



**IPJ Nepal Project
Trip Assessment – Final Report
April 2-17, 2007**

**“Conflict Analysis:
Anniversary of the People’s Pro-democracy Movement in Nepal”**

Overview

April 24-25, 2007 marked the one-year anniversary of powerful people’s movement—a movement that demonstrated how peace can prevail when a people stand united. King Gyanendra’s brutal human rights record and oppressive security tactics provided a springboard for the mainstream political parties and the Maoists to begin to negotiate. In the face of mounting grassroots pressure, the king ceded authority and restored the parliament on April 24, 2006. The following day, one million of the nation’s 26 million citizens took to the streets in celebration in Kathmandu; the IPJ was on the ground and able to respond during this window of opportunity by facilitating a series of roundtable discussions in which participants strategized how to maintain this momentum while managing expectations.

The IPJ remains in a key position to support and contribute to the Nepali’s efforts at this time. While many other organizations are limited by U.S. government funding restrictions, the IPJ’s financial independence allows it the freedom to continue to work with all parties. The one-year anniversary was an important time to evaluate the successes, and to plan for the challenges, that lie ahead approaching the constituent assemble originally scheduled for June 2007. As the nation looked towards constituent elections, the IPJ returned to Nepal to solidify networks, build coalitions and discuss plans of action and engagement.

In April 2007, the IPJ built on six successful years of experience working with diverse sectors, and responded to the participants’ articulated needs—from the July 2006 visit and on-going communication—to promote a peaceful and just society in Nepal.

Scheduled Activities

- Inter-Party Women’s Alliance Workshop
- Women and Marginalized Groups Workshop
- Emerging Leaders Workshop
- Civil Society Roundtable
- Today’s Youth Forum
- Individual consultations with political party leaders
- Rural community visits and follow up to the Peace Radio Project

Outcomes

- Strengthened constituencies for upcoming constituent elections
- Raise awareness in the U.S. through media outlets and IPJ Daylight Series Event
- Article for IPJ Compass
- IPJ analysis and prospects for future projects



IPJ team treks to conduct community dialogue in Baglung (April 2007)

Executive Summary

This report describes the findings of the IPJ Nepal Project team, Dee Aker, Interim Director, and Laura Taylor, Program Officer. An assessment trip to rural districts as well as a series of workshops and private interviews with key stakeholders in Kathmandu informed this analysis. Voices and perspectives of conflict survivors and political leaders on the forefront of the democratic transition are included.

This report briefly considers the background and root causes of the conflict, as well as the potential for constructive conflict resolution. The following sections review the IPJ participatory programming, and conclude with the opportunities for future IPJ involvement.

I. Background and Root Causes of the Conflict

Historic exclusion, a feudal caste system, and political in-fighting contributed to the initiation of armed conflict in 1996 when the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoists (Maoists) left the government, dusted off the communist manifesto from the 1940s, and began taking control of the countryside. Violence escalated in 2001, when King Gyanendra assumed the throne following the brutal royal family massacre and suicide of the crowned prince. The king's intensified military solution to the "Maoist problem" unleashed a new brutality on the Nepalese people who felt themselves caught between two stones. The initial influx of arms to King Gyanendra's government heightened the fatality of the conflict. After playing off the fracture political lines among the parties, the king sacked the parliament, took all power for the monarchy, and declared a state of emergency in February 2005. A year of growing discontent and jailed political leaders, journalists and human rights activists followed.

With conditions for human rights and civic participation dissolved, the Maoists, political parties and the people now shared a common enemy: the king. King Gyanendra's brutal human rights record and oppressive security tactics provided a springboard for the mainstream political parties and the Maoists to begin to negotiate. Initial steps, beginning with formation of the seven-party alliance (SPA) and the Maoists' unilateral three-month cease-fire declared in September 2005, laid the foundation for the greater cohesion in the movement against the monarchy. This movement—*Jana Andolan II*—grew, and under the weight of the mounting grassroots pressure, the king ceded authority and restored the parliament on April 24, 2006.



Boy herds sheep on mountain road (April 2007)

The newly instated parliament quickly passed sweeping legislative reforms and the people's expectations soared. As is often the case, this political transition carried the promises of social reconstruction, transitional justice and basic human security. However, "after one year of democracy," one participant questioned, "do the children know what it is?" Despite the initiation of U.N.-monitored cease-fire and arms management of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and the Nepali Army (formerly Royal Nepalese Army); a Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed in November 2006; and establishment of an

interim government and interim constitution, one year later, few of the initial promises of Jana Anadolan II have been implemented at the grassroots level.



Maoists' supporters organize street protest in Biratnagar (April 2007)

With worsening violence in the southern Terai region, and splinter Maoists groups creating a deeper sense of insecurity throughout the country, from the streets of Kathmandu to the hills of Humla and the plains of Gaur, Nepal is in a state of precarious peace. Constituent assembly elections previously set for June 20, 2006 have been delayed, with the current projections estimated a November date. The influx of support from the international community to assist the Nepalese people promote democracy will certainly advance the process. However, international attention must also specifically respond to the people's requests, not attempt to impose outside solutions or pre-formulated policies. In the transition to peace, the root causes of the conflict must not be forgotten, nor should the abuse of power and taking of human life be overlooked. For Nepalese society to be reconciled, a renewed sense of civic trust, in each other and the institutions which govern the nation, must be fostered. Inclusive dialogue with remaining armed factions, as well as village-level development, are just some of the steps that will need to be taken for Nepal's conflict to be transformed.

II. IPJ Participatory Programming

IPJ Workshops and Roundtable

The themes of each workshop were determined based on the articulated needs of past IPJ participants and conversations and consultations with key contacts. In July 2006, Urmila Aryal (Central Committee – UML) requested the specific training for the Inter-Party Women's Alliance (IPWA) to help them devise strategies for inclusion. Throughout the project year 2005-2006, participants requested specific training for dealing with the range of issues conflict victims face, including trauma and fostering a sense of personal agency. Finally, at the Today's Youth Forum in July 2006 on transitional justice and reconciliation, the emerging leaders requested additional information on non-violent movements and tools to understand conflict transformation. With this in mind, Dee Aker, Ph.D., Interim Director

of the IPJ, and Laura Taylor, Program Officer of the IPJ, designed and facilitated the following workshops in partnership with Shobha Shrestha, Program Officer of SAP-Nepal.

Inter-Party Women's Alliance

Twelve members of the Inter-Party Women's Alliance (IPWA), a coalition of women leaders from each of the eight parties in the interim government alliance, as well as the RPP and other smaller parties, participated in the day-long workshop, "On the Campaign Trail: Strategies to Advance and Mainstream the Women's Agenda" (April 9, 2007). Representing six parties, many of the participants were central committee members or held decision-making posts in the parties' women's wings. Despite these accomplishments, however, Prativa Rana (Central Committee –RPP) said that when she entered politics in 1990, "I thought I would do a lot for women, at the policy level. Until to day, however, we are still struggling. In this coalition we are determined to struggle ahead."

As individuals, and later working in smaller groups, participants analyzed their relationship to and with their constituents. Focusing on their agenda, and how to transcend the group lines they have traditionally represented in the past, they said, "The bitter truth is women represent men, but the men don't consider [women] when voting." To address this tendency, they then planned how to ensure women are successfully engaged in the coming elections at all levels—from voters to poll stations, from being on the ballot to being appointed in the future government. Considering their political goals in the broader context of gender justice, Uma Adjikir (Member of the Interim Parliament) said, "we do not have gender justice at all in Nepal. Laws, those are there, but they are not implemented. One year ago we passed the 33% law, this still does not exist. That remains true in all sectors—even at the city office.

There are only two women ministers, only nine percent. Even in [the interim parliament], old-age politics confine women's roles." These laws should be enforced, she concluded, asking that international agencies be an advocate for their implementation as well.



Uma Adjikir addresses gender justice in Nepal (April 2007)



Radha Gyawali advocates that gender inclusion is essential to peace and security (April 2007)

Using a framework for a gender audit of their own parties, participants adapted the questions to the Nepali political context. The gender audit will "help us in many ways," one participated responded in the evaluation. It will help "make parties more responsible, transparent and answerable" and "it provides clues for us to be effective in our demands within and outside out parties," responded two others. This process illuminated some of the areas of weakness that would need to be addressed: "Women are weak because of financial factors. We can't have the same outreach campaigns [as men] to the far-reaching areas [of Nepal]." The adapted gender audit, and the simulated process on inquiry, also helped participants articulate the need for clear

benchmarks for party promises, e.g., 33 percent inclusion, and future issues, e.g., gender-sensitive budgets for party finances. In response, participants practiced how to anticipate the “not now” answer from party leadership when pressed on gender inclusion, and think about how they might ensure their concerns are seen as an integral part of peace and security, not as a secondary issue. They framed their responses in how it will benefit the men, and what incentives there are for women’s full participation. To conclude the day, the IPJ shared a series of resources, including the 2004 and 2006 Women PeaceMakers conference reports.

Women and Marginalized Groups

The price of conflict, civil strife and violence is often trauma and isolation. At a time when Nepal is seeking a new democratic system, survivors should be supported and given avenues to participate in creating a new, inclusive society where everyone is guaranteed rights and knows how to advocate for justice. Whether at the hands of state actors or armed groups, or the result of systematic inequality and exploitation, groups of survivors who come together and speak up are making a difference—in their personal lives, local communities and at the national level.



Women and marginalized groups work in pairs and share stories of overcoming trauma (April 2007)

Representing a diverse cross-section of Nepalese society, twenty-three women participated in the workshop, “From Personal Recovery to Political Agency” (April 10, 2007). By creating spaces for mutual support and advocacy, survivors came together to determine joint strategies to address common problems. In realizing a deeper sense of personal worth, or by fostering individual self-esteem and providing an environment where individual voices can be heard, participants can be better able to not only realize their rights, but demand their rights and build coalitions for actions for those rights.

The workshop engaged participants to recognize the signs of vicarious trauma, as well as the resilience and psychosocial strengths of women during and after violent conflict. Participants were invited to share stories of how they, or the people they work with, have overcome the negative consequences of war and systematic human rights abuse.

- “Amrita was a victim of the Maoist. After her husband, a police man, was killed by the Maoists, she never received the compensation promised by the government. She has begun sharing her experiences with similar victims. These women have created a

group, Conflict Victims Police Wife's Association, and together have started demonstrating and trying to create awareness about the issues they face."

- "We have an example right here beside us. When Menuka was 18 years old, the Maoists killed her father; the army raped her sister and so severely abused her mother that she was handicapped, and died shortly after. Menuka left the village and came to Kathmandu and had many negative feelings. She entered a "restaurant" and worked as a singer. Even here, she had regular tiffs with her bosses and they scolded her. Through all of this, things were really difficult. Menuka then found MEET Nepal, which helped her deal with the psychological experiences and nightmares. Today, she is transformed into a woman who can do something for society—she is the president of Protection Nepal (*Raksha*). The change has been dramatic, and now she has many abilities which she uses to help others who have faced the same thing."
- "People's Voice is an organization brings youth, men and women, together for a series of trainings and forums. They train the youth individually and it has helped these displaced youth. What I have realized is that youth are really strong, and that one year can make a difference. Their personality and behavior has really improved. For example, there was a victim whose father was killed in front of the family. She had to flee from the eastern part of Nepal, leaving her house behind, to come to Kathmandu and stayed with relatives. The relatives found a program, but the victim did not want to talk, and had nightmares, and especially about her father's death. Then she got enrolled in residential training. There, she saw others like her and she realized it wasn't only her that had survived that [type of experience]. The group members [at the residential facility] provided mutual support, and her confidence grew. Now she speaks in the group and has even become a leader."



Participants foster mutual support (April 2007)

Each of the stories shared illustrated how women have overcome personal trauma, often times joining other survivors to demonstrate empathy, care, and respect in clever and creative ways, becoming leaders in helping those who are confronted with the same harsh realities of war. Participants identified increased self confidence, training, counseling and emotional attention, employment, awareness, motivation, women's mutual support, survival skills, access to resources, and rescue as common threads of resilience in these women's stories.

Following the international debut of the 2005 IPJ Women PeaceMakers documentary, *Reversing the Ripples of War*, one participant stated: "We can really feel like we are not the only country [that] is tackling this problem and it help[s] to empower us." The examples from Cambodia, the Philippines, Uganda and Zimbabwe "aided by giving more knowledge and created the nexus between national and international issues." Seeing how women around the world responded to conflict, "refreshed, empowered and energized us," reported another participant. The workshop concluded with participants sharing their methods of self-care to mitigate the negative effects of trauma through awareness, balance and seeking community. Minerva Manandhar, Business and Professional Women-

Kathmandu Chapter, told the facilitators that “this [information] will be really useful in the rural areas” and Rajana Maharjan shared, “We really feel the pain in the rural areas – this has been helpful.”

Emerging Leaders

Conflict is not inherently violent or destructive. With basic conflict analysis techniques, participants can more clearly see opportunities for constructive engagement. The workshop “Another Kind of Power: Constructive Conflict and Consensus Building through Nonviolence” (April 12, 2007) was designed to foster discussion among participants to model consensus-building methods that can be applied in a number of settings. Together, twenty-five participants dialogued and planned with one another to develop strategies to transform conflict in Nepal through positive, constructive means. They discussed how to ensure their voices and perspectives are heard, and how the new generation can secure a place for itself in deciding the future of Nepal.

Based on theories of constructive conflict, participants worked in small groups to better understand the current situation in Nepal. Using a simple framework for international conflict management to think about how to strategically impact various aspects of the peace process, they worked individually and in small groups to identify key domestic and international actors at the grassroots, middle range, and elite that had influence in the political transition in Nepal. “Conflict is the process of social transformation. [Youth are] searching for identity through civic engagement,” said Deepti Khakural.

Based on their current work, or where they would like to put their energy, each small group developed a series of action points to leverage their combined resources to gain influence with a specific actors. To influence the international grassroots actors, one group suggested a signature or letter writing campaign to promote inclusion of ethnic groups in the social, economic and political mainstream. To motivate domestic grassroots actors, another group devised a detailed strategy to stop child trafficking in Humla district, Karnali region. Working with each ward to the village development committees (VDCs), they would simultaneously address the root causes—poverty—through economic empowerment and microcredit,



Emerging leaders brainstorm how to leverage power with international grassroots actors (April 2007)

prevention—through literacy campaigns for child and families to educate about the rights of the child, and accountability—public denouncement of traffickers and initiation of judicial prosecution. Each set of action points included awareness campaigns recognizing “media’s importance in transferring messages.” Using consensus building methods, they transformed their action points into integrated action plans, serving as a springboard for future collective action among participants in this workshop.

Approaching reconciliation as the profound restoration of relationships, rooted in theory developed by John Paul Lederach, the participants worked in small groups to consider what balance of truth, justice, peace, and mercy was needed in Nepal. “Truth is not enough. We need to take in all four, it’s hard without doing that,” shared one group.

Another reported, "The topic of reconciliation is difficult. Justice is hard to talk about as just one branch. Focusing on justice, one thing we have to remember is constitution should not be made by Prachanda and Koirala, it should be made by the people. The most important thing is visionary local autonomy action, so that local people can participate in all levels. Justice in all political and economic activities." While the four are integrated, we need peace first proposed another group. "Law and order, security for all without discrimination," and addressing Madhesi issues in the Terai are of primary importance the group emphasized in the plenary session.

Throughout the day-long workshop, the participants gained skills and analytical tools to better translate their vision for peace into tangible strategies for change and concrete victories that improve the lives of people in their communities. "It helped me build a more clear concept of constructive conflict" shared one participant. "[The workshop] introduced a perspective to visualization our priorities and [how to] work together to achieve peace" wrote one participant on the exit evaluation. With new perspectives, they revised plans, refocused our actions, and filled in a more complete picture to leverage the most effective collective power to achieve their articulated goals.



Emerging leaders seek a voice in the democratic transition in Nepal (April 2007)

Civil Society Roundtable

The roundtable of seventeen leading civil society representatives was designed to create a space for select community activists and spokespersons to provide insight into the current political transition in Nepal. To see where civil society is headed, the discussion began by looking at group's priorities and agenda setting and the primary challenges faced.

While coming from a range of backgrounds and primary interests, the majority of participants stated that they were actively working on education and awareness-building about the constituent assembly (CA). There was disagreement, however, over the timing of the CA. Padma Mathema was optimistic, and expressed her thoughts that if civil society were mobilized at the grassroots level they could prepare and distributed voter education materials in time (the June elections had not yet been postponed when this workshop was convened). Mukti Rijal disagreed, he said that the timeframe is too short, highlighting that civic education should be based on the electoral laws which have yet to be established. There

is insufficient time, he concluded, to develop the materials in the 60 different languages spoken in Nepal and train the trainers to disseminate such information.

Representation, summarized Sushil Pyakharel, is the “crux of the problem in this country.” Those who claim to represent us—be they parliamentarians or Maoists—do not have our true interests in mind. “We must tell the politicians: ‘Don’t play politics’” added Rabindra Nath Jha. “After one year of democracy,” Pyakharel questioned, “do the children know what it is?” Impunity persists and the rule of law remains elusive. While the political parties focus on the CA, “human rights issues are ignored. Direct healing has stopped. [And there are] armies in every village.”

Other participants focused their reflections on the positive role civil society can play. Inu Aryal said, “We should commend the role of civil society [for the] change in the country in April 2006.” Leading up to the CA “civil society should be massively organized. . . . Let’s not talk about government and parliamentarians, let’s talk about the grassroots, the women and youth, and educate them about voting. To bring peace, what role will they play? To bring justice, how will the laws be implemented to protect them? [Those answers] are what will make a successful constitution.”

Striking a middle ground, Kapil Shrestha acknowledged that while the “CA is a controversial and debatable process,” it must still be “consensual, not a minimalist process.” Rather than going through the motions in a “ritualization of process, this should be a convergence of opinions. . . . [The] CA process has also generated hope and optimism. There is not only doom. For this first time, [we are] addressing the issues of the Madhesis—we had never used to address the inclusive issues in the past. Instead of completely rejecting [the CA process] and adopting a cynical attitude, civil society should create a conducive environment acting as catalysts and bridge builders, not as dividers. In this debate, we should look at creative and critical role we can play: both to caution the government not to engage in the politics of appeasement, as we so often do in Nepal, and to caution the Madhesis People’s Rights Forum (MPRF). The MPRF issues are justified, but the manners [through which] they have raised them have to be criticized. There can be no room for the politics of anger and hatred.”

While the date for CA elections was postponed just a few days later, each of the issues raised by the civil society roundtable must still be addressed. From implementing civic education to establishing a just representation system, civil society must ask itself what role it has to play. How will the greater community get justice? What are the challenges to bringing diverse Nepali needs to new legislators in the interim government or creating the new constitution? What might the future hold and what means are there for civil society to be heard? While media attention in the international community focuses on the political statements of the eight parties, this session afforded the opportunity to learn about shared platforms and joint strategies to ensure the voice and influence of civil society in the constituent assembly process and the future democracy in Nepal.

Today’s Youth Forum

On the first day of the Nepali new year, 30 youth ages 12 to 19 years old gathered for their weekly Today’ Youth Forum. Laura Taylor, IPJ Program Officer, facilitated the session “*Leading the Way to Peace: Fostering Youth Participation*.” After brief introductions and explanation of the IPJ programs, specifically the Women PeaceMakers Program, the youth watched the hour-long documentary on the 2004 Women PeaceMakers, *Leading the Way to Peace*. Following the film, Taylor led a dialogue in which the participants examined

commonalities with the women's stories in the film. Their stories are personal but the obstacles they tackle are universal. These survivors, human rights advocates, and peacemakers all face unique and dangerous situations; all have had to overcome the global reality of gender-based violence.

Common elements such as lack of human security, ethnic polarization and gender-based violence were discussed. "Scary things are changing [in Nepal] in the name of security." As Shreen Abdul Saroor stated in the film, Sri Lanka is neither a place of war nor peace. "This exactly describes the situation in Nepal," said one participant, "The war is not on people's hands, but it's still in their minds." They said that ethnic differences are being politicized and, like the Maoists, more extreme techniques are being relied on. The people in the Terai are "ethnicizing political issues" and there is a lack of leadership when looking to negotiate with the agitators, identified one participant. Like in the film, "silence also exists in our communities—you can't speak about violence against women." In this setting, one person reflected, "Violence adds deeper darkness."

When asked to think of constructive means to influence the peace process in Nepal, one replied, "Peace cannot be attained without understanding." Another stated, "Here we are all bridge-builders, despite the work, and the demands of our time, this is our primary interest. We build bridges between the generations, and between men and women. We are empowered to do this through education." It is more than education, countered a colleague, it is about "realization, the combination of knowledge with practice," the weaving of "words with action."

To contribute towards deeper realization, the youth leader Mandira Rijal who had participated in the previous IPJ workshop on reconciliation, quickly explained in Nepali the concepts of reconciliation presented during the day-long event—truth, justice, peace, mercy—and how they had analyzed and developed action plans tailored to the actors at each level of society. The participants at Today's Youth Forum immediately captured the ideas, and began discussing how those issues related to their experience in Nepal.

One participant suggested that the model for reconciliation was missing a key element: "There can be no peace without development. That would be the fifth element necessary for reconciliation." He explained, without development, reconciliation would not be sustainable because dissatisfaction would persist. Identifying poverty as one of the root causes of the conflict, the youth seized the new knowledge and adapted it to their reality. A pair whispering in the corner then spoke up: "We can think of stable peace, of true reconciliation as a hand, made up of the five fingers. First find out the truth, then give mercy for



Documentary *Leading the Way to Peace* screened at Today's Youth Forum (April 2007)



Youth propose development as a key to reconciliation (April 2007)



A new generation of peacemakers in Nepal discuss their role as bridge builders in conflict transformation (April 2007)

the truth, then establish justice with the truth, and with justice comes peace, and then with peace you can have development.” Weaving issues of social justice and basic human dignity, with new theories of conflict transformation, the youth at the forum incorporated the global best practices and international tools to better understand the conflict in Nepal.

A month following the forum, Natasha Kafle wrote in an email, “The documentary show and the discussion we had at

the interaction program at Youth Forum was very interesting. The members of the forum still have clear memories of the event and frequently use examples shown in the documentary film while discussing on concerned issues.”

IPJ Political Consultations

Consultations with individual political leaders of diverse parties revealed their perspectives on three aspects of the peace process in Nepal: security, governance and social reform, and what role they envision for the international community.

Strengthening and reforming the security sector, specifically the police, will be a priority as the country looks ahead toward constituent elections. By establishing security throughout the nation, a climate for elections free of intimidation will be fostered. “There are guns all over the Terai... and they are being used to threaten the people.” While it will be important to keep the Maoists and the splinter forces constructively engaged in the political process, there is still great apprehension about the king’s potentially destabilizing role: “while the king is silent, he is making his presence felt... He may make a move when the new election date is set.” The fear expressed by those the IPJ spoke with was that the king might make a last desperate power grab if he feels threatened by the constituent assembly elections. Whether the royalists have enough support to mobilize a movement against the democratic transition is still a lingering question.



Maoist flag covers the face of monarch in Nepal; the base of the statue is covered with announcements of Prime Minister Koirala’s upcoming talk in Pokhara (April 2007)

The issue of the monarchy is also present in the governance decisions facing Nepal. From top-level leadership to the grassroots populous, many reported an objection to the monarchy. A political leader recently returned from one of his 55 district-level visits this

calendar year shared a conversation he had had with a 90-year-old man who said: “I don’t understand him as the king—either religiously or constitutionally.” “Even the elders have changed their thinking,” he reported. Thus, the challenge ahead will be to determine how to restructure the state agenda. The Nepalese must find “a unity factor” that will connect the people, he stated, as they determine their system of governance.

“We have witnessed change beyond my imagination,” shared one politician who has been working in the rural areas, specifically to encourage participation of previously marginalized people such as women and ethnic groups. However, more comprehensive information is needed to see if the legislative changes that were passed in May 2006 have had any real effect in changing lives in the countryside. While women’s numbers in parliament are increasing (there are now 54 women in the interim government, while there were only 12 in the previous parliament), the extent to which they can shape political developments remains to be seen. In addition, funds and budgets at the village level must be earmarked and allocated for the development of marginalized groups. The politician advocated that promoting gender-sensitivity and social reforms should be a priority in the political transition.

While the peace process in Nepal has largely been an internal movement, the international community has a role to play. The police and security forces must be better trained to create a sense of security for the everyday citizen and international groups can contribute to this through programs such as human rights training. Providing information about various political systems, specifically detailed information about the range of democratic systems, is another key area in which the international community can support Nepalese to be informed going into constituent elections. Through development projects, the donor community can support local initiatives to assess the state of social reform and provide funds to foster development that enhances equality for all. By responding to the articulated need, rather than imposing specific approaches to reform, the international community can continue to promote local ownership and agency in Nepal’s peace process.

IPJ Rural Assessment – Peace Radio Project

While politicians debate the language power-sharing agreements and regulations for demilitarization processes, relationships at the grassroots level are being transformed. “Radio is a simple form of communication, and affordable to most of us [rural people]. It is possible to use the radio in all places, from the home to farm land. It is an effective means of communication in Nepal,” reported a participant in Dhikhuripokhari, Kaski District. Through communication and dialogue, participants in the IPJ Peace Radio Project have demonstrated their resilience and their desire to rebuild their communities.

“The conflict had greatly affected our society. Many children stopped going to schools and parents sent their children abroad for employment due to fear of abduction. People the feeling that development was on no use if



SAP-Nepal staff cross suspension bridge to reach radio listening groups (April 2007)

are to die tomorrow." Decreasing the sense of isolation and fear, the radio listening groups have provided a forum for people to begin to reconnect and develop joint solutions to their shared problems: "We can each help from our place. If there is a need, we can work together."

The "radio program has empowered us... to see where conflict happens and try to find peaceful solutions." "Youth were mobilized in the democratic movement, and later excluded from the decision-making processes;" however, "the radio episodes have motivated us to stay in our country" by focusing on the role of youth in conflict resolution. "I [now] feel there is enough space for us all in Nepal to do some creative work." Recognizing their role as agents of change, participants in Leknath said, "from this room, things will surface. We'll talk to the local ministries." While "we hope that peace lasts forever," the community members said "we'll never step back [from the peace process]." They believe they have a key role to play to transform their society.

Empowering listeners, the radio project promoted leadership capacity. Not only addressing the current conflict, the programs highlighted conservative practices in the society, such as gender and caste discrimination. In addition to raising awareness, "the radio program built our confidence to fight against these issues." By examining the root causes of violence and the historic exclusion of many segments of society, the participants reflected that "there are places that not only need to be touched [by the radio program], they need to be transformed."



Youth in the PRP initiate street theater to extend the outreach and share the information of radio programming (April 2007)

Through an affordable and accessible form of communication, the radio project fostered informative and interactive spaces to counter the negative consequences of the war and historic injustices. With an emphasis on local leadership, participants now "talk boldly" on the subjects of violent conflict and discrimination, and extend the impact of peacebuilding radio project to their friends, families and communities.

For additional information about the IPJ Peace Radio Project see the 2006 Executive Summary and Success Stories at: <http://peace.sandiego.edu/programs/nepal.html>

Recommendations for Future IPJ Programming

IPWA – Leadership / Gender Inclusion

Almost all of the participants requested more in-depth leadership training in the future; gender inclusion in constituent assembly elections was the second most requested topic. Finally, one participant also mentioned the need for additional workshops on “campaigning that will highlight women’s agenda.”

WMG – Political Participation and Gender Justice

As country in a transition phase, with the constituent assembly on the horizon, greater political awareness is needed in order for the Nepalese people to determine their own future. To this end, women and marginalized group participants recommended future programs must be focused on how to resolve the political dilemma and stabilize the political situation through “political empowerment.” They requested techniques on how to organize and convince the “people in power” to end impunity for violence against women, and to simultaneously build self confidence and survival skills so that women can “move from victims to actors in the new Nepal.” Compensations and justice for the victims were key concerns that participants requested guidance on in the future. Recognizing women’s relative lack of power in politics, many participants also requested specific training on enhancing women’s role in politics. Participants suggested programs should address how women can gain access to decision-making positions, and how to influence male attitudes to increase their gender sensitivity.

EML – Reconciliation and Transitional Justice

The majority of emerging leaders requested more information about reconciliation processes. In particular, they wanted to better address local level tensions, for example between Maoists and survivors and “compensation to the displaced people or victims of terrorism.” Within the framework of reconciliation, they also requested future workshops focus specifically on justice and establishing rule of law in Nepal. Recognizing the immediate need to promote youth’s participation in an “inclusive constituent assembly,” the participants were also future-oriented and articulated the need for training on how peace can lead to development.

Civil Society – Organize, Educate, Empower

Participants in the civil society roundtable emphasized in the important and complementary role that it has to play leading up to the constituent assembly elections. While the political parties will lead campaigns, as reported above they advocated that “civil society should be massively organized.... Let’s not talk about government and parliamentarians, let’s talk about the grassroots, the women and youth, and educate them about voting. To bring peace, what role will they play? To bring justice, how will the laws be implemented to protect them? [Those answers] are what will make a successful constitution.” A comprehensive outreach strategy, which focuses not only on elections, but also on the systems of a vibrant democracy such as rule of law and participatory governance, will build a strong foundation for the future of Nepal.

Political Leaders – Democracy and Women’s Participation

During the individual consultations, specific requests were made for information on various forms of democratic government and specific support for the women’s caucus in parliament.

Conflict-affected Communities – Continuation of Radio Programming

The most resounding request was that the peace radio programs continue and expand. As shared above, by examining the root causes of violence and the historic exclusion of many segments of society, the participants reflected that “there are places that not only need to be touched [by the radio program], they need to be transformed.” The listening groups visited specifically requested more information on conflict resolution and the role of youth, and other international examples of overcoming social discrimination.

The facilitators of the Peace Radio Program also recommended that the IPJ conduct a regional dialogue among the radio listening groups. The regional development director communicated this request: “Considering enthusiastic responses from the members of radio listener groups and the facilitators, we hope to hold a regional workshop among them to help continue peace building initiatives in Nepal. In our opinion, we can hold the workshop with following objectives:

- To share learnings and the best practices in the community due to radio program, especially the IPJ programs.
- To highlight the initiatives of peace radio project towards society building at regional level
- To identify issues and concerns of the community and to build common consensus among community representatives for addressing them.
- To identify probable future steps and strategies to promote community participation and efforts towards peace building and addressing issues of governance in sustainable manner.

For the regional workshop, we propose 45 representatives (30 from the local communities including facilitators, 10 from district level and 5 staff). The program will be conducted in Pokhara and travel/accommodation/ food facilities will be provided to community participants. The workshop will have representation from 6 districts of the region.”



IPJ team meets with youth participants on terraced mountainside in Dhikuripokhari (April 2007)

III. Appendices

Acronyms

CA	Constituent Assembly
CAC	Content Advisory Council
IPJ	Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice
IPWA	Inter-Party Women's Alliance
EML	Emerging Leaders
MPRF	Madhesi People's Rights Forum
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
PLA	People's Liberation Army - Maoist
PRP	Peace Radio Project
RPP	Rashtriya Prajatantra Party
SAP	South Asia Partnerships
SPA	Seven-party Alliance
USD	University of San Diego
UML	Unified Marxist Leninist
VDC	Village Development Committee
WMG	Women and Marginalized Groups

Success Stories

Cross-sector connections and relationships based on mutual trust and respect are key components for a vibrant democratic society. Participants in the IPJ Nepal Project have not only engaged with one another during the workshops, roundtables and forums, but also sought ways to support one another in the collective movement for peace and justice – whether in the halls of justice or the urban Building on six years of work, the networks that have been formed and fostered through the IPJ Nepal Project persevered during violent and oppressive times and thrive as peace appears on the horizon.

Resources, both financial and human, are scarce in Nepal. IPJ Nepal Project participants, however, are maximizing their connections to seek symbiotic partnerships and collaboration. Recognized for her dynamic leadership during the IPJ programming, Sangita Nirola of Swati Nepal was invited to apply to the International Visitors program by the U.S. Agency for International Development country staff. This opportunity will expose Sangita to the U.S. culture and help inform the U.S. audiences in the cities she visits to better understand the importance of the grassroots work and political transitions in Nepal.

Sangita's organization Swati is a nonprofit, nongovernmental organization which conducts research on women's role in governance, entrepreneurship, conflict resolution, and the environment; creates a network of women entrepreneurs worldwide; provides a forum to raise women's voice; and trains women in various skills (e.g., computers) and occupations (e.g., drivers, beauticians, artisans). Swati offers classes in which women are trained for employment in the beauty parlor industry and learn how to make artisan products. The programs are designed to empower women, economically, socially, politically, and culturally. Swati partnered with Menuka Thapa, founder of Raksha Nepal, and investigated ways that the Swati classes could be made available to the women living in the Raksha rescue shelter. In addition, as a grantee of an international donor agency dedicated to women's empowerment, Sangita recommended Menuka also seek institutional funding; Raksha's application is currently being considered by the agency.

While Raksha has made tremendous strides to create a safe house for women rescued from "massage parlors," it is continuously looking for ways to expand the services it provides. In addition to providing sewing class and basic literacy instruction, and exploring additional skills training in collaboration with Swati, Menuka has been able to forge relationships with other participants during the IPJ workshops that will benefit the women of Raksha. Through a relationship with Vidya Sharma of the Kathmandu School of Law, the two organizations are looking for ways to provide free legal council to the Raksha women who may have a range of legal needs. While the need is great in Nepal, the cooperative efforts to seek joint solutions continue to strengthen the foundation for peaceful, democratic change.



Sangita Nirola and Menuka Thapa, with Laura Taylor: Two faces of the ever tightening and expanding web of IPJ participants (April 2007)

Map of communities visited

K:\Country files\Nepal\2007 Nepal - Spring, April Trip\April 2-17 Trip\Regional Visits
 "Regional Site Visits- A and B 3-20-07"



Facilitator and Local Partner Information

Dee Aker, Ph.D., interim director of the IPJ, is a conflict resolution professional, facilitator, educator and psychological anthropologist working with diverse communities in conflict regions. She directs the IPJ Women PeaceMakers program and has worked in Central America, Africa and Asia with parties in conflict and post-conflict settings. The former university president is also free-lance journalist who has documented hundreds of stories of women working for peace with justice.

Shobha Shrestha, program officer under Peace and Governance Foundation of SAP-Nepal, is the member secretary of South Asia Small Arms Network-Nepal and has been working for small arms control since 2003. She is a regular contributor to international conferences, including the IPJ Women PeaceMaker conferences in 2004 and 2006. Shobha Shrestha works as Training Coordinator in SAP-Nepal and has implemented programs across Nepal. She began working with IPJ Women, Politics and Peace Workshops in 2003.

Laura Taylor, program officer of the IPJ, previously served as director of development at the Guatemala Human Rights Commission in Washington, D.C. and project coordinator for Puentes de Paz, an indigenous women's community mental health project in the highlands of Guatemala. Her research focus is women's and civil society's contributions to conflict transformation and post-conflict reconciliation. With Aker, she has co-edited a number of publications on gender and security.

South Asia Partnerships – Nepal

With the vision of creating Just Society with Peace and Prosperity , SAP-Nepal has been working in Nepal since 1985. The process of institutionalization of development and the capacity enhancement of the Civil Society has provided SAP-Nepal a broader perspective to initiate development activities at various levels. The bulk of the work of SAP lies essentially in the realms of structural poverty alleviation and the strengthening of the institution building process of target groups.

South Asia Partnership-Nepal is a non-government development organization that has been working in Nepal since 1984. It is currently active in the development arena as a development organization advocating for the overall social, political and economic enhancement of the lives of Nepalese people. With its extensive partnerships with over 1,000 organizations, SAP-Nepal has placed itself in a position to help direct the evolution of the community-based organizations that are best equipped to bring about development in Nepal.

With the vision of creating a "Just Society with Peace and Prosperity." SAP-Nepal has contributed to the process of institutionalization of development and the capacity enhancement of civil society, which in turn has provided SAP-Nepal with a broader perspective to initiate development activities at various levels. The majority of the work of SAP lies essentially in the realms of structural poverty alleviation and the strengthening of the institution building process of target groups.

For more information about SAP-Nepal, visit: www.sapnepal.org