



REGIONAL PROGRAMME FOR POLLUTION CONTROL IN THE
TANNING INDUSTRY IN SOUTH EAST ASIA - US/RAS/92/120

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STATUS OF WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE TANNING INDUSTRY IN SOUTH EAST ASIA

REGIONAL SUMMARY

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ENCLOSURES

1. Strategies for increasing women's participation in the tanning industry in South East Asia - China, India, Indonesia and Nepal - Second mission report, prepared by Mrs. I.S.A. Baud, Amsterdam, Netherlands, June 1997
2. Status of women's participation in the tanning industry in China - Country survey; prepared by Mrs Song Xian Wen, Shanghai, China, April 1997
3. Status of women's participation in the tanning industry in India - Country survey; prepared by Mrs Madhura Chatrapathy, Madras, India, November 1996
4. Status of women's participation in the tanning industry in Indonesia - Country survey; prepared by Mrs Suliestiyah Wrd, Yogyakarta, Indonesia, May 1997
5. Status of women's participation in the tanning industry in Nepal - Country survey; prepared by Dr U K Kunwar, Birgunj, Nepal, March 1997

ABBREVIATIONS/ACRONYMS USED

CETP	COMMON EFFLUENT TREATMENT PLANT
ETP	EFFLUENT TREATMENT PLANT
NGO	NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATION
REPO	REGIONAL PROGRAMME OFFICE
UNIDO	UNITED NATIONS INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANISATION
WID	WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT

BACKGROUND OF SURVEY

UNIDO AND WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE TANNING INDUSTRY

For a long time, the importance of women's participation and their contribution in the economic life was undervalued. Recent reviews of the status of women and their actual contribution to the industrial growth in many countries in South - East Asia - as conducted by various international and national organisations - showed that today women play an important role in the economic activities of these countries.

UNIDO has, for many years, been actively engaged in the promotion of increased participation and contribution of women in the industrial development process of the developing countries. With regard to the leather industry, UNIDO has implemented a number of successful, women focused projects, including some as part of its regional programme for the leather industry in Africa.

Under a similar set-up, UNIDO started the Regional Programme for Pollution Control in the Tanning Industry in South - East Asia covering Indonesia, India, China, Nepal in November 1995. This Regional Programme takes an integrative approach when directly assisting the tanning industry in the participating countries, by simultaneously looking at productivity, environmental soundness and worker friendly production.

Particularly, under the workforce oriented component of the Regional Programme, national experts were engaged in each participating country to make a survey of the current status of women's participation in the tanning industry and allied activities. At the same time, these experts also looked at the prevailing occupational safety and health standards at work in this industry.

OBJECTIVES & ORGANISATIONAL SET-UP OF REGIONAL PROGRAMME

The integrated Regional Programme for Pollution Control in the Tanning Industry in South East Asia, comprises the umbrella project "Assistance in pollution control in the tanning industry in South - East Asia" and the national projects in each participating country. The principal methodology in meeting objectives I, II and IV below is through 'show-how', that is by setting up pilot and industrial scale plants in operational tanneries or effluent treatment plants.

The objectives of the Regional Programme are:

- I. Containment of environmental degradation emanating from the tanning industry in selected countries in South - East Asia.
- II. A significant reduction in the amount of pollutant generated in the process of leather manufacture in a number of tanneries existing in the selected countries in South - East Asia.
- III. Increasing women's contribution and their effective integration in the activities of the leather sector in the region, with particular emphasis on environmental aspects.
- IV. Improving the health and safety of workers employed in the tanning industry in the region.
- V. Promoting consultation on global Eco-labelling concept.

To co-ordinate and synchronise the activities under the regional and the national projects within the region, the Regional Programme Office (RePO) was set-up in November 1995 in Madras, India (ref. Annex I).

PREPARATORY ACTIVITIES FOR WID

Following the successful launching of the Regional Programme and the establishment of RePO as administrative nucleus at the regional level, UNIDO appointed an international expert as co-ordinator for the activities under objectives III, IV and V, under the overall supervision of the Programme Co-ordinator. During the first co-ordination and planning meeting of the Regional Programme in March 1996 in Madras, India the basic strategy and approach for objective III were discussed and agreed upon.

As per the conclusions of this meeting, in each of the participating country a national expert, to co-ordinate the WID related activities at the country level was engaged (see annex II). Based on a review of secondary data and information and collection of primary data through visits to tanneries and meetings with tanners, women workers, non-governmental and governmental organisations, the experts compiled country surveys and made recommendations to increase women's participation in the tanning industry and allied activities at different levels of management hierarchy.

At the same time, RePO appointed an international expert on women's participation. The expert, with previous experience in women's participation in the leather industry, particularly in India and other countries of the region, was expected to provide direct guidance to RePO and the national experts in each

country in the implementation of activities to achieve the objective of enhanced participation of women.

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE TANNING INDUSTRY

During the fourth quarter 1996 and the first quarter 1997, the national experts in China, India, Indonesia and Nepal conducted detailed surveys. The national experts compiled their findings and recommendations in separate country reports based on the approach described. Each national expert was requested to follow a participatory approach, involving concerned parties such as tanners, tannery associations, workers (of both sexes), non-governmental and governmental organisations as closely as possible.

STATUS OF WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT IN THE TANNING INDUSTRY

The survey in each country revealed significant differences in the ratio of women's participation in each sector. The table below provides an overview of the results.

LEATHER PRODUCTION

There were significantly less women working in the production stage as from raw to semi-finished leather than in the stages of semi-finished leather to finished leather production in tanneries.

Table 1 - Overview of women's participation in each country and sector

Sector/Area	Country	China	India	Indonesia	Nepal
Tannery (raw to semi-finished)			5%		
Tannery (semi-finished to finished)		35%	15%	5%	8%
Leather conversion		50%	85%	30%	70% ¹
(C)ETP		40%	5%	n.a. ²	n.a. ³
R&D, Laboratory		45%	25%	50%	80%
Environmental consulting		not available	1%	not available	0
Chemical supplier		not available	1%	not available	0
Estimated total number of women employed in the tanning /leather industry		400,000	10,000	600	519

Note:

(1) Nepal has only one large shoe manufacturing unit, employing around 100 women.

(2) Only one ETP employs two women.

(3) There are no tannery effluent treatment plants in Nepal

TANNERY MANAGEMENT

Except in China and to a certain extent in India, only few women occupy positions at higher and middle management level. Similarly, it is very common to find women operating machines or holding work floor supervisory charges in tanneries.

SMALL AND MEDIUM/LARGE UNITS

The number and type of women employment differs significantly between small- and medium/large-scale tanneries. Small tanneries tend to employ women for job-work activities, either on piece/daily rate and informal basis. Large-scale tanneries were found to employ more women in the finishing operations.

ASSOCIATED SECTORS

The concept of common or individual effluent treatment plants is rather new in countries such as Indonesia and Nepal, while countries such as China and India have CETPs and ETPs in operation for an already longer period. In India, three CETPs in Tamil Nadu are reported to employ between 3-5 women each in various managing and technical positions (on average the CETPs employ 25 persons).

LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

In most countries covered under the regional survey, separate legislation or specific regulations pertaining to women's employment are available. These refer to limitations of employment of women during night times. Usually, the relevant regulations are contained in the legislative framework governing occupational safety and health in industry.

Maternity and special leave

The legislation in all countries includes provisions allowing maternity leave and other special leave in connection with child birth and nursing. In Indonesia, the law also grants special two-days "menstruation" leave every month.

Women worker's welfare facilities

With regard to welfare regulations for female employees with children, the employer is obliged by law to provide crèche facilities. In most cases, the provision of such facilities is bound to specific criteria such as number of women employed in the factory, etc. In most countries, the law does not specify whether these facilities have to be provided on individual or common basis, for example in case of several factories/tanneries located in the same area. Such alternative is not offered under the Factory Act in India which requires the employer to provide crèche

facilities in case more than 50 women are employed. The law does not differentiate between women with and without children.

Equal work - equal pay

Equal pay and equal career opportunities are presumed or specified as part of the national policy on women. However, these principles are not explicitly specified in the factory related provisions. Non-compliance and alleged breaches can be pursued through corresponding legal means as stipulated under the national policy.

Table 2 - Selected legal provisions pertaining to women's employment

Legal provision	Country	China	India	Indonesia	Nepal
Limitation of night time work		✓	✓	✓	✓
Restriction of women working in specific jobs		✓			
Maternity leave		✓	✓	✓	✓
Menstruation leave				✓	
Provisions of separate hygienic facilities		✓	✓	✓	
Provisions of crèche		✓	✓	✓	
Equal work - equal pay principle laid down in national policy		✓	✓	✓	✓

FACTORS AFFECTING EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN

SOCIO-CULTURAL PERCEPTIONS

The most crucial factor generally influencing employment of women in industrial activities pertains to perceptions in the respective socio-cultural context. Besides, the tanning industry as such is considered an employment opportunity with low social standing, usually reserved for certain communal or religious minorities or groups.

WOMEN'S SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC MOBILITY

Many traditional perceptions within societies in the countries covered under the survey, discourage women's social and economic mobility outside the family house or village community. Though significant regional and geographical differences could be noticed in these countries. Society's perceptions also play a crucial role when it comes to recruitment of women for work in tanneries for specific jobs other than auxiliary or unskilled ones.

Table 3 - Society's perceptions about women's employment

Country	China	India	Indonesia	Nepal
Perceptions				
Tanning done by a specific group of society		mainly Muslim community	mainly by Chinese origin community	mainly by Indo-Aryan group
Low standing of tanning industry	✓	✓	✓	✓
Poor image of tanning industry	✓	✓	✓	✓
Social and economic mobility of women limited		particularly in Northern India	particularly in rural community	particularly in rural community

IMAGE OF TANNING INDUSTRY

Many women, at the point of starting a vocational career, consider work in tanneries an unattractive option. This is due to prevailing poor working conditions in this industry, the limited scope of career and promotion as well as the general image of the industry. In case, women are willing to pursue a career in the leather sector, they usually prefer employment in the leather conversion sector or, if at all, in the finishing operations of the tanneries.

Rapid industrialisation in countries such as Indonesia reduces the number of women opting for employment in the manufacturing industry at all, being provided attractive opportunities in the emerging service sector.

WOMEN'S EXPECTATIONS

Women try, and sometimes are pressured by their families, to combine their professional career with their traditional role of housewife and mother. For lack of alternative arrangements, women shy away from positions which will require intensive travelling outside their home towns. This particularly affects the employment of women in companies such as consulting and chemical suppliers which usually require visits to clients in remote areas. Employment such as in laboratories, R&D and teaching institutions as preferred by such women.

The need of supplementing of family income is an important reason why women take up work as unskilled workers in the "semi-finished" sectors of tanneries. In many cases this is done for lack of an alternative.

EMPLOYER'S PERCEPTION ON WOMEN'S QUALIFICATIONS

Employers, on the other hand, feel that women are not fit to take up work which is physically demanding or is to be done under difficult work conditions such as widely found in beam

house, tan yard and wet finishing processes. However, in most countries, employers are convinced that women are capable to carry out activities more diligently, accurately and with a higher level of self-discipline than male workers.

Women's lack of experience and know-how

With regard to equal career opportunities and taking up supervisory and management positions, employers cite women's lack of experience and of know-how as main reasons, why women are still underrepresented at these levels.

However, in many cases cultural attitudes play a more important role denying women access to such positions. In many cases objections to women being engaged in machine operation were raised by male co-workers, fearing their replacement and loss of jobs. In order to avoid labour conflicts, the management decided not to pursue such plans further.

Such perceptions are already ingrained in the minds of both male and female students at the education and training stage in tanning training institutes.

Table 4 - Employer's perception about women's employment in tanning

Country	China	India	Indonesia	Nepal
Employer's perceptions				
Women not fit for work in tanneries, since work physically demanding	✓	✓	✓	✓
Women cannot operate machines		✓	✓	✓
Women not suitable for supervisory positions due to lack of experience		✓	✓	✓
"Feminisation" of jobs taking place		✓		
Men and women cannot/should not work together			✓	✓
Women employment adds costs	✓	✓	✓	✓
Women better and more accurate in leather finishing and leather conversion	✓	✓	✓	✓

PRODUCTIVITY AND COST IMPLICATIONS OF WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT

The existing legal provisions pertaining to women's employment, are perceived as obstacles by many employers. Tanning being a continuous process would require women to work at late hours and during night. However, the respective laws do not permit so.

Women as interim employees

Tanners claim that frequent absence of women workers due to family obligations, maternity as well as additional infrastructure

requirements (separate washroom, toilets, change room, health care,...) result in lower productivity of workers and higher cost. If at all, tanners prefer to employ unmarried women until their marriage. Since these women tend to drop out of the labour market after marriage the employers only invest little in their training and skill up-gradation. This again has an adverse effect on the career opportunities of women, giving feed to the perception of lack of qualification of women employees for higher levels of employment. Thus, investment in training of women is considered wasted money.

LABOUR MARKET CONDITIONS

Even if tanners had been ready to employ an increased number of women in the tanneries, they were not able to find any women willing to take up employment. Aside from the reasons mentioned earlier, the labour market did not provide the sufficient number of candidates. The tanning industry often faces local competition for women labour from in and outside the leather industry (tanning - leather conversion, tanning - textile industry, etc.).

In Indonesia, women constitute more than 70% of the employees in the service sector (banking, insurance, hotel,...) while men tend to take up employment in the manufacturing sector.

In Tamil Nadu, India, the concentration of leather conversion industries (shoes, garments, leather goods) in some geographical regions - with women employment rates up to 95% - were found to drain the respective labour market of women workers.

EXISTING INITIATIVES FOR PROMOTING WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT

BY TANNERY SECTOR

Except for a few progressive tanners, no concerted and structured efforts to increase women's employment in the tanning industry have been implemented by the national tannery associations. However, the good experience with employment of women as gained by these few tanners is usually widely known within the tanning community.

BY GOVERNMENT ORGANISATIONS

As mentioned earlier, the governments in the participating countries actively promoted increased women's employment and participation in the industry as such. This was attempted through national women oriented policies, women quotas and various incentive schemes, which should motivate employers to

increase the number of women in their industries, partly with the assistance of bi- and multi-lateral organisations. Unfortunately, in some cases, this has resulted in number-wise increases of women's employment only, without any corresponding development in women's quality employment. For example in China, women employment quotas - as prescribed by the government for state-owned tanneries - were reported to be met. The assessment of the ground reality in some tanneries revealed that this had been achieved with the result of underemployment of women for sake of fulfilling the quota.

Several state and semi-state organisations could be identified in most participating countries, completely devoted to women's issues. However, in many cases these appeared to be engaged in mere academic endeavours, with little impact on actually increasing women's employment in the industry. As a matter of fact, in many countries, tanning industry was not considered a focal area for such activities so far.

In few cases, these organisation provided gender sensitisation training at the enterprise level. However no such training was reported from the tanning industry, except in China.

BY NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATION (NGO)

Current activities implemented by NGOs target the lower strata of society promoting self-employment and entrepreneurial initiatives through skill up-gradation, training, credit schemes, etc., particularly at cottage and small-scale enterprise level.

Several NGOs are engaged in community level orientated gender sensitisation activities.

BY TRAINING INSTITUTES

Except for Nepal, all participating countries have training institutes for training the workforce of the tanning and leather industry. Relatively few female students were found to have enrolled in courses on tanning. Most female student opted for courses in finishing and leather conversion, since these sectors were perceived to provide better employment alternatives.

At present, many such training institutes do not undertake any efforts to encourage more women to join the available training courses on tanning.

CONCLUSIONS

1. In most countries, women have gained a good reputation as hard and diligent workers in the leather conversion sector. Similar qualities are assumed, but not yet proven, for work in tanneries.
2. Positive experiences of individual tanners with employment of women are shared through formal and informal communication within the tanning community, particularly in countries such as India, Indonesia and Nepal.
3. The attractiveness of a possible employment, e.g. in terms of working conditions, plays an important role for women to decide on different industrial employment options. In countries such as China, India and Indonesia attractive alternative options for women are available. The poor working conditions - as prevailing particularly in raw to semi-finished leather production steps - discourage women from taking up employment in tanneries, unless economically compelled.
4. In countries/regions, where basic perceptions of society only allow a limited social and economic mobility of women, further promotional activities under the Regional Programme may not be productive, unless these perceptions are overcome.
5. Many WID interventions e.g. government incentives or women quotas have led to a number-wise increase of women employment, but did not result in actual quality employment and better career opportunities for women.
6. Cost implications of women's employment play an important role for tanners when deciding on possible employment of women.
7. Women do not have equal* promotional and career opportunities in tanneries mainly for lack of their experience and know-how. Many tanners are reluctant to invest in training of their women workers, since many women usually quit employment after getting married.

RECOMMENDATIONS

STRATEGY AND APPROACH

The Regional Programme is not in the position to indulge into a broad based national sensitisation of prevailing socio-economic perceptions. In cases, where the national perceptions towards social and economic mobility of women are not conducive, only a focus approach with limited activities in co-operation with

positively inclined employers, NGOs and the government should be pursued.

LOBBYING AND ADVOCACY

Keeping in mind that there is an intensive formal and informal exchange of ideas taking place between tanners in most countries, the strategy for increasing women's participation in the tanning industry and allied sector will be mainly based on an advocacy and lobbying with the key counterparts in the respective countries.

Under this approach, positive experiences as gained by both employers and employees in the tanning industry and CETPs should become role models. RePO-UNIDO will provide the suitable forum and platform for a wider dissemination of such experiences. This could be in form of articles, round table discussions, national workshops and presentations in training institutes. Such good examples should be adequately documented and shared within the country and region. The emphasis in all endeavours should be on the promotion quality employment.

PRE-EMPLOYMENT/ON-THE JOB TRAINING

At the same time, the detailed training needs of both "freshers" and women on the job should be mapped in consultation with employers, based on which specific training modules could be elaborated for both target groups. Available in-country training sources should be identified for providing these specific training courses. RePO-UNIDO will lay-down specific guidelines under which such training could be sponsored by the Regional Programme in each country.

After completion and evaluation of each training, the national expert will take necessary steps in co-operation with the respective training source to institutionalise the training into a regular annual training syllabus. Such annual training syllabus will have to be administered by the national counterpart organisation.

In case of Nepal, the possibilities of inclusion of an entrepreneurial training in the field of leather good manufacture should be considered. An according decision will be taken in consultation with the concerned national counterparts after the mission of the international woman expert to there.

PLACEMENT AND ADVISORY SERVICE

The national expert will in co-operation with the existing training institutes of the country to provide a placement service of

qualified women graduates from these institutes, particularly vis-à-vis existing counterparts under the national project.

In addition to the above, further country-specific activities will have to be initiated as recommended by the international and national experts.

ACTION PROGRAMME

ADVOCACY

- Motivate selected tanners and CETP managers, who have had positive experience with women employment, to share their experience with other tanners and CETPs.
- Identify women already engaged in tannery and CETP work to share their positive experiences with other women, particularly young graduates in existing training institutes.
- Organise round tables and national workshops as forum for such sharing of experience
- Prepare articles on positive experiences with women employment to be circulated through suitable media

TRAINING

- In consultation with tanners, CETP managers and representatives from training institutes prepare training programme/modules for "freshers" and "on-service" in areas such as laboratory work, quality testing & control and machine operations in tanneries and CETPs.
- Identify sources for training in each country and arrange for training within the guidelines laid down by RePO.
- Review and evaluate training and undertake steps to institutionalise training subjects in existing training set-ups in each country. In the first phase such training shall be for women participants only.

LOBBYING

- Directly approach institutions covered under the national projects for contributions in terms of identifying and filling employment opportunities with qualified candidates.
- Assist these institutions in finding suitable candidates, possible through placement service of existing training institutes.

INFORMATION SHARING

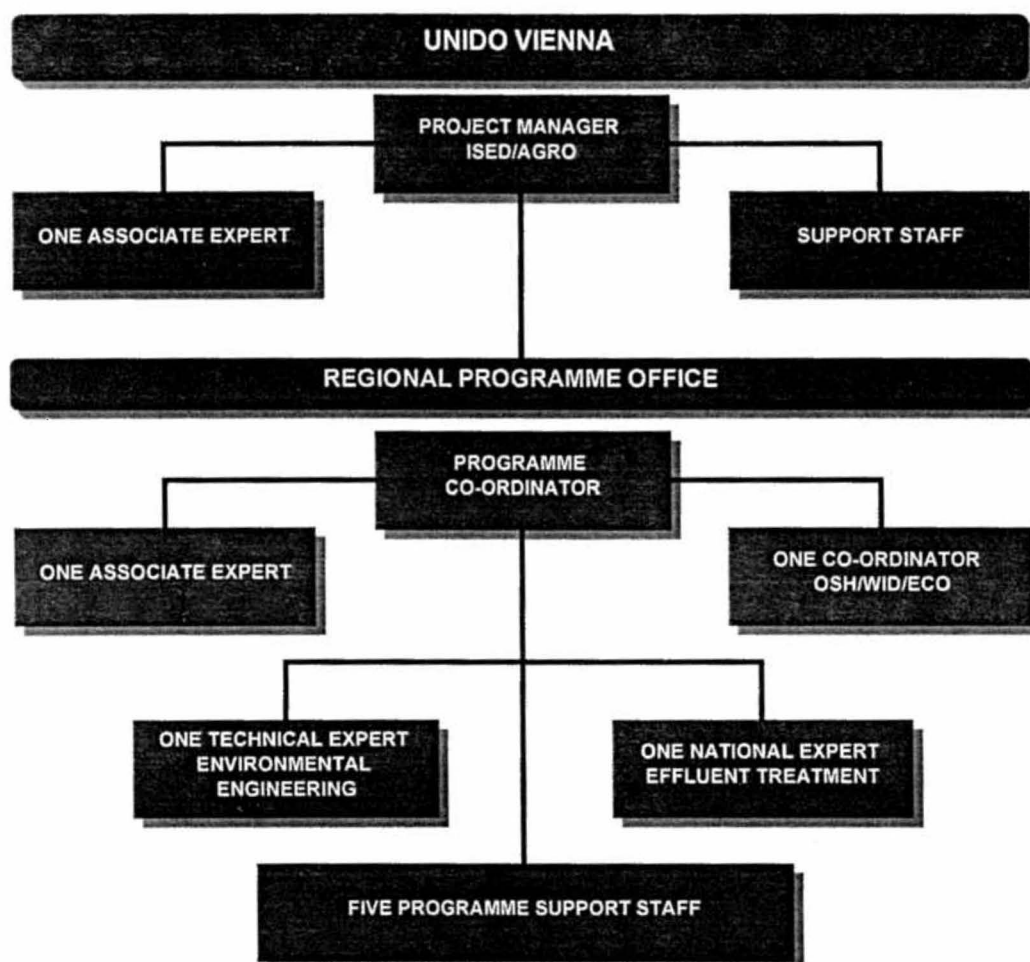
- Document successful models/cases of women's employment in non-traditional positions.
- Share such information through appropriate media channels in co-operation with the local tannery association.

UNIDO INPUTS

The inputs of RePO-UNIDO in this context could include financial contributions to the following:

Table 5 - List of UNIDO inputs

Input	Unit cost in US\$	Total cost in US\$
Three-four training courses per year in each country	1,000	16,000
One national workshop on WID in each country	5,000	20,000
Assistance to already identified counterpart organisations in advocacy programme	500	10,000
One promotion and information video	5,000	5,000
TOTAL		51,000

ANNEX I**STRUCTURE OF REGIONAL PROGRAMME OFFICE (RePO)**

ANNEX II**NET WORK OF WID EXPERTS AND COUNTERPARTS**

AGENCY/ COUNTRY	PERSONS INVOLVED	AGENCY/NATIONAL COUNTERPART
UNIDO Headoffice	Jakov Buljan (Project Manager) Hanna Hoffmann (Associate Expert)	UNIDO - WID SECTION
RePO-UNIDO	Jurgen Hannak (Co-ordinator) I S A Baud (Internat. Women expert)	
CHINA	Song Xian Wen (National expert)	China Leather Industry Association (CLIA) Shanghai Leather Technology Centre (SLTC)
INDIA	Madhura Chatrapathy (National expert)	Indian Leather Industry Foundation (ILIFO) All Indian Skins & Hides Tanners and Merchants Association (AISHTMA) Central Leather Research Institute (CLRI)
INDONESIA	Suliestiyah Wrd (National expert)	Institute for Research and Development of Leather and Allied Industries (IRDLAI) Academy for Leather Technology (ATEKE)
NEPAL	Dr U K Kunwar (National expert)	Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI) Nepalese Leather Industry and Traders' Association (NLITA)