



IPJ Nepal Project  
Final Report  
May 19-31, 2008

“Uniting for a Democratic Peace”

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Overview

As the puzzle pieces of Nepal’s fragile transition to peace continue to shift, the Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice (IPJ) at the University of San Diego’s Joan B. Kroc School of Peace Studies returned to analyze and take advantage of current windows of opportunities to infuse justice and inclusive participation into local and national processes.

Objectives

- Utilize and incorporate Nepali experts into workshop facilitation
- Expand IPJ’s reach into marginalized region (WDR)
- Reach new cohorts within Kathmandu and regional decision makers
- Deepen IPJ’s work/thematic focus in response to cutting edge developments in the international arena (e.g., constitutional drafting)

Scheduled Activities

- Inter-Party Women’s Alliance Workshop
- Political Parities and Policymakers Workshop
- Everest Summit Award
- Roundtable with civil society, security sector and political party
- Rural community dialogues
- Today’s Youth Forum
- Individual consultations with political party and civil society leaders

Outcomes

- Extension of IPJ programming to marginalized WDR
- Explicit inclusion of rural concerns and perspectives
- New materials in English/Nepali to educate/inform Nepali stakeholders
- Connections and relationships fostered between and among newly elected representatives (and with IPJ)
- 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

## Executive Summary

This report describes the findings of the IPJ Nepal Project team, Dee Aker, Interim Executive Director, and Laura Taylor, Senior Program Officer, and documents the IPJ participatory programming.

Aker served as a short-term elections observer with The Carter Center for the April 10 Constituent Assembly (CA) elections. The team returned with this information to conduct a series of workshops, an assessment trip to rural districts, as well as private interviews with key stakeholders in Kathmandu. Voices and perspectives of conflict survivors and political leaders on the forefront of the democratic transition informed this report. On May 28, 2008, the first seating of the 601-member CA marked "Republic Day;" celebrations were held around the country to commemorate this historic transition in Nepal's history.



Banners welcome "Republic Day" and citizens dance in celebration.



## 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.

### Inter-Party Women's Alliance

On Thursday, May 22, 2008 sixteen women from 4 parties participated in the day-long participatory workshop, "Gender Power: Activating a Common Agenda." Aker and Taylor were welcomed by the experienced politicians of the Inter-Party Women's Alliance (IPWA), a consortium of women from the major parties who invited the IPJ to convene this workshop, as well as newcomers from the recently formed Madhesis People's Rights Forum (MJF). In the shifting political landscape leading up to the constituent assembly (CA) elections, the MJF emerged as the major party representing the historically marginalized southern Terai region, and earned a comparable number of seats to the past leading parties of Nepali Congress (NC) and Communist Party of Nepal-Marxist Lenin (CPN-ML).



"It is a pleasure to welcome back Dee and Laura, you are like a family member in Nepal"  
Prativa Rana, Central Committee, RPP, former chair of IPWA

The workshop "Gender Power: Activating a Common Agenda" encouraged new leaders to find the common agenda of women from diverse experiences and help in developing a common "language" to build support for and advance common concerns. The Election Commission called for greater representation of women and now it is time for women to consider the constituencies they represent by gender as well as party. Through exercises and

case studies, participants examined the common challenges and strategies to address them when women come to power.

The program is a continuation of the IPJ Nepal Project which has been conducted with Nepali senior and emerging political leaders, civil society spokespersons, and women representatives since 2003. Programs are designed to enhance personal skills, build broader constituencies for democratic participation, and establish collaborations to address root causes and consequences of conflict.

After Taylor provided a brief review of the impact of the Women, Politics and Peace Working for a Just Society series over the past three years, Aker share a case study of Uganda. Illuminating how women were able to get gender on the agenda for the constitution, Aker described the process, product and impact of the women's movement on democratic change in Uganda. "Women decided that if a new constitution was going to be written, they would have to go out and make sure that everybody understood what a government was supposed to and what a constitution could do." The Ugandan women's movement led the educational campaigns about constituent assemblies, forms of governments, human rights, as well as enhanced efforts to collect the voices of people to inform the new document. Through multiple means, e.g., radio, print, TV, etc., the women said, "We are going to be the bridges, the voices from the people, to the political leaders."

In the next exercise, the participants worked in small groups to use the analytic framework for understanding the conflict in Uganda, to adapt and apply to understand the current transition in Nepal. "We haven't felt security in Nepal," shared one of the participants, "however, we hope the constitution will "help to build a successful nation." "The role played by civil society organizations can be further strengthened to make a good constitution," another participant added. Key issues across the small groups discussions were insecurity, mechanisms to implement necessary legislation, the dissemination of information to the people, transparency, the commitment of the political parties, honesty of the part of the government, and free and strong fair judiciary. One participant concluded, "We are thankful for what you bring, I had no idea about Uganda until now. We will do our best to bring this information to our parties."



"We are going to be the bridges, the voices from the people to the political leaders."

After common priorities emerged during the previous exercise, Taylor shared some key consultation mechanisms to channel constituents' voices to policymakers. Constitution-making is a "deliberative" process. Interim agreements, like the one Nepali leaders forged in 2006, help society to establish basic clarify basic legal rules and provide sufficient change from past root causes of conflict. A constitutional committee can help reframe a constitution from a "contract" to a "conversation" and carry out three key phases: civic education, popular consultation and synthesis of multiple contributions and submissions. This methodology helps increase public participation and promote an ownership model of civic engagement.

Through a media simulation, participants practiced asking local constituents about their interest and ideas for a new constitution based on the strengths and weaknesses of the 1990 constitution and the 2006 interim constitution, and summarized key points in 3 sentences. They brainstormed mechanisms to share this synthesis, including more traditional channels such as radio and television, but also SMS (cell phone texting) and local suggestion boxes at throughout VDCs.

When asked what was the most important or relevant pieces of information presented during the day-long workshop, many participants listed the comparison of "Uganda's constitutional process and women's activism." The analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of Nepal's previous constitution and Interim Constitution were also useful exercises, they noted. As for how participants will incorporate the information into their current work, responses included we "will encourage other women to organize and raise issue during [the] constitution framing period and will also discuss the new issues with in the party itself." To disseminate the knowledge, another wrote: "we will present the new ways through radio, TV, and spread the word through our NGO work."

The women agreed constitution-making processes can be transformation if given adequate resources and time to include a multitude of voices and perspectives. Public participation increases local ownership as well as the legitimacy of the final product. With wider societal support, it is more likely the impact of the constitution will be inclusive and empowering in light of the root causes of conflict.

#### Political Parities and Policymakers

As Nepal passes through this crucial transition, it provides an opportunity to look back, build on past experiences and plan for what is needed on the path towards greater democracy and freedom.

On Saturday, May 24, 2008 the IPJ convened "The Power of Negotiation: Constructive Communication Techniques," an extension of the negotiation, conflict management and communication skills building programs, which have been conducted with Nepali senior and emerging political leaders, civil society spokespersons and women representatives since 2003.

Through international case studies and exercises, 33 participants of the CPN-M party, including constituent assembly representatives, central committee members and leadership of the women's and students' association, examined how negotiation and communication provide methods to transform violent struggles and address conflict. It provided an introduction to relevant skills to a new community of leaders committed to a new democracy. The program encouraged each participant to reflect on personal resources for getting beyond confrontation and on the path to solutions.



Thirty-three members of the Community Party of Nepal (Maoists) participated.

#### Everest Summit Award

Aker on behalf of the Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice at the University of San Diego's Joan B. Kroc School of Peace Studies received the "Everest Summit Award" on 25th May, 2008 by Maoists Chairman Prachanda in Kathmandu, organized by Today's Youth Asia (TYA).

Associate Editor of Today's Youth Asia magazine, Ayusha Nirola said, "Today's Youth Asia in Nepal launched this humanitarian award to recognize those international figures who have been successful in bringing about a constructive positive reform in the society, to benefit global humanity through their tireless contribution to humanitarian works, peace, education and media."



Dee Aker accepts the Everest Summit Award

Chief Guest at this award ceremony, Maoist Chairman Prachanda said that he welcomed the participation of the international community in the development process of Nepal. He also congratulated Institute for Peace & Justice and said, "I am convinced that our next generation will contribute to Nepal's progress and development and the Everest Summit Award is the first step towards achieving that positive identity worldwide."



Shah, Prachanda and Aker with Everest Summit Award

Santosh Shah, the Publisher & Editor of Today's Youth Asia magazine and the Director of the Everest Summit Award stated that, "Despite several shortcomings of Nepal's politics and developments, TYA is making an effort to create at least some young leaders who can serve Nepal in various technical fields. Institute for Peace & Justice has contributed to the peace and justice of several conflict-ridden nations worldwide. We are impressed with their practical approach and innovative and effective methods."

The recipient of the award Dr. Dee Aker said, "In our work around the world, perhaps it is the inspiration and dedication of the women peacemakers and commitment of youth that teaches us the most about the essentials in peace building." She also said, "People want to cultivate a new respect for diversity while working for inclusion of voices and the profound rights of citizens. We hope to support you in the creation of a truly inclusive, democratic and just state."

Everest Summit Award was launched as an international award from Nepal in February 2008 and the first award was offered to Ms Aram Hur & Indigo Sowon of South Korea.

For further information contact Santosh Shah, Editor & Publisher, Today's Youth Asia Magazine [youthmag@wlink.com.np](mailto:youthmag@wlink.com.np).



Today's Youth Asia student volunteers and IPJ staff celebrate

Roundtable with civil society, security sector and political party

Elections are one step in a long-term peace process. Two years ago, *Jana Anadolan II* set the foundation for this change. With a new leadership, what role will Nepali people play in the determining the future of the democratic transition of the nation? The IPJ and MSBK-Nepal (see below) roundtable “Reaching Stable Peace: Roundtable on Reconciliation” held in Pokhara encouraged participants to identify and articulate some of the key challenges still facing their respective sectors.

On Tuesday, May 27, 2008 fourteen representatives of three political parties, eight civil society organizations and five security sector bodies contributed to the two-hour dialogue on their concerns about the peace process and the challenges and issues for those they represent, namely socio-economic development, rule of law, impunity, ending corruption and accountability of elected officials.

With a vision for the long-term nature of peacebuilding, one political representative stated: “Although there may be many disturbances along the way that act as hurdles, the main concern is in the process of establishing a republic. The second challenge is the social economic disparity that the country is now facing; there isn’t a lot of work being done to empower the people economically. If this feudal system ends, in 10 years time, then this period is an opportunity, and it will be possible for the resources to be distributed to the citizens and the power will be disseminated to the people.”



Members of the roundtable on stable peace represent police, civil society and political parties.

“The most important thing is to maintain law and order,” another expressed. Adding to the discussion on rule of law, one participant stated: “I want to raise an issue related to the security field, there is a great challenge in the integration of the Maoist army and the National Army; there is little consensus on how to integrate the forces.” In addition, “everyone is talking about a federal system, but as we the security personnel see, no one is talking about the framework of the security personnel in that system and how that will be addressed.” Restructuring of the existing forces and incorporation into the evolving government structures were key concerns raised during the discussion.

One of the threats to ending impunity is the politicization of the security sector and the silencing of the victims and their families. "There are weak sanctions. Sometimes we [state security personnel] bring in the culprits, only to have pressure of the political parties to release them. The new constitution will have to have strict laws so Nepal is a more secure place and it is easier for us to work." "No one discusses the disappeared and the murdered," shared a civil society representative. Another cited lack of criminal investigations as one of the challenges; "compensation may be given to the victim's families in some cases, but the investigation is not done." One advocate concluded, "the real conflict is over, but the consequences of conflict still remain, like the conflict victims. There needs to be more policies to give attention to the conflict victims" and reminded the group of the provision for a Truth and Reconciliation Commission in the Interim Constitution.

"One of the most dangerous things in Nepal is corruption and bureaucracy and until that is changed, people will not feel peace." While corruption is rampant throughout Nepal, in the political realm, the "administration and bureaucracy only serve the parties, and the people are still suffering. The parties' only agenda has become the political agenda, but we must focus on human dignity to reach sustainable peace and development." A political party representative noted, "in the drafting of the constitution, 26 seats were reserved for intellectuals. Those seats have been mis-used; the parties have divided the seats among themselves, trying to make themselves stronger, rather than focusing on the people's needs. Thus, there are no independent candidates that are fighting for the people's needs in the cabinet. In the very first stage of the drafting of the constitutions, [the major parties] are making it about getting power."

One method to curb corruption is increased accountability of the political parties to those that they represent. As voters, "we have influence on the elected member, but the question is whether those people elected will be ultimately influenced by the people or the party? If the party influences more than the people, then it's no use." The fact that many members of the CA are new, and perhaps less experienced, was seen as a two-edged sword: they might be more susceptible to pressure to follow the party line, or they might be more open to listen to the people's concerns if they were voiced clearly. "In spite of political connections, there are still people [in the CA] who represent castes and other areas."

Another aspect of accountability raised was the decentralization of power. While there was a heated debate on the value and practicality of federalism, there was consensus that the people of Nepal "are expecting decentralization. They want skills training in decision making to be enhanced so that they can make their decisions for themselves." Regardless of the divisions designed in the new constitution, one step is to "empower the existing system of the government such as the mayors, village development committees (VDCs) and district development committees (DDCs)."

Despite the many challenges addressed during the roundtable, participants reaffirmed their commitment to work for peace and security in Nepal. They emphasized the importance of working across party lines, as well as among the diverse sectors represented in the room, to achieve their vision for sustainable peace.

### Community Dialogues

Elections are part of peace process, as is the process of writing a new constitution. With MSBK, Aker and Taylor conducted three community dialogues with 150 people in Puranchour VDC, Bharatpokhari VDC and Lamachour VDC all in Kaski District. Discussions fostered thought on how local community members might advance their agendas with their newly elected representative in the CA.

In Puranchour, participants included a head master of the school, organic coffee farmer, community first chairperson, men and women farmers, NGO member, social worker, shop keeper, youth club member, student, chairperson of the drinking water committee and income generation club member. "The elections are over, but the people in Nepal want a nonviolent society." While "we are still optimistic, despite the ongoing acts of violence," there are "doubts that CA people will write a good constitution, because [the representatives] are worried about their positions, not the people."



Malla, Aker and Taylor discuss the CA at Puranchour VDC

Discussion progressed to how they could influence the CA process. Many were distrustful of the new CA members: "we are fully dependent on the leaders." "But democracy is new in Nepal, all the people who voted depend on the representatives and what they do in the center. The constitution will not be made from here." However, others asserted that "the representatives are supposed to listen to us."

After a discussion of the community's priorities for the new constitution, Aker shared the participatory CA process in Uganda. Many of the participants were inspired by the inclusiveness and began to plan how they could organize themselves. "First we would have to find consensus among the community members."

The following day, 49 participants (half men, half women) gathered in Bharatpokhari. They expressed their surprise that the elections were peaceful, and articulated the vision for the new CA: "Whoever is elected as representatives, their first priority isn't development, but on the development of a new constitution." When asked their priorities for the new constitution, they listed the property rights of women, citizenship in the name of the mother, the mother's name on the citizenship card, access to education and literacy, and the special

needs of the disabled. "In this election we voted for Rabindra Adikary. We want him to be in this position, and he has to deliver things like these." Another added, "not only Rabindra, but all the elected members should know these priorities. The constitution is for the welfare of the people."

Young farmer lists priorities for new constitution



The group then discussed mechanisms to share their priorities with their representative and other members of the CA. "The people of this community should take the initiative to build the box and write the letters. Then the community leaders, the women, should take on the initiatives and they should be taken to the VDC to the DDC." They also asked the IPJ to share their ideas: "What you have in your diaries, you should publish in the U.S. and in newspapers. People all over the world should know what we have said here today." Participants volunteered to serve as a "drafting committee" to write letters to their representative and continue to raise issues of importance to those gathered. In conclusion, a young farmer stated: "Thank you for the empowering conversation and you are welcomed back any time."



The IPJ and the drafting committee from Bharatpokhari VDC

In Lamachour, the IPJ met with the women's savings group, some of whom had participated in the Peace Radio Project and the Regional Forum in November 2007. While there was agreement that the elections overall were "free and fair," there were differences in opinion about why the Maoists earned the most seats; "some cast [votes] because of their wish, some because wanted change and some because of pressure or fear."



President of the women's savings cooperative in Lamachour shared their priorities for peace

When listing their priorities for the new constitution, they noted women's rights, access to education and employment as primary concerns. "Women are victimized by men and in the policies and in practices... male perceptions dominate women politicians, too." On the first page of the constitution, there should be clear policies about this type of discrimination, they stated. They brainstormed ways to influence their representative: write him directly; invite him to one of their meetings; lobby to his party members [Maoists]; and use media advocacy including radio and newspapers. After the IPJ shared about the recent work with policymakers in Kathmandu, the participants added work with civil society; network for policies on women; contact women's lawyers associations and the Inter-Party Women's Alliance or other women politicians within the Maoists. To better advance their efforts, they formed a committee to lead the research and documentation of facts that would help their advocacy efforts.



IPJ team discusses methods to lobby elected leaders

### Today's Youth Forum

On Saturday, May 31, 2008, 60 youth (ages 12 – 19) from Nepal and 3 from Israel, and 6 adults representing 3 Nepali organizations participated in "Transitions and Transformation: Linking Justice with Peace in Nepal." The forum, a project of Today's Youth Asia, is an open platform for youth to speak out, discuss issues and explore their creative ideas. Participants began by exploring their personal understanding of "justice;" Taylor synthesizing similarities and differences among the diverse perspectives. The youth raised a number of important questions, including some that sparked debate who is responsible to ensure justice (the individual vis a vis the state). Following, Taylor presented the goals of "transitional justice" and the range of concrete approaches that have been developed around the world following mass atrocity. Techniques emphasized methods of healing and inclusive participation.

Madhukar SJB Rana wrote, a "thank you for [the] kind invitation to attend yesterday's programme.... We are thoroughly impressed with the content, organization and style of the two hour session led by Laura Taylor. Congratulations to Youth Asia for assembling so many bright youngsters on such an important topic."

### Political Consultations

The IPJ team had the opportunity to conduct a series of consultative meetings with political parties including Narihari Acharya (NC), Minendra Rijal (NC), Jhalanath Khanal (UML) as well as with leaders in civil society including from the human rights and democratic governance sectors. At the conclusion of the trip, Aker and Taylor met with U.S. Ambassador Nancy Powell to discuss role of U.S. policy and international NGOs in supporting Nepal's peace process.



IPJ team meets with leaders of Nepal's major political parties

## Appendices

### I. 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
MSBK	Manabiya Srot Bikas Kendra Nepal
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

### II. 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. She has co-written publications on gender and security.

Upendra Malla Tara, member secretary / director of MSBK-Nepal, who has worked in the field of development since last eight year. Upendra has served in Western Development Region in areas of good governance, peace building, education development and capacity building in partnership with various reputed NGOs and INGOs. As a coordinator, he has worked for peace radio project in 10 communities from 5 districts of Western Development Region in partnership with IPJ. The project was focused on facilitating community discussions on radio episodes broadcasted by Equal Access Nepal for peace building process.

Laura Taylor, M.A., senior program officer of the IPJ, has worked on the IPJ Nepal Project and for the Women PeaceMakers Program. Taylor has research and operational knowledge in conflict transformation, mental health and transitional justice in the Caribbean, Central America and Nepal. Taylor is experienced in designing and directing peacebuilding programs for rural, indigenous and displaced communities, as well as women, youth and policy makers. With Aker, she has co-written publications on gender and security.

Manabiya Srot Bikas Kendra Nepal (MSBK-Nepal) is an NGO working in Nepal with the vision of ideal society building with effective mechanism to bring up human potentialities. Its main objective is to enhance capacities of the grass root NGOs and communities for the empowerment of disadvantaged section of the society. Currently MSBK-Nepal is working in 10 districts of Western Development Region in the areas of education, good governance, peace building, youth leadership development, ICT and capacity building.

#### 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 civil society has provided SAP-Nepal a broader perspective to initiate development activities at various levels. The bulk of the work of SAP lays 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](http://www.sapnepal.org)*