

Series  
Number

13/07

# Keynotes

## Cranfield CSSM Case Study Series

Updated:  
September 2007

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### Eroding National and Human Security: Gendered Challenges to Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration in Nepal

*(First draft of this article published in Women in International Security WIIS Words (Summer 2007))*

#### Aim

To examine the human security challenges to disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) through a gender-sensitive lens

Map of Nepal



## Nepal at a Glance

**Name:** Government of Nepal (Interim Constitution, Jan. 2007)

**Capital:** Kathmandu

**Population:** 27.1 million (UN, 2005)

**Area:** 56,827 sq miles (BBC)

**Major language:** Nepali (official)

**Major religions:** Hinduism, Buddhism, Muslim

**Life expectancy:** 61 years (men), 62 years (women) (UN, 2005)

**Monetary unit:** 1 Nepalese rupee = 100 paisa (BBC)

**Main exports:** Carpets, clothing, leather goods, jute goods, grain (BBC)

**GNI per capita:** US \$270 (UN, 2005)

### Political Sector:

**Governing Bodies:** Executive Branch Council of Ministers, Legislative Branch Unicameral Legislature-Parliament (Interim Constitution, Jan. 2007)

*Constituent Assembly Elections are scheduled for Nov. 2007*

**Seven Party Alliance (SPA):** Alliance of leading political parties: Nepali Congress, United Marxist-Leninist (UML), Nepali Congress (Democratic), Janamorcha Nepal, Nepal Sadbhawana Party (Anandidevi), Nepal Majdur Kisan Party, Samyukta Bam Morcha Nepal and NCP (Maoist)

**Communist Party of Nepal – Maoists (CPN-M)**

*The SPA and CPN-M signed a Comprehensive Peace Accord Nov. 8, 2006*

### Security Sector:

**Peoples Liberation Army (PLA):** The CPN-M Army, approximately 30,000 personnel

**Nepalese Army (NA):** Formerly the Royal Nepalese Army, approximately 94,000 personnel

**Armed Police Force (APF):** Approximately 23,000 personnel

**Nepalese Police:** Approximately 52,000 personnel

**United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN):** Charged with monitoring the ceasefire and elections assistance by UNSC Res1740)

## Human Security Eclipsed by National Security in Nepal

When ravaged by conflict, or perceived threat of terror, governments—the bodies charged with the protection of its citizens—are commonly the most abusive and egregious violators of human rights, especially the rights of women and girls. Oftentimes, the basic security needs of this half of the population are blatantly denied. Along with other marginalized populations, women's and girls' vulnerability to extreme exploitation and severe violence grows exponentially during conflict.

This trend, the sacrifice of human security in the name of national security, rings true in Nepal. When state actors and perpetrators of violence are not held accountable—when there is impunity and no justice for the victims—both national and human security are undermined. “We want our rights, and it's not a women's cause, it's a national issue.”<sup>i</sup> One step to achieve human security in Nepal is the development and implementation of gender-sensitive security sector reform.

## Current Conflict Analysis

Historic exclusion, a feudal caste system, socio-economic exploitation, and political infighting contributed to the initiation of armed conflict in 1996 when the Communist Party of

Nepal-Maoists (Maoists) left the parliament and began taking control of the countryside. Violence escalated in 2001 when King Gyanendra assumed the throne and intensified military operations, unleashing a new brutality on the Nepalese people (see Table 1).<sup>ii</sup> The initial influx of arms to King Gyanendra's government increased the lethal nature of the conflict;<sup>iii</sup> the government is responsible for two-thirds of the 13,000 deaths.<sup>iv</sup>

In response to the king's power grab, sacking the parliament in February 2005, a strong and powerful people's movement emerged. Women's groups were at the forefront of this peaceful movement—*Jana Anadolan II*—organizing rallies, poetry reading, satirical plays, mass meetings, letter campaigns, candlelight vigils, and door-to-door advocacy.<sup>v</sup> After the king restored parliament in April 2006, it quickly passed sweeping legislative reforms and the people's expectations soared.

The political transition carried the promises of social reconstruction, transitional justice, and basic human security. Despite the U.N.-monitored arms management of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and the Nepali Army (NA, formerly Royal Nepalese Army), a Comprehensive Peace Agreement, and the establishment of an interim government and interim constitution, few of the initial promises of *Jana Anadolan II* have been implemented at the grassroots level.

Constituent assembly elections previously set for June 20, 2007 have been delayed until 22 November. Violence in the southern Terai region, and splinter Maoists groups are creating a deeper sense of insecurity throughout the country.<sup>vi</sup> This insecurity is a primary hurdle to economic development and a peaceful political transition.<sup>vii</sup> Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala has declared "the constituent assembly elections cannot be held until [the] peace and security situation in the country is strengthened."<sup>viii</sup>

### **Speaking Out on Security in Nepal**

"Scary things are changing [in Nepal] in the name of security," shared an eighteen-year-old discussing the role of emerging leaders in transforming the conflict in Nepal through non-violent means. "The war is no longer on people's hands, but it's still in their minds," reflected another participant. In Nepal, neither a state of war nor peace, "silence exists in our communities—you can't speak about violence against women."

Women are still intimidated and enticed into joining the Maoists, and children are recruited not only as informants and watchmen, but also as combatants. "I joined the rebels when I was twelve because I wanted an education and the Maoists promised us real education, but we just spent all of our time recruiting other children," reported a fourteen-year-old girl. She later fled from Maoist rebel forces only to find she was unacceptable to her home community; she lives in constant fear after her escape. An estimated 6,000 to 9,000 of the total 30,000 PLA troops are under the age of eighteen.<sup>ix</sup> When considering common elements to be addressed by security sector reform—lack of human security, gender-based violence, and child soldiers—one youth concluded that throughout Nepal "violence adds deeper darkness." She said Nepal must have "law and order, and security for all without discrimination."

## Key Gender Dimensions of Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration

Disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) is an essential phase of the peace process in Nepal. The proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW) and bloated national security budget; poor living conditions of PLA cantonment sites; and inclusion of splintering violent factions contribute to the complexity of issues that must be addressed through a gender-sensitive DDR process in Nepal.

### Disarmament

Small arms and light weapons use in Nepal surged with the initiation of the Maoist insurgency in 1996, and again when King Gyanendra came to power in 2001. While the PLA has only registered 3,000 weapons with U.N. Mission in Nepal (UNMIN), experts estimate they have upwards of 60,000; government security forces have over 150,000. DD<sup>x</sup> While Nepal has strong laws and regulations against the purchase and ownership of weapons, 35,000 civilians are licensed to bear arms—this number does not reflect the rampant use of undocumented weapons procured through illegal trade along the 800-mile (1750 km) border with India.<sup>xi</sup>

The presence of small arms brings gender-specific vulnerabilities. The NA and PLA have used weapons to sexually harass and rape civilian women suspected of having a connection with the “enemy.”<sup>xii</sup> Fear of gender-based violence has displaced many young women, enhancing their vulnerability to trafficking and sexual exploitation. Small arms also present a post-conflict challenge: “These weapons are brought into the home and used to intimidate and abuse women, heightening the risk that domestic violence will become deadly.”<sup>xiii</sup> In the presence of SALW, women’s rights are threatened and “human security is in danger.”<sup>xiv</sup>

The consistent increase in the security budget has diverted billions of rupees from spending on peace, development, and social services such as health care and education. As primary caregivers, women bear the brunt of this burden; they face greater personal risk of reproductive health complications and struggle to take care of their families.

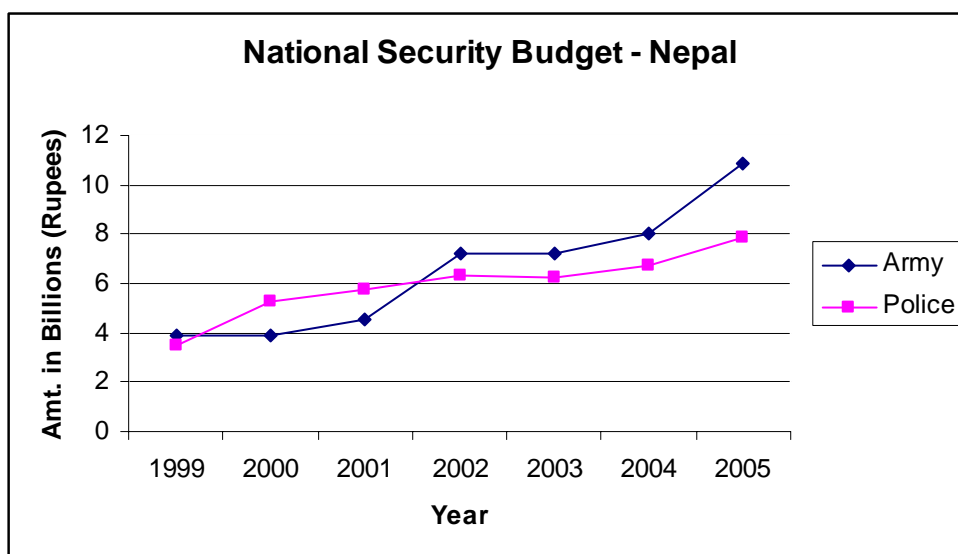


Table 1: National Security Budget – Nepal (1999 to 2005)<sup>xv</sup>

## Demobilization

Important strides have been taken to demobilize the Maoist PLA since the parliament was restored in 2006; however, the conditions of current cantonment facilities threaten to derail political negotiations.<sup>xvi</sup> Poor conditions for PLA soldiers, including nursing mothers, have caused nightly migration from the camps to the surrounding towns during heavy wind and rainstorms.<sup>xvii</sup> The monsoon season demands that these conditions are improved, and that the gender-specific needs of the estimated one-third female PLA are guaranteed in the U.N. cantonment sites.

## (Re)integration

Recent incidents have cast doubts of whether the Maoist leadership, now part of the interim parliament in Kathmandu, can wield control over the rural cadres. Within the Maoists, “there is a gap between the combatants and the policymakers;” therefore, strategies must be developed that do not deal with the Maoists as a monolithic entity. It remains to be seen if the Young Communist League will heed central committee calls for them to “stop their excesses and exercise restraint.”<sup>xviii</sup> Other cadres have out rightly declared they will not obey central or district-level leaders.<sup>xix</sup>

Mirroring the Maoists strategy of violent means, a number of spoilers—militant ethnic activists—have emerged in the past year, and while their demands are not clearly articulated, they can continue to cause unrest and insecurity at all levels.<sup>xx</sup>

New doors for dialogue must continue to be opened as these groups emerge to effectively implement the peace agreement.<sup>xxi</sup> As the government opens these doors, women—currently largely excluded from top-level leadership in government or insurgency groups—must be included in DDR negotiations (see Table 2).<sup>xxii</sup>

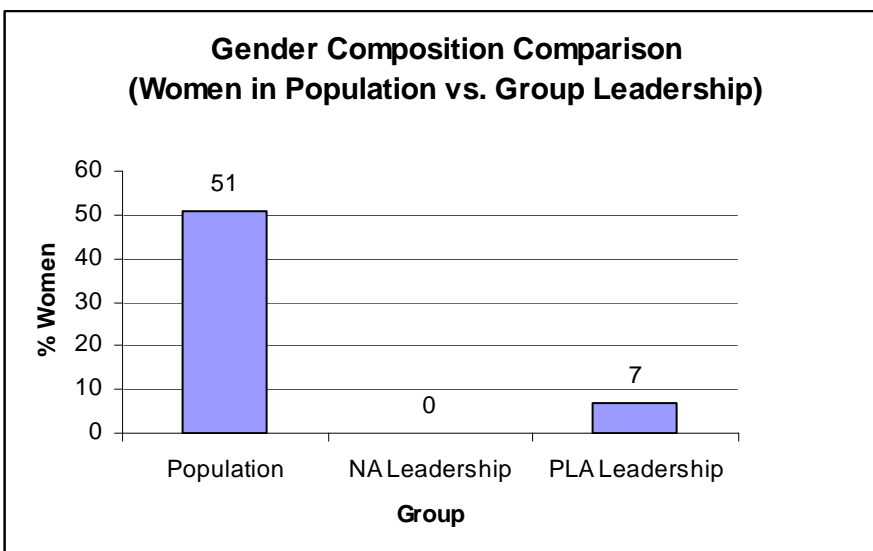


Table 2: Gender Composition Comparison in Nepal (Women in Population vs. Security Sector Group Leadership)<sup>xxiii</sup>

## Policy Recommendations

The political “gridlock” in Nepal cannot be resolved without an integrated and inclusive security sector policy. In accordance with U.N. Security Council Resolution 1325, a broad range of stakeholders must be consulted in this process, not only various factions of armed insurgencies but also women and conflict-affected communities.<sup>xxiv</sup> Legislative changes must be informed by and have an impact on local realities and an individuals’ sense of human safety. In the security sector, the personal is political, and across the spectrum men and women must work together to transform violent conflict and eliminate exploitation and violence against women and girls. While the following list is not extensive, it proposes key steps for immediate as well as systemic change.

### DDR and SALW Control:

- Appoint, raise the profile, and support with sufficient resources gender advisers to UNMIN and the Joint Cantonment Management Committee (comprised of NA, PLA, UN, and government representatives)
- Conduct a gender audit of security sector budgets and policies, including NA, PLA, and police forces (specifically in reconstruction of the 100 police posts destroyed during the conflict)<sup>xxv</sup>
- Extend security reform beyond DDR to include a victim-centered approach of relief, rehabilitation, and reconciliation<sup>xxvi</sup>
- Enforce legislation to decrease women’s vulnerability to post-conflict violence and exploitation, specifically addressing the illicit trade and ownership of SALW and the 1986 Human Trafficking Act<sup>xxvii</sup>
- Review and reallocate national security and social service budgets to promote peace and development, rather than war and destruction
- Establish a ministerial contact/focal point for SALW<sup>xxviii</sup>
- Convene a national commission, informed by village-level consultations, to review international conventions, U.N. protocols, and treaties regarding SALW
- Promote complementary initiatives towards gender justice throughout other sectors, specifically the political and social spheres<sup>xxix</sup>

### Key Discussion Questions:

- Given the prevalence of SALW, which actors should be engaged in the monitoring and decommissioning of weapons? What role does civil society play?
- Given the recent multiplication of armed groups, how can the government best respond to violent outbreaks by militant sectors of society? Are there proactive steps to be taken to address the root causes of violence?
- Nepal is a country plagued by multiple fault lines of exclusion and historic discrimination. How might other social, economic, political, and cultural divides be addressed in a way that complements a gender-sensitive DDR and security sector reform?
- How can the short-term security needs for the CA be adopted with an eye toward long-term security strategies to protect human security (e.g., what challenges might be encountered by adding up to 70,000 temporary police to monitor electoral polls)?

- How can international actors support a gender-sensitive security sector reform in Nepal? Are there best practices from other transitional societies that could be adapted to the Nepalese reality?
- What strategies can be utilized to hold the interim government accountability to the binding international resolutions and protocols (e.g., Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (Ratified 1990); Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (Ratified 1991); UNSC Res 1325 (2000) on Women, peace and security); and UNSC Res1460 (2003) on Children and armed conflict)?

## Endnotes:

- <sup>i</sup> Unless otherwise noted, quotations are from Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice (IPJ) Nepal Project participants and individual consultations. In most cases, anonymity is used at the speakers request; for more information and the original assessment reports, please visit <http://peace.sandiego.edu/programs/nepal.html>.  
In 2007, the Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice (IPJ) began its sixth year of work with Nepali civil and political groups. During 2005 to 2006, the IPJ expanded upon its work with political party leadership and policymakers and women representing political parties, civil society, marginalized groups, and victims, to include two additional Nepali constituencies: young adults entering politics and civil society service, and disenfranchised or isolated conflict-affected communities. The IPJ Nepal Project prepares these constituencies for greater participation in peace-building and democratic processes.
- <sup>ii</sup> The U.N. Special Rapporteur on Torture Manfred Nowak concluded that “torture is conducted on a systematic basis” in Nepal. (U.N. Commission on Human Rights, 62<sup>nd</sup> Session, 9 January 2006, E/CN.4/2006/6/Add.5 “Civil and Political Rights, Including: The Questions of Torture and Detention.” Available at: <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G06/101/19/PDF/G0610119.pdf?OpenElement>, accessed on 25 May 2007).
- <sup>iii</sup> Nick Bryant, “US courts Nepal as anti-terror partner” *BBC News*, 6 April 2004. Available at [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\\_asia/3593849.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/3593849.stm), accessed on 25 May 2007). The Bush administration “is investing \$17m of military air in the RNA, mainly to pay for about 20,000 M16 rifles and night vision equipment.”
- <sup>iv</sup> “Human Rights Violations Data” Insec. Available at: <http://www.inseconline.org/hrvdata.php>, accessed on 25 May 2007
- <sup>v</sup> Shobha Shrestha, “Women in the Nepali Democratic Revolution: Missing from the Government” in *Who’s Making Policy? What Difference Does It Make? – Final Report*, ed. Dee Aker and Laura Taylor (San Diego, CA: Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice, 2006), 8. Available at: <http://peace.sandiego.edu/pdf/FinalReportWhoMaking.pdf>, accessed on 25 May 2007).
- <sup>vi</sup> Maoist-affiliated factions include the Young Communist League (YCL), active in the capital and rural regions; the All Nepal National Students Union Revolutionary (ANNSU-R), active in the capital and cities with major universities; and rural Maoist cadres organized at the district level. Other violent splinter groups include two branches of the Janatrik Terai Mukti group, JTMM-Goit and JTMM-Jwalasingh, as well as the Madhesi People’s Rights Forum (MPRF).
- <sup>vii</sup> “Insecurity puts local development at risk” *Kantipur Report*, 18 May 2007. Available at: <http://www.kantipuronline.com/kolnews.php?&nid=109934>, accessed on 25 May 2007).
- <sup>viii</sup> “Polls only after security situation strengthened: PM” *Kantipur Report*, 19 May 2007. Available at: <http://www.kantipuronline.com/kolnews.php?&nid=110025>, accessed on 25 May 2007).
- <sup>ix</sup> “Human Rights Watch urges Maoists to release child soldiers” *Kantipur Report*, 8 May 2007. Available at: <http://www.kantipuronline.com/kolnews.php?&nid=108994>, accessed on 25 May 2007). This estimate will be confirmed during the second phase of UNMIN verification of PLA fights and arms, which has been delayed by Maoists demands for combatant wages and “a secure future for the fighters.”
- <sup>x</sup> “Maoists have 60,000 small arms” *Kantipur Post Report*, 6 March 2007. Available at: <http://www.kantipuronline.com/kolnews.php?&nid=102824>, accessed on 25 May 2007).
- <sup>xi</sup> Tirth Prasad Gyawali and Shobha Shrestha, “Small Arms Proliferation and Its Impact on Women” in *Nepal at Barrel of Gun*, eds. Bishnu Raj Upreti and Rohit Kumar Nepali (South Asia Small Arms Network – Nepal, 2006), 150.
- <sup>xii</sup> Shobha Shrestha, “Impact of Small Arms and Conflict on Women” in *Promoting Women’s Participation in Peace and Security Processes: Operationalizing U.N. Security Council Resolution 1325 – Final Report*, ed. Dee Aker and Laura Taylor (San Diego, CA: Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice, 2004), 11. Available at: <http://peace.sandiego.edu/reports/ConferenceReports/1325reportSmall.pdf>, accessed on 25 May 2007).
- <sup>xiii</sup> Shrestha, *Operationalizing UNSC 1325*, 11.
- <sup>xiv</sup> Gyawali and Shrestha, *Barrel of Gun*, 150.
- <sup>xv</sup> Gyawali and Shrestha, *Barrel of Gun*, 137.
- <sup>xvi</sup> “Maoists refuse verification” *Kantipur Report*, 1 May 2007. Available at: <http://www.kantipuronline.com/kolnews.php?&nid=108228>, accessed on 25 May 2007).

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- <sup>xvii</sup> “Windstorm rips through Nawalparasi cantonments, thousands displaced” *Kantipur Report*, 16 May 2007. Available at: <http://www.kantipuronline.com/kolnews.php?&nid=109750>, accessed on 25 May 2007).
- <sup>xviii</sup> “Maoist leadership directs YCL to end excesses” *Kantipur Report*, 23 May 2007. Available at: <http://www.kantipuronline.com/kolnews.php?&nid=110438>, accessed on 25 May 2007).
- <sup>xix</sup> “Maoists defy leaders’ instructions” *Kantipur Report*, 23 May 2007. Available at: <http://www.kantipuronline.com/kolnews.php?&nid=110379>, accessed on 25 May 2007).
- <sup>xx</sup> Janice Gross Stein, “Image, Identity, and the Resolution of Violent Conflict” in *Turbulent Peace: The Challenges of Managing International Conflict*, eds. Chester Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson, and Pamela Aall (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2001), 194. In a society fractured along caste, class, and gender lines, spoilers have exploited ethnic and regional tensions seeking inclusion in the political process.
- <sup>xxi</sup> Stephen Joseph Stedman, “International Implementation of Peace Agreements in Civil Wars” in *Turbulent Peace: The Challenges of Managing International Conflict*, eds. Chester Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson, and Pamela Aall (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2001), 741.
- <sup>xxii</sup> “Maoists, govt fail on HR commitments” *Kantipur Report*, 24 May 2007. Available at: <http://www.kantipuronline.com/kolnews.php?&nid=110469>, accessed on 25 May 2007).
- <sup>xxiii</sup> All figures from Census of the State of Nepal (formerly Kingdom of Nepal), 2001, specific information based on Census 2001 and taken from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics\\_of\\_Nepal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics_of_Nepal). Leadership for the Nepali Army refers to members of the Principal Staff Officers (High Command) and for the Maoists refers to the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) Politburo.
- <sup>xxiv</sup> UNSCR 1325 Article 13: “Encourages all those involved in the planning for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration to consider the different needs of female and male ex-combatants and to take into account the needs of their dependants.”
- <sup>xxv</sup> “Government unable to reestablish police posts due to financial crunch: Sitaula” *Kantipur Report*, 15 May 2007. Available at: <http://www.kantipuronline.com/kolnews.php?&nid=109653>, accessed on 25 May 2007).
- <sup>xxvi</sup> Dee Aker and Laura Taylor, eds. *Promoting Women’s Participation in Peace and Security Processes: Operationalizing U.N. Security Council Resolution 1325 – Final Report*, ed. (San Diego, CA: Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice, 2004), 45. Available at: <http://peace.sandiego.edu/reports/ConferenceReports/1325reportSmall.pdf>, accessed on 25 May 2007).
- <sup>xxvii</sup> Gyawali and Shrestha, *Barrel of Gun*, 146.
- <sup>xxviii</sup> Gyawali and Shrestha, *Barrel of Gun*, 151.
- <sup>xxix</sup> Maitrayee Mukhopadhyay and Navsharan Singh(eds.), *Gender Justice, Citizenship, and Development*, New Delhi: Zubaan, an imprint for Kali Women, 2007.