A Success Story of Social Innovation:

Strengthening Elder Friendly Culture

Honor those who honor senior citizens of the family
**Your Parents: Your Religion**

**Hindu**
Matri devo bhava, (revere your mother as God)
Pitri devo bhava (revere your father as God)  
(Taittiriya Upanishad, 11. Mantra 2)

**Islam**
Say not to them a word of contempt, nor repel them, but address them in terms of honour.  
(Quran 17:23)

Narrated 'Abdullah: I asked the Prophet "Which deed is the dearest to God?" He replied, "To offer the prayers at their early stated fixed times." I asked, "What is the next (in goodness)?" He replied, "To be good and dutiful to your parents"...  
(Bukhari)

**Christianity**
Ephesians 6:2,3 -- Parents have God-given authority and have generally done much good for the children. They deserve to receive respectful treatment, including respectful speech and attitudes.  
(Cf. Matt. 15:4; Prov. 6:20-23; 15:5; 23:22.)

1 Timothy 5:4,8,16 -- When children are unwilling to care for their elderly parents, they lack appreciation for what their parents did for them, and they also deny the faith.  

**Buddhism**
This was said by the Blessed One, said by the Arahant, so I have heard: "Living with Brahma are those families where, in the home, mother & father are revered by the children. Living with the first devas are those families where, in the home, mother & father are revered by the children. Living with the first teachers are those families where, in the home, mother & father are revered by the children. Living with those worthy of gifts are those families where, in the home, mother & father are revered by the children. 'Brahma' is a designation for mother & father. 'The first devas' is a designation for mother & father. 'The first teachers' is a designation for mother & father. 'Those worthy of gifts' is a designation for mother & father. Why is that? Mother & father do much for their children. They care for them, nourish them, introduce them to this world."  
(Itivuttaka)

Though being well-to-do, not to support father and mother who are old and past their youth -- this is a cause of one's downfall.  
(Sutta-Nipata, I:6, Narada Thera, tr.)
IT MATTERS WHAT PEOPLE SAY

Each year we will select the best five families of our VDC, judged by the quality of services they provide to their ageing parents and grand parents. We will honor them amidst a ceremony like this of today.

It was the first time that we did not close our eyes saying "what they do to their ageing parents and grand parents is their family concern and not ours".

Coordinator and members of selection committee for "ideal descendent" award.
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Executive Summary

GCN prepared this report with the hope that a reader may start thinking about replicating the program in his or her community and share the experience so that the program objectives could be achieved more efficiently and cover wider population across the globe.

It is less of “fight against elder abuse” and more of “honor those who honor elders” what Strengthening Elder Friendly Culture (SEFC) program is all about. All societies across the globe have inherent social value of respecting elders. It is hard to name a society, tradition, culture, religion or the government that promotes elder abuse and neglect. But the fact remains that elder abuse exists mostly at the family level and policy level of the government. Therefore, SEFC focuses on families and the lowest administrative unit of the government defined as a community for SEFC purpose. Program implementation involves following simple steps.

Step 1. Select program area and define the target community
Step 2. Identify local leaders and call their meeting
Step 3. Explain SEFC objectives and procedures to individual leaders and to the mass
Step 4. Formation of Selection Committee with the responsibility to recommend nominees for Ideal Descendant Award
Step 5. Publish life-history of nominees in a book or booklet form for wide distribution
Step 6. Arrange for certificate of recognition, medal and cash prize to honor nominees
Step 7. Organize award giving ceremony and ensure the presence of celebrities and government authorities on the occasion along with the media
Step 8. Honor the nominees and highlight their good deeds in public
Step 9. Motivate the community to give continuity to SEFC program on their own
Step 10. Replicate the program in new areas

GCN implemented SEFC program with its own resources in 2009 and 2010 in city and village, respectively. The program was better received by villagers. It was easier to achieve program objectives when a target population was defined based on the lowest administrative unit of the local government and the political leaders involved in the process. The program objectives are to:

- Establish a culture where people who serve their ageing family member the best, as judged by the community, are socially recognized and honored,
- Create a social environment where each member realizes that he or she is being judged on how he or she is treating ageing seniors in the family, and
- Each individual takes it as his or her duty to be concerned about how elders are being treated in other families in the neighborhood and community.

This report gives details of the process adopted, experience gained and success attained. The last chapter Four gives summary of experience and lists lessons learned from SEFC implementation in years 2009 and 2010. Motto of SEFC is “Honor those who honor Senior Citizens of the family”.

Geriatric Center Nepal, August 2010
Chapter 1. Introduction

Strengthening Elder Friendly Culture

1. Background

“Revere Mother as God: Revere Father as God:” (*Maatri Devo Bhava: Pitri Devo Bhava:* ) is one of the basic teachings of Hindu civilization (*Taittiriyopanishad*, part 11, Manta 2). Many other civilizations across the globe too have similar teachings inbuilt into their culture or religion. Family traditions and education systems were responsible for inculcating such social values in each individual. People were expected to exhibit such teachings in their normative behavior. However, with the changing times and modernization, the role of family and education systems also changed pushing these social values into the cultural background. Such deviations form tradition, culture and social value have been breeding many adverse social conditions for elders such as ageism.

Elder abuse and neglect are some of the manifestations of ageism. These and such other social evils are growing with the increasing number and proportion of elders in all societies. Efforts are being made both at the national and international levels to curb the problem. Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) has been instrumental for the purpose. As the result of MIPAA, many new national policies, programs, rules and regulation are at various stages of development in different countries. Being new or modern in their nature, they emphasize on awareness-building, creating new institutional set ups, new tools and new approaches. One basic character of all such efforts is that they rely on the involvement of government or other form of formally organized institutional setups.

Government capacity varies greatly across the world. Their ability to implement their own programs and commitments differs from country to country. Therefore, while getting commitments from all nations to adopt MIPAA declarations and directives in their national policies and plans is an achievement in itself, it does not ensure that the ultimate objective would be realized, i.e., a dignified life of ageing population across the globe.

It is commendable that nations and societies are working hard to come up with new solutions for new problems – new at least in terms of the high magnitude with which the elderly population is growing. However, it is equally important that the age old socio-cultural values and norms inherent in all societies that are favorable to old people should also be preserved and strengthened. It is high time that each society now also looks back into its socio-cultural norms and values that use to ensure a dignified life for elders in the past and could be revived and strengthened for addressing the ageing issues of today. Reviving and strengthening elder friendly socio-cultural values inherent in our societies could also be an efficient way of making significant contribution towards attaining MIPAA objectives.

It is with this view that Geriatric Center Nepal (GCN) developed and implemented a program for reviving and strengthening the culture of *Maatri Devo Bhava: Pitri Devo Bhava* – that has deep roots in civilization of this country. This teaching has immense implication on wellbeing of elders in the society. The need for such a social value is more now than ever before because of the larger good that it can cause to ever increasing number of elders in this
21st century and beyond. “Strengthening Elder Friendly Culture” (SEFC) program of GCN builds into the tradition to present practices.

This report gives details on how the program was implemented in 2009 and 2010 and the outcome of it. The approach is based on the principle of rewarding good behavior and the motto is **honoring those who honor senior citizens**.

2. **Objectives**
General objective of SEFC program is to revive and strengthen the culture of serving elders for self satisfaction and social approval or recognition. Specifically, the program aims to:

- Establish a culture where people who serve their ageing family member the best, as judged by the community, are socially recognized and honored,
- Create a social environment where each member realizes that he or she is being judged on how he or she is treating ageing seniors in the family, and
- Each individual takes it as his or her duty to be concerned about how elders are being treated in other families in the neighborhood and community.

3. **Justification**
Many ills of elder abuse and mistreatment are rooted in the general notion that how old person is treated in a particular family is not the concern of the community or other families around. The root cause of such social attitude is the total reliance on the principle that a family is an autonomous unit that has freedom to treat it members as it sees fit. SEFC program attempts to break this notion and create a society where it is generally accepted that it is the concern of whole community how an old person is treated in a particular family. Such motivations can only be instituted by providing positive re-enforcements for desirable behavior and involving all concerned. This approach is not only cost effective and sustainable because each member of the community shares the responsibility.

4. **Program Implementation Procedure**
SEFC program was first developed and launched by GCN in June 2009 in a section of Kathmandu city. It was replicated in 2010 in a VDC of Kathmandu district. Following are the sequential steps followed in program implementation.

- **Step 1.** Defining a community or target group for SEFC program implementation
- **Step 2.** Identification of personalities who are highly influential in the community or the leaders
- **Step 3.** Calling a meeting of “influential personalities” or leaders of the community and explaining them objectives and procedures of SEFC program
- **Step 4.** Formation of Selection Committee to identify the **Three** best families from the area who provided or are providing exemplary services to old person in their family.
- **Step 5.** Interviewing selected families for their life history to be published as book for wide distribution
- **Step 6.** Honoring selected members (as step 4 above) amidst a ceremony in the presence of high level authority, celebrity and presenting them as model families. Projecting them in the media.
GCN implements SEFC program each year in different communities. It is expected that after SEFC is implemented once or twice, the community will assume the responsibility to give continuity to the program each year on their own, as it happened in case of Seti Devi VDC of Kathmandu district. After a sizeable number of communities start implementing SEFC on their own, the snow ball effect will cover more communities not limited by national boundary and can spread across the globe. However, it may take some years for GCN to create sizable number of such communities to start the snow-ball effect as anticipated. Also, any other individual or organization can join in to expedite the process by implementing SEFC in more communities at a time.

5. Report Organization
This chapter introduced the subject with its background, objectives of SEFC program and its implementation procedures. The following Chapters two and three give detailed description on how the program was implemented in 2009 and 2010, respectively. The last Chapter four summarizes the program implementation process and lists lessons learned from the experience.
Chapter 2

SEFC Implementation in a Section of Kathmandu Metropolis

This chapter gives details on how the program was implemented by GCN for the first time in one section of Kathmandu Metropolitan City.

Step 1. Defining a Community
In May 2009, GCN selected a part of Kathmandu city with clear boundaries of city road network, ignoring the local administrative boundaries. The area selected has about 400 families with a population of about 2500. It was important for the selected area to be close by GCN office because the concept had to be tried out for the first time which would require close monitoring and continuous feedback. Also, this social experiment had to be cost effective in view of the limited resources GCN had for the purpose.

The square above shows section of Kathmandu Metropolis selected for SEFC program, 2009
The selected city section is one of the most densely populated areas of Kathmandu metropolis. GCN office is also located within the area. Families living within the following boundaries were defined as a unit or the community for trying out the concept of SEFC as shown in the map above.

North: South of road from Ratopul to Gaushala Chowk  
East: West of road from Gaushala Chowk to Puranobaneswor chowk  
South: North of road from Puranobaneswor to Maitidevipul  
West: East of road from Maitidevipul to Ratopul.

**Step 2. Identification of Local Leaders and Prominent Figures**

In the defined program area, GCN volunteers made door to door visits and informed families about objectives of GCN in general and SEFC program in particular. Each household visited was asked a set of questions that included:

- Which family has been living in the area from generations? (It was important to ask this question because most of the households were new settlers, so could not be well informed about their neighbors.)
- Who are the most popular political and social leaders living in the area?
- Who do you think is the most informed person about families in your section of the area?
- Who are the most known and respected personalities in the area?

Five volunteers worked for 15 days in the area. Thus collected information was analyzed to identify possible personalities in the area who are:

- Most informed about families in the area  
- Judged to be fare, trusted and respected by residents of the area

Based on these criteria, a list of 20 most desired personalities of the area was prepared. They represented various walks of life in the community including journalists, businessmen, employees, priests, retirees, social workers and literary figures. All of them were males.

**Step 3. Formation of Selection Committee**

Thus selected 20 persons were invited for a meeting at GCN and 18 attended. They were given a tour of GCN facilities and explained the objectives of SEFC program. GCN representatives explained purpose of the meeting in which basic points covered were:

- GCN would like to honor the **Three best families** of the area who served or are serving their elder family member in a way that could be an example for others.
- GCN can not judge how old parents are treated by each family in the area. Therefore, GCN requests all present to form 7 to 11 member Selection Committee with the responsibility to identify **the three best families** from the program area that provided or are providing exemplary services to their ageing elder in the family. GCN volunteer will work as a secretary to the Selection Committee.
- GCN will publish life history of the selected families in a book form so that their services to their elders are recorded and readers could get motivated to adopt such behavior.
• The book in Nepali will be titled “Sammanit Byaktitwaharu” meaning Honorable Personalities in English. The book will be widely distributed by GCN and its review published in local newspapers.
• The selected three families will also be felicitated with garlands and honored with Certificate of Recognition in a ceremony attended by national dignitaries and the press.
• Responsibility of Selection Committee is to recommend the three best families that deserve such honor instituted by GCN.
• It is expected that this activity will motivate others to do their best for their ageing parents and other seniors in the family. Thus, a culture of honoring people who best serve their old member of the family could be established as an integral part of our civilization or at least in the SEFC program area.

The meeting unanimously selected 11 members to work as the Selection Committee with responsibility to identify the three families from the area who provided or are providing exemplary services to senior citizens in their families. These eleven members came from different location of the program area.

1. Dr. Govnda Tondon (PhD),
   Religion and culture, Coordinator
2. Engr. Chet Prasad Bhattarai,
   Retired Director of Nepal Telecom, Member
3. Mr. Rama Kanta Mainali,
   Retired Chairperson of Nepal Industrial Management Board Member
4. Mr. Jagadish Chandra Upadhyya,
   Retired Secretary to Ministry of Agriculture Member
5. Mr. Tej Prasad Giri,
   Retired Director of Agriculture Research Center, MOA Member
6. Mr. Chhatra Bahadur Basnet,
   Retired Bank employee Member
7. Mr. Chhabilal Mainali, Social Worker Member
8. Mr. Keshab Ghimire Khatri,
   Retired Bank Officer Member
9. Mr. Keshab Prasad Ghnimire,
   Retired Engineer (Road) Member
10. Mr. Bhismna Nath Regmi,
    Retired Biogas Technician Member
11. Narendra Thapa, Social Worker Member

**Step 4. Selection of the Three Families**
It was a tough job to select the three best out of almost 400 families of the area. However, they happily accepted to volunteer for the job. After working for two weeks, the Committee had a meeting at GCN where different names were proposed and discussed. Finally, the Committee could unanimously agree on two names but found it difficult to judge between the remaining two. To solve the problem, decision was made to honor four families instead of three as planned earlier. Following were the head of selected families.
Step 5. Preparation of Biography
As planned, GCN volunteer visited each family and prepared biography of the family head. These biographies were published in a book titled “Sammanit Byktitwaharu” meaning Honorable Personalities.

Step 6. Honoring the Selected Families
GCN organized a ceremony on 5th August 2009 to formally inaugurate its office at Battisputali, Kathmandu. Honorable Minister for Culture Dr. Minendra Rijal was invited as the Chief Guest for the function. Other national level dignitaries were also present on the occasion. They together marked inauguration of GCN by watering flower sapling as seen in photo below.

From Left: Prof. Dr. Leela Devi KC, founder President of NSCONN (Sanjal); Ms. Angoor Baba Joshi, retired professor and active social worker; Ms. Padam Gurung, retired army major and active social worker; Mr. Madhav Prasad Ghimire, National Poet; Dr. Minendra Rijal, Honorable Minister of Constitution Assembly, Parliament and Culture; Dr. Mrigendra Lal Shrestha, retired statistician and active scholar; Dr. Prasanna Gautam, Gerontologist; and Dr. Chet Raj Pant, Honorable Member of National Planning Commission.
After inauguration, the special guests took their seats and the opening music was played on Tabala as shown in photo below.

Form left: Mr. Padam Gurung, Retired army major; Mr. Krishna Prasad Ghimire, National Poet; Dr. Minendra Rijal, Honorable Minister for Constitution Assembly, Parliament and Culture; Musician playing Tabla and Dr. Prasanna Gautam, Gerontologist sitting on stage after inauguration.

Gathering of seniors clapping with Tabla music

The book “sammanit byaktivaharu” (honorable personalities) was jointly released by Honorable Minister Dr. Minendra Rijal and The National Poet Mr. Madhav Ghimire as seen in photo below.

From Left: Mr. Madhav Prasad Ghimire and Dr. Minendra Rijal making the book public

Coordinator of Selection Committee Dr.Govind Tondon spoke on how and why the families were selected. Mr. Bharat Raj Pudel, CEO of GCN spoke on SEFC program of GCN and how the book was prepared.

Dr. Govind Tondon, Coordinator of Selection Committee and Mr. Bharat Raj Poudel, CEO of GCN speaking on the occasion
Step 8. Honoring the Selected Four
After the book was released and the services of selected families to their ageing family member lauded, it was time to honor them with Garlands, Tika, Certificate of Recognition and offering of white shawl. In Nepali culture, offering a white shawl to a person in a public gathering is the way of expressing highest social honor to the recipient.

Mr. Kavi Keshari Basnet receiving certificate of recognition from the Minister

Mr. Ramesh Regmi receiving certificate of recognition from the Minister
Mr. Laxman Poudel receiving certificate of recognition from the Minister

The fourth recipient Mr. Tika Upreti could not be preset on the occasion for his ill health.

**Step 9. Free Health Check-up**
GCN had coordinated with a local Health College to send some of its graduate students of nursing to attend the ceremony. The students checked blood pressure of all elders present on the occasion and offered health advices.

Volunteer students recording blood pressure of elders and giving health advices
Step 10. Worshiping Senior Citizens
According to Vedic literature, a person attains the level of purity and sanctity equal to that of god when he or she gets 60+ years old, hence qualifies to receive worshiping by young. To build on this almost forgotten teaching of Veda, GCN worshiped all elders present on the occasion. Worshiping includes offering of Tika (red vermillion mark on forehead), flower garland, and some sweets as Prasad (food offered to god).

Step 11. Closing
Chairperson of the ceremony Mr. Krishna M. Gautam thanked all present, made his closing remark and invited all to join for tea and snacks.
Chapter 3

SEFC Implementation in Seti Devi VDC of Kathmandu District

This chapter gives detailed procedure on how SEFC was replicated in Seti Devi VDC in 2010. Some improvements were made based on the experience of 2009.

Step 1. Defining a Community
GCN decided to replicate SEFC program in 2010 in a nearby rural area because it already had gained some experience with the program in urban setting. Seti Devi Village Development Committee (VDC) was selected for the purpose in view of its easy access and rural characteristics.

![Location of Seti Devi VDC of Kathmandu District](image-url)
A VDC is the lowest administrative unit of the government. A VDC is further divided into nine Wards. There are 3913 village development committees in Nepal. Number of households or families with a VDC normally varies from 1000 to 2000. VDCs are responsible to organize village people structurally at a local level and create a partnership between the community and the public sector for improved service delivery system. VDC has a status of an autonomous institution and authority for interacting with the more centralized institutions of governance. VDC gives village people an element of control and responsibility in proper utilization and distribution of state funds.

Each VDC has one elected chief. Each ward of it also has elected chief who are supported by four members elected or nominated at the Ward level. There is one village secretary appointed by the government to keep data, records and to manage administrative works. VDC is guided from the District Development Committee (DDC). GCN decided to take a VDC as a unit or community for SEFC program implementation for 2010.

**Step 2. Identification of Local Leaders and Prominent Figures**

In May GCN deputed its volunteers to meet each leader of all wards of VDC. It was easier to identify local leaders in a VDC. GCN volunteers personally met the past and present elected political leaders of each Ward and explained the objectives and procedures of SEFC implementation (given in Step 3 of previous Chapter). They were convinced of the value of SEFC and became active in facilitating GCN in the process.

A village meeting was called on a mutually agreed date of 29th June 2010 at VDC. About 60 villagers attended the meeting. These 60 were the prominent personalities of the village and represented all aspects of village life. GCN volunteer again explained the objectives and procedures of SEFC, and facilitated the meeting to elect/select 11 member Selection Committee. The Committee assumed its responsibility to select the Three best families from VDC who provided or are providing exemplary serves to senior citizens in their elder families.

**Step 3. Formation of Selection Committee**

The meeting unanimously selected 11 members Selection Committee as follows.

i. Mr. Prem Bahadur Bista, Social Worker, (Ward 7)           Coordinator
ii. Ms. Saru Pradhan, Social Worker, (Ward 1)               Member
iii. Mr. Ramchandra KC, political worker, (Ward 2)          Member
iv. Mr. Ram Kumar Basnet, School Teacher, (Ward 3)         Member
v. Mr. Samudra Keshar KC, Political worker, (Ward 4)       Member
vi. Ms. Indira Shrestha, Social worker, (Ward 5)           Member
vii. Mr. Ram Krishna Basnet, political worker (Ward 6)     Member
viii. Mr. Ganesh Man Shrestha, political worker (Ward 7)   Member
ix. Mr. Pushkar Khadka, social worker (Ward 8)             Member
x. Mr. Manesh Tamang, political worker (Ward 9)            Member
xi. Mr. Shridhar Bhushal, Secretary to VDC, a government employee Secretary
After formation of the Committee, it was announced that GCN will:

- Publish life-history of selected members in a book titled “Sammanit Byakitswaharu (honorable personalities) for the year 2010. The book will also include life-histories of all winners of other awards and honors instituted by GCN. GCN brings out a book with this title every year.

- Each of the household head or representative of the selected families will be honored with Adarsha Santati Samman (ideal descendant award) that carries a purse of Rs. 5000 and a silver medal. Design of the medal is shown below. Aadarsha Santati Samman (Ideal Descendants Award) is engraved on one side of the medal in bold letters with GCN logo, and the year in Bikram Sambat (B.S). On other side is the name and address of the recipient. This medal and cash prize were not the part of honor given in 2009.

- The selected member will also be felicitated with garland, shawl and a certificate of recognition.

- The award will be conferred on 6th August 2010 at GCN hall in presence of a large gathering for the ceremony. Rt. Honorable Vice President Mr. Parmanada Jha will grace the occasion as the Special Guest.

A group photo of Selection Committee Members, Seti Devi VDC, 2010
**Step 4. Selection of the Three Families**

The Selection Committee recommended Five names for the award whereas the GCN provision was only for the three. Like that happened in last year with Selection Committee of the city area where four were recommended instead of three, this committee too could agree on the first and second names but could not eliminate the other two for selecting the third one. Because, all three have done their best and it was not easy to rank or compare between them. Realizing the difficulty, GCN agreed to honor five families with Ideal Descendant Award on request of Selection Committee. Following are the representatives of the five families nominated for the honor and award.

- Mrs. Pukuli Sarki, Seti Devi VDC – 8
- Mr. Sanubhai Khatri, Seti Devi VDC – 2
- Mr. Ramchndra Tamang, Seti Devi VDC-7
- Mr. Ram Krishna Shrestha, Seti Devi VDC-1.
Step 5. Preparation of Biography
As planned, GCN volunteer visited each family and prepared biography of the family head. These biographies were published in a book form with the title “Sammanit Byktitwaharu” meaning Honorable Personalities.

Step 6. Award Ceremony
6th August is the anniversary day of GCN. One of the main activities of the day include conferring awards and felicitations to organizations, persons and families who best serve the interest of ageing population in the last one year. Accordingly, the Selection Committee members along with the selected personalities from the village were invited to attend the ceremony at GCN.

Book Release
Rt. Honorable Vice president Mr. Parmanada Jha inaugurated the program as the Special Guest for the occasion. He also released the book “Sammanit Byaktitwaharu”, meaning Honorable Personalities in English, on the occasion. The book is collection of life histories of winners of all awards instituted by GCN. GCN brings out a book with this title every year on the occasion of its anniversary.
Conferring Awards
The Ideal Descendant Award was conferred to the five nominees from Seti Devi VDC by the Rt. Honorable Vice President. The process included garlanding the winner, offering shawl, medal and the cash prize.

Rt Honorable Vice President Parmananda Jha Conferring Awards

Speeches and Expression of Commitments
Invitees gave speeches after all nominees were honored with different awards. Mr. Prem Bahadur Bista, Coordinator of Selection Committee for Ideal Descendant Award also made his speech on behalf of all recipients of Ideal Descendant Award. Following is the English translation of his speech. It is put in box for his speech marks the success of SEFC.

Rt. Hon’ble Vice President and friends,

When GCN staff came to our village for the first time in May this year and explained us the objectives and procedures of SEFC, we saw no harm in cooperating, rather appreciated the idea. Accordingly, we called village meeting and a Selection Committee was formed. I had the honor of working as Coordinator of the Committee. It was a responsibility of different nature. Selecting only three families from the entire village population was a challenging task.

Each of our Committee members started making door to door visits to families in their respective wards and tried to have insights on how elders are treated in families. We were doing this to ensure that most deserving candidate gets selected for the Honor. In doing
SO, WE REALIZED THAT IT WAS THE FIRST TIME EVER IN OUR LIFE THAT WE SHOWED SO KEEN AN INTEREST ON HOW ELDERLY ARE TREATED WITHIN OUR FAMILIES. IT WAS THE FIRST TIME THAT WE DID NOT CLOSE OUR EYES SAYING “WHAT THEY DO TO THEIR AGEING PARENTS AND GRAND PARENTS IS THEIR FAMILY CONCERN AND NOT OURS”.

IN THE PROCESS OF DOING OUR JOB, WE CAME ACROSS FAMILIES TREATING THEIR ELDERS WITH VARYING DEGREES OF SINCERITY AND CONCERN. WE NEVER THOUGHT SUCH VARIATIONS WERE POSSIBLE AND EXIST WITHIN OUR OWN COMMUNITY. SOME OF OUR FINDINGS SURPRISED US, SOME PLEASANTLY AND SOME OTHERWISE. WE CAME ACROSS FAMILIES THAT PERCEIVED THEIR AGEING MEMBER AS BURDEN AND ALSO THOSE WHO REVERED THEM. AT TIMES, WE WERE ALSO ASHAMED OF OUR IGNORANCE ON THE CONDITIONS IN WHICH ELDERLY WERE LIVING, IF YOU CAN CALL IT A LIVING, IN OUR OWN COMMUNITY. I BETTER NOT DWELL MORE ON THESE VARIATIONS AS WE ALREADY HAVE SELECTED THE MOST DESERVING FIVE AND THEY HAVE BEEN APPROPRIATELY HONORED.

BEING A PART OF THE PROCESS I WOULD LIKE TO THANK GCN FOR OPENING OUR EYES TO SEE HOW ELDERS ARE TREATED BY FAMILIES IN OUR VDC. IT WAS A GREAT LEARNING OPPORTUNITY FOR US ABOUT OUR OWN COMMUNITY. WE NOW REALIZE OUR RESPONSIBILITY TOWARDS OUR SENIORS, BE IN OUR OWN OR IN NEIGHBOR’S FAMILY. WE ARE CONFIDENT THAT WE CAN BRING ABOUT DESIRABLE CHANGES ON OR OWN.

THEREFORE, WE HAVE MADE A COLLECTIVE DECISION THAT FROM NEXT YEAR ONWARD WE WILL GIVE CONTINUITY TO SEFC PROGRAM FROM OUR OWN VDC BUDGET. EACH YEAR WE WILL SELECT THE BEST FIVE FAMILIES OF OUR VDC, JUDGED BY THE QUALITY OF SERVICES THEY PROVIDE TO THEIR AGEING PARENTS OR GRAND PARENTS. WE WILL HONOR THEM AMIDST A CEREMONY LIKE THIS OF TODAY, DECORATE THEM WITH MEDALS AND PROVIDE CASH AWARD TOO. CONSIDERING THE TOTAL VDC BUDGET THAT WE SPEND EACH YEAR, THIS NEED IS NOT MUCH AND CAN BE EASILY ACCOMMODATED. NOW WE REALIZE HOW LITTLE RESOURCE COULD ENSURE HOW MUCH GOOD TO HOW LARGE AGEING POPULATION OF THE AREA.

I PERSONALLY WILL ENSURE THAT GCN GETS THE INVITATION NEXT YEAR TO GRACE THE OCCASION IN OUR VDC.

AGAIN, I THANK GCN AND THE AUGUST GATHERING HERE FOR GIVING OUR VILLAGE THE HONOR AND THE OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN SO MUCH ABOUT OUR OWN AGEING PARENTS AND GRAND PARENTS. THIS WAS ALSO AN OPPORTUNITY FOR US TO START CREATING A TYPE OF SOCIETY WHERE WE WOULD PREFER TO LIVE A DIGNIFIED LIFE AS A SENIOR CITIZEN.

THANK YOU.
6TH AUGUST 2010
Group Photos

Award Winners with the Special Guest Rt. Honorable Vice President Mr. Parmanada Jha

Mr. Bharat Raj Oudel, CEO of GCN with participants from Seti Devi VDC after the ceremony
**Chapter 4**

**Summary and Lessons Learned**

1. **Introduction**
This Chapter compares SEFC implementation in 2009 and 2010 and draws on lessons from the experience. The comparison is given in Table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Implementation Steps</th>
<th>SEFC 2009</th>
<th>SEFC 2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Area selection</td>
<td>Urban, a section of Metropolis</td>
<td>Rural, a village</td>
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<tr>
<td>Defining a community</td>
<td>Administrative unit of local government ignored</td>
<td>A complete administrative unit of local government taken</td>
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<tr>
<td>Identification of local leaders</td>
<td>Avoided political leaders and relied on information collected from household interviews</td>
<td>Accepted already established political leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formation of Selection Committee</td>
<td>-From a meeting of 20 selected members, at GCN meting room</td>
<td>-From a mass meeting at a open ground in the middle of the Village</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Limited participation of selected leaders invited by GCN,</td>
<td>- Free for all to come and participate</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- not open for all to participate in the formation process</td>
<td>- Guided by the political leaders of the area</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Exclusion of political leaders</td>
<td>- One representative from each Ward plus the two as selected by the mass</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- 11 members</td>
<td>- GCN role limited to facilitating the discussions in selection process</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- GCN role was more directive</td>
<td>- Two women selected</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- No women selected</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Emphasis on selecting intellectuals of the area</td>
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<tr>
<td>Explaining SEFC objectives and process</td>
<td>Explained well to the members of Selection Committee</td>
<td>Explained well to a large gathering of local leaders and others who would then select the Selection Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification of Three nominees for “Ideal Descendent Award”</td>
<td>-Identified by the meeting of Selection Committee members based on their existing collective knowledge -Door to door visit not made</td>
<td>- Existing understanding of selection Committee members verified with door to door visit by members of Selection Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form of honor or recognition</td>
<td>-Published life history of nominees in a book titled “Honorable Personalities” -Provided certificate of recognition</td>
<td>-Published life history of nominees in a book titled “Honorable Personalities” - Medal and cash prize added - Honored with title “Ideal Descendent Award” engraved in the silver medal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social value of Award Ceremony</td>
<td>-Concerned minister as the Chief guest</td>
<td>-Rt. Honorable Vice president as the Chief guest</td>
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<td>Media coverage</td>
<td>Less</td>
<td>More</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability of SEFC</td>
<td>- Absence of initiative from locals to give continuity to the program</td>
<td>-VDC decided to give continuity to the program in the future on their own</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. Lessons Learned
   2.1 Area Selection
   The program was better received by rural population than by city dwellers. This experience could be attributed to factors such as: a) rural living allows devoting more time for social work, and b) the socio-cultural fabrics in rural area is found stronger than in cities.

   2.2 Defining a Community
   Selecting a complete administrative unit that enjoys some level of autonomy in making its resource use decisions can give continuity to SEFC program. VDC is the lowest such administrative unit of the local government in Nepal. In other cases it could be county, prefecture, district, city, township, borough, parish, shire and village to name a few.

   2.3 Identification of Local Leaders
   Efforts made by GCN to identify local leaders on its own through taking opinion polls of families visited did not succeed. It was erroneous to avoid involvement of political leaders in 2009. As is evident form the success of SEFC in 2010, it would be safer to involve all established political leaders of the community selected for SEFC implementation. They could be the ex or officiating or the potential leaders. The purpose of identifying local leaders is to form a Selection Committee out of them. It is better to include leaders from all walks of life than to limit to any pre-decided categories such as only intellectuals or only political leaders.

   2.4 Meeting for Formation of Selection Committee
   Persons from SEFC implementing agency should personally meet all leaders of the community and explain them a) objective and procedure of SEFC implementation and b) the need for Selection Committee. The date and venue for a meeting to form a Selection Committee should be fixed with consent from a majority of local leaders visited. All identified local leaders should be issued a letter of invitation requesting them to bring “others” with them. It is better to hold such meeting in open space (preferably a school or play ground) that is located almost in equidistance from village boundaries. Persons from the implementing agency should again explain objectives and procedures of SEFC implementation to the gathering.

   2.5 Formation of Selection Committee to Recommend Nominees for “Ideal Descendent Award”
   The role of persons from implementing agency should be limited to initiate the process of selecting representatives for Selection Committee and should intervene the process only as a facilitator. It is important to ensure that the mass feels ownership of the Committee Formation task and the selected Committee members feel answerable to the mass present.
2.6 Mode of Honor (Ideal Descendent Award)
Name of the Honor or Award should be fixed with great care considering the socio-cultural norm and value of the society. Name of the award should reflect respectable relationship between young and old persons, for example Ideal Descendant Award. It is equally important to put some cash prize along with certificate of recognition and medal to make the award more meaningful.

2.7 Media
Awareness building is the inherent objective of SEFC. Therefore it is important to ensure that the program is well covered by media as much as possible. Inviting celebrities or high officials makes the task easier. In case of high government officials, the occasion could also be used to make them aware of issues and get their commitments in public.

2.8 Sustainability of SEFC
The investment made in SEFC program from out of the community could be interpreted as a start-up cost for a welfare program that ultimately leads to larger good for wider population for the longest time to come. Example is the commitment of Seti Devi VDC. The total program cost for GCN on SEFC program in Seti Devi VDC came about US $ 3200 equivalent Nepali Rs. That included the cost of book printing, cash award, medal, shawl, certificates, travel, salaries and allowances to people involved. But it is worth noting that from the next year onward the cost will be born by the locals themselves which ultimately leads to better services for ageing population of the entire VDC. This also ensures that certain percentage of government budget to local government starts being used for the welfare of elderly population of the area (speech of Mr. Prem Bahadur Bista given in Box). This is a significant departure from the existing situation where local resources are not used specifically for the cause of old people at the local level.

2.9 Creation of Local Institution or a Pressure Group
The Selection Committee, though formally dissolved after the Award Distribution Ceremony, will continue to exist in the society as an informal group of people who are more concerned on welfare of old people in their village. Also, winners of awards will be morally bound to exhibit more concern on how elders are being treated by families in their neighborhood and vice versa. People of these both categories are given social approval of them peering into family matter of others where old people are involved. Thus a social taboo of “how an elderly is treated in a family should not be the concern of others” is broken down and a pressure group created within the community.

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