Ives & Messerli 1999: 212).

An examination of policies aimed at promoting sustainable development in Nepal reveals a shift away from centralisation and nationalisation policies from the early 1980s<sup>19</sup> onwards. In response to these emerging criticisms, the King Mahendra<sup>20</sup> Trust for Nature Conservation (KMTNC) was established in 1982 to “supplement and complement the government’s efforts in nature conservation and sustainable development” (KMTNC 2003). The support provided by KMTNC, along with other international and national organisations such as the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and WWF are seen as playing an important role within conservation and development initiatives in Nepal (Adhikari 1999). The Government recognises the importance of this and encourages the involvement of the NGO community in developing resource management regimes<sup>21</sup>.

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<sup>19</sup> This move away from the conventional approach to conservation and development can be seen through an overview of policies such as the 1992 Forest Act and emergence of Nepal Community Forestry Programme in 1993. The aim of the NCFP is to hand over the management of at least 61% of all Nepal’s forests to Forest Users Groups, although by 1999 these covered only 11.4% of Nepal’s forests (Agarwal 2001).

<sup>20</sup> It is important to note that Crown Prince Gyanendra was Chairman of KMTNC from 1982 until he became King in 2001. The implications of this association with the monarchy is considered later in the thesis (Section 6.6 and 6.7.2)

<sup>21</sup> The 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Five-Year plans recognised and supported the emergence of NGO voices and social and environmental activists in resource management regimes (Hobley & Malla 1996). The 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plans (1997-2002, 2002-2007) continue to stress the need for conservation and environmental protection within Nepal.

During the 1980s the pro-democracy movement, led by the Nepali Congress (NC) and United Left Front (ULF), gained popular support and towards the end of the 1980s saw an increase in violent street protests. This led to the return of democracy in 1990 and a general election being held in May 1991. The NC achieved an absolute majority. Despite this the Communist Party of Nepal- Unified Marxist Leninists (CPN-UML) launched violent street protests. This ultimately led to a vote of no confidence in 1994 and mid term elections. This signified the start of Nepal's turbulent experience with democracy. The elections in 1991 gave an added impetus to the decentralisation process. The five year plan in 1992 promoted Village Development Committees and District Development Committees as a means of decentralising power to the grassroots and development was defined as "a social and political process of mobilizing and organizing people to the desired goals" and stated that "this will be possible only when the people themselves are associated with the decision making process... more importantly in benefit sharing" (HMG Nepal 1991, cited in Hutt (ed) 1994: 45). Paralleling this is an increase in the activity of Non Government Organisations within Nepal. According to Whitehand (2004) the number of NGOs registered with the Social Welfare Council rose from 249 in 1990 to 12,388 in 2001. The recent insurgency in Nepal has created a challenging political environment in which to pursue decentralisation policies. Democracy in Nepal is characterised by change and instability. The first vote of no confidence in the Government came in 1994 and led to the Prime Minister G P Koirala dissolving the parliament for the mid-term elections. Between 1990 and 2001 there have been three general elections with over 9 different parties in power.

On February 4<sup>th</sup> 1996 a 40 point plan was presented to the government calling for, amongst other things, good governance, quality education and social reform. The Government dismissed these demands and on February 14<sup>th</sup>, just ten days later, a 'People's War' was launched by Maoist cadres. Despite a ceasefire being declared in July 2001 the break down of the peace talks in November of that year led to violent clashes between the police and local people. A State of Emergency was declared on November 26<sup>th</sup> 2001. Since then there have been continuing reports of human rights abuses on both sides with estimates of over 8000 casualties caught in the conflict to date (Amnesty International 2002, BBC 2004). DFID (2003) note that between 1996 and 2003 over 7,000 people were killed as a result of the conflict, many of them civilians. Of these 5,000 were killed in 2002 when Nepal had one of the highest rates of unlawful disappearances in the world.

A number of explanations are emerging for Maoist insurgency with many citing the Government's initial failure to enter into dialogue with the Maoists regarding their 40-point demand as a key cause. However others feel that this merely provided the CPN (Maoist) with an excuse for an uprising as in January a decision had already been taken to begin the uprising on 13<sup>th</sup> February 1996 (Thapa 2003). Some have argued that Nepal was not ready for democracy<sup>22</sup> due to the 'fatalistic' nature of society (see Bista 1991, Borre *et al.* 1994), the dominance of an agrarian economy and the complexities of a caste system dominated by the Hindu population (Gellner 2002). Others have suggested the elite educationalist system has contributed to the unrest by furthering social divisions (Mikesell 1999), whilst many feel the insurgency has gained popular support due to the inherent social inequalities (Bishwarkarma 2003, DFID 2003, Gellner 2002, Petigrew 2002, Roy 2002). Regardless of the causes of the insurgency the impact has been clearly evident within Nepal not only in terms of casualties and human rights abuses but also economically<sup>23</sup> and psychologically (Bajracharya & Shreshtra 2004, Shreshtra 2003, Standing & Dhital 2004, Thapa 2003).

Although the roots of the People's War are complex<sup>24</sup> the reaction of the government and subsequently the monarchy to the political unrest in Nepal has only served to fuel the insurgency. The complex dynamics of democracy and lack of progress that it has brought for the ordinary people of Nepal is seen to have fuelled the recent Maoist 'Peoples War'. This, coupled with the massacre of most of the Royal family in June 2001, leaves one with little optimism for future political stability and socio-economic development in Nepal (Gellner 2002, Shreshtra 2003). The recent State of Emergency declared in Nepal leaves democracy in a precarious position and the future of Nepal even more uncertain (Hilton 2005, Human Rights Watch 2005, Mishra 2005, Ramesh 2005).

It is within this political context that the ACAP has been operating since 1986. Although a project of an NGO, ACAP has received Government support. With the return of democracy and despite the insurgency the Government has continued to support initiatives such as ACAP and participatory natural resource management initiatives<sup>25</sup>.

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<sup>22</sup> Karki & Seddon (2003) highlight the role played by factionalism within the Community Party itself.

<sup>23</sup> Tourist arrivals fell by 28% in 2003 to 215,922 (Dhakal 2003).

<sup>24</sup> These include the historical legacy of the Panchayat system, poverty and inequalities at the local level with a lack of socio-economic and cultural opportunities among different groups, a lack of effective government and an absence of effective mechanisms for non-violent conflict management (Shreshtra 2003, Upreti 2004).

<sup>25</sup> This is demonstrated by the Forestry Act and Decentralisation Acts introduced in 1992, the launching of the Community Forestry Programme in 1993 and development of Buffer Zone Management Regulations in 1996 (see Appendix 2.1 for details).

This thesis now turns to explore the ACAP in more detail with particular attention being paid to the role of non-formal education within the ACAP.

## **2.2 The Annapurna Conservation Area Project, Nepal**

### **2.2.1 Context of the ACAP**

In response to the limitations of National Parks, more 'participatory' approaches have developed under the banner ICDPs<sup>26</sup>. The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) first launched ICDPs in 1985 and by 1994 the WWF was supporting over 50 projects, one of which was the ACAP (Larson *et al.*, 1998). A central component of ICDPs is reinstating the rights of local people to manage and control the resources on which they depend. In its broadest terms an ICDP can be viewed as "an approach that aims to meet social developmental priorities and conservation goals" (Worah (2000) cited in Hughes & Flintan 2001: 4). Many ICDPs have participation at the centre of their approach and aim to work *with* rather than *for* communities in the pursuit of sustainable development. The Annapurna Conservation Area Project was the first ICDP to be established in Nepal. A more detailed overview of the ACAP can be found in Parker (1997 & 2004b).

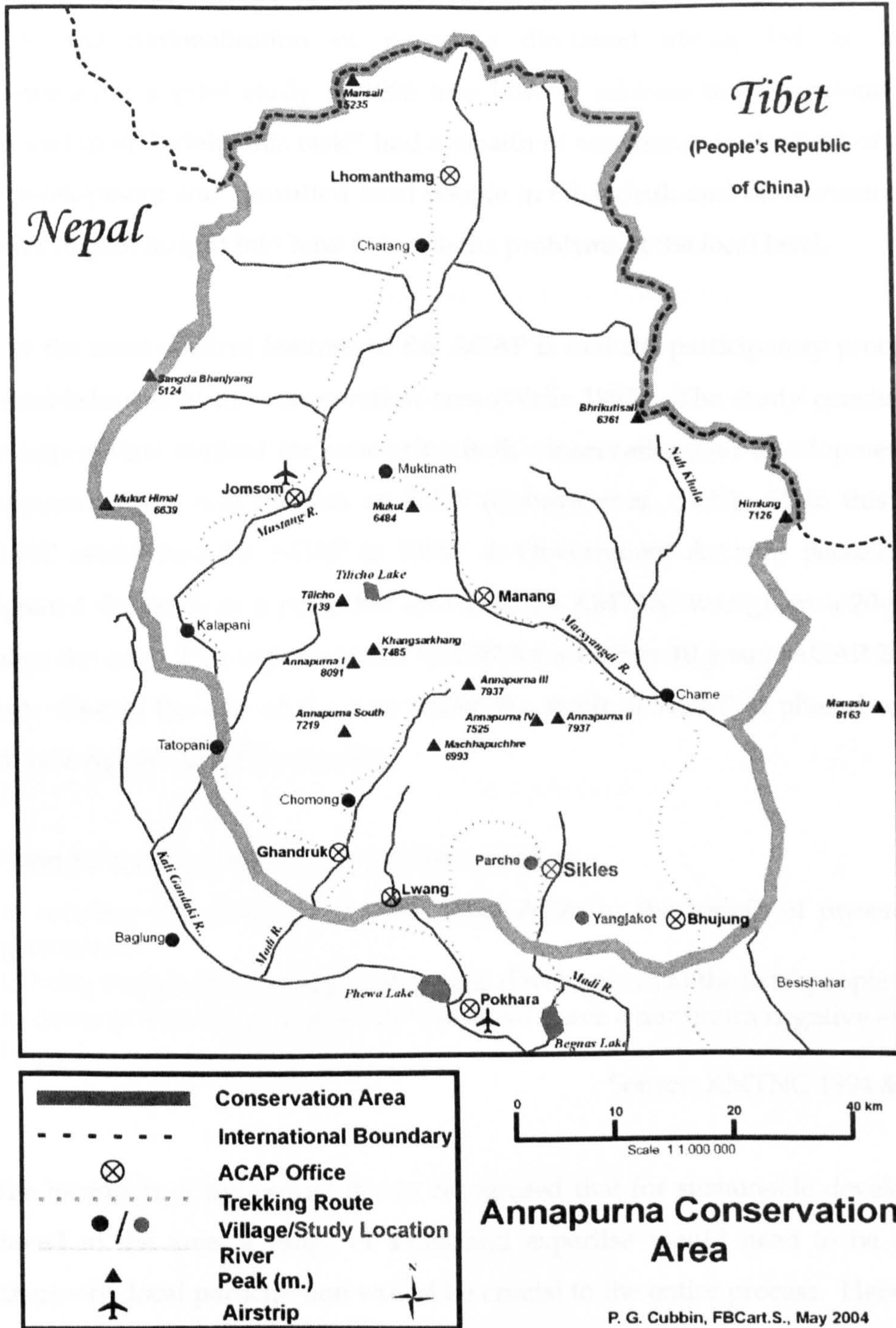
The Annapurna Conservation Area (ACA), located in the Western Himalayas (see Map 2.1 and 2.2), covers 7,629 sq km and accounts for 5.8% of the land of Nepal representing over 28% of the areas under protected areas status. It is geographically, biologically and culturally diverse. The ACA is the catchment area for three major rivers, having the deepest river valley (Kali Ghandaki) and two of the highest mountains in the world (Annapurna 1 and Dhawalgiri) and over 1,200 species of plants, 101 mammals, 474 species of birds, 39 species of reptiles and 22 species of amphibians (KMTNC 1994). It has more than 10 ethnic groups living within its boundaries. According to Wells & Sharma (1998) the ACA represents one of the most ecologically diverse protected areas in the world. The ACA has attracted an increasing number of tourists over the past two decades from just over 14,000 in 1980 to over 43,000 in 1994 to over 67,000 in 1999 accounting for 55% of all trekking visits to Nepal (ACAP 2002, Gurung & DeCoursey 1994. Lama & Lipp 1994).

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<sup>26</sup> In some of the literature they are referred to as Conservation-with-Development Projects but today are more often referred to by the acronym ICDPs and this is the term that will be used here. Hughes & Flintan (2001) provide an excellent review and bibliography of the ICDP literature. Parker (2004a) available at [www.staff.livjm.ac.uk/socspark/researchhome](http://www.staff.livjm.ac.uk/socspark/researchhome) provides further information.



Map 2.2 Annapurna Conservation Area



The ACA has 55 Village Development Committees within its region with a population of about 120,000. The main livelihood for the population is agriculture, with livestock as a secondary occupation (ACAP 2002). The majority of the population lives at subsistence level with a high level of dependence upon the natural resources and forests provide over 90% of local energy needs (Gurung & DeCoursey 1994). In the mid 1980s there was growing awareness of the environmental impacts of tourism within the Annapurna Region and recognition that local people were deriving only limited benefits from tourism (ACAP 1989, Eber 1992, Gurung and DeCoursey 1994, Shakley 1994, and Parker 1997,

2004b). This, coupled with the loss of traditional management systems within the area, due to the nationalisation of resources discussed above, led to the KMTNC commissioning a pilot study in 1985 into how to address these problems. The team employed to undertake this task<sup>27</sup> had a wealth of experience in the field of conservation and development and consulted local people in Ghandruk and the surrounding villages in order to gain insight into how to tackle the problems at the local level.

One of the most positive features of the ACAP is that the participatory process preceded the establishment of the conservation area (Wells 1993). The study concluded that the most appropriate method for promoting both conservation and development within the Annapurna region was to form an ICDP (Coburn *et al.*, 1986). With this in mind the KMTNC established the ACAP in 1986. A Government Act was passed in 1986 that designated the ACA as a protected area and the KMTNC was given a 20-year remit to manage the area. This was extended in 2002 for a further 10 years (ACAP 2003 pers com email). Due to the size of the area under the remit of ACAP, a phased approach was taken (see Appendix 2.2 for details).

The long-term objectives of the ACAP are stated as: -

- to conserve the natural resources of the ACA for the benefit of present and future generations
- to bring sustainable social and economic development to the local people and
- to develop tourism in such a way that it will have a minimum negative environmental impact.

Source: KMTNC 1994 & ACAP 2002.

At the inception of the project it was recognised that for sustainable development to be achieved in the area, a range of skills and expertise would need to be drawn upon. Furthermore, local participation would be crucial to the entire process. Hence, the ACAP recognises itself as 'lami' or matchmaker in the process towards realising sustainable development. "The ultimate aim of the ACAP is to achieve sustainability in the conservation of the natural resources of the area through people's participation" (ACAP 1995a: 4). The staff see themselves and the project as acting as a 'catalyst' in a process of

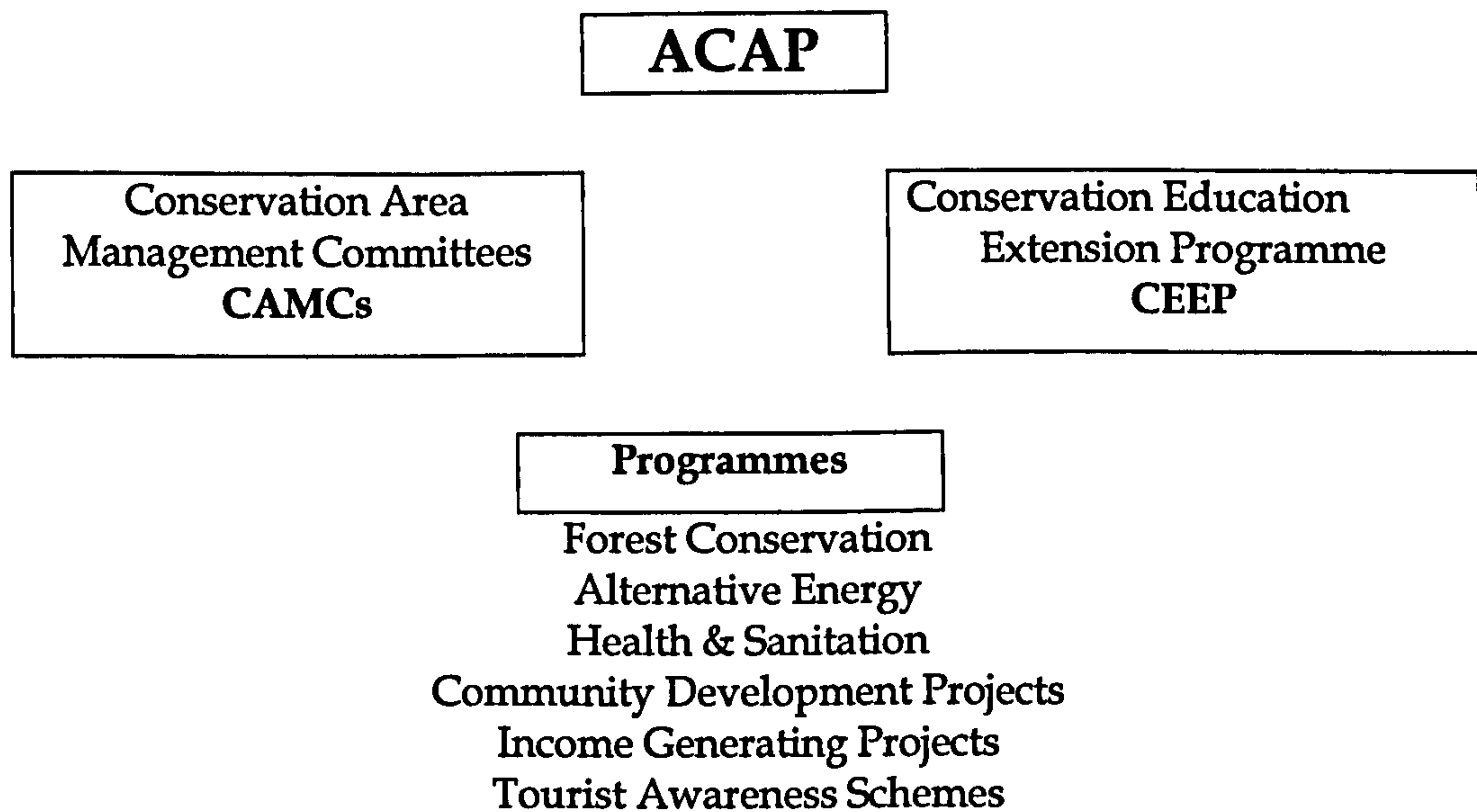
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<sup>27</sup> The team was: Dr Chandra Prasad Gurung who was from the village of Sikles and had studied in the United States of America giving him insight into the limitations of existing national park policy from a range of countries; Mingma Norbu Sherpa who had extensive experience working within the Sagarmatha National Park and had first hand experience of the impacts of excluding local people from the management process (Sherpa 1993); and Broughton Coborn had worked for many years as a Peace Corps volunteer. This resulted in all members of the team bringing a unique mix of experience with them to the investigation.

mobilising communities within the ACA to form Conservation Area Management Committees to regain control over the decision making process at the local level.

A number of factors stand out as contributing to the originality of the ACAP approach to promoting conservation for development. Firstly, the management of a conservation area has been handed over to an NGO in recognition of the problems associated with people-park conflicts and secondly, local people have been consulted since the inception of the project rather than being incorporated later in the implementation phase. The National Bio-diversity Unit (2003) in Nepal acknowledges that the ACA is a unique effort to establish local institutions that promote economically viable and ecologically sustainable activities in and around a multiple use area. The two main pillars of the ACAP approach are the formation of Conservation Area Management Committees (CAMCs)<sup>28</sup> and the running of an extensive Conservation Education and Extension Programme (CEEP) (Diagram 2.1). Technical support is provided by ACAP staff in the form of supporting programmes such as micro-hydro electricity schemes, agro-forestry projects and income generating activities.

**Diagram 2.1 The Components of the ACAP Approach**



Source: adapted from KMTNC (1994) and Lama & Lipp (1994)

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<sup>28</sup> Initially referred to as Conservation Development Committees (CDCs). With the introduction of Village Development Committees (VDCs) following the elections in 1992 and in line with the Conservation Area Management Regulation passed in 1996 the term Conservation Area Management Committee (CAMC) was introduced in 1996.

## **2.2.2 Participation and the role of CAMCs**

The emergence of a critical 'participatory development' discourse in the mid 1990s and literature citing ACAP as one of the most successful ICDPs<sup>29</sup> prompted a field visit to Nepal in 1995. The researcher undertook preliminary fieldwork that sought to examine the nature and meaning of 'participation' within the context of the ACAP and to gain insight into who was included and excluded from these processes. It was particularly focused on exploring the extent to which the ACAP was living up to the promises it had made and the successes and challenges it faced. Field visits in 1995 and 1996 enabled interviews of staff from both the KMTNC and the ACAP in Kathmandu and Pokhara, as well as ex-ACAP employees to be conducted. In addition to this interviews were carried out with ACAP staff working in the field in Sikles, Yangjakot, Jomson and Ghandruk. At the local level, especially in the Sikles sector, semi-structured interviews were carried out with local people and a selection of participatory rural exercises were carried out such as the construction of seasonal calendars and time lines with local children and a number of participant observation activities were undertaken including participating in CEEP activities at the local level. In addition to this I was a participant observer at a CEEP Evaluation Workshop held by ACAP in Pokhara in 1995<sup>30</sup>.

### **2.2.2.1 CAMCs**

ACAP aims to re-introduce and support indigenous forest and community development management systems in order to empower the local people through organisational development. Local participation is viewed by the ACAP as a process by which all people within the Annapurna Area are given the opportunity to participate in a process of decision making drawing heavily on traditional management systems that were previously in place. A number of indigenous management systems have been documented within Nepal that determine the environmental resource use at the village level (Gilmour & Fisher 1992, Basnet 1992, Gurung 1999 & 2001). In the Annapurna Conservation Area, an area dominated by Gurung villages, a system called '*rithi thithi*' was in place (Gurung 1999, Pignéde 1966 in Harrison & Macfarlane (eds) 1993). This is a system of customary rules and regulations that are developed by a council of village leaders. Respected members of the community were chosen to represent the ward on the village council and after consulting the population within the ward they developed rules

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<sup>29</sup> See Brown & Wyckoff Baird 1992, Eber 1992, Gurung and De Coursey 1994, Heinen & Kattel 1992, Hough & Sherpa 1989, Pye Smith & Feyerbrand 1994, Wells 1993, Wells & Brandon 1992, and more recently Hughes & Flintan 2003.

<sup>30</sup> See Chapter 4.

and regulations in relation to natural resource use and village life in general. In the ACAP region the pilot study found that the predominant traditional system of *rithi thithi*, although still evident in some villages, was dying away in others (Coburn *et al.* 1986).

In order to reintroduce these traditional management systems ACAP staff motivate local people to form CAMCs with the aim that these committees take responsibility for conservation and development activities within their jurisdiction. They are formed by local communities within the ACA and are comprised of 15 elected members. The Chairman of the VDC automatically becomes an ex-officio member. Each village has 9 wards and from each ward one person is elected. The Chairman and Vice Chairman then elect one more person totalling 12. An additional 3 members are nominated by ACAP in an attempt to encourage participation and representation of women and socially disadvantaged classes. By 1994 ACAP had established 24 CAMCs and by 2000 a total of 55 were in operation. In addition to this, since 1990, ACAP has actively promoted the involvement of women through the formation of Mothers' Groups (Ama Toli / Ama Samhu Groups). Like CAMCs the Ama Toli institutions existed before the inception of ACAP whereby women raised money by singing and dancing mainly for the maintenance of religious sites and organisation of religious festivals.

The ACAP has drawn upon these local institutions in order to harness their potential and redirect the attention of the women to matters of community development and conservation initiatives. Within the ACA the mothers' groups play an active role in promotion of conservation activities for the development of the community environment in which they live. A range of other committees have also formed from sub CAMCs to Hotel Management Committees resulting in over 1300 people participating in some form of institution with the ACAP by 2000 (see Appendix 2.2 for details). However, it is interesting to note that there has been a lack of 'political' institutions forming within the ACAP whereas in other parts of Nepal movements such as the Dalit Movement have been emerging to represent the voices of the excluded. This may in part reflect ACAP's focus on issues relating to the environment and community development but may also relate to a lack of political motivation within the ACA, or indeed, it could suggest a relative harmony amongst the populations within the ACA.

The Conservation Area Management Regulation (CAMR) and Conservation Area Management Directive (CAMD), passed in 1996, provide legal recognition to the CAMCs and clearly spell out "the function and authority of the CAMC to plan, implement,

monitor and control the resource conservation activities within their VDC boundaries” (ACAP 2002: 5). These directives have enabled the ACAP to have autonomy over the use of the tourist revenue fees collected from the visitors to the ACAP<sup>31</sup>. This is in direct contrast to National Parks where revenue is collected centrally<sup>32</sup>. Despite the fact that NEPAP (1993) cites ACAP as a potential new model for park management, Wells & Sharma (1998) note that a key constraint to the spread of the ACAP approach is the Government’s reluctance to delegate the authority and financial control of protected areas to NGOs within Nepal<sup>33</sup>.

The decisions CAMCs make reflect local priorities and are supported by numerous programmes offered by the ACAP. Each ACAP office has a different focus reflecting these priorities (Appendix 2.2). A range of decisions taken, from the banning of hunting, to restrictions on the cutting down of trees and regulations aimed at improving the sustainability of the tourism industry, support ACAP's claims that the CAMCs are able to promote the dual goals of both conservation and development (Brown and Wyckoff Baird 1992, Gurung and DeCoursey 1994, Parker 1997 and Parker 2004b). A lack of detailed and systematic evaluation of ICDPs is noted in the literature, including within the ACAP<sup>34</sup>. The success of the ACAP in encouraging CAMCs to form and the subsequent decisions and actions that result from this process have led to ACAP being described as “one of the most progressive ICDPs” (Brown & Wyckoff Baird 1992: 51). This is further supported by Hughes & Flintan (2001) in their review of ICDPs. However, insight gained from my own research within the ACA suggests areas for improvement, a brief overview of which is provided below.

#### 2.2.2.2 CAMCs and participation insights from the field

Discussion with local stakeholders, including staff and local people from Sikles, Ghandruk and Jomson<sup>35</sup> in the ACAP revealed two recurrent themes: firstly, issues surrounding the nature of participation and how less wealthy members of the communities within the ACAP were being included or excluded from the ‘participatory

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<sup>31</sup> The entry fee collected by KMTNC has quadrupled from 7,282,000 Rps in 1989/90 to 28,165,000 in 1993/94 (KMTNC, 1994) to over 67,000,000 in 1999/00 (ACAP 2002).

<sup>32</sup> It is interesting to note “the Buffer Zone Management Regulations of 1996 now require between 30%-50% of all national park revenue to be ploughed back into the communities of the buffer zone” (Haynes 1998: 57).

<sup>33</sup> As noted in table 2.1, in February 2004 the Government announced plans to hand over the management of all protected areas to the NGO community, including the KMTNC.

<sup>34</sup> This is confounded within the ACAP due to the fact that the data from the original base line data survey was lost. The socio-economic survey carried out from 1996-1998 (IPRAD 1999) goes some way to rectifying the situation yet does not fully compensate for the lack of baseline data needed for effective evaluation. ACAP’s biannual reports provide a useful source of information into the success of the ACAP.

<sup>35</sup> Full details provided in Chapter 4.

process' and secondly, the perception that a lack of education was a key barrier to local development. As Hough and Sherpa (1989: 441) note, ACAP has been comparatively successful at engaging people at local level in a participatory process as it "recognises and respects local people's rights to self determination, it builds self reliance, strengthens local institutions, provides lasting benefits and gives the local people incentives to co-operate in achieving conservation". However, my field observations and discussions highlighted some concerns over the depth of participation<sup>36</sup>.

In the case of Sikles, discussions with ACAP staff into the key challenges faced by the ACAP highlighted concerns over specific geographical areas within the village that were not engaging in conservation and development<sup>37</sup> activities. The perception of what constitutes a conservation and development activity was strongly influenced by ACAP's ethos in that these are actions that contribute to the well-being and sustainability of the whole village. Localities were identified through transect walks and discussions as being 'dirty areas' and the people who lived in them were viewed as 'unmotivated' and 'lazy' as the following reflections illustrate (Box 2.1).

**Box 2.1 'Dirty areas' - 'lazy' people reflections from my field notes**

*I have just returned from my transect walk with {name} who works as a forestry officer for ACAP. He is not from Sikles yet seems to really enjoy living and working here and has a good rapport with the people we met along the way. I am glad I recorded the conversations we had as we chatted about so many issues and I can now look at my rough map and add the detail in later. The one thing that really struck me though was how he spoke about the area just below the main shop along the path between Dhaprang Thar and Gairithar after pointing out all the positive changes and improvements his tone changed when he began to talk about this area as it was a "dirty area where people are not motivated to clean up their own environment" ... they were according to him "lazy and dirty" and not very active in conservation activities. (The area in question has a high concentration of non Gurung households and I know that people here are less wealthy than the surrounding households). His comments surprised me as from other conversations I have had with him he is very aware of the problems faced by the less wealthy members of the community and is very politically aware of the divisions and inequalities that exist between different castes in Nepal. Surprising then to see him describe areas as dirty and people as being lazy rather than connect to deeper explanations of why this may be!*

*Field notes April 1995*

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<sup>36</sup> Issues relating to the depth of participation will be taken up in Chapter 3.

<sup>37</sup> These were seen as activities such as building toilets, participating in clean up campaigns and planting trees.

Other transect walks and discussions supported this view and in each Thar (ward) local people would identify areas that they felt were 'dirty' and the main reason for this was a lack of awareness or enthusiasm at the local level to rectify this problem. These areas inevitably corresponded to the poorer neighbourhoods of the ward. This suggests that the less wealthy and less dominant members of the community have not been effectively incorporated into the ACAP approach, despite the fact that ACAP encourages at least one person from the traditional occupational groups to be included on the CAMC. This exclusion was highlighted as an issue for further research (Parker 1997). These comments about 'dirty areas' and the residents being 'lazy' and 'uneducated' were a common theme to my discussions with staff from ACAP and also with local people from the community. Comments from traditional leaders such as *"people are lazy and need to be motivated" "people are selfish, all they think about is money and going laire (outside/overseas to work) they are not interested in working for the village" "people do not care they are lazy and want to spend their time drinking and gambling, ke garne (what can you do)?"* (various interviews pers comm. 1995). There was a general consensus that people needed to be mobilised towards conservation and development activities.

Clean up campaigns at the local level were initiated to solve this problem but the root causes were not addressed and many people felt frustrated with the areas and communities that were 'letting the ward down'. Other initiatives were also instigated in order to help solve the problem of 'dirty areas' but from my observations the communities in question were not effectively integrated into these solutions and hence they were not effective as the following example illustrates (Box 2.2):

**Box 2.2 Building toilets for the 'dirty people' - reflections from my field notes**

*Sitting near the tap near the open area near the shop in Dhaprangthar watching a group of people construct a toilet. It seems an odd place to build a toilet as it is rather an exposed site and is at the edge of the area where lots of community activities and celebrations take place. I have been told that it is the first community toilet that has been built and members of the CAMC are responsible for building it. It is being built for the 'dirty people' who live in the houses just below the path (these are the same households as identified in the transect walk last year: see Box 2.1 above). None of the people involved in building the toilet are from these houses though which is unusual as most ACAP programmes get a wide level of support from community members.*

*Field notes April 1996*

The following year I note: -

*"the community toilet has a big lock on it and I am told that the key is held in the shop for when people want to use it - I find it quite strange that people are surprised that it is hardly ever used and that the environment below the path has not really improved much in the past year. What do they expect when the people who are supposed to use it don't seem to have been consulted in the building of the toilet and certainly have no sense of ownership over it - seems more like a top down approach to toilet building than a community project to me still ke garne - what can you do*

*Field notes Dec 1997*



The above example suggests a tension between the rhetoric of ACAP in the promotion of participatory development based on the principle of consultation at the local level and putting that process into practice. It is however only one selective example and is not representative of all of ACAP's work, yet it serves to highlight that the principles of inclusion and participation do not always translate down to the local level. In the case of the construction of a community toilet there is a lack of participation by the wider community in a decision making process. This results in a project that clearly does not reflect the priorities of the people living in the vicinity. The local people did not 'participate' in any shape or form in building the toilet and once built showed no signs of using it<sup>38</sup>! By failing to include members of the wider community in the consultation process more 'active' (wealthy) members of the community are left in a position of mobilising the rest of the villagers to act. It suggests that the principles of participation, consultation and inclusion promoted by the ACAP did not translate fully to the local level, instead staff and local people felt the need to 'incorporate' 'motivate' and 'develop' the poorer members of the community. This highlights a mis-match between ACAP rhetoric in the initial documentation and the views of ACAP staff in the field. This is reflected in ACAP evaluation reports such as the CEEP annual report 1996 which states that "ACAP is really concerned about improving the living standard of the low-caste poor people. However, because of the existing social structure it is very difficult to mobilize them" (Gurung, 1996: 30). This statement in itself reinforces the claims made above that ACAP believes that marginal communities need to be mobilised rather than empowered or consulted.

The operational plan for ACAP (Coburn *et al.*, 1986) argues that the strong traditions of community management systems within the ACA provide the ideal basis for the ACAP to engage with local people. Further plans acknowledge the need to integrate the disenfranchised into decision making processes at the village level (Gurung & DeCoursey 1988). However, through basing the participatory approach on the traditional system of *rithi thithi* local hierarchical power structures are both reintroduced and reinforced. These systems reflect gendered, generational and social inequalities that are prevalent in the societies within the ACAP. In interviews, a number of staff raised the need to tackle social inequality as being of paramount importance to the ACAP in achieving its mission objectives. One member of ACAP staff commented that in some ways ACAP had had an

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<sup>38</sup> This observation is only possible due to the ongoing nature of my visits to Nepal enabling me to see the whole process from construction to the lack of use. The lack of community engagement in this project is a source of frustration to the CAMC members who wish to see an improvement in the sanitation of the area.

impact on poverty and inequality at the local level yet *"in other ways it has reinforced the system but it hasn't changed it, we (ACAP) need to empower rather than motivate people. I don't think we have so far as there isn't a specific programme for the excluded, scheduled castes and now it is important"* (pers comm. 1996). In addition to this, another commented that *"there is also a generational factor – the younger generation is changing more than the older generation and they need to play a more prominent role in their communities"* (pers comm. 1996).

At the same time another member of ACAP in Pokhara felt that *"these are complex issues and not the current focus of the ACAP. Our current aim is to expand within the area and continue to run successful programmes, to increase the level of participation in the CAMCs. We are more focused right now on the project being accepted within communities. We can only do so much at one time!"* (pers comm. 1996). This was supported by other staff at the Directorate level who commented that *"we are not an agent for social change", "such goals as reducing inequality are outside our remit"* and *"yes I think social problems and inequalities exist within the ACAP but if we tried to tackle these more directly then we would lose the support of the local leaders and then where would we be?"*(pers comm. 1996). These reflections highlight the complexities involved in looking at issues of power and exclusion and suggest that they are not only based on caste but also gender, age and other factors which may not be apparent to external evaluators. Interviews also highlighted a tension between various stakeholders in relation to the significance and importance of tackling such issues such as inequality and exclusion. Further reflections are made on this issue in Chapter 5.

Overall based on the observations discussed above preliminary research concluded that rather than marginalised people being 'mobilised' they needed to be more effectively incorporated into the participatory process promoted by the ACAP. ACAP, through the establishment of Mother's Groups, recognised that it was necessary for women to have their own separate groups and space. It was argued that this approach needed to be applied to other groups of people such as the traditional occupational castes and the young. Mechanisms and forums need to be developed that recognise and respect the multiple priorities that exist within communities, and education programmes that enable critical reflection may have a potential role to play in meeting this need. This requires ACAP to be more aware of social inequality and power imbalances at the local level. It was felt that the educational component of the ACAP had the most potential to address these issues.

Many people interviewed, from both ACAP and the local communities, felt education was the missing ingredient in promoting a more active community as one CAMC Chairman notes: *"My village faces many many problems convincing the people about the aims of conservation and development schemes, and often there are hot talks with the villagers and even with the committee members. It has been happening because of the ignorance of the people and to some extent the selfishness of the people. My own work is difficult because so many people do not understand"* (pers comm., April 1996). It is to non-formal education and participation within the ACAP that this chapter now turns.

## **2.3 Education and ACAP**

### **2.3.1 CEEP**

There are significant challenges presented to researchers aiming to evaluate educational programmes not least because of their diverse aims and objectives. Following on from research undertaken in 1995 the aim of the research visit in 1996, undertaken in collaboration with colleague Rose Sands, was to gain insight into how CEEP operated and explore the outcomes and challenges that it faced. Essentially, we went to watch, listen and learn, with specific reference to the experiences of stakeholders of ACAP's Conservation Education and Extension Programme. The research aimed to be relevant to the ACAP and to the people we consulted within the Annapurna Region. Ideally, it hoped to inform ACAP and feed into strategies that would be both viable and practical.

Gurung & DeCoursey (1988) outlined the theoretical underpinnings of, and need for, conservation education<sup>39</sup> within the Annapurna Conservation Area in a Plan of Action that was submitted to the KMTNC in November 1988. The programme was devised to educate both local people and tourists in the ACA. In particular it was recognised that "within the general public attention needs to be given to women and the poor" (Gurung & DeCoursey 1988: 15). According to the report conservation education will "not only cement changes in behaviour and attitude, but will also act as a significant step towards integrating the needs and opinions of the disenfranchised into village decision making" (*ibid.*: 15). At its inception the proposed programme fully recognised the inextricable links between political and social dimensions of conservation. Conservation education was not seen to just promote participatory processes but to widen and deepen them.

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<sup>39</sup> A decision was taken to use the term 'conservation education' rather than environmental education in order to highlight the need to focus on people as well as the environment (Gurung & DeCoursey 1988).

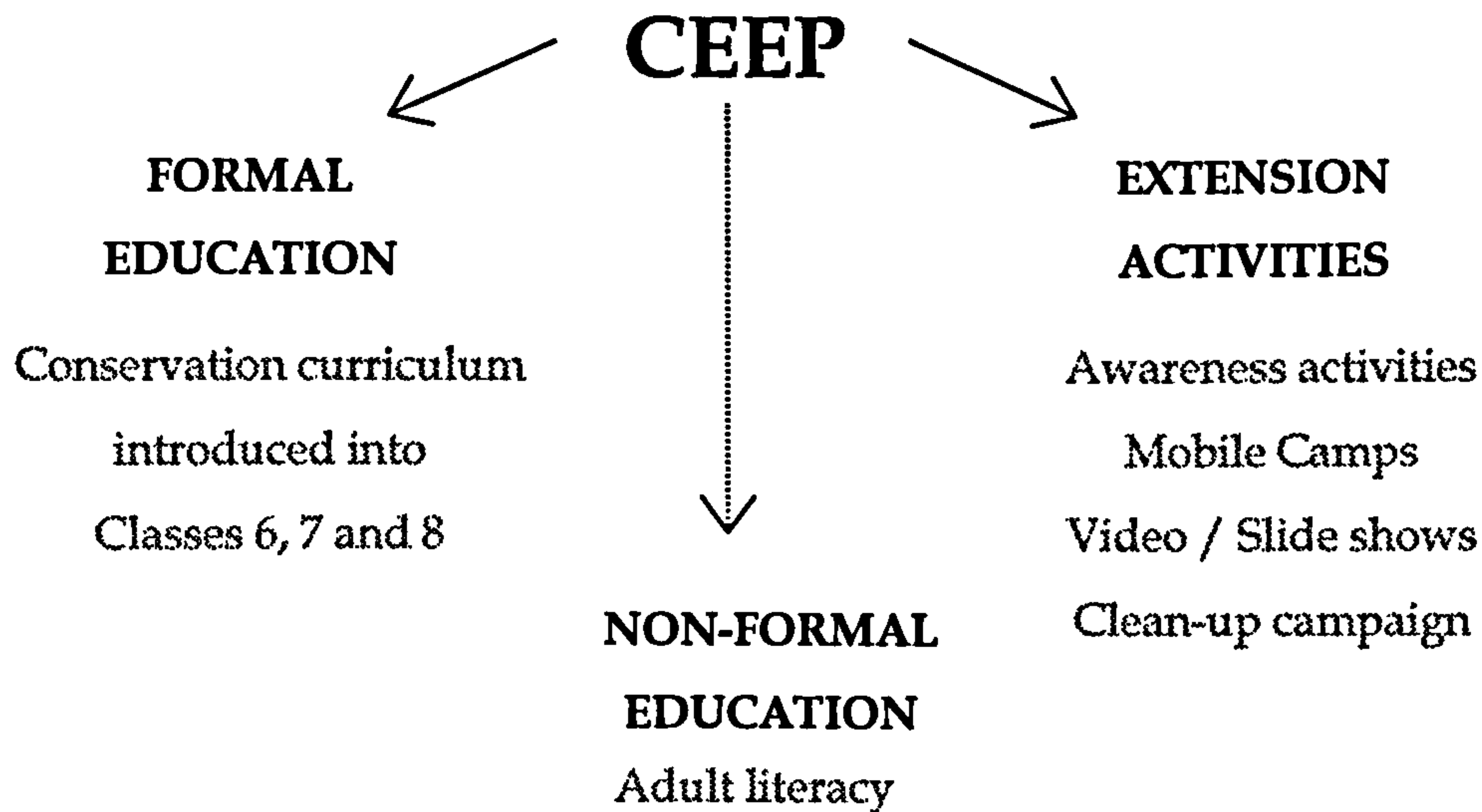
“Conservation education is considered the backbone for the success and sustenance of the project” (Gurung & DeCoursey 1988: 8). The CEEP has been called the ‘heart’ of ACAP and is regarded as being as important as institutional building through the CAMCs (see Diagram 2.1).

The Plan of Action clearly states that “the conservation education programme will only be meaningful if it integrates local traditional culture and world views” (Gurung & DeCoursey 1988: 38) and states that local people need to be involved in the monitoring and evaluation process. Dialogue was identified as being central to a process of two-way communication between local people and project staff as it was felt that ACAP staff had little experience in identifying environmental problems and hence dialogue between the two parties was vital to the success of the whole ACAP approach. They noted that it would be wrong for the CEEP to “assume that villagers lack environmental knowledge” (*ibid.*: 24). Local people being involved in the monitoring and evaluation process was also seen as being important to the success of conservation education initiatives at the local level. The philosophical approach of Paulo Freire was referred to as being fundamental. However the Plan of Action was careful to make no promises to the stakeholders of the ACAP. It aimed only to “provide the means for them to make well informed decisions and help people to help themselves” (Gurung & DeCoursey 1988: 70). Continuous monitoring and evaluation was seen as necessary to enable the programme to adapt to the changing processes and situations occurring within the communities yet no elaboration was made on who should carry out this evaluation or how.

The ACAP’s own revenue initially funded the Conservation Education Programme but from 1993–1998 it received additional funding under the Overseas Development Administration’s Joint Funding Scheme. The aims of the CEEP are :-

- to disseminate information of the ethos of the ACAP
- to facilitate community consensus building
- and to encourage community mobilisation towards conservation for development (ACAP 1995)

**Diagram 2.2 Components of CEEP**



Source: author's own.

In order to achieve these aims the CEEP has three major components that aim to promote sustainable development: Formal Education<sup>40</sup>, Extension Programmes (informal) and a Non-Formal Education element (see Diagram 2.2). The extension programme is comprised of activities such as home visits, mobile awareness camps, study-tours, audiovisual events and theatre performances. These events are used to achieve a number of objectives but mainly aim to increase awareness and mobilise communities into conservation activities such as clean-up campaigns or sanitation programmes. In the initial stages of contact, when the ACAP is new to an area, extension activities play a vital role in disseminating the ethos of ACAP. Many local people initially view the ACAP as being a top-down project and often fear the imposition of rules and regulations. Home visits and village meetings are used to dispel these myths. Study tours are organised to National Parks within Nepal so that the local residents can make a direct comparison of the ACAP approach and National Park policy. Study tours have been important in motivating villagers and increasing understanding of ACAP's aims and objectives. ACAP feel that due to the high levels of illiteracy within the ACA, "the non-formal approach to education and extension is the most appropriate strategy for villagers in the Annapurna region" (ACAP 1995b: 20). The Adult Literacy Project, designed by the ACAP, and aimed mainly at women within the Annapurna Conservation Area, is categorised as the main form of non-formal education within the ACAP.

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<sup>40</sup> Whilst recognising the importance of the formal component of the CEEP this thesis deals with the non-formal education component. For details of the formal component and extension activities see Parker & Sands 1997 & Parker 2004b available on line at [www.staff.livjm.ac.uk/socspark/researchinterests](http://www.staff.livjm.ac.uk/socspark/researchinterests) as well as Parker 1997, Gurung and DeCoursey 1994, Gurung 1996 and ACAP 1995a, 1995b.

### 2.3.2 Non-formal education within ACAP: insights from the field

The broad aims of CEEP, as outlined in the operational plan and discussed above, apply to all components including the adult literacy programme. With these in mind the Educational NGO SPACE<sup>41</sup> was enlisted to provide the training for local people to run adult literacy classes. SPACE's philosophical approach to education is rooted in the traditions of Paulo Freire and the use of the primer. In addition to this the Learner Generated Material (LGM) approach was utilised in order to draw upon local knowledge and local realities in the learning process. This was selected by ACAP as the model which it would adopt rather than the more commonly used Naya Goreto (A New Trail) approach, which although based on Freire's concepts has more in common with functional approaches to literacy rather than the 'empowerment' approach intended by Freire<sup>42</sup>.

Adult literacy training sessions took place throughout the ACA and in many villages were used as an entry point into the communities in which ACAP was working. Two levels of class were developed, basic and advanced. Once participants had undergone a year of the basic class they then progressed to the advanced class. Literacy classes are often one of the first requests made by local women to the ACAP and from April 1994 and March 1995 over 1300 people participated in adult literacy classes with a 75% completion rate (ACAP 1995b) and in the following year 42 classes ran with over 760 participants (see Table 2.2).

**Table 2.2 Non-formal Conservation Education Programme - July 1996**

| Sector       | # basic classes | # advanced classes | # participants | # participants completed |
|--------------|-----------------|--------------------|----------------|--------------------------|
| Ghandruk     | 6               | 6                  | 217            | 121                      |
| Lwang        | 7               | 5                  | 215            | Continuous               |
| Sikles       | 5               | 7                  | 220            | Continuous               |
| Bhujung      | 6               | -                  | 110            | Continuous               |
| Jomson*      | -               | -                  | -              | -                        |
| Manang*      | -               | -                  | -              | -                        |
| Lomanthang*  | -               | -                  | -              | -                        |
| <b>TOTAL</b> | <b>24</b>       | <b>18</b>          | <b>762</b>     |                          |

Source: Gurung (1996: 18) \* literacy classes had not yet been introduced into these areas.

It is generally felt amongst ACAP staff that increasing the literacy levels of women in the ACA stimulates the formation of Mothers' Groups, as women gain the skills required to

<sup>41</sup> Society for Participatory and Cultural Education.

<sup>42</sup> For a critique of the Naya Gareto see Robinson-Pant's (2000) in-depth study on Women's Literacy and Development in Nepal.

record decisions and hold meetings regarding activities they will undertake. The education package used to teach literacy skills includes a book of stories written by local women through a LGM approach that addresses the problem of a lack of relevant material for the course to be run. Women in Ghandruk produced stories based on their own experience of conservation and these were made into a text that is used in the Advanced Literacy classes. This text is used throughout the project and provides a conservation focus to the literacy classes. The use of LGM methods to produce the text used by ACAP demonstrates an innovative approach to literacy. However, this approach was not replicated in other areas, which results in the new text becoming the standard text, and the essence and benefits of the process of creating learning material at the local level is lost. For the true potential of the LGM approach to be captured it needs to be used consistently otherwise it becomes a one-off event rather than a process.

Based on reflections from the visit in 1996, and reflecting our own areas of interest, a central aim was to “generate dialogue amongst various stakeholders within the project about the evaluation of the CEEP” (Parker and Sands 1997: 9). Three main conclusions were drawn from our visit and a full report written for ACAP including a review of relevant and useful literature (Parker & Sands 1997<sup>43</sup>). Here the focus is on those conclusions that relate to the adult literacy programme of the ACAP. Firstly, it was concluded that the demand for adult literacy was not being met by the ACAP. Secondly, issues of exclusion and marginalisation were raised, reconfirming the conclusions drawn from a research visit in 1995. Thirdly, further evidence was found indicating that ACAP was not including participatory forms of evaluation in its approach. As such this was creating a barrier to the success of the ACAP by failing to build capacity at the local level and hence self-sufficiency.

### *2.3.2.1 Unmet demand*

It was noted above that at the local level people place emphasis on education as being vital to the pursuit of conservation and development. Education was seen by both ACAP staff and local leaders as being vital to solve the ‘ignorance’ and lack of motivation towards the goals of community initiatives at the local level. Many people saw education as being a ‘missing ingredient’ and a key barrier to ‘development’. Demand for

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<sup>43</sup> The report written in 1997 was used to feed back findings to ACAP during a field visit in December 1997 and was written with the audience of ACAP staff and KMTNC in mind. As such the criticisms were framed constructively where we fully acknowledged and praised the ACAP for its overall success. This is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

education programmes, especially evening literacy classes, was the most common issue highlighted by local women when asked what help they needed to promote conservation for development at the local level<sup>44</sup>. This demand for education was expressed at all levels from the local elite who wished others to be 'educated' into the need for engaging in community development activities, to women and children who had not had the opportunity to go to school who expressed an interest in learning to read and write. The reasons for wanting to do this were diverse and are likely to have been influenced by people's knowledge that I had once been a voluntary teacher in the school in Sikles.

Care was taken at all times to avoid suggesting that I could respond to these demands as I stressed my findings were to be fed into the ACAP. As such I was more than likely seen as another way of gaining influence over the ACAP in promoting the needs of the local people. The representatives of the Ama Toli who were consulted all stressed the need for further education, even in areas where the ACAP had run both the basic and advanced literacy classes. The interest in education was also evident from younger children who did not know of my connections or know me so well. Talking to children along the paths, working in the fields or those that came to hang around where I was staying highlighted the desire to attend school or have '*belukako paudne*' (evening classes).

As noted above there are two types of literacy class, basic and advanced. There is a natural progression for participants to undertake the basic course one-year and the advanced class the next. Once these two programmes have completed the cycle there are no follow up programmes and no post literacy programmes. Two years of literacy is seen to be enough as ACAP focuses on spreading the access to these classes to other groups of participants in other areas. The emphasis is therefore on the spread of the ACAP approach rather than deepening the level of participation and addressing inequality. In the village of Sikles the basic and advanced adult literacy classes ran for a number of years, with local villagers being trained as teachers. From 1995 to 1996 12 adult literacy classes were running in the Sikles sector of the ACAP but none of these were in the village of Sikles where most of the primary research was undertaken. Women in Sikles felt that ACAP should also be providing classes for them<sup>45</sup>. This demand was not being met by

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<sup>44</sup> Young people leaving the village for work overseas was seen as the next most important issue, especially by the men who were interviewed, as they felt soon there would not be enough people to work and maintain the fields. Only women and children would live in Sikles if the young boys continued to go overseas.

<sup>45</sup> In 1996 one class was being run in Sikles on a voluntary basis in an attempt to meet local demand. The teacher of this class was considered by many to be very socially active in the village in that she was involved in many community initiatives. One person informed me: "she gives her time freely to help the village and the community progress. She is one of the active members of our village and is a good example to others".



either the Government, the ACAP or at the local level. It was evident that the ACAP staff based in Sikles were aware of this demand as the requests were made to them on a regular basis during their home visits and extension programmes and through their general interaction in the village. One member of staff commented that *"the women are still hungry for literacy but we only have limited resources to develop courses so we can not meet this demand"*, another says *"yes we are aware of this demand but both our programme have run in Sikles, ke garne? (what can you do?)"*. One person informed us *"people in Sikles have reached an adequate stage of literacy. They are phugyo (full up)"* (various staff from ACAP 1996 pers comm.). The villagers were even described by an Officer in Charge (OIC) as being *"greedy for literacy"* (1996 pers comm.). It was evident that ACAP staff felt concerned and frustrated at not being able to meet this need. The people consulted at the local level expressed a genuine demand for the opportunity to attend evening classes. Whatever their reason and motivations ACAP staff evidently felt unable to respond to this need given the structure and focus of the CEEP. The focus at that time was to spread the ACAP approach out from the village of Sikles into the other villages within the sector in order to increase the area in which ACAP was operating.

By failing to meet the demand for education the ACAP was failing to meet its aim for CEEP to *"act as a significant step towards integrating the needs and opinions of the disenfranchised into village decision-making"* (Gurung & DeCoursey 1988: 15). It was felt that this unmet demand might lead to frustration. Further, by neglecting this demand ACAP was failing to maximise the creative potential of the stakeholders under its remit (Parker & Sands 1997). For the CEEP non-formal component to be sustained within a community it was concluded that ACAP needed to address these issues.

### *2.3.2.2 Issues of participation and exclusion in relation to education*

Examining the school records of Sikles modern high school highlights a relatively even gender balance within the pupils formally registered at the school, although it needs to be recognised that not all those registered actually attend school. However, the same cannot be said of the representation of the various caste groups that live within the village. Only a small number of students from the traditional occupational classes attend school until class ten and many drop out after only two or three years of education<sup>46</sup>.

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<sup>46</sup>Formal education in Nepal is free however hidden costs such as uniform and buying stationary and books, coupled with the pressure on children to contribute to the household income underlies this lack of participation in formal schooling.

Within the non-formal element of the CEEP these divisions are further exacerbated by social customs which mean that people from the 'traditional occupational' castes are not allowed to enter the homes of the Gurung population. This means that when adult literacy classes are held in Gurung property traditional occupational castes were physically excluded from attending. As discussed in Box 1.1, observing this exclusion first hand whilst living in Sikles in 1992 played an important role in shaping my interest in education. The fact that women were prepared to sit outside on the veranda of Gurung houses peering through the windows in an attempt to learn to read was testament to their desire to learn. These women could hardly see inside as the windows were wooden with small holes in them and there was no electricity so they sat in relative darkness listening to the class that was taking place inside. This illustrates the desire these women have to learn to read and write yet ultimately due to the impracticalities of the situation attendance soon dwindled. ACAP staff informed me that in other areas of the ACAP, where there is more of an ethnic mix, this situation is resolved by running separate classes for 'scheduled' caste women. Despite Government legislation banning such exclusion, social practices such as this are deeply rooted. However, the caste system in Nepal is relatively recent and in some respects has been imposed from outside (Bista 1991). This may make it somewhat easier to break down, but only if there is a commitment to social change by those leading the development opportunities - whether this be the State or NGOs or social movements.

In addition to this the literacy text written by women from Ghandruk focused on environmental issues rather than social, reflecting the ACAP's central ethos. Whilst the CEEP aims to merge environmental and social issues it fails to tackle controversial topics such as issues of equality and exclusion. This leaves the CEEP with more of an environmental focus than social. By stressing the integration of local traditional culture and worldviews the programme avoids talking about the need to challenge or change the traditional customs that lie at the heart of local inequalities. Questions are raised over the compatibility of the aim to both empower the disenfranchised whilst simultaneously supporting traditional cultural practices.

It has been illustrated that children from poorer families are unable to participate in the formal education system. This issue particularly affects females. Additionally no programme exists to reach non-school attending children and the literacy classes that run are limited in duration and scope. The need for such programmes is highlighted by the

fact that so many children drop out of school after primary level<sup>47</sup>. A more holistic model of education that places 'lifelong learning' at its core is needed to ensure that all residents within the ACA can benefit from Conservation Education. Within Nepal organisations such as Save the Children, World Education Nepal and UNICEF are starting to address the need for out of school programmes by developing programmes aimed at meeting the needs of those citizens who have previously been excluded from the formal education system.

### *2.3.2.3 Missing the potential of non-formal education*

Even though the adult literacy programme has been categorised as non-formal education the methods employed in teaching the classes are very traditional and formal in nature, with rote learning of key words and conservation messages. Despite the LGM text containing real stories written by 'local' women, the method of learning used was still very didactic. This is one of the factors behind the relatively high drop out rates. Table 2.2 shows that only 50% of participants in Ghandruk were reported to have completed the classes. In the classes observed women seemed tired and had limited interest for repetition of key words and syllabus. Words such as landslide, erosion and water were being taught formally using this key text. Reflections on a class I attended with a colleague in 1996 summarise how we both felt (see Box 2.3).

Overall it was felt that there was a need for the classes to be more interactive and interesting in order to engage the women who were obviously tired after their work in the day. These classes represented a space where women could potentially gather and discuss local issues away from the family and household chores. Having this opportunity to create dialogue with other women in the absence of men and children is potentially empowering in itself, and literacy classes are a means of facilitating this process, whether intended or not. However, the classes were not participatory or interactive in nature and the focus tended to be on the teacher and didactic methods of rote learning. There was no evidence of critical thinking or creative development within the classes. The classes were limited to reading words in a predetermined text. Social aspects of literacy programmes were not incorporated into the approach. The original plan of action proposed by Gurung & DeCoursey (1988) refers to the need to develop critical thinking and makes reference to Freirean approaches to literacy. As highlighted above the messages conveyed within the

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<sup>47</sup> In Sikles records suggest that student numbers drop from over 250 in the primary level to less than 80 in the middle school with only 15 or so attending high school on an annual basis. The children who drop out after primary level therefore receive no form of conservation education through the CEEP as the curriculum only operates in the middle school.

text were dominated by environmental messages rather than social or political messages associated with the work of Freire.

**Box 2.3 Reflections on visiting the ACAP literacy class**

*"tonight we visited the literacy class in Sikles and sat for nearly two hours repeating the syllables, प,पा,पी,ज,जा,जी (p, pa, pi, n, na, ni) पाजी(pani) the Nepali word for water. It was so boring and the women in the class looked tired and drawn as they repeated these letters time and time again. I must admit I did learn how to write the word pani but it was painfully dull and without any time to practice I am sure that I will forget. Children lay sleeping in their mother's arms and some of the women were beginning to fall asleep. No wonder the drop out rate for the classes is so high! Fortunately a yawn from me began a discussion about being tired and the attention of the class was diverted to me and Rose and how we wrote our names. The women at the class looked happy at the distraction and became more animated as they all talked about how tired they were and how busy they had been in the fields that day. The conversations were in Nepali and Gurung as the women talked about why they were so tired. One woman jokes "I even came here without taking any food! As my husband and children ate I had to rush away to get here after finishing all my chores". After much laughter and joking the class ended and Rose and I returned to the peace of our room. [Speaking to the teacher about this the next day she also commented on the need for new books for the class, as the women were bored learning the same words over and over again. She also mentioned that some of the women wanted to have English classes as well].*

Field Notes April 1996

Despite ACAP's focus on participatory development it is surprising that the underlying principles of participation were not being applied to the education programmes. Adult education programmes were limited to literacy classes. There was scope to increase the type of non-formal programmes to meet the needs of both adult learners and children unable to attend school. A more flexible education system was needed to meet the diverse needs of local communities. ACAP had developed the conservation classes within the school to be participatory and informal in nature and it was surprising to see that these lessons had not been applied into the non-formal education programme. We felt there was great potential to apply the experience gained in developing the conservation curriculum in the formal schooling system to the non-formal education programme (Parker & Sands 1997).

Before going to Nepal in April 1996 I had attended the international launch of the ActionAid non-formal education programme, REFLECT, in London. REFLECT had been introduced into Nepal in 1995<sup>48</sup>. Interviews with Actionaid staff Bimal Phunyal, and other activists engaged in education, suggested REFLECT was particularly successful in providing educational opportunities for the 'traditional occupational castes' within the areas where it was operating (Far West and Far East Nepal). Although these findings were tentative and based on a short period of time our conversations left us enthused and interested to find out more.

Fundamentally, I felt that a more participatory approach to adult literacy, based on a similar approach to REFLECT, could provide people with the non-formal education programme that they were demanding hence enabling ACAP to respond effectively to these demands. Such an approach offered the potential to facilitate a process of critical reflection at the local level, whereby participants would become the evaluators of their own initiatives. By generating their own baseline data in a participatory manner stakeholders would be empowered to become evaluators in the process as well as active decision-makers. This could therefore both strengthen and deepen the participatory nature of the ACAP approach. Based on experience elsewhere in Nepal it was also hoped that REFLECT would offer a more open and inclusive form of education that had the capability to address the caste issue within the field location. The importance of feeding back information to the local level is discussed in the methodology chapter, Chapter 4. Here it is important to note the results of feeding back the information presented in this chapter to the local level in order to clearly set the context in which I became involved in introducing REFLECT into the Sikles sector of the ACAP.

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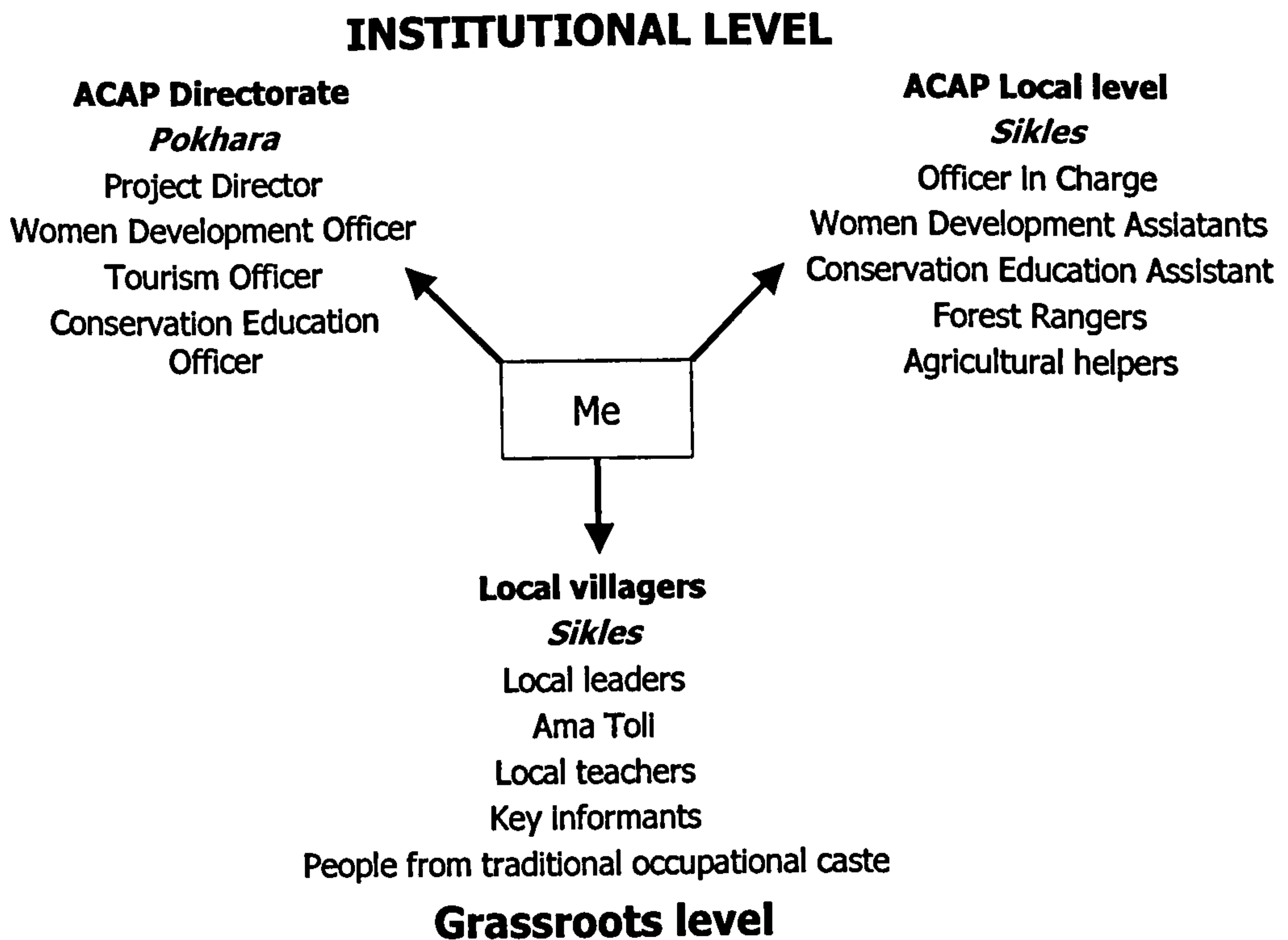
<sup>48</sup> Full details of REFLECT at both at the international level and within Nepal are provided in Chapter 3.

## 2.4 Response from the field

### 2.4.1 The importance of feedback – closing the loop

Gaining feedback to the report produced by Parker & Sands (1997) formed the basis of my research during my visits to Nepal in December 1997 and 1998. Whilst acknowledging important changes had taken place between 1996 and 1998 within the ACAP<sup>49</sup>, this section will focus on the response from a variety of actors to the key issues raised above in relation to the non-formal education component of the CEEP. Response from the field can be divided into two categories - the Institutional response (i.e. ACAP Directorate and ACAP staff at local level) and the grassroots response (local level response from local people especially in the Sikles sector of the ACAP (Diagram 2.3).

Diagram 2.3 Feedback from the field.



Source: author's own.

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<sup>49</sup> Such as the spread of CEEP into the northern sector of the ACAP (Jomson, Manang and Lo-Mantang), improvements to the conservation curriculum being made, training workshops had been held for conservation teachers and resources being developed to support the formal programme (KMTNC 1997). These were in the main as a result of the CEEP workshop held in 1996 that I had participated in (see Gurung 1996 for details).

Generally the feedback from the field was very positive. To some extent this illustrates the success in using a participatory approach and carrying out the research over a two year period, giving time for follow up and a high level of engagement at the local level. It gave me confidence in the conclusions I had drawn from the visits in 1995 and 1996. Detail of this feedback will now be discussed at the two levels identified above.

## **2.4.2 Institutional response – ACAP**

### **2.4.2.1 Directorate level – ACAP Staff in Pokhara**

The research findings were generally well received. Informal interviews with a mixture of project staff highlighted some interesting points and concerns regarding the research. As mentioned above the main concern for ACAP in 1998 was securing future funds for the programme. It must be noted that CEEP is only one component of the ACAP's portfolio of projects, albeit a central one. In the main, staff within ACAP were pleased to read the report and appreciated the fact that I had revisited Nepal to discuss the issues with them. My observations of research being undertaken within Nepal, and specifically in the ACA, was that all too often such research findings were not fed back into the field<sup>50</sup> and ACAP staff felt slightly resentful.

There was particular support from staff working in the fields of education and women's development programmes. Other staff within the ACAP supported the findings and agreed that in principle the introduction of a more empowering education programme was needed. One member of the ACAP staff commented on the fact that exclusion and non-participation was a particularly important issue in Lamjung sector of the ACAP (east of Sikles). Here the traditional system of *Rhodi Ghar*, where young girls and boys meet to socialise at busy agricultural times, is strong: "*these girls miss out on education – lots of girls miss out – and they need education on reproductive health as the illegitimate children is a big problem here*" (Tourism Officer 1997 *pers comm.*). It was felt that targeting *Rhodi Ghar* for REFLECT classes may be one way of reaching these girls. It was also felt that it could have potential in the northern sector, which is more remote, and where the population migrates on an annual basis, as well as in Jomson where there is less of a tradition of women's groups and hence need for activity in this field. One respondent felt that "*the*

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<sup>50</sup> Some reports are available in the ACAP offices in Pokhara and within the ACA. However in one case a foreign researcher had physically taken the baseline data collected in 1986 when ACAP started and this data had become lost creating problems for ACAP in future years.

*REFLECT approach could be useful to ACAP but it would need further research*" (WDO pers comm. Dec 1997).

The above comments illustrate an interest in the potential of REFLECT and its ability to contribute to many of the areas under ACAP's remit. However, many staff were unclear about the logistical implications of such a programme. The WDO commented that *"the theory of REFLECT is very good from what I have heard it is excellent but I don't know how it runs in practical terms"* (pers comm. Dec 1997). Some ACAP staff also expressed concern over the monitoring and evaluation burden of introducing a new programme into the area<sup>51</sup>. The Conservation Education Office (CEO) felt that *"if we try to do everything then we have a lot of monitoring and evaluation"* (pers comm. Dec 1997). Others were cautious of introducing a new programme in the whole of the ACA and felt it would be best to pilot it in one area first, possibly the Sikles sector. It was felt that it was more appropriate to pilot the project in a limited area on an experimental basis. Some staff were keen to visit a project with experience of REFLECT, especially if the organisation had an environmental focus such as the School for Ecology, Agriculture and Community Works (SEACOW)<sup>52</sup>. *"After seeing what it is about we will be more willing to take the risk"* (WDO Pokhara).

The response from the Project Director, however, was less enthusiastic in part due to the fact that ACAP was now seen as *'one of the most successful ICDPs. We are a model example with our success in this area. People are now visiting us on a regular basis in order to learn about how we have achieved so much success'* (pers comm. Dec 1997). Whilst he acknowledged the issues raised he also expressed concern over the extra burden that introducing a new programme would place on the ACAP and its staff. Overall he felt that there was *"no need for more programmes as ACAP needed to stream-line the CEEP and secure funding for it to spread into other regions"* (pers comm. Dec 1997). On the whole, securing funds for the current approach was seen as being more important than changing or improving the CEEP approach. External factors such as implementing the new Conservation Area Management Act (1996) also added to the workload of ACAP.

The report was well received by 'key informants' who were ex-ACAP employees. Overall the need to integrate more participatory approaches into the ACAP approach was seen as being vital to its future success. One key informant stated in email correspondence *"I like*

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<sup>51</sup> These concerns were somewhat misplaced. The central philosophy of REFLECT is to increase local level capacity and opportunity for critical reflection and evaluation (see Chapter 3 for full detail) and hence in theory could help to reduce to the evaluation pressure on ACAP staff. Ultimately REFLECT circles could decrease the level of dependency of local people on the ACAP for evaluation.

<sup>52</sup> SEACOW was known to staff to be a positive programme that was being run by an ex-employee of ACAP.



*the idea of getting ACAP staff trained in PRA and REFLECT... that is one thing I feel of ACAP is that the staff must be equipped with various new techniques and methodologies and encourage them to do research and write up their experiences. I encourage you to recommend ActionAid carry out such training if they have not already decided about it yet and to ask ACAP staff to also participate". The email ends with "the time has come for them (ACAP) to strengthen what they have achieved and move forward" (pers comm. Jan 1998).*

Due to the lack of understanding about the ideology of REFLECT in December 1997 it was suggested that ActionAid run an orientation workshop for ACAP. Initially staff at the Directorate responded to this suggestion positively and suggested a date in April 1998. This was based upon a number of factors such as the availability of ActionAid staff and potential dates when ACAP staff were free and also coincided with my next visit. It also fell after a crucial deadline date for the bid for the CEEP to be submitted to the Overseas Development Agency (ODA) for further consideration<sup>53</sup>. After discussing this request with ActionAid Nepal I emailed ACAP to try to arrange an orientation workshop for April 1998. Despite putting ACAP in contact with ActionAid Nepal this orientation workshop never took place due to the Project Director's view highlighted above.

#### *2.4.2.2 Local level – ACAP staff in Sikles*

At the local level within ACAP ideas were fed back to those staff who had participated in the previous research and discussed with those new to the Sikles area<sup>54</sup>. In December 1997, there was a new Office in Charge (OIC) in place, who took an interest in the suggestion that REFLECT could meet the demand for literacy classes. He noted that the women in Sikles were still asking for more non-formal education programmes and he felt this demand could not be met as the focus was on spreading CEEP to other VDCs within the Sikles sector rather than expanding opportunities to those who had already completed the basic and advanced course. Like previous informants he too felt that Sikles lacked any post-literacy programme and explained in Bhujung where he had previously been posted a library had been set up by ACAP to meet women's demands for reading material within that sector. Overall there was a positive response from those consulted and many of the ideas raised within the report were supported. People expressed a high level of interest in

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<sup>53</sup> At that time ACAP were under pressure to secure further funds from their main donor the ODA. The ODA (now DFID) were asking ACAP to justify their bid for further money for the CEEP due to the fact that the ACAP had invested a lot of time and money in CEEP activities.

<sup>54</sup> ACAP staff are often moved from one field office to another before being promoted to a position within the Directorate in Pokhara.

attending an orientation workshop on REFLECT to find out more about its potential<sup>55</sup>. At the local level ACAP staff felt that much of the demand for education came from women who had undergone the ACAP programme and hence they could be targeted for further classes. The need to reach people who had traditionally not been active in participating was recognised though it was felt that this would take more time. Staff seemed genuinely interested in learning more about REFLECT to see if it could meet the demand for a new literacy programme.

### **2.4.3 Grassroots response**

As well as consulting ACAP staff working and living in Sikles, local teachers, CAMC members and other committee members such as Ama Toli members were also consulted (Diagram 2.3). The findings were also discussed with women and children from both the Gurung and non-Gurung communities. Traditional leaders were also targeted for their opinions as it was felt that it was important to include such people as ultimately they play a important role in the local level decision making process. The shorter English and Nepali version of the report (Parker & Sands 1997) were particularly useful in making the findings more accessible at the local level. These were used as a basis for informal interviews at the grassroots level to gain insight into the response in relation to the issues raised. Spending time discussing these issues was also important, in part due to the lack of literacy skills of many of the stakeholders, and in part as it provided the opportunity for further exploration of the key issues. Body language, gestures and levels of interest could be gauged through these meetings giving the author insight into the authenticity of interest from the participants. Many of the discussions supported the conclusions presented in the report and reinforced the demand for more educational programmes, especially by the women. It reconfirmed issues that had been raised in the previous research visits. Having a non-formal education programme was still highlighted to me as a key priority. Participants were not bothered what programme was offered as long as it provided an opportunity to develop their literacy skills, be it REFLECT or any other programme.

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<sup>55</sup> It was seen as being particularly useful for the WDO and CEA to attend such a study tour as the programme would inevitably fall under their remit. They also expressed an interest in going on a study tour to a NGO such as SEACOW, as suggested above.

It is interesting to note that whilst many local staff supported the idea of further non-formal educational opportunities they felt sceptical that there was actually the demand for such classes. One teacher commented that *"people are more interested in making money and not in education"*. Local teachers, from within and outside Sikles<sup>56</sup>, felt that the people of Sikles, in particular the Gurung community, placed more value on their children securing employment overseas than gaining formal qualifications. Despite this focus on migration for employment, there was still a high level of demand amongst local people for educational opportunities to be provided with scholarship schemes, such as the Lali Guras project, to enable the poorer members of the community to attend school<sup>57</sup>.

Discussion with local leaders focused on their opinions about the need for a more inclusive non-formal education programme and the potential of REFLECT to meet this demand. The meetings held with the elders were in the main conducted in their homes sitting on the balconies drinking tea. For these discussions I relied upon the translation skills of two people who had become my friends in Sikles a local teacher and Hitman<sup>58</sup>. In general village elders and local leaders expressed their support for further non-formal education opportunities, especially if it would reach poorer people as it was felt that it would help to motivate them towards conservation activities. *"Our work in some places is very difficult as people do not understand the importance of conservation. They are ignorant of many things and do not keep their paths clean - they are very dirty. We need to teach them to be clean and about conservation matters. This is very important for the future of our village. Many times I have to do things myself"* commented a member of the CAMC in Sikles in April 1998. His interest in having any educational project must be seen in this light; as being aimed at solving the lack of motivation of local people rather than framed in terms of empowerment. In my discussions I was keen to explain that there was no 'teacher' as such, rather a facilitator, and also that there was no book or set lessons to learn. Regardless of this another respected elder felt the classes sounded like a good idea and stated that *"I think all the chiefs will agree with such an opportunity and if all the chiefs agree then everyone will agree"* (local leader- Sikles pers comm. April 1998).

This reflects the important role traditional leaders play within the communities in Sikles as their opinions and views are respected. If these leaders had rejected the idea that more

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<sup>56</sup> Many teachers in the local school are not from Sikles and are often from a 'high caste' group.

<sup>57</sup> This scheme has been set up to help poorer members of the community attend school through providing scholarships (see *Lali Guras* link on web page [www.staff.livjm.ac.uk/socspark/research](http://www.staff.livjm.ac.uk/socspark/research))

<sup>58</sup> See Section 4.2.1 & 4.2.3.2 for details.

education was needed then this could have created a significant barrier to REFLECT being introduced into the Sikles sector of the ACAP. However within the study area education is seen as vital for the betterment of the whole community and held in high regard, whether it be formal or non-formal education. Through interviews with the parents and children who were being supported by the Lali Guras fund it became increasingly evident that there was a much greater demand for education than previous research suggested. Talking to other children 'hanging around' the village and not attending school also indicated a desire to go to school "*we don't go because our parents do not send us*" one young Damai boy said. His sister added "*we want to go to school but we have no books and we must go to the field*" (Field notes April 1998).

A more flexible educational programme such as evening classes was seen to have particular value. I began to talk about the REFLECT approach as a potential programme that could meet this need for non-formal education. After raising this issue briefly with some of the parents of Lali Guras fund children the news quickly spread through their communities. When I returned to Sikles in April 1998 I noted one night in my diary "*I was walking home tonight along the path near the VDC building and some girls from the Dalit were calling out to me shouting "ek chin Didi ek chin" (wait wait sister). It took me a while to realise what they were asking for as it was dark and I was tired. I thought they were asking me for the usual request to take their photos or for a pen or rupiya (money). They kept shouting "Didi Didi bosnus, belukako phadne manparche" (stop stop sister we want evening classes)*" (Field notes April 1998). Hearing this touched me as it further reinforced my conclusions that these girls really did want to attend classes. It served to encourage me to explore the ways in which this demand could be met and find out how REFLECT could be piloted in at least the village of Sikles.

The above accounts are important in two ways, firstly it sheds light into how I made contacts with the traditional occupational castes in Sikles (through the Lali Guras Fund) and secondly demonstrates the importance of revisiting an area and becoming known in a local community. I discuss this further in my methodology chapter where I explore who I came into contact with and why and how this has changed during the research period from 1995 to 2004. My observations and insights have been greatly influenced by the relationships that I have developed at the local level and go some way to explaining my interest in women and education. It is through these connections that I have gained so much insight into the importance given to education by the women in Sikles. Through discussing my conclusions at the local level it soon became common knowledge that I was

interested in non-formal education. The speed at which news travelled along the grapevine never ceased to amaze me! Rather than seeking participants to talk to, people would often stop and ask me if ACAP were launching a new education programme. These requests further reinforced my previous conclusions that there was indeed a demand for non-formal education within Sikles. This was encouraging, as it had been made very explicit that such a programme would provide no books or pens, often a key attraction in forming non-formal education classes! Whilst some women showed interest in the REFLECT<sup>59</sup> approach, others wanted to have another course like the advanced class with a book about local issues. In Bhachowck one adult literacy teacher felt that she needed to *"repeat the advanced class again as all the participants were so busy that almost all of them didn't complete it continuously"* (pers comm. April 1998). I was asked *"what can you learn without a book?"* and *"what can you learn from just talking?"* by local women when I explained the REFLECT approach. This was a general area of concern and confusion regarding how an education project could run with no supporting text. There was much discussion about the value of an evening class that had no book and this was reflected in my conversations with the women and Ama Toli representatives. These conversations were in Nepali and I was able to follow them and add in explanations where needed. Despite my best efforts the concept of no book was a difficult one for them to comprehend, as all literacy classes in the past focused on a text, whether it be the Naya Goreto or ACAP's Learner Generated Material text book. Whilst some people were not convinced you could develop literacy skills without a book all agreed that it sounded good to have more education in the village and a genuine interest in REFLECT was established.

There was also some concern that the participants of this new programme were potentially going to be from the non-Gurung community. One woman felt that *"if the lower caste are also in the group then it will be very difficult as it will be divided with some people sitting outside, maybe a separate class would be better"* (pers comm. April 1998 Sikles). The logistic of how REFLECT would operate at the local level and enable non-Gurung participation was left for local people to resolve. One suggestion was to employ a local teacher from the 'traditional occupational caste' to run a separate centre for members of that community. A note was taken of the potential teacher for future reference.

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<sup>59</sup> It was explained that the name of the programme could be chosen by the participants as often people asked me what 'REFLECT' meant.

Overall the local level response to the suggestion that REFLECT may offer a model approach in order to address some of these local problems was well received. It demonstrates that the motivations behind having such a project is mixed and highlights the concern that existed over an evening class with no textbook. My earlier conclusion that there was demand for a non-formal education programme in the local area and that this demand was not being met by ACAP, the Government or any other NGO at that time were confirmed. I personally felt that the REFLECT approach could also enable ACAP to overcome some of the weaknesses of the non-formal educational component of the CEEP and also resolve some of the evaluation problems that the organisation faced (Parker 1997).

It needs to be stressed that I explicitly stated that I personally had no funds for this and that I was in discussion with ACAP regarding the possibility of them supporting this project. People in Sikles were happy for me to report back to ACAP that they had an interest in this approach, and like local ACAP staff were keen for training opportunities in this new method of teaching. I took these ideas back to ACAP during my visit to Nepal in both December 1997 and April 1998 with the hope that ACAP would take up the offer from ActionAid to participate in an orientation workshop in the REFLECT approach. This could be arranged by ActionAid to take place in Pokhara, where the ACAP HQ was based, and had no direct financial implications for ACAP.

#### ***2.4.4 My response to the feedback process – getting involved***

Despite the positive response to my research findings and regardless of the demand that had been expressed at the local level for more non-formal education the Project Director of ACAP decided that ACAP was unable to take up the offer of an orientation workshop in REFLECT offered by ActionAid. It was decided by the Directorate that ACAP needed to focus on securing funding for the projects currently running and to not expand into new areas. I was also given the impression at the Directorate level that there was very little support from staff within ACAP. Based on my interviews and discussions in the December 1997 I felt quite surprised at this. I was initially very disappointed at this decision, as I had faith in my research process and in the real demand at the local level. I could understand that there were reservations around the potential evaluation burden of a new project and began to question the authenticity of the exchange of ideas in my previous visit. It was reassuring to discover that staff I had previously spoken were also disappointed not to have the opportunity to find out more about REFLECT. The OIC in

Sikles felt that REFLECT had the potential to address some of the problems he was experiencing at the local level. Without the support of the Directorate, however, he too was relatively powerless. As my research was not linked to any funding agency it also lacked financial backing and I was left in a precarious position. Ultimately, ACAP were neither willing nor able to pilot REFLECT and this led to a number of important events. Firstly, based on requests from the local level, I became actively involved in facilitating the introduction of REFLECT into the Sikles sector of the ACAP<sup>60</sup>. Secondly, in order to gain insight into the consequences of this decision and to create a framework in which to explore the discourses of participatory development and reflect upon the experience of being engaged in a process of action-oriented research I registered for my doctorate.

Following the productive field visit in December 1997 I had started to think about registering for my PhD so that I could develop my research in Sikles. I was hoping to examine the experience of ACAP with REFLECT and critically evaluate the extent to which REFLECT could address some of the limitations of the CEEP. The lack of support from the Directorate left me at a junction in my research journey. The hypothetical focus of my research was clearly not an option to me now. So I had two choices available to me: I could either change my research focus (and focus purely on ACAP and CEEP) or I could respond to the demand that had been expressed in the Sikles sector and become engaged in a process of action-oriented research. I chose the path less travelled and became involved in facilitating the introduction of REFLECT into the Sikles sector of the ACAP and this resulted in the focus of my research being rooted in action-oriented research.

Although cautious about becoming involved in the process of introducing REFLECT into the Sikles sector of the ACAP the lack of support from ACAP left me with little option than to try. Failing to respond to this request would have left me in a position of undertaking research, raising expectations and failing the participants who had given their time. I felt more uncomfortable with this prospect than I did about getting involved. In the main 'getting involved' required me to put ACAP staff and local people in Sikles in contact with ActionAid staff in Nepal. I was ultimately based in the UK at an academic institution and neither held the position, knowledge nor skills to provide the training required. Although ACAP were not keen to become involved in REFLECT approval was sought and gained from both KMTNC and ACAP for the REFLECT approach to be piloted in the Sikles sector. This permission was not formally needed but their support

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<sup>60</sup> ACAP provided some logistical support for me to do this and expressed an interest in the outcomes of the experience (see Chapter 5 for details).

helped the smooth running of the project. It also enabled local staff based in Sikles to provide some support and provided a means of communicating between Sikles and myself<sup>61</sup>. ActionAid Nepal secured places for people from Sikles to join a training event in REFLECT that was taking place in the neighbouring region in September 1998.

My other main role was to secure the funding required for the training of REFLECT facilitators hence the number selected in the first year was modest with only three people being chosen. To this end I contacted UWCSEA, my former school and initial point of contact in 1992 with the school in Sikles, for funding and received a one off grant to enable this training opportunity to be taken up. The three target groups identified as potential participants in the REFLECT programme were firstly, women who had undertaken the literacy classes offered by ACAP and who had expressed a demand for post-literacy courses, secondly people in the community who had been excluded from, or marginalised by, the participatory process to date (mainly villagers from schedule castes) and finally children who were unable to attend school (mainly due to their socio-economic status).

In order to critically reflect upon the process of engaging with the field and to justify my research work in Nepal to colleagues at Liverpool John Moores University, I registered as a part time PhD student in the summer of 1998. As a full time member of staff in the Geography Department I was financially supported in this endeavour although I maintained my full time teaching, supervision and administrative commitments. This gave me an eight-year window of opportunity in which to complete the thesis.

The main questions that I had were: to what extent could the REFLECT approach resolve some of the limitations that had been identified in relation to the ACAP in the preliminary stages of the research? In particular could it meet the on-going needs of people at the local level to develop their literacy skills, whilst at the same time increasing the capacity of local level evaluation? To what extent could it address issues of inclusion and exclusion at the local level? If REFLECT does have the potential to address these issues then does it represent a potential model for educational programmes within ICDPs in general? Finally what lessons could be drawn from my experience of becoming involved in a process of action-oriented research and how do these contribute to the ethical debates surrounding engaging in development research? Before moving on to explore the lessons from this process it is important to explore the theoretical underpinnings of the thesis, in Chapter 3, before moving on to provide a clear overview of the methods that have been employed, Chapter 4.

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<sup>61</sup> Sikles at that time had no email connection, an unreliable phone system and relied upon radio messages from Pokhara and an internal mail system as the main forms of communication.



### **3 CHAPTER THREE Participatory Development and REFLECT**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter showed that ACAP is an innovative and successful ICDP. However it also raised some concerns over the level of success ACAP had in promoting inclusive participatory development. This concern is reflected within the discourses of participatory development that are currently evident in a number of arenas. This chapter will examine the rise of participatory development and in particular examine the contributions of Paulo Freire and Robert Chambers. It will also highlight how participatory development has become naively implemented by radical actors and co-opted by the 'development establishment'. This has in turn led to a backlash against it and the question "is participation the new tyranny?" being asked (Cooke & Kothari 2001). Consequently, calls are being made for participatory development to be re-conceptualised to prevent the term from becoming rhetorical and devoid of meaning and value. Particular attention is paid to the role of non-formal education<sup>62</sup> in the promotion of participatory development and the complexities facing people and institutions wishing to adopt 'participatory development' in their work with marginalised communities. Consideration is given to the nuances of participatory research and the tensions between 'participatory' and 'participatory action' research.

The Chapter moves on to explore the opportunity REFLECT provides agents seeking to recapture the radical transformative nature potential of non-formal education. Due to the dynamic nature of REFLECT, it is suggested that REFLECT may offer a model for non-formal education programmes that aim to be both inclusive and participatory in nature. The experience of REFLECT practitioners, globally and within Nepal, supports the calls being made for participatory development to be redefined as a radical, political process of transformation that is locally situated and contextualised.

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<sup>62</sup> Non-formal education is not to be confused with informal education that occurs through social interactions (Jeffs & Smith 1990). Non-formal education programmes have a provider, goals and objectives and are planned programmes whereas informal education is not.

## 3.2 Participatory development

### 3.2.1 The rise of alternative approaches to development - changing paradigms?

The predominant view of 'development'<sup>63</sup>, as being synonymous with 'modern western scientific progress' based on the spread of the capitalist mode of production and the accumulation of 'things' associated with development, is evident in writings from Nepal on the concept of '*bikas*', the Nepali translation for 'development' (Pigg 1992, Robinson-Pant 2000, Shrestha 1995). Nanda Shrestha (1995) provides a useful insight into the nature and meaning of *bikas* in the context of a self-reflexive narrative on the meaning of development to him and the impact of the culture of imperialism on Nepalese society. Growing up as a small boy in Pokhara, he became aware of the fact that he and his family were considered to be '*abikasi*' (not developed), due to their dependency on small-scale agricultural subsistence farming for their livelihood. He notes how the word *bikas* gained currency following the overthrow of the Rana regime in 1951. Those with some access to modern scientific knowledge therefore became *bikasi* (developed/modern). *Bikas* meant all things modern and scientific. "The hospital was a sign of *bikas*... It was brought by white people, the harbingers of *bikas*. To us they were obviously economically superior. They spoke the language of *bikas* ... they embodied *bikas*" (Shrestha 1995: 271).

*Bikas* denied and uprooted the traditional labour use system, traditional bonds and knowledge base that existed in Nepal rather than building on them. Shrestha reflects on the spread of development within Nepal during the past few decades and the lack of improvements this has brought for the majority of the population. "*Bikas* had done little to reduce our hunger" (*ibid.*: 274). At the same time the spread of *bikas* undermined the values and systems of self worth that previously existed and essentially demoralised the majority of the population. Shrestha concludes that the elite class (who by definition are powerful), whether self-made (like himself) or born and bred, underpin the inequality and socio-economic problems that prevail in Nepal today. He calls for us to "unlearn the Western values and development thinking which have infested our minds. However, unlearning is not complete without relearning. So let us relearn" (*ibid.*: 277). Ultimately

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<sup>63</sup> A full exploration of the multiple contested meanings of the term 'development' is not necessary here. Edited texts such as Desai & Potter (2002), Potter *et al.* eds (2000), Rahnema & Bawtree eds (1997), Sachs eds (1992) and Simon & Nārman eds (1999) provide useful overviews of these debates. Introductory chapters in Carmen (1996), Burkey (1996) and Wolfe (1996) also prove useful reference points.

he is calling for people to decolonise their minds, transform society and set a new agenda for 'development' with a focus on human dignity and relative economic autonomy.

Shrestha's account reflects what Said (1978) termed the 'colonisation of the mind', whereby knowledge systems, ways of life and concepts of development have become dominated by the power of the notion of 'development' as a modern, western scientific process based on rational scientific thought and underpinned by capitalist modes of production. This dominant paradigm was exported to the 'Third World'<sup>64</sup> and became one more manifestation of cultural dependency (Dodds 2001, Esteva 1992, Freidmann 1992, Hall 1981, Hettne 1995, Mercer 1999, Rahnema 1997). Scholars from Latin America such as Don Santos, Fran Amin, Fals Borda and Paulo Freire played an important role in challenging this dominant paradigm and presenting more radical interpretations and means of researching development (Burkey 1993, Carmen 1996, Etseva 1996, Freire 1972, Hall 1981, Rahnema 1992, Sachs 1992).

Their work highlights the limitations and contradictions of the dominant view of development, a view that focuses on the processes of integration of economies into the capitalist world and the exploitation of the less powerful. New theories and methods of research resulted from this and are often referred to as representing a paradigm shift<sup>65</sup> away from 'top down' development to more 'bottom up', inclusive, forms of development (Burkey 1993, Rahman 1993, Steifel & Wolfe 1994). Participatory development and participatory research emerged within these shifts and spread within the 'Global South' and within Europe and North America (Hall 1981<sup>66</sup>). This, coupled with the rise in feminist critiques of research, played an important role in the creation and spread of an overarching alternative development paradigm (Harding 1987, Maguire 2001, Moss 1993).

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<sup>64</sup> The term 'Third World' has many advantages and disadvantages and is rejected by some who claim that it is an imagined geographical entity that lacks meaning and is embedded with ideological assumptions. Equally however it has also been reclaimed to denote an 'alternative' approach to the promotion of development based on the principles that underpin the 'alternative development' movement. In an attempt to reverse the biases inherent within terms such as 'Third World' alternative terms such as 'majority world' are emerging to signify the fact that the majority of the world's population and natural resources are often found within the 'Global South' or 'Third World'. However such terms mask the economic inequalities, power imbalances and exploitative forces that have contributed to the unequal world that we live in today. One reason to continue with the use of these terms is that fact that it draws attention to global inequalities yet it is equally important to acknowledge that parts of the 'Third World' can be found in the 'First' and vice versa (Dodds 2002). The terms 'Global South' and 'Third World' are used with reservation within this thesis to signify countries who have been exploited in some shape or form by countries who have become 'economically developed' and powerful within the global context, either through colonial or neo-imperial forces. It does not suggest that these countries are homogenous and acknowledges their diversity. As Madge (1997: 113) notes the term third world "is the worst term, apart from all the rest".

<sup>65</sup> It is important to note however that there is no clear-cut distinction between these 'paradigms' and they are not mutually exclusive (Simon 1999).

Despite the emergence of 'other' forms of development however, the 1980s also witnessed what has been referred to as an 'impasse' in development studies<sup>67</sup> (Booth 1985). This impasse saw a call for more grounded theories of development being made, and for both academics and practitioners to rethink the purpose of 'development research' (Schuurman 1993, 2000). Reflecting on this impasse, Edwards (1989) concludes that for development research to be of value it has to be relevant to those people excluded from the development process, in particular the poor and marginalised members of communities. He later states that the "purpose of intellectual inquiry ... is to promote the development of people denied access to knowledge resources and power for hundreds of years. Second, that the most effective way of doing this is to unite understanding and action, or theory and practice, into a single process which puts people at the centre of both" (Edwards 1993: 90)<sup>68</sup>. Parnwell (1999) argues that these debates support the need for more area studies to be undertaken whereby researchers acknowledge the complexity and contextual nature of development.

These debates emphasise a need for a clear conceptualisation of development based on more humanistic, holistic principles such as the one offered by Carmen (1994: 69) who argues that development is "a process by which members of a society, starting from the most disenfranchised, increase their personal and common capacities critically to reflect, decode and read their world and organise accordingly for a sustainable improvement of their own lives and those of their children's children". Rahman (1992: 178) supports this vision and suggests that development is a process "whereby innate human potential is creatively and constructively realised by those concerned, on both the individual and collective levels". Such definitions enable development to be located as a process of transformation that is based on learning, as well as justice, sustainability and inclusion (Korten 1990). They highlight the importance of reintroducing an ethical or moral dimension to the debate and also stress the need to focus on the local level and conceptualising development as a situated process. Further to this, Chambers (2004) calls for the personal dimension to be included in the conceptualisation of development by proposing a focus on responsible well-being.

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<sup>66</sup> Hall's (1981) paper remains one of the most comprehensive and inspirational accounts of the rise of participatory research. The paper includes his personal reflections on the emergence of this movement.

<sup>67</sup> Texts such as Schuurman's (1993) edited volume bring together writers critiquing development at the start of the 1990's and Cooke & Kothari (eds) (2001) draw the debates within the field of participatory development together at the end of this decade.

<sup>68</sup> These sentiments are reflected in the ethical guidelines developed by DARG (2002).

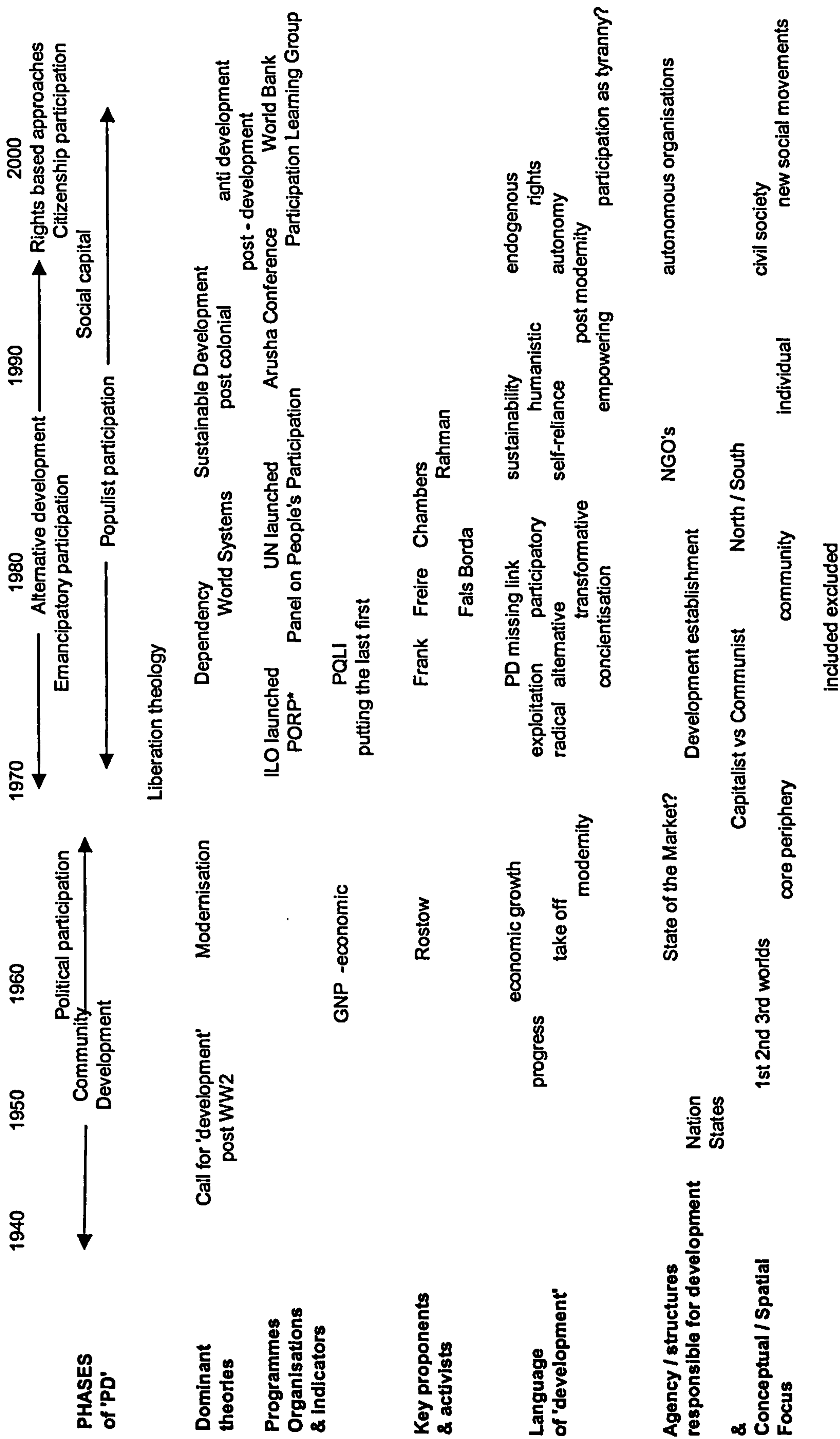
The emergence of an 'alternative development' movement or 'Third System' (Carmen 1996) is implicit within the discourse on participatory development. Self-reliance, autonomy, citizenship and empowerment lie at the heart of these debates (Carmen 1990, Craig & Mayo 1995, Desai 2002a, Friedmann 1992, Henkel & Stirrat 2001, Hickey & Mohan 2003, Korten 1990, Nerfin 1986, Rahnema 1992). This rethinking of development research and practice led to a call for 'bottom up' 'grassroots' 'participatory' approaches whereby people would be engaged in the process of their own development. This thesis turns to explore the rise of participatory development as an alternative to more traditional forms of 'top down' development theory and practice.

### **3.2.2 *The emergence of participatory approaches to development***

A full detailed discussion of the complexities of the evolution of participatory development is beyond the scope of this thesis. The following timeline (Diagram 3.1) serves to highlight a number of key areas worth considering. The following time line is not definitive but serves as a framework within which to examine the complexities that surround the evolution of participatory development and in which to identify its historical roots.

The timeline illustrates that 'participatory development' is a dynamic concept that is continuously evolving. It has evolved from early work in the field of community development and people 'participating in' other people's projects to participating in an autonomous process of development. It has been influenced by, and has contributed to, the emerging discourse surrounding alternative development and has played a crucial role in highlighting the centrality of human agency in the development process. A change in language and theoretical stance can be traced within this movement reflecting what some have termed to be a 'paradigm shift' away from the dominant scientific modernistic view of development to more post-modern, feminist and humanistic people-centric views of the world.

**Diagram 3.1 Timeline of 'participatory development' an overview of key theories, activities and issues**



\* Participatory Organisations of the Rural Poor

It is important to note that Non Government Organisations (NGOs) have played an important role in the evolution and spread of participatory approaches to development (Carroll 1992, Desai 2002b, Lane 1995, Nelson & Wright 1995, Pieterse 1998, Van Rooy 2002). Whilst the broad term NGO may cover a multitude of organisations they are “typically considered to be a third sector with a distinct socio-economic-political function” (Whitehand 2004: 12). They are, by definition, not commercial or governmental organisations and depending on the nature of the NGO can have varying types of relation with the State depending upon their political stance (Clark 1991,1995) and varying financing structures (Fowler 1997). Participatory development has become associated with notions of civil society (Mohan 2002, Hickey & Mohan 2003). In addition to this NGOs are also seen to play a vital role in the spread of radical non-formal education programmes such as the Freirean approach discussed above (Hall 1986 & 1989, Kane 2001, Marshall 1991) as well as within the field of ICDPs<sup>69</sup>.

The diversity of NGOs has led to a wealth of literature discussing the potential role of NGOs in the promotion of alternative democratic and more humanistic approaches to development (Clark, 1991, Edwards & Hulme 1992, Farrington & Lewis 1993, Korten 1987). The literature on the rise of NGOs within South Asia highlights the diversity of organisations and furthers the call for clearer categorisation of these organisations in order to deepen our understanding of these actors and assess their contribution towards the promotion of alternative development (Bhattachan *et al.* 2001, Fernandez 1987, Maskay 1998, Whitehand 2004). In the 1980s, many development NGOs began adopting participatory models of various kinds, with the goals of respecting local knowledge, placing marginalised people at the centre of the development process and avoiding the problems of outsider-driven development (Guijt and Shah 1998). There was a groundswell of popular movements in the 1990s<sup>70</sup> (Clark 1991, Edwards and Hulme 1992, Korten 1987).

Whilst not all NGOs engage in the promotion of participatory development, many of those that do see participation as the ‘missing ingredient’ that prevents development programmes from being successful (Oakley 1987). Caution is needed in assuming that “NGOs somehow embody the virtues of participation and empowerment” (Henkel & Stirrat 2001: 171). In many cases participatory approaches are adopted in order to cut or

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<sup>69</sup> The KMTNC, as a national NGO, is a prime example due to its pioneering work through the ACAP.

<sup>70</sup> It is outside the remit of this thesis to review this literature although reflections are included later in the thesis on the advantages and disadvantages of REFLECT being associated with an NGO.

share costs and motivate people to participate in predetermined activities (Craig & Mayo 1995, Rahman 1996). Chapter two highlighted the increase in NGO activity in Nepal that reflects a similar trend within South Asia in general (Fernandez 1987, Shreshtra & Farrington 1993). Whilst a full review of the emergence of NGO activity within Nepal is not feasible here it is important to note that many of these organisations do endeavour to promote participatory development and a variety of networks and federations have evolved to support NGOs working in this arena<sup>71</sup>.

The diversity of experience of NGOs with participatory development serves to highlight that 'participation' is a permissive concept and there is a need for a clear definition as there is little agreement on what it is or what its basic functions are (Cohen & Uphoff 1987). In the main participation is viewed as a process by which the poor become empowered through participating in their own autonomous development programmes (Burkey 1996, Mohan 2002, Rahman 1996, Potter *et al.* 1999). The United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) inquiry into participation proposed the following working definition of participation as "the organized efforts to increase control over resources and regulative institutions in given social situations, on the part of groups and movements hitherto excluded from such control" (Stiefel & Wolfe 1994: 5). This definition suggests individuals and institutions need to be self-reliant and autonomous and views 'participants' as the marginalised and excluded.

Burkey (1993), whilst acknowledging that the term 'self-reliant' has also become jargonised, offers a few pointers as to what self-reliant participatory development should be. He suggests that it should be a radical alternative to mainstream development; political in nature as it places politics and power at the centre of the development process by explicitly focusing on the marginalised, disenfranchised and excluded; a process by which people can become empowered and hence is a process which transformative in nature; and finally, it should be based on a reversal of assumptions relating to the nature and generation of knowledge and should challenge the dominant scientific assumptions held in the development establishment.

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<sup>71</sup> The NGO Federation of Nepal (NFN) established in 1991 and Nepal Participatory Action Network (NEPAN) established in 1995 play an important role in supporting innovative work in Nepal. Whitehand (2004), Chapter 3, provides a concise and informative review of NGOs in Nepal. Reflections by practitioners from Nepal working in the field of participatory development are found in Pratt (2000).



The origin of participatory development lies in the radical transformative left wing political arena of alternative development activists based on the belief that development is a process not a product. Equitable, humane and just development is therefore promoted through engaging people in processes of reflection and action leading to a liberating process of transformation. Participation is viewed as "an educational process but one in which the conventional nature of education is turned upside down" (Oakley & Marsden 1984: 70). One of the most influential workers in the field of challenging the conventional nature of education is Paulo Freire, the Brazilian educator. His work is central to REFLECT.

### **3.2.3 Paulo Freire and conscientization**

Freire (1972) criticises the formal education process for maintaining the poor as the underclass. He argues that education needs to be a liberating process rather than one where knowledge is 'banked'. A Freirean approach emphasise the importance of liberating programmes of non-formal education<sup>72</sup>. It highlights the need for the creation of 'spaces' where people can meet, engage in a process of dialogue and critically analyse their own situations before arriving at solutions to locally identified problems<sup>73</sup>. Freire rejects mechanistic conceptions of the adult literacy process, advocating instead a theory and practice based upon authentic dialogue between teachers and learners. Such dialogue, in Freire's approach, centres upon the learners' existential situations and leads not only to the acquisition of literacy skills, but also, and more importantly, to an awareness of his/her right as human being to transform reality. The model proposed is a process of literacy that is directly linked into a process of critical analysis and reflection with the aim of enabling the oppressed student to regard oppression, not as a given closed world with no exit, but rather, as a limiting situation which they can transform. This critical reflection ultimately leads to praxis, actions which will transform the world surrounding the learner.

Freire's pedagogy places the teacher or educator on a more even footing with the learner, here the educator has the role of a facilitator or catalyst (Kane 2001). This turns the

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<sup>72</sup> A number of key texts emerged in the 1970s regarding the limitations of formal education in meeting the needs and aspirations of people in 'developing countries'. See work such as Coombs & Ahmed (1974), Dore (1976), Faure *et al.* (1972), Illich (1971), Kindervatter (1979) and later Coombs (1985) Carmen (1990), Rao (1986) and Rogers (1992). A key theme within this writing relates to the potential non-formal education programmes had to offer to address the limitations of the formal education system.

<sup>73</sup> As discussed in section 2.2.3 earlier, the work and philosophy of Paulo Freire was seen as being central to the Conservation Education and Extension Programme of the ACAP in order to locate the learning process at the local level (Gurung & DeCoursey 1988).

traditional model of non-formal education upside down and centres on literacy acquisition as a means of challenging oppression. The Freirean view of literacy as a political phenomenon centred on critical reflection and intimately related to personal and collective experience is considerably broader than the conventional view of literacy (Roberts 1998). Group formation is central to this process. The process prescribed, outlined in the following Diagram 3.2, is a dialogical process where the poor explore their own social reality through group meetings and functional literacy programmes. Discussions held at informal gatherings are used to identify key themes and these themes are then codified into didactic sketches, photographs or stories. These visual representations are known as 'primers' and used to generate discussion within the 'culture (learning) circles' that form the basis of the programme. Functional literacy is used to highlight the cultural value of everyday activities (Taylor 1993). Change agents, employed to support the process, are essentially a "group of dedicated people who will spark an interest in the oppressed people" (Zachariah 1988: 75). The role of the agent is to support and accompany the process of critical analysis and literacy acquisition.

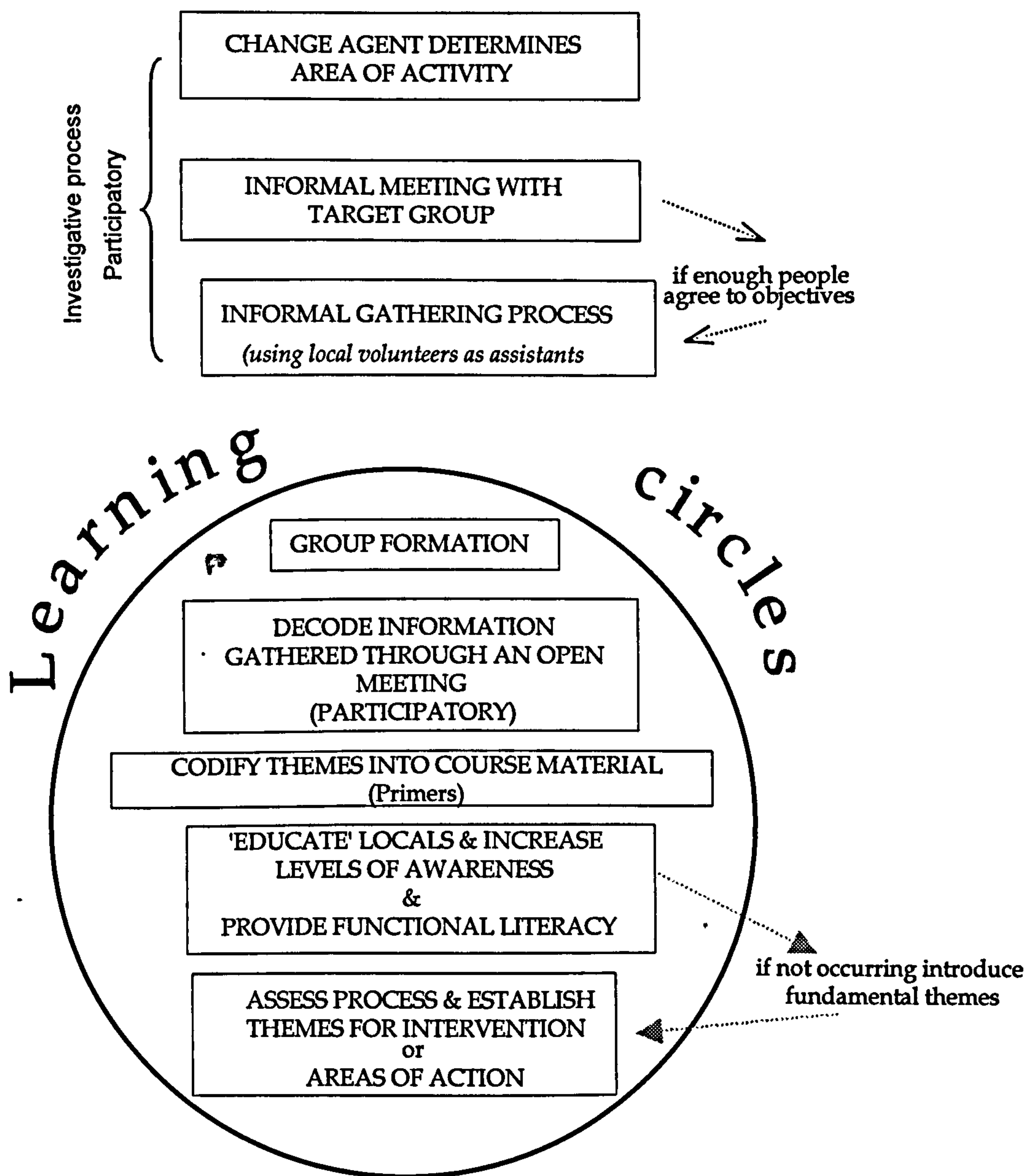
The literacy component centres on the introduction of certain words into the group and these words are then broken up into their syllables enabling students to use these components to form new words and move on to constructing their own sentences. The primer is used to introduce key words as a basis of discussion<sup>74</sup>. These words are then used to create new words based on their phonetic components (Appendix 3.1). Blackburn (2000) notes that this phonetic method is very efficient in terms of developing written literacy skills in part due to the creative link between dialogue, critical analysis and the broader process of conscientization. Literacy acquisition is given meaning by relating it to the everyday experiences of the participants. Functional literacy is used to highlight the cultural value of everyday activities of the peasant (Taylor 1993). It is important to note the value of using traditional means of communication when pursuing a participatory approach to development<sup>75</sup>. Through analysing coded material in their groups, participants become 'critically aware' and this theoretically leads to action against the forces of oppression. The focus is therefore on local level knowledge and local level analysis. This should be central to any intervention (Mosse 2001). The focus of the Freirean approach on the local level and local level knowledge is one of the key features that led to its uptake within the participatory development movement.

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<sup>74</sup> See Appendix 3.1 for an overview of this process.

<sup>75</sup> Carmen (1990) discusses this and highlights the important role media such as popular theatre can play in stimulating 'critical awareness' among the marginalized. Popular theatre refers to the "expression by the population of their own - as opposed to those of the dominant classes' - interest" (Carmen 1990: 103).

Diagram 3.2 Simplified model of key components of model proposed by Freire (1972)



Adapted from Freire (1972: 82-95)

According to Burkey (1993: 57) "the first step towards to achieving genuine participation is a process in which the rural poor themselves become aware of their own situation of the socio-economic reality around them, of their problems, the causes of these problems and what measures they themselves can take to begin changing their situation" (Burkey 1993: 57). Hence, the central goal is to change society; mainly to benefit the large group of marginalised poor (initially illiterate peasants in Brazil). Freire's work is aimed at helping the oppressed become 'subjects' of change who see through the myths of the oppressors<sup>76</sup>.

<sup>76</sup> Chapter 2 in Kane (2001) provides an excellent biography of Freire's life and work.

The book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1972) articulated the need for oppressed people to gain *conscientização*, a perception of social, political, and economic contradictions, and then see this oppressive and contradictory reality as something they could transform. Conscientization implies the "process by which the poor can become aware of their own humanity and their innate power to reshape an oppressive society" (Srinivasan 1989: 213). It involves those who were previously viewed as objects of development being viewed as active subjects. According to Carmen (1990: 73) "it, is much more than an increase in social awareness, it is geared essentially to the radical transformation of society, to Praxis" (Carmen 1990: 73). Praxis "represents the transition from critical thought to reflexive intervention in the world" (Giroux 1981: 177).

Freire's view that "no pedagogy which is truly liberating can remain distant from the oppressed by treating them as unfortunates and by presenting for their emulation models from among the oppressors" (1972: 35) had an impact on shaping the ideology of future calls for participatory development. It stressed the need for practitioners to embed their work in the views, behaviour and ethics of the participants they were seeking to work with (Mosse 2001). This approach can be seen throughout the discourses of participatory development especially in the work of Rahman (1985, 1995), Fals Borda (1985) Guijt & Shah 1998 and Nelson and Wright (1995). These authors call for people to define their own development and for the recognition of the empowering quality of grass-roots development, thus reflecting Freire's liberation ideology. This approach enables local people's knowledge to be incorporated into programme planning (Mosse 2001). It is particularly relevant to participatory development as "peoples self development implies changing the relations of knowledge, to restore popular knowledge to a status of equity with professional knowledge" (Rahman 1993: 179).

Paulo Freire's work "has been and remains a powerful influence among those eager to develop theoretical and practical alternatives to mainstream development approaches" (Blackburn 2000: 3). Blackburn argues that "the genius of Freire's literacy method is that the process of acquiring literacy (or any other skill) takes place within the context of the participant's reality" (*ibid.*: 9). It had great appeal in the 1980s among workers engaged in the field of promoting alternative development. Freirean ideology has been applied by many organisations, including development NGOs, seeking to reduce inequalities (Carmen 1990, Kane 2001, Kindervatter 1979, Hall 1986, Travers 1997). According to Francis (2001: 75) "although the language of participatory development is widely current in mainstream development, its roots lie in part in the radical philosophy of

conscientization associated with Paulo Freire and the alternative vision of development articulated by NGO's in the 1960s". It became common for alternative approaches to be described as 'Freirean' until the popular 'buzz word' participation emerged. However, with the spread of Freirean approaches came a critique of his work from a variety of arenas, including Freire's own self-reflection on the process and its limitations (Freire 1985).

The limitations of the Freirean approach occur at two levels: firstly, there are technical limitations and challenges; and secondly, at a deeper level there are flaws in the philosophy underpinning the conscientization approach and the role of change agents in the promotion of this process. On the technical side, Freire's approach has been critiqued for being a time consuming slow process and for becoming standardised and not adhering to the whole process of engagement with local people at the local level (Taylor 1993). This has resulted in standard primers being adopted regardless of the context in which the programme is taking place. The Freirean process is undoubtedly, when done properly, a lengthy process. Change agents who utilise the approach are often constrained by both a lack of time and resources. Freire (1972) recommends that if decoding is not occurring, the fundamental themes can be introduced via the use of primers (for examples of these see Taylor 1993). However by introducing predefined primers into the process the participatory nature is reduced and the approach devalued. For the full potential to be realised the process must be followed in its totality and this includes enabling participants to choose their own issues for analysis, however slow that process may be.

It is essential that "the oppressed participate in a revolutionary process" (Freire 1972: 97). However, attempts by local people to act against and challenge the oppressive forces that they identify through the process of conscientization are likely to be met with resistance from the local elite. This is highlighted by Kindervatter's observation that "historically, changing socio-economic conditions have placed specific limits on the connection between emancipatory discourse and action consistent with that discourse" (1979: 128). It is vital therefore that the analysis of the oppression and the identification of appropriate action is truly located at the local level by local people so that any potential repercussions can be fully understood and accepted by the participants.

In many cases literacy programmes alone are not enough and other forms of support are needed if the structures of oppression are to be adequately challenged. The extent to which programmes that solely focus on raising the level of consciousness can lead to an enhanced livelihood, if the target groups remain dependent upon the richer households for at least part of their subsistence, is questioned by Howes & Sattar (1992). They emphasise the need for a holistic approach to be taken and highlight the need for supporting programmes to accompany the Freirean approach. Freire has also been critiqued for placing too much emphasis upon the cultural causes of oppression at the expense of other forms of oppression. According to Taylor (1993) the material used in the primers often lacks analysis of the social causes of poverty. He goes on to argue that Freire was "either unaware of the real dimensions of social poverty (as opposed to cultural poverty) or he chose to exclude this debate from the analysis" (*ibid.*: 109). Freire's work has also been critiqued for failing to pay enough attention to the diversity within the community, particularly for neglecting to explore the gendered dimension to oppression (Ledwith, 2001, McLaren & Leonard 1993, Mayo 1999, de Koning 1995), a point which he addressed in his later work<sup>77</sup>. Freire's later work criticised literacy primers where the teachers set the text as this frames the learners as passive vessels into which this knowledge should be poured (Freire 1985). He stressed the need for learning material to emerge from the communities themselves to avoid this misconception being perpetuated.

It has been claimed that "the process of conscientization *cannot* begin without an avant-garde, a group of dedicated people who will spark an interest in the oppressed people" (Zachariah 1988: 75). Conscientization gave an essential role to "pedagogy from outside the oppressed group (from dedicated intellectuals or activists) but attributed ultimate responsibility and initiative to the oppressed themselves" (Wolfe 1996: 127). Whilst some question the ability of the appearance of a conscience to be an induced event rather than a spontaneous occurrence (Steifel & Wolfe 1994) others have focused on the abilities of change agents to induce this change at the local level. Facilitating a process of dialogue, through the use of open-ended questions and debate amongst a group of participants, places a great demand on the dedication and ability of change agents. During the investigative process, theoretically, extensive notes are taken and are decoded in an open forum. The decoding activity requires a lot of skill and training, as agents need to be highly flexible in dealing with an open forum and have the ability to facilitate and manage discussion (Taylor 1993). Kindervatter (1979: 152) supports this stating that "an

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<sup>77</sup> For details of this see McLarnen & Leonard (1993).

agent's ability to truly 'facilitate' enhances the active participation of the people ". Freire's concept of dialogue requires a lot of the educator (Blackburn 2000). Freire himself recognised this when he noted that the process of dialogue " must be 'authentic', 'creative', and can only take place with 'sympathy and love' "(cited in Blackburn 2000: 8).

Care must be taken to avoid the values of the external agents being imposed upon 'recipients'. This does not mean that change agents are value free, the most that can be hoped for is that the recipients come to share these values and engage in the process of critical reflection that they are encouraging at the grassroots level. Change agents need to view themselves as participants in the process and not just facilitators. "If development workers feel that they only need to bring the people up to their own level of consciousness then this will lead to an unequal relationship in which the development workers attempt to dominate, to indoctrinate, the people" (Burkey 1993: 55). Experience from the grassroots however raises questions over the ability of change agents to truly engage in the dialogical process without imposing their own ideologies upon the intended participants. Midgley's (1986) analysis suggests that the conscientization approach suffers from being paternalistic about peasant culture and assumes that help is needed in order to liberate the peasants from their oppression. "Any predetermined vision of liberation from the outside is ultimately paternalistic, since it presupposes that the oppressed are incapable of determining their own endogenously produced vision of liberation" (Blackburn 2000: 12). Much of the literature raises questions over the level of skills that trained staff have in facilitating this process. According to Marshall (1991), teachers working on a voluntary basis often have a limited capacity to guide adult learners to a critical understanding of their own situation. This in the main is due to a lack of ongoing training. Burkey (1993) feels that a high level of commitment and an appropriate attitude towards the poor is required for change agents involved in the conscientization process to be effective and avoid being over paternalistic. The assumption that 'poor people' are ignorant poses a significant limitation to the Freirean ideology.

Rahnema (1996: 125) feels that the lack of attention given to the complexities of the 'external change agent' is a limitation of Freire's work and can help to explain why "highly ideologized 'agent of change' or 'vanguards', have tried to use conscientization or participatory methods, simply as new and more subtle forms of manipulation". It is important that all people involved in the process engage fully in deconstructing and critically analysing their own realities and this includes the change agents. "Freirean

methods of dialogical action and conscientization are perceived by the [participatory] movement as a crucial instrument of interaction, aimed not only at liberating the oppressed, but eventually also the intervenor from his [or her] own conditioning as a 'bourgeois' thinker" (Rahnema 1996: 125).

As with participatory development, there are issues related to the labelling by external agents of potential target groups associated with non-formal education programmes. Marshall (1991) raises questions regarding who has the right to define what is functional for whom. Burkey (1993) asks how does a change agent actually recognise when a group has reached conscientization. For these limitations to be addressed it is essential that due care and attention is paid to the complexities of participation and that 'target' communities are fully included in the decision making process. To take on such an approach the change agent needs to have an all-encompassing ideology that focuses on the causes of oppression within communities and includes a significant amount of self-reflection. Taylor (1993: 10) describes Freire's pedagogy as "not just a method of teaching or a way of learning: it is a way of life". Education is needed for both the oppressed and the oppressors and requires radical change within society (McLaren & Leonard 1993). Freire's approach was developed in the context of Latin America, as such the primers that evolved from Latin America are situated in a particular time and place. Giroux (1981: 128) notes that when applying the model to other contexts agents need to "take into consideration vastly different socio-political and cultural experiences". This supports the need for primers to be developed locally. However, despite the limitations noted "Freire's work demonstrates that the dynamic of progressive change stems, in part, from working with the people rather than on them" (Giroux 1981: 139). The methods proposed by Freire were intended to create new forms of knowledge, power and understanding of reality with the aim of challenging oppression and promoting a process of equitable transformative development.

On a more ideological basis, Freire's work has been critiqued for its fundamental assumptions about the nature of oppression and his level of understanding at the local level. Street (1995), whilst recognising Paulo Freire as one of the most influential radical literacy campaigners, highlights the limitation of the assumption that illiterate people are unable to 'read the world'. The fundamental flaw in this assumption was the belief that illiterate people were ignorant of the causes of their oppression and lacked both the self-awareness and critical consciousness to understand the world in which they live. The focus on literacy as a key to development further exacerbated the myth that illiterate



people were in need of help to become 'developed'. Indeed, the whole focus on literacy as a means of development and self improvement, however radical the transformation, brought with it the extra baggage that literacy and development were inextricably linked and reinforced the 'westernised' conceptualisation of development, whereby being literate is seen as an indicator of development. This perception fails to acknowledge and respect the multiple, dynamic and complex abilities and literacies that exist within 'peasant cultures' and reinforces the image of peasants as being 'ignorant' and 'backward'. Blackburn (2000) supports these concerns by arguing that Freirean activists have tended to devalue traditional and vernacular forms of power and Freire himself oversimplifies the complexity of power relations by having a dichotomy between the oppressed and oppressors. However, Freire was very aware of the complexities of literacy, and discussed how it could be used for different purposes, such as to domesticate rather than liberate. He supports the argument that there is no monolithic 'thing' called literacy (Barton 1994).

Since the emergence of the conscientization approach Freirean methods have spread beyond literacy programmes to other alternative approaches to development. Ledwith (2001: 178) warns that "if we adopt Freirean concepts as a form of liberal rather than critical pedagogy, the vision of a truly mutual, reciprocal, non-hierarchical educative process becomes illusory" and stresses the need to address issues of power and complexity if the true potential of Freirean philosophy is to be realised. In essence Freire's work emphasised the need for new spaces whereby people could come together, meet and critically analyse, decode and act upon the forces of oppression that lie at the heart of their exclusion and poverty. Hall (1981: 9) notes the importance of the visit by Paulo Freire to Tanzania in 1979, regarding it as "a stimulus to many social scientists who might not have been impressed by the existing experience of many adult educators or community development workers". He goes on to note "one of the most useful roles of Paulo Freire has been to bring some of the current ideas of Latin American social scientists to the attention of persons in other parts of the world" (*ibid.*). Francis (2001: 75) notes the centrality of Freire's work to participatory development movement and goes on to say "in the English speaking world, perhaps one of the most influential writers on participatory methods has been Robert Chambers, and the method with which he is associated with, Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA)". It is to the work of Chambers that this chapter now turns.

### **3.2.4 Robert Chambers as a key actor**

Robert Chambers is often cited a key fore-founder of participatory development and is “widely recognized as one of the main driving forces behind the great surge of interest in the use of Participatory Rural Appraisal around the world” (Guijt & Shah 1998:x). Chambers’ (1983) seminal text, ‘Rural Development Putting the Last First’ highlights the biases<sup>78</sup> and limitations of traditional development research and argued that the focus of the external interventions and development in general needed to shift to local participants and expertise rather than external experts. Particular attention is paid to the role of outsiders and the ways outsiders work to promote rural development, as they perceive it needs to be promoted. His later work focuses on questions such as whose knowledge and whose reality counts (Chambers 1994a, 1997). Chambers (1983: 73) acknowledges that the work of Paulo Freire in pedagogy of the oppressed “has been an inspiration to those seeking methods of research in which rural people are actors rather than objects of observation and sources of data”. In particular it focuses on people who have been marginalised and excluded from the benefits of the development and decision making processes which impact upon their own livelihoods and ultimately own development.

Chambers main contribution to the ‘participatory development’ movement is in exploring the value and use of participatory tools for research and engaging in participatory activities at the grassroots level. His work is associated with the development, spread and adoption of many of the visualisation tools that are so central to practitioners attempting to engage in participatory activities at the local level. Specifically he is associated with the emergence of both Rapid Rural Appraisal and Participatory Appraisal (RRA & PRA). In his book he made practical suggestions to support this reversal in learning and outlined the principles of rapid rural appraisal. It is important to note that Chambers himself says “I am not a creator or forefather of participatory development of PRA I have just told stories about my experiences and interactions in the various countries in which I have worked - of what I have experienced in the field” (Chambers 1998 speaking at a Dialogue Session in CERID Kathmandu). This reflects the sentiments of Hall (1981) who acknowledges that a wide range of influential people are involved in the process of organising and influencing participatory research but emphasises that “few, if any, of us

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<sup>78</sup> These are cited as rural, project, dry season, professional and personal biases. Within the personal bias he discusses the numerous biases against poor people based on issues such as status, wealth, gender, user and adopter focus as well as active, present and living biases.

can say we are the author or originator of ideas and issues, such is the collective nature of our work" (7).

Chambers (1983) calls for three main changes in development research; firstly, long term careful investigation and secondly, for more ad hoc inventive research. The third call, more importantly, addresses a deeper issue that reflects the centrality of control and ownership in the research process. He stresses the need for "sensitive research, which shifts initiative to the rural people as partners in the learning, enabling them to use and augment their own skills, knowledge and power," (*ibid.*: 74). It is here that the real radical change lies as it requires a reversal in the relationship between 'uppers' and 'lowers'<sup>79</sup> and calls for indigenous knowledge systems to be respected and recognised as equal to more 'scientific' western systems of knowledge. In line with this Chambers also stresses the importance of acknowledging the visual as a form of communication. It is for these reasons that his work has been so influential in the field of indigenous knowledge and has recently seen an increase in interest (Ellen 2002, Grillo 2002). Chambers' work (1983, 1994a, 1994b, 1995, 1997) asserts the importance of placing local realities at the heart of development interventions, and the need to transform agents of development from being directive 'experts' to 'facilitators' of local knowledge and capabilities (Hickey & Mohan 2003). It represents a radical shift in mind set, from seeing the external expert as being the main source of information and knowledge to seeing others as equal and possessing knowledge that is to be valued and respected. Chambers more recent writing explores the importance of considering the personal dimension of development and he calls for a 'pedagogy or the non-oppressed' as a means of promoting responsible well-being as noted above. Such an approach firmly places personal reflection, the development of self-awareness and responsibility being taken for one's own actions to be central to the development process. It highlights the need for development to focus on those with power as well as those without if it is to be truly holistic.

### **3.2.5 Multiple meanings – typologies and continua**

The work of Freire (1972) and Chambers (1983) amongst others, has played an important role in the emergence and spread of the participatory development movement. Despite the wealth of experience and research within the field of participatory development a review of the literature highlights the lack of a clear conceptual basis as to what exactly participatory development is, what it means and what its end goals are. There are a

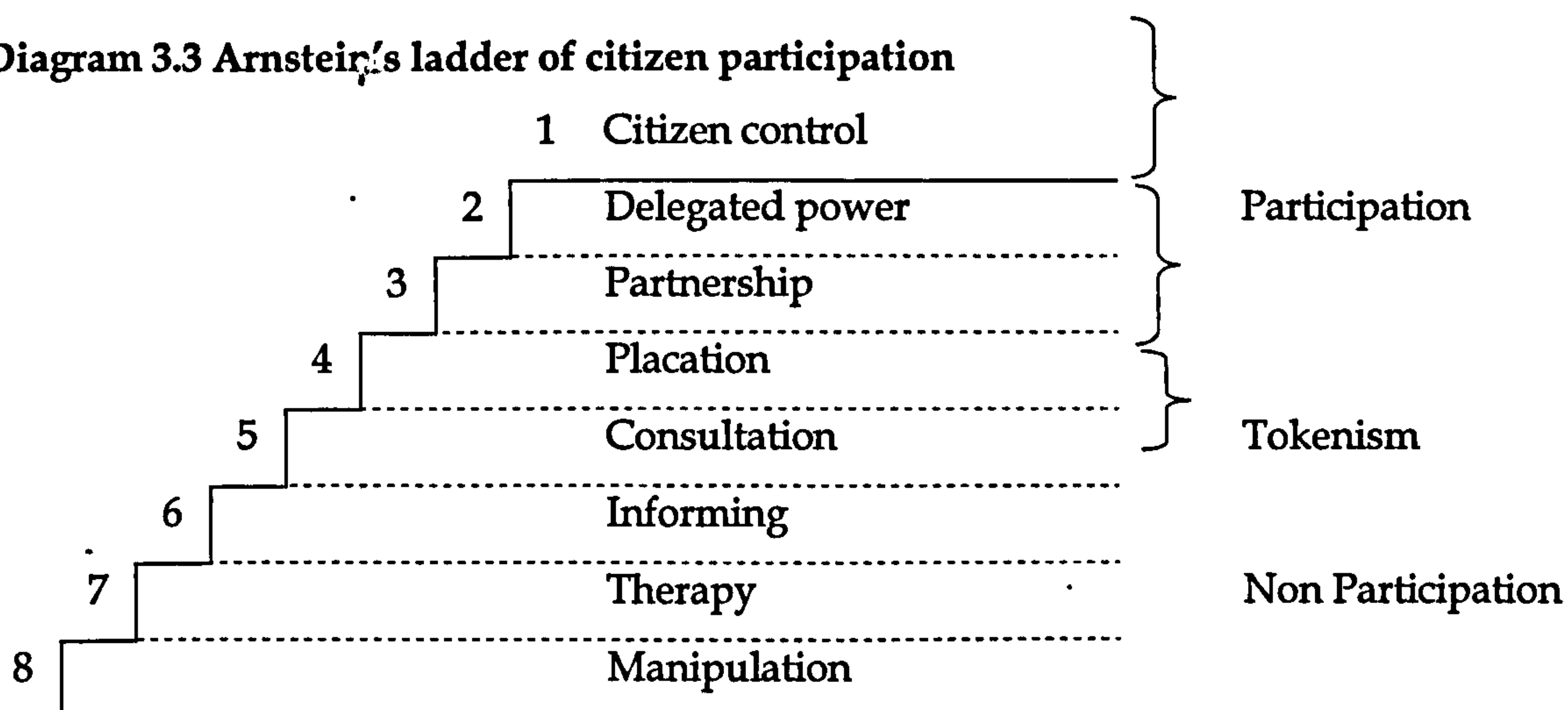
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<sup>79</sup> The powerful versus the marginalised or elite versus the excluded.

myriad of meanings and typologies that aim to encapsulate what is essentially a dynamic and complex movement.

Arnstein's (1969) ladder of citizen participation represents one of the first typologies of participation and remains one of the most commonly cited models within the literature on community participation. It was based on the experience of participation within the context of various programmes in the United States and has been applied to the context of developing countries by activists and academics. In this ladder eight rungs are presented divided into three sub-categories with the lowest rungs representing non-participation, through to tokenistic participation and at the highest level participation represented by citizen control (Diagram 3.3).

**Diagram 3.3 Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation**



Source: Arnstein 1969.

The ladder highlights that relatively few strands are categorised as 'citizen power' and that citizen empowerment is the ultimate goal (Watt *et al.* 2000). Power and control are therefore crucial to the participatory process. Due to the centrality of power Chougill (1996) proposed an alternative ladder with 'empowerment' being placed on the top rung as the ultimate goal. To move up the ladder and away from 'tokenism' people need to take control of the process hence reinforcing the centrality of power in the conceptualisation of participation. Arnstein's ladder offers a useful representation and imagery but does not fully capture the complexity and dynamic nature of participatory development. Within the conservation and development literature the typology developed by Pretty (1994) is often cited as a means of classifying approaches to participation (Table 3.1). This typology has been particularly prevalent in the literature on Integrated Conservation and Development Programmes and is therefore a useful model to apply to the Annapurna Conservation Area Project. According to the typology

proposed by Pimbert & Pretty (1994) the model employed by ACAP falls into the 'interactive' participation typology whereby the interactive joint analysis takes place, new local institutions are formed or existing structures are strengthened. On Arnstein's ladder the ACAP approach would fall on the partnership or delegated power rung.

**Table 3.1 Overview of terminology associated with 'participation'**

|   | Typology                                 | Components of each type   |
|---|--|---|
| 1 | Passive Participation                    | People told what to do - information belongs to external professionals  |
| 2 | Participation in information gathering   | People participate by answering questions posed by external agents - lack opportunity to influence proceedings  |
| 3 | Participation via consultation           | People consulted external agents define problems and solutions  |
| 4 | Participation due to material incentives | People participate by providing resources in return for incentives - people have no stake in prolonging activities once incentives end  |
| 5 | Functional participation                 | People form groups to meet predetermined objectives - involvement not sought in early stages of project cycle   |
| 6 | Interactive participation                | People participate in joint analysis that leads to action plans formation of new groups or strengthening existing ones. Groups take control of local decisions and have stake in maintaining structures and practices |
| 7 | Self mobilisation                        | People participate by taking initiatives independent of external institutions self initiated mobilisation and collective action may or may not challenge existing distributions of wealth and power                   |

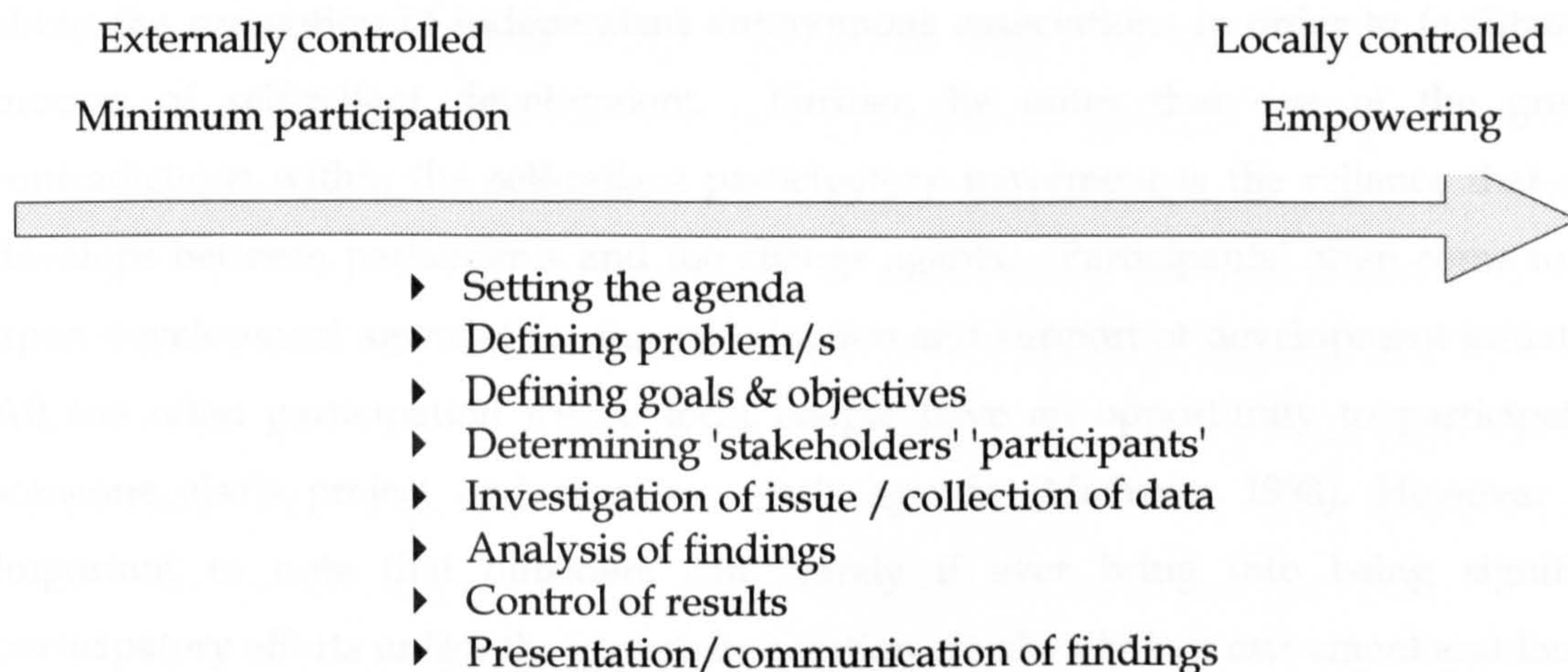
Adapted from Pimbert & Pretty 1994 cited in IIED (1994: 19).

Typologies such as these prove useful in enabling organisations, or researchers and activists, to identify the mode of participation with which they align themselves and their organisations. The complexity of participation begins to be uncovered through examining the two alternative typologies presented above. This is evident in the variety of terms used to try to define participatory development. The lack of clarity in the terminology has led to a variety of attempts to redefine 'participation' more explicitly. It has led to several authors claiming that some approaches to participation are more 'genuine' (Goulet 1989) or 'authentic' (Wolfe 1996) than others. A diverse range of terms has emerged in an attempt to clarify the aims and objectives of participatory development such as 'people centred' (Oakley and Marsden 1984) 'self-reliant' (Burkey 1993), 'empowering' (Freidman 1992), 'active' (Rogers 1992, Pretty & Pimbert 1994) 'autonomous' (Carmen 1996) and 'transformative' (White 1996)<sup>80</sup>.

<sup>80</sup> See Appendix 3.2 for a review of these and others.

In proposing new typologies, continua or terminology for participation the central questions that are often asked relate to who is participating in what, how are people participating and who controls the process as well as what is the ultimate purpose of participation. In particular the question is posed whether participation is a means or an end? Implicit within 'participatory development' is a process of intervention or research of one party (often external and powerful agents) in the lives of others (local, marginal oppressed). Often staff working for NGOs carry out this work. The agents involved in these support mechanisms need to internalise the underlying philosophy of participatory development and be committed to radical transformative change and development. Fundamentally, this requires a shift in control, or to use Chambers (1983) phrase 'handing over the stick'. It is essential that the process and control of the process is embedded at the local level if these interactions are to be as meaningful as possible. For this to occur all stages of the intervention process, as depicted below in Diagram 3.4, must as far as possible be controlled at the local level.

**Diagram 3.4 Intervention or research process and degrees of participation**



Source: adapted from Chambers 1994b, Pretty 1994, White, 1996.

Participatory development requires a change in the thinking and underlying ideologies that dominate today's society. It requires 'activists' to disempower themselves in order to empower the participants at the local level. One of the limitations of Freire's work, discussed earlier, was the lack of incorporation of the 'change agents' or 'facilitators' into the process of critical analysis and reflection which can lead to them dominating or indoctrinating the target participants and reducing their ability to act as catalysts. For this reason it is important that the participation process itself remains inclusive and is not exclusively for the 'poor'. Often control remains in the hands of the 'change agents' and therefore limits the potential outcomes of the process. Terms such as 'manipulative,

'tokenistic', 'technocratic' and 'partial' all refer to participatory processes that do not seek to empower people to take control of the whole process. Ideally participation and control should be gained at all stages from setting the agenda and determining the focus of the process, through to designing programmes and devising actions that may improve the situation in which the participants find themselves. Equally important is that participants critically reflect on the process and evaluate the outcomes as well as present these findings to wider audiences. This does not mean that people have to be completely independent and rely totally on their own resources. It does not exclude change agents themselves from also contributing their skills and knowledge to this process. It simply requires them to acknowledge and respect the skills and knowledge at the local level and to ensure that they, as external agents, do not dominate the intervention process.

Burkey (1994: 206-208) provides a useful reference point in defining self-reliant participation by stating that it is about promoting social transformation and autonomy. It is about acknowledging development as a process in which change agents have a valuable contribution to play if they are committed to the concept of conscientization, and it is about the promotion of independent autonomous associations in order to facilitate the process of self-reliant development. Further, he notes that one of the greatest contradictions within the self-reliant participatory movement is the reliance that often develops between participants and the change agents. 'Participants' often come to rely upon development agencies for the introduction and support of development initiatives. All too often participation means local people have an opportunity to participate in someone else's project and someone else's agenda (Michener 1998). However it is important to note that outsiders can "rarely if ever bring into being significant participatory efforts unless the groups in question are already in a movement and looking for help" (Stiefel & Wolfe 1994: 137).

People's perception of participation is "not shaped by academic rhetoric but rather by past experiences. For them participation has little to do with self-reliance, empowerment or even efficiency. Instead, it is an opportunity to extract resources from willing agencies" (Michener 1998: 2116). It is important therefore to consider the motivation and philosophy of both the agencies and individuals involved in participatory development. It is also important to recognise that the distinct categories of 'insider' and 'outsider' rarely exist as coherent entities and that participants may play multiple roles in the process (Dyck 1993, Moss 1993). No change agent is value free, hence the important role self-reflexivity plays within the participatory development movement.

### 3.3 Participatory research – from RRA and PRA to PAR

Three key movements have profoundly shaped participatory research: popular education, feminism and the international grassroots development movement (Finn 1994). Participatory research is not just a 'third world issue' but has relevance and value to any context where exclusion and inequalities prevail (Finn 1994, Hall 1981, Rogers 1992, Sarri & Sarri 1992). For example social work within Europe and North America also draws upon this emerging tradition. Hall (1981) provides an excellent overview of participatory research by reflecting upon the work of the Participatory Research Network established in 1977. The International Council for Adult Education supports this work by noting that "it appeared that the concept of participatory research, with its emphasis on 'people as experts', shared a common premise with adult education" (Hall 1981: 6).

Participatory research differs from traditional research in its commitment to "the empowerment of learning for all those engaged in the process" (*ibid.*: 6). Participatory research is essentially about people power and praxis and links into a long and growing tradition of alternative radical researchers who have been involved in the evolution of qualitative research (Reason 1994). A diverse range of terms are found within participatory approaches to research such as Participatory Research (PR), Action Research (AR), Participatory Action Research (PAR), Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) and Collaborative Research (CR) to name a few. Participation is a central feature to them all but as as Dudley (1993) reminds us, it has been at the top of the development agenda for at least twenty years and "it is still far from clear what community participation is, how it comes about, and what it is actually for" (Dudley 1993: 8). In order to address this question this section will explore the differences between RRA, PRA and PAR.

Rapid Rural Appraisal and Participatory Rural Appraisal (RRA & PRA) have emerged from the grassroots offering alternative means of both 'working with' and 'researching with' people. Chambers (1994b: 957) believes that "RRA began and continues as a better way for outsiders to learn". Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) is proposed as a means of overcoming some of the constraints of 'quick and dirty' rural development tourism research<sup>81</sup>. RRA aims to overcome the time and cost factors associated with long term

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<sup>81</sup> These constraints can be seen amongst researchers engaging in development research where the research is often funded by external agencies with acute time and financial constraints leaving researchers feeling as if they are involved in 'safari research' whereby they go to a place for a short intense period of time then leave to remote destinations to reflect upon the findings they have extracted from the field. It was disillusionment with the value of such an approach that initially inspired Chambers to write his text in 1983 and to make pragmatic suggestions as to how these dilemmas could be addressed.



research into rural societies whilst attempting to engage with people at the local level, in an attempt to 'put the last first'. These participatory methods stress the importance of visual representation of data rather than the written word and have played a significant role in enabling people to record and discuss local issues. Techniques such as participatory mapping activities, transect walks, constructing seasonal calendars and creating community or resource maps have proved effective at gaining access to local knowledge. It has taken the emphasis away from the written word and highlighted the importance and value of visual representation. This is one of the most fundamental benefits of the RRA and PRA movement. DeKoning (1995: 36) notes how these "methods can create a feeling of achievement amongst participants, which in turn helps enhance self confidence and self esteem". Visualisation techniques also help as they provide a constant point of reference for discussion and reflection and can enhance the capacity at the local level to evaluate change and to demonstrate these changes to external agents involved in the development process (Linney 1995). The plethora of material that results from these visualisation methods is evident within the literature on participatory development. One important benefit of employing visualisation techniques is that it has the potential to raise the confidence of people who have previously been labelled as lacking knowledge. According to Chambers (1994) it was not until the mid-1980's that the term 'participation' and 'participatory' entered the RRA vocabulary representing a move towards research that is more empowering than extractive, based on 'insiders' reflection and analysis and for the use of participants rather than the investigator. All participatory research must consider how the lives of those participating can be enhanced starting from within the framework of their own beliefs and values (Swantz 1996).

Participatory research stresses the educational aspect of social investigation (Kane 1997). There are strong links in particular to Adult Education, with the work of Paulo Freire being particularly prominent. However, it is increasingly recognised that these approaches are equally relevant to work with children (Johnson *et al.* 1996, Johnson & Ivan-Smith 1996, Sapkota & Sharma 1996). The use of PRA in development research and planning has led practitioners to reflect upon what kind of participation actually occurs (Guijt & Cornwall 1995, Chambers 1994). A key concern amongst participatory practitioners, given the rise in popularity of participatory approaches, is that agendas can often be driven from outside of the community. According to Guijt & Cornwall (1995: 2) it "has become clear that the use of participatory methods alone does not guarantee participation in setting the development agenda".

Both RRA and PRA are pragmatic attempts to ground the research process at the local level. PRA however represents a more comprehensive attempt to incorporate people 'genuinely' into the research investigation process. Diagram 3.5 serves to illustrate the key differences between RRA and PRA. PRA is viewed as a more empowering mode of research with a significant level of ownership embedded at the local level.

**Diagram 3.5 Continuum of research from RRA to PRA**

| Nature of process                                    | RRA                         |           |         | PRA                         |
|--|-----------------------------|-----------|---------|-----------------------------|
| Mode   | Extractive                  | Elicitive | Sharing | Empowering                  |
| Outsiders role                                       | Investigator                | —————     |         | Facilitator                 |
| Information owned, analysed and used by participants | Outsiders                   | —————     |         | Insiders                    |
| Methods used   | Mainly RRA<br>Sometimes PRA |           |         | Mainly PRA<br>sometimes RRA |

Source: Chambers (1994b: 59).

For PRA to live up to its promise of being empowering participation needs to be enlisted at all stages of the intervention/research process. Local people need to be included at all stages of the research process from agenda setting, decision making to the implementation of any subsequent actions that may arise out of the process. It is particularly important that participation is sought in the early stages of the research cycle as the earlier in the cycle participation is gained, with participants requesting support and setting the agenda, the more 'genuine' participation is deemed to be (Goulet 1989, Rogers 1992). For the research process to be as participatory as possible it needs to fall to the far right of the continuum in as many aspects as is feasible, with as much control being devolved to the local level as possible given any financial and time constraints.

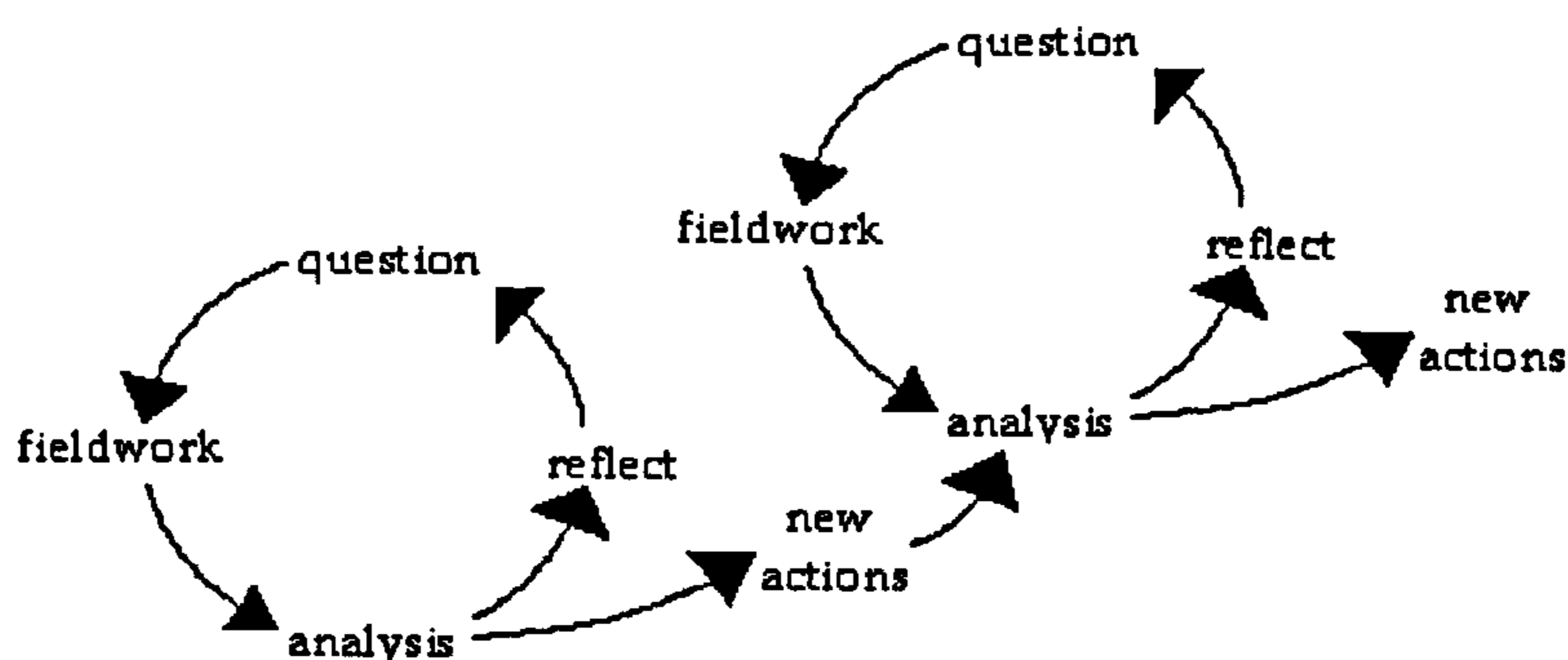
In addition to this it also requires those who hold the power in the intervention or research process to give up their control of the process if they are to truly 'hand over the stick' to the local people. As Holland & Blackburn (1998: 1) note "sustainability in policy making demands that those in power disempower themselves". It also requires the intervention process to be viewed as an ongoing process rather than a one off event if it is to ensure that participation does not become tokenistic. The other element highlighted above, is that of using the information and acting upon the knowledge generated. Through actions the participants can enhance their livelihoods. This emphasis on acting

brings us on to explore the more transformatory, radical and explicitly political area of action research and in particular Participatory Action Research (PAR).

Chambers (1997) makes the distinction between 'development practitioners' and 'academics in development' whereby the practitioners are preoccupied with action and the latter with theorising and understanding or deconstructing development. In the main Chambers' work is aimed at development practitioners who are working under specific conditions of engagement with disempowered communities, time and financial constraints dominate the decisions they make and Chambers takes a pragmatic stance in proposing tools to enhance the way in which they work with local communities and minimise the constraints that they are faced with. However, participatory action research offers the development academic the chance to cross over into the role traditionally taken by the practitioners. It allows academics, through working collaboratively and getting involved, to become active within the research or development process and allows activists the opportunity to engage in critical research.

According to Dick (1999) action research can be described as a family of research methodologies that pursue action (or change) and research (or understanding) at the same time<sup>82</sup>. The research process is seen as an ongoing cycle of critical analysis and reflection, based upon Freirean ideology, and is therefore different from conventional research that is more linear in nature and less dynamic (see Diagram 3.6).

**Diagram 3.6 Action research cycle**



Source: Wadsworth (1998)

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<sup>82</sup> A multitude of resources and sites can be found on the web; worth noting here is the site developed by Jack Whitehead Action Research.net posted on the Bath University web site <http://www.bath.ac.uk/~edsajw/>, the Action Research Resources web page <http://www.scu.edu.au/schools/gcm/ar/arhome.html>, the Action Research International hosted by Bob Dick (2000) and the Action Research site hosted by Coventry University <http://legacywww.coventry.ac.uk/legacy/ched/research/R-LTeaching.htm>. In addition to this a new peer reviewed journal *Action Research* was launched in 2003 with the aim of furthering dialogue amongst action researchers and the wider research community.

In most of its forms action research does this by using a cyclical process that alternates critical reflection and action continuously refining methods, data and interpretation in the light of the understanding developed in the earlier cycles. It is thus an emergent process that takes shape as understanding increases; it is an iterative process that converges towards a better understanding of what happens. In most of its forms, though not always, it is also participative and qualitative (Dick 1999).

Laws *et al.* (2003) capture the essence of action research in the diagram depicting a 'wheel of participation' (Diagram 3.7). The wheel evokes a more dynamic image of participatory research being a journey or a process and suggests that it can turn both ways, thus increasing levels of participation in the process do not naturally follow from each other. "The wheel suggests the idea of travel, and reminds us that research is a means to an end, and not generally an end in itself" (*ibid.*: 61). It also reinforces the point raised earlier that participation is required at all stages in the cycle if the research process is to realise its full potential.

**Diagram 3.7 Wheel of community participation in research**



Source: Laws *et al.* (2003: 62)

By placing local community members at the heart of the process in this visualisation local control by communities is highlighted as a key goal. Further it stresses that the research is to be used by the participants through using the findings to argue their case. However, the diagram does not include any detail on what role external researchers should play in this process. This issue is central to PAR. Whilst PAR shares the same goal as PRA, for

people to produce knowledge, it aims to empower at a deeper level through a process of constructing and using their own knowledge. As such "PAR values the processes of genuine collaboration" (Reason 1994: 328). PAR therefore involves researchers and community members in a collaborative, co-learning process that integrates investigation with education and collective action.

PAR is a research process which is "seen as part of a total educational experience which serves to establish community needs and increase awareness and commitment within the community" (Hall 1978: 162). PAR is about "action research which is participatory and participatory research that unites with action" (Rahman 1985: 108). PAR according to Sarri & Sarri (1992) is characterised as; participatory, empowering, experiential, co-learning, creative, collaborative and politically active. The two central components then are, as the term suggests, participation and action. But participation by whom and in what? And action by whom for what?

Participation is by both the 'external' researcher and local community members. Rather than being categorised as 'informants', 'subjects' or 'objects' in the research process people are invited to participate and share in the research process. This is reflected by the concerns expressed by Swantz (1996) regarding the nature of language used within academia. She expresses her unease in talking about people involved in the research process as informants stating that "my friends were not 'informants' -even less could I think of them as objects or 'targets'" (Swantz 1996: 123). Collaborative participatory research has the potential to transform the researched into active participants and facilitates a process by which they become co-researchers if not the sole researchers. As Kesby (2000: 424) notes "the term participant (rather than 'informant' or 'respondent') is significant then and signals a particular epistemology". It places the participants as 'knowers' and producers of knowledge. She criticises research that insists people be studied by impartial outsiders in the search for 'scientific' knowledge. Swantz (1996: 124) feels "it was cultural arrogance for anyone to study the people from another culture as a kind of specimen without ever asking them what they themselves wanted to find out or without discussing with them the goals of the study".

PAR avoids the dominance of scientific knowledge<sup>83</sup> as "an immediate objective of PAR is to return to the people the legitimacy of the knowledge they are capable of producing through their own collectives and verification systems" (Rahman 1985: 128). Additionally PAR places research on the same level rather than above 'other' knowledge. It also indicates a reciprocal relationship in the research process. For some, particularly feminist, post-structural and post-development writers the rise of participatory action research reflects attempts to make the research process more open and transparent as well as empowering and politically activating for those involved (Katz 1994, Kobayashi 1994, McDowell 1997, Nast 1994). It can potentially redress some of the concerns expressed earlier in relation to the potentially extractive nature of 'safari research' or 'rural development tourism' discussed above. Furze *et al.* (1996) observes that a central feature of both RRA and PRA is that they play an important role in legitimising local knowledge and acknowledge the importance of the located and situated nature of indigenous knowledge.

The ultimate aim of PAR is not only to recognise inequalities but also to take actions that aim to confront and redress them. Swantz (1996: 124) feels that a "participatory researcher acts as a catalyst for engendering a spirit of inquiry into areas in which the people themselves have an interest". People are therefore recognised as agents of their own development. Cornwall & Jewkes (1995) reinforce the need for participation to be engaged throughout the research process to enable people to be "brought into the research as owners of their own knowledge and empowered to take action" (1670). Rahman (1985: 128) notes that participants have the "right to use this knowledge ....as a guide to their own action". Within the realms of PAR the focus is on those included in the research process to be involved in the production of knowledge for action 'in the field' (Kesby 2000). It is for this reason that it is sometimes referred to as PLA.

Participatory research is also differentiated from conventional research in the alignment of power within the research process (Cornwall & Jewkes 1995). It has been influenced by a number of traditions, most notably feminism (Eyles 1993, Gatenby & Humphries 2000, Harding 1987, Maguire 2001, Moss 1993, Skeggs 2001). In particular feminism and action research share the view that the "impetus to redefine power and its manifestations in research came from lived experiences.... and from experiences with the poor and

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<sup>83</sup> It is important to note that scientific rationality and knowledge is not excluded. Participants may decide to establish themselves as fully scientific and draw upon scientific knowledge and expertise in order to resolve a number of issues. The focus here is on indigenous local knowledge systems gaining the respect they deserve.

marginalised in adult or popular education, community development and development assistance" (Maguire 2001: 65). However, it is important to note "while participation holds the potential to radically alter the politics of fieldwork it does not dissolve all power relations between the researcher and researched, nor is it free from ethical dilemmas" (Kesby 2000: 432). Laws *et al.* (2003: 62) in relation to the 'wheel of participation' note that "it should be remembered that participatory research is a partnership process. While professionals need to be conscious of the power they have, and make every effort to facilitate community members in having a say, it is not helpful if professionals feel inhibited from contributing their own skills as well. Researchers should not get too agonized about the power they take, for example in undertaking analysis of the data". Nevertheless, it is essential that the researcher engages in an in-depth process of reflection in order to explore these power imbalances and to achieve the transparency required (Fuller 1999, McGee 2002). It is important that researchers recognise that PAR takes both time and patience to realise its potential (Sarri & Sarri 1992). It is not a quick fix solution.

The focus of the participatory research approach is usually on change agents or 'catalysts' working with the 'excluded', 'oppressed' and 'marginalised'. This agent may be from the local 'community' but is often from outside. The process of investigation is usually collective in nature and therefore leads to collective action. This mirrors the key elements of the Freirean approach to education and conscientization, and hence is prone to the same limitations. This raises important questions regarding the role of external agents in stimulating a process of critical reflection that is likely to lead to action, which may or may not be confrontational in nature. Rahman (1985: 107) notes that change agents are often from the 'well educated' classes and that the "tradition of intellectuals stimulating and assisting popular struggles is an age-old one". Rahman (1985) presents us with a number of case studies of local initiatives where change agents have been involved in mobilising a process of self-reliance at the local level within the context of Asia. Some of the characteristics of these successful interventions are noted as being, creating opportunities for people to meet periodically to review experiences, the dependence on the initial catalyst ceasing through the development of skills at the local level and framing the research process as subordinate to the people's collective interest as perceived by them. These characteristics present researchers with significant challenges and are fully explored within the following chapters in relation to how these were addressed with this thesis.

The many positive aspects of PAR have been highlighted above in addition to some of the challenges it presents for the researcher. Within the field of development however, concern has been expressed over the spread and co-option of PAR (Chambers 1994, Francis 1996, Gaventa & Cornwall 2001, Guijt & Cornwall 1995, Rahman 1985, Rahnema 1992, White 1996). In its true sense PAR opposes empiricism, logical positivism and structuralism and recognises that all research is value biased in terms of class, gender and many other aspects. It has emancipatory objectives and opposes the predominant neo-liberalist development paradigm which has prevailed for so long. "PAR, after all, is threatening to become a respectable intellectual movement, and participatory researchers are gaining in social status" (Rahman 1985: 124). While the spread of PAR is seen as being a positive move practitioners warn of the dangers of it becoming institutionalised, watered down and de-politicised (Sarri & Sarri 1992).

However, despite the emergence of PAR as a popular form of research Rahman (1985: 108) feels that "it *cannot* be claimed that PAR has yet reached a convergent theoretical position". When the terminology is adopted by organisations such as the World Bank then a measure of caution is needed (Francis 2001, Rahman 1985, Swantz 1996). This lack of a clear conceptual basis has enabled PAR to be co-opted by less radical organisations as they adopt the methods without the underlying philosophy. This lack of conceptual clarity is a key area of concern within the field of PAR (Guijt & Cornwall 1995). However they also note that by attempting to define it too tightly you risk the danger of destroying the key characteristics and face the paradox of it becoming what it rose up in opposition to! It is important to recognise that "PAR is more of an attitude or approach rather than a series of techniques" and that essentially "local people are empowered to take charge of the research process and to implement potential solutions or to take action on concerns. Ideally, through this process the initial agents of change become redundant" (Cornwall & Jewkes 1995: 1670). The lack of conceptual clarity noted within the field of PAR is mirrored in the discourses of participatory development and is seen as being central to the current backlash against participatory development.

### **3.4 Participation as tyranny - the need to reconceptualise**

The critiques aimed at participatory development, like those aimed at Freire's work, have centred on a number of key themes. Firstly, that participation has been co-opted and taken on in a mechanistic manner without due regard to the underlying principles and philosophy. This critique raises questions about the agencies involved in the promotion



of participatory development and questions the role that change agents should and can play in the promotion of participatory development. Secondly, that participatory development practitioners and theorists do not pay enough attention to diversity, and thus undermine participation as an apolitical and locally situated practice. These critiques of participatory development have led to calls for the underlying philosophy of participatory development to be reviewed and more coherently articulated.

### **3.4.1 Co-option and loss of meaning**

The link between NGOs and participatory development was noted earlier, however in the past two decades there has been a rapid uptake of 'participatory approaches' within the development establishment as a whole including by Governments and multilateral agencies such as the World Bank. The popularity of tools and approaches, developed by the likes of Chambers, has played a pivotal role in this uptake as they offered a practical way of 'reaching' although not necessarily 'empowering' the poor. Government and multilateral agencies have adopted participatory approaches to overcome some of the barriers and limitations that they face in the promotion of more traditional mainstream development activities. According to Michener (1998: 2105) "participation is no longer limited to more progressive organisations such as non governmental organisations (NGOs) it has an important place in the rhetoric of the development giants". Some question the ability of mainstream institutions, such as the State and the World Bank, to engage in radical participatory development due to the inherent ideological contradictions that exist (Francis 2001, Stiefel & Wolfe 1994). By the end of the 1990s many were arguing that participatory development had become institutionalised and depoliticised, losing its radical transformative roots (Cleaver 1999, Cooke & Kothari 2001, Hickey & Mohan 2003, Michener 1998, White *et al.* 1994, White 1996, Williams 2003).

Chambers (1995) himself noted that there were many dangers facing PRA as the approach spread. In particular he warned against 'faddism', doing it because it is popular and fashionable, 'formalism', following the approach to the letter but not adopting the whole spirit of participation, treating PRA as a one off event- rather than seeing it as a process and a change in approach to all work, conducting PRA by command - because you have been told to do it yet have little belief in or understanding of the underlying principles; and finally, routinization and rut - whereby the approach is applied time after time and loses its meaning and life. These concerns lie at the heart of the critical discourse of participatory development as a whole. The advantages of the tools of participation such

as speed, visibility of outputs and amenability to be used on a large scale “may also turn out to be its greatest weakness” (Mosse 1994: 522). “From the World Bank to the United Nations agencies to a range of NGOs, increasingly, ‘participation’ has become a required component of evaluation, appraisal, assessment, training and research projects” (Brydon-Miller *et al.* 2003: 24). The standardisation of approaches and technical, rather than empowerment orientated, use of ‘participatory’ methods are highlighted as crucial paradoxes by Guijt (1996). Many argue the ‘spirit’ of participation is not being adopted and it is being applied in a mechanistic, domesticated and conformist manner with some arguing that it has almost become ‘tyrannical’ (Cooke & Kothari eds 2001).

Ultimately the spread of participatory development represents the de-politicisation of the movement as participatory approaches are adopted without the internalisation of the ideology they on which they are based. The following quotes serve to highlight the level of concern over the loss of value and meaning of the term participation as a meaningful concept within the promotion of alternative development strategies. Rahnema (1992) noted how the word participation had become part of the development jargon and since then others have commented that participation “is fast becoming a catch all concept, even a cliché” (Cornwall & Jewkes 1995: 1667). Whilst it is recognised as a powerful concept it has been argued that it “suffers from many ambiguities that, for the most part, go unrecognised” and “as a concept has taken on a characteristic as a panacea” (Michener 1998: 2105). This is supported by Cleavers (1999: 597) who states that participatory development “has become an act of faith in development, something we believe in and rarely question”.

In support of these claims, it has been noted how the ‘populist’ approach to participatory development “has been swallowed whole by development institutions such as the World Bank that have remained otherwise unchanged” and thus “as this approach to participation became mainstreamed then, its essentially atheoretical and apolitical character meant that ‘participation’ could therefore be easily detached from any radical agenda” (Hickey and Mohan 2003: 13). Whereas thirty years ago the work of Freire and other activists was seen as revolutionary and threatening, by the 1990s “their analysis has entered the mainstream and had been apparently accepted by the development establishment” (Hailey 2001: 99). The use of participatory poverty assessments<sup>84</sup> (PPAs) by the World Bank, for example, represents how participation has been ‘scaled up’ from

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<sup>84</sup> To date, over 60 countries have carried out PPAs with the support of the Bank, with an equal number implemented with the support of other development agencies (Robb, 2002).

the project to policy level (Blackburn & Holland 1998). This is supported by the work of Francis (2001) who demonstrates how Chambers' techniques have been incorporated into the World Bank's Poverty Reduction Strategy with little attention to the radical dimension of participatory development. Francis (2001: 85) argues that "although calling on the tradition and vocabulary of empowerment PRA has paid little attention to the articulation of the alternative vision of development that this abstraction implies".

This inability of organisations to change their underlying philosophy is one of the reasons why Cooke (2003) proposes a rule of thumb, for those people who are genuinely interested in promoting participatory development, to never work with the World Bank<sup>85</sup>. Craig & Porter (2003) note how the World Bank's Poverty Reduction Strategy remain consistently part of the neo-liberal agenda and are simply a new 'technical framework' that does not address uneven power relations within countries and between them and donors. Consequently the techniques that aimed to empower and transform become ritualised and disempowering in nature. Populist approaches fail to pay attention to power dynamics at the local level or to acknowledge the politics of participation. By neglecting to address the political dimension they contribute to the depoliticisation of development (White 1996). Participatory development, within these institutions, uses a "language of emancipation to incorporate the marginalised people of the 'Global South' within the unreconstructed project of capitalist modernisation" (Williams 2003: 3). Hence, whilst acknowledging the importance of the work of Chambers it needs to be noted that his work has also contributed to the domestication of participatory development.

### **3.4.2 *Reconceptualisation of participatory development***

According to proponents of alternative development, "participation...was always radically conceived as a struggle against political and economic exclusion from exercising control over public resources" (Fals Borda 1998: 161). Participatory development was always intended to be 'radical' in character with the aim of liberating the marginalised. It was never intended to be a means of undertaking or justifying specific projects or part of the 'mainstream'. In order to avoid participatory development becoming a rhetorical and meaningless concept calls are being made for participatory development to be reconceptualised. This is vital as the "conceptual blurring around the terms

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<sup>85</sup> In the introductory paper presented at the IDPM conference in February 2003, Cooke outlines his rule of thumb advice. He argued that those who work for the World Bank with a belief that it can be changed from within are naive. Others responded to this by arguing that if you refuse to work with them then ultimately it

'participatory' and 'participation' create a space for a range of applications, as well as for confusion" (Cornwall & Jewkes 1995: 1668). Rahnema (1992: 126) argues that participation "is too serious and ambivalent a matter to be taken lightly, or reduced to an amoeba word lacking in any precise meaning, or a slogan, or fetish, or for that matter, only as an instrument of a methodology". If this occurs it potentially becomes a dangerous tool for manipulation and an agent for tyranny (Cooke & Kothari 2001).

Redefining participatory development however is no easy task, as the above discussion has demonstrated participatory development is a highly contested and complex term that has multiple meanings in different spheres. It also raises questions concerning who has the right to redefine participatory development, academics in the 'West' or practitioners and participants based in the Global South? It is evident that more clarity is required to stem the tide of the critique and reassert participatory development as a real 'alternative to development'. From reviewing the literature three areas emerge as key to looking at the reconceptualisation of participatory development; namely the centrality of power and empowerment; the need for action and transformation (praxis) that is inherently political in nature; and thirdly the need to acknowledge the contextual nature of participatory development.

I would argue that it is essential that the work of people such as Freire be revisited and developed in order to maintain the focus on action for social transformation. The most inspiring examples of successful participatory development, those that maintain their radical edge, lead to transformations within societies and those that promote 'alternative' forms of development need to be critically examined in order to gain further insight into the potential that participatory development holds. It is interesting to note that Pratt (2000: 34) in Nepal suggested that REFLECT is an "*excellent starting point for exploring the alternative view of PRA as a tool for consciousness raising, empowerment and political action*". Examining REFLECT as an alternative approach to non-formal education, based on the work of both Paulo Freire and Robert Chambers, provides a useful starting point for reconceptualising participatory development. This thesis contributes to this dialogue through reflecting on the experience of REFLECT in the context of Sikles in Nepal. This thesis now turns to explore the emergence of REFLECT and its application in Nepal.

## **3.5 Regenerated Freirian Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques (REFLECT)**

### **3.5.1 *Origins and principles of REFLECT***

REgenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques (REFLECT) was developed by ActionAid UK and blends the Freirean theory of conscientization with the practice of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) (Archer and Cottingham, 1996a, 1996b). It is fundamentally based upon the principles propounded by Paulo Freire: each person has the ability to learn; people have the right to participate freely and express their views; education cannot be a neutral process and is either domesticating or liberating; and that if the end is liberation then the learning process should be both participatory and democratic (Basnet 1998). Essentially the role of education is to provide a learning environment that enables people to analyse situations and find conclusions. Through merging the philosophical approach of Paulo Freire and the techniques developed within the field of PRA, REFLECT addresses some of the key concerns regarding the cooption of participatory development. Firstly, it provides PRA with the conceptual philosophical grounding that is often missing. Secondly it removes the dependence on external change agents as PRA tools are transferred to the local level and embedded within the educational process.

REFLECT was initially piloted in three project areas from 1994-1996, Uganda, El Salvador and Bangladesh. An evaluation of this experience concluded that the REFLECT approach proved to be both more effective (than primer based methods) at teaching people to read and write and more effective at linking literacy to wider development. The pilot projects were evaluated through a process of action research in the first six months of 1995 paying attention to their ability to impart literacy and numeracy skills<sup>86</sup> and assessments of the wider impact of the literacy process on community development and empowerment (see Appendix 3.3). Based on the success of the pilot stage a 'Mother Manual' was produced that outlined the underlying philosophy and techniques and these formed the basis of REFLECT. ActionAid UK launched this Manual and the REFLECT approach in London in April 1996<sup>87</sup>.

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<sup>86</sup> For more on the importance of numeracy within REFLECT circles see Foroni & Neumann 1998.

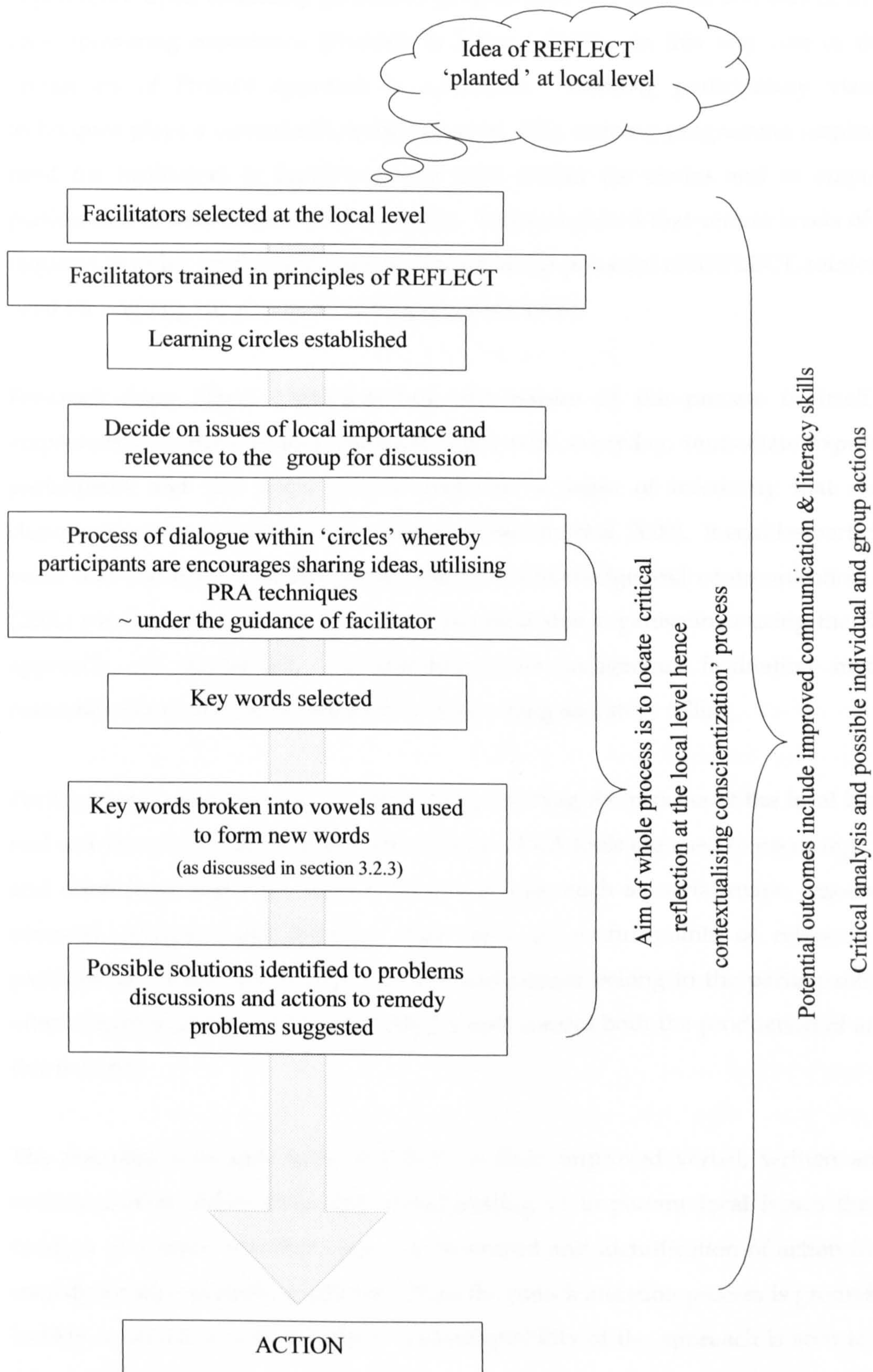
<sup>87</sup> The influence of attending this launch on my research focus will be discussed in detail in section 4.2.3.1

REFLECT is an increasingly influential, worldwide approach to popular education that attempts to make Freirean principles more practical by abandoning the idea of a 'literacy primer' or of educators choosing generative words. Instead it stimulates a process of community development where, collectively, groups are encouraged to discuss, analyse and produce a range of visual representations of their communities. These take the form of maps, charts, calendars, graphs, and diagrams that visually represent the communities' perception of their socio-political, cultural and economic environment. Kane (2001) feels that REFLECT imaginatively uses PRA techniques towards more radical ends and hence overcomes the lack of overt political analysis often missing in much of the PRA discourse. The language used to describe the REFLECT process highlights the difference between REFLECT and other approaches to literacy. Teachers are known as facilitators, students and learners are called participants; circles are formed rather than classes. The facilitator also participates in the learning process and is seen as an equal rather than a dominant member of the class. High quality training, like in many other programmes, is essential to the process of REFLECT. Diagram 3.8 provides a simplified overview of the REFLECT process and demonstrates how it differs from the Freirean model of conscientization.

Before REFLECT circles establish, 'facilitators' are chosen and trained in the principles of REFLECT and introduced to the basic Freirean ideology. The facilitators are usually from the local 'communities' and hence part of the 'community' in which the REFLECT process is taking place and actively participate in the process of critical reflection that is integral to the REFLECT approach. They also explore the value of utilising participatory visualisation techniques in promoting dialogue and stimulating critical analysis within the centres. Through discussing issues of local importance keywords are then chosen to be the focus of the class. The word is written on the blackboard and broken down into the separate letters and vowels in accordance with the method developed by Freire. The topics for discussion are contextualised in the locality as the participants themselves chose what to talk about, when, for how long and may return to the discussions at a later date.

The fact that participants choose their own keywords and sub words removes the need for a set text or primer. This frees the classes from learning set words that they may not wish to learn. Importantly it reduces the ability of the facilitator or change agent to introduce predetermined issues; the words emerge from within the REFLECT circle hence reflecting local concerns.

**Diagram 3.8 Overview of REFLECT process**



Source: adapted from Archer & Cottingham 1996a

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Participants decide the issues they wish to discuss and explore, thus reversing the dependence upon externally generated programmes and material and this is, in essence, an empowering experience (Fiedrich & Jellema 2003). In this way one of the major limitations of Freire's approach is overcome. Utilising participatory visualisation techniques plays a central role in this process. The training programme emphasises the need for facilitators to hand over the stick within the circles and to empower the participants to take control of the process. It is recognised that certain levels of skill are required in order for the facilitators to live up to the potential of REFLECT, reinforcing the need for ongoing support and training (Popkins 1998).

Feedback from Nepal highlights how the nature of the process in itself can be empowering as participatory methods begin with everyday, immediate experiences of participants and this helps people overcome a sense of inferiority that may often characterise more formal learning situations (Sitikhu *et al.* 2000). It enables participants to value and use their own indigenous forms of knowledge and communication. Mohan (2001) provides us with evidence from the field that organisations using the REFLECT approach are successfully incorporating more indigenous facilitation methods of communication into their work such as dance, song and story telling.

Participatory techniques are fundamental to locating the process at the local level in the real and lived experiences of the participants. PRA tools are used to encourage dialogue and often form important records of discussions, such as social maps, resource maps, seasonal calendars and timelines that serve as useful points of reference for the participants. These key words, pictures and images belong to the participants and are often displayed on the walls. The participants control both the production of and use of this material.

The potential outcomes from REFLECT include improved verbal, written and visual communication skills, deepened understanding of important local issues through the creation of a space whereby ideas can be shared and identification of action in order to remedy locally identified problems. Thus the conscientization process is grounded in the locality in which it is taking place. The adaptability of the approach is seen to be a key feature of the process<sup>88</sup>.

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<sup>88</sup> Although piloted mainly in rural areas REFLECT is currently being used in urban areas (Jellema & Fiedrich 1998), with children (Cottingham 1998), with refugees in the UK (Norris 1998, Newman and Metcalf 2002), and even within schools in the UK as part of the citizenship teaching pack 'The Get Global! Guide' (Price 2003).



REFLECT offers an approach to literacy and empowerment that responds to the uniqueness of place, recognises that 'place matters' and that development is an internal process that cannot be introduced from the outside. The ultimate aim, as demonstrated in the previous diagram (Diagram 3.8), is for relevant actions to be determined at the local level based on a process of critical reflection and sharing of ideas and knowledge. These actions may be undertaken by individuals or by the group as a whole, the REFLECT community. In addition to these actions may be identified that require the support of other people from within the 'wider' community and can draw upon the multiple support networks that exist at the local level. In some cases actions may be radical and in opposition to the local power structures and at other times they may draw upon the more powerful members of the community in an attempt to implement actions that are deemed by the group to be progressive. The actions may centre on local issues and concerns or may challenge wider structures. There is no ideal end goal or action that takes place.

The REFLECT approach fully respects that all actions are situated in a particular locality and context and recognises that actions need to be based on an autonomous process if they are to be successful, relevant and meaningful. No action may result from the REFLECT process, as participants may decide not to act upon their reflections. Evidence from Latin America suggests that the "REFLECT-Action approach [offers] a way of working which, among other things, emphasises the importance of power relations embedded in structures, procedures, attitudes, roles and so on" (Blanco 2001 in Kane 2001: 169).

The REFLECT approach aims to develop communication skills and facilitate a process by which individuals and groups are more able to assert their rights and read the words and the world in which they live. It is explicitly political in nature as the purpose of the REFLECT movement has always been to promote participatory and empowering education - "political commitment is a must in REFLECT" (Phnuyal 2002: 30). REFLECT is innovative in the fact that it "appears to offer a structured participatory approach" (Archer & Cottingham 1996b: 88). Paulo Freire commented that REFLECT was "exactly what I sought to do - but you give it more structure and stronger roots. The literacy process will be based on people's own experience, their language and their reality - so that the transition from reading the world to reading the word will be more organic and clearer. This is very exciting work" (cited in Archer & Cottingham 1996b: 92). Elsewhere it has been noted that the main strength of REFLECT is that it creates a space where

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people feel comfortable to meet and discuss issues relevant to them and their lives. REFLECT aims to improve the meaningful participation of people in decisions that affected their lives, through strengthening their ability to communicate (Metcalf 1998).

Fundamental to REFLECT is that local participants are free to take the methodology and apply it to their own ends. It is not prescribing a set path but encourages participants to adapt and develop their own strategies based on the principles on which REFLECT is founded. Once ideals and methods have been imparted, with or without the manual, learners and participants can progress at their own pace. Other methods can be incorporated into the process to make it more meaningful to diverse localities. Locality matters, place and social context will determine the progression of the approach and if it does not meet the needs of the participants then it can be adapted or dropped. It is, according to Phunyal (1998), an organic process. Arguably, the REFLECT offers a holistic, radical, embedded approach to the promotion of participatory development. Through critically analysing REFLECT in action insights can be gained into the nature of participatory development and its possible reconceptualisation.

Participants negotiate when and where the circles will meet and what they shall be called. In doing so they take ownership of the programme. The REFLECT circles will only exist as long as there is demand at the local level and the closure of circles should not necessarily be taken as a failure of the REFLECT approach. Essentially, local participants are inextricably linked into a process of ongoing evaluation of the approach due to the central characteristics of the programme. Being grounded at the local level however does not exclude external researchers, such as myself, or other agencies from being involved in a process of evaluation. It does however present the researchers with a number of challenges.

In order to assess the success and challenges of the REFLECT approach, localised studies are needed that draw upon the traditions of participatory action research and include the local participants in the evaluation process. The experience and reflections arising within the REFLECT circles need to form a central part of this process. The research process needs to be grounded at the local level, reflecting local issues and concerns. In addition to this the process ideally needs to be autonomous with local participants owning the outcomes and process.

### **3.5.2 Spread of REFLECT**

The International Education Unit team at ActionAid was given the responsibility of supporting REFLECT. Within 2 years of being launched in 1996 REFLECT had spread to 25 countries, through 95 organisations and was continuing to expand. By 2000, only 4 years after being launched REFLECT was operating in over 50 countries with over 250 different organisations involved in promoting the approach (Riddell 2001) and by 2003 it was being used by over 350 diverse organisations in more than 60 countries (Archer *et al.* 2003). There are at least 200,000 participants in REFLECT circles<sup>89</sup> (CIRAC 2001). On launching the REFLECT approach in 1996 Archer and Cottingham (1996b: 87) highlighted the importance of ongoing evaluation of the original pilot programmes and of new REFLECT experiences. Evaluation has been a central component of the REFLECT process from the local level to the national and equally important at the international level. Forming networks amongst REFLECT practitioners and facilitators has been vital to this process and a number of important lessons have been learned in the eight years since REFLECT was launched.

#### **3.5.2.1 Importance of support networks**

The International Education Unit at ActionAid was given responsibility for co-ordinating a process of ongoing reflection and evaluation. In addition to this, forums were established at a variety of levels in order to disperse power and responsibility for this process to the regional, national and local level. The First Global Conference of REFLECT, which I participated in, was held in India in October 1998 in order to enable practitioners to reflect upon the successes and challenges of REFLECT at the international level. This conference drew heavily on the regional forums that had been established and provided some useful insights into the experiences of REFLECT as well as demonstrated the diversity of approaches and experiences. The International REFLECT Circle (CIRAC) was established in 1998 in order to create a forum for practitioners to share experiences and internalise the principle of critical reflection, central to the REFLECT approach, at the institutional level. It is through this forum that information and evaluation of REFLECT is now disseminated<sup>90</sup>. In addition to this the ActionAid publication Education Action plays an important role in enabling practitioners to share experience gained in the process of promoting REFLECT.

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<sup>89</sup> For information and material on REFLECT see CIRAC web site available at <http://refelction-action.org>.

<sup>90</sup> FOR CIRAC web site - [www.reflect.ActionAid.net/index.html](http://www.reflect.ActionAid.net/index.html)

It is equally important that evaluation is undertaken at the local level and not dominated by external agents and REFLECT practitioners (Riddell 2001). Pressures exist from donors and agencies to provide success stories and these pressures blur the evaluation process at the local level, as participants are often dependent upon the external agent for further support. The problems of gaining 'true insight' into the outcomes of the REFLECT process, when the participants often depend upon such institutions for the continuation of the programme or for support of other programmes, have been explored by recent studies (Betts 2000, Fiedrich & Jellema 2003). Particular attention has been paid to the process of, and quality of, training and support given by organisations to REFLECT practitioners and facilitators (Archer and Cottingham 1996b, Bhattarai & Popkins 1997, Popkins 1998). Through this training facilitators are expected to contemplate and internalise the principles and ideologies on which the whole process is based. Training was seen as being crucial to the running of successful circles in the recent global evaluation of REFLECT (Riddell 2001). Internalising the principles of REFLECT by practitioners at all levels has been seen as a central component of the REFLECT approach.

#### *3.5.2.2 Limitations of the Mother Manual*

Some interesting lessons have been learnt from reflecting on the process of scaling up REFLECT. In particular the use of the 'Mother Manual' has come under particular scrutiny. Cottingham (1998) notes that the REFLECT Mother Manual, whilst seeking to promote diversity, by its very existence may promote standardisation and therefore requires radical revisions to make a more broad, flexible and less prescriptive resource. In support of these reflections Gautam (1998) notes how the Mother Manual was effective in disseminating REFLECT but was also potentially a seed for its distortion as it became a 'sacred text' which led to the techniques becoming mechanical and prevented the inherent dynamism and flexibility of the REFLECT approach from being realised. As a result the manual became a guide on how to run REFLECT circles rather than a dynamic resource pack. The overriding conclusion was that the Mother Manual was often being used in a mechanical manner and hence stifling the diversity and creativity of local practices and communication. It was decided that the 'Mother Manual' needed to be abandoned.

In response to this CIRAC have developed a resource pack to replace the Mother Manual that is more flexible and open ended in its presentation entitled 'Communication and Power'. The abandonment of the 'Mother Manual' represents an attempt to prevent REFLECT from becoming subject to the 'tyranny of technique' critique discussed previously. Archer & Newman (2003) note in the preface it "is not intended as a manual,

holy book or academic text". As such it is a pack of resources that have been colour coded into sections on the written word, the spoken word, number and images. It is designed to give broad ideas and is framed so that practitioners can add their own material and ideas to the pack. As such it has no one author but is a dynamic and practical solution to addressing the limitations and short falls of the Mother Manual. Its success in responding to these criticisms will become evident in time. In September 2003 UNESCO awarded CIRAC the International Literacy Prize in recognition of its work as a democratic network that has 'revolutionised literacy' in recent years. In particular the award was given due to the space that it has created for REFLECT practitioners to engage in their own ongoing process of reflection and action, constantly contributing to the evolution and enrichment of the REFLECT approach<sup>91</sup>.

### 3.5.2.3 Literacy and empowerment – emerging tensions

The second area of concern that emerged from the ongoing process of reflection was the lack of clarity with regard to the relationship between literacy and empowerment within REFLECT and the framing of REFLECT as an approach to literacy programmes when it was evolving into something much more holistic and encompassing. Written literacy was only one means of engaging in the REFLECT process. It has been acknowledged that there are multiple literacies and varying practices of literacy in differing social settings (Street 1984). Indeed, Archer (2002) provides a succinct overview of the 'baggage of literacy' in his article in *Education Action*<sup>92</sup> where he notes the complex history of 'literacy' and highlights the need to challenge the myths of literacy and the perception that literacy brings 'modern' development and has an intrinsic value. He argues that there needs to be a clear shift away from the 'teaching' of literacy as 'technical skills'. This draws on previous work where it has been noted that in the REFLECT approach "literacy is not structured around introducing ABC or generative words or syllabic families but around real uses in real contexts" (Archer 2000b: 275).

Increasingly it is recognised that to become 'literate'<sup>93</sup> in the widest possible sense requires the literacy skills to be used in everyday life and often requires some form of post-literacy support and the utilisation of everyday 'real' documents within the setting in

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<sup>91</sup> For more details see CIRAC website, in both English and Spanish at <http://www.reflect-action.org>

<sup>92</sup> *Education Action* is published by ActionAid to disseminate information regarding ActionAid's work within the field of education. It focuses on the experience of REFLECT and creates a space for dialogue regarding practitioners experience of REFLECT at the international level.

<sup>93</sup> There is a need to take a holistic approach to 'literacy' and recognise multiple literacies, oral, written and visual (see for example Archer 1998b, Carmen 1996, Street 1995).

which literacy is being developed/taught (Archer 1998b, Hodge 1997, Robinson-Pant 2000, Rogers 1994). According to Hodge (1997a) one criticism of REFLECT is that whilst it challenges the functional approach to literacy it still reduces literacy learning to a specially set up group with materials being devised by the learners rather than engaging materials in real situations. Hodge (1997a) contends that the Community Literacy Project in Nepal, sponsored by DFID UK, addresses this issue by taking material encountered by learners in their everyday environment. Experiences from REFLECT circles however demonstrate that participants use everyday materials as well as locally generated material (Froni 1999, Riddell 2001).

Dyer & Choski (1998: 76) argue "in linking literacy so closely with development REFLECT tacitly endorses the 'autonomous' model of literacy". However, Archer & Jellema (1998: 89) clearly state that the REFLECT approach opposes "the notion that literacy itself can bring about social change". As stated in the original documentation "Literacy itself does not empower people" (Archer & Cottingham 1996b: 87). However, they note that literacy programmes can be very empowering if the literacy process is interwoven with other processes through a well-structured participatory methodology". In recognition of the need to problematise and re-conceive 'literacy' a meeting of the International REFLECT Circle in March 2000 agreed that "the central concerns of all REFLECT programmes is to enhance people's capacity to have their voices heard - by whatever communication means necessary" (Archer 2000b: 2). Due to the emphasis placed on literacy acquisition debates have emerged surrounding the relationship between literacy and empowerment which led to REFLECT being redefined as early as 1998.

#### *3.5.2.4 Redefining REFLECT*

Reflections from practitioners in the field in response to some of the criticisms discussed above note an increasing recognition that there is "a desperate need to pull together all the concerns that have been raised and all the innovations that have developed in practice since 1996" (Archer 1998a: 31). Further studies of REFLECT highlight the importance of such ongoing critical evaluation by ActionAid and agencies involved in REFLECT in order to ensure a constant process (Friedrich 1996). In order to accomplish this a workshop was held bringing together fifteen leading practitioners from eleven countries<sup>94</sup>.

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<sup>94</sup> This article highlights how the bringing together of practitioners represents the creation of an International REFLECT Circle and therefore recognises that REFLECT is not just an approach to work at the local level but is equally valid for people working at the international level. This has helped increase the recognition that REFLECT is a process integral to all spatial scales. See Archer 1998a for details.

It was as a result of this gathering that a new agreed definition for REFLECT was developed. It reads:

“REFLECT is a structured participatory learning process which facilitates people’s critical analysis of their environment, placing empowerment at the heart of sustainable and equitable development. Through the creation of democratic spaces and the construction and interpretation of locally generated texts, people build their own multi-dimensional analysis of local and global reality, challenging dominant development paradigms and re-defining power relationships (in both public and private spheres). Based on ongoing processes of reflection and action, people empower themselves to work for a more just and equitable society” (Phnuyal *et al.* 1998: 27).



A list of basic principles was also drawn up by the participants in the workshop that identified issues such as gender equity, the importance of exploring and analysing the causes of power inequalities and oppression and the evolving nature of the process. In addition to this it was recognised that individual transformation is as important as collective transformation therefore networking of participants, facilitators, staff and organisations involved in REFLECT is essential and institutions need to internalise the principles of REFLECT within their own work<sup>95</sup>.

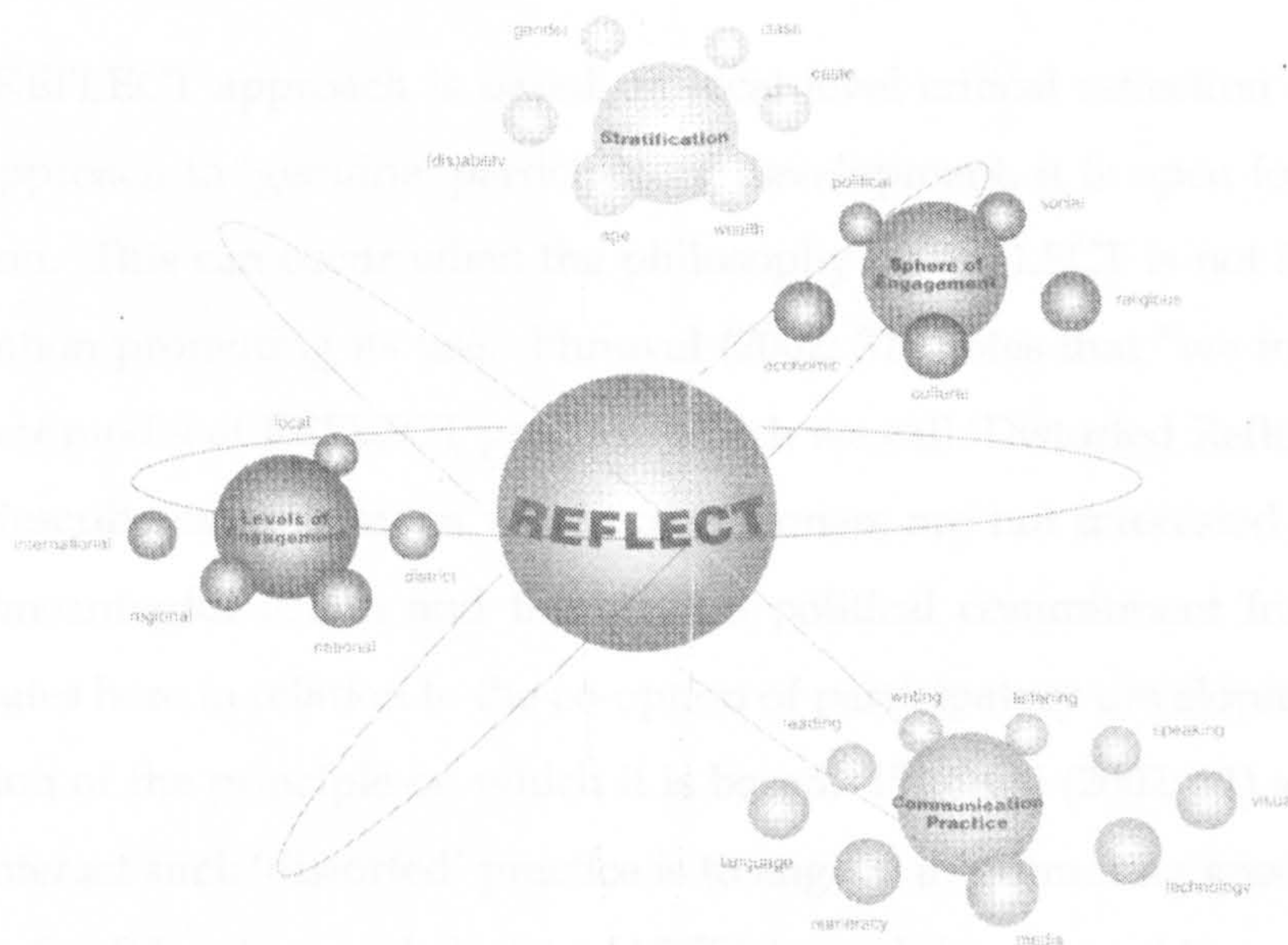
Elsewhere within CIRAC discussions have taken place regarding the actual value of the term REFLECT, as at the local level it has little if any meaning to potential participants. One of the first steps in the process is often a discussion based around what to term this new approach to literacy and hence at the local level we find numerous terms and words used to describe REFLECT. The naming of the approach is central to the local people taking the approach and making it their own. It is therefore fundamental in ensuring control and ownership is grounded at the local level, hence placing REFLECT at the far right of the continua presented earlier in the chapter. The 5<sup>th</sup> CIRAC paper feels that “formal speeches and lectures about ‘REFLECT’ should be avoided. Ideally the word ‘REFLECT’ will never be used” (Quintanilla *et al.* 2000: 78). However, when attempting to discuss the approach and its impacts the generative term REFLECT has obvious value.

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<sup>95</sup> The whole edition of *PLA Notes* No 32 June 1998 provides a useful source of information and experience on the theme of participation, literacy and empowerment and is a useful reference point for readers interested in these discourses.

The new definition also reflects the debates within the International REFLECT Circle (CIRAC) and those with experience of REFLECT regarding the relationship between the dual goals of empowerment and literacy. In the revised definition there is no reference to literacy and the emphasis is placed upon empowerment. Communication is preferred rather than literacy as highlighted in the above discussion. Archer (1998b) reflects on the emergence of a more sophisticated complex understanding of empowerment and literacy in an attempt to provide a more visual representation of REFLECT, highlighting the wide range of communication practices which fall within its remit (Appendix 3.4). The visualisation proposed as best capturing the essence of REFLECT is that of a solar system (Archer 1998b). In this visualisation REFLECT is placed at the conjunction of four forces, none of which are static (Diagram 3.9).

**Diagram 3.9 An Alternative visualisation for REFLECT**



Source: Archer 1998b: 104

### 3.5.2.5 Potential for co-option

It has been suggested that many initiatives that promote participatory approaches to development are concerned with efficiency rather than empowerment (Cleaver 2001). Through basing REFLECT on Freirean ideology it can be seen that ActionAid has firmly placed empowerment at the centre of its educational activities. There is a recognition that achieving empowering goals, such as gender equality, does not stop with the use of analytical tools espoused by REFLECT but that the ideology needs to also be internalised by the individuals and organisations involved in REFLECT (Cottingham *et al.* 1998). Within the field of REFLECT there are some positive reports of organisations internalising



the philosophical approach and applying the techniques to their own internal practices (see for example the case of CIAZO in El Salvador Orrellana *et al.* 1998). However, other studies demonstrate that we need to exercise caution over the motivation behind the adoption of the REFLECT method as an approach to literacy rather than its adaptation (Feidrich & Jellema 2003). This was evident in the use of the Mother Manual discussed previously. Robinson-Pant (2000: 37) found that some NGOs were using REFLECT because “REFLECT is currently ‘making a lot of noise’ (publicity) and there would be better funding prospects and career opportunities by adopting the label”. The NGO in question had previously been using a Freirean approach yet had adopted REFLECT as a means of securing funding. This anecdote serves as a warning when examining the reasons behind the spread of this innovative approach to non-formal education and is a reminder of the importance of local level studies in order to gain further insight into the REFLECT process.

Whilst the REFLECT approach is based on local level critical reflection and action, like any other approach to ‘genuine’ participatory development, it is open for co-option and domestication. This can occur when the philosophy of REFLECT is not internalised into the organization promoting its use. Phnuyal (2002: 31) notes that “we in Asia have also noted another model of REFLECT practice, which we call ‘Distorted Reflect’”. This term is used to describe circumstances where practitioners are not interested in empowering literacy or meaningful action and there is no political commitment for change. This mirrors debates here in relation to the co-option of participatory development without the internalisation of the principle on which it is based. Phnuyal (2002: 31) argues “the only way to counteract such ‘distorted’ practice is to engage in promoting good practice”. The Asia Forum for Education and Society (AFES) is evolving to enable popular education practitioners to document, learn from and strengthen best practice in popular education in people’s movements.

The above discussion serves to highlight how REFLECT is evolving in light of experience at the local and international level. Further insight can be gained into REFLECT through an examination of the experience of REFLECT in Nepal.

### 3.5.3 REFLECT in Nepal

#### 3.5.3.1 Non-formal education in Nepal<sup>96</sup>

The broader historical context of non-formal education within Nepal is central to understanding how REFLECT came to be introduced. A participatory exercise undertaken with a group of non-formal education practitioners from Nepal at the First Global Conference on REFLECT in India in 1998 (Photo 3.1 and Diagram 3.10) provides a useful way into exploring this historical context. Here a group of REFLECT practitioners, including myself, participated in a PRA activity of constructing a 'River of Literacy' in the sand on the beach at Puri<sup>97</sup>. This activity highlighted the importance of the changing political situation and changing Government policies upon the provision of non-formal education.

Photo 3.1 River of literacy in Nepal

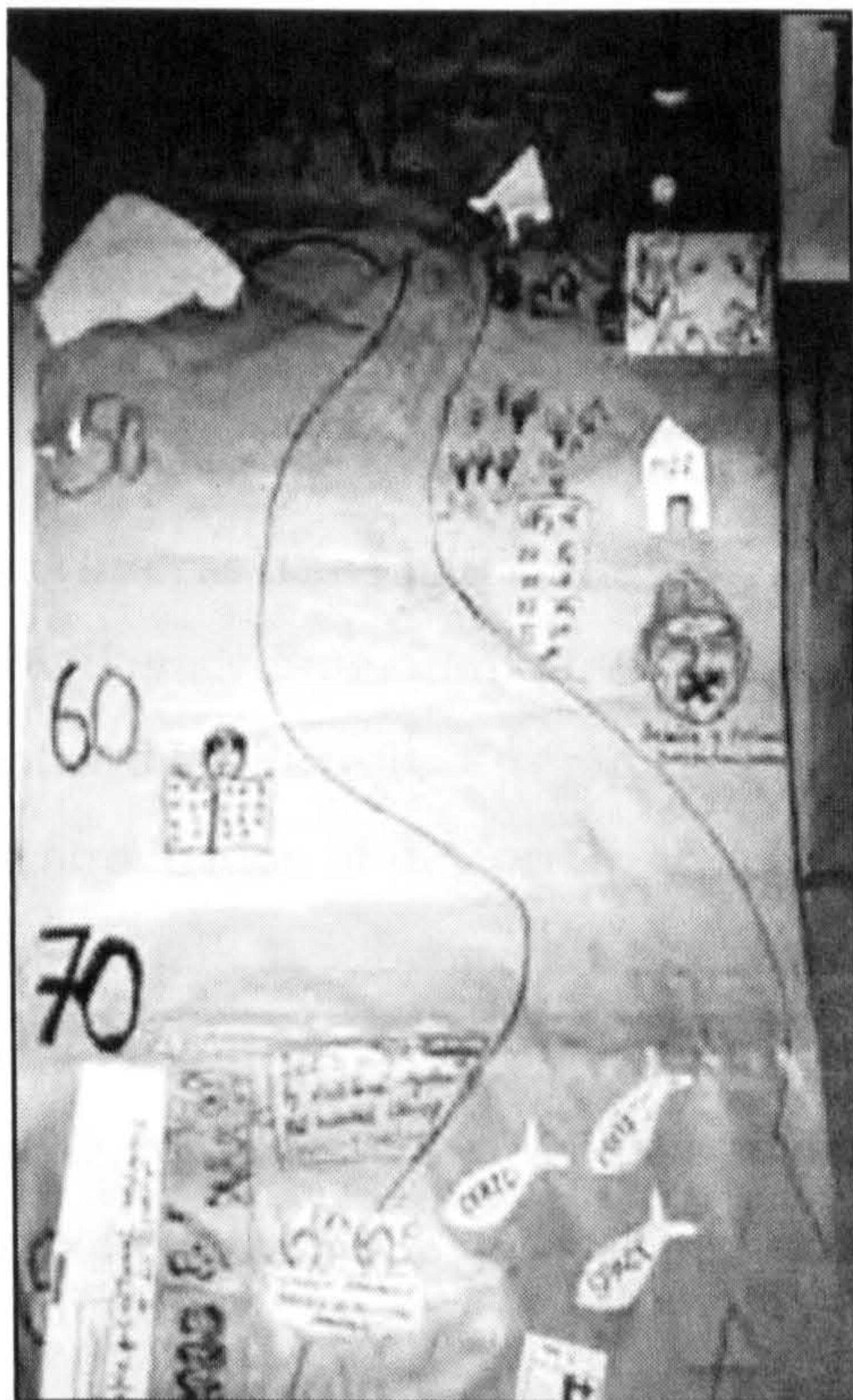
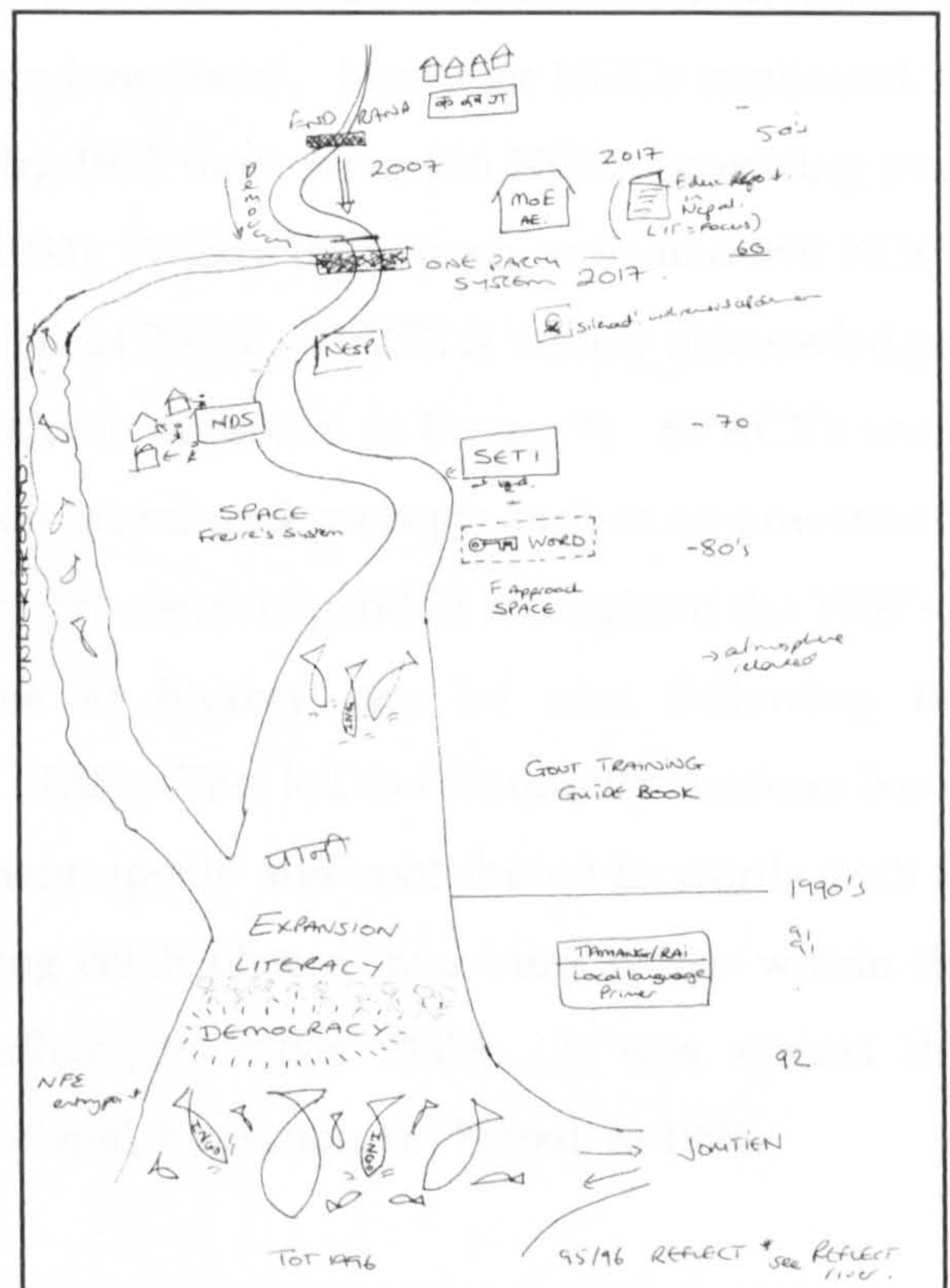


Diagram 3.10 Sketch map of photo



Source: Available on line at [www.action-reflect.org](http://www.action-reflect.org) Taken at First Global REFLECT Conference, Orrissa 1998, Sketch - authors own.

The Government's New Educational Plan in 1971, when non-formal education was classified into action oriented and adult literacy, was seen to be a progressive initiative.

<sup>96</sup> For a discussion of the broader educational policies within Nepal see Bajracharya, HR *et al.* eds (1998 & 1999), Bhattarai *et al.* (1998) Maddox (2003) Robinson-Pant (1995).

<sup>97</sup> For a detailed account of this event and the information that was gained from being a participant in the activity see <http://www.staff.livjm.ac.uk/socspark/Nepal%20education/nepaleducation.htm> & Appendix 3.4.

To develop the quality of non-formal education provision the Government began the Research Centre for Educational Innovation and Development (CERID) in 1971. Under the Panchayat System, Government projects were established to promote literacy in rural areas the most notable being the Basic Skills Education Project (SETI) an integrated approach to literacy that placed emphasis on rural development (International Literacy Explorer 1999, Robinson-Pant 2000). The key word approach was adopted by SETI, though no attempt was made to maintain the radical ideology associated with Freirean ideology. Additionally, a number of key people and international organisations were identified as having played a significant role in the introduction of more radical approaches to grassroots literacy programmes<sup>98</sup>.

Local NGOs are particularly important providers of non-formal education. With the introduction of the Panchayat System in the 1960s many of the educationalists involved in radical literacy programmes were driven 'underground'. However NGOs continued to work within the field of adult literacy and by 1992 there were 136 NGOs providing over 50% of Nepal's literacy classes (Shreshtra 1993). Today there is an estimated 300 NGOs providing literacy classes (Nepal Literacy Polices 2003). SPACE is widely acknowledged to be one of the first NGOs to adopt the Freirean approach to literacy<sup>99</sup>. SPACE's work was seen as being particularly significant as it introduced concepts such as empowerment into literacy programmes. Although literacy provision expanded throughout the 1980's a noticeable increase in radical approaches to literacy can be seen following the reintroduction of democracy into Nepal in 1990's. This led to community workers being able to talk about concepts like empowerment openly and contributed to words such as 'empowerment' and 'participation' becoming catch phrases and buzz words within the NGO community in Nepal (Sumon Tuladhar *pers comm.* 2000). It was against this backdrop that REFLECT was introduced in Nepal, by ActionAid Nepal, in 1996.

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<sup>98</sup> David Walker from World Education was noted as being the first person to talk about Freire's work. World Education played a prominent role in developing the Adult Literacy Programme based on the key word approach entitled *Naya Gareto* meaning a New Path.

<sup>99</sup> It was noted in Chapter 2 that SPACE provided the training for ACAPs Adult Literacy Programme but as the chapter highlighted the Freirean ideology was not embedded within the programme. This demonstrates how easy it is to adapt radical literacy programmes away from their political roots.

### 3.5.3.2 REFLECT in Nepal

Diagram 3.11 provides a useful summary of the key events and experience of REFLECT in Nepal<sup>100</sup>. It highlights that the first Facilitator Training workshop took place in 1995 with ActionAid Nepal (AAN) and SPACE piloting REFLECT in 11 circles. REFLECT and the principles on which it is based provided a model that on the surface seemed to offer a more relevant and useable approach to literacy within Nepal that could meet the needs of diverse communities. Subsequently many other organisations have adopted the approach to further their work with marginalised communities. Robinson-Pant (2000: 37) notes that that “the arrival of REFLECT in Nepal from December 1995, has increased interest amongst NGOs’ in the idea of linking literacy more directly with community development initiatives”.

**Diagram 3.11 River of REFLECT in Nepal**



Source: Sitikhu *et al.* (2000: 7)

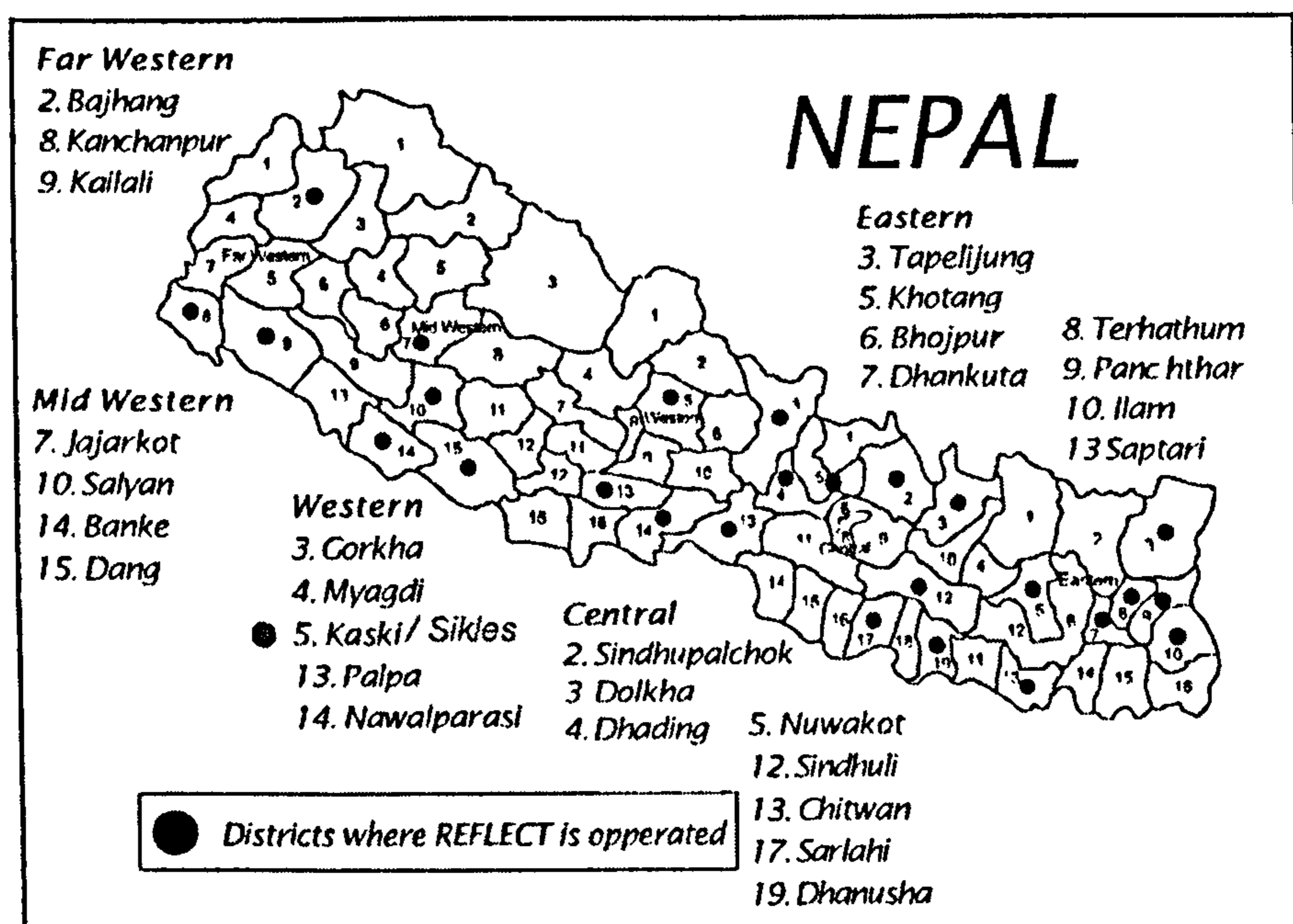
In 1997 Education Network was formed to support REFLECT in delivering training and co-ordinating REFLECT, taking the responsibility away from ActionAid Nepal. The main objective of Education Network was to empower communities through participatory education by utilising government, non government and international organisations’ resources at a national level for the development and scaling up of REFLECT. In order to

<sup>100</sup> A comprehensive overview of the introduction, spread of and experience of REFLECT in Nepal can be gained from the text by Sitiku *et al.* (2000). Other key sources include Bhattacharai *et al.* 1998, Bhattacharai, & Popkins 1997, Gautam 1998, Khadkha & Thapa 1998, Popkins 1998, Shrivastav & Gautam 2001 Also see reflect action page available at <http://217.206.206.24/action/asian/Nepal.htm>

share experiences amongst REFLECT practioners within Nepal Education Network produces a REFLECT bulletin in Nepali. In addition to this Education Network has produced a video about the ethos of REFLECT to demonstrate how REFLECT can contribute to social change and development by breaking the culture of silence (Basnet 1998). The approach spread to such an extent that by 1997 there were 100 circles in operation and by the end of 1999 nearly 200 operating in 28 different districts of Nepal covering 15 different ethnic groups (Sitikhu *et al.* 2000). Map 3.1 provides an overview of the areas in which REFLECT is operating, including the case study area for this thesis.

The spread of REFLECT in Nepal is impressive, however, some caution is needed in assuming that all the organisations that adopt REFLECT are working towards a radical end. As noted above, Robinson-Pant (2000: 37) warns that some organisations “also see the material advantage of having the REFLECT label”. Ultimately REFLECT, like any other participatory approach, can be adopted without the philosophy that underpins it being internalised. Phnuyal (2002) feels that the way to counteract this is to ensure that practitioners engage in ‘best practice’ and that training is provided to all who are involved in the REFLECT approach from the people at the grassroots to the people in the institutions and organisations that are promoting it.<sup>101</sup>

**Map 3.1 REFLECT in Nepal**



Source: Adapted from Sitikhu *et al.* (2000: 2) to show location of case study (in red ●)

<sup>101</sup> Riddell (2001) provides a review of the strengths and weaknesses of REFLECT in Nepal (Appendix 3.5.).

Interestingly in Nepal the Mother Manual approach was rejected from the inception of REFLECT because it was felt that it would lead to people being told what to do and it would be disempowering to them. Instead the focus was on the training of facilitators in the ideas and methods of REFLECT, "so that they can internalise the approach and make it their own... there is no sacred text for them to follow" (Gautam 1998: 42). It was experiences such as that in Nepal and other contexts that led to the Mother Manual being abandoned in favour of training that focused on the approach and methods and on building on local capabilities and dynamism. Given the later overall abandonment of the Mother Manual elsewhere, in favour of a more open learning pack entitled 'Communication and Power', this decision not to use the Mother Manual demonstrated considerable foresight. Nepalese practices were also innovative in relation to the training support and in developing indigenous forms of communication and participatory activities (Popkins 1998). In Nepal, rather than adopt the manual for training, participatory techniques were utilised throughout training events to impart the skills needed in order to establish and run a REFLECT circle. It was felt that using a manual in the training event would in itself be disempowering, as it would not allow local ideas and creativity to be fully expressed (Gautam 1998). Within Nepal it has been noted that along with the more common forms of PRA tools, such as social and resource maps, preference ranking and seasonal calendars that song writing, myth and story telling as well as drama have all been utilised within the REFLECT circles (Bhattarai & Popkins 1997, Popkins 1998, Sitikhu *et al.* 2000). These approaches highlight the diversity of communication used with the centres.

In the Nepalese context a wide range of changes and actions at the local level can be discerned within a relatively short period of time. During the field visit to Nepal in October 1998<sup>102</sup> to observe REFLECT circles in Sindhupalchok and Saptari (numbers 2 and 13 respectively on Map 3.1) it was noted that in the 4 months that the circles had been running some impressive changes had taken place. Within the groups observed women talked about how before the circles had begun they used to sit separately and eat separately due to the social customs associated with caste and untouchability. After discussing the reasons behind this in the circles the women decided that they should sit together and not be restricted by such social norms. In addition to this within the wider community the scheduled caste women were now able to gather water from the local well

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<sup>102</sup> Field visits were made by practitioners from other parts of the world to REFLECT centres in Bangladesh, India and Nepal as part of the activities of the First Global REFLECT Conference that was held in Puri, India Oct – Nov 1998. I joined a group of Latin American practitioners in the visit to the Saptari District of Nepal.

rather than walking further afield to get water from a different source. The group where these changes took place had named itself 'harmony' group. The predominance of words associated with socio-political issues was also noted at the Conference in 1998 with words such as poverty, exclusion, oppression and caste being noted among the key words raised within the REFLECT circles.

In addition to these local level changes REFLECT in Nepal has become very intimately linked to issues of social exclusion and transformatory development and has stimulated new social movements at the grassroots level (Shrivastava & Gautam 2001, Archer *et al.* 2003). In Eastern Nepal the women from the REFLECT circles began analysing the caste system and decided to counteract such discrimination through group formation and group action. The REFLECT centres "have been instrumental in evolving a process and methodology for organising Dalits ('untouchable' castes) to begin to confront huge social, economical and political discrimination that they face" (Shrivastava & Gautam 2001: 1). As a result of participating in REFLECT circles the women formed Sanghams (organisations) and social divisions started to break down. These organisations have begun to challenge the injustices that Dalit groups face with the support of the NGO Saraswati Community Development Forum (SCDF)<sup>103</sup>. The turning point in the movement was when they took the decision to abandon their traditional jobs as dictated by the caste system (Archer *et al.* 2003). Although this resulted in local repercussions continual reflection and new actions over time has resulted in the Dalit movement going from strength to strength and spreading through Nepal. Currently this movement is "continuing to put pressure on issues as varied as education, land reform and citizenship" (Archer *et al.* 2003: 37).

The importance of the contribution of REFLECT to the promotion of radical change and a more just and equitable form of development is seen as being central to the programme in Nepal. In April 2003 an Asia REFLECT Workshop was held in Nepal with the theme 'Sharing Learning from Popular Education Practices in People's Rights Movements in Asia'. REFLECT and other popular education practitioners as well as Rights activists participated in the day highlighting the link between critical popular education and social justice movements. Evidence from Nepal would suggest that in the main REFLECT offers a model that enables radical educationalists to further their work with the marginalised, excluded members of society and facilitates a process that is grounded at the local level and draws upon the strengths, imagination and creative potential that is innate within the

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<sup>103</sup> SCDF is a partner organisation of ActionAid Nepal.

communities in which they work. It is for this reason that local level studies are required into the complexities of REFLECT in order to gain further insight into its strengths and weaknesses. It is suggested that this thesis makes an important contribution to these debates.

### **3.6 Overview and summary of key issues**

This chapter has provided a critical review of the discourses of participatory development and has paid particular attention to the contribution of the work of Paulo Freire and Robert Chambers. The complexity and challenges in defining such a dynamic concept as participatory development along with the spread of, co-option and backlash against the participatory development movement has also been discussed. The importance of having spaces where people feel willing and able to engage in a process of critical analysis that is truly embedded at the local level has been highlighted. For this to occur participation needs to be viewed as both a means and an end. Control of the whole process must be grounded at the local level, from setting the agenda and determining priorities, to the undertaking of actions and taking responsibility and ownership for the outcomes. This is not to suggest that there is no role for external agents in the promotion of a more just and equitable society but the work of such agents needs to be based on the central principles of participatory action research and their work needs to be collaborative, empowering and based on the ideological premise of challenging oppressive structures. The original principles of the alternative development movement are integral to this move and critically revisiting the work of the original thinkers and activists in this area, such as Freire, provides a useful reference point from which to begin to reconceptualise participatory development.

REFLECT has been detailed as a potential model that activists, often NGOs, may adapt in order to work with local people and communities in the pursuit of a more just and equitable society. REFLECT has moved away from focusing on being an approach to literacy towards an emphasis on communication and power in recognition of the importance of respecting varied indigenous communication systems. It also highlights the centrality of power to the participatory development movement. Through embedding the REFLECT process in critical reflection and action at the local level it has been established as a model that offers considerable potential for practitioners working in the field of participatory development. It has the capacity to enable many of the limitations associated with the latter to be overcome.



Preliminary research undertaken by the author between 1992 and 1998 supports many of the emergent criticisms of participatory development approaches. It suggested that ACAP, although innovative in the field of conservation and development policies, had only adopted a limited conceptualisation of participatory development. Radical transformation was not a primary objective; in fact interviews suggested social change was not on the agenda of the organisation at all. It seemed that maintaining the status quo and working with the elite was seen to be crucial in the success of ACAP. In particular it is suggested that the non-formal education component of the project was not living up to its initial radical aims and objectives, as outlined in the operation plan (Gurung & DeCoursey 1988). It was found that there was a high level of demand for non-formal education classes that was not being met and that certain members of society were being excluded from these programmes. Additionally it was concluded that the adult literacy classes were failing to engage the learners in a meaningful process of reflection and learning or develop local level capacity to engage in a meaningful participatory process.

REFLECT seemed to offer a solution to some of these challenges and limitations. It was therefore presented as a potential approach to non-formal education in that it could offer a genuine, holistic and potentially empowering model for organisations seeking to promote transformative participatory development embedded at the local level. By avoiding a techniques based approach and through emphasising the ideological basis of Freire's work REFLECT may offer a way of reintroducing the 'radical' back into participatory development. As such it is potentially an ideal model for non-formal education programmes running within ICDPs like ACAP.

REFLECT also offered a means to respond to demands being made for me to facilitate the introduction of a non-formal education programme into the Sikles sector of the ACAP. Through responding to this request and helping to facilitate the introduction of REFLECT into the study area I became an 'active agent' in my own research process. This thesis explores the potential role that action-oriented research has to play in both understanding the processes of participatory development and supporting communities in their endeavour to participate in their own autonomous development. It contributes to the participatory development discourse by providing an in-depth examination of the introduction and progress of REFLECT in the Sikles sector of the ACAP. The next chapter moves to explore the methods employed within the research process and explore the challenges of engaging in action-oriented research.

## 4 CHAPTER FOUR Methodology

### 4.1 Introduction

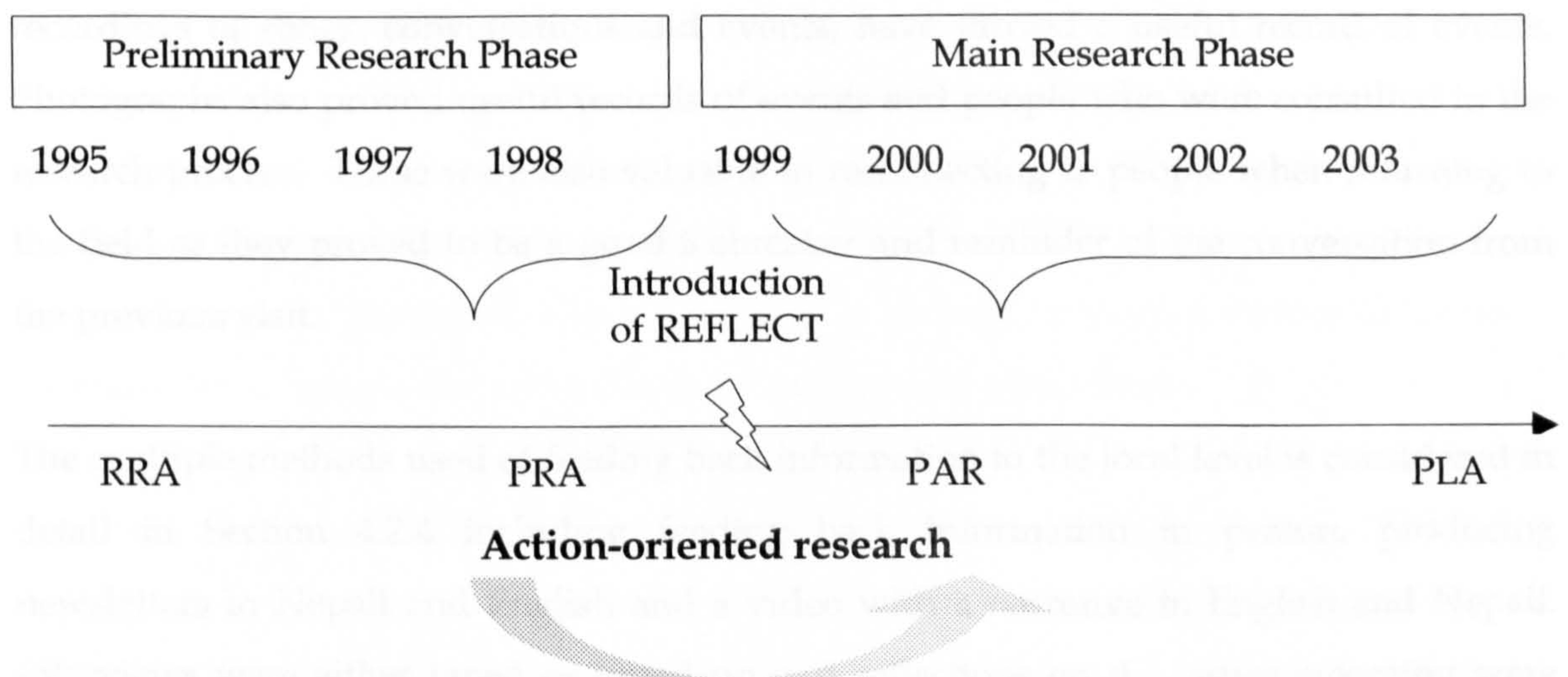
At the heart of this thesis is a complex and lengthy research journey that has enabled me to engage with people from Nepal in a process of learning and action. My motivation for undertaking research in Sikles arose out of my previous experience of living there in the village of Sikles (Box 1.1) and from the onset I was keen to explore issues that were of local interest and value to the people involved in the research process. The preceding chapters have discussed the theoretical dimensions of this journey. Chapter two concluded that ACAP was indeed a very positive example of an ICDP. However, areas for improvement were identified, especially in relation to the potential of the education programme to promote self-reliant inclusive development (Parker & Sands 1997). Chapter 3 provided a critical analysis of the discourses inherent within participatory development and non-formal education, as these are central to both the ACAP approach and REFLECT.

This chapter provides an overview of what has ultimately been a messy research process typical of action-oriented research (Brydon-Miller *et al.* 2003, Cook 1998, Kincheloe & Berry 2004, Mellor 2001, Reason & Bradbury 2001, Robertson 2000, Wadsworth 1998). It considers the importance of the researcher's prior experience to the research that underpins this thesis. Further, it explains how the research methods changed in response to the changing circumstances at the local level and reflects on who has 'participated' in the research process and how this has changed over time. Denzin & Lincoln (2000) suggest that such research is best described as 'bricolage' as the methods change according to the circumstances in an attempt to respond to the complexity of the research process. The chapter starts by defining the research approach and explains how my research can be best described as action-oriented research. It established the importance of reflexivity to action-oriented research and outlines some of the challenges AOR presents the researcher. Two distinct research phases are identified; firstly, entering the field and preliminary research (1995-1997); and secondly the main research phase (1998-2004). This chapter discuss the changing methods that have been employed in both research phases and explore who was consulted. Following this an overview of the wider issues that effected the research are considered such as the impact of my changing role on the research process, the changing political situation and some of the ethical issues that were faced by the researcher.

### 4.1.1 Action-oriented research – defining the research approach

The research process for this thesis has been long, fluid and organic in nature that it is difficult to define and categorise. It has evolved in relation to changing circumstances. I subscribe to the view proposed by Edwards (1993: 90) that the “purpose of intellectual inquiry in this field of study (development) is to promote the development of people denied access to knowledge, resources and power for hundreds of years”. In addition to this “the most effective way of doing this is to unite understanding and action, or theory and practice, where people are put at the centre of both”. My initial interest lay in the exploring the challenges ACAP faced in promoting participatory development and as Chapter two highlighted my research began to focus on non-formal education within the ACAP. Although it was not envisaged that I would become personally involved in the introduction of REFLECT I was committed to engaging in research that was of value to those who participated in the process. By getting involved in introducing REFLECT into the Sikles sector of the ACAP my commitment to acting on the knowledge generated by my preliminary research is demonstrated. This resulted in a shift in my research approach from participatory to action research as depicted in Diagram 4.1 below. As a result the term that best captures the essence of my research approach is action-oriented research.

**Diagram 4.1 How my research fits into the participatory continuum**



The research falls also within the remit of area studies as I have undertaken “a considerable degree of hands-on, grassroots level fieldwork, conducted with and through local individuals and institutions” (Parnwell 1999: 88). I have spent extensive periods in Nepal sitting with, talking with and listening to a variety of people from local villagers in the ACA, especially in Sikles, to staff working for the ACAP and KMTNC. In addition to this I have interviewed and talked to a range of activists from Nepal who have worked in the field of non-formal education over the past three decades. A variety of methods have been employed within the research process many of which can be described as ethnographic<sup>104</sup> due to the fact that I participated in the daily lives of the people in Sikles over a lengthy, although not continuous, period of time.

According to Baxter & Eyles (1999) the use of multiple methods taken from within the field of qualitative research gives the research process rigour and validity. This sentiment is reflected within the literature on qualitative research in general. However this can leave the research process difficult to label due to its holistic nature. Research in the field of both education and development is renowned for being inherently complex and rigour is gained through systematic note keeping and recording of information and through feeding the information back into the field for triangulation (Gorard & Taylor 2004, Kincheloe & Berry 2004, Mellor 2001, Zeni 1998). During each visit reflexive diaries were kept on a regular basis noting down conversations, observations and general feelings. In addition to this, letters home provided useful insight and audio letters, including recordings of songs, conversations and events, have proved a useful record of events. Photographs also proved useful records of events and people who were consulted in the research process. These were also valuable in reconnecting to people when returning to the field as they proved to be a good icebreaker and reminder of the conversation from the previous visit.

The multiple methods used of feeding back information to the local level is considered in detail in Section 4.2.4 including feeding back information in person, producing newsletters in Nepali and English and a video with a narrative in English and Nepali. Interviews were either taped or typed up and reflections on the issues emerging were noted. At times these have been discussed with other people visiting Nepal with me and such conversations have proved useful in forming opinions. My diaries note not only

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<sup>104</sup> Although influenced by ethnography the approach is not pure ethnography due to the fact that a continuous period of extended time was not spent in the field. Rather multiple field visits underpin this thesis and are fundamental to research approach.

events and observations but also of equal importance record my changing feelings. My joys, frustrations and changing emotions along with my concern over what I was doing, and why am I involved in research have also been written down in both letters and emails home. Further a reflective dairy has been kept whilst in the UK during the writing up of this thesis which notes on the first page "I've decided to keep this book as a PhD reflection book which is quite appropriate really given the fact that I am studying REFLECT, reflection should be central to my whole thesis" (14/07/1998).

Due to the flexible, responsive, multi-method approach employed and the reflexive manner in which the research has been conducted by the researcher could be viewed as a 'bricoleur'<sup>105</sup> (Denzin & Lincoln 1994). However, due to the association of the term with concepts such as trickery or cunning, framing the research in this way could have negative connotations (Hammersley 1999). To some it may suggest a lack of rigour or planning. The bricoleur does not reject empiricist research but does aim to produce "richer, thicker, and more rigorous forms of empirical knowledge and more humble claims for what it represents" (Kincheloe & Berry 2004: 35). As such it calls for more varied forms of output from the research process, for products that more accurately represent the reality of the research process. Equally it calls for research from all areas to be more reflective, less culturally biased, aware of alternative knowledges and less dismissive of multiple ways of seeing society in general. Rather than view research as a monological process it is viewed as a dialogical process that is both complex and contested (Tandon 19981). In recognition of this, detailed consideration is given within this chapter as to who has participated in the research process. Reflections are also made on how this both changed over time and the impact the author's own position has had within the research. It is aligned with what Tandon (1981) refers to as a process of dialogical inquiry. Dialogical inquiry assumes a mutual interest of parties in learning instead of there being a distinction between subjects and researchers.

Systematically recording the dialogue between researcher, participants and stakeholders is essential to this process whether it be via reflective diaries, typed up manuscripts of interviews or records of email exchanges. Utilising multiple methods and triangulation, are seen as crucial to gaining a deep understanding of any phenomenon being researched (Denzin & Lincoln 2000). Utilising and adapting a range of methods has been crucial in attempting to secure a depth of knowledge into the issues being explored and as the

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<sup>105</sup> This metaphor is taken from the French language and means 'tinkering'.

research process has evolved so have the methods employed. At times, when permission was granted and equipment available, interviews were recorded and at others notes taken during the interview<sup>106</sup>. These were typed up and used as a basis for follow up interviews and conversations giving the interviewee an opportunity to respond to my interpretations. When interviews were in Nepali or Gurung<sup>107</sup> time was spent following the interviews with the translator ensuring the details were recorded as accurately as possible. Being able to follow basic Nepali helped to ensure the meaning of the conversation was captured as accurately as possible given the language barriers and at times this led to lengthy discussion between myself and the person translating as we explored the issues being raised. A variety of methods have been employed within the research process<sup>108</sup> including formal and informal semi structured interviews with a variety of 'stakeholders', participant observation in various events and village life in general, participating in workshops, observation of REFLECT centres as well as conducting interviews by email and analysing email correspondence between support workers and my self over a 5 year period. The research process endeavoured to be as participatory as possible and led to the researcher becoming an active agent in the research process.

Achieving 'genuine participation' in the research process, from the outset including setting the research agenda, was by no means simple. It presented a number of challenges for researchers engaged in action research. There are complex ethical issues that need to be addressed by researchers engaged in action-oriented research. The first of these is whether to act or not. Because of ACAP's response to my preliminary research (Chapter 2.4) I was left in a position where my help was being requested. I was mindful of the advice given by Sidaway (1992) for researchers to avoid making any false promises. By engaging with the field, and playing a role in generating an interest for REFLECT, I felt morally obliged to respond to the demands from the local level and help to facilitate the introduction of REFLECT into the Sikles sector of the ACAP. In so doing I took the risk of dependent relations developing and was aware of the potential pitfalls of this approach.

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<sup>106</sup> Being a fast writer and developing my own unique shorthand helped to record conversations often word for word.

<sup>107</sup> Further reflection is provided on the issue of language when exploring the use of research assistants and support workers later in this chapter.

<sup>108</sup> These are discussed in detail for each of the research phases in sections 4.2.2 and 4.2.3 respectively. Table 4.1 and 4.3 provide an overview of these methods and how they have change over time.

After taking this decision I was faced with a number of decisions and challenges and became even more aware of the power imbalances that existed between myself and the participants and stakeholders. Such power imbalances are common between 'researcher' and 'researched' (or rather between researcher and participants) but these imbalances of power are further exacerbated when First World researchers enter the realms of the Third World<sup>109</sup>. Questions have to be addressed such as "who are we – who am I – to intervene in other people's lives when we know so little about any life, including our own?" (Rahnema 1997: 395). My concerns are reflected in my diaries where I note "*why am I getting involved in research in Nepal when I could be doing something in my own 'community' in Liverpool.... Maybe it's because I feel more at home here than I do in Liverpool but I have only lived there for 5 years, yet I have been here for less time!*" (April 1998). Later I note "*after conversations tonight [regarding if I could help a friend's brother get a visa to the UK] I have really started to question who I know and why and what our 'friendship' is based upon. So much so that you start to question what you are doing and why and what is expected of you but the more I thought about it the more I realised all relationships are fraught with complexity and sometimes you can think about this too much!*" (April 1999). These concerns can present psychological barriers that prevent researchers actually getting involved in action-oriented research. Whilst it is important to consider such issues it is important not to agonise too much about these decisions and relationships as such scrutiny can be debilitating.

Rahnema (1997) further notes that we are seldom allowed to enter the world of the 'target population' or 'stakeholders'. Often practical barriers also exist to becoming actively involved in the research process, such as a lack of funding or support from employers. I gained the support from my institution to 'enter the world of my participants' through registering to undertake my doctorate based on my experience of 'getting involved'. I secured funding for RELECT from my old school in Singapore. These actions provided me with the time and space to reflect upon my role in the research process and the implications of this and to enter into my own journey of learning, of critical reflection and personal transformation that is far from over. As I have been studying on a part time basis I have been able to engage in a dialogical process over a relatively long period of time (seven years) with a diverse range of people<sup>110</sup>.

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<sup>109</sup> This is equally applicable to any research that explores issues of marginalisation, exclusion and inequality whether it is in the Global North or Global South. As noted in Chapter Two elements of the Third World exist in the First World and vice-versa. It also needs to be noted that at times I was relatively powerless due to my position and lack of communication skills and hence the power relations are not as one way or as static as they may at first seem. Power is relational and changes depending upon the circumstances. Reflection is made on this in the concluding chapter.

<sup>110</sup> Critical reflections will be provided on the success of this strategy in Chapter 5 and 6.

The ethical implications of engaging in the field, especially working within 'other' 'distant' communities are well established within the fields of Anthropology (Grillo 2002)<sup>111</sup>, Education (BERA 1992) and Social Science in general (Reason & Bradbury 2001). These dilemmas are particularly acute within the field of action research due to the closeness of the researcher to their 'subject'. This has led to the emergence of protocols to guide the researcher through some of these dilemmas but as Lincoln (2001) notes these are often formalistic and do not go far enough or deep enough into the complexities facing action researchers. The need for ethical guidelines is increasingly recognised amongst academics and workers within the development community. The RGS/IBG Developing Areas Research Group's (DARG) recently established guidelines<sup>112</sup> are a welcome initiative and clearly acknowledge that "research in developing areas is typically characterised by sometimes extreme inequalities in the opportunity for and means of undertaking research". It is suggested that "DARG members should thus endeavour to use the research process as a means of reducing these inequalities wherever possible and practicable".

The DARG Monograph by Robson and Willis (1997) provides an invaluable point of reference for researchers entering the field of development research, as do the recently published texts by Laws *et al.* (2003) and Scheyvens and Storey (2003). It is important that these guidelines are maintained as work in progress and can be developed with input from a range of practitioners, academic and activists engaged within the field of development across disciplines and countries. During the research period a variety of guidelines have been consulted both at the time and retrospectively which have proved useful points of reference. Rather than discuss these here retrospective reflection is provided on the ethical challenges faced within the research process in Section 4.3. They are further explored in the findings chapter, Chapter 5. This research contributes to these debates and actively engages in the considered use of these ethical guidelines. It supports calls for ethical guidelines to be seen as 'work in progress' rather than given entities<sup>113</sup>.

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<sup>111</sup> Details of ethical guidelines for ASA can be found at <http://www.asa.anthropology.ac.uk/ethics2.html> and the AAA at <http://www.aaanet.org/committees/ethics/ethcode.html>

<sup>112</sup> DARG's ethical guidelines developed can be found at <http://personal.rhul.ac.uk/unfa/001/dargethics.html> where an invitation to contribute to them is also sought.

<sup>113</sup> These issues will be explored further in the forthcoming DARG Postgraduate workshop in June 2005 that is being organised by the author for PhD students working in 'developing areas'.



### **4.1.2 The need for reflexivity**

There is a growing body of literature advocating researchers become more critically reflexive in the research process especially when the research process is qualitative, or action-oriented, in nature (Baxter & Eyles 1999, Davies 1999, England 1994, Greenwood 2003, Olesen 2000, Pain 2003, Pollner & Emerson 2001, Punch 1994, Robertson 2000, Rose 1997, Sapsford & Jupp 1996). "Reflexivity can simply be defined as viewing the self and data in a critical self detached manner" (Grbich 2004: 71). Sidaway (1992) provides a comprehensive critique of how traditional geographical research has separated the researcher and the research and attempted to produce 'objective scientific knowledge' about 'Others' without sufficient analysis being given to the relationships between the researcher and the researched. This more critically reflexive approach has been called for in order to position the researcher within the context of the research. It requires researchers to consider the way in which the knowledge was generated, the positionality (and therefore impact) of the researcher in this process as well as the potential impacts this may have had upon the information made available to them and therefore on any knowledge which may result from this (Edwards 1994, Grbich 2004, Howard 1997, Katz 1994, Kobayashi 1994, Madge 1993, McDowell 1997, Robson 1997, Sidaway 1992).

Denzin and Lincoln (1994: 3) argue that "research is an interactive process shaped by his or her personal history, biography, gender, social class, race and ethnicity, and those of the people in the setting". Fieldwork is a dialogical process that is structured by both researchers and participants and requires greater reflection by the researcher on these dynamics in order to promote more inclusive methods that are sensitive to the power relations embedded within fieldwork (England 1994). As Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) state research to some extent requires the researcher to provide 'an ethnography of the ethnographer'. Critical reflexivity is essential to achieving rigour in qualitative research and action-oriented research (Baxter & Eyles 1999). The researcher needs to examine not only him/herself but also to reflect on the roles and consequences of the 'gate keepers', 'key informants' 'participants' and 'friends' consulted along the way (Hammersley & Atkinson 1995). One of the key qualities needed within research that is immersed at the local level is 'self-awareness' (Atkinson & Hammersley 1994, Dyck 1993, Moss 1993, Maguire 2001, Parnwell 1999). This can be gained through engaging fully in reflexivity and analysing in particular the relational power that exists within the research process.

With respect to research undertaken in the field of development, and in particular research that aims to merge understanding with action, Edwards (1993: 90) advocates "all who are involved in this endeavour make our own values and objectives explicit, so that they can be criticized and 'deconstructed'". It is equally important to reflect upon the power relations that exist between stakeholders to avoid the reflection being tokenistic. Keeping reflexive fieldwork diaries played an important role in this process<sup>114</sup>.

Critical reflection is particularly relevant to academics involved in 'real world' concerns such as social exclusion which are intimately connected with questions of power (Maxey 2000). There is perhaps a danger that those who engage in participatory action research are inclined to believe that such an approach negates the need for critical reflection. However "while participation holds the potential to radically alter the politics of fieldwork it does not dissolve all power relations between the researcher and researched, nor is it free from ethical dilemmas" (Kesby 2000: 432). Sarri and Sarri (1992) remind us that within any form of participatory research it is important to consider who is participating in what and what actions are being undertaken, by whom and for what? In the light of current literature this research paid particular attention to enlisting participation in the whole research including determining the design and research agenda. This is done by reflecting on who has participated and how in each of the two research phases and how this has changed over time.

Reflexivity is also important in the writing up stages not only within the methodology section but within the whole text. Academic work often removes the writer from the written text (WGSG 1984). The use of the first person is avoided, placing the author as a distant other. Subjective experiences need to be viewed as valid forms of experience and are increasing being used within post-modern research (Gubrium & Holstein 2003) and are essential in action-oriented research where the researcher and researched are closely linked (Harding 1987, Maguire 2001, Moss 1993). Emerson *et al.* (2002: 355) state that "field notes are an expression of the ethnographer's deepening knowledge". As a result, they are often unruly and represent a process of selection by the researcher. Whilst in Nepal I kept detailed field notes. Noting down selective issues that seemed important at the time provided me with a record of insights into the complexities at the local level and

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<sup>114</sup> It was only in completing the thesis that the true value of these self reflective diaries came to fruition as is often the case within action oriented research. Mellor (2001) provides useful insight into the value of diaries in his work as an educational practitioner. Chambers (2002) highlights the value of such dairies in his reflections on engaging in the World Bank project that led to the publication *Voices of the Poor* (Narayan *et al.* 2000) and influenced the World Development Report 2000/01.

a later reading of these notes provided me with a deeper understanding of the impact the research process has had upon me. My field notes varied depending upon the visits and time available for reflection and often my reflections were sent in letters back home. Where appropriate, I have included extracts from these field notes and reflections have been included as boxed text, in italics.

#### **4.1.3 Challenges of PAR - overcoming the dilemmas ?**

A number of challenges face researchers undertaking action-oriented research such as how do you represent the voices of 'others' and what language do you use to describe these 'others', how do you avoid creating dependency upon the researcher in the PAR process and how do you retain objectivity. Many researchers have expressed concerns over describing people as 'informants', 'subjects' or 'objects' in the research process as such terms are so mechanistic. Within this thesis the term 'participant' or 'stakeholder' is preferred as it acknowledges the important role people play in the construction and ownership of knowledge. This basic respect for participants has often been missing from development research and indeed development interventions (Biker & Sillitoe 2002, Chambers 1984, 1994, Dudley 1993, Redclift 1992). In the main the use of the term 'participant' has been reserved for those people actually participating in the REFLECT circles that have been established in the Sikles sector of the ACAP.

Issues of representation and 'voice'<sup>115</sup> are not just restricted to knowledge creation but are also evident in the dissemination of findings from action research. Often the rich process, by which the knowledge or 'findings' are generated, is lost in the production of the written text, in the main due to pressure from publishers for authors to get to the point and discuss the outcomes (Greenwood 2004, Harvey 2002). Collaborative writing is fraught with difficulties and authors have expressed their discomfort at speaking for the people rather than with them (Chambers 1997, Møller 1998, Swantz 1996). I also share these feelings of discomfort and believe that ideally representatives from the local level should be afforded the opportunity to participate in conferences and workshops, to produce their own and joint publications and in relation to overseas work to visit the country from where the research has originated. In reality many barriers, especially financial, prevent this depth of collaboration. As an academic, I have presented my

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<sup>115</sup> Within action research the term 'voice' is used to signify the views of the participants in the research process (Hadfield & Haw 2001). Whilst these are often 'silenced' 'excluded' or 'marginalised' voices this does not necessarily have to be the case. Action research may equally enhance the voice of the powerful and certainly gives voice to the researcher engaged in the process (Doucet & Mauthner 1998).

research findings at a number of conferences and workshops<sup>116</sup>, however lack of funding opportunities and difficulties in gaining visas for my collaborative researchers have proved to be significant barriers. These barriers are evident within all forms of development research. The lack of participation from researchers from the Global South was noted in a DARG session in 1997 despite the desire by many academics to include the researchers they collaborate with in these events. This exclusion reinforces the unequal relations inherent between researchers and the researched. Indeed the DARG ethical guidelines call for collaborative research that encompasses the principles of genuine reciprocity and the joint ownership and publication of research findings. This principle underpins my work and utilising my position as an academic within the UK to further links with Nepal to provide opportunities wherever possible for collaborative research and presentations, has played an important part in addressing the imbalances of power that inevitably exist between the researcher and the researched and/or co-researchers.

## **4.2 Its all part of a process - my research journey**

### **4.2.1 Understanding and entering the field -1992**

Spending 6 months in Nepal as a voluntary teacher in the village of Sikles placed me in a particularly strong position to engage in a process of PAR that included local people in setting the research agenda. Various insights into the complexities of Nepalese village life and the work of ACAP were derived from my time spent there. Time spent in the village, in the school, shops, and homes of a variety of people led me to develop a range of 'key informants' and friends within Sikles. The students I taught and the people who visited the ACAP office where I often 'hung out' influenced the people I met and homes that I visited. As Sikles is a predominantly Gurung village it was inevitable that most of my contacts were with Gurung families. Other caste groups were represented in the community but economic and social mores often made it difficult or inappropriate for a relationship to evolve. This was exacerbated within the school environment due to the low enrolment of members from the traditional occupational castes.

I gained valuable insight into the complexities of the caste system and its ramifications through my contact with a pupil from the Damai caste. For example, whilst he would be the one who invited me to social gatherings his absence from those gatherings was

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<sup>116</sup> I have presented 'my' findings at the RGS January 1997, DSA Sept 1996 and Sept 2003, IDPM Conference From Tyranny to Transformation Feb 2003, International Conference on Sustainable Development March 2003, and the Educational Issues in Nepal One Day Conference organised by myself as part of British Council funded Higher Education Link in October 2003.

notable. As a member of the traditional occupational caste he was socially barred from entering Gurung homes; interestingly, such social divisions were openly discussed amongst the students and in many respects they regarded it as a generational issue, a social practice that they believed would be gradually dismissed. These social barriers were the same ones that prevented women from the traditional occupational caste from attending the ACAP non-formal education classes discussed Chapter 2.

This period in Nepal also proved to be particularly pertinent to the future research as I also got to know various ACAP staff living in Sikles. I occupied a room in '*raato ghar*' ('red house') directly above a room accommodating eight of the ACAP staff. We spent time socialising in the ACAP office. I also assisted in the ACAP office and would accompany staff in their household visits and participate in extension activities such as planting trees and repairing the paths<sup>117</sup>. Through spending time with the staff I came to learn a lot about how ACAP functioned and the aspirations of the people who worked for the project. I also formed friendships with some of the local women in Sikles who worked for ACAP in the forestry nursery.

Letters and audiotapes sent back home during this period, along with extensive notes in my diary, all served as useful reference points in later research. An example of this is the records I kept of how alienated some of the 'non-local' teachers made me feel in the school compared to the local teachers and villagers. These teachers were predominantly male and belonged to the Brahmin caste. Despite my best efforts to speak to them in Nepali, and regardless of their excellent spoken English, they would speak to me at such a speed, and with a formality not used at the village level, that I soon gave up trying to talk to them. Within the local high school I got to know the headmaster, a local man from Sikles who was keen to spend his time talking about the problems of Sikles with me, again providing useful insights. At this time I was neither a lecturer nor an external researcher but was to many, though not all, Sara Didi<sup>118</sup>, a privileged position to be in when beginning your research. I had good access to a wide range of 'gatekeepers' and 'key informants' when I entered the field in 1995.

Gaining entry into a setting or a group is a key aspect of action-oriented research and it is essential that the relationships that are established are positive and based on mutual respect and equality (White *et al.* 2004). Being able to communicate in Nepali and having

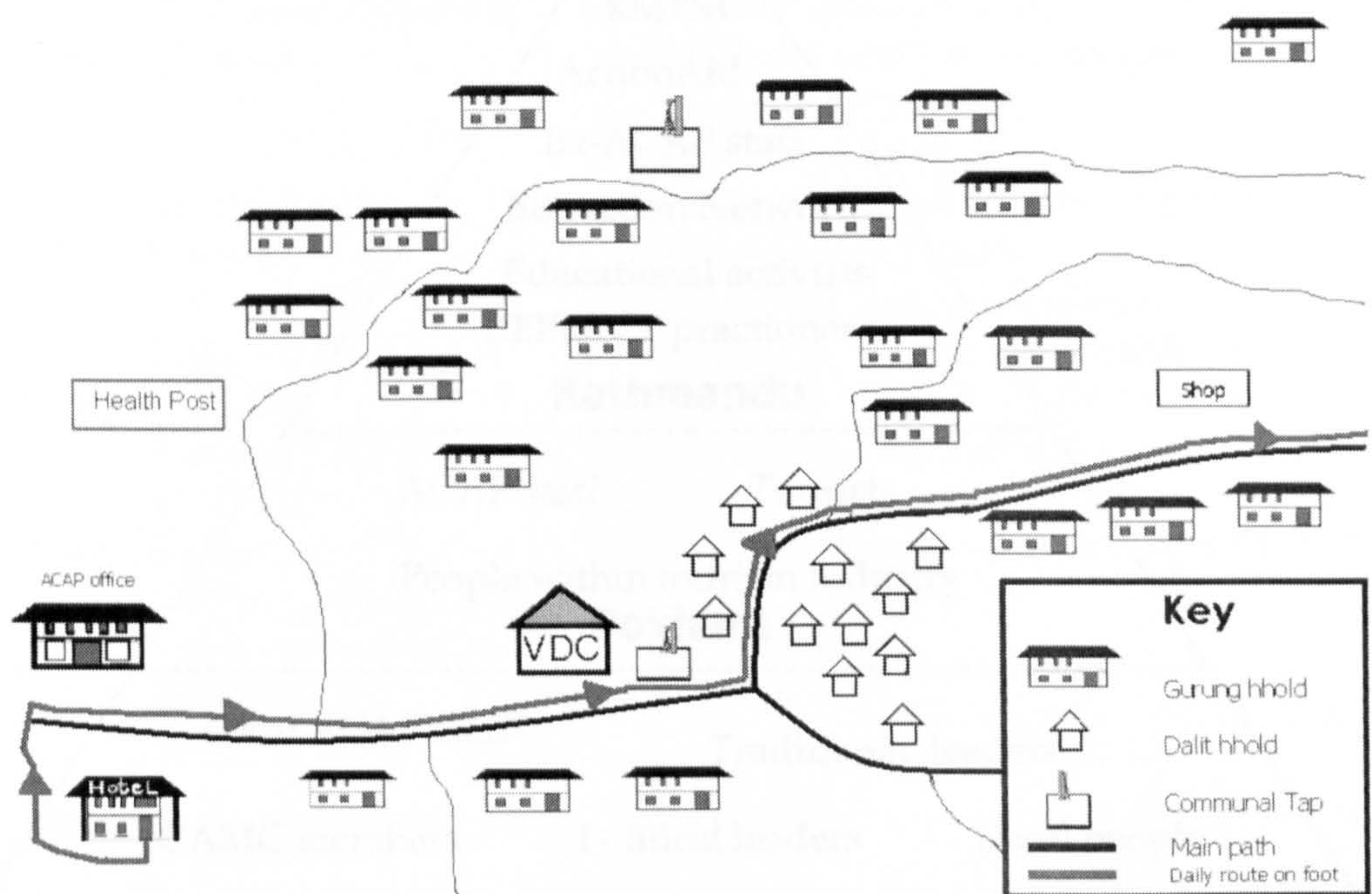
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<sup>117</sup> Although local villagers would often try to prevent me from doing jobs which required getting dirty!

<sup>118</sup> 'Didi', meaning older sister is a term used in Nepal to signify friendship and is used when people know each other well. Students in the village often referred to me as Sara Miss.

an established network of contacts was integral to my research process. This familiarity with the research area allowed me to devote time to seeking out and listening to 'quieter voices' within the 'community' in Sikles; the voices of women, those who obtained *Lali Guras* funds, children who did not go to school and members of the traditional occupational castes<sup>119</sup>. This was done in a variety of ways but most important is being open and approachable at all times. Stopping to talk as well as take photographs of people when requested proved an important point of contact. Whereas my relationship with more wealthy members of the community centres on being in the home, eating and drinking, my interactions with those less wealthy were often on the paths in the village that I walked along on a daily basis. Hanging around key meeting places, such as taps and crossroads within the village, was a sure way of meeting people. The following sketch Map (Diagram 4.2) of the area surrounding the VDC Office in Sikles is one such area where I got to know a number of people from the traditional occupational castes. It was at this junction where I would spend time taking photos and hence becoming familiar with the people who lived in the 'Dalit' community.

**Diagram 4.2 Feedback from the field**

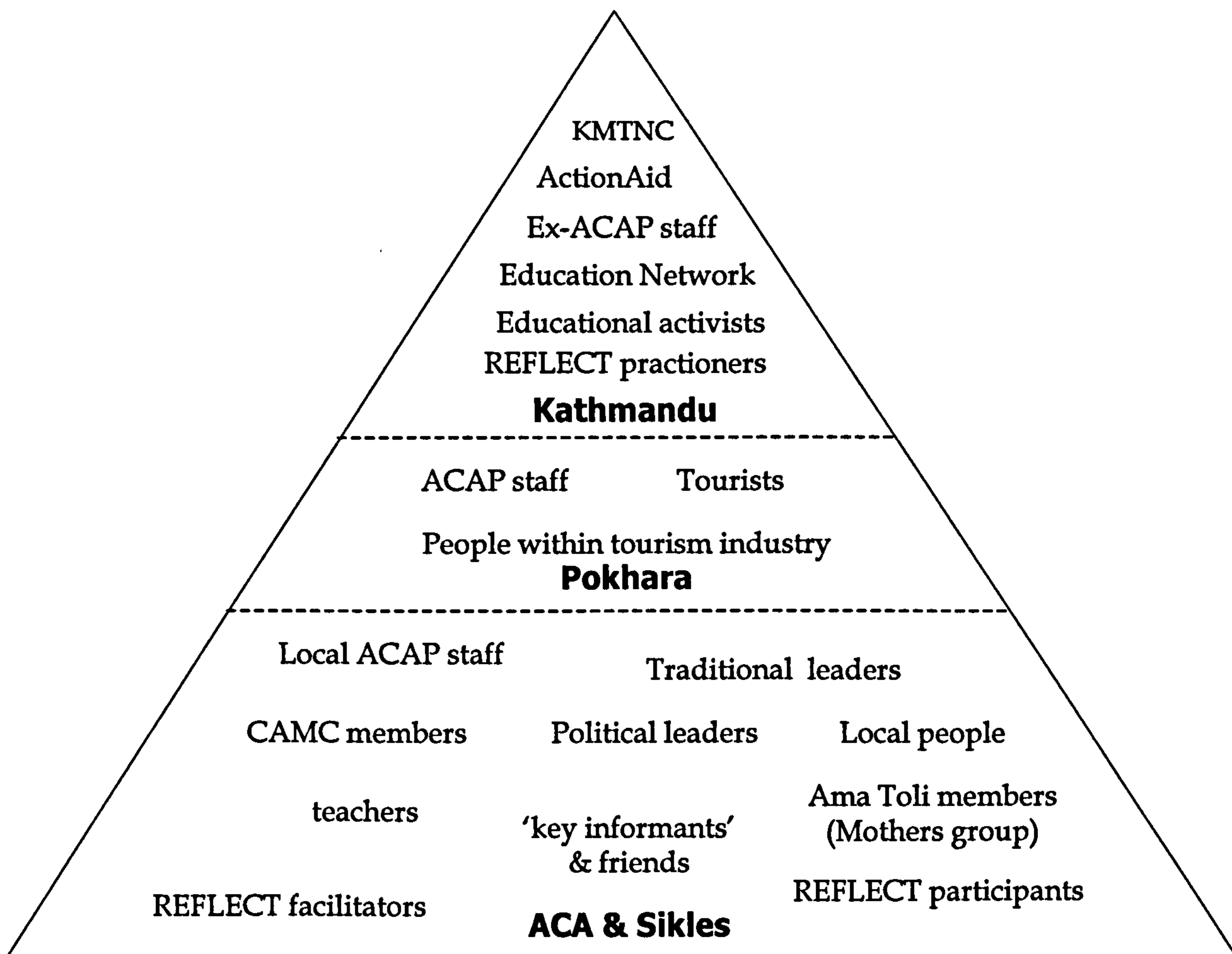


It is important to recognise that my contacts will have been skewed towards the more outspoken and influential members of the community, as they are more confident, forthcoming and willing to share their opinions with me. They are also more able to offer

<sup>119</sup> Taking photographs and returning with them proved to be a useful point of contact with people. This was especially true near the VDC Hall, which I passed daily, where I had some useful conversations with members of the traditional occupational castes that lived there.

me food and drink, a key means of interaction in Sikles. Less wealthy members of the community cannot always offer the same hospitality and this creates barriers to interactions. Yet at the same time, I managed to include 'quieter voices' in the research process. It is interesting to note that apart from a few key men, such as local teachers and a select number of men, most of my contacts and friendships have developed with women in the village. This highlights the fact that my interactions are shaped not only by gender but also by social status. Research was undertaken at a variety of levels during the two research phases that underpin this thesis (Table 1.1 & Diagram 4.1) from Kathmandu and Pokhara, to villages within the ACA more broadly particularly in the Sikles sector of the ACAP. Diagram 4.3 provides an overview of the types of institutions and people consulted during the research process. It is important to note that the spheres to which people have been designated are not fixed, people have moved between them to some extent.

**Diagram 4.3 Overview of 'stakeholders' and those consulted in the research process**



#### **4.2.2 Preliminary research phase**

The aims of my visit in 1995 were very broad and free from a number of constraints, apart from time. My overall aim was to simply explore the extent to which ACAP was living

up to its promise of promoting conservation *for* development and to gain insight into the successes and challenges that it faced. I had no external funding for this visit and therefore no pressure to meet an external agent's agenda. This gave me the freedom to follow any line of enquiry that arose out of my discussions with the people I came into contact with. Operating in a Gurung village presented obvious language barriers. From living in Sikles in 1992 I had developed basic conversational Nepali skills<sup>120</sup>. On returning in 1995 I undertook a course in Nepali to expand my vocabulary and develop a basic understanding of written Nepali. I also took every opportunity to practice my Nepali whilst in the UK through developing contacts with Nepalese students in Liverpool. I also acquired some very basic Gurung words which enabled me to develop a greater rapport with the people of Sikles than might otherwise have been possible<sup>121</sup>. My increased ability to both speak and write basic Nepali was invaluable to research process. Table 4.1 provides an overview of the visits during this time and the form of the field research.

**Table 4.1 Methods employed in preliminary research**

| Date of visit       | Purpose of visit /<br>duration<br><i>Focus of research</i>                               | METHODS <sup>122</sup>  |
|---------------------|--|---|
| 1995<br>April - May | Preliminary research<br>8 weeks<br>ACAP  | Stakeholder identification & Interviews with 'stakeholders' and key informants<br>Discussions at local level<br>Participant observation |
| 1996<br>April - May | Research visit<br>8 weeks<br>CEEP & NFE  | PRA with school children eg calendars & maps<br>Participant observations<br>Interview with key stakeholders                             |
| 1997<br>Nov. - Dec  | Field Visit<br>4 weeks<br><i>Feedback findings</i>                                       | Triangulation and confirmation of previous research<br>Semi-structured interviews   |
| 1998<br>April - May | Field visit<br>6 weeks<br><i>Further inquiry into non-formal education &amp; REFLECT</i> | Interviews ActionAid & ACAP<br>Discussion at local level regarding REFLECT  |

During the preliminary research phase I visited Nepal four times (more than 6 months altogether). My time away from Nepal provided useful time to reflect, analyse and

<sup>120</sup> The text by Karki & Shreshtha (1988) was particularly useful in learning to read and write.

<sup>121</sup> There is no written form of Gurung (Tamu) and very few people outside of the Gurung community speak the language. Notable exceptions are Alan MacFarlane and Judith Petigrew, two anthropologists who have carried out ethnographic research in the Kaski District of Nepal. I therefore developed my own system of writing down the key words and phrases (such as "ini lee mu, tie tie" - it's delicious - enough enough!). Using simple phrases such as this was much appreciated as well as a source of amusement.

<sup>122</sup> For a detailed list of who was interviewed in the preliminary research visits and a selection of transcripts from this research and details of research undertaken in 1997 see Appendix 4.1 - 4.3.



produce written reports or newsletters to summarise my main findings. The research agenda gradually evolved throughout the preliminary research period shaped by discussions with local people in the field and in part by my changing position in terms of employment, professional and personal interests also played a role in the evolving focus.

From living in Sikles in 1992, I was keen to expand my understanding of how the ACAP promoted participatory development in the ACA and what barriers it was facing. It was with this question in mind that I returned to Sikles in 1995. I was also interested in exploring the complexities of the inequalities I had observed within the region. In particular I wanted to know more about the barriers that prevented people from the non-Gurung community accessing education in the village of Sikles. I wished to gain more insight into how the ACAP conceptualised and promoted participatory development and the role non-formal education played in this process. Through discussing these issues in the Sikles area it was clear that these issues were also of local concern and interest. The research agenda was also driven by a personal interest in questions of equality and inequality in relation to the effectiveness of ACAP. It particularly focused upon the Sikles sector and employed multiple methods in order to gain a deeper insight into these complex issues.

#### *4.2.2.1 Multiple methods*

Information in the preliminary stages was gathered from a number of sources and from a variety of methods. Visits were made to the key institutional offices of the KMTNC in Kathmandu, the ACAP Directorate in Pokhara and Head Office in Ghandruk, and literature produced by ACAP and KMTNC were reviewed. Informal interviews were conducted with key officials and workers (past and present) from the two organisations<sup>123</sup>, and with key stakeholders in the ACA, mainly in Sikles. The aim of these discussions was to gain further insight into the key areas of local concern. This coupled with participant observation and detailed field notes helped to develop an understanding of the pertinent and complex issues ACAP faced in achieving its aims and objectives. Due to the open ended nature of my questions in 1995 a number of diverse themes were raised such as the need for eco-tourism projects, the importance of paying attention to gender within the ACAP, concerns over how to resolve conflict at the local level and concerns over the migration of the youth from the villages. All of these would have made

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<sup>123</sup> Observation and interviews were carried out in Pokhara, Sikles, Gallegurka, Yanjakot, Jomson, and Ghandruk. The school activities only took place in Sikles. The researchers also attended the annual CEEP workshop (Pokhara) as participant observers.

interesting and viable topics for further research by myself or other interested parties. However, overall conversations and interviews reinforced the emphasis placed on education as being central to the success of the ACAP<sup>124</sup>.

Hence, when I returned in 1996, with my colleague Rose Sands, the research focus was on the education and in particular the non-formal educational component. This was partly influenced by attending the launch of ActionAid's new approach to literacy, REFLECT, in April 1996 and in part also reflected the interests of my colleague who had previously visited an ActionAid project in Nepal. The research evolved to focus on exploring the challenges and successes of the Conservation Extension and Education Programme (CEEP) of the ACAP and the role that it played in promoting sustainable development within the ACAP. Although we were keen to engage in relevant research our approach could not be classified as pure PAR (Parker & Sands 1997). However, emphasis was placed on utilising participatory techniques, such as constructing mobility maps, seasonal calendars and transect walks<sup>125</sup> in order to widen the participation in the research process in order to access quieter voices and partly to develop our own experience of using these techniques.

Equally important time was spent observing and 'hanging around'; in ACAP offices, nurseries, canteens, sharing meals with local people, sitting around public spaces, participating in literacy classes and a joining in a number of extension activities<sup>126</sup>. Much was learnt from this time spent 'wandering about', or as it is known in Nepal *Gumna Jaani*. My colleague accompanying me to Sikles provided a fresh perspective on key issues and provided invaluable opportunities for reflective discussions. Whilst previously these activities were rarely acknowledged as valid research tools outside of Anthropology, Chapter 3 highlighted the increasing use of such techniques within the field of 'alternative' or 'participatory development'. Chambers (1983) maintains that in fact the most effective learning (from each other) takes place in everyday situations such as

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<sup>124</sup> This was influenced by a variety of factors such as people knowing my interest and experience within education, the fact that two female employees from ACAP were due to attend a course in Glasgow on environmental education and the fact that many ACAP staff were involved in preparing the annual CEEP report ODA Joint Funding Scheme. As a result educational issues were on the minds of staff from ACAP. At the local level in Sikles the new Modern High School (funded by UWCSEA) had just opened and was a major topic of conversation.

<sup>125</sup> Conversations during these walks were recorded using a Dictaphone in order to capture the wealth of information that was gleaned from these exercises.

<sup>126</sup> The most memorable of these was participating in an Conservation Mobile Camp event in Yangjakot that coincided with Buddha Jayanti (Buddha's birthday) where we were the only non Nepali people participating in a village festival that centred around the performing of the traditional Gurung Ghātu dance and culminated in half a dozen chickens losing their heads! (for reflections on this see Sands & Parker 1996, Gurung & Parker 1996).

walking, talking, travelling and observing. Dudley (1993: 65) goes on to suggest that “walking or wandering around is possibly the pre-eminent development research technique. Its banality belies its value and explains its lack of prestige as a research methodology”. The research process in 1996 benefited from the expanding network of stakeholders that had been developed in previous visits. Chapter 2 noted how two local people, a teacher and University educated Hitman, translated for me when conversations were in Gurung in Sikles. The two people differed in their translation techniques with the local teacher translating less and discussing more. Due to the conversations being in Gurung it was impossible for me to follow the conversation fully. I relied upon trust and assessing body language when such issues as what is REFLECT were being explained to local people.

In December 1997 I noted in my field diary after one such interview “*it was a bit odd today as {teacher} spent most of his time talking to the traditional leader I had requested to meet to talk about the report and the newsletter. I felt a bit left out as they talked for over an hour about the issues I had raised and very little of his time (the local teacher) was spent translating the response to me*”. This was in the main due to the conversation being informal and interaction with this person being framed by his respected position and age. He was over 80 years old and had recently suffered from ill health. He still had a bad cough and he was slow to respond to the questions and gave thoughtful considered replies. It would have been inappropriate for me to request these were translated to me as it would have broken the flow of the conversation. I further note in my field diary that “*...it was a bit odd really but at the same time was nice not to be at the centre of attention and he (my translator) seemed to be explaining the process to him from his hand gestures..... overall he (traditional leader) seems quite well at the moment where as last time I was here he had been rather ill. He seems very keen on the prospect of opportunities for more education classes and gave his support for the project (field notes Dec 1997). Later that day I noted “I feel quite lonely today for some reason, maybe its because I can’t speak Gurung? ke garne (what to do?) .... If I could speak Gurung it would be so much better- still I will struggle on in Nepali and rely upon my ability to communicate with people like Grandma in what can only be described as sign language, I am always amazed at how we manage to sit and talk for so long with her not speaking Nepali and me not speaking Gurung” (ibid.). The same is true for the conversation with the traditional leader noted above. From merely being there when the discussion took place I gained a great deal of insight into the feelings of the respondent from their gestures and demeanour. My Nepali at that time, though far from being perfect, was very much village Nepali, and enabled me to follow conversations and engage in discussions with the help of translators. During the*

field trip in April 1998, employing Hitman to translate proved valuable in recording the detail of these discussions and we spent time reflecting on my notes and the interview to ensure the rich detail was captured.

Semi-structured interviews and discussions in Kathmandu and Pokhara were usually conducted in English and recorded either via copious note taking<sup>127</sup>, or occasionally with the aid of a tape recorder. A system of recording information in sectioned noted books was particularly useful in systematically recording the information<sup>128</sup>. Before moving on to explore the research undertaken in the main phase of the thesis it is important to briefly consider who participated in this research phase and why.

#### *4.2.2.2 Multiple stakeholders – participation in the preliminary research.*

A distinction is drawn between people who are 'local' and those who are 'non-local'. Local is taken here to mean that the person was either born in Sikles or Yangjakot as these are the two villages where REFLECT has been established, or people who have their 'home' in either Sikles or Yangjakot (including women who have moved there upon marriage). A variety of contacts were made in different places as depicted in Table 4.2.

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<sup>127</sup> There were notable benefits from having two researchers present during interviews in 1996. On the one hand it enabled more detailed notes to be taken and on the other interviews were more fluid. Questions evolved from the conversation and what started of as an interview soon flowed into open conversations.

<sup>128</sup> I began using different coloured Filofax paper (held together with treasury tags or string) as small pads could be kept on my persons at all time. The larger textbooks were useful in more formal setting and each section was colour coded with both a coloured divider and pages within that section being edged in the same colour. As a result of this the red section became Kathmandu, blue sections Pokhara, Green section Sikles and 'local' level information and the yellow section was for follow up issues and other notes such as teaching ideas. Though this may seem very simple, due to the longitudinal nature of the research it helped to track issues and follow up questions between visits. The previous field notes would be taken back into the field on subsequent visits. Also recording the information on paper proved important as often computer discs would become infected with viruses and rendered useless and pitfalls such as technical problems were avoided in the main. Email access during the period of research has developed and become widely available in Nepal, yet time spent in the evenings on email whilst in the field is time away from exchanges with people and immersing yourself in social opportunities which are important dimensions of the research process.

**Table 4.2 Overview of people consulted in the research process**

| Place                 | Non local to the Sikles sector of the ACAP  |  |
|-----------------------|---|--|
| Place                 | KMTNC Staff   | Other contacts   |
| Kathmandu             | Chairman<br>Director<br>Key staff   | People working for NGO's such as SPACE, SEACOW, NEPAN and ActionAid - especially those working within the field of participatory development and non-formal education  |
| Pokhara               | ACAP staff - Project Director, Conservation Education Officer, Women Development Officer, Tourism Officer, Southern & Northern Area Co-ordinators<br>ACAP employees in Ghandruk, Jomson & Yangjakot<br>Ex-employees of ACAP | Ex Ghurka soldiers from the Gurung community who now live in Pokhara<br>Tourists and people involved in the tourism industry in Pokhara  |
| Others <sup>129</sup> | People who have volunteered for ACAP<br>Students from UWCSEA who have lived & taught in Sikles  | Colleagues and friends who have accompanied me on trips to Nepal   |
|                       | <b>Working within Sikles sector 'non local'</b>   | <b>Local to Sikles sector</b>  |
| Sikles 'local' level  | Staff working for ACAP<br>Especially: -<br>Officer in Charge (multiple)<br>Conservation Education Officer<br>Women in Development Officers<br>Forest Rangers<br>Accountant  | Local ACAP staff - agricultural helper, nursery employees<br>School contacts - Headmaster & teachers both local and non local<br>Local leaders - CDC Chairman, VDC Chairman, traditional leaders, Head of Mothers Group<br>Lali Guras recipients (non Gurung)<br>Friends & acquaintances from 1992 |

My interactions in Sikles were generally less formal than elsewhere due to my previous experience and relationships there. Whilst I have noted my unease at labelling friends as 'informants', at times this is what they have been, whether knowingly or not. Almost all conversations bear relevance to the research process. Through sharing their time, hospitality and opinions they have had a significant impact upon my understanding of many complex issues. Some of these people have remained engaged in the research process in a variety of ways further stressing the dynamic nature of action-oriented

<sup>129</sup> These contacts are less easy to pigeonhole as they cross over the boundaries or have changed their position during the research period and hence fit less well into the above categories. It needs to be noted though that none of the categories are static or clear cut as over the period of the research these have changed a good example of this is with one person who was initially the OIC in Sikles in 1992, then came to study in the UK in 1994 and returned to a post within the KMTNC. Since leaving KMTNC he has been employed by a larger American NGO and today is employed as one of the first Nepali advisors to DFID in Kathmandu. This person does not fit into a box unless I create one for close friends.

research. Key informants may at a later date become participants in the process whilst others may chose not to participate in any resulting actions. These insights serve to demonstrate the fluidity of participation and the complexities of trying to define participants, stakeholders and co-researchers in action-oriented research, especially when it is longitudinal in nature.

Due to the mobility of the ACAP staff I have developed a wide range of contacts within the organisation. Meeting people on a continuous basis was important for confirming my findings and for triangulation purposes as well as enabling me to follow up areas of ambiguity. ACAP staff frequently move from one office to another meaning that each time I visited Sikles some of the staff were familiar to me whilst others did not know me. This effected the nature of the interviews with staff, with newer contacts being interviewed more formally and those I knew well less so. If staff had been relocated between my visits I endeavoured to meet them in Pokhara in the ACAP Headquarters. Obviously, the longer I had known the person the less formal and more open and friendly my interactions were. My reflexive diary has provided me with invaluable insights into my changing experiences in the research process. These are included in the relevant places often as boxed text. As a result of these networks I was invited to be a participant observer in the CEEP Monitoring and Evaluation Workshop in 1996. This was significant in developing my understanding of the successes and challenges of the CEEP and the pressures placed upon NGOs via the evaluation requirements of external donors.

The number of visits during the preliminary research phase has played a crucial role in this process and enabled a genuine process of dialogue to be established between myself and ACAP staff, both in person and through email correspondence. It also played an important role in building up relationships and friendships as well an influencing people's perceptions of me. Visiting Nepal frequently at different times of the year has been crucial to establishing a dialogue with stakeholders and has enabled me to participate in a variety of events organised by ACAP<sup>130</sup>. Although a somewhat transient visitor many people view me as someone with a real interest in ACAP and in Nepal. My connection to and passion for Sikles is well known. Whilst my links to ACAP were also well known I refrained from associating myself too tightly with them. As a result I was neither seen as an employee, representative or supporter of ACAP. This will have no doubt impacted on the information shared with me; in some cases people requested that I

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<sup>130</sup> From conservation education activities, celebrating environment day, participating in mobile camps and study tours to participating in monitoring and evaluation workshops.

let ACAP know how they felt and specifically asked that I put things in my report whilst other information was given to me in total confidence<sup>131</sup>. The nature of my interaction at the Directorate level of ACAP in Pokhara was more formal and constrained by time. My visits would sometime clash with busy report writing periods and my questions and feedback were not always welcome.

Visiting Nepal on an annual basis between 1995 and 1998 played a crucial role in enabling research findings to be fed back to the local level. These visits enabled a dialogical process to develop between local people and myself and were pivotal to incorporating local ideas into the research focus. As a result the research process became increasingly participatory in nature. Research undertaken in this period underpins the previous discussions (Chapter 2, Parker 1997 and Parker & Sands 1997). It was through this preliminary research that I was able to gain insight into the 'genuine'<sup>132</sup> concerns of the stakeholders who were consulted in the dialogical process. My ability to listen to, accurately record, analyse and feedback information gathered during this period has been crucial to the process of embedding local stakeholders in setting the research agenda. These discussions contributed to the process of dialogue that underpins this thesis.

### ***4.2.3 Engaging with the field - the main research phase***

The field trip in April 1998 proved to be a watershed in the research journey for two reasons. Firstly, there was a mixed response to my feedback from the local and non-local level<sup>133</sup>. At the local level, and in particular in the villages of Sikles and Parche, during this trip my conclusions were further reconfirmed by local stakeholders and a demand to pilot REFLECT was clearly evident. As Chapter 2 highlighted, I became involved in helping to facilitate this into the Sikles sector of the ACAP. Secondly, following this decision, I decided to register for my PhD on a part-time basis whilst employed as a full time lecturer at Liverpool John Moores University. More importantly, the actual introduction of REFLECT into the Sikles sector marks a significant turning point in the research process as it changed my role in the research process from one of an 'interested and concerned outsider', or 'organic intellect', to a 'facilitator' in the introduction of a new

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<sup>131</sup> Issues of anonymity and confidentiality are discussed later in this chapter as a key ethical consideration facing action-oriented research. It is worth noting here though that any information shared with me in confidence has remained confidential. These insights however have served to develop my own understandings of concepts such as 'community' and reinforce the issues raised in the previous chapter regarding the contested nature of community and the need to explore these complexities in more detail.

<sup>132</sup> This can only be claimed if the reader accepts that my interactions in the field were based on the 'genuine' and honest opinions of those with whom I had established a dialogue.

<sup>133</sup> This was discussed in detail in Chapter 2 Section 2.4.

programme into the Sikles area. I became the link between the funding body<sup>134</sup> of the programme in Singapore and the participants in the programme. As such the approach is best classified as being action-oriented in nature.

All research undertaken since 1998 is classed as the main period of research. The field visit in October 1998 had two main purposes. Firstly, I visited Sikles to interview people who had been trained as facilitators. Whilst this trip was informative, as the REFLECT centres had not yet been established in Sikles only a short visit to the study area was required. More significantly, however, was the opportunity this provided me to participate in the First Global Conference on REFLECT, in Puri, India<sup>135</sup>. This included participating in a pre-conference field visit to REFLECT centres in the Saptari District of Eastern Nepal with ActionAid staff from Nepal and a group of REFLECT practitioners from El Salvador and Peru. This provided me with my first experience of REFLECT in practice and equally valuable was the time spent discussing the experience of REFLECT with other practitioners. Reflections of the impact of this upon the research process are considered further in Chapter 5. This chapter will now examine some of the methodological implications of being involved in a process of action-oriented research and explores what I actually did and who was involved in this process.

There are a number of areas that require reflection with respect to the introduction of REFLECT in the Sikles sector. Firstly, detail is provided on who was involved in the research process, both in terms of key stakeholders at the local level and also in relation to the support workers. Finally, reflections are provided on the importance of feedback in the research process.

#### *4.2.3.1 Changing participation*

The following diagram depicts the key stakeholders involved in REFLECT and therefore the research process that underpins this thesis (Diagram 4.4). The same distinction between local and non-local that was established above has been applied.

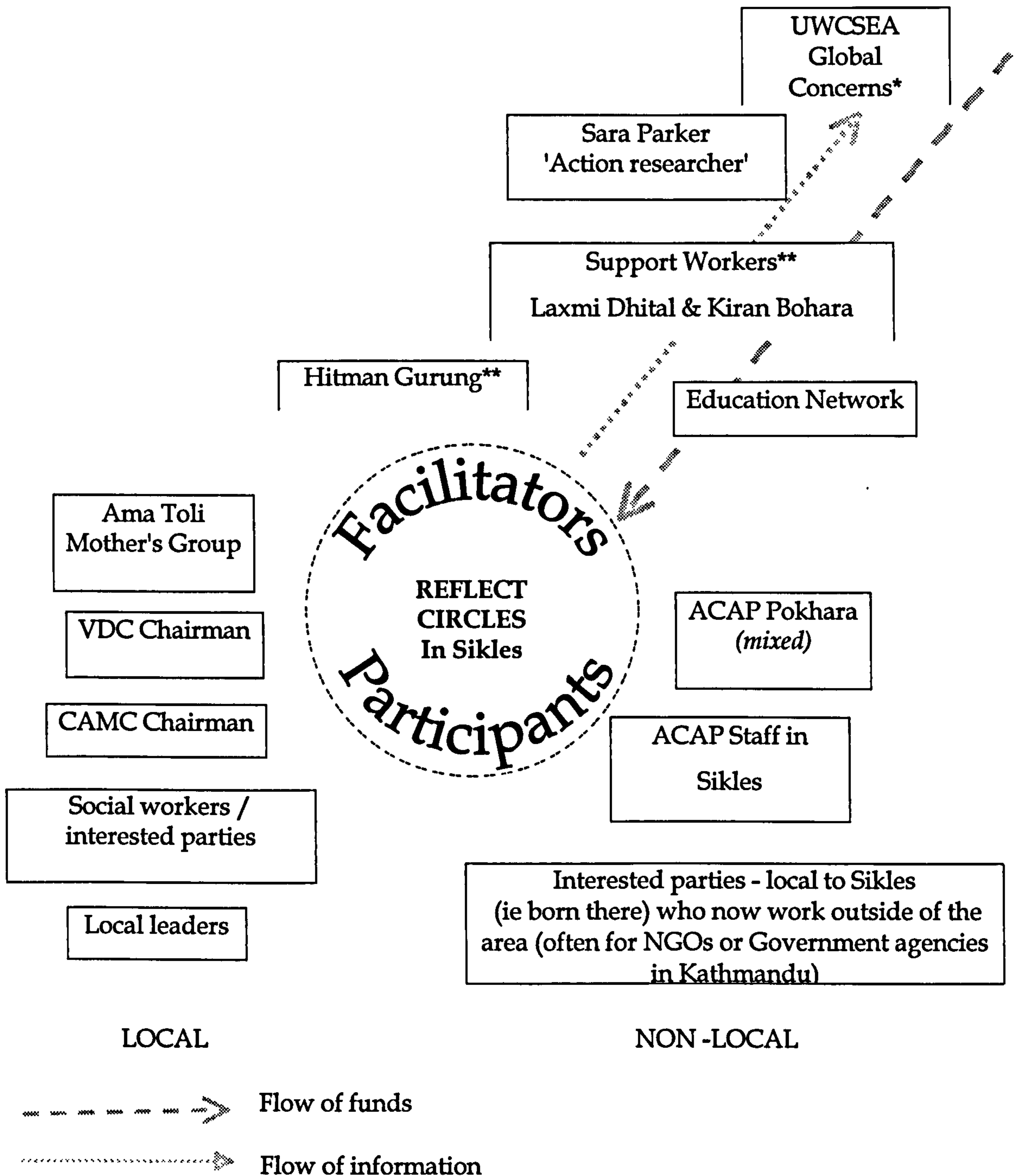
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<sup>134</sup> Funds were secured from UWCSEA for training and running of the REFLECT approach in the Sikles sector of the ACAP in August 1998 as discussed in Chapter 2.

<sup>135</sup> The event was launched with a dialogue session at the research Centre for Educational Innovation and Development (CERID), Tribhuvan University and connections were made that have led to a BC Funded Higher Education Link being established between my Institution and CERID.



**Diagram 4.4 'Stakeholders' within the REFLECT process in Sikles sector of ACAP according to 'locality' and involvement in process**



\*Global Concerns is an initiative developed within UWCSEA that seeks to integrate into the College's education programme an awareness of global development and environment issues. With a focus on experiential learning, Global Concerns aims to increase students' awareness of these issues and to enable students to do something about their concerns. Part of its remit is to fund projects and encourage an exchange of students. For more detail see <http://www.uwcsea.edu.sg/globalconcerns/>

\*\*Hitman Gurung was born in Sikles and has studied in both Kathmandu and Manchester where he completed his Masters Degree (2000). His thesis provides some useful insights into the nature of REFLECT within the Sikles sector. Laxmi & Kiran as well as supporting REFLECT are currently completing their Masters Thesis on their experience of REFLECT in Sikles at Tribhuvan University in Kathmandu.

At the 'local' level there are the facilitators and participants in the REFLECT circles that were established as a result of my intervention. These are in the main local women from the communities in the Sikles sector of the ACAP. In addition to this there are other interested parties or 'stakeholders' who have maintained an interest in REFLECT and participated in some form in the research process. In addition to this some ACAP staff have been involved and consulted in the research process along with other 'external' parties such as ex-employees of ACAP. Equally some influential people from the communities in which REFLECT is operating have engaged in the REFLECT process and hence need to be included in the research process. Additionally a support network has been put in place to both support REFLECT and also to maintain a process of dialogue between the study area and myself.

It is important to acknowledge, "within communities not everyone will be able to participate, nor will everyone be motivated to become involved" (Cornwall & Jewkes 1995: 1673). No claim is made here to reach all those who are, or feel, excluded. Detailed reflections will be provided of who has participated in the REFLECT process in the findings chapter, Chapter 5 and concluding chapter. Here, the importance of external supporters in the REFLECT process needs to be noted. The flow of funds and information is indicated on the diagram to clarify the links between the local level and external support network.

#### *4.2.3.2 Supporting staff*

Interviews conducted in October 1998 highlighted the need for some form of support to be provided to link the REFLECT circles. The provision of training and evaluation opportunities was seen as fundamental to the REFLECT process due to discussions with ActionAid staff and practitioners in Nepal (Bhattarai & Popkins 1997, Popkins 1998, Sitikhu *et al.* 2000). In order to address this need, and given that ACAP were not in a position to support the project, advice was sought from ActionAid Nepal. Through ActionAid, Laxmi Dhital was identified in December 1998 as a potential support worker. Laxmi was studying in Kathmandu and had gained experience of REFLECT through attending a number of training workshops and was keen to gain field experience which related to her studies. Laxmi visited Sikles with me for the first time in January 1999 and was subsequently taken on to support the circles in Sikles through visiting them on a regular basis and offering her guidance, advice and logistical support. In addition to this, Laxmi would often accompany me in my visits to Sikles where her knowledge and translation skills proved to be invaluable.

In 1999, it was felt that due to the increasing political unrest, and therefore concerns over the safety of Laxmi travelling to and from Sikles, an extra person was required to give Laxmi peace of mind and extra support. Kiran Bohara, a fellow student, was then taken on to support her in the field. He also provided her with support in report writing and organising workshops and became a fully paid member of the team. Laxmi and Kiran<sup>136</sup> supported local facilitators and participants in creating an effective local evaluation mechanism, in the form of Monitoring and Evaluation Workshops (M&E)<sup>137</sup>. These workshops enabled facilitators and participants to share their experiences, review progress and identify needs and priorities for the future of circles. The important role Laxmi and Kiran have played in communicating information from Sikles to myself cannot be underestimated. Creating and maintaining dialogue with Laxmi and Kiran through email will be considered in the section below that explores the changing methods that have been employed within this thesis.

Robson (1997: 56) notes that despite the fact that research assistants are often integral to postgraduate research “the relations between a researcher and research assistant are rarely, if at all, discussed in the literature”. Reflecting on the role of the support workers is central to this thesis due to the important role that they played in both the functioning of REFLECT at the local level and maintaining a link between myself and the field. The cost of their input has been embedded into the funding bids made to UWCSEA and justification provided, although it is important to note that their input is viewed as reducing on an annual basis as the need for support declines and the local capacity to manage the REFLECT process is enhanced. This support mechanism has been central to my attempts to reduce any potential dependencies on myself from arising whilst ensuring local support is provided. Due to my personal circumstances and lack of expertise in this area I was neither in the position to nor qualified to support REFLECT. Although Laxmi and Kiran are from Dang in Eastern Nepal, they possessed the knowledge and skills to take on this role. Whilst they are not native Gurung speakers this has not hindered them in supporting the project. Reflection is provided on the experience of this support network in Chapter 5.

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<sup>136</sup> Laxmi & Kiran have both given me their consent to use their names within this thesis, and other publications and media and are fully aware of the context in which they are cited. They have both received draft copies of my thesis and other publications and presentations, as discussed further in Chapter 5.

<sup>137</sup> Full details listed in Appendix 4.4.

Whilst not officially employed as a 'support worker' Hitman Gurung<sup>138</sup>, an ex KMTNC employee from Sikles, has provided invaluable support and insight. At times Hitman has accompanied me on my visits to Sikles as part of his own studies, at times as my paid translator and at other times as the request of the REFLECT participants. Being a Gurung speaker from Sikles has obvious linguistic advantages, especially when interviewing the older generations within the study area who are less at ease speaking Nepali. Through Hitman's friendship valuable insight was gained from this friendship into the more subtle complexities of social structures and systems in Sikles and nuances of Gurung culture. He provided an insider's view of Sikles and a deeper insight into Gurung culture that I would not have gained without his companionship and help.

#### 4.2.3.3 Changing methods

The following two tables (Table 4.3 and 4.4) provide an overview of the methods I employed in the research process and the importance of field trips to Nepal. The techniques that have mainly been used to inform this thesis and the subsequent data that has been generated can be separated into two different categories (Table 4.3): those that I have actually employed myself and data I have collected during my visits to Nepal and data that has been generated at the local level (mainly in the REFLECT circles and in Monitoring & Evaluation Workshops).

**Table 4.3 Techniques employed and sources of data**

| <b>Information gathered in person</b>  | <b>Information generated locally</b>  |
|--|---|
| <p>During field trips to Nepal:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Detailed field notes through use of reflexive diary</li> <li>▶ Interview transcripts from both structured and unstructured interviews</li> <li>▶ Detailed notes on reflections of general observations</li> <li>▶ Participant observation in REFLECT circles</li> <li>▶ Group discussions with REFLECT participants</li> <li>▶ Observation of classes and activities</li> <li>▶ Participating and observing in M&amp;E workshops</li> <li>▶ Discussing key issues as presented in newsletters and other media</li> </ul> | <p>Process of discussion and reflection within centres has resulted in variety of data :-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ List of attendance according to age gender and caste</li> <li>▶ Key words selected on an annual basis by centres</li> <li>▶ Production of visual material such as locally produced social and resource maps, ranking exercises, preference matrices.</li> <li>▶ Monitoring &amp; Evaluation reports produced on basis of annual workshops</li> <li>▶ Field reports from Laxmi &amp; Kiran following their visits to the study area</li> <li>▶ Email discussions with Laxmi &amp; Kiran regarding issues that arose out of above process</li> </ul> |

<sup>138</sup> Likewise, Hitman has also given me his permission to use his name within the thesis and a full draft copy of my thesis was provided to him in Jan 2004 for his critical comments and feedback.

Table 4.4 provides an overview of the field visits to Nepal and the different methods employed at different times within the research period. It demonstrates that in the first two years of the main research period four trips were made to Nepal and a final trip was made towards the end of the research period. In the initial stages (the first two cycles) it was important that I visited Nepal regularly in order to support the process and to gain insight into the nature of the REFLECT centres for my thesis. These trips proved essential in me being able to feedback information to the funding body in Singapore.

**Table 4.4 Overview of field visits in the main research phase and methods used.**

| Date of visit         | Duration of visit<br><i>Focus of research</i>                  | METHODS<br>employed  |          |
|-----------------------|--|--|----------|
| <b>1998 Sept</b>      |  | <b>REFLECT BEGINS</b>  |          |
| <b>Oct 1998</b>       | <b>3 weeks</b>   | Participate in the First Global REFLECT conference in India  | Cycle 1* |
| <b>Jan 1999</b>       | <b>4 weeks</b><br><i>Observe &amp; monitor REFLECT process</i> | Observe REFLECT circles<br>Interview facilitators<br>Informal discussions with participants & wider 'community'  |          |
| <b>April 1999</b>     | <b>6 weeks</b>   | Collect detail on issues key word actions arising out of centres<br>Visit Sikles & Yangjakot<br>Observe centres & Produce video  |          |
| <b>April 2000</b>     | <b>4 weeks</b>   | Observe & participate in first M&E workshops in Pokhara<br>Discuss issues with support workers<br>- Laxmi Kiran & Hitman<br>Talk to other 'stakeholders'   | Cycle 2  |
| <b>Sept 2000</b>      |  | Local level generation of information and process of analysis continues in REFLECT centres   | Cycle 3  |
| <b>April 2001</b>     |  | Information gathered by support workers  | Cycle 4  |
| <b>Sept 2001</b>      |  | Monitoring & Evaluation workshops consolidate experience on an annual basis  | Cycle 4  |
| <b>April 2002</b>     |  | Material and information generated by local facilitators in Monitoring and Evaluation workshops  | Cycle 5  |
| <b>Sept 2002</b>      |  |  | Cycle 5  |
| <b>April 2003</b>     |  | Email correspondence with support workers  | Cycle 5  |
| <b>Dec 2003</b>       | <b>3 weeks</b>   | <b>Field visit 3 weeks</b>   | Cycle 6  |
| <b>Aug - Oct 2004</b> | <b>Laxmi &amp; Kiran<br/>Visit UK</b>                          | Interviews with various stakeholders and interested parties, including ActionAid, ACAP, Education Network, World Education and Mountain Spirit<br>Unable to visit Sikles due to political unrest hence held a workshop in Pokhara for facilitators<br>Interviews discussions and paper presentations plus joint papers |          |

Dates in bold reflect field visit undertaken.

\* Cycles refer to the years that the REFLECT circles have been running for.

By exploring the data generated and gathered through this process insight is gained into the extent to which REFLECT is an inclusive non-formal education programme that has the potential to contribute to the promotion of radical transformatory participatory development. This understanding is gained by reviewing a number of aspects such as: examining literacy and communication improvements, including written, visual and verbal skills, by exploring the key words and visual material generated by the circles and through exploring the participants' changing attitudes and feelings towards REFLECT; exploring who has participated and why, with particular attention being paid to issues of gender, caste and age; examining the relationship between the key words generated and the actions undertaken by the REFLECT circles; and finally, by reflecting upon the sustainability of the REFLECT programme in the Sikles sector and assessing the extent to which REFLECT is grounded at the local level.

I was aware of the issues raised in Chapter three, that genuine engagement in participatory research requires the researcher, as well as policy makers and activists, to actively disempower themselves in the research process (Burkey 1994, Holland & Blackburn 1998, Moser 2001, Ruddick 2003). In order to do this I felt it was important to reduce my visits to Nepal once REFLECT had been established in the study area. Whilst financially the opportunity was available for me to travel to Nepal on an annual basis<sup>139</sup> I took the decision to reduce my visits to the field in order to encourage the local capacity to evaluate the outcomes, through the support mechanisms that has been put in place, to develop and hence reduce any potential dependency forming upon myself. It was an attempt to distance myself from the REFLECT in order to reduce local expectations that I was responsible for evaluating its outcomes.

In the main, my decision to not visit Nepal between April 2000 and December 2003 was based upon the fact that I did not want to become that which I critiqued<sup>140</sup>. I did not want to dominate the evaluation process and felt my presence at evaluation workshops may influence their outcomes, as people would look to me for suggestions for future activities. Saying this, I could have participated in these events as a participant observer and taken steps to avoid this domination, but by visiting on an annual basis I risked the project being seen as Sara Parker's project rather than that of the people in the Sikles sector who

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<sup>139</sup> The British Council funded Higher Education Link, established in 2000, and provided funds for an exchange of staff between CERID and Liverpool John Moores. I felt it was important to provide opportunities for other people to visit Nepal as part of this exchange.

<sup>140</sup> i.e. as my initial argument had been that ACAP dominated the evaluation process hence reducing the capacity at the local level to engage in the evaluation process (Parker 1997).

engaged in the REFLECT process on a daily and annual basis. Reflection will be made on the consequences of this decision later in the thesis. The support workers play an important role in both supporting the process of REFLECT at the local level as well as within my research process as they are required to transmit ideas, reports and issues arising from M&E workshops. Email played an important role in making this communication possible. It was due to this support that I was able to make the decision to not visit Nepal.

My decision not to visit Nepal was further influenced by my changing personal circumstances. In 1999 I became a mother for the first time when I gave birth to Jamie Conan Doherty on August 16<sup>th</sup>. I travelled to Nepal twice whilst being pregnant with Jamie. In April 2000 I took Jamie, along with my husband Bob, to Nepal and Sikles<sup>141</sup>. Engaging in the field whilst breastfeeding a small baby proved to be a rewarding, if at times challenging, experience. According to my PhD proposal I had intended to return to Nepal in April 2003 to carry out my final fieldwork research. However, as I had given birth to my second child, my daughter Maya Louise Ellen Doherty, on August 28<sup>th</sup> 2001, I postponed this trip until the December of that year. The thought of travelling to Nepal with two children, one aged 3 ½ and the other 1 ½ was too much to consider. Waiting until Maya was 2, and a little more responsive to our requests and commands<sup>142</sup>, coupled with work commitments of both my husband and myself, meant that we decided to postpone this trip until December 2003.

The impact of not visiting Nepal created a shift in information being gathered by myself to information being sent to me via Laxmi & Kiran. It also increased the need for effective Monitoring and Evaluation Workshops to take place in order to consolidate the experience of the facilitators on an annual basis. It also heightened the importance of the support workers, not only in their ability to support the process of REFLECT at the 'local' level but also as active agents in the research process requiring them to transmit ideas, reports and issues arising from M&E workshops and their field visits. Whilst recognising there is limited internet access in Nepal<sup>143</sup>, this proved to be crucial in maintaining a

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<sup>141</sup> The manual written by Wilson-Howarth & Ellis (1998) provided a useful source of ideas for travelling abroad with children especially in relation to health concerns.

<sup>142</sup> Like most children, both Jamie and Maya went through the phase of doing the exact opposite of what you asked them to do, so 'don't touch that' would have the opposite effect!

<sup>143</sup> According to the World Bank (2003) data the number of personal computers has risen from 1.2 per 1,000 people in 1996 to 3.59 in 2001 with 60,000 Internet users. By 2004, according to Pudasaini (2004), there were over 150,000 Internet users. However, despite these numbers access could be improved. The high cost of phone calls, high concentration of population in rural areas (nearly 88%) having little access to the technology (Kandel 2003, Montgomery 2003, Shakya & Rauniar 2002).

dialogue between the support workers and myself. Distancing myself from the field would not have been possible without the ability to communicate quickly and effectively via email. Laxmi & Kiran had access to the Internet via a shop in Kathmandu as well as through other commercial outlets. The cost of this was taken into consideration when making funding bids to UWCSEA and was explicitly itemised as a legitimate cost.

During the main research period over 200 emails have been sent from Laxmi & Kiran<sup>144</sup>. These emails have provided a wealth of information that has been analysed and used within this thesis in order to gain insight into the research process. There are important considerations to be taken into account in the storing of information and transmission of ideas through the medium of the Internet. The ESDS (2003-2004) and BSA (2002) both acknowledge that ethical standards for internet research are not well developed as yet and therefore this is a problematic area. Ensuring the security of data transmissions is problematic and care must be taken when communicating through this means, especially when the research is sensitive in nature. In analysing the emails all personal information had to be removed and kept confidential and a system of tracking and highlighting key points developed (see Appendix 4.6). Mann & Stewart (2003) provide a comprehensive overview of some of the key issues that need to be considered when conducting Internet interviews. Within the context of this thesis, as noted above, the internet has provide a useful means of maintaining connections and communications with the support workers Laxmi & Kiran. Where information has been utilised care has been taken to ensure that Laxmi & Kiran have been consulted and that the author has their informed consent to use this information. Reflection will be made in the concluding chapter on the value of such analysis. It is important to note that research via mechanism such as email and ICT, though relatively new, is increasing, especially within the post-modern genre of research, and calls are being made for more sophisticated ethical guidelines to be developed (Grbich 2004, Gubrium & Holstein 2003).

Though I actively reduced my visits to Nepal, I continued to support the programme through communicating findings sent to me from Nepal to Singapore and have invested time and energy in securing funding for REFLECT on an annual basis. Securing funds for

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<sup>144</sup> Most, although not all, of the emails Laxmi & Kiran have sent me have been filed in my email system at work, and as such provide a wealth of information into the research process. They provide the researcher with a record of the process of dialogue that can occur remotely during the research process. Content analysis of these emails has proved useful in cross checking issues and supporting certain issues raised within the findings Chapter, Chapter 5. Unfortunately, my replied to them were not saved hence only half of the dialogue has been recorded.



the monitoring and evaluation workshops as well as the salaries for the support workers, Laxmi and Kiran, was vital in enabling me to withdraw this support and hence reduce any potential dependency developing between the project and myself. Reflections on the effectiveness and implications of these decisions are made in the concluding chapter. Conclusions will be drawn on the extent to which I was able to meet the challenge of using the research process as a means of reducing inequalities (DARG 2002). Further it will assess the extent to which the research addresses issues relevant to those who have been previously marginalised and its ability to unite understanding and action, or theory and practice, where people are put at the centre of both (Edwards 1993).

In summary, the research methods utilised have changed over time. They evolved from ones based on the principles associated with PRA, to ones based more on the principles of PAR. The research to some extent is dependent on the REFLECT circles functioning and the willingness of the local participants to share their information with me. However, it would have still been possible to complete my thesis without this process, although the story that is told would be a different one. Whilst it did reduce my role in the evaluation process, it also left me dependent upon my support workers and the participants in the REFLECT process at the local level. Visiting Nepal in December 2003 is an important aspect of this thesis as it afforded the opportunity to take back my interpretations and conclusions of the process back into the field. It enabled me to reengage in the dialogical process that had initiated the research process and reconfirmed the value of fieldtrips as providing the opportunity for face-to-face discussion. It enabled me to triangulate my findings at the local level and proved fundamental to the research process. In addition to this funds were secured to enable Laxmi & Kiran to visit the UK in September 2004 to present a paper at the annual BAICE conference in Brighton (Parker, Dhital & Bohara 2004). This opportunity also provided important time and space for reflection on the research process and hence is included in the time frame of this thesis.

#### **4.2.4 The role of feedback**

Researchers engaging in qualitative, collaborative action research often, though not always, recognise the importance of feeding back the findings from the research process to the participants engaged in that process. However, all too often information is extracted and taken back to the 'home' country and institution and used for the production of journal articles or the advancement of the researcher's career (Sidaway 1992, Hanlon 1991). This lack of feedback to the local level further highlights the

imbalance of power between the researchers and researched. Hanlon (1991) notes that even in the case of PhD students who have undertaken lengthy pieces of fieldwork their findings are not communicated back into the field. This raises ethical issues about the nature of fieldwork and the imbalances of power that exist, especially when researchers are engaged in development research (as noted in the DARG ethical guidelines). Whilst researchers cannot deny their privileged position in the research process, mechanisms can be put in place to ensure that the process is responsible, sensitive and accountable at the local level and therefore as ethical as possible.

Feeding back findings from the research process is an integral part of the PAR process. Without it participation is limited to being extractive and externally owned. Research that does not feed back to the local level can only be classed as RRA because true PAR is a cyclical process of reflection and analysis by all those engaged in the research in question. The information also needs to be provided in appropriate forms as a number of authors note that development research is often inaccessible to the participants consulted either through lack of feedback or through the use of reports that are not written for their target audiences. Unless information gained through the PRA process is communicated back to the participants the research will suffer from these same criticisms. Without sufficient feedback of findings into the field it cannot be claimed that there has been genuine participation in the research process. This will result in the PAR process not realising its full potential. If research is to truly be a dialogical process, as authors such as England (1994) and Tandon (1981) suggest, then appropriate feedback is needed in order to create dialogue. In order to address these problems, findings need to be written up into short reports, newsletters, presentations, video production or whatever medium is most appropriate for the community involved<sup>145</sup>.

Verbal feedback is also important to enable people to share their ideas on the conclusions drawn from the previous research<sup>146</sup>. The importance of the frequency of visiting Nepal cannot be underestimated in the feedback and research process discussed above. However, even where the opportunity to return does not present itself it is important to feedback reports and other material resulting from the research process back to the people

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<sup>145</sup> Some communities may find other forms of feedback more appropriate such as through video, radio, drama or songs.

<sup>146</sup> During my visits within the Annapurna Area I have come across a number of 'researchers' from undergraduate students to established 'academics' yet very seldom have I seen their findings fed back to the local level and often not even to the staff within the project who have the ability to make such work available to a wider audience. ACAP staff in particular have expressed to me their frustration at this lack of respect.

who have participated in the research process in the most appropriate forms possible. Such work can also inform future researchers and prevent them asking the same questions to the same people and hence creating a feeling of research fatigue within the communities in which it takes place. Equally, however, it may contribute to the 'project' bias discussed by Chambers (1983) by focusing other researchers' attention on the project under investigation.

Robertson (2000: 307) highlights the fact that "action researchers often experience a complicated research process, not only when conducting their research, but also when trying to report their processes and findings". A variety of diverse feedback mechanisms have been employed to present these findings back to the stakeholders, both in Nepal and Singapore. If my methods can be classed as 'bricolage' then so can my outputs. This thesis does not stand alone as a sole product but lies within a range of products, some written conventional and others less so. From the very start I have made conscious efforts to feedback my research findings to Nepal be it in the form of reports, newsletters or sending papers I have either published or presented to Nepal for feedback.

In the preliminary research initially this feedback was through verbal communication. In December 1997 the report written by Parker and Sands (1997)<sup>147</sup> was taken to Nepal in order to gain feedback on our findings (see Appendix 4.5 for examples). In the preliminary research phase findings were personally disseminated and fed back to stakeholders in a variety of formats: -

- A comprehensive report to the KMTNC/ACAP and key informants/stakeholder at the village level (see Parker & Sands 1997<sup>148</sup>).
- A summary of this report in both English and Nepali to make it more widely accessible.
- Short newsletters, in both English and Nepali, to a wider audience.
- Interviews and discussion were held in person with both ACAP staff and people in Sikles.

During the main research phase the same strategy was employed and in addition draft copies of papers to be presented at conferences were emailed to support workers and interested parties (such as ACAP, ActionAid Nepal and Education Network), a paper was presented at a Dialogue session in CERID in January 2004 and a draft copy of my thesis was taken to Nepal in January 2004 and the key issues discussed with various stakeholders. These were well received and appreciated by the participants and

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<sup>147</sup> Including a summary of this report in both English & Nepali in order to make it more widely available.

<sup>148</sup> This report is available at <http://www.staff.livjm.ac.uk/SOCSPARK/researchinterests.htm>

facilitated a process of feedback and validation that was fruitful to the evolution of the research focus.

By including photographs in the newsletter it also enabled other people to be drawn into the circle of participants, as they were keen to see what the newsletter covered<sup>149</sup>. During the field visit in April 2000 I also made a short video of the REFLECT process to try to capture the essence of the project (Appendix 4.5). The voices of Conan Leavey and Hitman Gurung provided the narrative resulting in it being available in both English and Nepali. This was sent back to the people in Sikles, ACAP and Singapore. Ideally the video would have also been based on a more participatory approach<sup>150</sup>. Unfortunately time constraints prevented this.

Also since start of REFLECT reports from Laxmi & Kiran, Monitoring and Evaluation Reports and reports from training workshops have also been essential in terms of feeding back information to me and to wider audiences<sup>151</sup>. These media also proved useful in securing funding from UWSCEA to support the introduction of REFLECT. There were important feedback implications of this process and research findings not only had to be communicated back to the local level but also I became the 'key person' in communicating outcomes from the REFLECT programme to the Global Concerns Project in Singapore. Feeding back draft papers and my thesis to the local level resulted in some useful comments from the local level, including the note that the preferred term within Sikles for the 'Dalit community' was traditional occupational caste. Whilst recognising not many people will actually read my whole thesis it has proved useful to provide Laxmi, Kiran and Hitman with a copy and also to discuss some of the key issues arising from my research with staff at ACAP during the field visit in December 2003.

### **4.3 Wider issues – fluidity and action oriented research.**

The detail provided here has demonstrated that action-oriented research is indeed a messy and complex process. The reflections provided stress the importance of researchers making the research process as transparent as possible. This is supported by the dialogue between Greenwood (2002) and others, such as Dick (2003), Gustavsen (2003, 2004),

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<sup>149</sup> Unfortunately the first newsletter was not produced in Nepali. However, subsequent newsletters were.

<sup>150</sup> See Kindon (2003) & White (2003) for insights into use of participatory video production and its potential to destabilise hierarchical power relations in the research process.

<sup>151</sup> Copies of these reports are available from REFLECT centres in Sikles and also from Education Network in Kathmandu. Work is underway to make them accessible on line.

Reason (2003), Shotter (2003) and Streck (2003)<sup>152</sup>, into the unfulfilled promises and unmet challenges of action research. Greenwood (2004) concludes that action researchers need to provide richly detailed studies and pay as much attention to publishing details of the process as well as the outcome of the action research process<sup>153</sup>. Before concluding this chapter and moving on to explore and assess the outcomes of the research process a number of issues need to be briefly discussed that span the research period. Firstly brief reflections are made on my changing role in the research process, secondly how the changing political situation in Nepal has impacted upon the research process will be considered and finally reflections are provided on a number of key ethical issues that underpin this thesis.

### **4.3.1 My changing role**

Action-oriented research theoretically places the researcher and researched on a more even keel. The researcher needs to have the ability to engage in a collaborative process and the skills to listen, learn and reflect upon the process in order to clearly communicate the context in which the research took place. According to Finn (1996) the research must be able to engage with the community or group and be an active listener. Interpersonal skills are therefore essential. The research also needs to truly embrace the philosophical position that all are equal and all knowledge is valid. Cornwall (1996) notes the importance of researchers having the ability to promote dialogue not only between the research and participants but also between the participants involved. Being willing to adopt participatory techniques to facilitate this process is also important. It is important that the researcher is willing and able to learn the priorities of those who are engaged in the process of dialogue (Dudley 1993). It is difficult for the researcher to claim that they have developed these skills as the question is raised according to whom and how do you know? Reflections are provided on this in Chapter 5.

Whilst going back and forth from Sikles I have been accompanied by a variety of people<sup>154</sup> and this has had a noticeable impact on the discussions I have had. These visits have all enriched my experience of Nepal and helped to deepen my understanding through

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<sup>152</sup> This debate has taken place in the journal *Concepts and Transformations* and taken together form a useful contribution to the action research discourse.

<sup>153</sup> Though equally he acknowledges the barriers that are presented to researchers attempting to publish such rich and detailed texts, including himself.

<sup>154</sup> I have returned to Sikles with my father (1995), my brother (1999), my friends and colleagues (1996, 1998, 1999), with a group of undergraduate students (1999) and with my husband and children (2000 & 2003).

conversations we have had between ourselves and with people in Nepal. Being accompanied on a visit by my colleague Rose Sands in 1996 provided extremely helpful in giving me a friend with whom I could talk through my ideas and gain a different perspective both whilst in Nepal and back at home in Liverpool. Visiting with family members has also enriched my relationships with people in Sikles who have seen me in the role of daughter, sister, single woman, pregnant wife and mother. The impact of these changes was clearly evident to me when I visited Nepal whilst pregnant and the change in the women's conversation with me and openness in sharing personal information was noticeable. I too became interested in different aspects of the women's life as my own life circumstances changed. I look forward to sharing future experiences with people I know in the coming years.

It is clearly evident from the above account that my role in the research has changed over the research period. It has highlighted my changing role within the research process and the multiple methods that have been utilised along the way. In some ways my research journey has gone full circle as in writing this thesis I am placing myself in the role of 'external observer' and 'expert' in passing my judgements.

#### **4.3.2 *Changing political situation***

During the research period there has been an increasing level of political instability in Nepal, as discussed in Chapter 2, section 2.1. Following the reintroduction of democracy in 1990, local level elections were held in 1992 whilst I was living in Sikles. This gave me first hand experience of the subtle complexities of democracy at the local level<sup>155</sup>. The People's War was launched in February 1996 and has developed and spread throughout Nepal over the past eight years. The situation did not impact upon my visits between 1996 and 2000<sup>156</sup> as the uprising was confined in the main to Far Western and Far Eastern parts of Nepal. It was not until the State of Emergency was declared in November 2001 that the so-called 'insurgency' became an international issue became a cause for personal concern and safety.

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<sup>155</sup> The person elected to be the local VDC representative was not the same person elected to be on ACAP's CAMC and led to the pending resignation of the CAMC Chairman from the committee as he felt there was a lack of support. ACAP had to hold a number of meetings at the ward and village level to resolve this conflict which resulted in the Chairman remaining in post due to the local support for him to remain in this position.

<sup>156</sup> It did affect the areas we visited as part of the REFLECT Global Conference Programme for some areas were deemed unsafe to visit. It was also a noticeable area of concern in Eastern Nepal where some of the battles were being fought out. The atmosphere in the Saptari district was very different from that in the Kaski district and ACA as a whole.

By the time of my visit in 2003-2004 the change in atmosphere was noticeable. ACAP had withdrawn its operations from the Southern Sector of the ACA following attacks by Maoists on ACAP offices (Basnyat 2003). Warnings were provided and no one was injured but in both Ghandruk and Sikles the offices were ransacked and set on fire. As a result ACAP employees, including those from Sikles, have relocated to Pokhara. Within Nepal there is also a sense of unease in travelling in areas where you are not from. This is due to the fear of being either challenged or abducted by the Maoists or accused of being a Maoist by the Government security forces. This has led to a general feeling of distrust amongst the population. As a result of this Laxmi & Kiran have not visited Sikles since August 2003. Although this creates some problems and barriers in supporting the Chalphal Kendra process these are not insurmountable. This forms the basis of the paper co-presented by Parker, Dhital & Bohara (2004).

My trip in December 2003 however was also affected by the political situation, as I did not visit Sikles at this time. I was strongly advised by friends and colleagues not to visit Sikles until the political situation was more settled. Due to the fact that I was travelling with my family and was constrained by time I took this advice. My fear was not so much being accused of being a Maoist or supporter of ACAP but rather a fear of being caught in between the two. If I had been travelling alone, without family responsibilities, I would probably have gone to Sikles. However as a mother of two and given the consistency of the advice not to go it was a risk I was unable to take. In order to discuss issues with people from Sikles a local workshop was held in Pokhara for facilitators and other key stakeholders and I saw as many people as I could from Sikles whilst they were visiting Pokhara (see Chapter 5 for details).

### **4.3.3 Ethical Issues**

As noted previously a range of ethical guidelines exist to inform researchers in their deliberations in the field of research. In the main they centre around issues such as; ensuring the research aims are explicit and the research is conducted in an ethical and honest manner; gaining informed consent and ensuring participants are aware of the research aims and objectives; ensuring informed consent is obtained in the research process and considerations of confidentiality. Madge (1997) argues that research with developing areas (and indeed all research) should aim to do no harm, have the potential to do good, recognise the positionality of research, ensure informed consent is gained and

acknowledge that ethical considerations, like the research process, are positional and embedded at the local level. What is appropriate and ethical in one locality may not be so in another. Hay (1998: 1) goes as far to state that “no inflexible code of ethics can be contemplated seriously by geographers”. Ethics should be viewed as a ‘living practice’ and forms a central point of discussion for researchers engaged in researching (Madge 1997). Zeni (1998: 9) notes that due to the “often meandering” nature of action research “action research raises its own, often sticky, ethical issues which may never be addressed”. In response to this Zeni proposes a set of ethical guidelines that utilise “a set of more-or-less provocative questions as a heuristic for reflection” (*ibid.*: 10). With these questions in mind this thesis engages with the ethical guidelines in two main areas: firstly by exploring the complexities of informed consent and anonymity and secondly by discussing the ethical challenges posed in writing up the results of action-oriented research.

There is no doubt that acting ethically and being open and honest about the research aims and objectives is fundamental to action-oriented research. Ensuring participants are aware of the research focus, that they participate of their own free will, and that information gathered will be treated with respect and integrity underpin the research process. It is absolutely essential that the researcher ensures “that participants in the research are doing so voluntarily, without coercion and in the knowledge that they can withdraw at any time” (ESDS 2003-2004<sup>157</sup>). These are reiterated in the DARG guidelines that call for honest, integral, sensitive research.

Within the context of action-oriented research gaining informed consent should be viewed as a continual process of gaining and confirming consent, due to the fluidity of the research and diversity of potential outcomes. The BSA (2002: 3) guidelines clarify this issue stating “it may be necessary for the obtaining of consent to be regarded not as a once-and-for all prior event, but as a process, subject to renegotiation over time” ....“particular care may need to be taken during periods of prolonged fieldwork where it is easy for research participants to forget they are being studied”. This requires the researcher to maintain dialogue with the field in the writing up process, whether this is in collaborative publications or more individual in nature such as within this thesis. It is also vital to feedback the information to the participants in appropriate formats to ensure they are fully aware of how the information is being used and how their story is

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<sup>157</sup> Detailed guidelines regarding confidentiality and consent can be found on this web site.



being told. Using a variety of formats for feeding back information, as highlighted above, was central to seeking people's permission to tell their story.

The DARG guidelines however further suggest "it is imperative that the identities of respondents are protected... and "thus appropriate mechanisms should be deployed to guarantee confidentiality and anonymity.... no other consideration should be allowed to supersede this fundamental principle. Respondents have the right to confidentiality and privacy" (DARG 2002: 2). This is supported by the ESDS (2003-2004) guidelines that state "they [both researchers and participants] must feel confident that there will be no adverse consequences of the research, including, if they wish, the preservation of anonymity" (*ibid.*: 1). The subtle difference between the two however lies in the phrase 'if they wish'. Within the field of action-oriented research the principle of anonymity is not as clear-cut as this. Participants may, for a variety of reasons, wish to be explicitly named. What does the researcher do when participants explicitly request to be named, not only in their work but also in other media resulting from the research process, in this case monitoring and evaluation reports, newsletters and videos<sup>158</sup>. Academic convention suggests that in sensitive research all participants should be given pseudonyms (Punch, 1998). Yet, even in sensitive research, participants may request to be named and it cannot be assumed that the participants are unaware of the outcomes of the use of this information. In such circumstances the researcher must negotiate with the participant to reach a resolution that all parties are happy with. All parties must be satisfied that there will be no adverse impacts from the dissemination of the research findings. One pertinent area where this has come in to play within this thesis has been over the use of information regarding the increasingly unstable political situation. Also some information has been given in confidence and requests have been made not to include it in any written reports. These requests have always been honoured. In relation to the political situation discussing any issue that may have unintended consequences has been avoided.

When jointly writing the paper for the BAICE conference that specifically focused on Education in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: conflict, reconciliation and reconstruction, the authors were presented with a series of decisions (Parker, Dhital and Bohara 2004). Whilst we discussed the issues in general we avoided using detailed information gained through interviews and personal experiences, as we were unsure of the unintended consequences this may have. The importance of not telling stories and using information also became

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<sup>158</sup> Video footage is one form of media where preserving anonymity is particularly difficult. Equally co-authoring reports removes the possibility of anonymity (Møller 1998).

apparent. Issues and ideas were kept very general in order to avoid any misrepresentation. As a result the paper may have lacked the depth and quality it could have portrayed but we all felt comfortable with the final product. Texts containing such reflections need to be written collaboratively with people from the local level if their views are to be respected and full permission sought. This may be an area for future research. Within this thesis care has been taken to avoid using any information that could endanger local people. The impact of the political situation in Nepal is considered further in Chapter 5.

Two different approaches have been adopted within this thesis to resolve these challenges. Firstly, participants and facilitators in the REFLECT circles at the local level have repeatedly requested to be named in newsletters, reports and also within this thesis. Annual reports have been written by Laxmi & Kiran based on the monitoring and evaluation workshops. These have been written in Nepali and then translated into English for the benefit of a wider audience and myself. The decision was taken by the participants to use their real names in these reports as people are very proud to see their names in print. As a result of this, and due to demand from the local level, real names have been included in my thesis where appropriate. In the main this relates to information from the facilitators and statements from the participants that relate directly to their experiences of REFLECT. Feeding back information in a variety of formats and giving people the opportunity to comment on draft copies of work has also ensured consent was reconfirmed. In addition to this the issue of consent and anonymity was discussed at a workshop held in Pokhara in January 2004 with facilitators and key stakeholders. Laxmi & Kiran have also discussed the key issues with participants to help ensure that the information has been verbally fed back to the local level. Secondly, information gleaned from interviews conducted with organisations, or key stakeholders and friends at the local level have been made relatively anonymous<sup>159</sup> through referring to their position within the organisation or community. Where names appear the full consent of the individual has been given. Extractions from field diaries however are more difficult to ensure consent has been gained. For this type of material other means of identifying the participants have been employed, such as referring to their position in an

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<sup>159</sup> Some investigative work would result in these people being identified and this is a problem that faces all researchers conducting research with a small organisation or community. There is usually only one Project Director for example or one Village Development Chairman. This reinforces the need for researchers to demonstrate integrity, sensitivity and respect in using information gathered in the field.

organisation or relationship to myself, unless of course I have acquired the participants' full consent.

The participants in the research process wished to have their names included and although they are unlikely to ever read the final product the other material such as presentations and newsletters are readily available to them. At the end of the day I am accountable to the people who have participated willingly and freely in my research process. To deny them this wish to be named is to actively disempower them and take away their voice. In the context of this thesis this is deemed to be unethical. It is important to note that no attempt has been made to use pseudonyms. Utilising false names is regarded with a certain amount of suspicion in Nepal (Petigrew *et al.* 2004). In addition to this using false names is also problematic in Nepal as many people share the same middle, if not total name, and hence any attempts to hide identify can lead to the information being misconstrued and attributed to another member of the community.

Sidaway (1992) calls for researchers to be more aware of unintentional outcomes of the research process. Yet as Robson (1997) points out this can prevent us from acting or researching as we can never be sure of the repercussions of our work. So where does this leave us? Dove (1999) urges researchers to worry less about the unintended consequences and instead to reflect upon issues of power. These complexities and dilemmas can be addressed to some degree by paying attention to discussing the research in detail and by avoiding any claims to objectivity (Fuller 1999). The Golden Rule suggested by Zeni (1998: 17) is that researchers ask themselves questions such as "what are the likely consequences of this research? How well do they fit with my own values and priorities? If I were a participant, would I want this research to be done? What changes might I make to feel comfortable?" Scheyvens & Leslie (2000), in exploring the ethical dilemmas of engaging in development fieldwork conclude that "genuine respect for local people and customs, flexibility in the research design, a sense of humour and a willingness to share one's own experience with research participants, are all critical" (*ibid.*: 129).

The literature notes that analysing and utilising data collected by emerging forms of communication, such as the email and internet, presents researchers with new challenges and it is imperative that reflection is made on these and that guidelines are produced to set ethical standards. It is important to note that care has always been taken to avoid asking potentially controversial or political questions in email during the research process. Whilst in Nepal in January 2004 I felt uncomfortable talking about the political

situation and have avoided asking any questions in relation to the conflict over the Internet. Having the time and space in the privacy of my home during the visit of Laxmi and Kiran to the UK, as well as writing the paper presented at BAICE in September 2004, provided an invaluable opportunity to explore the political situation in Nepal in more detail. Some of the issues that emerged from these discussions will form the basis of future research.

Action research and working closely with communities presents a number of challenges in the writing up of the research (Robertson 2000). Whilst the research process may be collaborative in nature the writing of the research process however often falls solely to the person more traditionally associated with that of researcher, in this case myself. This responsibility reinforces the inequality that exists within action-oriented research. This is summed up by Reason (1994: 325) when he states "the paradox of writing about research with people is that I cannot do it alone". This thesis would not have been possible without the participation of people in Nepal in an action research process. The detailed reflections above are my attempt to pay tribute to the people who have participated in this action research. Total active participation, where participants are involved in the whole process, means that they too should be involved in the analysis and communication of the findings to a wider audience.

It cannot be avoided that regardless of the techniques employed during the research process, "the researcher who writes up the account remains in the more powerful position" (Olesen 2000: 231). There is no escaping that this thesis is my own construct and in completing it my own position becomes elevated. Equally at the local level, Laxmi & Kiran have been responsible for writing reports based on the monitoring and evaluation workshops. These have been fed back to the local level, in Nepali, and translated into English for a wider audience. Yet the participants in the REFLECT centres have limited literacy skills hence rendering this feedback practically inaccessible. Such barriers reinforce the value of field visits by support workers and other forms of dialogue such as group meetings at the local level. Gatenby & Humphries (2000) discuss the difficulty in generating new and exciting means of disseminating research and note the tendency to conform to academic articles. They suggest other more imaginative means such as storybooks, photographic studies or autobiographical accounts and stress the importance of speaking to wider audiences to share experiences. Overall, within action-oriented research it is important to produce multiple means of disseminating the experience to encourage dialogue with a wider audience. This thesis represents only one

form of feedback but is an important one as it provides the space to reflect in depth on both the outcomes and the research process.

#### **4.4 Summary and conclusions**

This chapter has provided an overview of the research journey that has culminated in this thesis. It has demonstrated how the research undertaken has moved from being participatory in nature to a more action-oriented process. Engaging in the action-oriented research has generated a vast amount of information, both collected first hand and via the mechanisms discussed above. My role in this thesis is to make sense of all the information that has been gathered and to reflect upon the process by which it has been generated. In order to do this, I need to analyse, summarise and reflect upon the outcomes and implications of the research. I have noted above that this thesis is only one medium for telling this story and a variety of less lengthy forms have also been produced. This thesis is however my space to explore the issues and experiences of this process in detail. The research presented here reflects the way these issues are seen through my eyes and is therefore constructed by my biases, opinions and participation.

Along with participation records, material generated by the different centres has been analysed to gain insight into the key areas of concern being raised at the local level. This information provides us with a rich insight into the nature of the REFLECT centres and the impacts that this is having at the local level. Additionally interviews, observations and field diaries have been explored in order to gain further insight into the outcomes of REFLECT. A complex dialogue has taken place between myself and support workers that has enriched the research process and proved invaluable in gaining a clear picture of the changes taking place at the local level and the complexities of being engaged in a process AOR in a remote community. The next chapter now moves to provide insight into experience and outcomes of REFLECT in the Sikles sector of the ACAP from 1998 to 2004. By analysing information generated in the study area and through critically reflecting on the research process it will address the question to what extent does REFLECT offer a model approach to non-formal education to organisations, communities and individuals wishing to engage in a process of locally controlled participatory development. Based on this analysis, conclusions will also be made into the successes and challenges of both REFLECT at the local level and the wider lessons that can be drawn from engaging in a process of action-oriented research.

## **5 CHAPTER FIVE REFLECT in the Sikles sector of the ACAP**

### **5.1 Introduction**

Chapter two discussed how I became involved in supporting the introduction of REFLECT into the Sikles sector of the Annapurna Conservation Area in 1998. This was a direct result of my previous research in the area and the demands that I had found for non-formal education programmes. As previously noted ACAP decided that they were unable to provide any further education programmes in the area at that time. This chapter focuses on the outcomes of introducing REFLECT into the Sikles sector of the ACAP. It explores in detail some of the opportunities and changes that have resulted from REFLECT at the local level. It also highlights some of the tensions associated with the process. Critical reflection is also provided on the nature of the research process and consideration given to the lessons that can be drawn from my experience of action-oriented research. Before moving on to these issues it is important to outline the support framework that was established at the local level.

#### **5.1.1 Supporting networks and logistical issues**

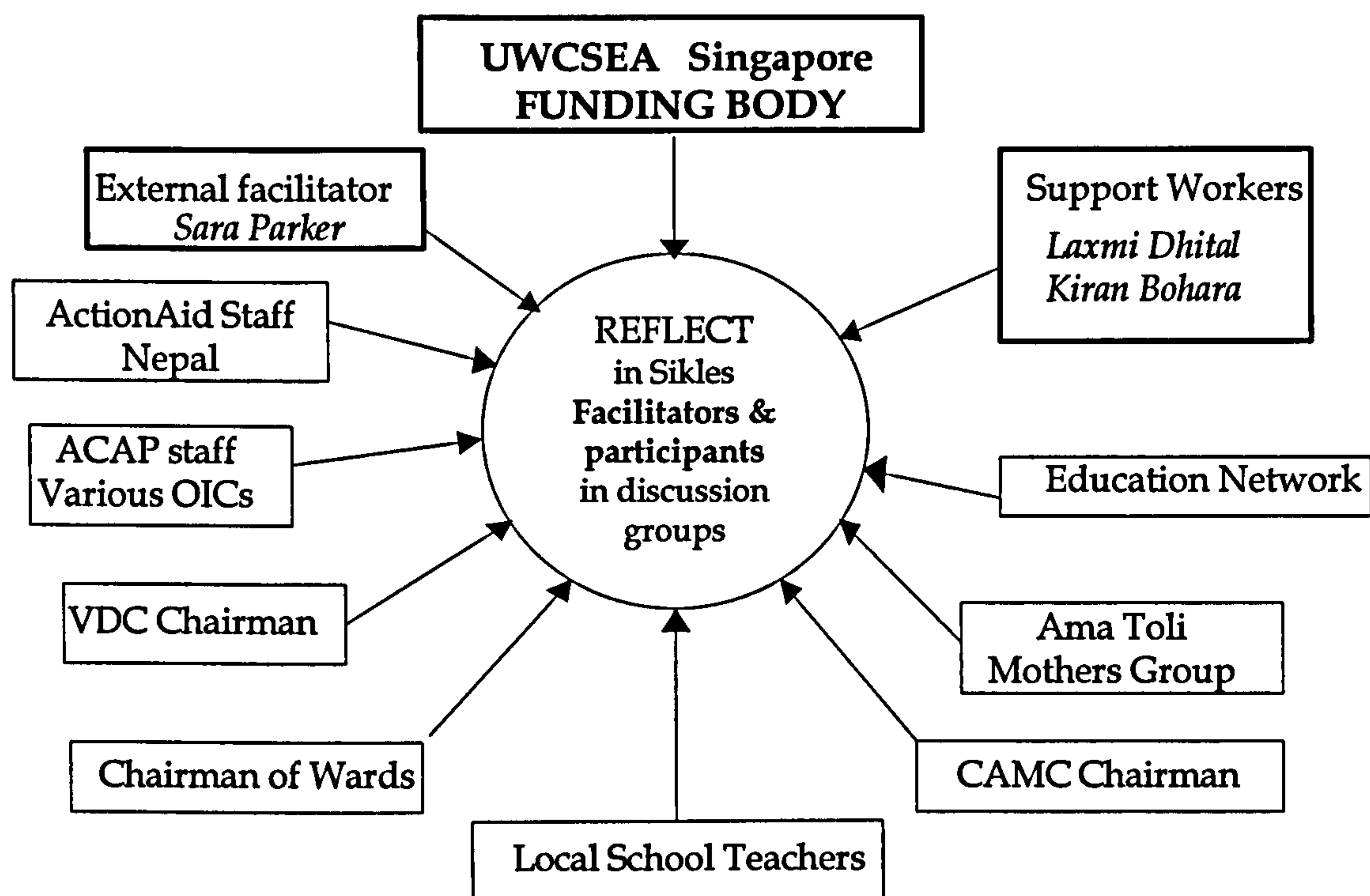
As ACAP had not taken on any role in supporting the introduction of REFLECT into the study area it was imperative that a support system was created. To some extent this already existed due to people expressing an interest in the approach in the preliminary research. Local people, members of the Ama Toli, local leaders and other members of the community had all expressed an interest in helping facilitate a new non-formal education programme in the area. REFLECT required the skill and expertise, as well as contacts, of both ActionAid Nepal and Education Network<sup>160</sup>. Through emailing ActionAid Nepal and with the help of the OIC in Sikles a link was made between the people who wanted to be trained in REFLECT and a training event in the Gorkha District in October, 1998. Following this training and given changes in the way in which REFLECT was supported within Nepal<sup>161</sup>, Education Network were also enlisted to provide support for monitoring and evaluation workshops as well as for future training events. The introduction of REFLECT into the Sikles Sector of the ACAP drew upon both formal and informal support networks (Diagram 5.1).

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<sup>160</sup> The role these two organisations play in relation to REFLECT in Nepal was outlined in Chapter 3, Section 3.5.3.

<sup>161</sup> Education Network became the main organisation responsible for the provision of training and coordination of support for REFLECT within Nepal (see p106).

**Diagram 5.1 Support network of REFLECT process in Sikles sector**



It was also vital that a source of funding was secured for both the running of the project and for the support of REFLECT (through the work of Laxmi & Kiran and also via monitoring and evaluation workshops). Following the one off grant awarded by United World College South East Asia (UWCSEA), a bid was made to the Global Concerns Committee<sup>162</sup> for further funding to support REFLECT in the study area. As previously noted, Global Concerns provided the initial funds for training due to the long-standing relationship that existed between UWCSEA and Sikles (Box 1.1). At the end of the first cycle<sup>163</sup> a bid was written to UWCSEA Global Concerns for further funding. This bid was successful and secured funds for the running of the centres, the support-workers' salaries and, equally important, for annual training and evaluation workshops. Funding requirements rose as the centres spread but always remained below £4,000 a year and have been reduced on an annual basis since 2002. My role was that of external facilitator or interlocutor, as I provided the link between the local people in the Sikles sector, Education Network and the funding body, UWCSEA, in Singapore. I wrote the initial report requesting funding and have fed back information to the College on an annual basis in order to maintain funding commitment. Gaining funds to support the REFLECT

<sup>162</sup> See Diagram 4.3 for details.

<sup>163</sup> In the first cycle I personally contributed to the running of the three centres until funds were secured. Before funding could be secured from Global Concerns a bid had to be written and submitted for consideration with more detail being needed on the project and its potential outcomes.

project was integral to the whole process. My role was to communicate progress arising from the local level to the donor agency in Singapore and to submit a bid on an annual basis for funds.

Whilst a number of people have supported REFLECT within the Sikles sector, it is important to note the support provided in the initial stages by Ram Chandra, the OIC of ACAP posted in Sikles, Nepal. He played an important role in communicating between the villagers in Sikles and myself and with the training providers. Communication with Sikles is difficult at the best of times and in 1998 from the UK was practically impossible<sup>164</sup>. Ram Chandra's support was vital, as he would not only relay messages I sent via ACAP but also email during his visits to Pokhara. Also, in the first year he was responsible for the distribution of salaries and the purchase of essential materials such as blackboards and night lamps. Initially Ram Chandra gave this support in his free time, in some cases using up annual leave, but this work fell outside the official remit of his job and therefore was not sustainable. As discussed in the previous chapter (Section 4.2.3.2) Laxmi and Kiran were taken on to support the project<sup>165</sup>. Securing funding for training and evaluation workshops ensured that evaluation was embedded in the process at the local level. This is seen as vital to the REFLECT approach (CIRAC 2003, Education Network 2004, Friedrich & Jellema 2003, Popkins 1998).

## **5.1.2 Introduction of REFLECT into the Sikles sector of the ACAP**

### **5.1.2.1 Selection of facilitators and training**

In September 1998, four people from the Sikles sector of the ACAP attended a training session organised by United Mission to Nepal (UMN) in Ghorkha. The participants in this training were chosen through discussions with Ama Toli groups, local leaders and social activists, and ACAP staff in Sikles. During my field visit in April 1998 one woman, Ganga Maya Gurung from Dhaprangthar in Sikles, had been consistently mentioned as a potential candidate due to her skills in running the ACAP's Adult Literacy Classes in Dhaprangthar and therefore had experience of teaching evening classes. She was also known to be an active member of the community. This was based on her work previously

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<sup>164</sup> The one phone in the village had never worked during my many visits and mail was both slow and unreliable. Communicating via ACAP's radio system and email was the most effect means of communicating with people in Sikles.

<sup>165</sup> This is discussed in detail in section 4.2.3.2 though it is worth noting here that Laxmi visited the field more frequently in the initial stages of the programme when more support was needed and in response to requests from the local level. She also organised and ran training and M&E workshops and provided a link between the local level and Education Network.



a Health Worker, a member of the *Lali Guras* Committee and an employee in ACAP's Day Care Centres. I have known Ganga Maya since 1992. I had observed Ganga Mayas' class in 1996 (Box 2.3: 40). Bhadra Bir Nepali (from the Sarki/cobbler caste) was also chosen to run a class for non-Gurungs in the neighbouring village of Parche. Two other women were selected from two different villages to be trained as facilitators, Renuka Gurung from Yangjakot and another female from Bhachowck<sup>166</sup>. Local leaders and the wider community were consulted in the selection process through ward level meetings.

The training session provided orientation into the underlying philosophy of REFLECT and was very participatory in nature<sup>167</sup>. It covered issues such as active and passive participation and group discussions about the difference between domesticating and liberating education. Participants kept a diary of events and ideas that they could refer back to when they were in the field. The role of the 'teacher' versus the role of a facilitator was covered and the REFLECT methodology was presented. Key words were selected by the participants to demonstrate the process of linking literacy acquisition to the participatory visualising process and discussion in the circles. When interviewed in October 1998, Ganga Maya was very enthusiastic about the training and was keen to put it into practice. At that time she felt that *"the people of Sikles do not understand it (REFLECT) very well. I have talked to all the village leaders in Sikles but I found them to be not very interested in the REFLECT approach. I know many women who want to attend a literacy class though. The trainer from UMN has encouraged me very well and I am trying to develop the REFLECT class in Sikles with a different name"* (pers comm. Oct 1998). As a result of this training, and her obvious enthusiasm, Ganga Maya was the first person to establish a REFLECT circle in November 1998. By January 1999 a circle had also been established in Yangjakot. Unfortunately, Bhadra fell ill with jaundice soon after the training event, but despite this set back he started his own circle in Parche in February 1999.

#### 5.1.2.2 Chalphal Kendras – Discussion Centres

The issue highlighted above by Ganga Maya regarding the lack of understanding of REFLECT is understandable given that it is a new approach to literacy. The term REFLECT has no meaning within the Sikles sector as the people have had no contact with Actionaid or other organisations with experience of REFLECT. It was therefore up to the

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<sup>166</sup> This person married soon after the training and therefore never established a REFLECT circle and hence this area has been excluded from the study. It is worth noting the impact of marriage upon the work of women as they move to new areas and are often unable to put their training to good use.

<sup>167</sup> This was in part due to the fact that the Mother Manual was not adopted as a training tool in Nepal, as noted in Chapter 3.

three people who had received orientation training to spread the message amongst their own communities. When the circles were first established in Sikles the participants talked at length about what to call this new approach to literacy. The term 'REFLECT' meant very little to local people. This has been noted at the global level with nearly 60% of organisations involved in REFLECT using local terms for REFLECT (CIRAC 2001). After discussing this in the circles, the participants chose the phrase 'Chalphal Kendra' meaning 'Discussion Centre' in Nepali. This name emphasises the value placed upon discussing issues within REFLECT circles and therefore when talking about REFLECT circles in the Sikles sector the terms Discussion Centres (DCs) or Chalphal Kendras shall be used interchangeably. REFLECT circles shall be used to make generalised comments about the process or refer to examples from other localities. Each year that the discussion centres have been running will be referred to as a 'cycle' and there have been 5 cycles in total. Further insights into the complexities of participation can be gained from examining participation levels, according to age, gender, caste and repeat participation levels, in the subsequent cycles of the Discussion Centres.

## **5.2 Participating in Chalphal Kendras: insights from the field**

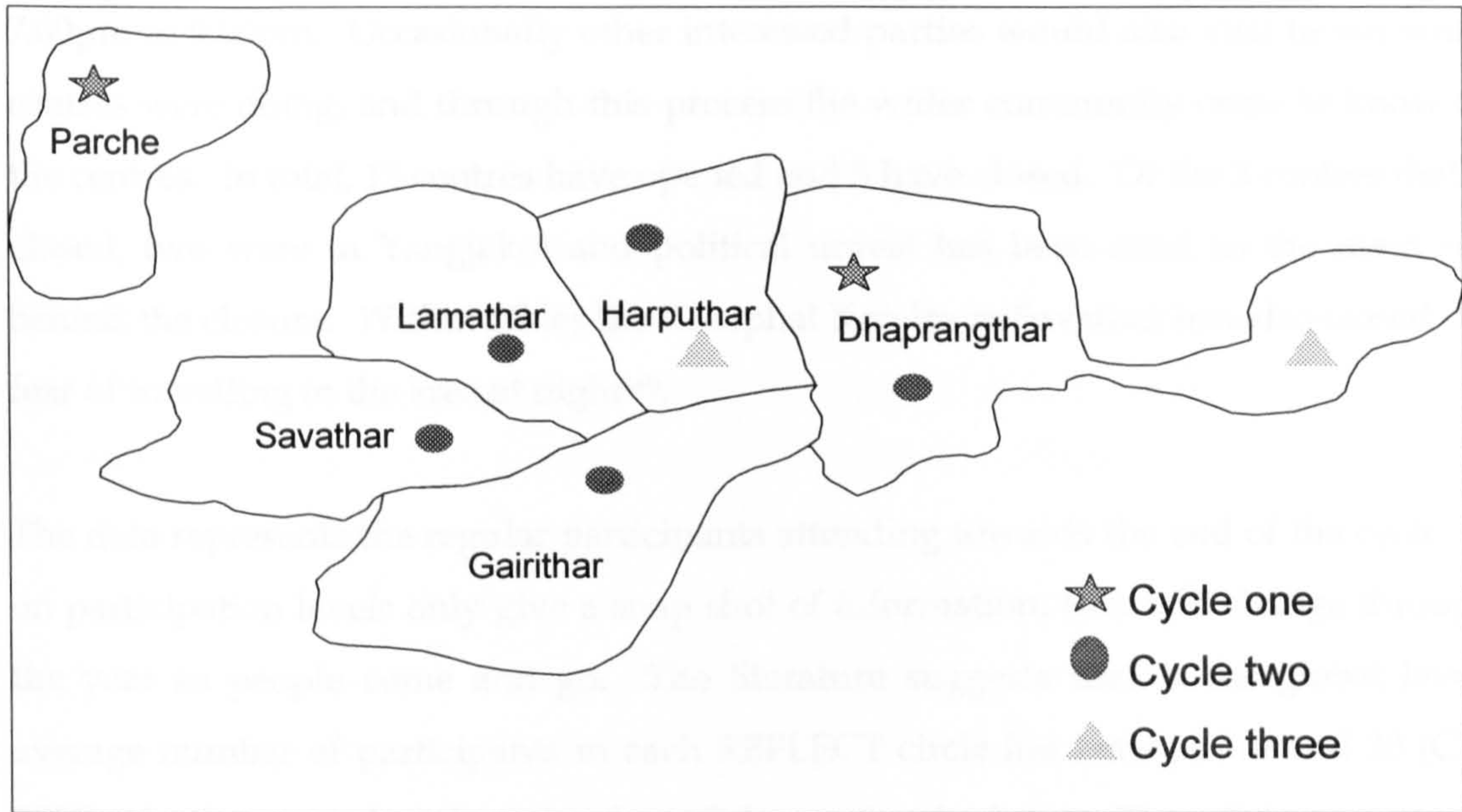
### **5.2.1 Spread of Chalphal Kendras**

The first cycle of the Chalphal Kendra was crucial to the subsequent developments. News spread of the experience of the Chalphal Kendras and local people from the wider community (i.e. outside the wards in which it was operating) showed an interest in starting their own centres. Hence the following year, nine Chalphal Kendras were established and the year after that ten. The geographical wards within the villages determine participation in the Chalphal Kendras. Participants in each centre live in the ward in which it runs. Map 5.1 shows that in Sikles some wards have established more than one centre. In Yangjakot three centres were established in three different wards but in the past two years two of these have closed due mainly to political unrest<sup>168</sup>. However, new centres established in Sikles resulted in an increasing number of people participating in the Chalphal Kendras.

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<sup>168</sup> Reflections on the impact of political unrest on the Chalphal Kendra are provided later, Section 5.6.

**Map 5.1 Map showing Chalphal Kendras and date established in Sikles & Parche**

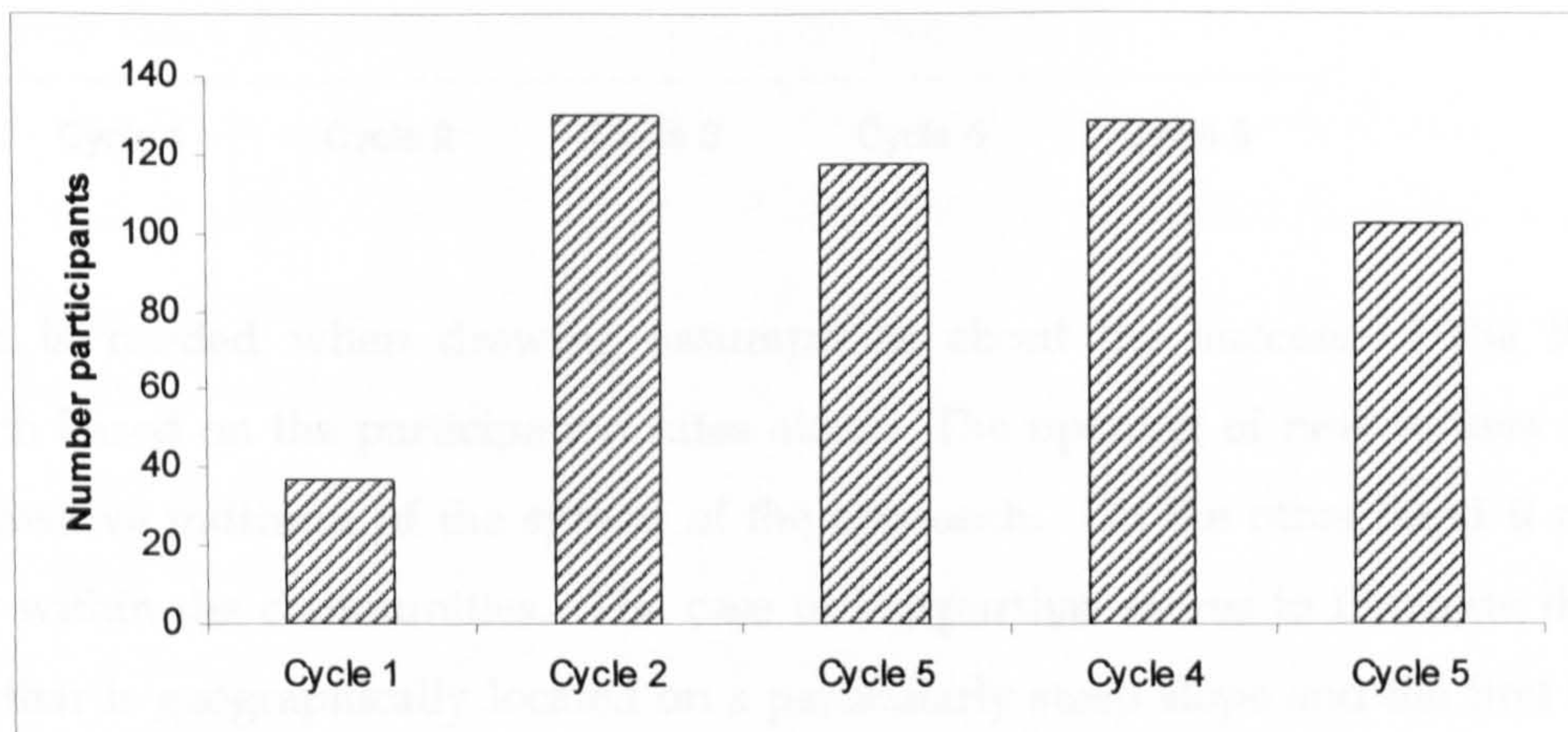


## 5.2.2 Overall participation

### 5.2.2.1 Overall levels

With the spread of the REFLECT approach to other wards within the villages of Sikles, Parche and Yangjakot, the number of people participating in the programme increased from 37 in cycle one to over 100 by the end of cycle 5 (See below Figure 5.1). It also demonstrates that these increased participation levels have been sustained over the past 5 years. At the global level 76% of organisations report that REFLECT centres have a life span of less than two years (CIRAC 2001). The centres in Sikles have now been running for over 5 years and are continuing to do so, making them quite unusual.

**Figure 5.1 Overview of participants in Chalphal Kendras**

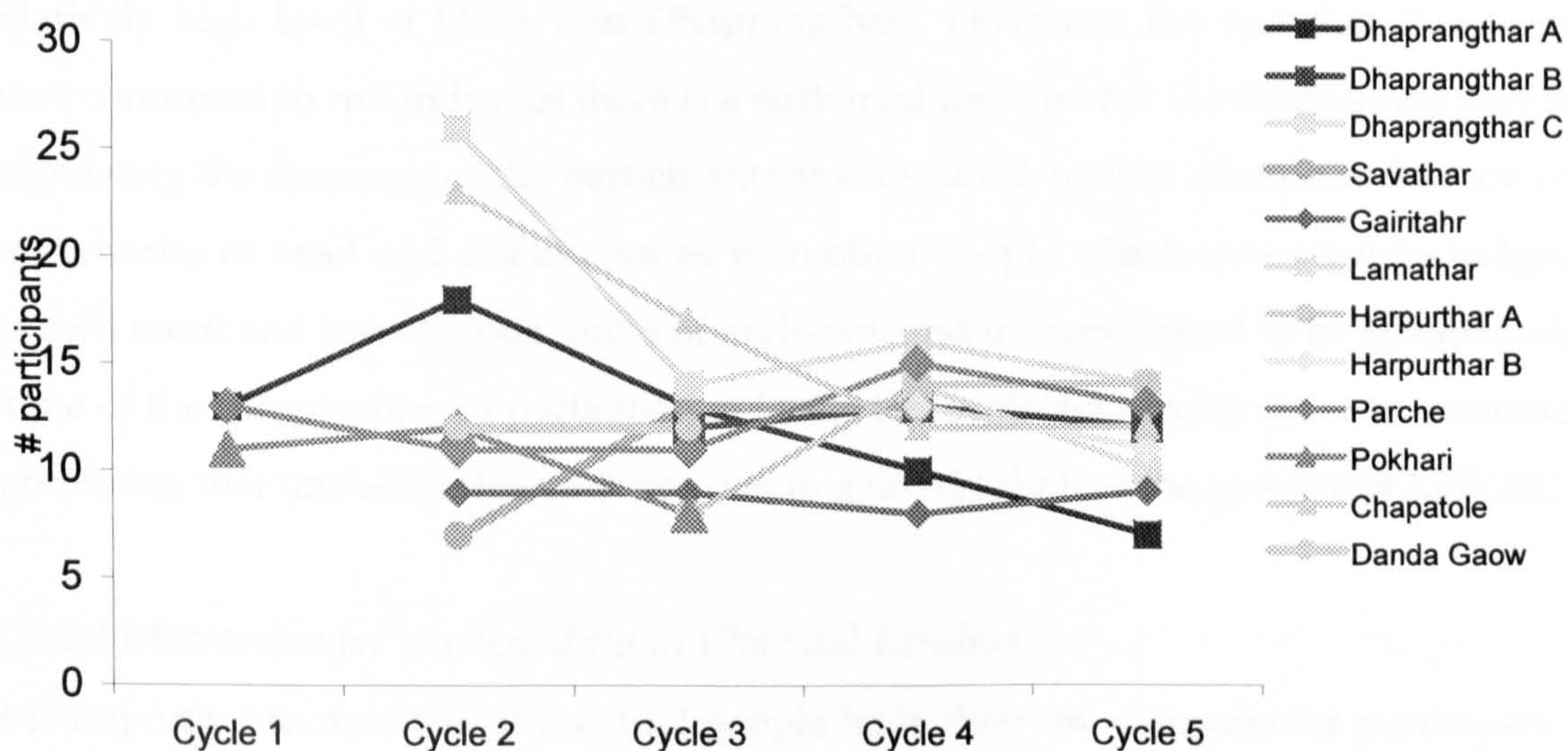


Source: Various Monitoring & Evaluation reports 1998 - 2004

DCs ran in the evening on a regular basis, six times a week except Saturdays, from about 7.00pm to 9.00pm. Occasionally other interested parties would also visit to see what the centres were doing, and through this process the wider community came to know about the centres. In total, 12 centres have opened and 3 have closed. Of the 3 centres that have closed, two were in Yangjakot and political unrest has been cited as the main reason behind the closure. Within Sikles the Chalphal Kendra in Savathar has also closed due to fear of travelling in the area at night<sup>169</sup>.

The data represents the regular participants attending towards the end of the cycle. Data on participation levels only give a snap shot of information, they will change throughout the year as people come and go. The literature suggests that at the global level the average number of participants in each REFLECT circle lies between 10 and 20 (CIRAC 2001). In the second cycle a number of the centres had over 20 participants attending, however this stabilised in the following years with each Chalphal Kendra having between 11 and 14 participants attending on a regular basis (Figure 5.2).

**Figure 5.2 Overview of participants in Chalphal Kendras by Ward.**



Caution is needed when drawing assumptions about the success of the REFLECT approach based on the participation rates alone. The opening of new centres can seem like a positive indicator of the spread of the approach. On the other hand it may hide conflict within the communities. The case of Harpurthar serves to illustrate this point. Harpurthar is geographically located on a particularly steep slope and the first Chalphal Kendra centre established was located at the top of the ward. In this area there is a high

<sup>169</sup> Laxmi confirmed this increasing level of fear in an email on 28/08/2002.

concentration of people from the Gurung 16 clan (less wealthy as noted in Chapter 1: 10). In 2001, women living at the lower end of the ward, mainly from the more prestigious 4 clan, requested that a separate centre be established for them at the bottom of the ward. The main reason given was that they didn't want to travel up to the top of the village late at night. As a result of this a facilitator was selected and trained and a new centre established in September 2001. However in discussing this decision further with Laxmi and Kiran, it emerged that the women at the lower end of the ward did not want to attend the other centre as it is in a less prestigious part of the community and some tensions existed between the different factions of Gurungs.

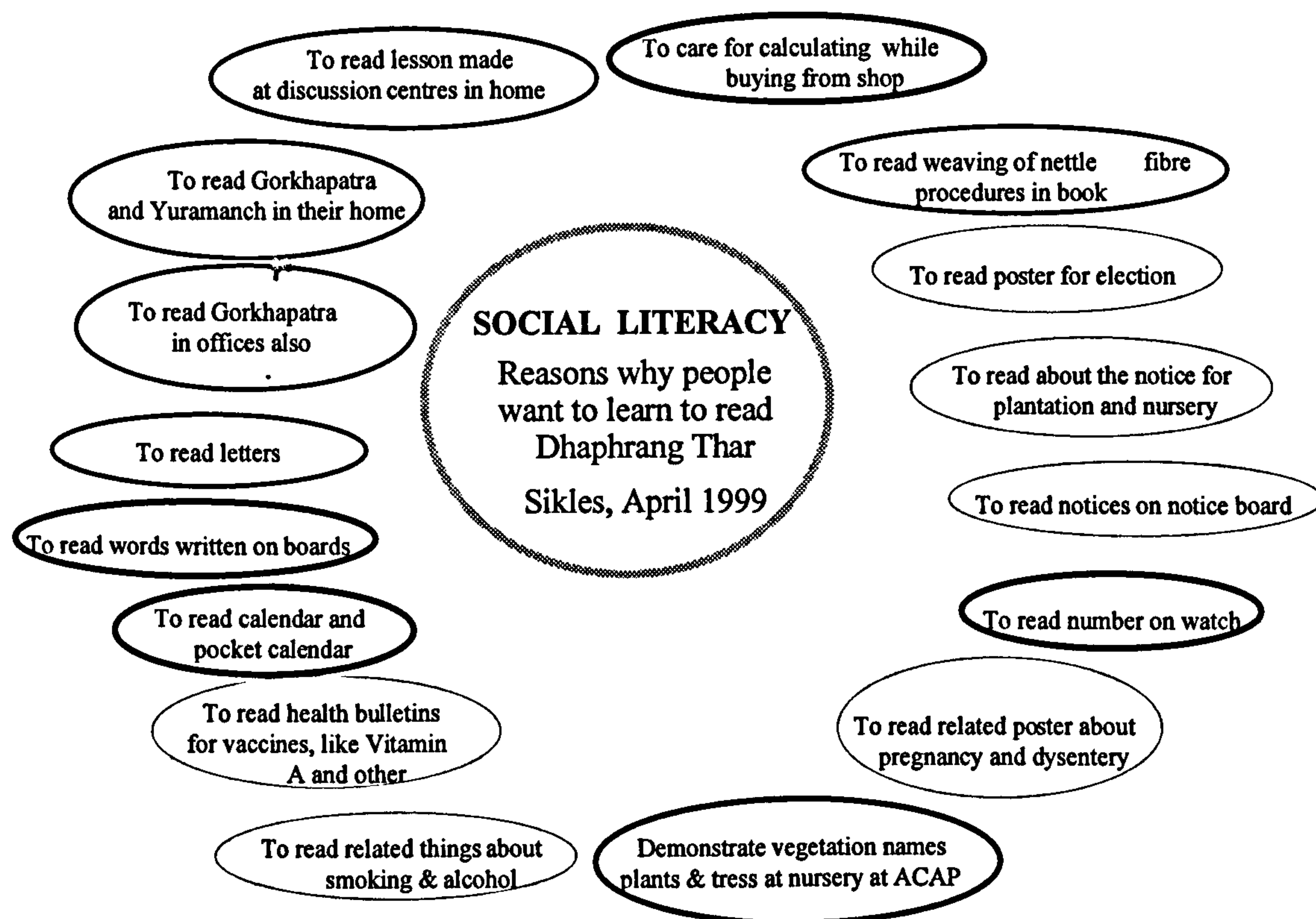
Such tensions are hard to discuss in the field as many people deny the existence of, or significance of, such internal divisions, although everyone knows who belongs to which clan. A second centre could be seen as widening participation yet equally it could be seen to be reinforcing internal divisions. Reasons for establishing centres are complex with each centre having its own unique rationale. Most sources feel that the three centres running in Dhaprangthar are due to the high level of demand from within the community to become literate (although an overview of literacy levels in Sikles suggests there is a relatively high level of literacy in Dhaprangthar). However, the fact that these centres have continued to run indicates there is a sustained demand for the centres and they must be meeting the demands of the participants at some level, be it in relation to literacy or the opportunity to meet and discuss issues with other people. Each case must be judged on its own merit and less obvious forces of exclusion and inclusion need to be acknowledged. Some of the complexities of participation levels are explored here in order to examine the motivation that underlies this participation to gain insight into the process of REFLECT.

#### *5.2.2.2 Motivation for participating in Chalphal Kendras*

It is important to note that individual people have their own reasons for participating in the Chalphal Kendras. Activities undertaken in the Chalphal Kendras along with information generated in evaluation workshops shed some light on these motivational factors. As shall be seen it is not just seen as a means to gain literacy skills but a new space has been created whereby participants, and in particular women, can meet and talk about issues of local concern. It seems that the creation of this time and space is equally as important as the provision of an educational opportunity, supporting the arguments of Freidrich and Jellema (2003).

In April 1999 a survey was undertaken with the Chalphal Kendra participants in Dhaphrangthar, to explore in more detail the reasons for participating in the centres. The responses were noted, discussed and then ranked (Diagram 5.2). Gaining literacy skills was a key motivating factor as participants wanted to be able to read a variety of written media as Diagram 5.2 demonstrates. Improving numeracy skills was also raised as a motivating factor.

**Diagram 5.2 Reasons for participating in the Discussion Centres - April 1999**



Whilst constructing the social literacy map, a debate took place between the participants as they discussed their personal reasons for attending the centre. Extracts from the field notes (Box 5.1) further highlight the women's desire to improve their literacy skills and illustrates the nature of discussion that is the focus of each centre. The reflections highlight that women are not only motivated by the demand to learn to read and write but they feel that the discussion and increased understanding they get from the centres is also important to them. As the centres continue to run, a shift in motivation can be seen from wanting to learn to read and write to being more motivated by having the opportunity to talk about local issues. The facilitators reflected upon reasons for continuing the Chalphal Kendras in the Monitoring and Evaluation workshop in April 2000. The reasons cited highlighted a demand for participants not only to learn more but

equally the opportunity to implement some of the actions that had been discussed in the centres. As the process has continued these motivational factors have become stronger as we shall see in later discussions. A ranking exercise undertaken at an evaluation workshop shows that speaking, discussing and carrying out social work were all ranked as more important than learning to read or write (Appendix 5.3).

**Box 5.1 Reflections from attending the Chalphal Kendras April 1999 & April 2000**

There was a lot of interaction in the centres tonight. Laxmi asked the women why they attended the centres and a big debate began.... One woman said *"we want to learn to read so we can improve our lives and be better in our daily activities"*. Another participant adds *"also we can now read our husbands letters<sup>170</sup> and we don't need to show the letter to others so we can keep secrets and other personal matters (lots of laughter and comments in Gurung about this issue).... since the Chalphal Kendra we can now read ourselves"* (Yangjakot, Chalphal Kendra April 1999). When Laxmi poses the same question in Sikles one participant says *"There are many boards to read in the ACAP office and VDC and also in the Health Post and that is why we need to read, now whatever is written there we can read it."* Another corrects her saying *"No not all of us can read, some of us are better than the others. Some of us can only read simple letters and a few words".... "Yes I agree we are different in our ability". "Some of us have had nettle fibre training from ACAP in the weaving methods all of this was written in a book. Now I can actually read some of it!"* Finally one participant comments *"Yes but we all wear the watch for a long time and now we can actually read it and tell the time"* (lots of hysterical laughter from the whole group) (Dhaprangthar Chalphal Kendra April 1999).

During the field visit in April 2000 facilitators were asked why people continued to participate in the Chalphal Kendra and one facilitator felt that *"In Yangjakot they were all keen and excited to learn new things and all of them have strongly voiced up to come in the centres. They were a mixture of both new and old faces.... The old group was interested to learn further lessons because they want to know more things like writing more letters and daily mathematical problems and also to know the reasons and effect of the community and social problems like gambling, drinking, clean up campaign and many more things related to the community"*. In Sikles the facilitators felt that *"the new faces also are keen to learn new things in the centres and the old faces [previous participants] are asking for books in the centres. They are also very excited to learn new things. These people want further classes because they feel that what they learned before was not enough they want to learn more and more and they want to gain more knowledge like the general students get from their education. They enjoy talking and discussing issues and have become more confident in speaking in the centres. The new faces were not talking very much although they seem keen to do so"* (April 2000 pers comm.).

Examining only the rising participation levels in the Chalphal Kendras hides issues such as continuation rates and drop out levels. The facilitators of the centres for their own monitoring and evaluation procedures keep detailed records of participation. An examination of these shows that over 40% of the participants in any one-year continue to attend the following year. In some centres the participants have been attending the centres throughout the period. This reflects the fact that the centres are meeting a real

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<sup>170</sup> Many men from Sikles work overseas as Gurkhas in the army or are employed in 'Arab' and other countries as casual labour returning to Sikles every two years to visit their wives and families.

demand within the community and although literacy levels have improved new reasons for attending emerge. There is no end point or target that the women reach and hence 'graduate' from the centres. Rather, the centres provide the participants with the opportunity to continually participate in the discussion centre. This has implications for the sustainability and spread of the approach that shall be discussed later. On the other hand, participants also leave the centres for their own individual reasons. The facilitators cited a number of reasons in the evaluation workshop in April 2000 such as the:-

1. Unavailability of reading materials (books)
2. Feeling of laziness or boredom in drawing pictures
3. More household activities (such as housework and childcare)
4. Aged group of people think that they need no more education
5. Problem of poor eyesight for the elderly participants left them unable to see in the evening

Source: Laxmi Dhital (2000)

In other cases younger participants had married and moved to other villages meaning they were unable to attend and the older participants felt they were unable to see the letters clearly. In Dhaprangthar the elderly people who had poor eyesight would participate in the discussion part of the group and then leave early. There was also some fear associated with travelling to and from the centres at night as the paths are poorly lit. The fear of travelling outside of the home has been exacerbated in recent years with an increase in political unrest due to the insurgency (Bohara, Dhital & Parker 2005, Parker, Dhital & Bohara 2004). Lack of support from the family was also cited as a reason for people leaving. According to one participant from Dhaprangthar (*pers comm.* 2000) "*it is difficult to get permission from their mother or father in law because they are told it is not necessary to read and write, what is the output from it and what are you going to be after you are literate?*". Another reason cited for drop out was "*it is taking a long time for some participants to read and write letters which is making them feel more backwardness and less capable*" (facilitator *pers comm.* 2000). Overall the younger women tend to continue participating in the centres and these women often grasp literacy skills more quickly and hence tend to feel less frustrated.

#### 5.2.2.3 Gender & generational composition

Only one of the facilitators trained is male, Bhadra Bir Neplai (as noted above from the Sarki caste). In the first cycle of the Chalphal Kendra there was also only one male participant, a young boy in Parche attending Bhadra Bir's centre. Although this has increased slightly the Chalphal Kendras remains dominated by women (Table 5.1 & Appendix 5.1). It is interesting to note that although the age range varies from 6 to 73 the



male age range is significantly lower with the youngest being 6 and the oldest being 28. This suggests that either the older men did not feel the need for literacy classes or that despite the fact that they may need such an opportunity they were not interested in, or did not feel able to join, the Discussion Centres.

**Table 5.1 Summary of participation by age and gender**

| Cycle   | Total Participants | Female | %    | Male | %   | Min age | Max age |
|---------|--------------------|--------|------|------|-----|---------|---------|
| Cycle 1 | 37                 | 36     | 97.3 | 1    | 2.7 | 12      | 45      |
| Cycle 2 | 130                | 122    | 93.8 | 8    | 6.2 | 6       | 61      |
| Cycle 3 | 117                | 112    | 95.7 | 5    | 4.3 | 9       | 73      |
| Cycle 4 | 128                | 121    | 94.5 | 7    | 5.5 | 12      | 66      |
| Cycle 5 | 102                | 96     | 94.1 | 6    | 5.9 | 14      | 67      |

The majority of the participants have been women (94.65%). The reason often cited for the low level of male participants was *"they feel shy to be in the female dominated circles"* (Facilitator, Sikles *pers comm.* April 2000). However the relatively low level of male participation also reflects the lower levels of illiteracy noted between men and women noted earlier with only 18.6% of males reported to be illiterate compared to 30.4% of women in the VDC of Parche (IPRAD 1999).

### **5.2.3 Reaching the marginalised - issues of inclusion**

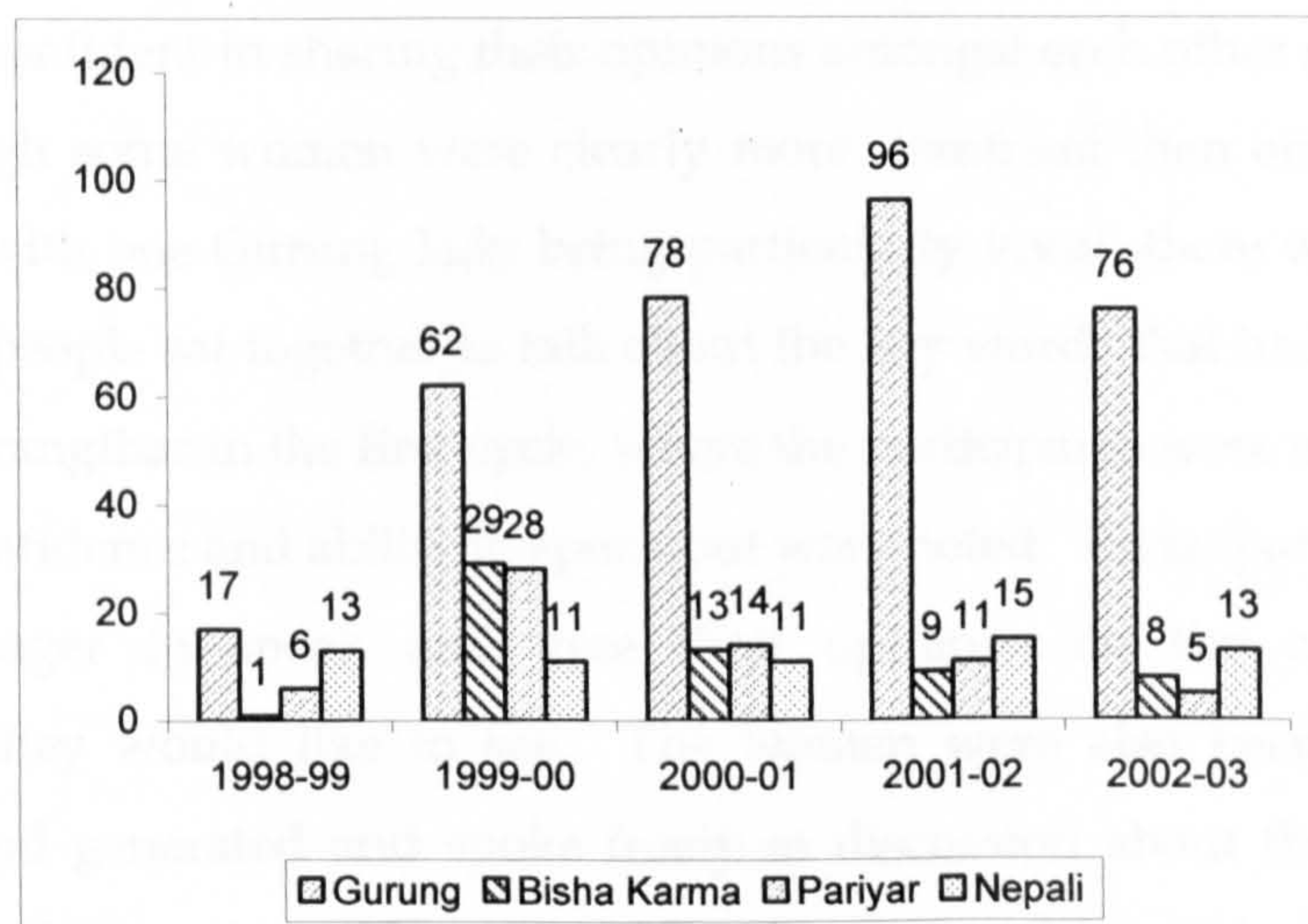
#### *5.2.3.1 Caste - reaching the excluded*

In the first cycle of the Chalphal Kendra there were 3 centres with 37 participants, of which only one was male. The youngest participant was only 12 years old the eldest 45 years old. More importantly was the notably high level of participation from people from the traditional occupational caste who accounted for 54.1% of the participants. However, on closer examination we can see that out of the three centres established the one in Dhaprangthar, Sikles consisted only of Gurung participants and the one in Parche only of Nepali (Sarki/cobbler) participants. This left Yangjakot as the only mixed centre with 4 Gurung, 1 Bishwa Karma and 6 Pariyar participants.

It is important to note that divisions within the communities are not as clear-cut as caste would suggest (Chapter 1, Section 1.4). There are also divisions within the Gurung community between the dominant influential 4 clan and the less dominant 16 group. Through discussing issues of participation with the OIC of ACAP he noted that Gurungs

from the 16 clan dominated one discussion centre in Yangjakot. People living in this area had not taken the previous courses offered by ACAP. Whilst we were visiting the centre one participant teased the OIC saying "at last now we have this precious chance we are learning many new things". She continued "your ACAP is doing nothing for us; you work only in wards 2 and 3 in our village! Why do you not work here? When we ask you for seedlings and plants you give us nothing and look here we are giving you food – eat, eat" [lots of laughter from the rest of the group as they encourage Ram Chandra to eat their food] (field notes Yangjakot April 1999). This brief exchange highlights the fact that people within this ward previously felt excluded by ACAP. The REFLECT programme seems to have provided some people with the opportunity to be included in a non-formal education programme. Figure 5.3 highlights the relative success of the Chalphal Kendras in attracting participants from a diverse range of castes.

**Figure 5.3 Participation in Chalphal Kendras 1998- 2003**



**Table 5.2 Overview of Caste groups and participation in Chalphal Kendras**

| Caste        | Also known as  | Associated occupation | Participation in DC (%) | % Population in Parche VDC <sup>171</sup> |
|--------------|----------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|---|
| Gurung       | <i>Tamu</i>    | Various               | 64                      | 65.79                                     |
| Bishwa Karma | <i>Kami</i>    | Blacksmith            | 36                      | 13.16                                     |
| Pariyar      | <i>Damai</i>   | Tailor                |                         |   |
| Nepali       | <i>Sarki</i>   | Cobbler               |                         |   |
| Brahmin      | <i>Baun</i>    | 'priests'             | -                       | 2.44                                      |
| Other        | <i>Various</i> | -                     | -                       | 3.37                                      |

Source of data: Various Chalphal Kendra M&E workshop reports

<sup>171</sup> Population data for Parche VDC is taken from IPRAD (1999)

Since 1998 the Chalphal Kendra has increased from 3 to 9 centres and the number of participants has risen from 37 participants to over 120 in 2002. Over 30% of the participants are from the 'traditional occupational' castes of Bishwa Karma (Kami), Pariyar (Damai) and Nepali (Sarki) (Figure 5.3). This is a positive participation rate given collectively they comprise 27% of the local population and are exactly the groups of people who ACAP had found so hard to 'mobilise'<sup>172</sup>. There are a number of reasons behind the success in gaining participation from a variety of groups. Firstly, one facilitator, Bhadra Bir Nepali, was selected in order to meet the demand expressed in the village of Parche for adult literacy classes, especially from participants from the Nepali (Sarki) group who lived there at the top of the village<sup>173</sup>. This Chalphal Kendra has had the most consistent participation levels in the past 5 years.

During the field visit in 1999, I noted a marked difference in the nature of participation both within and between the centres. In Yangjakot the group was mixed and participants were relatively confident in sharing their opinions amongst each other and with Laxmi & myself. Although some women were clearly more dominant than others in expressing their opinions (with one Gurung lady being particularly vocal) there was a high level of interaction and people sat together to talk about the key words that had been chosen that night. In Dhaprangthar in the first cycle, where the participants were all Gurung, similar disparities in confidence and ability to speak out were noted. Participants in both of these centres were eager to speak and give their opinions on the centres and what improvements they would like to see. The women were also keen to show off the material they had generated and spoke freely in discussion about the topic they were talking about in that session. However in Parche there was a marked difference in the confidence of the participants. Although I recognise that my presence will have affected the level of shyness, observations from the field diary shed some light on this and the reluctance of the women to speak (Box 5.2).

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<sup>172</sup> As discussed in Chapter 2 & Parker & Sands (1997).

<sup>173</sup> The research undertaken by myself in 1995 and 1996 highlighted this demand and is in part responsible for the establishment of the centre in Parche. It is impossible to say if this need would have been identified without this previous research and my interest in this area.

### Box 5.2 Reflection from Parche - April 1999

"Tonight when I visited the centre in Parche I was accompanied by a WDO from ACAP (a local woman from Parche). Laxmi, my brother James and Conan were also with me. Compared to the other centres that we had visited the participants were very quiet and shy. Although I am aware that my presence has an impact on the centres when I visit them I began to feel rather uncomfortable as Bhadra Bir struggled to get the participants to share their views on the keyword they had been discussing the previous night. There was lots of evidence of activity from other sessions in the classroom such as a social map and keywords displayed on the walls. The keyword they were talking about was society (samaj). The lack of discussion prompted the WDO to ask the group in a loud commanding voice "*why are you not speaking? What is your keyword do you not know what it means?*" [silence - participants made no reply to the question] Bhadra Bir the facilitator looked worried by their shyness and added "*we have already been discussing many words like clean up and drinking water so please speak now*" [silence- participants hide away in the shawls] She adds "*you have a lot of problems but you do not speak!*" [continued silence]. Feeling uneasy and awkward I engineer a situation where the WDO has to leave as my guests need to eat leaving Laxmi<sup>174</sup> and myself with the group. Her presence seemed to be stifling the class.

Once she had left, the participants become a little more talkative about the keyword and start to explain what they mean by 'society'. They explain how they had chosen the key words and discussed its meaning and decide that it is not only your family but also people outside of your family that may also help you in your daily life. Laxmi plays them the tape of the women singing in Yangjakot that we recorded the previous night. They all seemed to like it. The song talks about joining together to change society and making life better through the process of REFLECT. The participants in the group talk amongst themselves and then ask Laxmi "*what can we do to change society as we are a few in number*". Laxmi talks about how small steps can lead to big changes and takes this opportunity to read them some news from the newsletter produced by Education Network. She tells them about a group of women from the scheduled castes in Eastern Nepal who had previously covered their faces with their shawls when in public. Since attending REFLECT centres and discussing this issues they have decided to remove the shawl from their faces [Laxmi demonstrates this by using her own shawl as a prop]. The participants seem pleased and encouraged by this and the class draws to an end. We thank the participants and leave' (Field notes April 1999 - Parche)

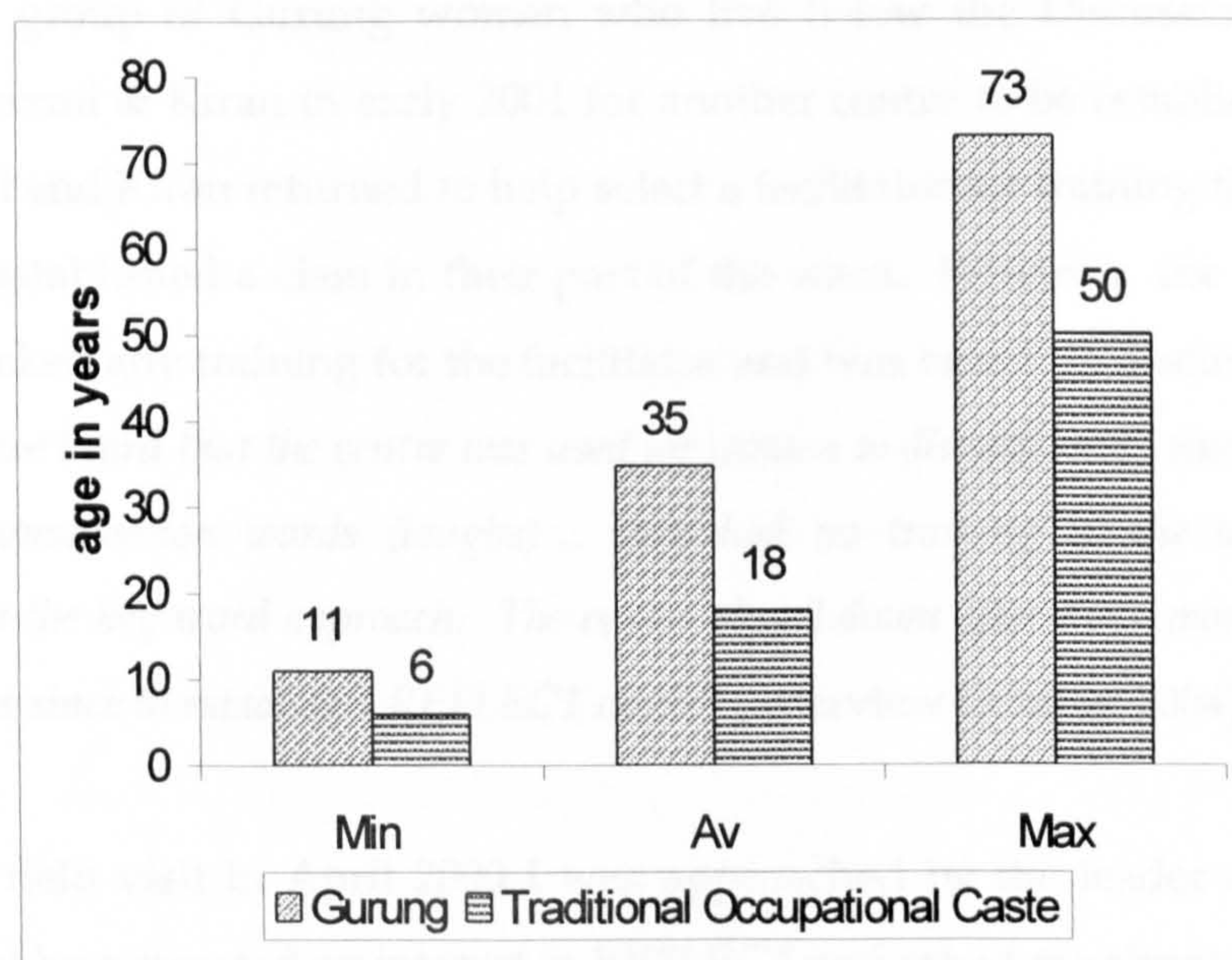
I took these issues up with Bhadra Bir the following day. When I asked him why the participants were so shy in sharing their views he explains "*last night they did not talk openly because they felt shy and they are not good at talking in public. They are worried, as they cannot speak perfectly, correctly and clearly. When they are only themselves they all speak equally and debate issues amongst the men and the women*" (pers comm. April 1999). This experience serves to highlight the complexities of exploring issues of caste and participation as an external. This experience demonstrates the impact visitors, such as myself or ACAP staff, can have upon a centre. It demonstrates that my presence, as well as others, changes the nature of the centre.

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<sup>174</sup> Laxmi is neither Gurung nor Nepali but has been in regular contact with the group as she has been supporting the centres since they started in January - having a support worker from outside of the local vicinity has both disadvantages and advantages as will be discussed later.

Also it is important not to overstate the level of participation of people from the 'traditional occupational caste' as on closer examination of the records we find that in the first two cycles the ratio of Gurung to Non Gurung was roughly 1:1 yet in each subsequent cycle this has dropped. In the latest cycle the ratio was 3:1 in favour of the Gurung population. In addition to this the drop out rates have been greater amongst the traditional occupational castes, with the exception of the only centre with no Gurung participants in Parche. Further examination of the data demonstrates that participation in Chalphal Kendra is not static, but a dynamic process. In the first two cycles, all the centres in Yangjakot had a mixture of Gurung and non-Gurung participants attending the Chalphal Kendras. In the third cycle, the centre in Yangjakot ward number 1 lost all of its non-Gurung participants (Appendix 5.2). Feedback from Laxmi suggests that this was a result of a group of Gurung boys, who had been drinking, teasing the 'lower' caste girls. The behaviour of these males created a problem for the girls as they teased them asking them if they were going to be teachers. This made the girls feel uneasy about going to the Discussion Centres at night so eventually they stopped going. This shows that even though the girls were willing to participate in the centres the reactions from within the community have prevented them from attending.

**Figure 5.4 Age range of participants by ethnic group - all Cycles**



There is also a variation in age range of the different caste groups (Figure 5.4). It is interesting to note that the average age of participants from the traditional occupational caste, at 18 years old, is significantly lower than that of the average of 35 years for Gurung participants (Figure 5.4). Further, the youngest participant is 6 and eldest 50 within the traditional occupational caste compared to 11 and 73 from within the Gurung population.

Whilst not conclusive, this suggests that the younger sectors of the non-Gurung population are missing out on an education, as suggested in Chapter One.

Further reflections on issues of caste are made in Section 5.5. In particular, consideration will be given to the importance of 'space' in facilitating the participation of Gurungs and non-Gurungs. This had been cited as a barrier to the ACAP approach. Later sections reflect upon differences in relation to caste, such as the experience of the participants, the keywords and themes identified, as well as the problems highlighted by the different groups and resulting actions. It is also important to explore issues of exclusion within the Chalphal Kendras and ask 'who is not being reached?'

### 5.2.3.2 *Who is not being reached?*

Although participation levels are impressive, it cannot be claimed that all who wish to participate in Chalphal Kendras are doing so. Whilst no one has been actively refused entry into a Chalphal Kendras there have been cases of a demand for a centre being expressed that has not then been met. An example of this is in Parche, the only centre with no Gurung women. This centre lies at the top of the village and was established in direct response to requests for a non-formal education programme. Bhadra Bir Nepali was selected specifically to run this centre. It is an open centre and anyone can attend. However, a group of Gurung women who live below the Discussion Centre made a request to Laxmi & Kiran in early 2001 for another centre to be established in their area. When Laxmi and Kiran returned to help select a facilitator for training they found that the ACAP had established a class in their part of the ward. However, the centre established by ACAP lacked any training for the facilitator and was based on discussion alone. Kiran noted that *"we heard that the centre was used for women to discuss local issues but all they talked about was conservation words (laughs)... they had no training in the use of participatory approaches or the key word approach. The centre closed down after three months and no one has approached us since to establish a REFLECT circle"* (interview October 2004).

During my field visit in April 2000 I was approached by the leader of the local Youth Group<sup>175</sup> and he expressed an interest in REFLECT and asked me about the possibility of a centre being established to meet their needs. This request was handed over to Laxmi and Kiran to take up with the local communities. Despite the attempts of Laxmi & Kiran to facilitate this process this centre was never established. One of the problems here is

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<sup>175</sup> The youth group in Sikles had been formed with the help and support of ACAP and were often engaged in extension activities such as mobile camps to other villages and in organising local celebrations.

gauging the demand for such a centre. Also each Chalphal Kendra has a strong link to the ward in which it is located, reflecting the nature of decision-making processes within the village. It was felt it would be difficult to find a facilitator for such a centre as it would cut across the ward boundaries. The general consensus in Sikles was that the youth would not attend such a centre and therefore one was not established. This highlights the complexity of community interaction and suggests that wards within the villages are significant in identifying people's community and social interactions. Running a centre that cuts across these boundaries poses more problems than running them within a ward. This issue has also been noted in relation to the need for a centre that focuses specifically on young children who have the need for a more flexible system of education. Although I felt there was the potential for REFLECT to meet the needs of an 'Out of School' programme, I was hesitant to pursue this as initiatives such as this should evolve from the grassroots. Again a number of children who do not attend school are not being 'reached' by the Chalphal Kendras and the demand for some form of educational programme remains apparent.

It is interesting to note the difference in opinions between the facilitators and other key community members regarding the question of who is being included and excluded from the Chalphal Kendras<sup>176</sup>. The facilitators felt that the centres were mainly attracting Gurung, mostly married women and that the wider community (Gurung and Dalit, men and women) were all supporting the centres when it was needed. However a key political leader felt that the centres were mainly attracting the middle class families as both the higher class and marginalised felt unable to attend. He felt the higher classes were not attending due to a fear of losing social status, as they perceive the programme to be for poor and illiterate people only. On the other hand, he felt that the poorer members were unaware of the focus of the programme and didn't fully understand its potential value to them. Whilst the facilitators were trying to make them aware of the programme he believed there was some way to go and that it *"needs very hard labour to bring them into the programme also it is important at the same time we also have to involve the participation of the youth"* (interview with Laxmi & Kiran August 2004). This supports the observations above and stresses the importance of facilitators making efforts to spread the message of Chalphal Kendras and also the value of holding local workshops to expand participation in the programme.

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<sup>176</sup> This question was raised during interviews in January 2004 and in a focus group discussion held by Laxmi & Kiran in August 2004 in preparation for joint paper (Parker, Dhital & Bohara 2004).

### **5.3 Communication and power - from literacy to life long learning**

This section aims to analyse the experience of REFLECT in the Sikles sector to determine the extent to which it is meeting the life long learning needs of the participants. Further, it aims to examine the key words selected by the centres as a means of gaining insight into local issues and priorities.

#### **5.3.1 Literacy and numeracy skills**

Whilst it is difficult to quantify or measure literacy changes of the participants, it is important to explore if the participants feel that their ability to read and write has improved as a result of participating in the Chalphal Kendras. This is particularly relevant given the emphasis placed on acquiring these skills as a key motivating factor for attending the Discussion Groups. Feedback via field visit, Monitoring and Evaluation Workshops and also through support visits by Laxmi and Kiran, confirm a general belief that the participants' ability in reading and writing and proficiency in using numbers have all improved as a direct result of the Chalphal Kendras. Feedback from the field by the end of 2001 highlights the impact the centres are having upon people's ability to read and write: -

- Rather than use their finger print, participants were now able to sign their names at meetings and they feel very happy about this
- Many participants can also read their children's name also
- They can read names of products in the shop
- Some are able to make simple sentences and others paragraphs
- They are able to teach their children general letters when they get home
- Some are able to read letters for communication
- Read signboards when they go to the town or city centre
- Able to see if their names and those of their family are correct in the list and to see if there are any social celebrations
- They are able to do simple addition and subtraction

Source: Dhital & Bohara 2001

However, within the groups the participants' ability to read and write varies greatly. Facilitators have observed that the younger members are often quicker at acquiring new literacy skills. Education is still important to the elder members of the group who have never had the chance to attend classes before, as illustrated by one of the older participants, aged 61, when she commented "*I am feeling proud and excited with the Chalphal Kendra because I can read and write now which I never expected when I joined the centre*"<sup>177</sup>.

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<sup>177</sup> It has also been noted though that the more elderly participants with poor eyesight choose to come to the centres just for the discussion and often leave the centre before the key words have been written down.



Another woman added proudly *“now we know the importance of education and we should all make our children literate”*. One participant explains how initially she was not given permission by her husband to attend the centres and says *“after some days he asked me to write my name and I wrote it clearly and properly, my husband was delighted with my progress and amazed so now he gives me permission to come to the centre”*. By the end of 2002 it was noted that in some cases the husbands of the women are so proud of their wives progress they have taken on some of the household duties in order to enable them to attend the centres. One woman tells of her husband saying *“why are you being late? You may go now (to the Chalphal Kendra) I will complete the rest of your work”*.

Ganga Gurung, a participant in Dhaprangthar in 2001, aged 22 felt that she *“was completely illiterate before joining the centre. I did try my best to learn and know a lot. I have learned a lot and gained confident experiences now. REFLECT has given me wider knowledge and I think I can even run the centre myself now so I am dreaming to be the facilitator but as I am a participant I do not know whether it will be good or not to be the facilitator”*. Today, in 2004, Ganga Gurung runs her own centre in a neighbouring locality. This shows that as the participants become more literate through the Discussion Centres, members of the wider community, who were initially sceptical of the centres, are starting to support them.

The need for numeracy skills was highlighted as a reason for participating in the centre as highlighted in Diagram 5.2. Whilst constructing this diagram one group of women started to talk about the problem of shopping in the village and other areas. One woman commented *“you need to take great care when buying in the shop or you will be cheated”* (lots of agreement and laughter from all participants). Another added *“if we know basic maths then we may not be cheated by the shop keepers here in Sikles and Pokhara and as well even in the Health Post”*. One person felt that before Chalphal Kendra *“we did not have enough knowledge about cheating but now from this Discussion Centre we can do simple maths. One year ago we could not know if we were being cheated and now we can”* (pers comm. 2000).

Each centre introduces literacy as and when the participants request it. Laxmi and Kiran provided training in how to develop literacy with the aid of participatory activities. They used the same techniques to help facilitators gain insight into how to incorporate literacy into the centres. By the end of the third year, participants in Dhaprangthar felt able to recognise and use numbers from 1 to 100. Others had mastered 1-10. Some centres had included addition and subtraction within the centres. The practice of numeracy is directly related to their daily lives and is often introduced when discussing issues such as the cost

of medicine or the cost of goods in the local shops. Additionally, participants now feel more able to help their children in their studies. As with literacy, the aim is not to test the level of ability but to acknowledge the importance of developing these abilities. These steps may seem small but they are important to those who acquire them (Feidrich & Jellama 2003). These selective quotes provide some insights into the changes taking place<sup>178</sup>.

As the participants have been exposed to the REFLECT key word approach they have begun to understand how their literacy can develop without using a set textbook. However, this does not mean that there is no demand for books - In response to continuous demand each centre has established its own tin trunk library with a selection of texts from organisations such as UMN. Laxmi and Kiran have provided the link between the Chalphal Kendras and wider agencies working in the field of literacy within Nepal. Written and visual material is also generated within the centres and displayed on the walls. In order to reproduce and share this material the facilitators requested that litho machines be provided for the centres. By providing litho machines in the village, the participants are then free to make their own material and to copy material to distribute to other centres. To date, 6 litho machines have been provided and stories and other material have been shared amongst the Chalphal Kendras (see Appendix 5.4 for examples). The newsletters produced in English and Nepali noted earlier (Chapter 4; page ! ) are highly valued by the participants who are proud to see their achievements and to see their photos in print.

### **5.3.2 Other forms of communication - oral and visual**

Literacy is not just about the ability to read words, it is about being able to participate in the world with confidence and capability, including all forms of communication. Through discussion and the selection of key words, along with the utilisation of participatory techniques and visualisation, the capacity to communicate at the local level has been developed. Chapter 2 highlighted the limitations of ACAP's non-formal education programme (Section 2.3) and provided reflections on the methods employed within the classes being run<sup>179</sup>. During a field visit in January 1999 the same teacher who had been observed in 1996, Ganga Maya, was now facilitating a Chalphal Kendra in

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<sup>178</sup> Dhital (2005 forthcoming) provides further insight into these changes in her Master's thesis.

<sup>179</sup> Rote learning was the main technique employed and there was little interaction between the students, thus leaving them bored and tired (see Box 2.3 for detail).

Dhaprangthar. In her role as a facilitator Ganga Maya was a lot more animated and involved participants in the group in both discussion and other activities. At one point she physically 'handed over the stick' she was using to conduct the class, thereby encouraging participants to take control of the session and to play games to test each other. This made the class much more interactive, challenging and stimulating for the participants. Participants were more active in discussion and in confirming the words written on the board. In a past class students had merely repeated the words in unison. Ganga Maya reported that the women were reticent at first but after some time they gained in confidence and were now not shy to shout out and identify the keywords on the board. In the centre, some Gurung words had also been formed despite Gurung having no written form<sup>180</sup>.

By the end of Cycle 1, Ganga Maya felt that the REFLECT class was *"very good as we discuss and develop our own keywords. Each person has their own views and all come together so everybody gets to know each other's opinion. After the main keyword there will be many sub keywords made and then they can make sentences and can learn the grammatical ordering"*. She goes on to say *"they can then split into groups and see which group can make the most words and these two groups get the competition feeling and feel good when they can make a simple sentence using their words"*. Ganga Maya further adds, *"village problems are discussed in the centres and they can use many different types of word but if they read based on books like the ACAP ALC book then they will be further focused only on the book and will not be free to talk about their own problems. Because the book has to go lesson by lesson from one day to the next then it is limited"* (pers comm. April 1999).

Facilitators reviewed the differences between REFLECT and other methods during a monitoring and evaluation workshop in 2001. This comparison highlighted the importance of discussion within the centres and the emphasis on accumulating knowledge (Table 5.3). Further, it demonstrated how the facilitators feel that they are given more responsibility in the REFLECT approach and that actions often result from deliberations within the centres. This will be explored further in Section 5.4.

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<sup>180</sup> The innovative nature of this approach has enabled women to write down Gurung words using the Nepali characters and debate about how Gurung words should be spelt.

**Table 5.3 Differences between traditional literacy approaches and REFLECT**

| <b>Adult Literacy Class</b>  | <b>REFLECT centres</b>  |
|--|---|
| We used to learn only books provided in the class.   | It focuses more on discussion session, which has encouraged us to speak without any difficulties and shyness.                                 |
| To some extent, the provided materials made us able to read and write although we were not able to know our problems due to lack of discussion in the class. | We have learned not only about reading and writing but also accumulated knowledge about the outside world.                                    |
| We never tried to produce reading materials ourselves due to the pre-packaged printed materials.   | We prepare our lessons ourselves, which generally emphasises social, cultural and economics issues.   |
| We never realised any problems about our village while we were (are) facing so many problems.  | We have identified many problems during our discussion sessions and we have initiated actions to overcome the prevailing problems in society. |

Source: *M&E Report 2001* (Dhital & Bohara 2001)

Interviews highlight the importance placed upon having the opportunity to discuss issues and the motivation among participants to attend the centres on a regular basis:-

⇒ *REFLECT encourages all participants to participate in the discussion. It gives us opportunities to express our views in the group. We used to have the same gatherings and discussion before which is called Rodhi but we are now in REFLECT centre and it has helped us generate the idea of self-motivated solidarity so as to initiate our village development programmes.*

Bishnu Kumari Gurung Age 46  
Participant, Dhaprangthar REFLECT Centre

⇒ *We used to have our dinner late in the evening before REFLECT came in the village but now we do take our dinner sooner and we come every day in the centre. It has been like a planned programme for us now.*

Lausuba Gurung, Participant

⇒ *Due to heavy manual job every day, I get exhausted in the evening, which makes me difficult to go in the centre. I always worry about my daily jobs on the one hand, on the other, I feel very happy when I join the group in the centre. We practice reading and writing as well as entertainment, which help us share and reduce our panic, sorrow and problems. If I miss a session I feel that I am losing something. So I do not want to miss any sessions.*

Yam Bahadur Gurung Age 49  
Male Participant Dhaprangthar

⇒ *Due to REFLECT centre, we are conducting clean up campaign, we built community hall and we are learning how to read and write all at the same time in the centre.*

Him Kumari Gurung Age 53  
Participant Chapatole, Yangjakot

⇒ *We sing, dance, and learn to read and write in the centre. The centre has become the potential place for us where we practice not only reading and writing but also conduct discussion and*

*initiate village development programmes. Moreover it has provided materials free of cost which we did not get before.*

Lal Shree Gurung Age 65  
Dhaprangthar REFLECT centre

⇒ *I am 61 years old now. I never tried to catch pencil and paper and I used to think that the skill of reading and writing is beyond my abilities but it was not as true as I thought and I have learned to catch pencil and paper. I can write my name now which has made me feel so proud and it is my biggest achievement in my old age.*

Bishnu Kumari Gurung Age 61  
Participant Chapatole, Yangjakot REFLECT Centre

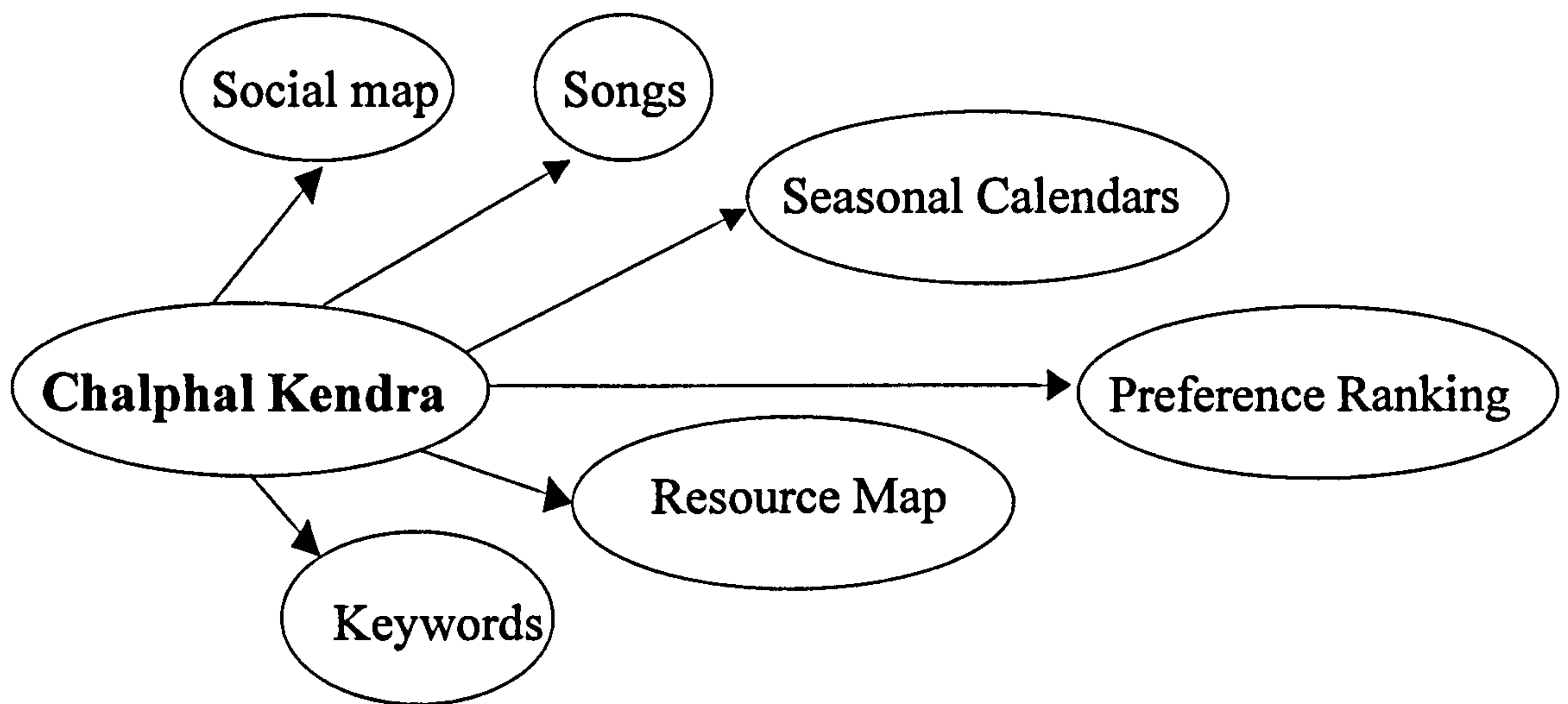
The above quotes highlight that although developing literacy skills may have been the initial factor motivating people to participate in the Chalphal Kendras, once they become involved they value having the space and time to discuss their own issues and problems. Central to this process of discussion is the utilisation of participatory techniques and visualisation activities such as mapping, constructing timelines and other appropriate activities. As discussed in Chapter three, *“through the REFLECT process visualisation tools and techniques designed for Participatory Rural Appraisal are handed over directly to the people”* (CIRAC 2003). The practical resource manual developed by CIRAC (2003) contains a number of resource sheets to help share some practical experiences of these techniques.

Within the study area, Discussion Centres have produced a wide variety of images, each reflecting local issues and concerns (Diagram 5.3). When looking at the images produced, a general pattern can be seen with social maps being the first image that is constructed<sup>181</sup>. The complexity of the tasks undertaken increases as time goes by. Facilitators also request training in different techniques in the training workshops as they seek to improve the techniques that they use within the centre. Education Network, along with Laxmi and Kiran, play a central role in developing the facilitators' capacities to use these techniques. Images may be remade at a later date if the centre feels the need and they both encourage discussion and active participation within the centres as well as serving as a record of information. They are displayed on the walls of the centres along with the key words that have been chosen. Some centres have also prepared an attendance sheet on cardboard so that they can check their attendance thoroughly.

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<sup>181</sup> See Appendix 5.5 for an overview of the images that have been produced by different centres.

**Diagram 5.3 Overview of images displayed in centres**



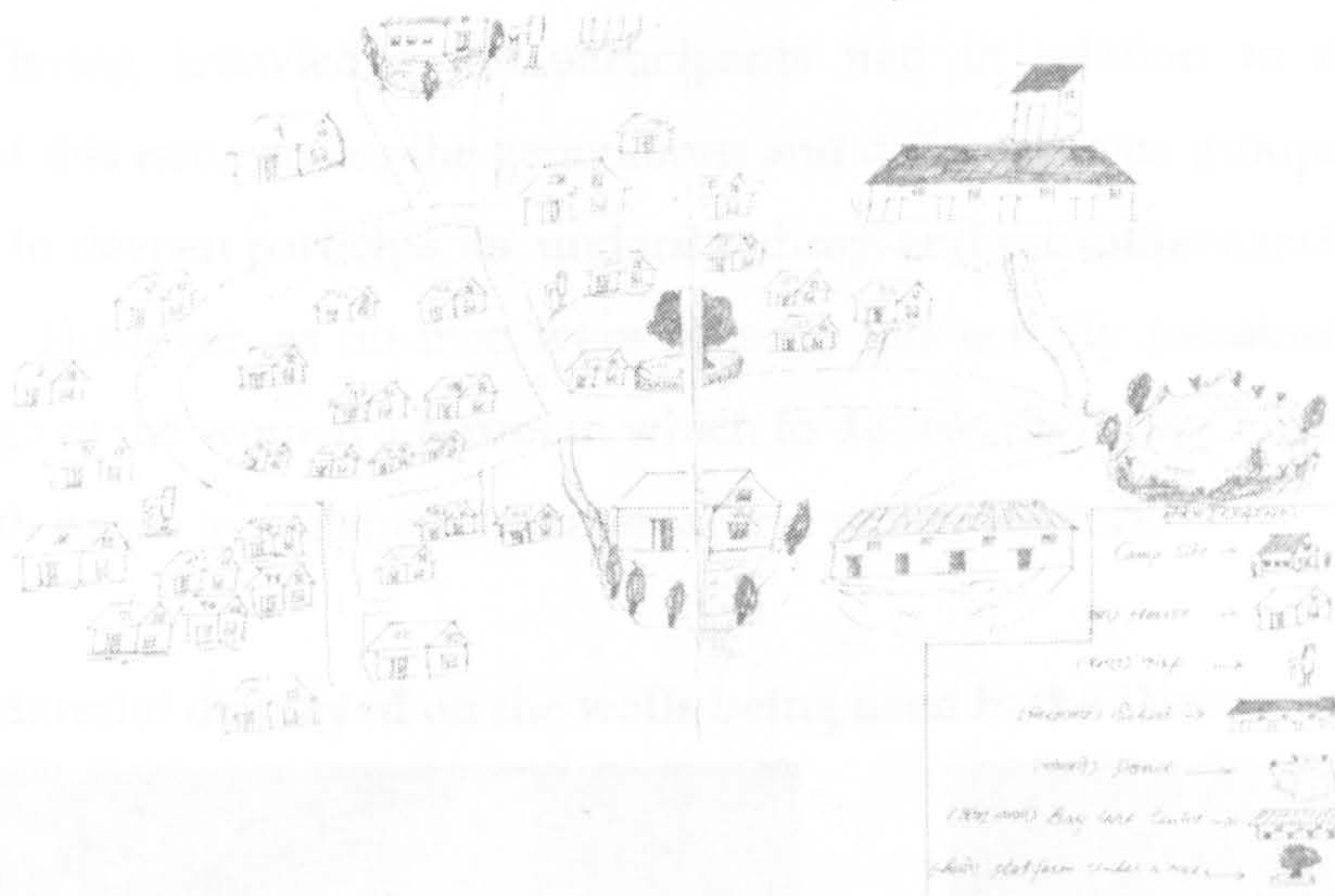
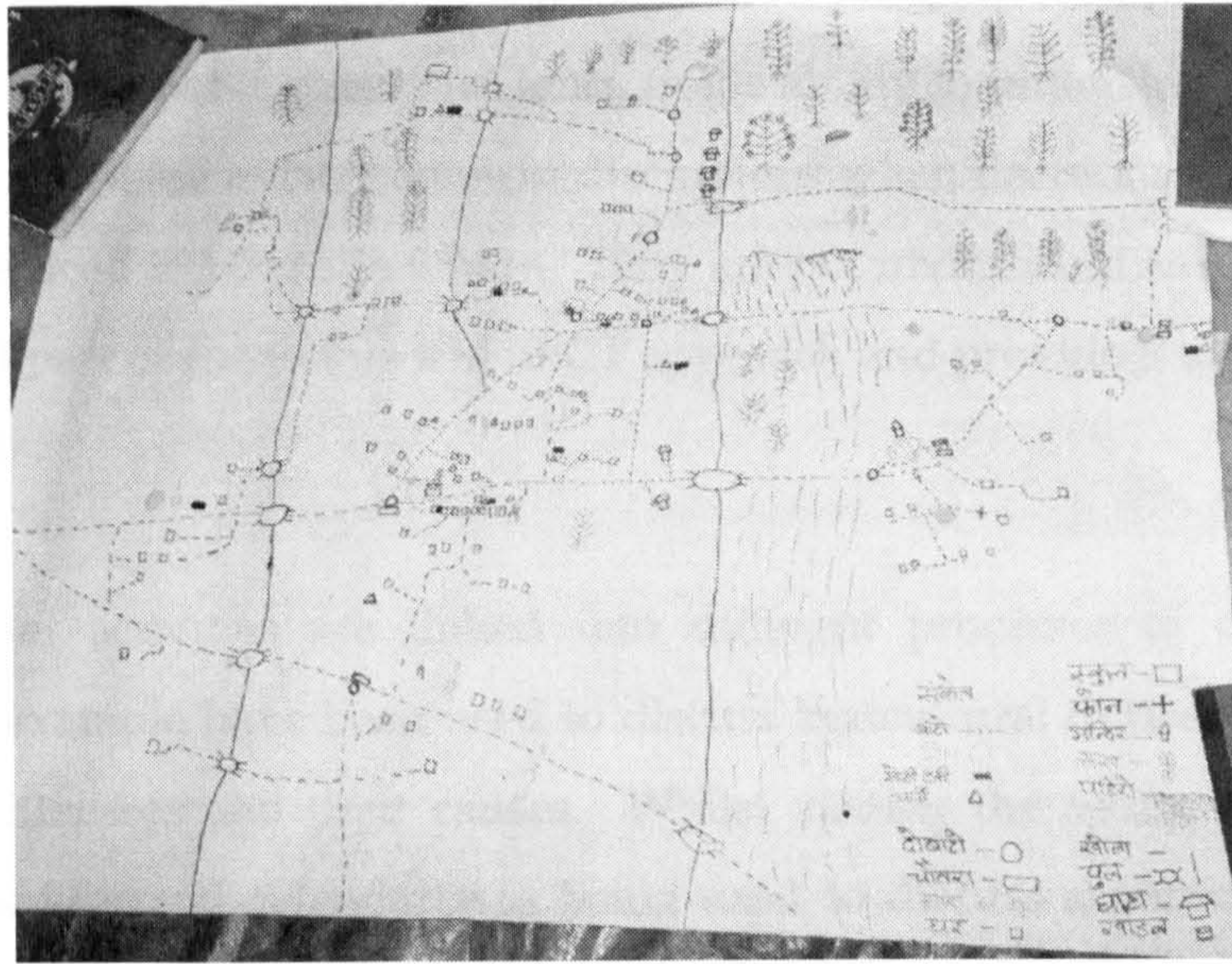
Songs are used in training sessions and, like social maps, are amongst the first types of material to be displayed on the walls of the centres. Each centre composes their own songs reflecting their local concerns and daily life. Songs are also used to stimulate discussion and create a good atmosphere in the centres as one of the male participants points out, *"I like to come to the class regularly I am much happier with other female mother participants because they make the class pleasing by singing and dancing. I forget my tiredness when I come to class"*. As the literacy skills of the participants have increased they have started to write paragraphs and short stories. Again these are displayed with pride on the walls and circulated to other centres using the litho machine to reproduce them.

It is useful to look at some of the material generated to gain insight into the nature of REFLECT at the local level. When comparing the different social maps from different Chalpal Kendras, for example, insight can be gained into the local area and the local problems that the centres feel are most prominent. A comparison of social maps of Dhaprangthar and Yangjakot highlights the different perspectives of the participants. In Dhaprangthar the participants have chosen to map the whole ward whilst in Yangjakot the immediate area surrounding the centres has been chosen as the focus (Photo 5.1)<sup>182</sup>.

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<sup>182</sup> The photos highlight that different groups use different colours and symbols. When we compare different maps, insight into the important features of each locality can be gained. Some centres include natural resources on their maps, others concentrate on the location of buildings. The participants in Dhaprangthar have included areas of landslides and the rice grinding mills along the stream, whereas in Yangjakot emphasis has been given to the school, day care centre, campsite and pond. The maps have been used in generating many key words such as 'sanitation', 'water' and 'clean up campaign'.

Photo 5.1 Social Maps of Dhaprangthar – April 1999 & Yangjakot April 2000



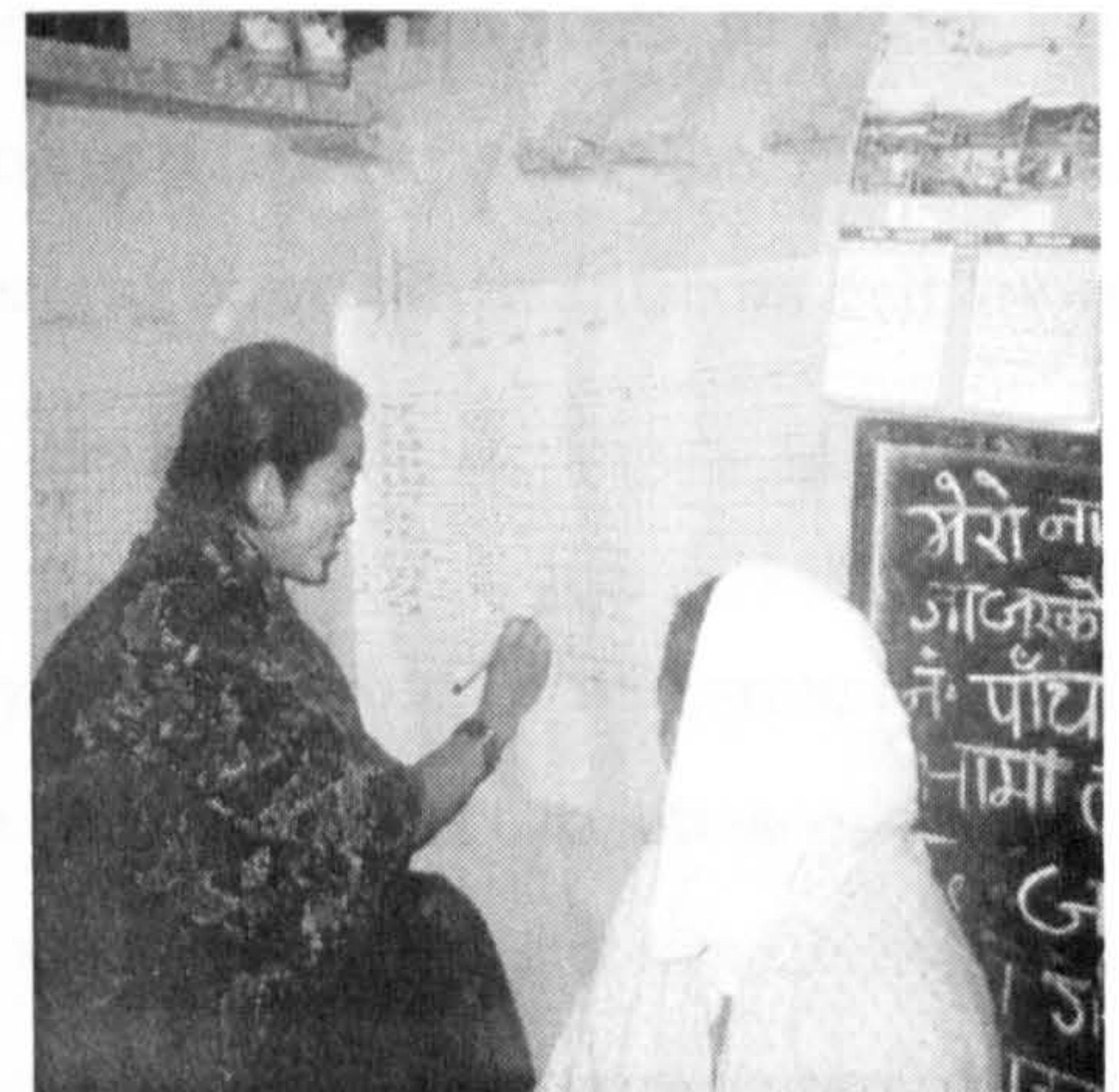
material gives the centres a sense of identity, as no two centres will have the same material displayed (Photo 5.2). Often it is the first time that the participants have been given the opportunity to create such material<sup>183</sup>. My previous experience in Sikles found that even children within the school have little opportunity to develop their creative visual potential. The process of constructing diagrams is based upon extensive discussions and negotiations between the participants. To this end, it is not the product that matters but the process that lies behind constructing the images. In many DCs mapping activities may be done more than once, each time becoming more sophisticated. Laxmi and Kiran report that mapping activities have played an important role in raising

<sup>183</sup> Many of the participants did not attend school so they have not been given the opportunity to draw and construct maps in the past.

the confidence levels in many of the Discussion Centres. Regardless of any other outcome, the process of producing such material can be both rewarding and empowering in itself as the participants gain confidence in the ability to understand their own locality. The maps are also used at later dates in discussions when decisions are taken about what improvements need to be made where. They are not undertaken as one-off activities but are an integral part of the whole REFLECT approach and provide a useful reference point for participants.

Different visual activities are linked into different processes of analysis. Seasonal calendars for example have been used to discuss agricultural duties and festivals and to discuss local illnesses and their causes. Whilst visiting the centre in Dhaprangthar in April 2000 the seasonal calendar was being used to discuss a particular illness and its remedies. What struck me from the visit was the diversity of opinions within the centre and the differing knowledge the participants had in relation to natural remedies. Discussion of this issue across the generations and different caste groups has provided an opportunity to deepen participants' understandings and misunderstandings of the illness in question. However, as no men were present, this activity remained gendered in its analysis. It gave the women a forum in which to discuss their own health and a means of linking health issues to wider environmental and societal factors.

**Photo 5.2 Material displayed on the walls being used in the Discussion Centres**



An added value of participatory mapping techniques and the visualisation process is the interaction it generates amongst participants. Unlike previous classes, participants are engaged and feel empowered by this increased capacity to discuss and analyse local problems with the aid of visualisation techniques. It is central to the process of 'handing over the stick' and developing active participation. It also reinforces the belief that the participants and facilitator are all equal within the centres. The outcomes of this process



can be seen in more detail when we examine the actions undertaken by the Discussion Centres in the Sikles sector. This thesis shall now examine some of the key words chosen by the centres before moving on to explore actions that have been taken in the study area.

### 5.3.3 Keywords - more than just words

Through discussion and visualisation employing participatory rural appraisal techniques each centre selected key words. These key words were then used as the basis for developing literacy skills through applying the key word approach discussed in Chapter 3. Table 5.4 is an example of key words selected by one Chalphal Kendra and demonstrates the keyword approach.

**Table 5.4 Examples of key word generation in Dhaprangthar, Sikles**

|                     | Discussion                 | Key words | Letters                 | Vowels      | Action identified |
|---------------------|----------------------------|-----------|-------------------------|-------------|-------------------|
| Dhaprangthar<br>(7) | a. how to manage rubbish   | Clean up  | Sa, ra, pha             | Ii, a<br>Am | √                 |
|                     | b. forest resource         | Forest    | Ba, na, ja,<br>ga, La   | U, ai       | ×                 |
|                     | c. how to control gambling | Gambling  | Ba, ta, ha<br>Ta, ka pa |             | ×                 |
|                     | d. drinking water          | Water     | Pa Ni                   |             | √                 |

At the end of the first year it was reported that one of the main challenges to the process was that the facilitators found it difficult to encourage the participants to select key words. This issue was addressed at the next training workshop when the number of facilitators rose from 3 to 9. At the end of the second year all facilitators felt more confident in their facilitation skills.

Each centre choose its own key words and they range from environmental and agricultural issues such as forest, fodder, plantation and sanitation to ones relating to health such as diarrhoea, vomiting, cough and cold to words which were considered to be anti-social, due to the fact that there were excessively used by many men in the communities, such as gambling and alcohol. It is interesting to note that over the 5 years in which the Chalphal Kendras have been running over 90 different key words have been selected (Appendix 5.6). By categorising these words according to criteria such as environmental, social and health related it can be seen that socially-related words dominate followed by environmentally-related words.

By the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> cycle 9 out of 11 centres had chosen the key words 'clean up' and 'forest' whilst 8 had chosen the key word 'cigarette'. Seven out of eleven had chosen the words sanitation and community house at some point within the programme and over 50% of the centres has discussed and chosen the key words dirt, path, rubbish and toilet. The extent to which ACAP's previous CEEP activities have influenced the issues being discussed is impossible to determine. What these words do highlight though is that when given the time and space to select and discuss important issues these often relate to the environment or social issues such as gambling and drinking. It is important to acknowledge the context in which these words are discussed and to reiterate that the participants select these words themselves. They are not introduced through a predetermined text. The fact that environmental issues dominate the centres shows the local concern over environmental issues and suggests that the REFLECT approach may indeed be highly relevant to the ACAP approach. It is impossible to ascertain the extent to which ACAP has influenced this concern. If the fundamental aim of ACAP is to build the capacity at the local level to identify local problems and implement solutions to these problems in order to promote sustainable development, then the experience of REFLECT in the study area suggests it has the potential to complement ACAP's approach and strengthen its CEEP.

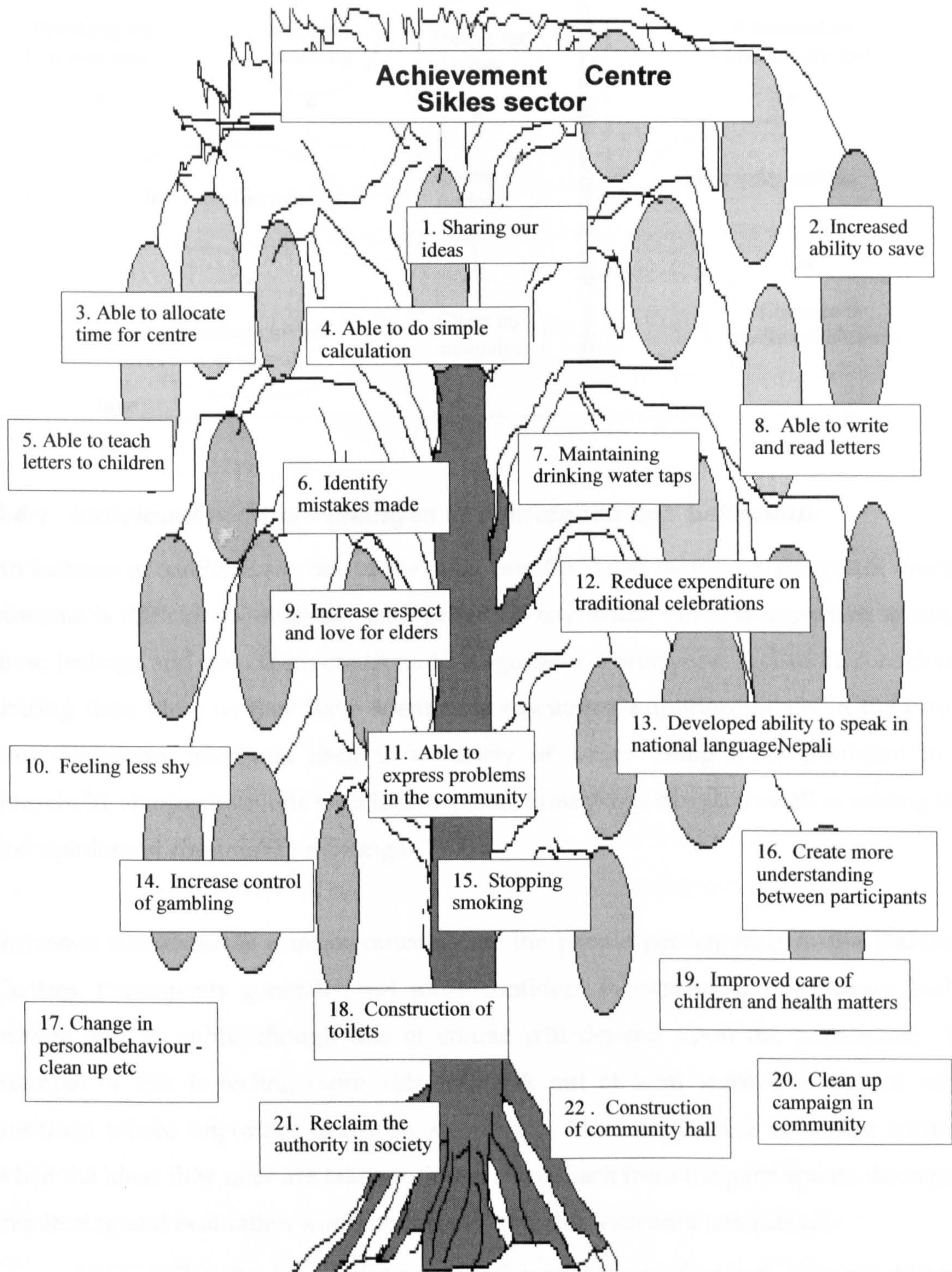
It is difficult to gain insight into the different concerns of the various participants given that there is only one centre that has no Gurung participants (Parche). However an examination of the key words chosen by the different centres reveals that this centre in Parche was the only centre to select the words exploitation, anxiety, hate, oppression, social status and unity. This suggests that different groups have different concerns and reflects the impact of a participant's caste upon their concerns. The words 'society', 'cooperation' and 'untouchable' were also chosen by the group in Parche and by other groups in Yangjakot. In addition, this the facilitator reported that "*the participants feel it is difficult to create keywords. The problems they face are hard to solve as they have a lot of problems and no money to correct them. They also have a feeling that if they create (present) a problem to the community then how will the community feel about these keywords. If they create a word like 'drinking alcohol' or gambling then they feel that the community will reject their ideas*" (pers comm. April 2000). The fact that some of these words were also chosen by other centres serves to highlight the commonality of some of the issues faced by all centres and that some issues cut across caste. Members of the traditional occupational caste dominated the groups that raised issues of social status, oppression and anxiety.

## **5.4 From communication to action**

It is important to note that developing communication capabilities is only one outcome of the Chalphal Kendra experience in the Sikles sector of the ACAP. The ultimate aim is for autonomous actions to take place (Section 3.4.2). It is therefore important to explore some of these actions in detail. The response to these actions from the community in which the participants live is also important. The findings discussed here concentrate on those actions that are evident within the communities in which the participants live. The 'achievement tree' produced at the Monitoring and Evaluation workshop in April 2001 (Diagram 5.4) highlights the diversity of actions reported by participants since 1998. It highlights that although literacy improvements are noted they are only one of many achievements. Increased understanding, ability to express problems and sharing of ideas are also seen as valuable outcomes. In addition to this a number of direct actions have also been highlighted resulting from the Chalphal Kendra experience.

These actions demonstrate the individual and collective nature of change at the local level. Some of these are very personal, such as stopping smoking or being more vocal in the household or public meetings. Others undertaken by the Chalphal Kendras indicate that a new sense of identity has emerged. Other actions require the support of the wider 'community' and usually draw upon members from within the ward in which the Chalphal Kendra is located. Inevitably actions that require people to work together and cooperate with the wider community often take longer, as some ideas need to be taken to local community meetings in order to generate support (Diagram 5.5). The diversity of outcomes recorded on the tree does not represent all the outcomes from the REFLECT process, just the ones that emerged at the workshop.

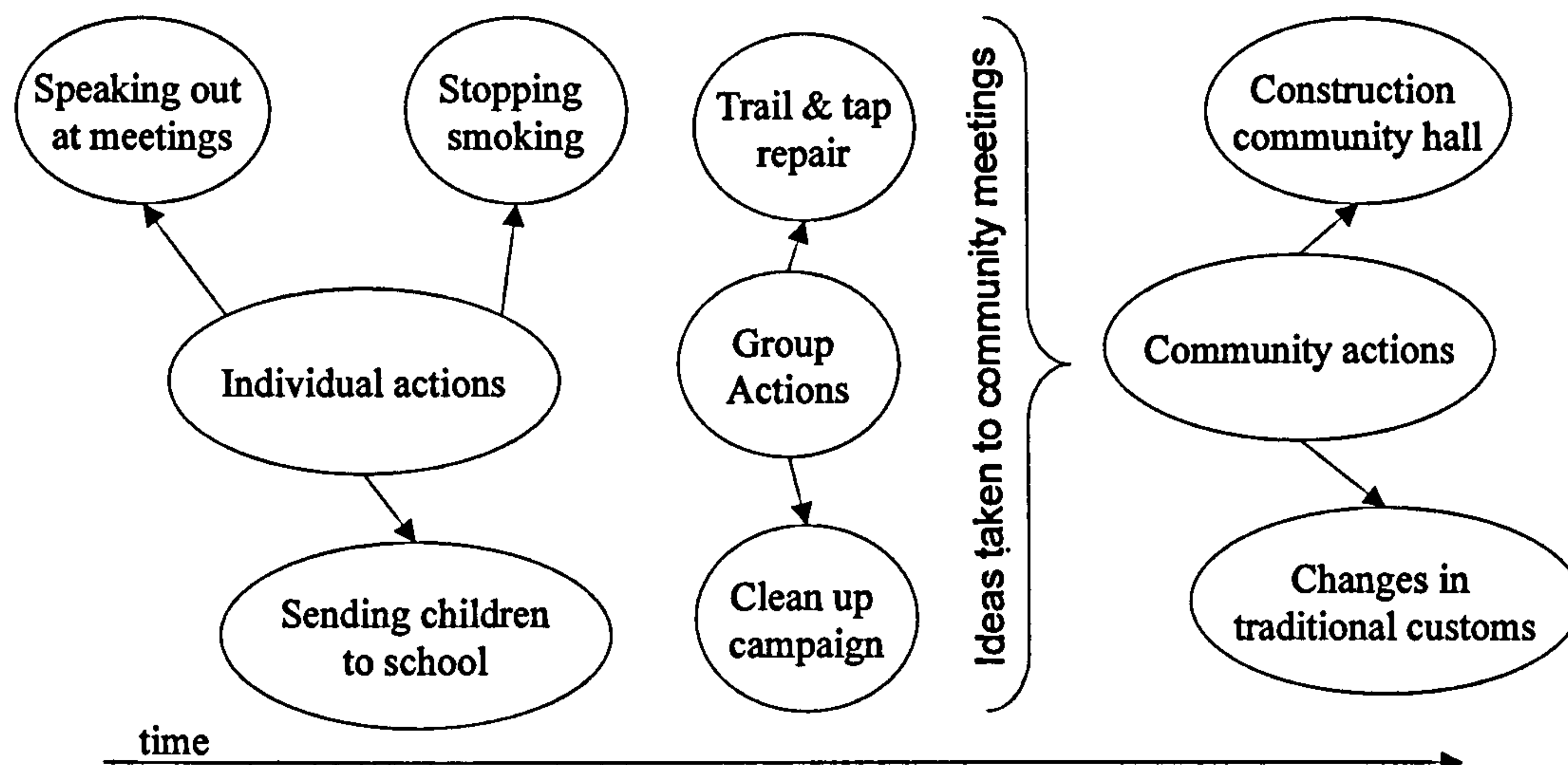
Diagram 5.4 Actions arising out of REFLECT process



Source: Dhital (2001)

Further examination of these outcomes highlights the different scales and spaces in which they take place. They can be classed according to individual actions, group actions (undertaken by the Chalphal Kendra participants) and community actions (which require the participation of people from outside of the Chalphal Kendra) as the following diagram depicts (Diagram 5.5). These shall be examined turn by turn.

**Diagram 5.5 Actions arising out of REFLECT process**



### **5.4.1 Individual actions - changes in confidence and behaviour**

An increase in confidence is one of the main benefits noted by local participants. Such an outcome is difficult to 'evaluate' and 'prove' to any extent but it is important to respect these feelings and give them credit and recognition. Participants feel more confident in sharing their ideas as they have spent time discussing important issues in the centres. This confidence manifests itself in a variety of ways:- being more confident in the household, sharing opinions with local women, family and friends as well as raising ideas and opinions at community meetings.

Increased confidence is a major outcome for the people participating in the Discussion Centres. Participants generally feel more confident in expressing their views both in private and in public though this of course will depend upon the participant. One example of this is feeling more able to speak out at local ward meetings or village meetings where important decisions are made. Their confidence is further increased when the ideas they raise are taken seriously. Feedback from the participants through the monitoring and evaluation workshops highlights this increased confidence:-

*"REFLECT centre has enabled us to speak confidently in the group. I can not deliver my views like a leader's speech but I can present my views in the village gathering now"*

Men Suba Gurung, Age 38, female participant Dhaprangthar Discussion Centre.

*"My friends used to tease me in the community when I come in the centre by saying ' look at you becoming the master, joining the campus and laughing at me, and to some extent it makes me not want go the centre. But now I do not care about their comments and preaching and I come in the centre to learn more"*

Indra Kumari Bishwa Karnma, Age 22, female participant Savathar Discussion Centre.

Other actions taken by individuals are based around changes in behaviour. A prime example of this is participants deciding to stop smoking or to stop making alcohol for others and themselves to consume. These decisions have been taken after discussing the negative impacts of these actions on both the health and financial means available to the household. Feedback has also shown that women are now more keen to send their children and daughters to school in order for them to get an education, as they now want their children to have the opportunity to learn that they themselves never had.

Smoking and gambling are topics that have been discussed by many of the centres. Some of the participants have given up smoking and will also challenge others about the harm it does to their health. The women have shared their concerns over the high level of drinking and gambling by then men within their households and have discussed how this impacts upon the funds available to the whole family. As a result they are encouraging men to stop gambling and drinking, apart from during festival periods and community celebrations, so that the money saved can be used for the household rather than wasting it. The women have found it very useful to talk about these issues in a group and to share experiences. When talking about issues there is always a lot of laughing and joking at how much money is wasted by such activities. Through discussion though they become more aware of the impact this expense has on the household income. For some of the participants, giving up smoking is considered to be a great achievement. However small, it is important to note the value of these actions to the participants and their sense of self worth and self-esteem.

However, there seems to be some disagreement amongst participants and facilitators between balancing discussion and solving problems with learning to read. This tension was highlighted during a workshop I attended in January 2004. One of the facilitators commented that in her centre many of the participants, especially from the traditional occupational castes, were continuously talking about problems with their husbands and the key word 'divorce' had been chosen. However some of the participants began to bring their personal problems on a daily basis after this and some of the other participants were complaining about the amount of time spent resolving conflicts. This emphasises the importance of facilitators being able to use their skills to prevent certain people or topics dominating the Chalpal Kendras. It also serves to highlight the diversity of experiences that the participants bring to the sessions and demonstrates that divisions occur within the centres and they are not always harmonious democratic spaces.

## 5.4.2 Community level actions

### 5.4.2.1 Chalphal Kendras projects

Table 5.5 provides an overview of some of the projects that have been initiated through the Chalphal Kendra process. The link between the participatory techniques and also key words and the subsequent actions that are taken is also demonstrated. There are a number of actions that have been taken either by the Chalphal Kendra group or by the wider 'community' in which they operate. The 'wider community' here refers to the people living in the same ward, as most, if not all actions are undertaken at the ward level. Most institutions are based around the unit of the ward, such as VDC and ACAPs CAMC as well as other more traditional institutions such as 'rithi thithi'. Chalphal Kendras are very much organised within the framework of the ward. They have created a new space for discussion and analysis as well as providing an educational opportunity for participants. Each Chalphal Kendra has a strong affinity to its local ward members.

**Table 5.5 PAR activities and the actions that they can lead to - examples from Sikles**

| PAR image   | Issues discussed   | Actions taken   |
|---|--|---|
| Social Map  | Identify dirty areas   | Clean up campaign   |
|   | Areas poor sanitation  | Construct public toilets  |
|   | Poor path  | Trail repair  |
|   | Problems with water supply   | Repair of taps & build new tanks  |
|   | Problem to access forest   | Bridge construction   |
|   | Rubbish disposal   | Garbage pit construction  |
|   | Identify natural resources such as forests etc                                   | Help identify future plantation sites   |
|   | Availability of vacant houses or land  | Help to choose location of meeting halls to be constructed  |
| <i>Many actions that relate to the social map are practical projects that are undertaken in the local ward where the DC is running and therefore may need discussion at ward meetings</i>   |  |   |
| Seasonal Calendar   | Discussion of diseases and when they occur                                       | Identify preventative techniques & herbal remedies  |
|   | Use to plan the Discussion Centre activities when to start etc                   | Decided to close Discussion Centre in busy summer months  |
|   | Help to determine when is the best time to start activities such as construction | Enabled time to be set aside for building of community hall   |
|   | Discuss expenses on traditional celebrations                                     | Decided to change custom of high expenditure at certain ceremonies  |
| <i>This activity may be undertaken in the first cycle of the process and will be revisited in future sessions if it is an appropriate activity for subsequent key words being discussed</i> |  |   |
| Preference Ranking  | Helps them to determine priorities within the group                              | Decide which projects should take priority and with seasonal calendar decide when and how these projects can be implemented |
| <i>This activity is not usually undertaken until at least the second cycle of the group and hence many actions have been discussed by this stage.</i>                                       |  |   |

The actions undertaken further support the earlier observations of the centrality of environmental concerns within the study area. All centres report regular clean up campaigns, path repairs and water and sanitation projects being implemented. In some cases the support of ACAP has been sought to undertake these projects, for example through requesting funds and technical support in the construction of garbage pits. If we take the example of 'clean up campaigns' the significance of the impact of the Chalphal Kendras can be more fully seen. 'Clean Up Campaigns' were introduced into the Sikles sector as part of the Annapurna Conservation Projects activities in 1992. Initially these were very successful with a marked improvement in the cleanliness in the villages. Mother's groups and school children were particularly active within this field. As highlighted in Chapter 2, however, not all people were participating in these activities and some areas remained 'dirty' and a source of tension within the community (Section 2.2.3.2). I had been informed by one member of staff from ACAP that "*the scheduled caste areas are more dirty as they do not care for their environment or listen to us when we tell them to clean up their areas. These areas are a problem for the whole community as often they pollute the local waterways*" (pers comm. 1995.).

Since 1995 the clean up activities had become less regular and were not being undertaken on a systematic basis. It is therefore promising to note that all the Chalphal Kendras have initiated their own clean up campaigns, including the centre in Parche (an area previously noted for being difficult to motivate). In Parche following the success of the clean up initiative the facilitator reported that they were keen to do more to improve their local environment. Bhadra Bir feels that "*the REFLECT class has been a major force which is bringing out all things (such as clean up campaign) from their hearts and they have never had this experience before. Many people still think that this change will be slow though*" (pers comm. Field Visit April 1999).

Chalphal Kendra participants have engaged in discussion about issues such as sanitation, health and the environment and have subsequently taken ownership of the clean up campaign initiative. There is no need for ACAP, or any other agency to 'tell them to clean up their areas'. Through reflection and analysis along with the creation of visual images to identify problem areas, the participants are now motivated to undertake these activities on a regular basis. Furthermore, through discussing the importance of these issues at ward meetings the wider community is now also engaged in supporting the Chalphal Kendras in these activities. Women, men and children now work together and this has created what many participants refer to as the '*development of we feelings*' within the



communities. In addition, in one centre a participant worked for ACAP as a helper and suggested that they requested a rubbish pit to be built by ACAP so that they could dispose of the non-biodegradable rubbish in a suitable and sustainable manner. To date two such rubbish pits have been constructed at the request of Chalphal Kendras. This example also demonstrates the importance of engaging the wider community in the actions that have been identified within the centres.

#### 5.4.2.2 Actions from within the wider 'community'

Within the study area certain people are viewed as 'key community' workers such as the VDC Chairman, CAMC Chairman, Mother's Group Chairwoman, local teachers and traditional leaders. These people occasionally attend the Discussion Centres to see how they are run and what they are discussing. The facilitators and participants have had an open door policy whereby anyone can come and join in the discussion and this has fostered a relationship of trust. Whilst maintaining this openness the support workers, and facilitators have discussed the importance of the centres not becoming a political arena so that any one political party does not hijack Chalphal Kendras. The open door policy helps to prevent any distrust from being generated within the wider community. The facilitators motivate influential leaders from all political parties to visit the centres to ensure that any misunderstandings are avoided. Table 5.6 demonstrates the range of activities that the community has been involved in implementing with Chalphal Kendra participants.

**Table 5.6 Implemented actions and support received**

| Implemented Action   | Support Agency  |
|--|---|
| Clean up campaigns   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mothers group and other people of that community</li> </ul>  |
| Built a permanent cemented garbage pit   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cement and wages from ACAP</li> <li>• People's participation without having labour charge</li> </ul> |
| Built a community toilet   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rs. 30,000 from mothers group</li> <li>• People contributed labour free of charge</li> </ul>         |
| Built a community hall   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACAP, mothers group and the people of the community</li> </ul>                                       |
| 'Dalits' participated actively in some centres and are involved in social work | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By the help of elected representative and other personalities</li> </ul>                             |
| Maintained drinking water tank and tap   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People's participation free of charge</li> </ul>   |
| Constructed small wooden bridge  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peoples participation free of charge</li> </ul>  |
| Bought community cooking pots (worth Rs. 30,000)                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Got financial support by the fund of mothers group</li> </ul>  |

Source: Dhital & Bohara (2002: 9)

The support gained from within the community comes as no surprise given the positive initiatives emerging from the Discussion Centres. The actions identified serve to improve the local community and there is a strong focus on community development projects. If the actions were more 'political' in nature and posed a challenge to the more affluent members of society then less support would be gained. To date no such actions have been undertaken. It will be interesting to monitor this situation in the long term to gain a fuller insight into the complexities faced by the Chalphal Kendra in the study area. Two particular examples of actions undertaken serve to highlight their complexity, firstly changes to local customs and expenditure at times of festivals, and secondly the building of community halls. Through examining these two examples insight is gained into the process and the nature of the REFLECT approach in the Sikles sector of the ACA.

Key words such as festival, useless expense, saving, future planning and neighbourhood began to emerge in the second cycle of the Chalphal Kendras. It was reported in the Monitoring and Evaluation Report (2001) that one of the main actions that year was the decision to reduce the expense of festivals and social customs by changing these customs at the local level. Instead of "*wasting money on unnecessary ceremonies and formalities this money could then be used to start a saving fund for the community to implement the many projects that needed to be started in each ward*" (email feedback from Laxmi, April 2001). In the following summary Laxmi and Kiran explain the detail behind this decision (Box 5.3).

#### **Box 5.3 Reducing the 'useless expenses' - from Chalphal Kendra to community action**

After discussing the different work that men and women do throughout the year using the seasonal calendar, participants talked about the many festivals and rituals within the Gurung community. After discussing these as a group they felt that there were too many festivals and rituals and that these were expensive occasions not only for the poorer members but also for everyone. They also realised that not all people in the community are equally rich. Despite the economic difference between people they all have to celebrate the festivals in the same way and most participants felt that the cost of these events was too high, especially for those households who were less wealthy.

The problems of taking loans out was also discussed and the malpractices of the so-called 'elite groups' was also discussed. They all realised that poor people are unable to spend unnecessary money like rich people. Finally, they suggested that these expenses were excessive and there was no reason why the customs could not be changed so that they were less of a burden. At first not everyone agreed but the ideas were taken to the ward level meeting to see what other members of the community felt. Eventually they were able to convince people that this was an unnecessary burden. A decision was taken by the ward members to reduce the cost and a ward fund established for the more wealthy members of the community to donate to as an alternative. Through this process money for projects is now being raised.

Summary of email correspondence between Laxmi & Kiran and myself in April 2002

The above highlights how the Chalphal Kendra participants, after discussing issues at length, then felt able to discuss these issues in a wider forum. It also demonstrates that key words need to be understood in relation to their context and it is difficult to separate them from the process of discussion that underpins them. Participatory visualisation processes often facilitate the analytical process that leads to a decision being taken. Issues are discussed over a number of months and show that Chalphal Kendra is 'process orientated' rather than a 'quick fix' approach. As a result these actions can take time to emerge from the centres. The fact that the wider community supports ideas such as these represents a significant achievement for the Chalphal Kendra participants. Gaining such support has increased their confidence in taking other issues to public meetings developing a stronger sense of community and 'we feelings'.

The exclusion of members from the traditional occupational caste from Gurung households has been highlighted as a barrier to widening participation in evening classes. Within the study area this barrier was initially overcome by finding spaces where it was socially acceptable for people from different castes to gather, such as in rooms above storage areas or cattle sheds that were not physically attached to a Gurung household. In Parche the participants in the centre established by Bhadra Bir were all from the Nepali caste hence overcoming the problem as the centre ran in a room above one of the participant's houses. In the first year the Gurung participants in the Dhaprangthar Chalphal Kendra discussed this issue and selected the word 'samajdhi' (meeting hall) as one of their first key words. The facilitator, Ganga Maya Gurung, felt that *"by only discussing words in class Chalphal Kendra will not be a success. You need action from the groups"*. She goes on to explain that *"if the key word chosen is gambling then it would be good if they can stop gambling activities but only discussing this word in class will not be a success. You need action from the groups. In our group the key words we discussed was meeting hall and now one is being built"* (pers comm. April 1999). The suggestion of building a community hall was taken to the wider community in order to solve the problem of exclusion that prevented non-Gurungs from attending the Chalphal Kendras

Utilising the social map created in the Chalphal Kendra a number of sites were proposed for the construction of such a hall. Derelict houses were identified as well as open spaces. As the construction of a meeting hall would require substantial physical labour and financial input the discussion was taken to the ward meetings where it gained the support of the wider community. The idea was welcomed and members of the 'wider

community' contributed both their labour and finances to this project and the first meeting hall was built by April 2000 in Dhaprangthar (Photo 5.3).

Ganga Maya reports that *"ward people, leaders, the mothers group and ourselves were involved in this venture and ACAP also helped us. We finally completed it. The name of the newly built house was given samajdhi in our language, which means community house or social house. Untouchable participants were then freely allowed without any hesitation to come together with Gurung participants in the new house. This house is not only used for running the centre but also for ward gatherings, meetings and other social events take place here"* (pers comm. April 2000). The participants felt that building a Community Hall would unite the community and would show others what the Discussion Centre could achieve.

**Photo 5.3 Meeting hall in Dhaprangthar and the participants studying in the centre**



Since then meeting halls have also been constructed in Lamathar and Yangjakot, Chapatole. These meeting halls have enabled the wider participation of different groups in the Chalphal Kendra through creating a new space where people can come and meet, discuss ideas and develop their communication and literacy skills. They are also used for other occasions but have a strong sense of identity with the Chalphal Kendras and are used on a daily basis to run the centres. The construction of the meeting halls are largely responsible for the diversity of castes participating in the Chalphal Kendras and represent a very physical outcome of the whole process.

## **5.5 Reflections on exclusion**

It was noted in chapter one that issues of caste and exclusion are not as clear cut as they may seem due to the internal divisions within the Gurung community. Compared to other parts of Nepal the exclusion and social customs that relate to the traditional occupational castes in Sikles are not as extreme, though it is interesting to note that some

customs such as exclusion from the household and not sharing food or drink between castes has permeated into the Gurung culture. Many of the divisions and inequalities that exist are purely economic and in today's society are undergoing rapid change. However, equally important is the persistence of social customs, especially amongst the elder members of the Gurung community.

The construction of meeting halls has created a space whereby people from different groups can come together to meet and discuss local issues whilst at the same time developing their communication skills, be they verbal, written or visual. This can only be seen as a positive step towards promoting increased understanding and unity at the local level. It is interesting to note that the main language used within the centres is Nepali. Within the villages Gurung is mainly used in conversation yet because not all participants speak this fluently the centres have decided to use Nepali to avoid excluding people from the discussions. Participants have reported that as a result of this they have improved their capacity to discuss issues in Nepali, rather than their own Gurung language. Some women have cited this as one of the main benefits of the centres. It reinforces that participants and facilitators all learn together and all have their own capacities that they bring to the centres.

When the Meeting Halls were first established the participants naturally segregated themselves, Gurungs and non-Gurung sitting separately. This soon became a focus for discussion with key words such as 'society' and 'social status' being selected by different centres. Through discussing these issues it was decided that there was no reason for people to sit separately and the centres became more integrated. In the workshops attended by the facilitators<sup>184</sup> the social custom of not drinking tea or eating in the presence of a member of the 'untouchable caste' was discussed. Through discussing this issue the facilitators and other participants rejected this custom. As a result, in training and Monitoring and Evaluation workshops, the facilitators all sit, eat and drink together freely. These changes represent positive steps in behavioural change at the local level. However, caution is needed in making claims that the society as a whole has transformed as not all the changes noted above have transpired out of the space of the Chalpal Kendras as the following example demonstrates (Box 5.4). The example serves to highlight the difficulties in overcoming these social barriers and emphasises that it takes time for practices to change within the wider community. Although facilitators have

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<sup>184</sup> As noted earlier all but one of the facilitators were both female and Gurungs.

changed their individual behaviour it has not been as easy to change the behaviour of the wider society. In the main it is felt that the younger generations are more open to change and hold such practices in less regard, yet there is unease at offending the elder members of their family and community.

#### **Box 5.4 Serving tea - tensions and insights**

A training workshop was held in Sikles in 2002, attended by support workers (Laxmi & Kiran), Chalphal Kendra facilitators and participants as well as member from the wider community. Bhadra Bir Nepali, the facilitator from Parche, was the only person from the traditional occupational caste at the meetings. This is quite typical and reflects a lack of participation by the Dalit community in public meetings. Despite this he was very confident in sharing his opinions and his contributions were respected and valued by the other people present.

However, when it came to serving the refreshments, there was a sense of unease amongst the participants. This caused a delay in the tea being brought and people began to discuss what to do (ke garne?) as it is not 'socially acceptable' to eat in the presence of people from the Dalit community. Bhadra Bir remained seated waiting for his tea. And he waited, and waited ... until eventually one of the Chalphal Kendra facilitators, with some obvious unease, politely requested that Bhadra Bir leave the meeting so tea could be served. This caused an argument between the two people with Bhadra Bir commenting that if the facilitators of the centres could not change their attitudes then what hope was there for the rest of the society changing? Whilst agreeing with Bhadra Bir, the facilitator argued that it was a slow process and change would come step by step and eventually Bhadra Bir left the room and tea was served.

Interview Laxmi & Kiran Oct 2004

However in other parts of Nepal greater steps have been made in reducing caste discrimination through REFLECT (Shrivastav & Gautam 2001, CIRAC 2003, Phnuyal 2002, Education Network 2004). In October 1998, I observed a REFLECT circle in the Sapatari District where a similar process to that experience in Sikles had taken place. Initially women sat and ate separately on the verandas where the REFLECT circles took place. After participating in the circles and discussing this issue women began to both sit and more significantly eat and drink together. This occurred within a year of the circles establishing. However, more significantly was the fact that community ended the social custom of excluding people from the 'untouchable castes' from using water from the community taps around the village, meaning they had to travel out to the rivers to collect water and wash. This shows how the women's discussions had permeated into the local community and persuaded others that such practices were oppressive.

It is important to note that comparatively, there are fewer restrictions in Sikles on the traditional occupational castes. An example of this is that there is no restriction on Dalit

community members using the same water source<sup>185</sup>. However, this aside within the context of this study it must be noted that members of the traditional occupational castes are still excluded from Gurung households and although participants will sit together in the centres the invite is not extended into the household level. Changes in behaviour are very much restricted to the 'space' of the Chalphal Kendra as the above example demonstrates.

Within the study area Bhadra Bir reports that the Chalphal Kendra has played an important role in reducing the feeling of '*pidadyak*'<sup>186</sup> (panic, sadness and oppression) within the community in which he lives. Other participants in the study area have noted this and generally the Chalphal Kendra has improved understanding within the communities at the local level. As noted above the traditional occupational castes, gain prestige from their ability to speak in Nepali and the Gurung participants have commented on how they have benefited from this interaction. Overall, there are some changes noted in relation to caste discrimination especially within the spaces of the Chalphal Kendra but social barriers have not been fully overcome. The fact that a separate space is needed for the centres to run demonstrates that the Dalit community are still excluded from Gurung households. Time is needed for such customs to be challenged and overcome within the wider society. This is an area worthy of further investigation in the future and will form part of the study by Dhital (2005).

## **5.6 Reflections on autonomy and sustainability**

### **5.6.1 Formation of a CBO**

When the Discussion Centres were first formed within the Sikles sector the facilitators and participants devised a set of rules and regulations. However within Sikles during the training workshop at the start of the 3<sup>rd</sup> cycle facilitators felt that these were not being adhered to. They also felt that for the centres to be sustainable and more successful in implementing actions they needed to both formalise the process and draw upon the wider support within the community. As a result of these deliberations three management committees were established in Parche, Savathar and Gairithar in the village of Sikles. The facilitators of these centres fed back this information to other facilitators in the

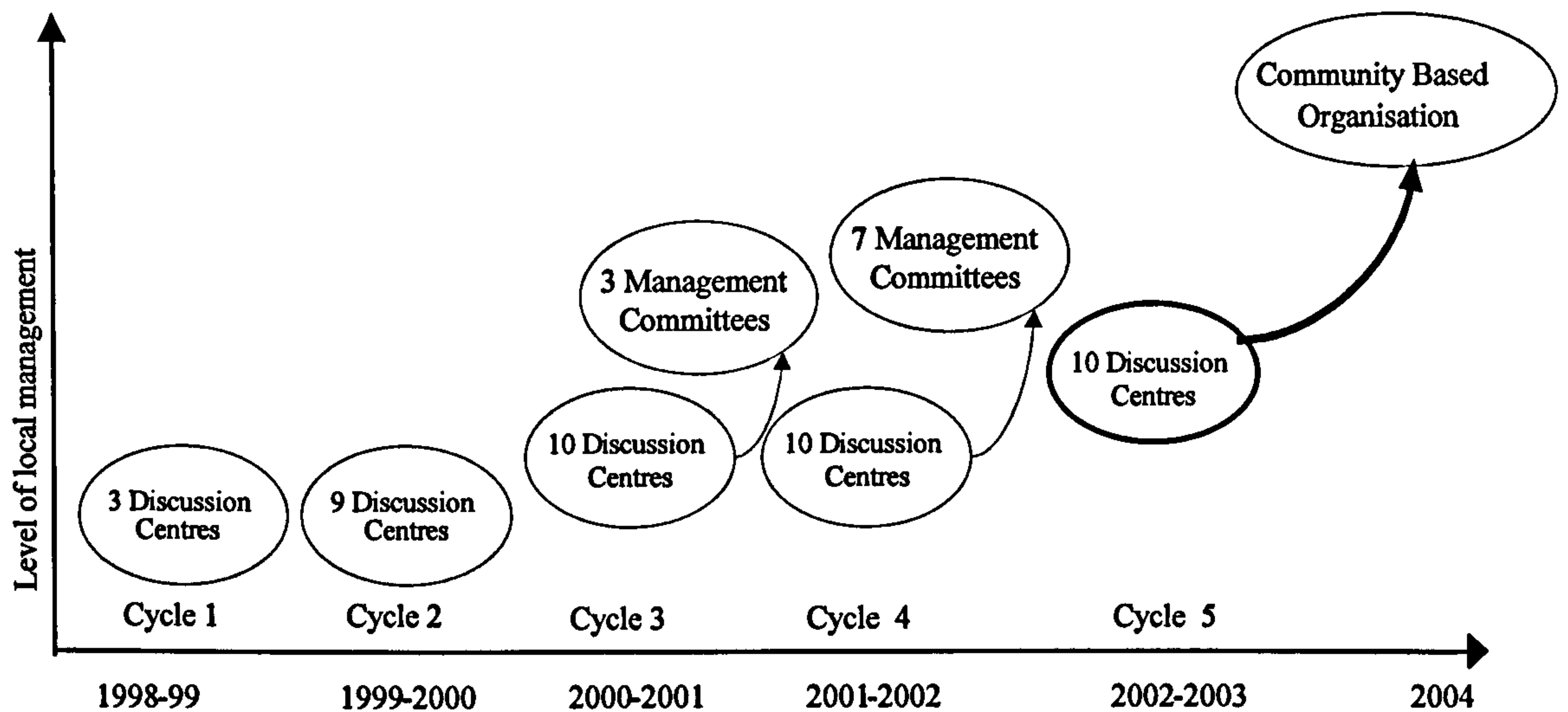
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<sup>185</sup> In some places in Sikles the use of taps may seem to be segregated according to caste but this is mainly due to the clustering of households from a particular group in a particular location. Gurung people will take water from these sources if they are passing by and non-Gurungs are not denied access to water in any area.

<sup>186</sup> There is no direct translation of this word and it was the source of much discussion between Laxmi, Kiran and myself as we tried to decide on the exact meaning.

Monitoring & Evaluation Workshop in May 2001. They felt the main benefit of these committees was engaging other members of their wards in supporting their initiatives. In the light of this other centres expressed an interest in forming such committees in their own wards and by November 2001 most centres had established a management committee (Diagram 5.6).

**Diagram 5.6 Overview of formation of Chalpal Kendra management committees**



Every management committee was responsible for providing the salaries for their facilitators and organising logistical issues such as provision of material for the centres. The aims and objectives of the Management Committees were defined at the start of Cycle 4 in the training workshop in September 2001. The participants in the workshop drew up a list of responsibilities for the Management Committees that included supervising the centres, providing logistical support such as arranging rooms and providing salaries for the centres, reviewing and checking attendance of the facilitators and participants, and helping to initiate and support decisions that emerged from the Chalpal Kendras (Dhital & Bohara 2001a).

The establishment of these committees demonstrates that local people, facilitators participants and the wider society were beginning to take control and ownership of the Chalpal Kendra and were keen to increase autonomy at the local level. It is interesting to note how the process draws upon the wider community and in particular draws upon the male members of the community<sup>187</sup>. This decision was a strategic one and as a result

<sup>187</sup> See Appendix 5.7 for an example of a management committee.



there was an increasing level of involvement from the wider community in Chalphal Kendra initiatives.

The success of the new management committees led to the formation of a Community Based Organisation which was seen as vital to increasing the financial and logistical sustainability of the Chalphal Kendra process. A Committee was formed in 2001 in order to start this procedure. The participants in the workshop requested the support of Laxmi and Kiran in the formation of the Community Based Organisation. In particular they felt they needed support in registering such an organisation with the appropriate government offices and providing technical support in the formation and initial cycles of the Community Based Organisation. Laxmi and Kiran were both interested in supporting this initiative as they had been involved in the Discussion Centres for three years and were keen to see an increase in the local level management of the project and ultimately saw the formation of a CBO as enabling the project to become sustainable and less dependent upon their input.

Laxmi herself felt that after three years there was an urgent need to increase the capacity at the local level to manage the project as the following feedback from her, demonstrates:-

*"we need to pay our attention not only to encourage them to discuss, reading/writing and undertake joint activities, but our efforts should be on shifting the technical capacity and managerial skills to the management committees as well as to the concerned bodies. The concept of management committee is not very new but a lot of efforts and direct technical support is needed to make strength the committee from the sustainability point of view. This year (Cycle 4), in my opinion our efforts should be on empowering management committee through providing technical knowledge to run centres by themselves, establishing their linkage with other institutions like District Development Committee, Village Development Committee, ACAP and others. Likewise, it is also necessary to equip them with skills on how to settle disputes, use of authority and fulfilling obligations and bargaining with other institutions on the related issues. Also fund raising for centres and social activities is necessary from the sustainability point of view. The Ama Toli Management Committee, participants and even the facilitators should know the tools and techniques to raise fund to sustain the centres. The community needed very close guidance, knowledge, exposure and support from us to achieve the mentioned changes." (pers. comm. Laxmi email Dec 2001)*

Laxmi and Kiran began to hand over many of the logistical roles that they had previously undertaken to the local level Management Committees. They began to focus more on facilitating the formation of a Community Based Organisation. They worked with local committees to ensure they had the technical knowledge to run the centres smoothly and stressed the importance of linking into local level structures and organizations to generate

wider support from within the community for the Discussion Centres and their activities. This transference of power and control to the local level is vital for the success of the CBO to operate in the long term.

To progress this idea further the VDC chairperson, OIC of ACAP Sikles, social workers and representatives from the mothers group were invited to the Monitoring & Evaluation Workshop held in May 2002. The main reasons for forming a CBO were recorded as: firstly, wanting to institutionalise the process of REFLECT; secondly, a desire to enhance the sustainability of the programme; thirdly, to foster linkages between Chalphal Kendra and other institutions (such as VDC, DDC, ACAP and potential donors) to enable funds to be raised at the local level through fund raising activities and finally, to enable the Chalphal Kendra to start to launch other programmes like income generation, further literacy programmes and other relevant activities (Dhital & Bohara 2002). Further, by registering as a CBO they could have an official bank account in which to deposit funds.

These reasons highlight the importance of engaging the wider community in the Chalphal Kendra and stress the need for linkages to be developed if the programme is to become sustainable. This is important not only from a financial point of view<sup>188</sup> but also with respect to developing autonomy at the local level. By forming the CBO local ownership is taken and a sense of identity is created beyond each individual Chalphal Kendra. A membership fee system was devised to raise funds for the CBO with a general membership fee at a nominal 10 rupees and life membership at Rps 500. More importantly the registration of a CBO would enable a bank account to be opened, formal recognition to the work of the Chalphal Kendra and also legitimacy as a fund raising body. Further money raised at the local level could be deposited in the account and hence widen the work of the Chalphal Kendra beyond the ward boundaries they currently work in.

Expanding the programme is also seen to be an important aspect of the CBO. The working area for the CBO was defined as the Kaski District including the districts of Parche, Thumako Danda, Namarjung, and Sindujure Village Development Committees. This represents an expansion of the activities of the Chalphal Kendra from two VDCs to five out of the seven VDCs in the Sikles sector of the ACAP (Map 1.1 Chapter 1: 8). The focus of the organisation would be to work with Women's Groups, Dalit Groups

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<sup>188</sup> This is an important consideration as the funds from UWCSEA are being phased out in line with criteria that all projects demonstrate the ability to sustain themselves.

(especially farmers who are dependent on traditional agriculture) and Farmers Group (dependent only on agriculture). It was also decided that an office should be established in Parche VDC in Sikles. In order to register the CBO with the district administration office in Kaski an ad hoc committee was formed. Laxmi Dhital was also invited to be on the committee and asked to help prepare the constitution for the CBO. Political instability in Nepal and a lengthy bureaucratic process meant that it took a year to actually register the CBO officially with the District Development Office in Pokhara. The efforts of Laxmi, Kiran and the VDC Chairman from Sikles played a vital role in this process. The 'Madikhola Women Development Organisation' (MWDO)<sup>189</sup> was formally registered at the District Administration Office in Pokhara on May 30<sup>th</sup> 2003. Headed paper, receipts and identity cards have been produced (Diagram 5.7).

**Diagram 5.7 Headed paper of MWDO showing logo and registration number**

Regd. No. 1170/059/060

Phone: 061-5-29336



**मादीखोला महिला विकास संघ**  
**MADIKHOLA WOMEN DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION**

सिक्लेस, कास्की-२०६०  
 Sikles, Kaski-2060

Ref. No.

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A SWOT analysis, completed by Laxmi and Kiran in September 2004, identified the main barrier to the Chalphal Kendra as being the lack of funding<sup>190</sup>. To date the process has depended upon funding from UWCSEA Global Concerns Committee. Producing newsletters and a video has been vital in communicating the outcomes of Chalphal Kendra to the funding body. Unlike other Global Concerns projects, no students from UWCSEA have visited the Chalphal Kendra, in the main due to political unrest. The conditions under which the funds were secured stated that the funding stream would be phased out, over a 3 to 5 year period, in order to ensure the project became sustainable at the local level. The exact time period was never fully qualified and on an annual basis reports have been sent and a bid made to the committee. Students at UWCSEA

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<sup>189</sup> A variety of names were proposed for the organisation including, the Annapurna welfare organisation, Sikles human welfare organisation, Madi Khola association of women development, Madi active social union and Annapurna creative society. Initially the name "Madikhola Creative Women's Association (MaCWA)" was chosen but this was changed in January 2003 to Madhikhola Women Development Organisation (MWDO). The acronym MWDO gives the meaning of pilgrimage to the sacred temple in Sikles where a three-day celebration takes place every year and the participants wanted to reflect this local celebration in their title.

<sup>190</sup> See Appendix 5.8 SWOT by Laxmi & Kiran Sept 2004.

essentially run the project and each year a different student has been responsible for presenting the bid to the committee. My only contact with these students has been through email. I have had to build up a rapport and explain who I am, the aims of the project and report back on the outcomes of the Chalphal Kendra on an annual basis. This has taken time on my part yet has to date been a worthwhile investment.

In the summer of 2002 however, the communication between myself and the representative broke down, delays in emailing and confusion about who to email led to a key deadline for bidding for funds being missed. The repercussions of this were quite severe as in attempting to send all the information to the correct person it was felt that I was sending too much information<sup>191</sup>. The students were almost alienated by this process and a flurry of email correspondence in January 2003 eventually resolved the situation<sup>192</sup>. A proposal was approved for funding to be sent and for this to be phased out over a 3-year period, reducing the funding by 50% each time. This scenario demonstrates how dependent the process is on the funding agency. It also stresses the importance of maintaining effective lines of communication. Failing to do so created unease at the local level as the centres were running with no funds and the facilitators were concerned as to whether they would be paid.

The problem of ongoing funding was further heightened by the lack of resources available from the VDC and also by the withdrawal of ACAP from the area due to political unrest. In January 2003, a ceasefire was announced and the CBO was almost registered yet there were few opportunities for alternative sources of income. The pressure from UWCSEA to demonstrate sustainability came at a very challenging time for the project (see email correspondence in Appendix 4.6). It is important to note that the projects initiated by Chalphal Kendras have been implemented with funds raised at the local level. This demonstrates the ability of the Chalphal Kendra, and now CBO, to raise funds and to engage the wider community in their initiatives. In 2003 the CBO organised an event to celebrate Women's Day (previously organised by ACAP). Participation levels of women in this event were higher than in previous years and the event was seen to be a great achievement<sup>193</sup>.

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<sup>191</sup> As the new person was unaware of the project I sent past information and background detail as well as reporting on progress made in the past year.

<sup>192</sup> This involved emails between two teachers at UWCSEA, my key contact on the Global Concerns committee, Laxmi & Kiran and myself. Laxmi and Kiran in Kathmandu had to visit Sikles to gather some information about funding provided for projects undertaken.

<sup>193</sup> See Appendix 5.9 for photos of this event.

### **5.6.2 Participation in the CBO**

The previous reflections on the toilet-building project in Sikles (Box 2.1: 28) provided insight into the domination of certain members of the community in initiating community development projects. Questions were raised over the level of participation in some of the activities at the local level. Due to the number of visits made to Sikles, including my time spent living there, it became evident to me that within each ward there are a few active people. These people would seek me out to share their ideas and concerns with me and were generally regarded within the wider community as 'active' or 'socially motivated' people. My observations in my field diary of the Environment Day Celebrations organised in December 1997 serve to illuminate this point: *"The day has been celebrated in the field surrounding the ACAP office and it seems as if the whole village has come to participate in the activities. In the main they are all sitting along the embankments watching the games and competitions that have been organised by ACAP. During a game of musical chairs I noted it was the same women who had just taken part in the previous activity. When I looked at the faces of these women I realised that they are the same faces that 'participate' in many of the other events I have witnessed over the past few years. It is the same people playing the same games whilst others sit and look on. Everyone is enjoying the day and maybe they don't want to participate but it is interesting to note how certain people, both men and women seem to dominate in these community gatherings"* (Field notes Dec 1997). Some of these same women were selected to be facilitators in the Chalphal Kendras.

The selection process at the local level is inevitably affected by the social context and although criteria such as education, awareness and a genuine interest in running a centre are all part of this process other factors such as kinship and social networks will come into play. This ties in with debates surrounding the 'myth of the community'. Far from being a homogenous democratic entity communities are embedded within complex relationships based on gender, caste, clan, age and kinship. Within the CBO a number of people on the committee could be referred to as 'the usual suspects'. In the initial ad hoc committees only two out of the ten members were women and only one member was from the traditional occupational caste. The person from the traditional occupational caste had previously been a representative on the ACAP's CAMC demonstrating how dominant actors permeate all caste groups. Minutes from Ad Hoc Committee meetings presented at the evaluation workshops highlight a tendency towards political leaders, local teachers and social workers being key members of these organisations. The initial two people trained in REFLECT were also included on this committee. Due to the political situation, and subsequent migration of key males from the village, the CBO

committee has had to be reformed. This has resulted in more women being on the committee and less of the 'usual suspects'. It will be interesting to review the situation at a future date when the political situation is hopefully less fragile.

### **5.6.3 Changing political context**

Although the People's War was declared in 1996 it was not until 2001, following the State of Emergency, that the impacts really began to be felt within the study area<sup>194</sup>. The insurgency in Nepal has had a number of impacts upon the experience of Chalphal Kendra (Parker, Dhital & Bohara 2004) and the research process that underpins this thesis. Whilst the current situation has not prevented the centres from running it has changed the atmosphere surrounding them. Centres find it is less easy to run on a daily basis due to the fear of being caught between the government and Maoists<sup>195</sup>. Many people say they feel like they are sandwiched between the security forces and the Maoists and have no sense of trust and personal security. There is a general fear of travelling within the village late at night. Centres have continued to run up to the present date but this cannot be guaranteed if the situation stays the same or worsens.

Political unrest has also posed challenges to the functioning of the CBO. According to one member *"since we established the CBO, we haven't done any major activities. It is due to the situation of conflict in the country"* (participant interview August 2004). Many of the CBO members (male) have relocated to Pokhara until the conflict is resolved. The CBO has needed to reform so that it can continue to function effectively without these key members. Another CBO member points out that *"the CBO has just established and we are just in a learning period to run the CBO. However, the REFLECT centres are running on behalf of our CBO. We are also making coordination with other organizations in a organizational level"* (interview August 2004).

Instability has been cited by many people as being the main barrier to the success of the CBO. The CBO members are even afraid to put up the sign of the CBO in the local village in case it attracts undue attention or even attack. Although such an event has not occurred the fear of these reprisals is impacting at the local level. One of the community leaders feels that *"normally the Maoists attack those organizations that are running without*

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<sup>194</sup> See Section 2.1.1.2 and Appendix 2.1 for details (Chapter 2: 19).

<sup>195</sup> Although no-one to my knowledge has been abducted in the Sikles area to date, the fear due to media coverage of Maoists activities is very real in the minds of the people.

*transparency. REFLECT centres are running their programmes through the local people in transparent way. If the programme loses the transparency then they will be more vulnerable to being attacked from either side*” (interview Aug 2004). Hence everyone is very aware of the need to be open and honest about the aims and objectives as well as the activities of the centres.

Political unrest is also impacting on the ability of the CBO to meet one of its core objectives, that of establishing links with other institutions and raising funds. Firstly the Government has suspended the VDC funds that are normally available<sup>196</sup>. Secondly the ACAP has withdrawn from the Sikles sector, and in fact the whole southern sector, as due to its links to the Monarchy, it was targeted by Maoist activity and staff were requested to leave. Finally, tourists and other visitors to Sikles have significantly dropped leaving the Ama Toli and Chalphal Kendra with no opportunity to raise funds by performing<sup>197</sup>. However, despite these barriers, in the past year the CBO has managed to function albeit it under constrained circumstances (Parker, Dhital & Bohara 2004).

## **5.7 Lessons from the process**

The aim here is to reflect upon the experience of engaging in action-oriented research in order to draw out the wider lessons and issues. This includes reflecting upon my initial decision to get involved, examining the impact of the decision to reduce my visits to Nepal and the impact of the changing political situation on the research process, assessing the importance of and implications of utilising support workers in the research process, and considering other factors such as funding implications, lack of support from ACAP and the wider ethical considerations. This critical reflection is essential in order to draw out the wider issues from my experience of action-oriented research.

### **5.7.1 The first challenge - getting involved with REFLECT**

My reservations at ‘getting involved’ have been outlined previously. In 1998, I was neither in the position to, nor had the inclination to become, a benefactor and was unsure if I could actually help to facilitate the introduction of REFLECT into the study area. My concerns were dispelled to some extent through reading texts such as Burkey (1993),

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<sup>196</sup> Since the State of Emergency was declared in 2002 funds being channelled to the local level via the VDC system have dwindled, especially in the more remote areas of Nepal. Usually there is 500,000 Rupees (approx. £5,000) distributed to the local VDC Chairman for village development initiatives.

<sup>197</sup> Singing and dancing for visitors is a major source of income for the Ama Toli and this is a significant blow to the programme.

Rahman (1993) and Carmen (1996). As discussed in Chapter 4, I envisaged a role acting as an interlocutor despite the potential pitfalls of engaging in such a complex process (Rahman 1992). My desire to succeed in this role and concern over the potential pitfalls<sup>198</sup> has provided an immense source of motivation in engaging in the process of introducing and supporting REFLECT in the Sikles sector. The unconventional nature of my relationship with the field and the longitudinal nature of the study lends itself to being action-oriented.

My knowledge of REFLECT, as I understood it in 1998, influenced my original research as it seemed to offer an ideal model for resolving some of the concerns that emerged from my preliminary research (Chapter 2). It provided me with a solution that was not only logistically feasible but was also ideologically compatible with my beliefs. Ultimately I was employed as a full time lecturer at Liverpool John Moores University and had neither the knowledge nor the skills to personally introduce REFLECT into the study area. However, my position and previous research enabled me to develop the contacts that made this a reality.

My strong links to the stakeholders at the local level, especially in Sikles and Parche, played a vital role in the success of this process. This was underpinned by my experience of living in Sikles and visits between 1995 and 1998. The time spent with friends and key informants proved to be invaluable in developing my understanding of both the communities in the area and the issues that they felt were important. My connection to the village of Sikles gave me access to a wider spectrum of people and my frequent visits enabled the people to respond to my interpretations of events and issues. It was through these visits that a dialogue began. However, whilst I am not viewed as being an external expert or an outsider neither can I claim that I am seen as an insider or a local. My unique relationship with Nepal has been both rewarding and also challenging.

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<sup>198</sup> Ranging from not being able to secure any funding to support the process through to avoiding dependent relations developing, as well as the impact it has inevitably had on how I am viewed in Sikles. I am no longer Sara the ex-volunteer teacher but Sara the person who 'brought' REFLECT to Sikles.



## **5.7.2 To visit or not to visit**

### *5.7.2.1 Distancing myself from the field*

My reluctance and concerns over becoming 'involved in the field' were noted in Chapter 4. I was extremely uncomfortable with the prospect of a dependent relationship developing between the project and myself. I did not wish to become that which I critiqued (Chapter 4: 138). This led to the decision to reduce my visits to Nepal and ensure that a local system of monitoring and evaluation was established and included in funding proposals. This decision has had both negative and positive impacts. On the positive side facilitators have been engaged in an annual process of training and evaluation workshops that has ensured local level evaluation has taken place. Laxmi, Kiran and staff from Education Network have supported this process. Reports have been produced which belong to the Chalphal Kendra and plans have been developed on this basis. I have engaged in correspondence via email in order to obtain this information and have entered into dialogue with Laxmi and Kiran to clarify issues as and when needed. Through digesting this information, writing a research bid and sending it back to the field for confirmation I have then entered into email dialogue with the funding agency in Singapore.

In the initial stages REFLECT was inevitably seen as 'Sara Parker's Project' as I was the one who secured funding and helped develop contacts between the local people, funding agent, training providers and the support workers. I hoped that over time, by not visiting Nepal, this association would dwindle. During my four visits to Nepal in the initial stages of the Chalphal Kendra (between October 1998 and April 2000) it was evident that people thought that the project was linked to me and that I was funding it. This was despite my explanations that the funding came from Singapore. My name always appeared on the reports produced by the Chalphal Kendra as either the organiser or the benefactor of REFLECT<sup>199</sup>. I constantly had to ask Laxmi and Kiran to remove my name or at least refer to me as a supporter. During the workshop I attended in January 2004 I thanked everyone for their support and asked them to keep up the good work. I explained my role to them again and asked them to please not put my name in such big letters on their reports, as I am not a '*thulo manche*' (big/important person). I concluded by saying this is your programme and you should be proud of it and that I had only played a small

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<sup>199</sup> Often in large bold font!

part it in the process. I also stressed that where possible I was happy to continue to provide any support that was requested.

My unease in being framed in this role however needs to be deconstructed and the question asked why was I so uncomfortable with this label? I had tried to physically distance myself from the project by not visiting Nepal so often (ibid.: 142). Despite this in the imaginations of the people in Sikles in particular, where I am well known, I am linked to the project although everyone is fully aware that the funds come from Singapore. However, due to a number of factors, most recently being the insurgency, no students from Singapore have visited Sikles of the Chalphal Kendra. This has meant that, unlike other projects supported by UWCSEA<sup>200</sup>, I am the main point of contact with Singapore and naturally this leaves me as the 'face of REFLECT'. Being the person that most people associate with REFLECT emphasises the significant role that I play in linking the funding agency to the local level.

My concern over how I am viewed was heightened after reading an article in a local Nepali newspaper<sup>201</sup> about the Chalphal Kendra in Sikles. The article was called 'Women (mothers) are becoming judges themselves (Appendix 5.10). This article was based on the journalist's visits and conversations with people in Sikles at the Women's Day Celebration organised by the Madikhola Women Development Organization (MWDO) in March 2004. It gave the impression that the CBO's main role, and also the Chalphal Kendra, was to enable women to solve local disputes and that the REFLECT centre is everything as a 'court bench and witness box' (Appendix 5.10). It went on to state that the REFLECT centre had been established with the help of Ms Sara Parker, and later stated that I had "encouraged the women about the task which they had to perform" and that I had "also taught them about the health and sanitation". I felt very misrepresented in the article and was concerned that Laxmi and Kiran, as well as the facilitators, were so happy to see the project gaining coverage in the national press. Through interviewing Laxmi & Kiran in September 2004 it became evident that they too were confused at the manner in which both the REFLECT aims and objectives, and also my role in the process, had been

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<sup>200</sup> When UWCSEA funded the building of the new modern high school in the village staff and students would visit on an annual basis and ex-students would volunteer to teach in the school after completing the International Baccalaureate. Indeed I was one of these ex students! It was through reading about the experience of an ex-student that I came to hear about Sikles in the first places (as discussed in Box 1.1). When official visitors came from UWCSEA the whole village would join in to show their gratitude and elaborate ceremonies would take place to mark the occasion.

<sup>201</sup> This article appeared in the *Janadharana Vernacular Weekly Newspaper* on July 22<sup>nd</sup> 2004. Kiran translated it for me and sent it to me via email.

portrayed. They felt this was more due to the journalistic skills of the author rather than a view that was held at the local level. A further article has appeared which is more balanced and representative (Bhadgaule 2004). The author has contacted me in relation to my input to the project. It is important that I engage in these dialogues in order to ensure that my actions are not misrepresented in any way.

In discussing these issues with Laxmi and Kiran during their stay in the UK in 2004, it was interesting to note that they seemed almost bemused that I was so 'hung up' about being associated with the Chalphal Kendra<sup>202</sup>. They explained how they were proud and excited to be working in the project and felt that I should feel the same way. I explained how I too am personally very proud of my links to Sikles and as they know I am passionate about my research. I encouraged them to critically reflect on my role and explained how such insights would be useful to my thesis. The main criticism they had was that I did not go to all the evaluation workshops as they felt that my presence, rather than negatively impacting on the proceedings, enthused the facilitators and made them happy! To some extent this helped reinforce my decision not to go as I felt it was important that the focus of the workshops was on local people and local needs rather than providing an opportunity for facilitators to share their experiences with me. This thesis now turns to explore the impact of the political unrest in Nepal on my research process.

### **5.7.3 Changing political and personal circumstances**

Whilst the decision not to visit was primarily based on concerns over potential dependent relations developing my changing personal circumstances were also significant (ibid.: 131). Becoming a mother whilst working full time and completing my thesis on a part time basis presented challenges. In relation to visiting Nepal the decision to visit became a family rather than personal decision<sup>203</sup>.

During a field visit in December 2003, political unrest, coupled with the fact that my family accompanied me, prevented me from visiting Sikles in person. Whilst I recognised the value of such a visit, and personally was very keen to visit, I was advised by friends from Kathmandu, Pokhara and Sikles not to go. The main fear was that we might get

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<sup>202</sup> This was in response to me trying to elicit from them some of the negative impacts of me being involved in the project, such as issues of dependency and questions I have been contemplating such as who am I and why am I involved in supporting REFLECT in Nepal.

<sup>203</sup> My changing circumstances resulted in me delaying a planned visit to Nepal in April 2003 until December of that year.

caught between the security forces and potential Maoists. It was common knowledge that if stopped by Maoists we would be under no physical threat but it was more than likely that we would be asked to make a donation to the cause. The risk was more related to the fact that we could get caught in the crossfire between the Army and Maoists. If I had been 'young free and single' this was a risk I would have been willing to take. As a mother travelling with my children it was not. I addressed this constraint by organising a workshop in Pokhara and endeavoured to meet as many people as I could in Pokhara. Despite the inconvenience, the facilitators travelled down to meet me to participate in a one-day workshop. The exchange of ideas during this workshop was useful and helped me to develop my understanding further. It provided a forum for me to feedback the conclusions I had started to draw and enabled me to reconfirm the consent given to use names within my thesis and other publications. They were all very confident in speaking in the meeting, even the ones who had not met me, and Laxmi and Kiran demonstrated their skill in facilitating workshops.

I met other people in Pokhara yet these encounters were both short and uncomfortable I noted in my diary "*I saw {name} today and it felt so weird to see her outside of her usual setting. She did not look happy as she is now living in Pokhara and is missing living in the village. The usual conversations felt stilted and for the first time I felt like she was looking for some help in some way.... It just didn't seem right*" (Diary, January 2004). Similarly after meeting another friend in the hotel I was staying at I noted "*seeing {name} today was so bizarre I felt as though we could not speak openly as we were sitting overlooking the lake drinking tea. It is unusual to meet people out of their everyday setting and he seemed drawn and tired. I had so many questions I'd have liked to ask but just didn't feel like I could. We talked about the political situation but again I did not want to press him for details. It was not the same as sitting round his fire sharing food and stories like we usually do. At one point he commented rather sceptically "you see Sara nowadays so many people are living abroad, working for money. Money can buy you everything, yes everything..."*". [This exchange of words may not seem that strange but the sadness and tone of his voice highlighted his concern over the situation]. I noted in my diary that "*I needed to have asked him more key questions really but it didn't seem appropriate as we were sitting in a very public place and time was relatively short. I guess overall I see him more as a friend than a 'key informant' and it just didn't feel right to press him for any more information.*" (Extracts from field diary January 2004).

These reflections serve to highlight the change in atmosphere that I noted between my visits in April 2000 and January 2004, in the main due to the insurgency. If I had visited

Nepal during this period maybe these changes would have been less stark. My experience also highlights the importance of being in spaces where all participants feel comfortable and have a sense of belonging. In general, we all felt more at ease and at home in the village that we did in Pokhara. The political situation served to heighten this issue. I have acknowledged the importance of just 'hanging out' in my previous research in Chapter 4, but had not fully considered how these exchanges would have differed if they had not been in the home or local surroundings of the person with whom I was talking<sup>204</sup>. I had noted a difference in interactions in space with relation to the issue of caste but had not considered the public-private dimension of my interactions with people from within a caste and also the significance of the political situation on the ease of these interactions.

Although I reduced my visits to Nepal in the second half of the main research period they remained integral to the research process. Whilst visiting Nepal the value of directly experiencing the Chalphal Kendras, albeit as an 'external observer', was extremely evident. During the visit in 2004, being able to speak face to face with the facilitators provided an opportunity to both present my conclusions and reflections on my interpretation of the Chalphal Kendra experience and also to discuss issues in more depth. This visit helped me to clarify the information that I had been receiving from Laxmi and Kiran. It also enabled me to talk about the formation of the CBO and explore the impact of the changing political situation. According to Laxmi and Kiran the visit also served to motivate the facilitators, as they were all enthusiastic and excited after the meeting. Being unable to visit Sikles in 2004 due to the Maoist insurgency was a missed opportunity to gain more insight at the local level. I would, for example, have liked to visit the centre in Parche to see if the participants were more confident in speaking in front of me, to visit the centres and see the material on the walls for myself instead of relying upon photos and to talk to the wider community to explore their opinions in person. If my thesis were focusing purely on critically examining levels of empowerment, exclusion and inclusion these visits would have been essential. Overall, on reflection I stand by my decision to visit the field less frequently once the Chalphal Kendras were established. Whilst I acknowledge the importance of personal interaction and the

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<sup>204</sup> I had noted during a trip in April 1996 how an ex-student and friend had seemed so confident and big in his own community, despite the fact he was only 20, yet when accompanying me to Pokhara after my visit to Sikles he seemed different, quieter, less confident and smaller even. I was aware of the importance of place on a person's position, as in Sikles he was a '*thulo manche*' and a key contact and point of entry into many places whereas in Pokhara I took on this role. The impact of place on interactions however was more stark in 2004 due to the changed political atmosphere.

importance of the visit in December 2003 I feel I have gained a comprehensive insight into the process through the methods employed.

An inevitable consequence of not visiting Nepal was that it left me highly dependent upon Laxmi and Kiran. I was totally dependent upon their ability and commitment to send me information that was generated, reporting on progress following their visits to Sikles and answering any questions. They were also responsible for sending me reports generated by the workshops. This had financial implications for the funding of the project but also was a high-risk strategy. Due to the skills and reliability of Laxmi and Kiran it is one that has paid off (see discussion below). The exchange of information and ideas has only been possible due to the efficiency and speed of email. It has been totally reliant on the ability of the facilitators to both keep records of participation, key words and visual material generated as well as their capacity to evaluate their experiences in the Monitoring and Evaluation workshops. It is to the experience of working with others that this thesis now turns.

#### ***5.7.4 Working with others- support network***

The support provided by Laxmi and Kiran has proved to be invaluable at two levels. Firstly, they have provided crucial logistical and moral support to the Chalphal Kendra facilitators, participants and other interested parties such as the CBO members. Secondly, they have always been reliable and professional in corresponding with me on a regular basis. Finally they have proved to be committed and enthusiastic 'educational activists' and have used their knowledge and skills to support the Chalphal Kendra process. In doing so they have developed new links, taken opportunities to participate in workshops and training courses and have also applied their new knowledge to their own graduate studies. In addition to this the support provide by Hitman in the initial stages played an important role in feeding back the information and starting the process of REFLECT.

In the initial stages of REFLECT (1998 – 2000) Laxmi regularly accompanied me to Sikles. This enabled me to develop my ideas and deepen my knowledge as my experiences were enriched by her translation and facilitation skills. I learnt from just observing Laxmi and the manner in which she interacts with the local people. She treats all people with respect and as equals. Whilst neither my Nepali nor Laxmi's English is perfect we have established a good rapport between us over the years. Although I can follow many

conversations in Nepali it is difficult to engage fully in these conversations as they often involve many people, especially when they are participatory in nature, and the interchange is very rapid<sup>205</sup>. Following the banter and joking amongst a group of Chalphal Kendra participants can be challenging to Nepalese people, such as Laxmi and Kiran, as often elements of Gurung are brought into the conversations. At times we have recorded conversations but due to the nature and length of them this has not always been practical. Time has been spent cross checking my notes with the recollections of Laxmi in order to iron out any confusion. Kiran's support has also been appreciated and his translation skills<sup>206</sup> have proved invaluable. It has also added an extra dimension to the support team. Like Laxmi, Kiran has become committed and enthused by the work they have done in Sikles. Although they are both the same age, Laxmi is actually Kiran's aunty and this relationship has enabled them to work effectively in Sikles as an unmarried couple. Whilst they were initially teased in Sikles for being 'baun<sup>207</sup>' (high caste) through their interactions in the study area they have become an important source of support for the Chalphal Kendra. Laxmi at one time was requested to be a member of the CBO.

Neither Laxmi, Kiran nor I speak Gurung, apart from to exchange brief greetings and gratitude for any refreshments provided<sup>208</sup>. However Laxmi & Kiran feel that not speaking Gurung has played a part in encouraging participants and facilitators to speak in Nepali. This has also been noted as important for the traditional occupational caste, who have limited use of the Gurung language. Initially when Kiran entered the field the women would speak in Gurung, obviously questioning who he was and what relation he was to Laxmi. This was good natured banter however, and Kiran notes how through him using a few simple Gurung words this soon stopped. Laxmi and Kiran's interactions in the study area have also been influenced by their gender with Kiran noting that he feels closer to Bhadra Bir, the only male facilitator, than the other women as he has spent more

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<sup>205</sup> My Nepali is based very much on conversational Nepali at the village level being informal in manner and that most commonly used within rural Nepal. I am a 'gaunko keti' (village girl) and struggle to keep up with the more formal use of Nepali used for example by the teachers in the school in Sikles as a sign of authority. I can hold conversations with Laxmi speaking Nepali and me English to the extent that I often don't realise she is not speaking English to me. I can read letters and write words, though slowly, and this has proved invaluable in making connections to people I don't know and in clarifying words where I am unclear of the meaning. Through writing it down in Nepali I can then check the exact meaning in a dictionary or with other people, as some words do not translate easily between the languages.

<sup>206</sup> Kiran has excellent written and spoken English in part due to his education in an English speaking boarding school.

<sup>207</sup> Kiran and Laxmi recall how people tease them saying they were too high caste to sleep and eat in their homes. The fact they acted naturally and with respect in the village soon led them to becoming accepted and valued by the Chalphal Kendra participants and wider community.

<sup>208</sup> Most importantly we know how to say that the food is delicious yet we are full and have had enough in Gurung as the women in the Sikles sector are renowned for being very hospitable to their guests. Refusing food is almost impossible regardless of the time of day or even state of your own personal health.

time discussing issues with him (interview Sept 2004). These reflections serve to highlight the multi-layered and complex nature of interaction in the field.

Despite my best efforts to get Laxmi and Kiran to critically assess my role in the REFLECT process, one of the few limitations they can come up with is that I didn't visit the centres on a regular (i.e. annual) basis. They felt that my visits to Nepal served as an inspiration to the women and motivated them to be active in their work. To some extent their lack of willingness to be critical of me is understandable as our relationship and friendship is framed within the context where I have played a crucial role in their securing the job supporting REFLECT and also played an important part in securing their trip to the UK. Through encouraging their participation in the CERID exchange visit and by stressing the value of us presenting a joint paper in Brighton, funds, and more importantly a visa, were acquired to facilitate the visit in 2004. This visit went some way to addressing the fact that I am in a position where visiting Nepal is relatively easy, whereas they are not easily able to visit the UK. More importantly it also provided valuable time and space for us to share our ideas and begin to work on joint publications (Bohara, Dhital & Parker 2005, Parker, Dhital & Bohara 2004).

The support provided by Laxmi and Kiran has resulted in other benefits such as providing a link between the Chalphal Kendra and REFLECT practitioners at the National level. Through the involvement of Education Network in the Monitoring and Evaluation workshops an important link has been established that will be vital to the future experience of the Chalphal Kendra. Through this link Laxmi and Kiran have shared the experiences and lessons they have learnt from REFLECT in the Sikles sector with the wider community of REFLECT practitioners in Nepal. As a result of this in March 2003 two facilitators from Sikles attended the National REFLECT workshop to share their experiences in person. Laxmi reports *"this time we just supported them and they came to the frontline and presented the matters. IT WAS AMAZING!!! All participants were interested to listen and know from them. These two facilitators took place as the chief guests of the workshop! They made everyone spellbound sharing their efforts in the programme and changes through REFLECT. They shared how they started, how they involved the local community in the programme and how they have formed their own networking group as an NGO and the support mechanism. The participants of the workshop were all very interested too visit Sikles to and learn from the local people"* (pers comm. Laxmi email March 2003). This example highlights two important issues; the development of support networks at the national level which may prove useful to the CBO in future years and also the importance of forums where local



facilitators and participants can tell their own story. Further it demonstrates the value of email in maintaining a dialogue between Laxmi, Kiran and myself.

The emails sent over the research period generated a wealth of information. Some of the issues raised that were personal or sensitive were removed from the analysis by the use of bracketed text. In an attempt to widen the participation in this email dialogue a Chalphal Kendra email account has been set up to which we all have access. It is hoped through developing a web page in the near future that this can be a forum in which facilitators and participants from the Chalphal Kendra can become engaged. These issues will be explored further in a forthcoming workshop that will focus on operationalising the CBO. Issues to be covered are how to raise funds and the development of media to inform potential donors of the project and its aims thereby making the CBO sustainable.

### **5.7.5 Anonymity revisited**

Detailed consideration was given to the issue of anonymity and the importance of ensuring informed consent was viewed as a process rather than a one-off event (Chapter 4). Within the research process consent has been reconfirmed both during visits to Nepal and via email as well as through requesting the support workers to discuss the issue with the facilitators and participants at various monitoring and evaluation workshops. The decision to use people's real names is maintained as the participants at the local level have specifically requested this. The decision to use real names within the reports produced within Nepal lies with those who produced the reports i.e. support workers and facilitators.

Within this thesis care has been taken to avoid any sensitive issues from being discussed where this may have repercussions for the participants. Any information given in confidence has remained so. One area that has been excluded from discussion is the impact of the political situation within the study area, as I was unable to travel to Sikles in January 2004 and therefore it would be imperative for the issue to be discussed in detail. Reflections on this issue can be found in Parker, Dhital and Bohara (2004). Culturally anonymity is treated with suspicion in Nepal (Petigrew *et al.* 2004). Given the political climate in Nepal it is viewed by many people at the local level, including the CBO committee members, facilitators and support workers, that the aims and objectives of the programme are transparent. On reconfirming that consent had indeed been granted during an interview with Kiran he reported "*yes it's OK because we have asked with them so many times and in these last times they are very happy and one of the participants he said it is my*

*proud you see if Sara gives my name in her thesis, it is my proud because she is not our family not relation, so if she use our name it makes us proud and they are very happy” (pers comm. Sept 2004). Laxmi adds “yes we are telling people about everything that has been created by the REFLECT centres, we are not telling any lies and is our pride as well as the participants when we see our name written in such a way” (pers comm. 2004).*

It is important to make clear that there is no connection between ACAP and the Chalphal Kendra, as it is an autonomous organisation, run by and for the local people in the Sikles area. The CBO has been hesitant to display the new sign they have constructed but they feel it is important to do so to advertise their achievements and vital for the long term sustainability of the project. Receiving press coverage is seen as important to the viability of the project and along with the article noted above a recent article has appeared in the national press (Bhadgaunle 2004). The author of this article has contacted me with the view to write an article about my input and role into the project and it is important that I engage in this dialogue. Though the focus is relatively personal to me I ensured that my responses were first sent back to the support workers to include them in the dialogical process. As the first article demonstrates open dialogue is crucial to ensure myself or other participants are not misrepresented.

Ethical guidelines regarding anonymity should also be treated as such, a process of dialogue. It is important for forums to be created for these ideas to be shared amongst the wider research community. To this end a DARG one day workshop is being organised in July 2005 in order to discuss these and other methodological issues. A further point is highlighted here in relation to the importance of co-publishing with participants in the action-oriented research process. Whilst collaborative writing has its challenges and is less valued under the research assessment system that Universities within the UK find themselves within it is an important aspect to action-oriented research. No one can claim total ownership of the research process if collaboration has been central to the approach. Efforts have been noted in producing joint publications with the support workers above. Further efforts will be made to provide a means of disseminating the story contained within this thesis with the participants themselves, be it through writing or other mediums such as developing a web site<sup>209</sup>. It is also important that I make the space to tell my own story, both within this thesis but also to a wider audience through publication and conference presentations.

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<sup>209</sup> Over the past year starting to develop a web site has proved to be a useful forum of creating a dialogue with a wider audience.

### **5.7.6 Ke bhayota – so what?**

I had the opportunity to discuss my findings with people in Nepal during my recent visit to Nepal in December 2003. Presentations at CERID, meetings with ACAP, ActionAid, World Education Nepal and Education Network along with a Chalphal Kendra facilitator workshop in Pokhara all enabled me to reflect upon my thesis and the findings. Whilst these discussions confirmed my confidence in the findings present within my thesis it also left me more questions to answer. After leaving a meeting held at Education Network, where we discussed the experience of Sikles in relation to other areas of Nepal I was left with the question of 'ke bhayota?' 'so what?'. To what extent is the experience in Sikles unique? How does Sikles differ from other areas within Nepal? How can recommendations be made on such research focused on the micro level? All of these questions provide areas for future research. Of particular interest to myself is the potential for REFLECT to meet the educational needs of people in other mountainous communities.

The British Council funded Higher Education Link between Liverpool John Moores University and Tribhuvan University in Kathmandu provides a means of taking these research questions forward although further funding will need to be sought. This programme aims to provide opportunities for students from both the UK and Nepal to become engaged in a process of collaborative research on areas of key concern and will hopefully enable further research to be undertaken into experience of non formal education programmes, including REFLECT, in Nepal. The importance of sources of small supporting funds can not be underestimated as it is such support and funding that has enabled me to engage in such a rewarding research process. Efforts to date have demonstrated a lack of funding opportunities for students from Nepal, and other marginalised nations, to study in the UK. This is a shame as it is at such a time, when calls are being made for a critical analysis and reconceptualisation of participatory development, that such local level studies are needed to enable this process of reconceptualisation to be embedded at the local level. Future research is likely to be undertaken by people such as Hitman, Laxmi and Kiran who have all used the REFLECT experience within their studies so far, Hitman in his MSc in Community Organisation and Rural Development at Manchester University and Laxmi and Kiran in their studies in Nepal.

## 5.8 Overview of findings

Overall this chapter has provided an overview of the experience of REFLECT within the Sikles sector of the Annapurna Conservation Area in Nepal from 1998 - 2003. The rise in participation levels has been detailed and issues relating to the ethnic composition of the DCs have been discussed. Through examining the key words selected by the participants a detailed insight into the concerns and priorities of local participants in the study area has been gained. It can be seen that literacy skills are only one of the many outcomes of the REFLECT process. Equally important is the opportunity the DCs provide for participants to have a forum where they can talk about issues that concern them, an opportunity they may not have had before. Through discussing local issues they deepen their understanding and share their knowledge within the groups. As a result of discussions and participatory activities participants identify problems and where appropriate propose alternatives to these problems.

Although some initial scepticism was noted it has been demonstrated that the wider community have become involved in the REFLECT approach and have given their support for initiatives won. This has led to a number of community development projects being implemented within the study area as highlighted in Section 5.4. In addition to this some changes have occurred to the traditional practices that were deemed to be expensive and unfair, especially on the less wealthy members of society. These positive outcomes have resulted in a high level of support from the wider community, especially within the village of Sikles, from villagers and also from ACAP staff. As a result of this support a Community Based Organisation is in the process of being established. The findings here are by no means conclusive as the process is still ongoing and many challenges lie ahead in making the project totally owned by the local community, which is crucial to its sustainability. What has been provided is a snapshot of events and some of the complexities of introducing an alternative form of non-formal education programme into an established ICDP, namely the Annapurna Conservation Area Project. This thesis shall now draw together the issues raised in this chapter to the experience and literature reviewed in Chapters 2 & 3 and will seek to answer the question "*To what extent does the REFLECT approach offer a model of non formal education that can facilitate a process of transformatory participatory development at the local level?*". Reflections and conclusions will also be drawn upon the value and challenges of being involved in a process of participatory action research and what lessons have been learnt from my experience.

## **6 CHAPTER SIX CONCLUSION**

### **6.1 Overview of thesis**

The central aim of this these was to critically examine the capacity of non-formal education programmes to meet the demands of local people within the context of the Sikles Sector of the ACA, Nepal. Insights have been gained into both ACAP's Adult Literacy Classes and REFLECT. The second aim of the thesis was to draw out the key lessons learnt from engaging in action-oriented research. As such it has drawn on a wide body of literature and brings together the experience of non-formal education in the ACAP with the theory of participatory development. It has relied upon the author's experience of engaging with action-oriented research in the Sikles sector of the ACAP. In particular it examines the effectiveness of the non-formal education component of the ACAP in meeting its objectives (Chapter 2). Specifically it notes concern with issues of exclusion and a failure to embed evaluation at the local level hence raising questions over the depth of participatory development within the ACAP. Further, Chapter 2 explained how due to a lack of support from ACAP I became involved in facilitating the introduction of REFLECT into the study area. Chapter 3 reviewed the participatory development discourse and presented REFLECT as a potential model to address some of the limitations of ACAP's Adult Literacy Programme. The details of the research undertaken were provided in Chapter 4 with the approach being clearly framed as action-oriented research. The impacts of REFLECT in the study area and reflection on the research process formed the basis of Chapter 5.

This chapter moves on to draw conclusions and suggest recommendations for those seeking to engage in action-oriented research. Firstly, it will assess the extent to which REFLECT has addressed the limitations of ACAP's non-formal education programme. Further it will consider the extent to which REFLECT offers a model for non-formal education within ACAP and ICDPs in general. Secondly, insights are provided based on the authors' personal experience of action-oriented research. Thirdly, it will draw out the key lessons regarding the need for participatory development to be reconceptualised. Finally, concluding reflections are made and areas for further research proposed.

## 6.2 Reflecting on REFLECT in Sikles

### 6.2.1 Lessons from the field

Securing funds from UWCSEA Global Concerns was vital to the introduction of REFLECT into the study area. These funds have been provided on a regular basis over the research period. Of equal importance, the Global Concerns committee was open to less conventional forms of feedback, such as newsletters and summaries of M&E Reports. The newsletters produced for Nepal have enabled the students in Singapore to gain a flavour of the outcomes being achieved at the local level and convinced them of the value of the REFLECT approach in the Sikles sector. A wider point can be made here regarding the need for small amounts of funding to be available for innovative projects such as this one. Funds are needed that actually enable local participants to determine the agenda, process and means of evaluating the programme that is being implemented. UWCSEA Global Concerns project is a model project that could be adopted in any school wishing to engage actively in 'global citizenship' and become involved in community initiatives.

REFLECT, or rather Chalphal Kendra, in the Sikles sector of the ACAP has shown evidence of attracting people from various different ethnic groups. In particular it appealed to participants from the traditional occupational groups that ACAP found hard to include in their activities. Further, through the construction of new meeting halls new areas have been specifically created providing a new arena in which people can congregate<sup>210</sup>. This has enabled the process of critical reflection, learning and action to operate amongst groups of people who previously, due to social customs, lacked a separate more private space in which to engage in a dialogical process. It is not claimed however that this 'new space' is all encompassing and inclusive as not all the people who have a desire to attend will be able to do so, for a variety of reasons.

Women have been noted to dominate the Chalphal Kendra in the Sikles sector, although men are not actively excluded, and therefore insight is gained into the gendered nature of participation that is so often lacking in ICPD literature<sup>211</sup> (Argawal 2001, Flintan 2000, Furze *et al.* 1996, Hughes & Flintan 2001). The changing dynamics of the Discussion

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<sup>210</sup> Thus supporting calls for new spaces to be created for participatory development processes to take place in to enable the challenges and barriers of participating in public spaces to be addressed (Cornwall 2002, Guijt & Shah 1998, Mosse 1994).

<sup>211</sup> ACAP was noted as being an exception with regards to attention being paid to the gendered dimension of development due to the importance given to the formation of Ama Toli (Mothers Groups) in its approach, see Chapter 2 Section 2.5.2.1 for full discussion.

Centres highlights the value of local level studies such as this, in order to gain insight into the complexities of participatory development and unravel some of the myths of the community. Many 'communities' have been shown to exist within the Sikles sector and participants in the Discussion Centres draw on a wide range of networks. It is not argued that there is a 'community of women' or even a 'community of Chalphal Kendra participants'. Individuals in these centres participate in many other forums within the community. However, Chalphal Kendra has undoubtedly provided an extra arena in which people are free to participate if they so choose.

Whilst acknowledging the complexities of 'communities', both real and imagined, the research demonstrates a strong sense of geographical association with the ward (thar) in the Sikles sector. All the centres fall within distinct ward boundaries. No centre has been established that cuts across these boundaries. Chapter 5 highlighted how during a field visit in April 2000 I was asked to help establish a centre for the youth that cut across the ward boundaries (Chapter 5: 170). Whilst some interest was expressed it never materialised. As an external observer this represented a missed opportunity to provide a centre for children who had missed out on school and who were keen to participate in the Chalphal Kendra. The younger children attending the Chalphal Kendra would also have benefited from a space where they could learn with their own age group. It was not my place to intervene however, as the premise of REFLECT and action-oriented research is that decisions and actions such as these need to emerge from the local participants. It is important however to recognise that researchers should not feel inhibited from discussing the observations and making suggestions, as they too are participants in the research process. There is a fine balance between discussing ideas and imposing one's own view. It is essential that such researchers engage in a process of critical self-reflection. Based upon my experience with Sikles and position as a British academic conducting research in the area, it is inevitable that I will be seen as embodying the characteristics of *bikas* highlighted in Chapter 2. This reinforces the importance of researchers being sensitive, reflexive and honest as suggested by DARG (2002).

Monitoring and Evaluation Workshops have created a valuable space for dialogue to take place between the Chalphal Kendras. These have played a crucial role in raising the local capacity to evaluate the outcomes of the REFLECT process and make plans for the future. Support for these events, through Laxmi & Kiran, as well as Education Network, has also been fundamental to the success of the REFLECT approach in the study area. This evidence supports the calls by REFLECT practitioners in Nepal for attention to be paid too

supporting mechanisms (Popkins 1998). The workshops have been more participatory in nature when they have taken place at the local level, in Sikles, as they are open not only to facilitators but also participants in the wider community. The workshop held in Sikles in 2002 was fundamental to the emergence of the community-based organisation. Through this workshop a wide range of participants were actively engaged in the evaluation process and as a result a number of people from the wider community are now represented on the CBO that has been formed. Unfortunately, the increasing political unrest in Nepal has meant that the workshops have had to run in Pokhara for safety reasons as often public gatherings are treated with suspicion (Bajracharya & Shrestha 2004). Given the recent State of Emergency it is uncertain when they will be able to run at the local level. Further, uncertainty about potential sources of funding also poses a threat to these events.

Whilst a number of significant changes have been noted at the individual and community level it is evident that the outcomes evolve as the centres become more established. Those that require the participation of the wider community, such as the formation of the CBO and changes being made to social customs, inevitably take longer than individual actions. The experience in Sikles demonstrates the value of the REFLECT centres running over a relatively long period of time, over six years to date. The diversity of outcomes also highlights the difficulty of establishing key indicators for the success of REFLECT. If REFLECT is to live up to the promise of participatory development it is imperative that local people define their own indicators of success in order to reflect the local priorities and issues that REFLECT aims to address. This makes it very difficult to form generalised conclusions from the experience as the process is so embedded at the local level. This challenge is generic to action-oriented research. Further complicating the evaluation process, these indicators of success need to change over time and evolve from local level analysis. It is for this reason that attention needs to be paid to exploring the process that underpins action-oriented research, or equally participatory development, as well as the outcomes.

Embedding the evaluation process at the local level is central to action-oriented research and is vital if it is to live up to the challenge of being participatory. Within this research this has been achieved in the main through ensuring that funds have been allocated to run monitoring and evaluation workshops on an annual basis. M&E reports provide a wealth of information on the changes that have taken place. These are available through Education Network in Nepal to enable other practitioners in Nepal to gain insight into the



experience of REFLECT in the Sikles sector of the ACAP. These reports provide a record of changes that have taken place according to the facilitators and participants. Through recording the outputs from participatory exercises undertaken during the workshops insight can also be gained into other, less tangible, outcomes of the Chalphal Kendras within the study area.

Field research by the author sheds light into changes occurring as a result of the Chalphal Kendra such as people noting an increase in confidence or sense of well-being. It is important to acknowledge "*not everything that counts can be counted and not everything that can be counted counts*" (Einstein cited in Lane 2001: 171). Changes such as increased levels of confidence and feelings of self-worth and happiness are difficult to quantify and discuss yet are clearly evident upon meeting people and revisiting Sikles. Action-oriented research, such as this, offers researchers a means of exploring these changes. Chapter 5 highlighted some of these changes in the words of the participants of the Chalphal Kendra. In order to do justice to the process and outcomes of engaging in research in the Sikles area it is important to provide a rich descriptive narrative along with critical reflection on the research process. An example of this is the notable impact Chalphal Kendra has had upon power relations within the village. The impacts are complex, as new people become empowered equally others may feel disempowered. The current political situation in Nepal made it difficult to gain insight into those who remain excluded from the project. Exploring the complexities of these changes is an interesting area for further ethnographic study.

One of the major achievements of REFLECT in the study area is the degree to which the local participants have taken ownership of the programme and sustained it over the past six years. The establishment of the autonomous CBO, the Madhikhola Women's Development Organisation, is testament to this ownership. Though in its infancy, and faced by a challenging political environment, the CBO has engaged in a number of activities and continued to support the Chalphal Kendras in the study area. It is interesting to note that both facilitator and CBO members have continued to ask for support from the support workers and external funding agencies. This could be seen as sign of dependency or equally as a sign of maximising the use of the social networks that are available to them. The need for on-going support and training is emerging from the International Reflect Circle (CIRAC) as being integral to the success of the approach. 'Self-reliant' and 'empowered' are not synonymous with being 'independent' and 'cut off from support'. Sustainability need not mean isolated. In addition to this, financial

support may be needed from either external sources or the local level depending upon the circumstances.

Based on evidence emerging from the field these networks of support are starting to diversify (Chapter 5: 212), despite the difficult political situation in Nepal. REFLECT in the Sikles sector has shown that by having limited support from external agents (in this case UWCSEA, support workers and myself) communities can engage in a process of praxis and develop their own autonomous organisations. The experience of the author in engaging in action-oriented research is central to this thesis as a means of exploring the experience of REFLECT in the study area.

### **6.2.2 *Is REFLECT a model for ICDPs?***

Preliminary research along with the literature reviewed suggests that ACAP (and ICDPs in general) does not pay enough attention to issues of inequality and complexity at the local level and fails to maximise on the potential of non-formal education programmes to deepen and embed the participatory process at the local level (Flintan 2000, Hughes & Flintan 2001, Ghimire & Pimbert 1997, Parker 1997). Ultimately, REFLECT has been sustained by local people for the past 5 years which provides some indication that it is meeting the needs of the participants. It therefore provides a means by which ACAP could satisfy 'women's greed' for literacy. Evidence to date indicates that REFLECT in Sikles sector is a relatively inclusive model of non-formal education that has potential to support autonomous development. The creation of a new community based organisation, the Madikhola Creative Women's Association (MaCWA), in May 2003 is evidence of this autonomy. Further, the actions taken at the local level seem to complement the work of ACAP suggesting that REFLECT is a potential model on which to base its non-formal education programme. An interesting area for further research would be to explore the extent to which ACAP's previous activities have influenced the discussions that have taken place within the Chalphal Kendra.

When I registered to undertake my doctorate in April 1998, I still hoped the ACAP would become interested in REFLECT. This is demonstrated by the fact that I tried to facilitate a REFLECT orientation workshop for ACAP staff by ActionAid Nepal. However, ACAP's non-involvement, although initially perceived as a potential weakness, has actually turned out to be one of the main strengths. Whilst ACAP had to withdraw from the Sikles sector in 2003 because they were not associated with the ACAP the MaCWA and

Chalpal Kendras have been able to continue. This situation could not have been predicted at the start of the research journey. To date it has received no objections from the Maoist movement though general apprehension has been noted within the centres. If Chalpal Kendra had been linked to ACAP then no doubt its activities would have had to cease. Being open and transparent about the aims and objectives of MaCWA and the Chalpal Kendras' role is seen as being vital to the future success of project.

Through embedding the process of critical reflection at the local level, REFLECT draws heavily on local knowledge systems and creates a new forum where local knowledge can be shared. Whilst it is important to recognise and value local indigenous knowledge this does not mean that local people should be denied access to other knowledge which can inform their process of critical reflection and action. Information disseminated via other conservation education programmes is important and can be discussed at length in the Chalpal Kendras and incorporated into the process of critical reflection. Through discussing these issues in the centres they become contextualised at the local level. Any actions that may result from this dialogical process are more likely to be supported, as people will have had time to reflect upon the issues. Whilst acknowledging that equally some conservation message may be rejected, it is suggested here that REFLECT has the potential to complement and supplement rather than substitute ICDP educational activities.

Some caution is needed in recommending REFLECT to the ICDP community. It has already been noted how easily 'alternative' 'radical' and 'innovative' approaches can become co-opted, standardised and taken away from their original aims and objectives. REFLECT, like any other participatory development approach is vulnerable to such co-option and care needs to be taken when adopting the REFLECT approach. If ICDPs are to adopt the REFLECT approach they must do so in its entirety and hand over the process to the local level and seek the expertise of trainers who are well versed in the REFLECT ideology to impart this training. Whilst acknowledging the importance of adapting REFLECT, rather than adopting it (as discussed in Chapter 3 Section 3.5), ideally the principles on which REFLECT is based should be internalised into the organisation that is proposing use that approach. Therefore if ACAP, or another NGO, was to promote REFLECT they need to fully internalise the basic principles of REFLECT and be prepared to truly 'hand over the stick' and therefore disempower themselves (Fiedrich & Jellema 2003, Holland & Blackburn 1998). ICDP staff need to acknowledge that local people are responsible for determining their own agenda and actions and accept that these may not

complement the ICDP aims and objectives. ICDPs are likely to need to continue to support other forms of conservation education programmes to complement the REFLECT approach if they are to be effective in promoting the dual goals of conservation and development for local people.

### **6.3 Reflecting on action-oriented research**

AOR can offer a great deal to researchers concerned with inequality, participatory development and who wish to work with communities to make a difference. Completing a thesis on this experience has stressed the importance of reflexivity. This involves examining the implications of the researcher's personal worldview, explaining the changing nature of participation in the research process and reflecting on the interactions of those people engaged in the process. The multi-layered nature of the research and the intrinsic complexities involved, including my position within the research, were discussed at length in Chapter 4. A number of key lessons can be drawn from this experience.

Preliminary research was vital to engaging people at the local level in determining the focus of the research. The experience of REFLECT demonstrates the success of this approach in identifying a project that was of genuine interest and value to local people. M&E workshops have been valuable in embedding local participation in the whole process as depicted by Laws *et al.* (2003).

One of the main challenges in becoming involved in this process of participatory action research in the first instance was to actually become involved. Researchers face the challenge of avoiding making promises they cannot keep (Sidaway 1992). At no time during the research was anything actually promised but unavoidably expectations and excitement about the potential of REFLECT was generated through my conversations with people, especially in the villages of Sikles and Parche. At all times it was stressed that funding was not secured and training not guaranteed. Fortunately funds were secured so that the enthusiasm and expectation generated in REFLECT in the preliminary research was honoured. I was asked by a participant at the One Day Conference on Educational Issues in Nepal<sup>212</sup> if REFLECT would have been introduced into the Sikles sector of the ACAP without my involvement. The honest answer to this question is 'probably not'. As well as ACAP's reluctance to pilot the project no other NGO was

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<sup>212</sup> As noted earlier this was organised by myself as Link Co-ordinator for the British Council Funded Higher Education Exchange link between Liverpool John Moores University and CERID, Kathmandu.

running REFLECT in the area (Map 3.1). Although many dynamic networks and interaction occurs between local people in Sikles and the wider world, none existed within ActionAid or Education Network at that time. I was therefore very much the 'catalyst' in the process of introducing REFLECT into the Sikles sector although my initial reservations about becoming involved almost prevented this from happening. Whilst it is recognised that professionals and researchers need to be aware of power it is not helpful *"if they feel inhibited from contributing their own skills.... researchers should not get too agonised about the power that they take, for example in undertaking the analysis of the data"* (Laws et al. 2003: 62). This goes some way to quell my unease at gaining a formal qualification and therefore personally benefiting from the research process I have become involved in<sup>213</sup>.

Chapter 5 (Section 5.7.2) highlighted my reasons for reducing my visits to Nepal after April 2000. Whilst disempowering oneself is seen to be a key feature of genuine and sustainable participatory approaches, as discussed in Chapter 3, it requires substantial effort on behalf of the researcher. Whilst it is difficult to predict the impact my visiting Nepal during this period, not visiting seemed to be successful in creating some distance between myself and REFLECT. As a result new relations were developed with the support workers and external agents. An inevitable consequence of this decision was that in effect it made me reliant on others, in particular upon the support workers. Their skills and support for REFLECT in the Sikles sector of the ACAP have played an important role in its success and their endeavours and commitment to the project are commendable. In addition to this through their links with Education Network, ActionAid Nepal and subsequently CERID Laxmi & Kiran are telling the story of Sikles within Nepal and helping the participants gain a voice in wider forums<sup>214</sup>. On the one hand their support could be seen as creating new dependencies and on the other it could be seen as creating new opportunities and synergies.

Email has been used to maintain a dialogue and visiting Nepal in 2003 have proved fundamental to the research process. In essence, we all make decisions every day and then have to live with the consequences. It is worth noting here that I am content to live with the consequences of this particular decision. Overall my experience has confirmed my commitment to research in Nepal, both with and for local people, and has strengthened my commitment to working with the local people of Sikles.

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<sup>213</sup> There is an unavoidable inherent contradiction between pursuing a formal qualification for my own benefit whilst singing the praises of non-formal education as an important tool for community empowerment.

<sup>214</sup> As highlighted earlier in 5.7.3.1.

Action-oriented research presents further challenges to the research when it comes to the writing up stage. Being honest and open entails subjecting oneself to a process of critical self-reflection that is central to action-oriented research. Such public expression of this reflection is often inhibited by personal fear, constraints associated with loyalty to those you have worked with and also by a lack of time and space (Chambers 2004). It could further be argued that such reflection is discouraged by those who make decisions about what is, and what is not, published (Greenwood 2004). PhD theses therefore remain important spaces for researchers to engage in such detailed reflection and this thesis calls for more attention to be paid to the process of research that underpins them. It stresses the need for researchers to share their thoughts and feeling and lessons, however small, that they have learnt along the way.

Although AOR is participatory in nature it is not about selfless giving rather it is about interacting with people and being an active agent. Reflecting on the research conducted has at times been a challenging process but overwhelmingly it has been a rewarding one. I plan to build on this experience in my future postdoctoral research in Nepal. It has strengthened my ability to engage in collaborative research. Reflecting on the process also gives me the grounding on which to talk about the experience of REFLECT in Sikles and disseminate the findings through publications and presentations and share the story of Sikles to a wider audience. Whilst acknowledging this thesis would not be possible without the input from a number of people in the study area it represents a personal space to tell the research story and explore the complexities faced by action-oriented research.

REFLECT provided me with a meaningful way of engaging with the field. My experience suggests that it could offer others a means of becoming involved in a locally embedded non-formal education programme whilst avoid the trappings associated with the traditional Freirean approach. To avoid the pitfalls of PAR, the researcher has to actively withdraw from the research process and make a conscious effort to embed monitoring and evaluation processes at the local level. This can potentially empower the facilitators and participants to take full control of the process and enables autonomous learning and development to be established. Of equal importance, this process reduces dependencies from developing upon the external researcher or catalyst.

## 6.4 Reflecting on participatory development

Through engaging in research in the Sikles sector of the ACAP, a number of areas were identified where ACAP could improve its approach and further build the capacity at the local level to engage in the evaluation process in a meaningful and more participatory manner. This was identified as a common concern amongst agencies<sup>215</sup> promoting participatory development in Chapter 3. It was suggested that REFLECT, as opposed to the literacy classes being promoted by ACAP, could offer a means of embedding a more genuinely participatory approach within the non-formal component of the CEEP, thus strengthening the ACAP's participatory approach.

From introducing REFLECT into the study area wider lessons can also be learnt and contributions made to current participatory development discourse. Experience from this research suggests that through firmly embedding the Freirean ideology into the REFLECT approach and through enhancing the local capacity to utilise participatory techniques a process of critical reflection and action has been established at the local level. Engaging in action-oriented research, and taking measure to ensure that new dependencies are not created on the catalyst (i.e. myself) has been crucial to ensuring local control of the process is maintained and that the project truly belong to the participants engaged within it. Whilst the continua presented in Chapter 3 proved useful in defining the research approach taken here they lack the dynamism and fluidity that characterises both AOR and REFLECT. This is best captured by the model proposed by Archer (1998b) who proposes a new visualisation of REFLECT. This diagram has the potential to contribute to the reconceptualisation of participatory development (as discussed in section 3.4.2). Rather than a two dimensional image, by using the imagery of a solar system this model portrays the idea that participatory development is something that has multiple dimensions but has a core to it that we should work towards.

It has been suggested that a new term may be required due to the level of cooption that has already been established (Section 3.4.1). Languages other than English may offer a solution as in the past essential characteristics of key concepts have been lost in translation. If we take the Spanish term '*educación popular*' the term '*popular*' means 'of the people' and 'the people' are the working class, the unemployed peasants and the poor. When it is translated into the term 'popular education' "important connotations are lost in translation" (Kane 2001: 8). If we apply this logic to 'participatory development' then

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<sup>215</sup> Including those engaged in promoting Freirean approaches to literacy (see Section 3.2.3).

terms such as '*participación popular*' may offer a way forward. If action is a core feature then '*participaction*' may be more accurate. Rahnema (1996: 129) provides useful insight when he suggests "if the participatory ideal could, in simple terms, be redefined by such qualities as attention, sensitivity, goodness or compassion, and supported by such regenerative acts as learning, relating and listening, are these qualities and gifts precisely impossible to co-opt?" It is fundamental that the process of redefining participatory development arises out of a process of participation if the term is to truly be reclaimed. Providing opportunities and forums whereby the excluded can participate in this dialogue are essential to this process. It is neither possible, nor desirable, to suggest a term here.

Chapter three highlighted how REFLECT was reconceptualised in a relatively short period of time to move it away from being framed as an approach to literacy to a "structured participatory learning process which facilitates people's critical analysis of their environment, placing empowerment at the heart of sustainable and equitable development" (Phnuyal *et al.* 1998: 27). For this to happen local control of the development process is essential.

I have begun to visualise participatory development more as phenomena made up of a central core of concepts that we should ultimately move towards, rather like a ball of energy that we are drawn too. Diagram 6.1 suggests a web of participation may prove useful in this endeavour. By taking the core features of participatory development, as discussed in Chapter 3<sup>216</sup>, and by placing local control at the centre of the web, the diagram captures the multiple dimensions of participation and suggests as local people take control of the different dimensions the we move nearer to the idealised concept of participatory development.

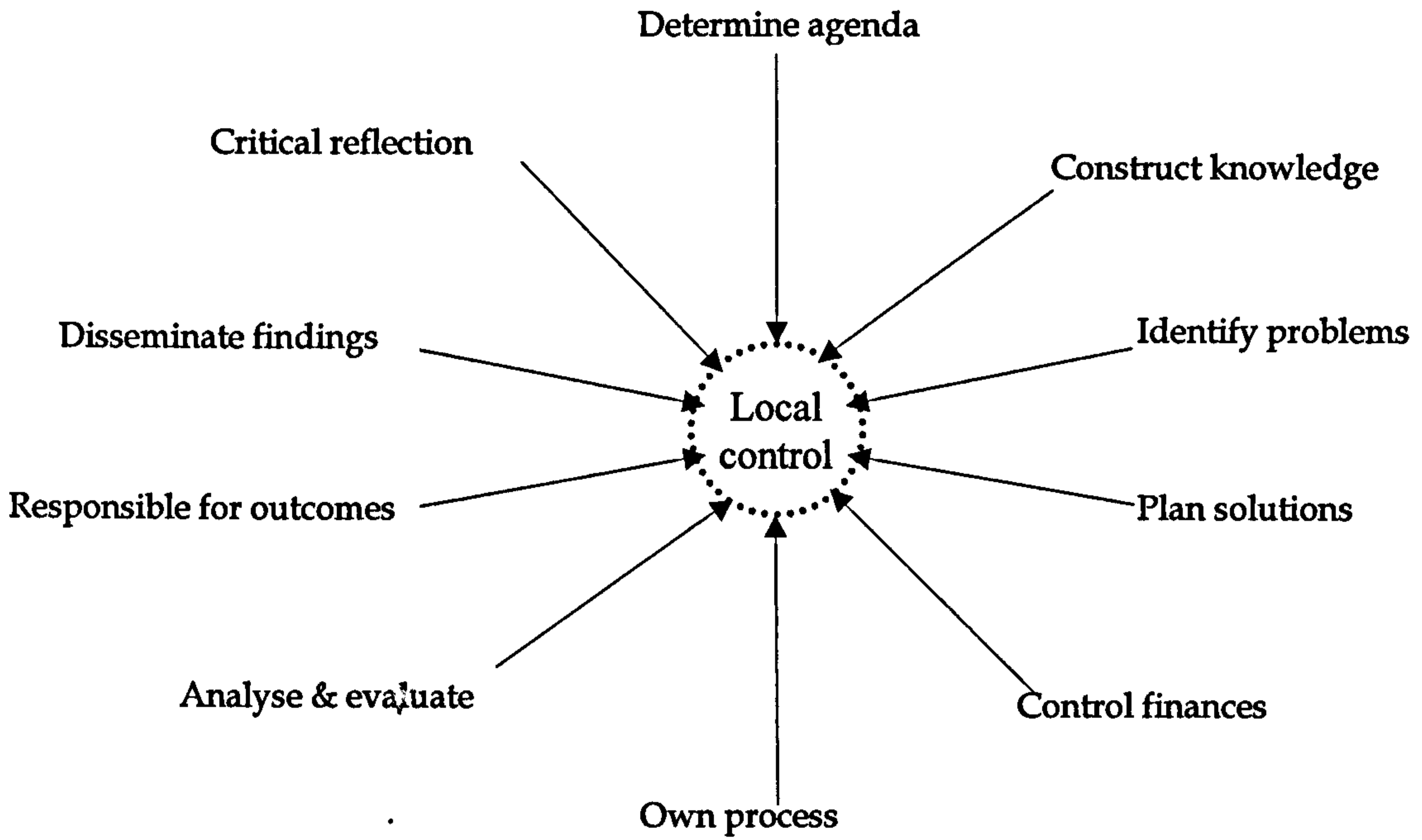
Diagram 6.2 represents an attempt to compare ACAP's Adult Literacy Classes compared to the Chalphal Kendra approach. Whilst Chapter 2 highlighted ACAP's relative success in engaging people in the formation of CAMCs and conservation activities it also suggested that ACAP staff remained in control of such activities as evaluation and disseminating the findings to a wider audience. ACAP therefore maintained relative control over some of the aspect of the intervention process depicted in Diagram 6.2.

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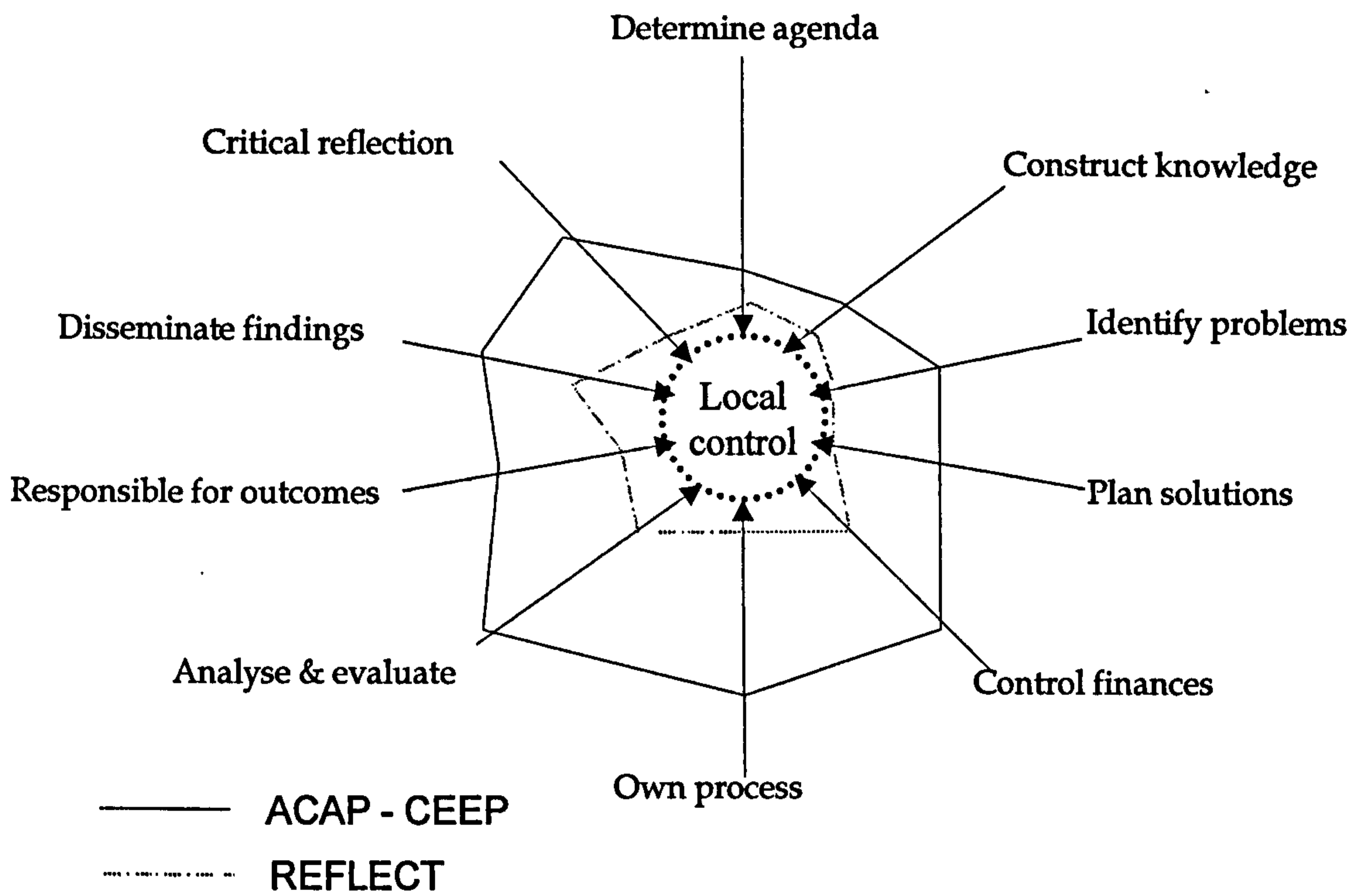
<sup>216</sup> And presented in the diagrams by Arnstein 1969, Chambers 1994 and Laws *et al.* 2003.



**Diagram 6.1 Web of participation**



**Diagram 6.2 Comparison of ACAP's CEEP and REFLECT Web of participation**



Source: author's own

This thesis suggests that in the study area, the REFLECT approach has given those who have participated in the Chalphal Kendras more control over the evaluation process and more input into how this information is disseminated and used. Whilst the writing of M&E reports has remained in the hands of the support workers these have been based on the deliberations of the facilitators in annual workshops and hence their participation in their production has been gained. With some further support this responsibility will be transferred to the local level in the near future. Monitoring this progress provides an area for ongoing research. I too have played a central role in disseminating the findings from the process to a wider audience through participating in conferences and workshops and in writing this thesis. Notable exceptions to this external dissemination is the participation of two local facilitators in a national REFLECT workshop in 2004. If the political climate is conducive such networking is likely to increase in the future. Through the formation of a CBO local control over both finance and ownership of the Chalphal Kendra process has been transferred to the local level. This process is not totally controlled by the local level as external funds and support are still seen a vital to the project. Developing a systematic means of measuring the level of local control would enhance the comparison of participatory projects. Challenges exist to quantifying concepts such as local control and this remains an area for further research.

Networks, such as the participatory development group at IDS and CIRAC and other forums within the Global South, need to engage in these discourses collaboratively. Forums for practitioners, academics and policy makers committed to transformatory development need to be strengthened. This has obvious funding implications that policy makers and practioners need to take into account. Further, it is suggested that participatory techniques should ideally be used in this process. Employing participatory approaches on such a large scale, across multi-layered communities, is by no means an easy task. CIRAC's web site (discussed in Chapter 3: 97) is a positive example of sharing debates within a global community via the medium of the World-Wide-Web, however issues relating to the access to the ICT remain pertinent.

Essentially participatory development means different things to different people in different contexts and is ultimately locally situated and constructed. The lessons from emerging reconceptualisation need to be shared within the wider community of practitioners, policy makers and academics if the depoliticisation and co-option of participation is to be prevented from going any further.

## 6.5 Final reflections

Rahnema (1997) challenges those engaged in pursuing alternative development to seek new ways of working with 'others' and stresses the importance of critical reflection on work conducted within this area:

"for over half a century 'target populations' have "suffered the intrusion in their lives of an army of development teachers and experts, including well-intentioned field workers and activists, who spoke big words – from conscientization to learning from and with the people. Often they had studied Marx, Gramsci, Freire and the latest research about empowerment and participation. However, their lives (and often careers) seldom allowed them to enter into the intimate world of their 'target populations'. They were good about giving people passionate lectures about their rights, their entitlements, the class struggle and land reform. Yet few asked themselves about the deeper motivation prompting them to do what they were doing. Often they knew neither the people they were working with, nor themselves. And they were so busy achieving what *they* thought they had to do *for* the people, that they could not learn enough *from* them about how to actually 'care' for them, as they would for their closest relatives and friends whom they knew and loved" (395).

This thesis has enabled me to engage in a process of action-oriented research and provided me with the space to critically reflect upon this experience. On reflection my close involvement in the process is one of the strengths of this research. It has forced me to immerse myself in the research and critically reflect on complex issues, such as power relations and the underlying assumptions and limitation of participatory development and how these are lived out and experienced in the communities I have engaged with. It has required me to articulate my own ideological stand point and reduced my apprehension at engaging in a process of action-oriented research and the discourses of participatory development. Engaging with REFLECT has offered the means to enter the world of a particular area, to engage in the lives of others and enabled me to learn from and with them.

The overriding conclusion that I would draw from the experience of this thesis is that, engaging in action-oriented research has provided me with an extremely positive, though at times challenging, experience and enabled me to engage in a meaningful way with people in the Sikles sector of the ACAP. The experience has been a rewarding one for me as a researcher, a Geographer and as a friend to the people I know in Sikles. I can only hope the experience of Chalphal Kendra at the local level matches my own personal satisfaction and has contributed as much to the development of the people of Sikles as it has to my own personal development. I have endeavoured to maintain respect for local customs, a flexible research design and provide open channels of communication

throughout the research process. As Wilson (1992: 189) notes “locals remember researchers and ‘learn’ from [or rather with] them through their personal relationships – not their monographs” (cited in Sheyvens & Leslie 2000: 129).

Overall, the research process in the main has lived up to the advice of Burkey (1993) (cited in Chapter 1: 12). I went to the people, lived and learnt from and with them and ended up working with and for them. Though the work is not done this thesis for now is and although I take full responsibility for it, it would have not been possible without the participants at the local level, we have done it together.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge that this is only one ‘product’ from the research process. This thesis stresses the value of providing rich and detailed accounts of the processes that lead to these outputs. Further, as Harvey (2002) reminds us, the final product is not a dead thing, it is alive, and should be viewed as part of a dialogue, a process by which ideas are exchanged. I plan to return to Nepal in 2005 to continue my dialogue and share my findings and ideas in person with the participants of the Chalphal Kendra and the wider communities in which they are taking place. I am particular interested in exploring ways in which to facilitate a process through which the stories and voices of those engaged in the process can be provided with a forum, be it through producing a video or photographic exhibition utilising participatory techniques.

Overall I remain committed to my approach and passionate about my research. I have immersed myself in a research process that has been rewarding on many levels: to the participants in the Chalphal Kendra and the facilitators of those centres, to the support workers, Laxmi and Kiran who have gained experience of REFLECT and provided invaluable support, to my own journey of self discovery that is central to this thesis.

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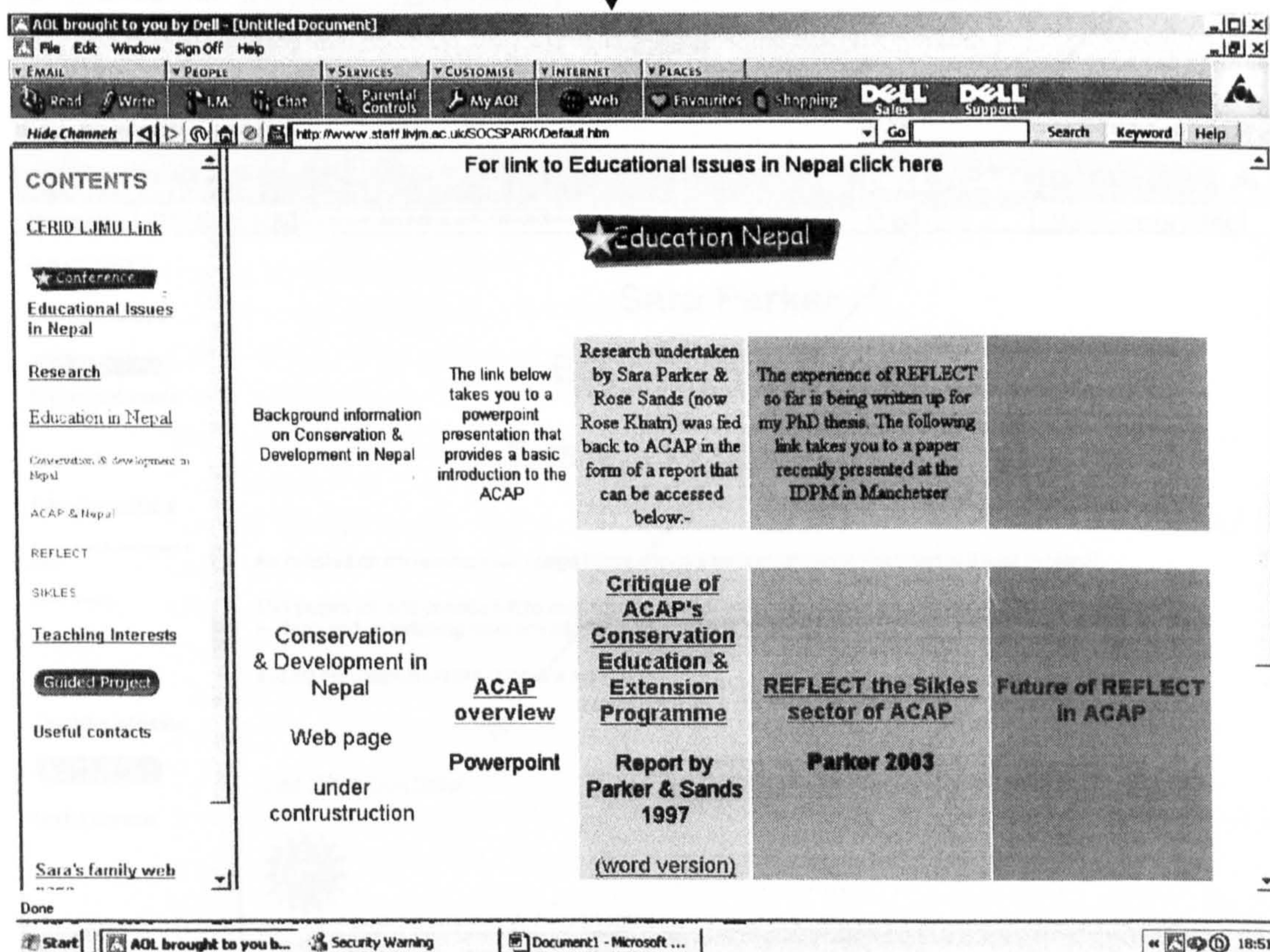
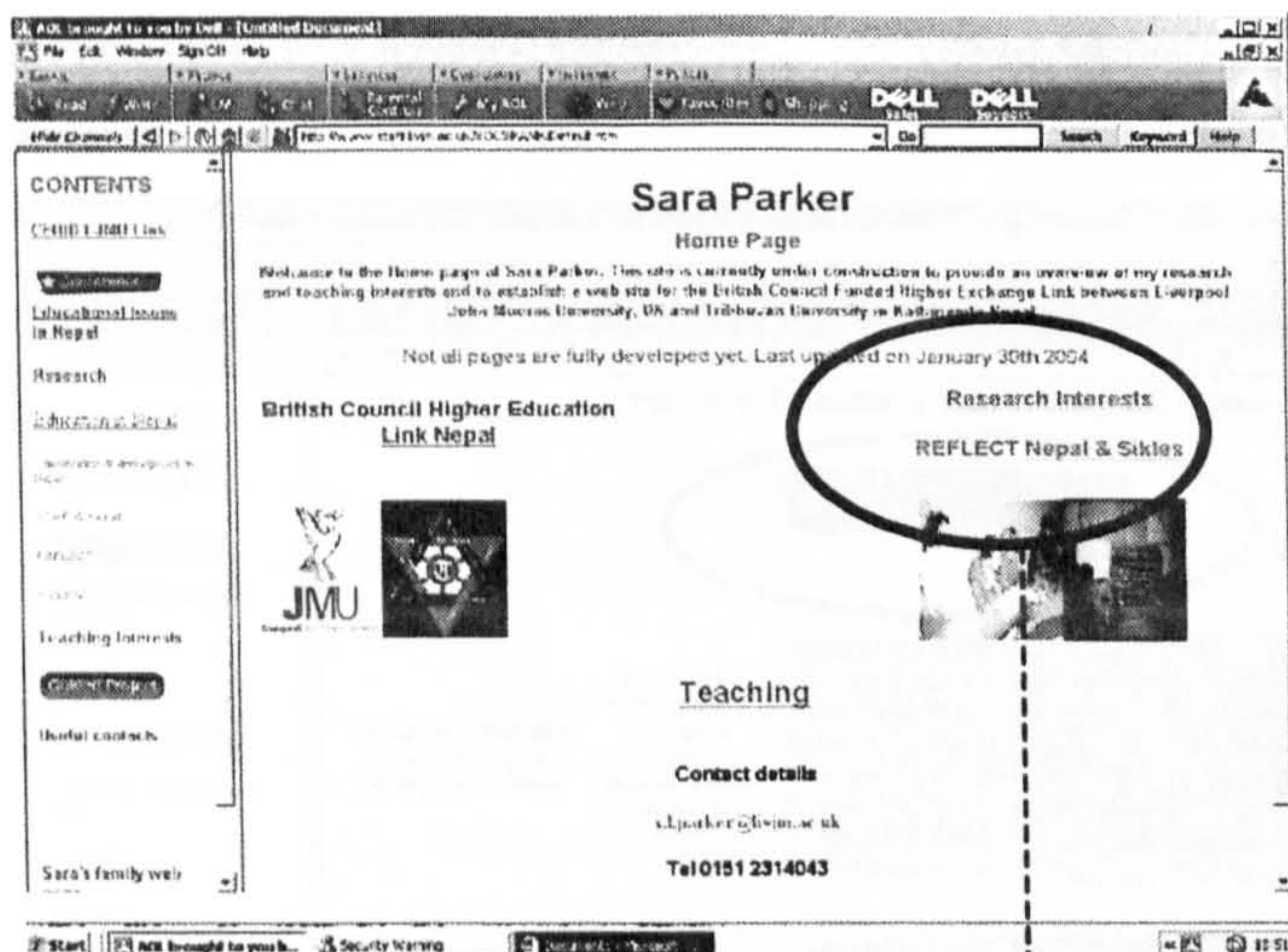


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# APPENDICES

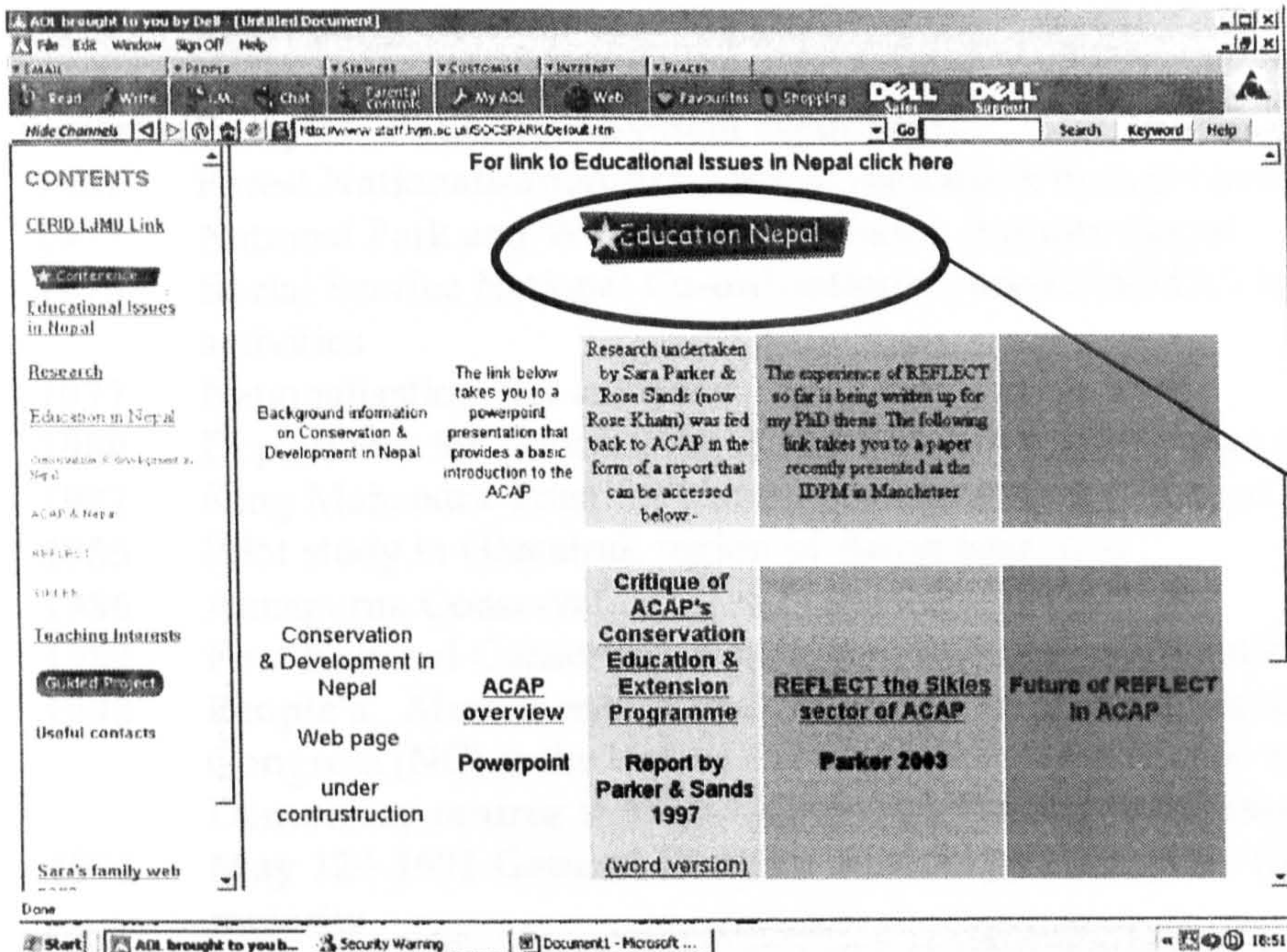
## Appendix 1.1 Overview of personal web site



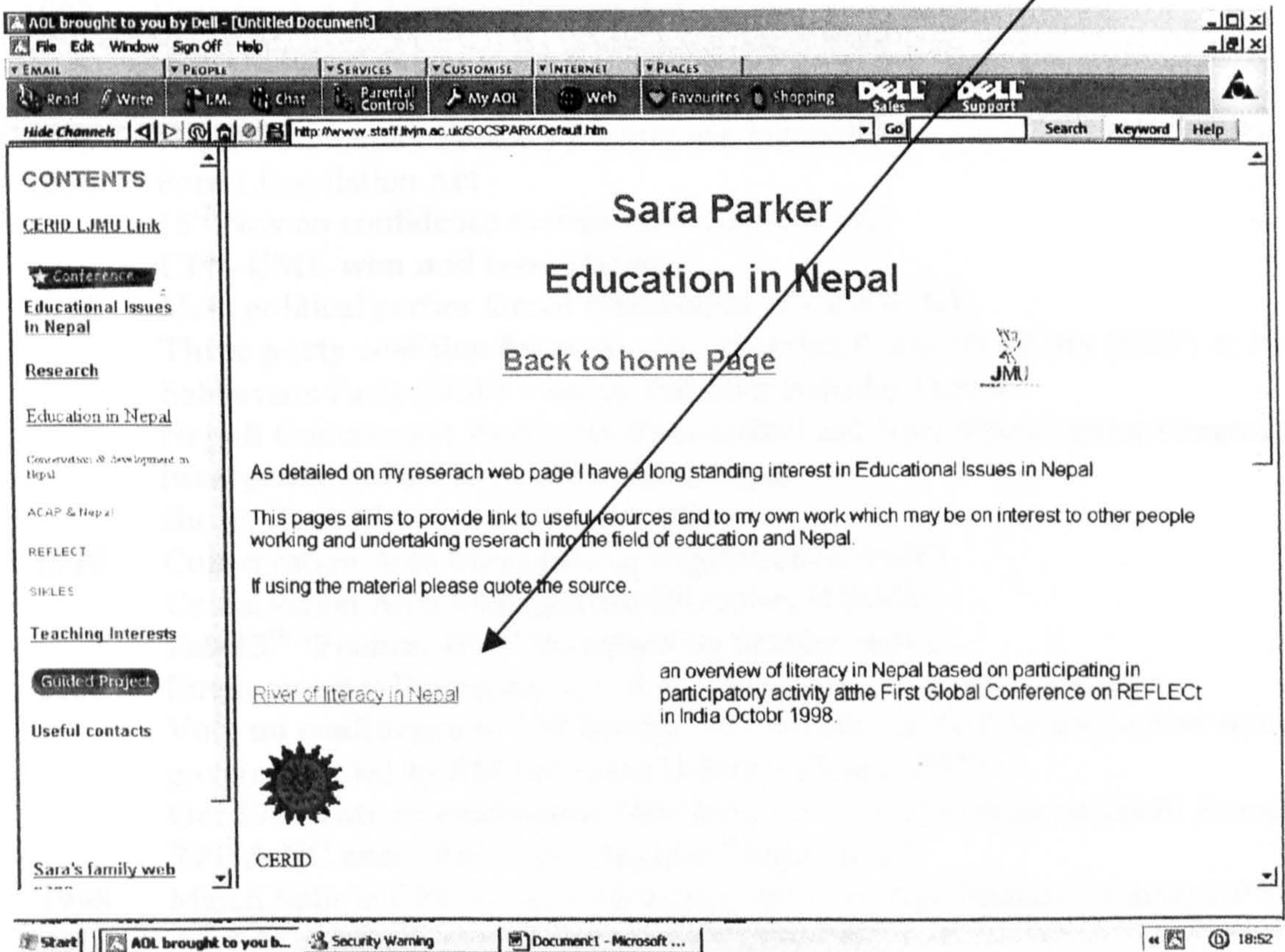
Two papers can be found on my personal web site.

Paper 1 provides a detailed overview of the move away from National Parks to Integrated Conservation and Development Programmes

Paper 2 provides an in-depth overview of conservation and development issues within Nepal.



Follow this link to next page and full details of event & river of literacy are found on next page



## Appendix 2.1 Overview of political events and key environmental policies in Nepal 1950 - present day

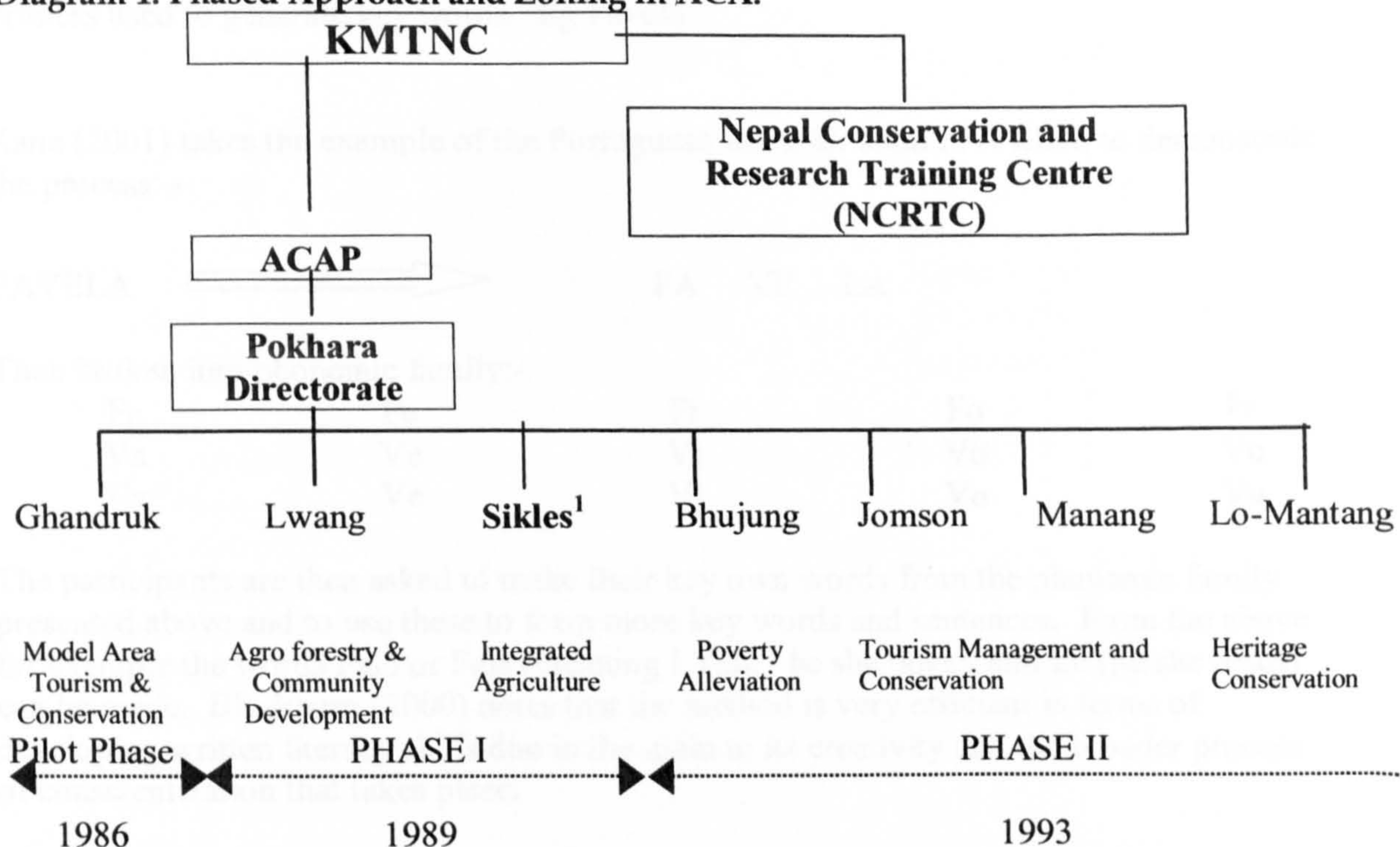
- 1951** End of Rana Regime (Monarchical Rule) which had been in place for 104 years
- 1957** Nationalisation Act – forests brought under control of government
- 1959** Multi-party elections saw Nepali Congress Party elected
- 1960** Government dismissed by King Mahendra  
**Partyless Panchayat System** established
- 1961** Forest Nationalisation Act - forest regulation brought under Panchayat system
- 1973** National Park and Wildlife Conservation Act introduced
- 1975** Social Service National Co-ordination Council (SSNCC) to co-ordinate their activities
- 1977** Nationalisation Act amended - attempt to decentralise
- 1980** Department for National Parks and Wildlife Conservation established
- 1982** King Mahendra Trust for Nature Conservation established
- 1985** Pilot study in Ghandruk region of Annapurna area
- 1986** Annapurna Conservation Area Project established
- 1989** First National Conservation Strategy (NCS) in collaboration with IUCN
- 1990** **People's Movement:** Pro-democracy movement/agitation led by Nepali Congress (NC) & the United Left Front (ULF) resulting in violent demonstrations  
Democracy returns to Nepal –General elections and decentralisation
- 1991** **May 12<sup>th</sup> 1991 General Election** with Nepali Congress (NC) achieving absolute majority  
Violent street protests launched by Community Party of Nepal-Unified Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML)
- 1992** Forestry Act & Decentralisation Act  
SSNCC replaced by Social Welfare Council (SWC)  
Government decree relating to ACAP
- 1993** Nepal Community Forestry Programme launched
- 1994** Forest Regulation Act  
15<sup>th</sup> Nov no confidence motion issued against NC  
**CPN-UML won mid term election**
- 1995** Main political parties forced **dissolution of CPN-UML**  
**Three party coalition formed** – NC, Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP) & Nepal Sabhavana Party (NSP) – led by PM Sher Bahadur Deuba  
**Nepali Communist Party (NCP)** (a radical left wing Maoist group) **begins insurgency** in Far East and far West Nepal  
Buffer Zone Management Regulation
- 1996** Conservation Area Management Regulation (CAMR)  
Conservation Area Management Directives (CAMD)  
**Feb 13<sup>th</sup> 'Peoples War' launched by Maoist cadres**
- 1997** Environmental Protection Act & 9<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan 1997 – 2002  
**Vote no confidence in PM Deuba** - CPN-UML & RPP formed a new coalition government led by PM Lokendra Bahadur Chand (RPP)  
**Oct 1997 vote co confidence** PM Chand. New coalition government formed by RPP & NC under PM Surya Bahadur Thapa (RPP)
- 1998** March Split in CPN-UML with former PM Bam Dev Gautam forming CPN-ML  
April **Minority Government formed** under NC  
December **Coalition Government formed** NC, CPN-UML & NSP under PM Girija Prasad Koirala

- 1999** May **General Election** NC wins absolute majority – new Government formed under PM Krishna Prasad Bhattarai  
Throughout 1999 internal conflict over party leadership within NC  
Buffer Zone Management Guidelines
- 2000** March resignation PM Bhattarai replaced by PM Koirala  
Revised Forestry Sector Policy
- 2001** **Royal massacre June 1<sup>st</sup>** -  
Prince Gyanendra crowned as King of Nepal June 4<sup>th</sup>  
Increased campaign of violence by Maoists. P M Koirala resigns Sher Bahadur Deuba becomes PM – begins peace talks with Maoists  
Ceasefire declared July 25<sup>th</sup> (two rounds of peace talks between Government & Maoists)  
November - Peace talks end in deadlock. End of ceasefire. Attacks against Army & Police. State of Emergency Nov 26<sup>th</sup>. Royal Nepalese Army enter conflict
- 2002** Nepal Bio-diversity Strategy  
10<sup>th</sup> Five year Plan  
Unprecedented levels of violence (Human Rights report by Amnesty International)
- 2003** Second cease-fire announced Jan 29<sup>th</sup>  
Three rounds of peace talks - Cease-fire ends August 2003
- 2004** February - Government announced management of all protected areas to be handed over to the NGO community
- 2005** February – State of Emergency Declared – parliament dismissed, communication lines cut for one week

**Source:** Various including; Agarwal 2001, Basnet 1992, Bista 1994, Burghart 1994, Devkota 1999, DFID 2003, Edmonds 2002, Gellner 2002, Hobley & Malla 1996, Ives & Messerli 1989, Metz 1991, Mishra 2005, Ramesh 2005, Whitehand 2004

## Appendix 2.2 Overview ACAP structure & institutions

Diagram 1. Phased Approach and Zoning in ACA.



Source: Diagram adapted from information in KMTNC 94, Lama and Lipp 94.

Table 1 Institutions formed in ACA 1986 - 2002.

| Sector       | CAMC    |           | Forest Mgt Sub Committee <sup>2</sup> |           | Mother Groups Ama Toli |            | Other*  |            |
|--------------|---------|-----------|---------------------------------------|-----------|------------------------|------------|---------|------------|
|              | 1986-94 | By 2002   | 1986-94                               | By 2002   | 1986-94                | By 2002    | 1986-94 | By 2002    |
| Ghandruk     | 4       | <b>5</b>  | 18                                    | <b>21</b> | 40                     | <b>52</b>  | 14      | <b>18</b>  |
| Lwang        | 3       | <b>7</b>  | 15                                    | <b>35</b> | 30                     | <b>45</b>  | 4       | <b>9</b>   |
| Sikles       | 3       | <b>7</b>  | 6                                     | <b>7</b>  | 25                     | <b>31</b>  | 8       | <b>14</b>  |
| Bhujung      | 6       | <b>8</b>  | 2                                     | <b>13</b> | 18                     | <b>64</b>  | 7       | <b>12</b>  |
| Manang       | 4       | <b>12</b> | 0                                     | <b>3</b>  | 0                      | <b>26</b>  | 2       | <b>23</b>  |
| Jomson       | 3       | <b>9</b>  | 5                                     | <b>14</b> | 0                      | <b>39</b>  | 6       | <b>13</b>  |
| Lo-Mantang   | 1       | <b>7</b>  | 8                                     | <b>0</b>  | 11                     | <b>33</b>  | 12      | <b>12</b>  |
| <b>Total</b> | 24      | <b>55</b> | 19                                    | <b>93</b> | 124                    | <b>290</b> | 53      | <b>101</b> |
| Members      | 360     | Na        | 540                                   | 540       | 1488                   | na         | 557     | na         |

Source: p7. 1986-1994 data Lama & Lipp 1994 **Bold data** From ACAP (2003)

Other committees range from Electricity Management, Health Post Management Committees, Day Care Centre Committees, and Campsite Management Sub Committees to Snow Leopard and Musk Deer Sub Committees in the Manang region.

<sup>1</sup> \*\*The Sikles sector is where most of the field research has been undertaken for this thesis.

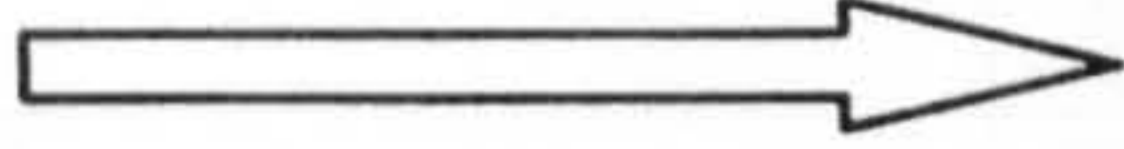
<sup>2</sup> Sub CAMCs were renamed Forest Management Committees in 1999 to reflect the nature of the work that they do.



### Appendix 3.1 Key word formation using Freirean (phonetic) approach

Primers used to generate key words. Eg Favelá

Kane (2001) takes the example of the Portuguese word for slum FAVELA, to demonstrate the process: -

FAVELA  FA VE LA

Then broken into phonemic family:-

|    |    |    |    |    |
|----|----|----|----|----|
| Fa | Fe | Fi | Fo | Fu |
| Va | Ve | Vi | Vo | Vu |
| Va | Ve | Vi | Vo | Vu |

The participants are then asked to make their key own words from the phonemic family presented above and to use these to form more key words and sentences. From the above for example the words Falo or Fala (meaning I Talk / he she talks), and Le (he/she reads) can be made. Blackburn (2000) notes that the method is very efficient in terms of developing written literacy skills due in the main to its creativity and the broader process of conscientization that takes place.

### Appendix 3.2 Overview of terminology associated with 'participation'

| <b>Least participatory</b> | <b>Most participatory</b> | <b>By / source</b>                    |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Tokenistic / decorative    | Participant control       | Arnstein 1969                         |
|                            | Genuine                   | Goulet 1989                           |
| Reliant / dependant        | Self reliant              | Burkey                                |
| Planner centered           | People centered           | Oakley & Marsden 1984                 |
|                            | Autonomous                | Carmen 1996                           |
| Inauthentic                | Authentic                 | Wolfe 1996                            |
| Technocratic               | Participationist          | Wolfe 1996                            |
| Dis-empowering             | Empowering                | Freidman 1992                         |
| Passive                    | Active                    | Pretty & Pimbert 1994,<br>Rogers 1992 |
| Not Holistic               | Holistic                  |                                       |
| Shallow                    | Deep                      |                                       |
| Exclusive                  | Inclusive                 | Freidmann 1992                        |
| Transient                  | Intransient               |                                       |
| Forced                     | Free                      | Rahnema 1992                          |
| Mainstream                 | Radical alternative       | Burkey 1993                           |
| Nominal                    | Transformative            | White 1996                            |
| Formulaic                  | Dynamic and personal      | Hailey 2001                           |
| Instrumental               | Transformative            | McGee 2002                            |
|                            | Real / true               | Carroll 1992                          |

### Appendix 3.3 Overview of the evaluation of REFLECT taken from Archer & Cottingham 1996b

**Table Literacy achievement in first year of pilot scheme of REFLECT**

| Project Area | % achieved basic literacy after one year |       |
|--------------|--|-------|
|              | REFLECT programme                        | Other |
| El Salvador  | 65                                       | 43    |
| Bangladesh   | 60                                       | 26    |
| Uganda       | 68                                       | 22    |

Taken from Archer and Cottingham 1996b p86

Additionally Archer & Cottingham (1996b) note further changes in the local levels that indicate a process of empowerment is also stimulated via the REFLECT approach such as:

- Participants in all three areas spoke of self-realisation as one of the benefits. Self-esteem had increased and ability to both articulate and solve problems has improved. An increase in the knowledge of the local environment was also noted which was reflected in improved relations within the community.
- Increased community participation in decision making bodies was also noted in Uganda and El Salvador with participants taking up positions of formal responsibility.
- Community led actions often resulted from discussions held in the circles in both economic and environmental spheres. The key factor in this process was the fact that learners had independently arrived at decisions and acted based on their own analysis and hence felt local ownership of problems and solutions.
- The REFLECT circles had a positive influence of people's resource management at an individual and household level.
- Gender roles were also analysed and in some cases positive changes were noted for example men were reported to be taking on domestic work that had previously been carried out by women especially in Uganda and Bangladesh.
- Health awareness and initiatives had been noted as having a positive impact upon communities.
- Children of participants were increasingly being enrolled for school with the most dramatic results being noted in Uganda.

Appendix 3.4 Alternative visual diagrams of literacy and REFLECT

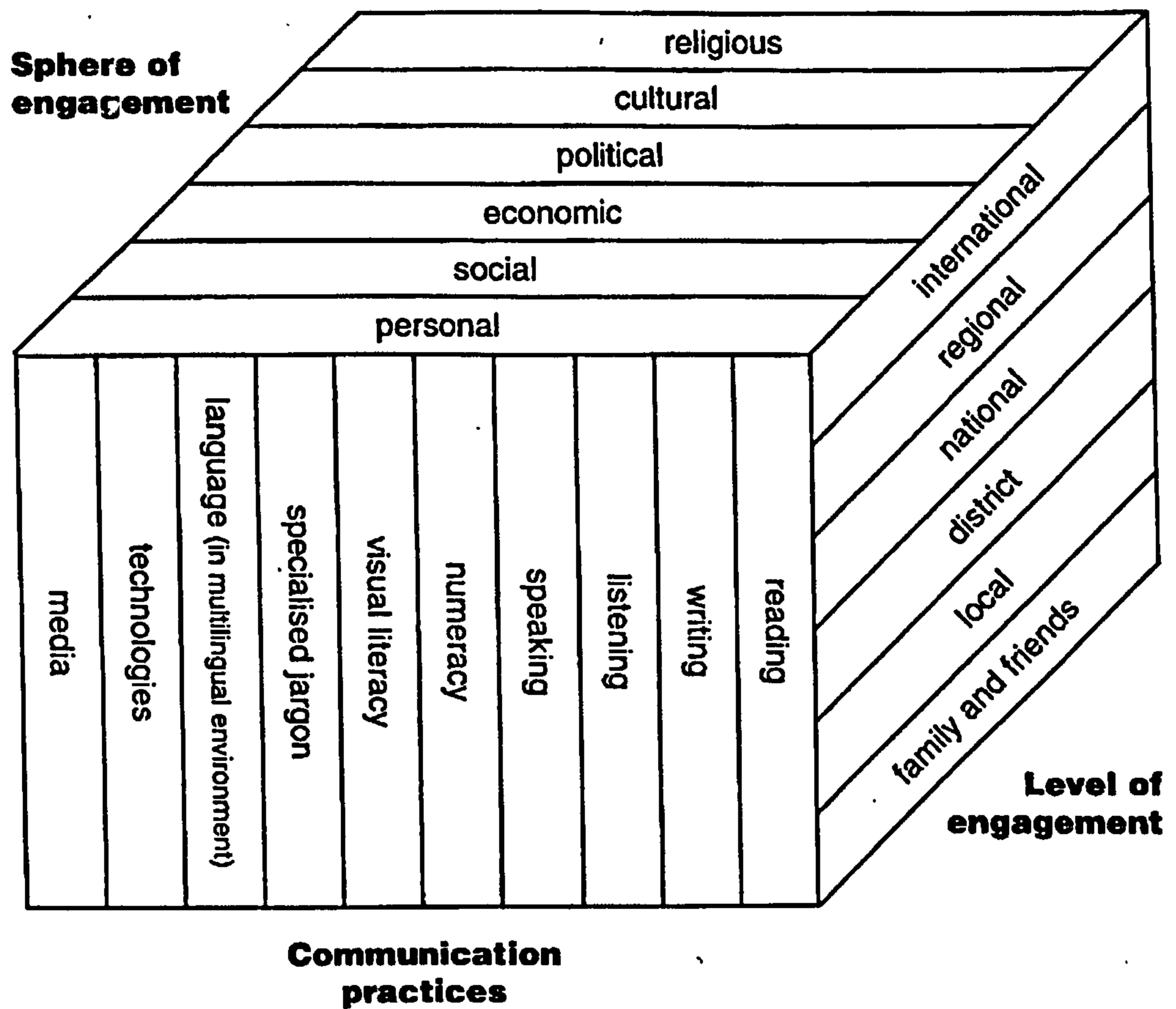
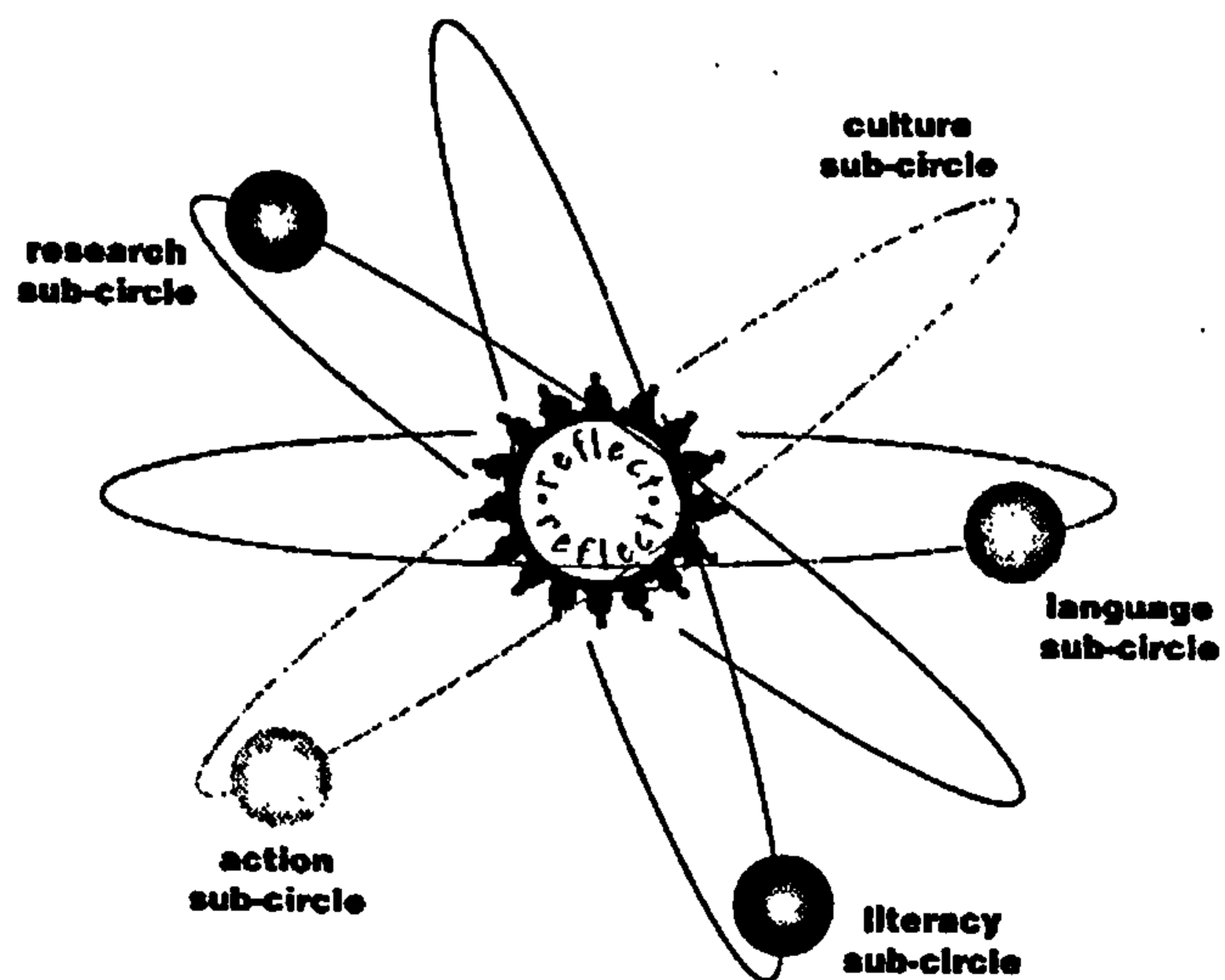


Figure 2. An attempt to visualise a more complex view of literacy - involving a wide range of communication practices.



### Appendix 3.5 Overview of REFLECT in Nepal from Riddell (2001)

|                                   |  |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| <b>Programme Context</b>          | First piloted in 1995 in 11 circles; end of 1999 had encompassed 700 circles, 200 then operating through 30 organisations in 28 districts; ActionAid Nepal superseded by Education Network in training   |
| <b>Reflect Approach</b>           | Diluted quality with expansion   |
| <b>Evaluation Purpose/ Timing</b> | December 1999; 2 weeks; 6-person team of external and internal consultants; to assess the concept, process, practice and impact of Reflect vis a vis other existing approaches and practices of literacy and empowering activities in the development context of Nepal |
| <b>Evaluation Methodology</b>     | 20 circles in 7 districts operated by 7 organisations selected by external consultants bearing in mind geographical and ethnic diversity; circles observed and discussions held of draft report with participants, facilitators, trainers and programme managers       |
| <b>Literacy/ Numeracy</b>         | Most circles did not cover letters and literacy achievement was unsatisfactory   |
| <b>Empowerment</b>                | People have become vocal and in some cases have acted to address local issues; follow up activities almost solely involving saving and credit  |
| <b>Other Outcomes</b>             | More effective when run with the most marginalised peoples; reaching deprived and remote communities; school-age attendance seen to, including of girls  |

|                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| <b>Weaknesses</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-assessment of the training of trainers seems to have been waylaid.</li> <li>• The programme has become compartmentalised, covering particular issues, rather than being adapted to different localities.</li> <li>• Insufficient care had been taken in the selection of facilitators, choosing relatively well-to-do persons who, rather than serving as a bridge to empowerment, were seen as part of the oppressors.</li> <li>• The need to link local with national issues has been lost without the cross-fertilisation that would take place in exchanges amongst facilitators.</li> <li>• There have been insufficient refresher courses.</li> <li>• A secret aura has been placed around the training that has taken place – a lack of transparency.</li> <li>• There are insufficient materials for neo-literates.</li> <li>• Emotionally detached (from Reflect) people have begun running the programmes, without sufficient personal commitment.</li> <li>• PRA has been used as an easy way out of hard statistical work</li> <li>• The practice of giving an orientation on Reflect before an institution takes it up has been abandoned.</li> <li>• Objectives have not been clarified concerning literacy and community empowerment.</li> <li>• Follow-on activities have not always been conceived as part of the programme, nor future courses.</li> <li>• Environmental issues have been addressed in very limited and fragmented ways.</li> <li>• The roles and responsibilities of circle management committees have been unclear.</li> <li>• There is no clear assessment of the output of Reflect.</li> </ul> |
|-------------------|--|

Recommendation

- That an orientation to Reflect be compulsory for organisations wishing to utilise it, as had previously been the case
- That systematic and continuous follow-up is required in order to assess the impact of Reflect
- That there be regular Reflection and soul searching involving critiques of all sorts of Reflect practice and processes at all levels and that an analytical workshop of the trainers together with key players is urgent
- That training be overhauled with an agreed minimum content and possible methods of delivery and tools and that professional trainers should have a particular length of practice and demonstrated ability
- That re-orientation be compulsory for all trainers once every two years in order for them to continue to be trainers
- That the main business of Reflect needs to be clarified, the place of literacy precisely defined and what is central to Reflect in terms of concepts and methods
- That annual documentation of the changes in concepts and practices of Reflect be done nationally and globally (Reflect is rather weak in obtaining and processing factual data,..and achievements are not properly recorded.)
- That Reflect be appropriately named in different contexts and languages
- That the Reflect support mechanisms be upgraded, possibly catered for regionally and with some diversification of skills.

**From Review of 13 Reflect Evaluations Abbey Riddell 2001**

**Available at <http://reflect.actionaid.net/resources/publications/abbyriddell.htm> accessed Feb 2003**

**Appendix 4.1 Full details of research visits 1995-2004**

**Table 1 Preliminary Research**

| Date of visit                  | Focus of research / purpose of visit  |
|--------------------------------|---|
| 1986                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First trip to Nepal</li> <li>• Tourist / holiday</li> </ul>  |
| 1992<br>May - Oct.             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Volunteer teacher in school in Sikles for 6 months</li> </ul>  |
| 1995<br>April – May<br>8 weeks | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As a lecturer at LJMU returned to undertake preliminary research - overview of ACAP and problems it faces</li> </ul>   |
| 1996<br>April – May<br>8 weeks | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visit with co-researcher Rose Sands</li> <li>• Review of Conservation Education &amp; Extension Programme</li> </ul>   |
| 1997<br>Nov. - Dec.<br>4 weeks | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback findings from 1996 to ACAP and Sikles. Develop contacts with Actionaid</li> </ul>   |
| 1998<br>April – May<br>6 weeks | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Further focus on Education and REFLECT approach</li> <li>• Local people in Sikles requested training in non-formal education programme – REFLECT.</li> </ul> |
| 1998 June                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Registered to do Ph.D. part time</li> </ul>  |

Pre PhD research

**Table Overview of field visits in the preliminary research phase & places visited**

|  | Date trip           | Reason   | Other info  |
|--|---------------------|--|---|
| Preliminary research using RRA PRA methods | 1995<br>April - May | Field visit - 8 weeks<br>to explore successes & challenges of the ACAP   | Visited Sikles twice, ACAP offices in Yangjakot, Pokhara and Ghandruk |
|  | 1996<br>April - May | Field visit - 8 weeks  |   |
|  | 1997<br>Dec         | Field visit - 4 weeks  |   |
|  |                     | To feedback findings & gain response from ACAP & local stakeholders. Visit to Sikles to discuss key findings in person<br>Furthered links with Actionaid Nepal |   |

**Table 2 Main Research**

|   |  |                |
|---|--|----------------|
| 1998 Sept   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training of 4 people from Sikles sector in REFLECT,</li> <li>• Circles start in Sikles, Parche, Yangakot &amp; Bhacwock</li> </ul>  |                |
| <b>1998 Oct - Nov.</b><br><b>3 weeks</b>                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visit REFLECT circles in Sikles &amp; Eastern Nepal</li> </ul>  | <b>CYCLE 1</b> |
| <b>Jan 1999</b><br><b>4 weeks</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First Reflect Global Conference in Puri, India</li> <li>• Visit ACAP and Sikles to observe REFLECT classes</li> <li>• Collect information on key issues raised so far in the different REFLECT circles</li> </ul> |                |
| <b>April 1999</b><br><b>6 weeks</b>                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observe REFLECT classes Sikles &amp; Yangjakot</li> <li>• Discuss issues with people</li> </ul>   |                |
| <b>Sept 1999</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Newsletters feed back - secure more funding</li> </ul>  |                |
| <b>April 2000</b><br><b>4 weeks</b>                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visit Sikles REFLECT centres</li> <li>• Monitoring &amp; Evaluation Workshop - Pokhara</li> <li>• Feedback to UWCSEA</li> </ul>   | <b>CYCLE 2</b> |
| <b>Sept 2000</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funds secured</li> <li>• Training of facilitators</li> <li>• Laxmi Dittal to be based in field for 10 months</li> <li>• NO FIELD VISIT</li> </ul>   | <b>CYCLE 3</b> |
| <b>May 2001</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitoring &amp; Evaluation Workshop</li> </ul>   |                |
| <b>Sept 2001</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding secured</li> <li>• Training of facilitators – Sikles</li> </ul>   | <b>CYCLE 4</b> |
| <b>May 2002</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitoring &amp; Evaluation Workshop – Pokhara</li> </ul>   |                |
| <b>Sept 2002</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training of facilitators</li> <li>• Workshop – evaluation &amp; CBO formation</li> </ul>  | <b>CYCLE 5</b> |
| <b>May 2003</b><br><b>Dec 2003 –</b><br><b>Jan 2004</b><br><b>4 weeks</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CBO registered</li> <li>• Field visit to Nepal to meet with facilitators and supporters</li> <li>• Workshop held</li> <li>• Meetings with ACAP, Actionaid Nepal and Education Network</li> </ul>                  |                |

**Dates in bold reflect field visit undertaken.**

**PhD Main Research  
Based on PAR**



## Appendix 4.2 Research undertaken in 1995 & 1996 – interview schedule

Interview schedule 1995: Main focus of interviews– Strengths and weaknesses of ACAP and how to overcome them

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <b>April 1995</b>                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 2 separate visits to Sikles( one with my father and one on own)</li> <li>▪ Visit to Main Regional Office of ACAP in Ghandruk</li> <li>▪ Also KMTNC Office in Kathmandu &amp; ACAP Office in Pokhara</li> </ul> |   |
| <b>Interviews KMTNC</b>                       | <b>Person interviewed</b>   | <b>Notes</b>  |
| <b>Interviews ACAP staff</b>                  | PD<br>CEO<br>WDO  | All contacts were interviewed twice to enable issues to be follow up and clarified<br>Notes taken rather than taped (technical problem with recorder) |
| <b>ACAP staff in regional offices</b>         | OIC<br>CEO<br>WDO   | In Ghadruk – original HQ of ACAP  |
| <b>ACAP staff Local Level – Sikles sector</b> | OIC<br>WDO<br>FR<br>Agricultural Helpers  | Notes taken on all interviews<br>FR – also took me on transect walk of village and I accompanied WDO on home visits                                   |
| <b>Local people</b>                           | Teachers – local,<br>Political leaders, CAMC leaders<br>Traditional leaders<br>Chair of Ama Toli<br>Ex students whom I had taught   | Interviewed in English & Nepali depending upon language with the help of local Ex headmaster who speaks Nepali Gurung and English                     |
| <b>Children</b>                               | Focus group in classes<br>Seasonal calander structure, Time line,<br>Hopes & dreams exercise  |   |
| <b>Transect walk</b>                          | Two members ACAP<br>Two different local people- one adult one youth   |   |
| <b>Interview Ex ACAP Staff</b>                | Now at KMTNC HQ   |   |

**Interview schedule 1996: Focus of discussions: - Issues Surrounding effectiveness of CEEP – successes & challenges and hopes for future**

|  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| April 1996                                       | <b>2 separate visits to Sikles</b><br><b>one with R Sands</b><br><b>one on own</b><br><b>Accompanied staff on CEEP programme in Yangjakot</b><br><b>Visited Jomson and revisited Ghandruk</b>    |   |
| Attended the CEEP Evaluation Workshop – May 1996 | All CE Staff from ACAP assembled in Pokhara  | I was invited to this event as a participant observer following an interview with the CEO in Pokhara  |
| Interviews ACAP staff                            | PD<br>CEO<br>WDO<br>TO   | Again notes taken apart from joint Joint interview with WDO & TO taped and transcribed in full  |
| ACAP staff in regional offices                   | WDO  | In Ghadrak – original HQ of ACAP  |
| ACAP staff Local Level – Sikles sector           | OIC<br>CEO<br>WDO<br>FR<br>Agricultural Helpers  | Interviewed formally plus numerous opportunities to follow up issues as accompanies staff on a study tour to Yangjakot as part of CEEP activities surrounding Bhudha Jayanti  |
| Local people                                     | Headmaster local school<br>Teachers – local, Political leaders. CAMC Chair & members, Traditional leaders, Traditional healers, Active members<br>Ama Toli Toli<br>Ex students whom I had taught | Local translator and Masters student (and friend) , Hitman Gurung helped with interviews especially with the traditional leaders and healers who all spoke Gurung in the main.<br>Ex students discussed issues in English with me and Forest Ranger from ACAP provided translation support for the interview with the CAMC Chairman |
| Children   | Lali Guras recipients (traditional occupational caste)<br>Non school attenders   | Contact was made with recipients through two of the members on the Lali Guras Committee<br><br>Basic interviews in Nepal around the issue of schooling and education & hopes for future   |
| Interview Ex ACAP Staff                          | Now at Mountain Institute<br>Now at UNDP<br>Now at WWF<br>Now SEACOW   | Mixture of interviews and follow up discussions on key issues depending upon my previous contact with the person in question<br>Full notes kept in field diary  |
| Actionaid Nepal                                  | Project Director   | Formal meeting with Ramesh Singh with Rose & myself – detailed notes taken of key issues  |

**Interview schedule 1997 & April 1998**

FEEDBACK RESEARCH - research undertaken in Dec 1997 &amp; April 1998

Focus of discussions: - feeding back findings from previous two visits for confirmation / validation / triangulation – Aim to assess interest in REFLECT by stakeholder

|  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| Dec 1997                                   |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Visit to Sikles</b><br/>(Participated in conservation education day)</li> <li>▪ <b>Visit to ACAP in Pokhara &amp; KMTNC</b></li> </ul>  |
| <b>FOCUS Pokhara &amp; Sikles</b>          |  |   |
| Interviews ACAP staff                      | PD<br>CEO  | Discussed key issues and gained feedback - plus followed up with email  |
| ACAP staff Local Level – Sikles sector     | OIC – new appointment<br>CEO   | New OIC so introduction & feedback was required   |
| Local people                               | Local teachers<br>Political leaders<br>CAMC Chair & members<br>Traditional leaders<br>Active members Ama Toli<br>Non-Gurungs             | Summary & Nepali version used in feedback – useful tool for explaining clearly the key points<br>Also Hitman supported interviews with local leaders in Gurung<br><br>Whom I had become to know through previous visits – mainly discussions on path ways                           |
| Interview Ex ACAP Staff                    | Full report provided to all those whom had previously been consulted   |   |
| April 1998                                 |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Visit to Sikles accompanied by Rose</b></li> <li>▪ <b>ACAP in Pokhara</b></li> <li>▪ <b>&amp; KMTNC</b></li> </ul>  |
| <b>FOCUS MORE ON LOCAL LEVEL IN SIKLES</b> |  |   |
| Interviews ACAP staff                      | PD   | PD only short meeting   |
| ACAP staff Local Level – Sikles sector     | OIC & WD   | Numerous discussions in relation to practicalities of introducing REFLECT   |
| Local people                               | Active members Ama Toli<br>Local 'community' workers / socially active people<br><br>Non-Gurung community<br>Ex Student from Sarki caste | Focus on assessing actual level of demand for REFLECT<br>Discussed practicalities and potential opportunities for training in REFLECT<br>Discussed potential barriers to the process<br>Hitman again accompanied us on the visit to Sikles<br>To gain insight into demand in Parche |
| Actionaid Nepal & Education Network        | Staff involved in REFLECT such as Manvi Shrivasta & Education Network Staff  | Focus on how to meet the demand in Sikles and how to support the process  |

## Appendix 4.3 Example of interview transcript 1996

### Unstructured interview with Officer in Charge (OIC) Forest Ranger (FR) & Women and Development Officer (WDO) Sikles & other ACAP staff in April 1996

*2<sup>nd</sup> day in Sikles – sitting in canteen of the ACAP building*

Q What do you think are the priorities for ACAP in Sikles?

We have to build the Community Development Committees [now known as CAMCs] so that they can stand on their own two feet that is why we are paying so much attention to training them and giving them different meetings and activities .... It is along process.

Q How long?

Well we have to gather together the people and first for the CDC. All the people who are interested in joining come. Before we call them, that is, before the announcement is made we have to motivate people – inform them – so we have a video programme and extension slide shows. There is lots of dancing and then we can call on them to form the CDC, but we only have small power, we (ACAP) have the right to pick a candidate from the women or from the castes such as Kami and Damai but we can not appoint one if there is no volunteer.

Q Does this cause any conflict ?

not really mainly there is some conflict about things like forest use especially where the boundaries of ACAP are. Some people want to be in ACAP but they are outside the geographical boundary – some of the people who are in ACAP don't want to let others in and there is a big problem – we cannot solve it from our side or from our capacity.

Q Is the geographical boundary used in forming the CDC?

Yes we form the CDCs on the basis of the resource use pattern and if some forest is outside the ACAP area and the settlement is in it then this can create problems as we then have to bring the resources into the ACAP area or we have to form a new CDC in that area

Q Is it easy to motivate people to form a CDC?

yes there are only 15 people who are nominated and so far we have not had a problem. In the future we may have to use ballot being on the CDC is a prestigious position to hold in society – like being a mayor or something – it is difficult to change the members once they have formed as it is prestigious position. If they break the law though then they will be kicked out, we have the right to kick that person out but they will feel bad and loose prestige – one person in Sikles was kicked out [he does not mention the name and I do not ask]. People tend to be elected if they are good speakers and are known for doing good work in the community if they have lots of leisure time, good knowledge and contact with higher officials, like that... yes people are selected who have good relations in society.

Q How do you include women and other castes then if they are not selected ?

The VDC is by election and the VDC can be on the CDC but he cannot be the Chairman of the CDC in most cases the VDC and CDC is different. This is useful as the VDC coordinates the government funds for local development and this prevents replication of projects and programmes between the VDC and CDC. Also if the VDC is in the CDC then this is a good source of information. We usually find that in this valley the local leaders are from the Gurung people and they suggest who should be on the committee we try to encourage them to select themselves a person from different caste and also to choose one active women to be on the CDC. This person they usually choose from the Ama Toli as there are many loud women and active women in the villages here (laughs) yes the women are quite strong in their voices.

INTERVIEW INTERRUPTED – Forest Ranger enters to report on the Germans we had seen the previous day on our trek to Sikles who were collecting beetles at the campsite. The IOC and FR go off to talk to them about their activities and see if they have a permit.

Whilst they are gone the WDO joins me and we begin to discuss what has changed :-

**Q How are the programmes for women doing nowadays?**

Many of the programmes are going well and lots of women are involved in conservation activities, they are very active in planting trees in Sikles did you see how big they have grown when you came into the village? [I note that I had – the trees she is referring to were planted when I was there in 1992 on the steep slope as you enter the village where many landslides had been occurring – the trees had grown into a small wood and the landslide problem seemed to be averted for the meantime] There are many more sites like this I can take you to see them tomorrow or day after – especially on the Dhaprangthar side of the village yes there are many sites there soon the women will not have to walk so far to collect their wood and fodder for the cattle.

**Q I'd like that. Are there any programmes that the women would like to see introduced ?**

Nowadays in Sikles there is no adult literacy classes we have run the two classes here both basic and advanced and now there is none. There are classes running in Bhachowck and Chahcowk from 7 till 9 at night and oh yes there is one in Narmajung for advanced learners. [OIC returns and joins us at the table] People ask for classes again in Sikles but now they have done them everyone can read and write. WDO is called away to the radio leaving me to talk to OIC.

**Q WDO was just telling me that many women still ask for literacy classes - do you feel that women in Sikles need them ?**

literacy classes are a focus mainly in the beginning but there are many programmes and many focuses – the women are greedy for literacy they like it too much ! The classes have taught them to read and write and they have also had the advanced class and also they have conservation education but still they are hungry for education but we only have limited resources and we need to develop courses – we are so busy in our extension work though ke game (what can you do ?) actually I think there may be one class running privately in Dhaprangthar you should go and see if it is I am sure there is – near the top of the ward in the house of one of our staff – yes I am sure of it. You must also speak to the CEO he will know or the WDO – [FR returns he thanks us for bringing the activities of the Germans to his attention –returns and conversation turns to preparations for the extension programme that is to run later in the week and then to some people who have come to the office to seek advice over where to best plant trees in a landslide area. FR invites me to join him on a site visit to the area the following day]

Staff go their separate way and I go off in search of Agricultural helpers who may know where the literacy class is running.

#### Appendix 4.4 List of Monitoring and Evaluation workshops held 1998 – 2004

| YEAR | Training / Workshop   |
|------|---|
| 1998 | Five days basic REFLECT facilitators training facilitated by Kishor Bhandari in Gorkha to run centres   |
| 1999 | Ten days basic REFLECT facilitators training facilitated by Basanta Kunwar and Laxmi Dhital in Pokhara – for ten facilitators from Sikles, Parche and Yangjakot                     |
| 2000 | Five days group formation and management training facilitated by Nirala Tiwari and Laxmi Dhital in Sikles   |
| 2000 | Three days REFLECT facilitator Refresher training facilitated by Ganesh Bhakata Sitikhu and Laxmi Dhital in Pokhara   |
| 2001 | Five days Monitoring and Evaluation Workshop in Sikles (3 days) and Yangjakot (2days) facilitated by Ganesh Bhakta Sitikhu, Laxmi Dhital and Kiran Bohara                           |
| 2001 | Six days REFLECT facilitator Refresher in Sikles facilitated by Laxmi Dhital and Kiran Bohara   |
| 2002 | Three days REFLECT Review Workshop in Pokhara facilitated by Ganesh Bhakta Sitikhu, Laxmi Dhital and Kiran Bohara   |
| 2003 | Four days REFLECT Review Workshop in Pokhara facilitated by Ganesh Bhakta Sitikhu, Laxmi Dhital and Kiran Bohara  |
| 2004 | Workshop with REFLECT facilitators and CBO members in Pokhara facilitated by Laxmi Dhital, Kiran Bohara and Sara Parker   |
| 2004 | Two facilitators along with Laxmi and Kiran attend the Regional Workshop of REFLECT practioners in Dharan in February on behalf of Madikhola Women Development Organisation, Sikles |

#### Photos: Monitoring and evaluation workshop in Pokhara May 2003



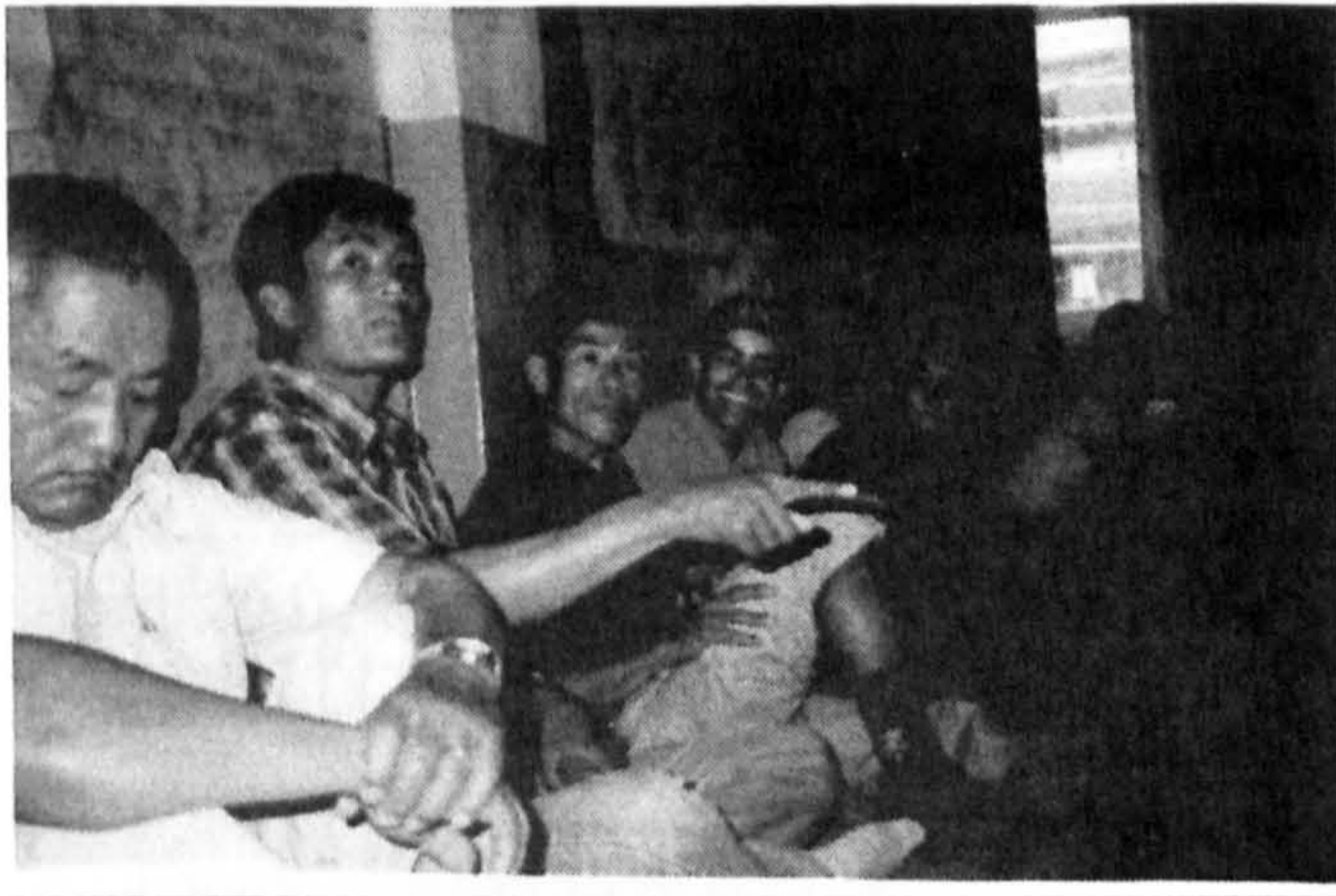
Facilitators gather in Pokhara for a Monitoring and evaluation workshop an integral component to REFLECT in the Sikles sector of the ACAP.



Sharing ideas and making plans for the future



Information and ideas generated is recorded for all to see then used as a basis for the report compiled by Laxmi & Kiran the support workers.



Members from the 'wider' community also are invited to participate in the workshops by the facilitators.

Here from left to right we see the CAMC Chairman, the VDC Chairman and Suraj Kumar Gurung a local teacher with facilitators

**Appendix 4.5 Detail on media at different stages of the research to feedback information into the 'field'**

**Overview of media used 1996-2004**

| <b>Date of visit</b> | <b>Focus of research / purpose of visit</b> | <b>Feedback to field<br/>What – to who</b>  |
|----------------------|---|---|
| 1995                 | Preliminary research<br>Overview ACAP       |   |
| 1996 April           | Focus CEEP                                  | Draft Chapter for Parker 1997 paper taken into field - to KMTNC ACAP staff as well as to some key informants<br>Newsletter to ACAP & Sikles             |
| 1997 Dec.            | Feedback Report to variety of stakeholders  | Report (Parker & Sands 1997) to ACAP<br>Summary of report in English & Nepali<br>Discussion with local people summarising key points for their comments |
| 1998 April           | Request for training                        | Report/ Proposal to UWCSEA – with aim of securing funding for REFLECT   |
| 1998 June            | Registered to do Ph.D. part time            |   |
| Sept 1998            | REFLECT initiated<br>REFLECT Cycle 1        | <b>On an annual basis in each Cycle: -</b>  |
| April 1999           |   | 1) Report to UWCSEA + funding request   |
| Sept 1999            | REFLECT Cycle 2                             | 2) Newsletter to Nepal in English & Nepali  |
| May 2000             |   | 3) Field reports from Laxmi & Kiran fed back to REFLECT circles   |
| Sept 2000            | REFLECT Cycle 3                             | 4) Monitoring & Evaluation Reports produced – available through Education Network or REFLECT centres in Sikles  |
| April 2001           |   | +   |
| Sept 2001            | REFLECT Cycle 4                             | April 2000 Video for UWC & REFLECT participants / ACAP  |
| May 2002             |   | +   |
| Spet 2002            | REFLECT Cycle 5                             | Conference papers sent to ACAP & REFLECT supporters   |
| May 2003             |   | Web site being developed  |

Preliminary Research cycle



# 1. A selection of newsletters produced for feeding back into the field

## First newsletter produced in 1997 ( 2 of 4 pages shown)

### NEWSLETTER TO NEPAL

NAMASTE - from Sara & Rose

We spent two months working in Nepal in 1996 studying the Annapurna Conservation Area Project. We visited Kathmandu and Pokhara and many villages in the ACA including Sikles, Jomson, Ghandruk and Yangjacot. We would like to thank all the people we met in Nepal for their time and help. We would especially like to thank the ACAP staff for sharing their ideas and the people in Sikles for their hospitality and time. We hope that the students continue to enjoy conservation classes and to study hard towards their exams.

This newsletter has been written to share some of our work with those who took part in our research (anusandan). It is also a way of saying thank you to all those whose ideas we have shared.



Above is a picture of Sara and Rose in Jomson.

This newsletter has been written for students in the Sikles Modern High School and for use by ACAP in the Annapurna Area.

#### Conservation Education and Extension Programme. (CEEP)

The ACAP started in 1986 and feels that education is at the centre of sustainable development. It has two types of conservation education programmes:-

1. formal education in schools
2. informal extension activities

ACAP also runs adult education classes in some villages.

The CEEP Officer in Pokhara is Him Bahadur Gurung. While we were in Nepal he was very busy writing a report for the Overseas Development Agency in the UK which funds part of the CEEP.



Him Bahadur Gurung has worked for ACAP in Ghandruk and is now based in Pokhara.

He is the Conservation Education Officer for ACAP and is working hard towards improving the curriculum of the education programme. We wish him luck in the future.

ACAP employ Conservation Education Assistants. In Sikles this person is Sher Jung Gurung. Many of the schools in the Annapurna Conservation Area have teachers who teach Conservation Education to students in classes 6,7 and 8. ACAP and Conservation teachers are developing a new curriculum based on the sharing of ideas.

#### Conservation Education in Sikles.

In Sikles, we attended conservation classes with class seven on how important forests are in looking after the environment.

Together with Suraj Kumar, the conservation teacher, Sara asked the students about the local forests. The students knew a lot about the forests and would go to collect firewood on Saturdays when there was no school.

Together class seven drew a map of the local forests that were used for collecting fire wood. Other forests such as the religious forest and the forest where a special green plant is collected were also drawn. This forest was a long way from Sikles and it takes the children a day to walk there. They go with friends and stay the night in the jungle while they collect the vegetable which is very good for your health.

Below is a picture of class seven and the map that they drew. They also drew some of the many plantation sites that have been planted by the community since ACAP came to the village.



Their teacher is called Suraj Kumar Gurung who has worked in the school for over 17 years. He likes teaching conservation as well as other subjects because he feels that

it is important to think about the future and make sure students realise the importance of looking after the environment.

We wish class seven and the rest of the school students good luck in their exams and that they continue to enjoy conservation classes.

#### MOBILITY MAPS - a day in the life of a student in Sikles.

We wanted to find out about what children who go to school in Sikles do in an average day. We went to class 8 and asked the students to tell us what they did and when.

Many of the children are very busy both before and after school. Here is what some of the children do. "Before school I cook with my mother" "I wash my clothes before I come to school" "Everyday I feed the buffaloes" "I read my school books after school" "At night I play with my friends"

#### Grammar point

When you talk about things that you do every day I you must use the present simple to make your sentences.

| Present simple |      |      |
|----------------|------|------|
| I              | go   | eat  |
| You            | go   | eat  |
| We             | go   | eat  |
| They           | go   | eat  |
| He / She       | goes | eats |

Here is an example of what Sara and Rose do everyday.

Sara gets up at 7.00 every morning. Sara and Rose work at a University in Liverpool, England. Sara teaches Geography and Rose teaches Health Studies.

## First REFLECT newsletter produced -Front page shown in English & Nepali

News from the field -- July 1999

नामाअते प्लफल केन्द्र (रिफ्ले) अरादिदि

#### Sikles - Dhanprang Thar

Ganga Maya Gurung facilitates a group of 15 Gurung women. They meet every day except Sunday to talk about problems and learn new words. The classes started in October 1998 and the participants have produced a local map and a seasonal calendar.



**सिक्लेस**  
सिक्लेस, धनप्रधरना इण्डाष्ट फार्मिक महिनादेखि संचालन भइरहेको रिफ्लेकेन्द्र कक्षा । प्लफल केन्द्र मा जन्मा जठ जना गुरुङ्ग जातिको महिलाहरूको सहभागिता छ । यस कक्षाको लागि उत्त घरवादे नै सहयोगी रूपमा श्रीमती गंगा माया गुरुङ्गको धनैत भएको छ ।



#### KEY WORDS & CHANGES

Many key words have been made since the start of classes. Also participants wanted to focus on numeracy skills to improve their ability in this area. A group of researchers visited the class to find out what changes had been seen in Sikles since the introduction of electricity in Sikles.

Health issues were being talked about when Sara visited the class in April 1999. The women shared their knowledge on the causes of certain health problems and how to solve them. Ideas were shared on the use of local herbs. The women laughed and joked in class and enjoyed the opportunity to meet and discuss local issues. The group was keen to have classes running after the agricultural season. One issue that had been raised in the group was the lack of a place where Gurung and Non Gurung women could meet. The key word developed was meeting hall. Since then a small meeting hall has been built in Sikles for people to meet, talk and learn together.

#### सिक्लेस

यस प्लफल केन्द्रमा गानिबार वाहेक प्रत्येक दिन देबुका उ बने देबि नव बने सन्ध्या को कक्षा संचालन हुने गर्दछ । यस कक्षामा धुन शुरुमा साधारण शब्दहरू अनाएर लेख्न पर्यन सिक्केका थिए । हाल आएर मूल शब्दहरू निकाली प्लफल गर्नुको साथै खेड्ने, पार्ने, गनुर्छेव बनाउने, साधारण जोड घराउ हिसाबहव सिक्ने र चिपुडी पत्र लेख्ने जस्ता कार्यहरू नियमित रूपमा हुदै आएका छन् । साथ साथै सामाजिक नक्सा, भौतिकी पाठो, चाहना स्तरीकरण, गतिशिल नक्सा आदिमा पि.आर.ए. को प्रयोग पनि संगै गर्दै लगेका छन् ।

2 Video cover Parker & Gurung (2000) Sikles & Yangjakot Chalphal Kendra (REFLECT) video available from ACAP, Pokhara, Chalphal Kendra Group Sikles and Sara Parker

Video Cover & supporting text 2000

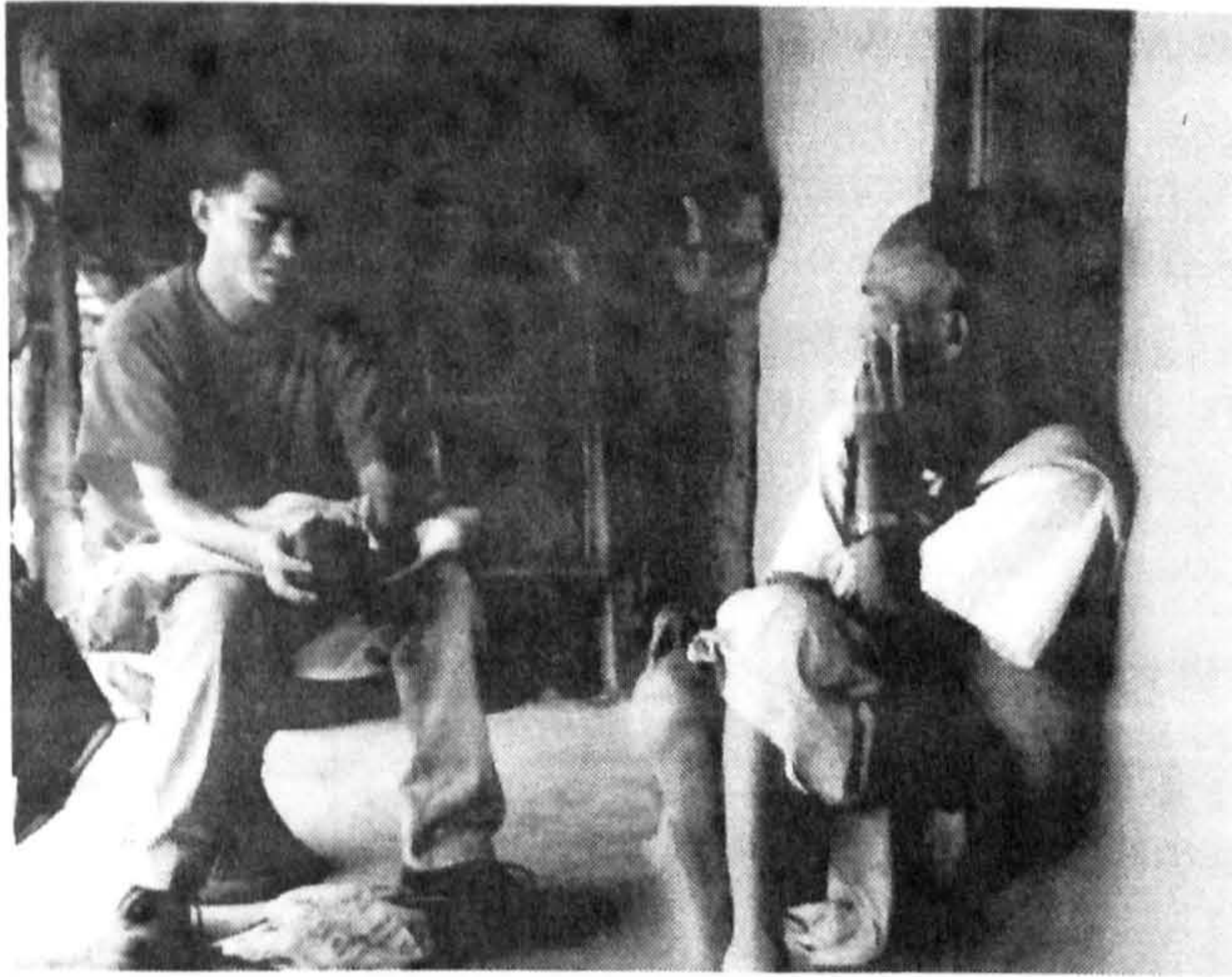
सिक्लेस क्षेत्रमा संचालन भइरहेको  
क्षलफल केन्द्रको बारेमा एक कलक  
Sikles & Yangjakot Chalphal Kendra  
(REFLECT) video  
by Sara Parker & Hitman Gurung August 2000  
NEPALI  
(Duration 40min)

सिक्लेस क्षेत्रमा संचालन भइरहेको क्षलफल केन्द्रको बारेमा एक कलक  
Sikles & Yangjakot Chalphal Kendra (REFLECT)video  
by Hitman Gurung & Sara Parker August 2000 (Duration 40min)

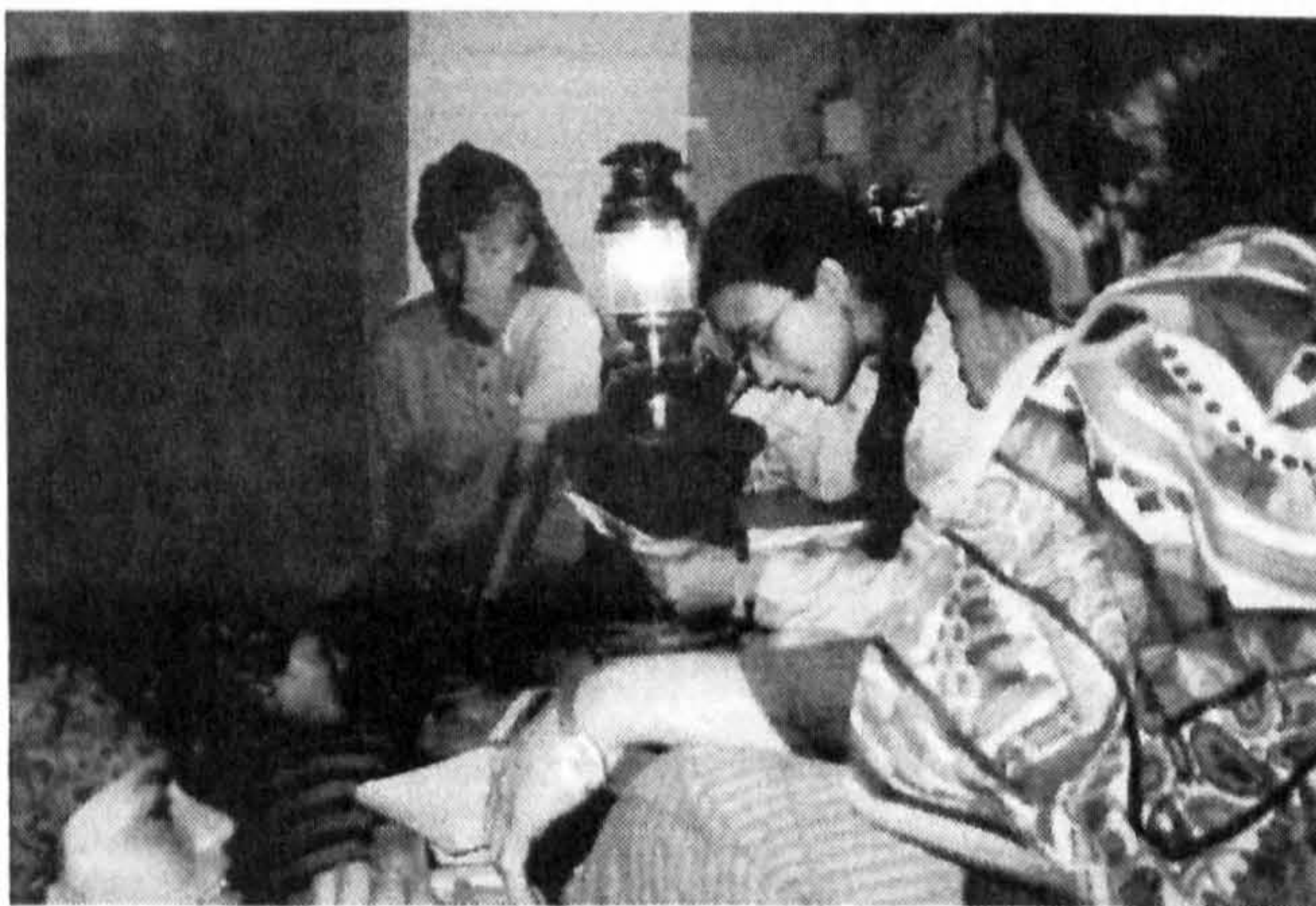
Reflect is a new approach to non formal education pioneered by Actionaid. This video shows how the people in Sikles & Yangjakot (Kaski District, Nepal) have participate in this non formal education programme. The programme has been running since 1998 and is now in its third year. It has been supported financially by the Global Concerns Project of UWCSEA, Singapore & logistically by Education Network in Kathmandu. The Reflect centres in the Sikles sector are called Chalphal Kendra which means ~ discussion groups ~ a name chosen by the local people to emphasise the importance of discussion and dialogue in the learning process. We hope this video gives you a feel for where these centres are running and the impact that they are having.

Thank you to the people of Sikles & Yangjkaot, Actionaid (Nepal), Education Network (Nepal), UWCSEA(Singapore), ACAP (Nepal), Laxmi Dittal & Conan Leavey, Rose Sands and Hitman Gurung for their support and participation in this exciting project~ Sara Parker November 2000

### 3. Feeding back in person – a selection of photos



Discussing findings in  
Dec 1997 with traditional  
leader



Laxmi in a Discussion  
Centre feeding back  
information about Sikles  
to Yangjakot



In Discussion centre in  
Yangjakot



At the first monitoring  
and evaluation workshop  
in Pokhara in April 2000

## Appendix 4.6 Sample of annotated emails from Laxmi & Kiran

**Overview:** 210 emails saved in work email account (over 50 sent this year).

Many emails are logistical and relate to running of centres, sending of money, arranging of workshops and general emails to update me on the situation in Nepal. Cut and pasted over 40 emails into word. These were selected due to the informative nature of their content in order to examine the key issues in more detail. Annotated them to highlight key points.

NOTE: Names of people taken out {name} as permission to use not gained

|            |  |
|------------|--|
| 2003/03/18 | <p>Dear Sara, Namaste !</p> <p>We are fine here and hope same with you. We got your previous email with the attachments of photographs. We succeed to open the website and got chance to see Jamie and Maya. Really they are cute. We became exited to see them. There are many photos and we could manage to see some of them and will be seeing others too!</p> <p>By the way, we got phone call from {facilitator}, Sikles. They have celebrated Women's day with various programmes. She was very happy at the time of conversation as they became able to organize the programme through REFLECT circles for the first time. She was very exited because they became able to make the huge participation of women for the competitive games. According to her the participants were from Sikles and Parche. They have built up the confidence that they can do something there themselves. We would like to inform you that the ACAP had been celebrating the Women's day in the past but there was not involvement of ACAP this year. Rests of the things are fine, We will be writing to you, Thanking You, Sincerely Yours, Laxmi / Kiran Nepal</p> <p>P.S- Please extend our Namaste to Bob, love to Jamie and Maya.</p>  |
| 2003/04/08 | <p>Dear Sara, Namaste !! It's really nice to hear from you that you have got the money from Singapore. We can't forget that it became possible to get money due to your hard effort and will extend your regards to the people of Sikles. Hope they will be very happy to know about this wonderful news. They can't forget you and your support forever. We will spend the money according to their suggestions.</p> <p>We are thinking to go Pokhara/Sikles to register CBO as soon as we get money from you. {Friend} can bring money at her convenience. You can send rest of the money through Bank. In this connection please make contact with {friend doing research in Nepal} because we got money in a faster way which she sent to us. Certainly, we will open the bank account of CBO to deposit the money.</p> <p>It will be our pleasure to get Newsletter with photos so that we can distribute to the facilitators and some people of Sikles. CBO has not registered yet so that they can't produce Newsletter now but we hope they will produce after the CBO get registered. It's a very good idea that you are going to update the summary of Key Words and the information regarding the formation of CBO. We will be very happy to get it too!!!! We are pleased to know that you are looking for other sources in UK to support the programme. You are absolutely right that it needs registered as soon as possible and that it have own bank account. We are also trying to look other sources [of funds] like ACAP, VDC and Ama tolies of Sikles and other organization too. Therefore we are in rush to register CBO and we will sort out the things in this trip to Pokhara/Sikles. Hitman Dai is in Pokhara and has invited us to provide help to register the CBO. Hope it will be registered soon and we can make approach to other organizations on behalf of "Madi Khola Women Development Organization". We are also thinking to set up centres for the childrens and will raise this issue in our M&amp;E workshop and let you know about it. We were dreaming to see you here in April but you have changed your mind. We know you are much busy these days because Jamie and Maya are very small. However, we are very much happy that we are getting chance to see you here in December with Bob, Jamie and Maya. Please do not change your mind again to come here in Nepal on december. We can't wait to see you here. Yes, of course we will be very happy to do research with you and {other person} next year. We are always free to assist you as we have been working for you since few years. It will be our pleasure to go with you anywhere and visit people to collect information with you.</p> |

|            |   |
|------------|---|
|            | <p>We have already completed 1st stage survey of {other PhD student} and sent all the information for her in English. And now we are still doing 2nd stage survey for her with sample households. It is nearly completed and will send it to her asap. We are trying our best to make her satisfied and hope she is happy with our work. It was interested for us to get new experience in a Squatter community. It is all because of you and would like to offer our hearty thanks to you again. As you know we have done some kind of research for you first, then for others. In this connection we have built up our confidence to do research in different fields and would like to request you to suggest us if someone needs such kind of works to be done here in Nepal. Again, it will be our pleasure to get this kind of work by the help of you and we are always ready to do once you tell us. Rests of the things are fine, We will be writing to you. Thanking you, Sincerely Yours, Laxmi / Kiran Nepal</p>   |
| 2004/03/06 | <p>Dear Sara Namaste</p> <p>We are fine and hoping that you and your family are fine. Sorry, I am late to sent email to you but hope you got email that Kiran sent you regarding the workshop in Dharan. The sharing workshop was so interesting where we shared our experiences and at the same time got information that how others are working in the same theme in different parts of the country. Two of our facilitators (Ganga Maya and Nandashir) shared their experiences. This time, we just support them how to share their experiences but they came to the front line and presented the matters. IT WAS AMAZING!!! All participants were interested to listen and to know from them. These two facilitators took place as the chief guest of the workshop! They made others spellbound sharing their efforts in programme and changes through the REFLECT. They shared how they started, how they involved the local community in programme and how they have formed their own networking group as an NGO and the support mechanism</p> <p>Participants of the workshop shown their interest to visit Sikles and learn from the local people. This time, we could get opportunity to see how our program people are encouraged and how they can articulate their experiences if they get chance! We are so happy because our facilitators are able to express their views if they get chance and guidance.</p> <p>The people of Sikles invited us to take part in Women's day (March 8<sup>th</sup>) but due to "Bandh" and Holi Festival, we could not attend the program. After completing {students} work, we have planned to go to Sikles for 7-10 days that I will inform you earlier.</p> <p>If you are interested to see the documents that the facilitators presented in the workshop, I can send you. Please write me if you like.</p> <p>Sara, please forward my regards to Bob, Jamie and Maya.</p> <p>Thank you Yours: Laxmi</p> |
|            |   |

## Appendix 5.1 Participation in Chalphal Kendra 1998- 2004

| PHASE 1      |             | 1998-1999   |              |           |          |
|--------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|-----------|----------|
| Ward name    | Ward Number | Facilitator | Participants | Female    | Male     |
| Dhaprangthar | 7           | Ganga Maya  | 13           | 13        | 0        |
| Parche       | 4           | Bhadra Bir  | 13           | 12        | 1        |
| Yangjakot    | 1           | Renuka      | 11           | 11        | 0        |
| <b>TOTAL</b> |             |             | <b>37</b>    | <b>36</b> | <b>1</b> |

| PHASE 2      |             | 1999-2000   |              |            |          |
|--------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|------------|----------|
| Ward name    | Ward Number | Facilitator | Participants | Female     | Male     |
| Dhaprangthar | 7           | Goma        | 17           | 16         | 1        |
| Savathar     | 5           | Nun Suba    | 7            | 7          | 0        |
| Gairitahr    | 6           | Hitmaya     | 9            | 9          | 0        |
| Lamathar     | 9           | Nandashree  | 26           | 26         | 0        |
| Harpurthar   | 8           | Kuldavi     | 12           | 11         | 1        |
| Parche       | 4           | Bhadra Bir  | 11           | 10         | 1        |
| Yangjakot    | 1           | Renuka      | 12           | 10         | 2        |
| Yangjakot    | 3           | Omkumari    | 12           | 9          | 3        |
| Yangjakot    | 5           | Renu        | 24           | 24         | 0        |
| <b>TOTAL</b> |             |             | <b>130</b>   | <b>122</b> | <b>8</b> |

| PHASE 3        |             | 2000-2001   |              |            |          |
|----------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|------------|----------|
| Ward name      | Ward Number | Facilitator | Participants | Female     | Male     |
| Dhaprangthar 1 | 7           | Ganga Maya  | 13           | 10         | 3        |
| Dhaprangthar 2 | 7           | Goma        | 12           | 12         | 0        |
| Savathar       | 5           | Nun Suba    | 13           | 12         | 1        |
| Gairitahr      | 6           | Hitmaya     | 9            | 9          | 0        |
| Lamathar       | 9           | Nandashree  | 14           | 14         | 0        |
| Harpurthar     | 8           | Kuldevi     | 8            | 8          | 0        |
| Parche         | 4           | Bhadra Bir  | 11           | 10         | 1        |
| Yangjakot      | 1           | Renuka      | 8            | 8          | 0        |
| Yangjakot      | 3           | Keshuba     | 12           | 12         | 0        |
| Yangjakot      | 5           | Ashmaya     | 17           | 17         | 0        |
| <b>TOTAL</b>   |             |             | <b>117</b>   | <b>112</b> | <b>5</b> |

| PHASE 4        |             | 2001-2002   |              |            |          |
|----------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|------------|----------|
| Ward name      | Ward Number | Facilitator | Participants | Female     | Male     |
| Dhaprangthar 1 | 7           | Ganga Maya  | 10           | 9          | 1        |
| Dhaprangthar 2 | 7           | Goma        | 13           | 13         | 0        |
| Dhaprangthar 3 | 7           | Taula Shree | 14           | 13         | 1        |
| Savathar       | 5           | Nun Suba    | 13           | 12         | 1        |
| Gairitahr      | 6           | Hitmaya     | 8            | 8          | 0        |
| Lamathar       | 9           | Nandashree  | 16           | 14         | 2        |
| Harpurthar 1   | 8           | Tika Devi   | 14           | 14         | 0        |
| Harpurthar 2   | 8           | Nau Maya    | 13           | 13         | 0        |
| Parche         | 4           | Bhadra Bir  | 15           | 13         | 2        |
| Yangjakot      | 3           | Keshuba     | 12           | 12         | 0        |
| <b>TOTAL</b>   |             |             | <b>128</b>   | <b>121</b> | <b>7</b> |

| PHASE 5        |             | 2002-2003               |              |        |      |
|----------------|-------------|-------------------------|--------------|--------|------|
| Ward name      | Ward Number | Facilitator             | Participants | Female | Male |
| Dhaprangthar 1 | 7           | Ganga Maya              | 7            | 6      | 1    |
| Dhaprangthar 2 | 7           | Goma                    | 12           | 12     |      |
| Dhaprangthar 3 | 7           | Ganga (new facilitator) | 10           | 9      | 1    |
| Savathar       | 5           | Nun Suba                | X            | X      |      |
| Gairitahr      | 6           | Pushpa                  | 9            | 9      |      |
| Lamathar       | 9           | Nandashree              | 14           | 12     | 2    |
| Harpurthar 1   | 8           | Tika Devi               | 14           | 14     |      |
| Harpurthar 2   | 8           | Nau Maya                | 11           | 11     |      |
| Parche         | 4           | Bhadra Bir              | 13           | 11     | 2    |
| Yangjakot      | 3           | Keshuba                 | 12           | 12     |      |
| <b>TOTAL</b>   |             |                         | <b>102</b>   |        |      |

**Table Summary of participation by age and gender.**

| Cycle   | Total Participants | Female | Male | Min age | Max age |
|---------|--------------------|--------|------|---------|---------|
| Cycle 1 | 37                 | 36     | 1    | 12      | 45      |
| Cycle 2 | 130                | 122    | 8    | 6       | 61      |
| Cycle 3 | 117                | 112    | 5    | 9       | 73      |
| Cycle 4 | 128                | 121    | 7    | 12      | 66      |
| Cycle 5 | 102                | 96     | 6    | 14      | 67      |

**Table Overview of repeat participants**

|         | Number of Participants | Repeats | % repeat |
|---------|------------------------|---------|----------|
| Cycle 1 | 37                     | -       |          |
| Cycle 2 | 130                    | 20      | 54%      |
| Cycle 3 | 117                    | 56      | 43%      |
| Cycle 4 | 128                    | 59      | 50%      |
| Cycle 5 | 102                    | na      | Na       |

## Appendix 5.2 Participation in all cycles by caste

| Cycle1       | 1998-1999 |              |         |        |
|--------------|-----------|--------------|---------|--------|
| Ward name    | Gurung    | Bishwa Karma | Pariyar | Nepali |
| Dhaprangthar | 13        | 0            | 0       | 0      |
| Parche       | 0         | 0            | 0       | 13     |
| Yangjakot    | 4         | 1            | 6       | 0      |
| total        | 17        | 1            | 6       | 13     |

| Cycle2       | 1999-2000 |    |    |        |
|--------------|-----------|----|----|--------|
| Ward name    | Gurung    | BK | P  | Nepali |
| Dhaprangthar | 14        | 0  | 4  | 0      |
| Savathar     | 5         | 2  | 0  | 0      |
| Gairitahr    | 6         | 3  | 0  | 0      |
| Lamathar     | 18        | 3  | 5  | 0      |
| Harpurthar   | 7         | 5  | 0  | 0      |
| Parche       | 0         | 0  | 0  | 11     |
| Yangjakot 1  | 0         | 5  | 7  | 0      |
| Yangjakot 3  | 12        | 11 | 0  | 0      |
| Yangjakot 5  | 0         | 0  | 12 | 0      |
| TOTAL        | 62        | 29 | 28 | 11     |

| Cycle3           | 2000-2001 |    |    |        |
|------------------|-----------|----|----|--------|
| Ward name        | Gurung    | BK | P  | Nepali |
| Dhaprangthar - 1 | 10        | 0  | 3  | 0      |
| Dhaprangthar - 2 | 9         | 0  | 3  | 0      |
| Savathar         | 11        | 2  | 0  | 0      |
| Gairitahr        | 6         | 3  | 0  | 0      |
| Lamathar         | 13        | 1  | 0  | 0      |
| Harpurthar       | 8         | 0  | 0  | 0      |
| Parche           | 0         | 0  | 0  | 11     |
| Yangjakot 1      | 8         | 0  | 0  | 0      |
| Yangjakot 3      | 3         | 7  | 0  | 0      |
| Yangjakot 5      | 10        | 0  | 8  | 0      |
| TOTAL            | 78        | 13 | 14 | 11     |

| Cycle 4          | 2001-2002 |    |   |        |
|------------------|-----------|----|---|--------|
| Ward name        | Gurung    | BK | P | Nepali |
| Dhaprangthar - 1 | 7         |    | 3 |        |
| Dhaprangthar - 2 | 13        |    |   |        |
| Dhaprangthar - 3 | 14        |    |   |        |
| Savathar         | 11        | 2  |   |        |
| Gairitahr        | 7         | 1  |   |        |
| Lamathar         | 11        |    | 5 |        |
| Harpurthar - 1   | 14        |    |   |        |
| Harpurthar - 2   | 13        |    |   |        |
| Parche           |           |    |   | 15     |
| Yangjakot 3      | 6         | 6  |   |        |
| TOTAL            | 96        | 9  | 8 | 15     |

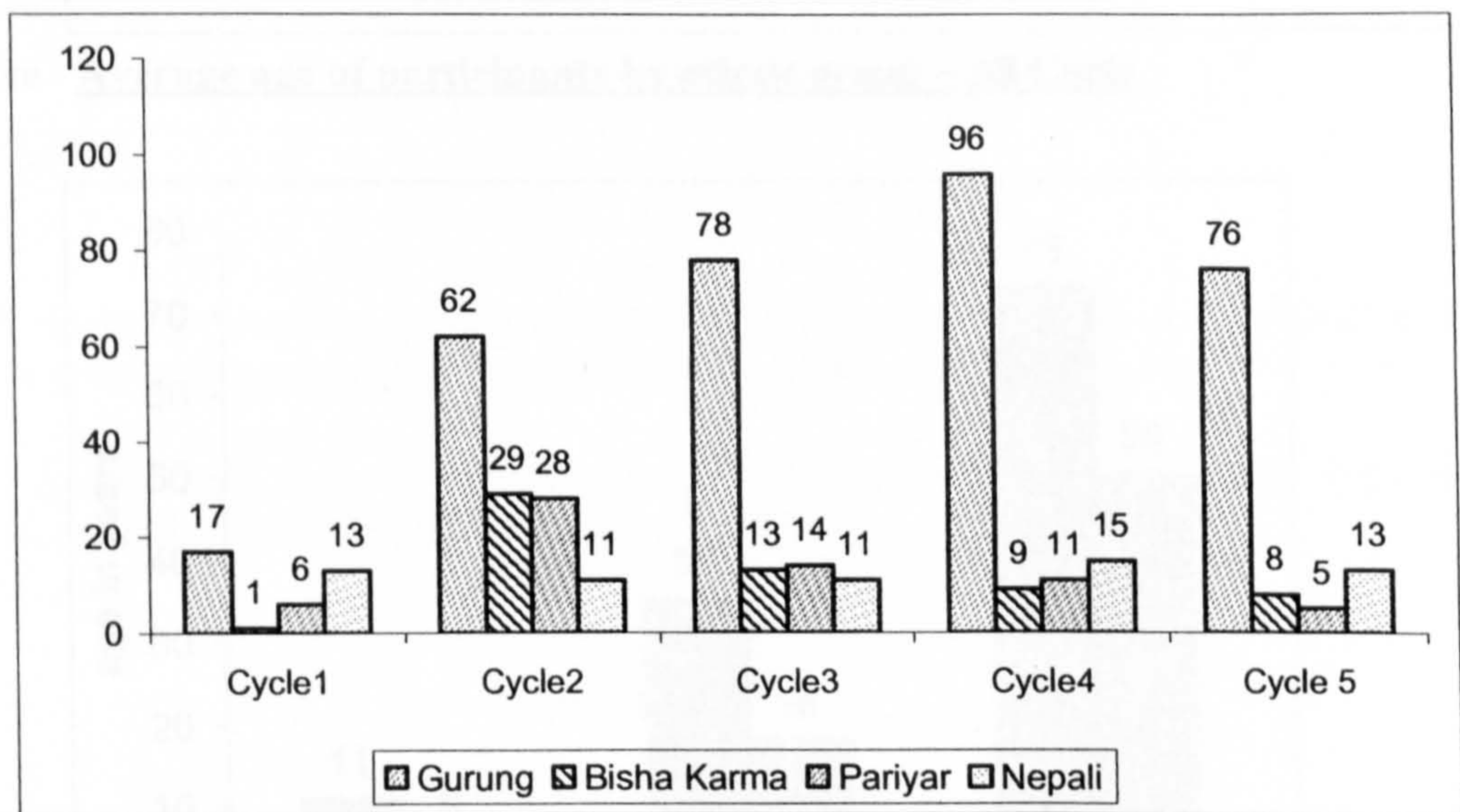
  

| Cycle 5   | 2002-2003 |    |   |        |
|-----------|-----------|----|---|--------|
| Ward name | Gurung    | BK | P | Nepali |

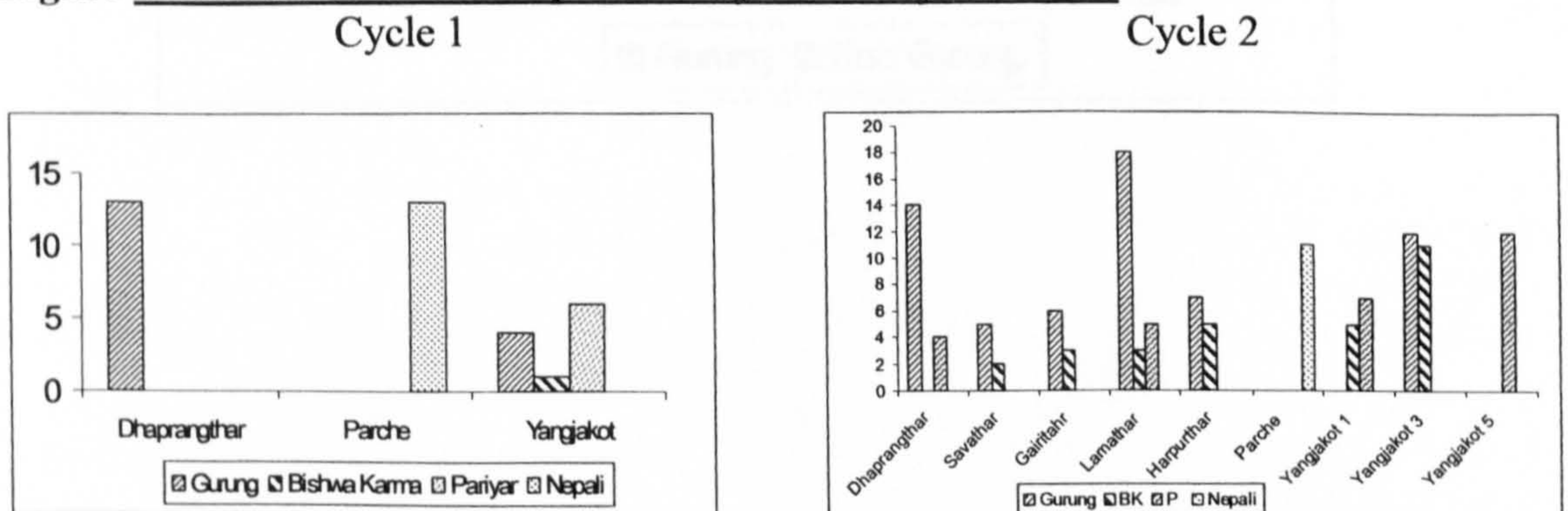


|                |           |          |          |           |
|----------------|-----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| Dhaprangthar 1 | 7         |          |          |           |
| Dhaprangthar 2 | 12        |          |          |           |
| Dhaprangthar 3 | 10        |          |          |           |
| Savathar       | X         |          |          |           |
| Gairitahr      | 7         | 2        |          |           |
| Lamathar       | 9         |          | 5        |           |
| Harpurthar 1   | 14        |          |          |           |
| Harpurthar 2   | 11        |          |          |           |
| Parche         |           |          |          | 13        |
| Yangjakot      | 6         | 6        |          |           |
| <b>TOTAL</b>   | <b>76</b> | <b>8</b> | <b>5</b> | <b>13</b> |

**Figure Overview of participants in Chalpal Kendra by Caste.**



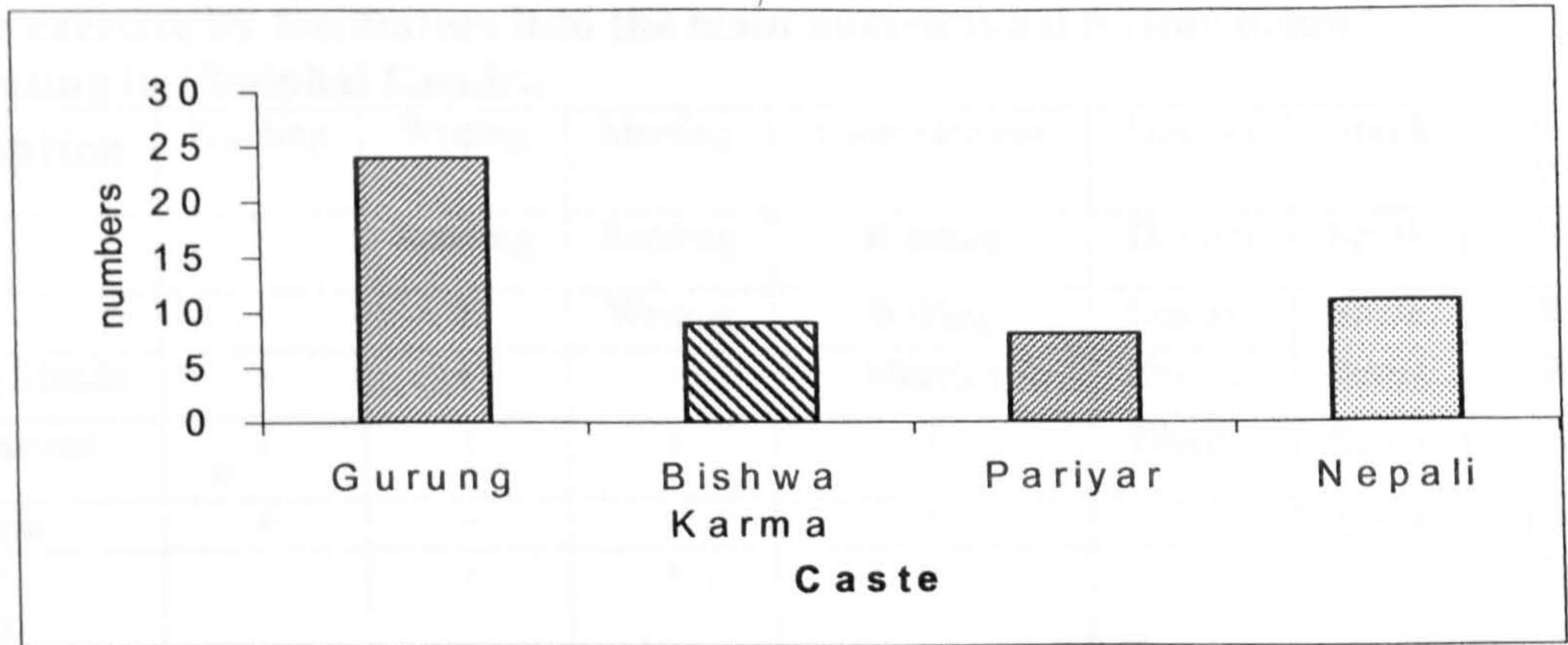
**Figure Variation of caste composition by Ward Cycles 1 & 2**



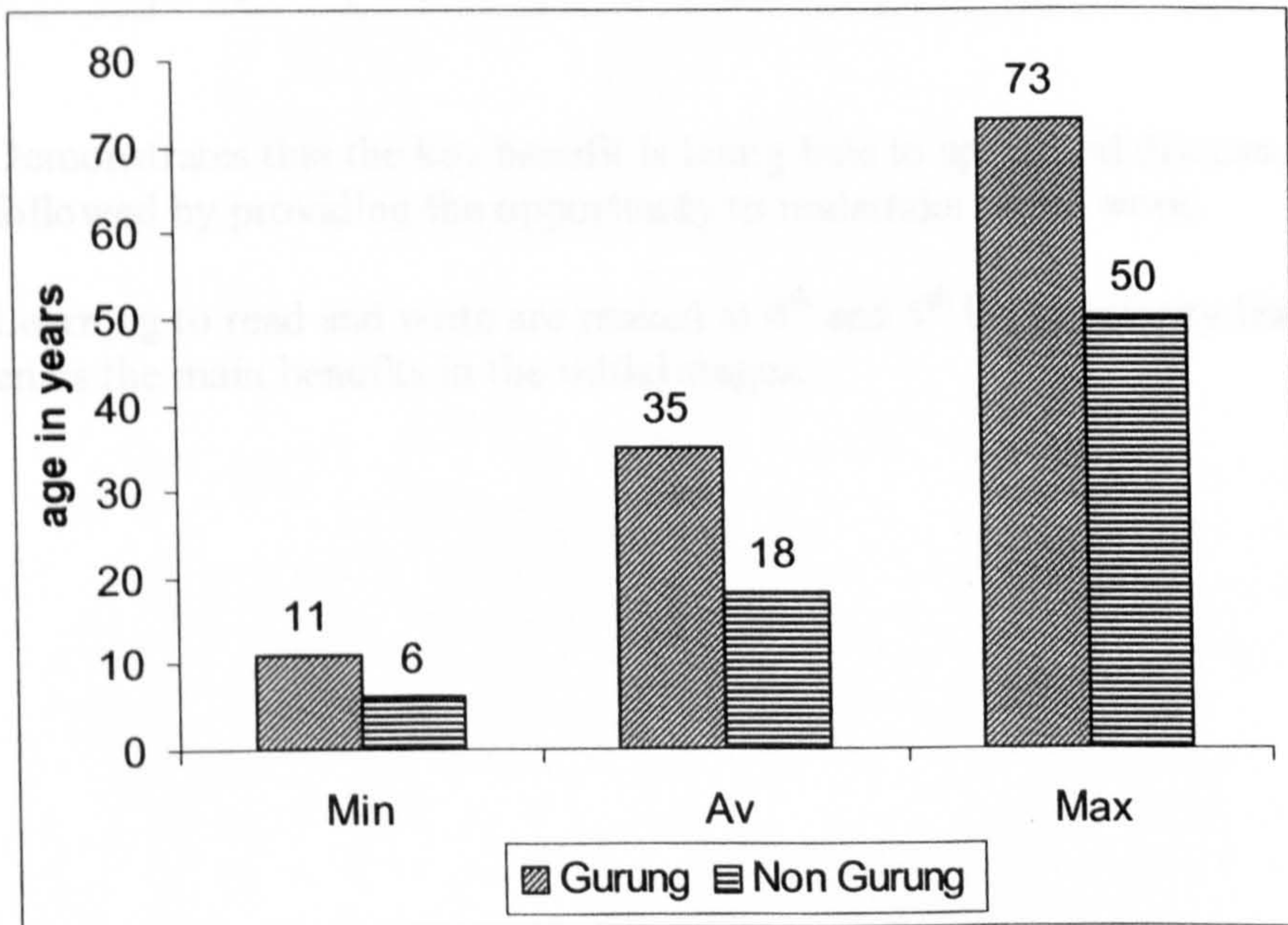
**Table Caste composition of participants dropping out Phases 2 – 3**

| Ethnic Group | Number of participants |         |          |
|--------------|------------------------|---------|----------|
|              | Cycle 2                | Cycle 3 | % Change |
| Gurung       | 62                     | 78      | 25.8     |
| Bisha Karma  | 29                     | 13      | -55.2    |
| Pariyar      | 28                     | 14      | -50.0    |
| Nepali       | 11                     | 11      | 0.0      |

**Figure** Composition of participants who have participated in both Phases 2 and 3 by caste



**Figure** Average age of participants by ethnic group ~ all Cycle



**Appendix 5.3 Ranking exercise – value of REFLECT to local participants (April 2000)**

**Ranking exercise by facilitators into the main motivational factors behind participating in Chalpal Kendra**

| <b>Description</b> | <b>Reading</b>        | <b>Writing</b>        | <b>Meeting</b>        | <b>Entertainment</b>  | <b>Discuss</b>        | <b>Speak</b>          | <b>Social Work</b>    |
|--------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Reading            | +                     | Reading               | Reading               | Reading               | Discuss               | Speak                 | Work                  |
| Writing            | +                     | +                     | Writing               | Writing               | Discuss               | Speak                 | Work                  |
| Meeting friends    | +                     | +                     | +                     | Meeting               | Discuss               | Speak                 | Work                  |
| Entertainment      | +                     | +                     | +                     | +                     | Discuss               | Speak                 | Work                  |
| Discussion         | +                     | +                     | +                     | +                     | +                     | Speak                 | Discuss               |
| Improve speaking   | +                     | +                     | +                     | +                     | +                     | +                     | Speak                 |
| Social Work        | +                     | +                     | +                     | +                     | +                     | +                     | +                     |
|                    | <b>3</b>              | <b>2</b>              | <b>1</b>              | <b>0</b>              | <b>5</b>              | <b>6</b>              | <b>4</b>              |
| <b>RANK</b>        | <b>4<sup>th</sup></b> | <b>5<sup>th</sup></b> | <b>6<sup>th</sup></b> | <b>7<sup>th</sup></b> | <b>2<sup>nd</sup></b> | <b>1<sup>st</sup></b> | <b>3<sup>rd</sup></b> |

- ▶ Demonstrates that the key benefit is being able to speak and discuss local issues followed by providing the opportunity to undertake social work.
- ▶ Learning to read and write are ranked at 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> in the priority list although these were seen as the main benefits in the initial stages.

Appendix 5.4 Examples of material produced by litho machine



LEFT  
Pictures produced by participants in to facilitate discussion about key issues such as health, literacy, gendered workloads and water.



LEFT:-  
Story written by participants in Discussion Centres and then distributed by using litho machine bought by the centres. BELOW

सू मू नू घू रू पू नू डू रु कू  
फू हू रू भू त ता ति ती तू ते तो तै  
पाले - पालो हालो - हिलो मज्जा।  
हिलो - मेलो इनार - किनार।  
माखू - आँसू सासू - सुसुरा।  
पुस - माघ जूवा - जूता।  
उता - हेरा मूसा घूस तिमी हामी।  
साइला - भाइला फील तीरा।

साइली - ऐ भाइली तिमी आज काँहा जानी हो ?  
भाइली - किनार साइली ?  
साइली - होइना तिमी हामी मिलेर अ-  
म्मा ~~सुख~~ आमा समूहहरु सिता समाखिका काममा लाग्ने हो कि ?  
भाइली - के काममा लाग्ने हो ?  
साइली - तला सिलाको घरमा जूवां र तास जावनी सतलहा-अज्ज मा जानी हो । उसको घरको जूवां तासले वार्तावरण जरजाइलो हेरा।

Number sheet produced by centres for participants to take home with them

|             |    |    |
|-------------|----|----|
| १ ०         | ११ | २१ |
| २ ००        | १२ | २२ |
| ३ ०००       | १३ | २३ |
| ४ ०००       | १४ | २४ |
| ५ ०००       | १५ | २५ |
| ६ ०००       | १६ | २६ |
| ७ ०००       | १७ | २७ |
| ८ ०००       | १८ | २८ |
| ९ ०००       | १९ | २९ |
| १० ०००      | २० | ३० |
| १० १०० १००० |    |    |

Appendix 5.5 Summary of visual material produced by each centres<sup>3</sup>

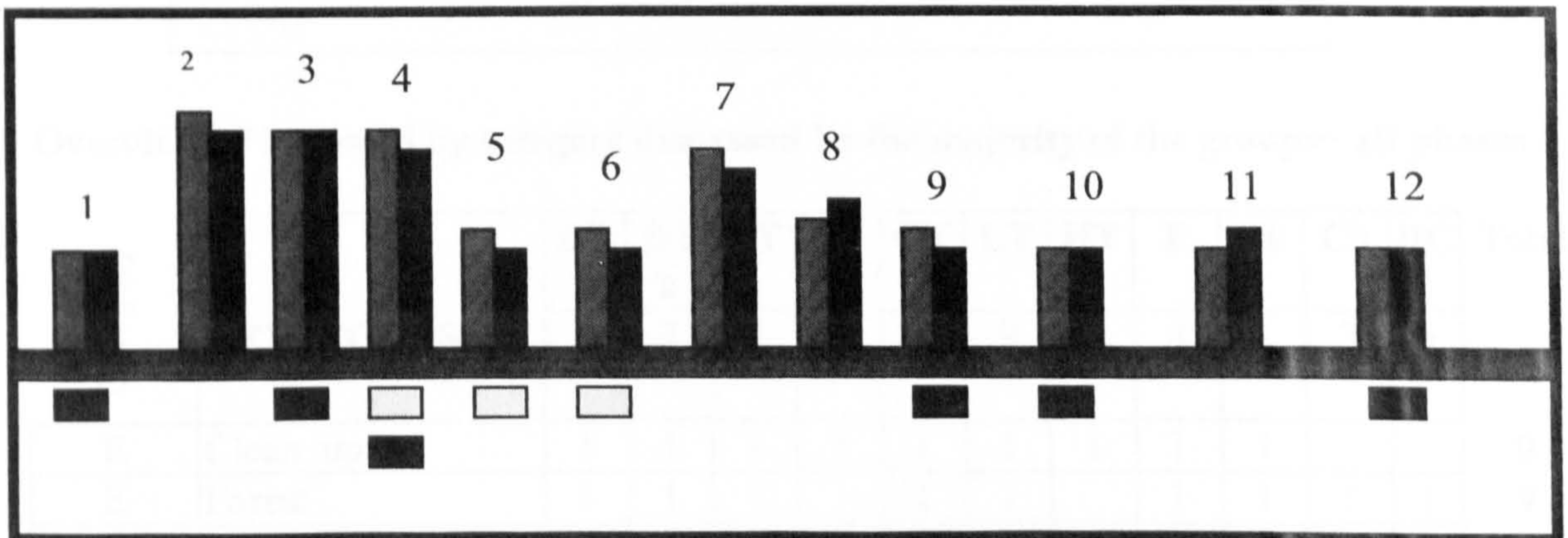
| Ward Name                     | Ward | Cycle 1<br>1998 -1999                                    | Cycle 2<br>1999-2000  | Cycle 3<br>2000-2001  | Cycle 4<br>2001-<br>2002 |
|-------------------------------|------|--|---|---|--------------------------|
| Dhaprangthar<br>'A'<br>Sikles | 7    | Social Map<br>Seasonal calendar<br>Preference<br>Ranking | Social/Resource<br>map<br>Seasonal calendar<br>Preference Ranking | Preference<br>Ranking<br>Seasonal<br>Calendar                   |                          |
| Dhaprangthar<br>'B'<br>Sikles | 7    | X  |   |   | Social<br>Map            |
| Dhaprangthar<br>'C'<br>Sikles | 7    | X  | X   | X   | Social<br>Map            |
| Savathar<br>Sikles            | 5    | X  | Social Map<br>Seasonal Calendar<br>Preference Ranking             | Seasonal<br>calendar<br>Preference<br>Ranking                   |                          |
| Gairitahr<br>Sikles           | 6    | X  | Social Map<br>Seasonal Calendar                                   | Preference<br>Ranking   |                          |
| Lamathar<br>Sikles            | 9    | X  | Social Map<br>Preference Ranking<br>Seasonal Calendar             | Preference<br>Ranking<br>Seasonal<br>Calendar<br>* Resource Map |                          |
| Harpurthar<br>'A'<br>Sikles   | 8    | X  | Social Map  | Preference<br>Ranking   |                          |
| Harpurthar<br>'B'<br>Sikles   | 8    | X  | X   | X   | Social<br>Map            |
| Parche<br>Sikles              | 4    | Social Map   | Social/Resource<br>Map<br>Preference Ranking<br>Seasonal calendar | Seasonal<br>Calendar<br>* Preference<br>Ranking                 |                          |
| Chapatole<br>Yangjakot        | 3    | X  | Social/Resource<br>Map  | * Preference<br>Ranking<br>* Seasonal<br>Calendar               |                          |
| Pokhari<br>Yangjakot          | 1    | Social Map<br>Song on wall                               |   |   | X                        |
| Danda Gaow<br>Yangjakot       |      | X  | Social Map  |   | X                        |

<sup>3</sup> Information is for cycles 1 – 4 as it was not collected for cycle 5.

Appendix - Gender analysis of work loads

| S.No. | Work particular  | Female      | Male              |
|-------|--|-------------|-------------------|
| 1     | Wake up early in the morning   | ✓           | ✗                 |
| 2     | To fetch fresh water and to smooth mud over walls/Floor  | ✓           | ✗                 |
| 3     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Light fire to make food</li> <li>• Washing up the pans and other cooking pots</li> <li>• Washing clothes</li> </ul> | ✓<br>✓<br>✓ | ✗<br>✗<br>✗       |
| 4     | Taking care of the cattle  | ✓           | ✓                 |
| 5     | Agriculture work in field  | ✓           | ✓                 |
| 6     | Plugging and working with spade  | ✗           | ✓                 |
| 7     | To collect fire wood and fodder from jungle  | ✓           | ✓<br>(Little Bit) |
| 8     | Taking care of children  | ✓           | ✗                 |
| 9     | Cleaning up the house  | ✓           | ✗                 |
| 10    | A. Making local wine (Rokshi)<br>B. Weaving the local carpets<br>C. Making the threads for carpet  | ✓<br>✓<br>✓ | ✗<br>✗<br>✗       |
| 11    | Bamboo work  | ✗           | ✓                 |

Example of seasonal Calendar from Chalphal Kendra Sikles



Note: Months from 1 to 12 shows from April to March

Key

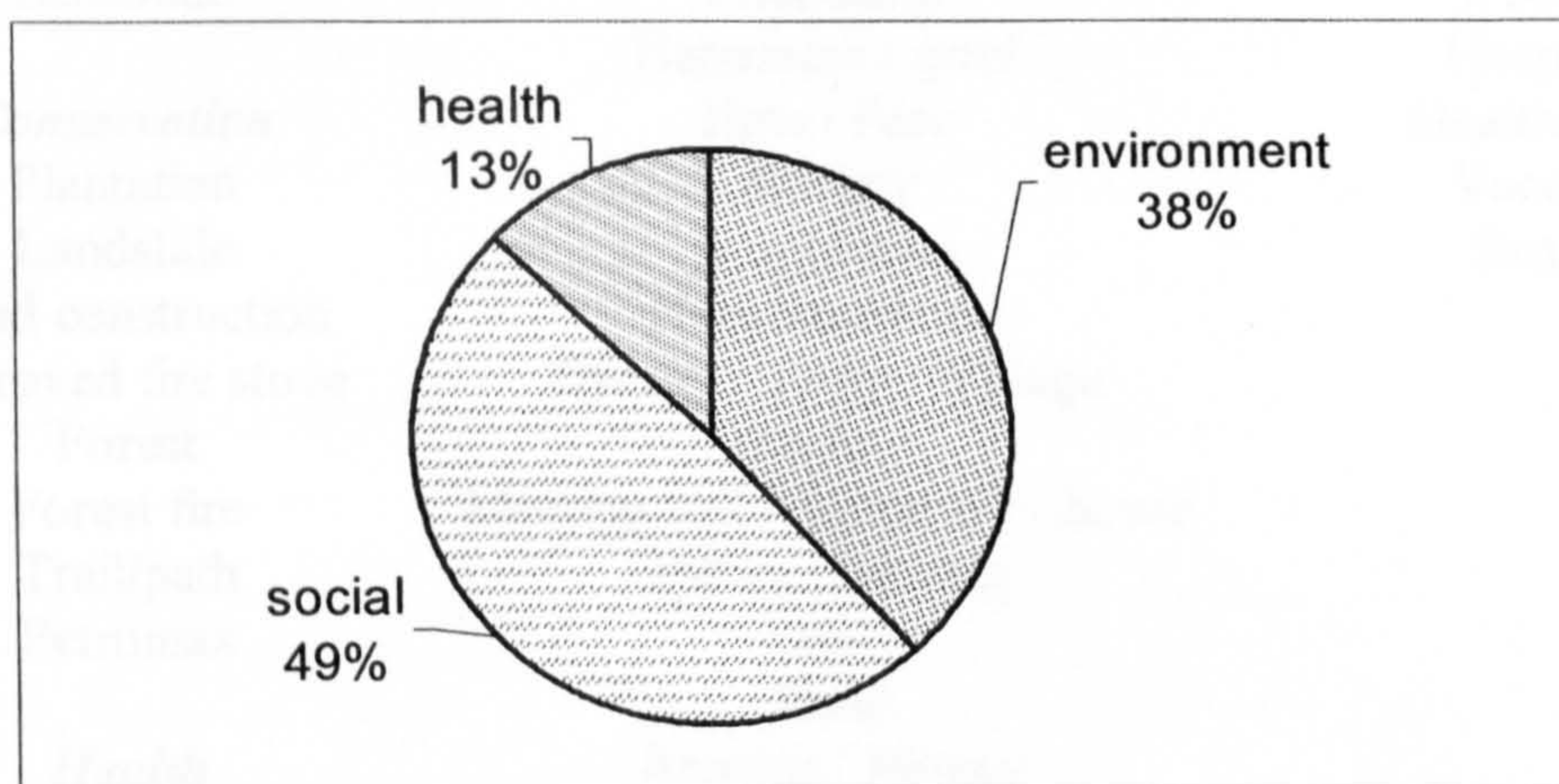
- Female
- Male work
- People suffer from diseases
- People face problem of food deficit

## Appendix 5.6 Overview of key words produced by Chalphal Kendra 1998-2004

### Overview of keywords by category ~ all cycles

|             | Cycle 1 | Cycle 2 | Cycle 3 | Cycle 4 | Cycle 5 |
|-------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Environment | 9       | 10      | 25      | 9       | 4       |
| Social      | 12      | 7       | 27      | 24      | 12      |
| Health      | 4       | 4       | 6       | 3       | 3       |

Figure Overview of the words chosen by centres in Cycles 1-4



### Overview of keyword by category discussed by the majority of the groups ~ all phases

| Category | KEY WORDS            | DT | DT | DT | ST | GT | LT | HT | P | Pk | Ch | DC | Total |
|----------|----------------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|---|----|----|----|-------|
|          |                      | a  | b  | c  | 5  | 6  | 9  | 8  | 4 | 1  | 3  | 5  |       |
| E        | Clean up             | 1  | 1  | 1  | 1  | 1  | 1  | 1  | 1 | 1  |    |    | 9     |
| E        | Forest               | 1  | 1  | 1  |    | 1  | 1  |    | 1 | 1  | 1  | 1  | 9     |
| H        | Cigarette            | 1  | 1  |    | 1  | 1  | 1  | 1  |   |    | 1  | 1  | 8     |
| E        | Sanitation           | 1  |    | 1  | 1  | 1  |    | 1  | 1 | 1  |    |    | 7     |
| S        | Community house      | 1  | 1  |    | 1  | 1  | 1  | 1  |   |    | 1  |    | 7     |
| S        | Gambling             | 1  | 1  |    |    | 1  | 1  |    |   | 1  | 1  |    | 6     |
| E        | Dirt                 | 1  | 1  |    |    | 1  |    |    | 1 | 1  | 1  |    | 6     |
| E        | goreto – path, trail |    |    | 1  | 1  | 1  |    | 1  | 1 | 1  |    |    | 6     |
| E        | Rubbish              | 1  |    |    | 1  | 1  | 1  |    |   | 1  |    | 1  | 6     |
| E        | Toilet               |    | 1  |    | 1  | 1  |    | 1  | 1 | 1  |    |    | 6     |
| S        | Alcohol              | 1  | 1  |    |    |    | 1  |    |   | 1  | 1  | 1  | 6     |
| E        | Water                | 1  |    | 1  |    |    |    | 1  |   |    | 1  | 1  | 5     |
| H        | Clean house          |    | 1  |    | 1  | 1  | 1  | 1  |   |    |    |    | 5     |
| E        | Agriculture          |    |    |    |    |    |    |    | 1 | 1  | 1  | 1  | 4     |
| E        | Drinking water       |    | 1  |    |    |    | 1  | 1  |   |    | 1  |    | 4     |
| S        | Neighbours/hood      |    |    |    |    |    |    |    | 1 | 1  | 1  | 1  | 4     |

**All Keywords by category generated by the Discussion Centres**

**ENVIRONMENTAL**

*Agricultural*

Potatoe farm

Grain

Fodder

Crops/cereal

Compost/fertiliser

Farmers

Fruits

Herdsman

Landslide

*Conservation*

Plantation

Landslide

Road construction

Improved fire stove

Forest

Forest fire

Trail/path

Petromax

*Health*

Environment

Agriculture

Water

Toilet

Sanitation

Rubbish

Dirt

Clean up

Water tank

Drinking water

**SOCIAL**

*Behavioural*

Roksi / alcohol

Playing cards

Gambling

Incident

*Community*

Discussion

Development

Family

Friendship

Happiness / grief

Hate / Fear

Anxiety

Neighbours

Neighbourhood

District / Town / Village

Society

Meeting hall / community house

Future planning

Letter

Help

Amount / Money

Watch

Saving / loan / debt

Useless expenses

Idea

Unity / Co-operation

*Festivals*

Water festival / holi

Arghu / funeral

Tihar / Dashain

Chhewar/hair cutting

Festival

Priest/poju klebri

*Gender*

Women scholarship

School support

Girls / female / men

Family planning

Backward women

*Inequality*

Social status

Exploitation

Un & touchable

Oppression

Poverty

Darkness life

Anxiety

**HEALTH**

*General*

Cigarette

Clean house

Cough cold

Diarrhoea

Diseases

Smoking

Vomiting

Pneumonia

Doctor

Hospital

Health post

Vaccine

Snake



Appendix 5.7 Example of members of a Chalphal Kendra Management Committee,  
CBO Members and Photos

Table Ad Hoc Committee of REFLECT in Sikles. formed in Phase 3

| Name                    | Position                 |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| • Dambar Bahadur Gurung | Chair person (Lamathar)  |
| • Suraj Bahadur Gurung  | Secretary (Dhaprangthar) |
| • Kuman Singh Gurung    | Member (Lamathar)        |
| • Bal Bahadur Gurung    | Member (Harputhar)       |
| • Indra Kumari Gurung   | Member (Gairithar)       |
| • Karna Bahadur Gurung  | Member (Sabhathar)       |
| • Som Bahadur Nepali    | Member (Parche)          |
| • Jit Bahadur Gurung    | Member (Dhaprangthar)    |
| • Men Bahadur Gurung    | Member (Sabhathar)       |
| • Bel Kumari Gurung     | Member (Harputhar)       |

Table CBO Committee of REFLECT in Sikles. formed in Phase 4

| Name                      | Position in Society                 |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Ms. Bel Kumari Gurung     | Local Teacher, Sikles               |
| Mrs. Ganga Maya Gurung    | Facilitator, REFLECT Centre, Sikles |
| Mr. Bhadra Bir Nepali     | Facilitator, REFLECT Centre, Parche |
| Mr. Dambar Bahadur Gurung | Social worker, Dhaprangthar Sikles  |
| Mr. Hit Man Gurung        | Intellectual, Sikles                |
| Mr. Man Bahadur Gurung    | Chairperson of Parche VDC, Sikles   |
| Mr. Shyam Gurung          | Social Worker, Sikles               |
| Mr. Suraj Kumar Gurung    | Local Teacher, Sikles               |
| Ms. Laxmi Dhital          | REFLECT Programme coordinator)      |

Photo from left to right

Hitman, Ganga, Bel Kumari, Dambar, Suraj Kumar, Bhadra Bir & Man Bahadur separate photo)



| <b>MEMBER</b>          | <b>Position within society</b>                         |
|------------------------|--|
| 1. Kum Bahadur Gurung  | Elected Ward Chair Person                              |
| 2. Suraj Kumar Gurung  | Teacher of Annapurna School Sikles                     |
| 3. Yam Bdr. Gurung     | Participant (Male)                                     |
| 4. Buddhi Maya Gurung  | Member of Mothers group & also elected member in VDC.  |
| 5. Khusi Maya Gurung   | Participant.   |
| 6. Bhim Bahadur Gurung | Member of Annapurna Conservation Management Committee. |
| 7. Ganga Gurung        | Participant (Mafu)                                     |

Appendix 5.8 SWOT analysis produced by Laxmi & Kiran September 2004

| <b>STRENGTHS</b>   | <b>WEAKNESS</b>   |
|--|---|
| REFLECT center as a platform to solve the social problems.   | Lack of economic resources to meet the demand of REFLECT centers according to their discussion. |
| Center as a community information center.  | Not able to make know (publicity) about the activities of REFLECT centers.                      |
| Acceptance of women's leadership in the community.   | Program is limited in a specific geographical region.   |
| Community is able to monitor and evaluate the programs launched by different organizations.  |   |
| The gathering and interaction between the people from different age, sex and different ethnic background in the center is supposed to be the strength of the REFLECT center. |   |
| <b>Opportunities</b>   |   |
| 1. There is a chance to launch the development programs through REFLECT centers.   |   |
| 2. Sikles can be developed as a model village.   |   |



