



# The Role of Women in Peacebuilding in Nepal

May 2013



The 10 years of armed conflict in Nepal involved widespread ethnic groups in most districts, affecting the country’s socioeconomic performance and bringing greater impacts on women’s lives. Nepal’s transitional situation provides many opportunities for women, such as participation in constitution making and socioeconomic reforms, wherein a significant number of women lawmakers can take part. There are also empowerment activities for women at the community level, and formal and informal institutions have been created to ensure equity in development as Nepal goes through transformation. Such political and socioeconomic transformation processes have created a relatively favorable environment for women to increase their influence in bringing visible changes to society.

International and national commitments place the role of women at the heart of peacebuilding, integrating it into the statebuilding agenda. In 2010, the United Nations Policy Committee endorsed the seven-point action plan on women’s participation in peacebuilding. The Busan Joint Action Plan on Gender Equality and Development made during the High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in 2011 captures commitments to gender equality, women’s rights, and women’s empowerment. Nepal’s Comprehensive Peace Agreement 2006 highlights social inclusion and gender sensitivity. Following that agreement, the Nepal Peace and Development Strategy 2010 emphasizes a more focused targeting of funds to gender-sensitive interventions as part of the long-term peacebuilding effort.

In view of ADB support for gender equality and social inclusion and action to mainstream gender sensitivity in program design and monitoring, it conducted this study to document how women have contributed to economic upliftment and social reconciliation through a number

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of civil society organizations and development projects, in particular ADB-supported projects. The content of this publication is drawn from literary reviews; consultant's field observations; monitoring of ADB projects in 18 districts of the country by using the peacebuilding tool; interviews with selected development partners, government officials, and nongovernment organizations (NGOs) for women; and the results of joint context analysis with development partners.

## Supporting the National Peace Process

- Women continued to raise voice through various means and strategies during conflict and post-conflict periods. As a result, United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325—an international legal framework that addresses not only the inordinate impact of war on women, but also the pivotal role women should play in conflict management, conflict resolution, and sustainable peace—has been translated into the National Action Plan endorsed by the government. One tangible result of this activism is that 33% of the constituent assembly are women.
- Women are also represented in local peace committees, community mediation activities, and paralegal committees, and continue to advocate for equal representation in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Commission for Disappeared.
- To create influence at the national level, women conduct advocacy activities such as peace rallies, radio/TV talk shows, round table discussions, and production and dissemination of publications on the impact of conflict on women and videos on peacebuilding.



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Women's networks act as change agents by informing the peace dialogue and speaking out for the democratization of the peace process.

- Women's networks act as change agents by informing the peace dialogue and speaking out for the democratization of the peace process. They have also lobbied for the inclusion of women in key structures and committees, including those that influence laws and policies in the reform processes.
- Some of the key outcomes of women's advocacy include having a female member in the interim constitution committee and recognition of women's role in the peace process monitoring committee. Strategies used were a continuous sit-in program, nationwide peace rallies, lobbying, signature campaigns, back-channel roundtables on contemporary issues, voter education, and creating mass awareness of UNSCR 1325.



## Women Network for Peace and Justice

**Shantimalika**, formed in 2003 with 150 peacebuilder women, is implementing a peace project specially focusing on UNSCR 1325 and 1820 and on the implementation of the National Action Plan in close coordination with the Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction. It is also implementing the women and youth project focusing on national and community peacebuilding.

In 2006 and 2007, Women Network for Peace and Justice, supported by USAID, engaged 11 women's networks in raising voice for 33% female representation in key government structures and the national peace process. The network also provided voter education during constituent assembly elections and educated women on the provisions of UNSCR 1325.<sup>a</sup> The Track 1.5 approach applied through this network



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has created a meaningful linkage between civil society and political parties.<sup>b</sup> Strong advocacy from the women's network made it possible to have one female member in the interim constitution drafting committee.

**Women's Alliance for Peace, Power, Democracy, and Constituent Assembly**, a loose network of women in peace, was initiated with the Government of Norway in 2007. It has now turned into **Sankalpa**, a local nongovernment organization (NGO) that has incorporated 11 large networks related to women in peace and dealing with women's issues. Sankalpa advocates for women's participation and representation in Nepal's peace process and peace structures. It also works in advancing support to implement the National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 and 1820 in coordination with the Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction. The major theme of Sankalpa's engagement is strengthening women at all levels in politics and as change agents and active participants in the peace process.

Similarly, **Women Acting Together for Transformative Change (WomenAct)** is a coalition of 36 women's NGOs and networks to ensure women can raise their voices, work in teams, and support each other. It drafted a charter for inclusion in the political party manifesto and in the new Constitution. It encourages women to participate in the political process through advocacy, radio programs, and interactions. It also mobilizes a large number of women's organizations to educate women at the grassroots level on transitional and contemporary democratic issues across the country.

<sup>a</sup> S. Jnawali. *The Nepal Transition To Peace Initiative and the Women Peace Building Network: An effective way to include women?* Kathmandu: Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue.

<sup>b</sup> Track 1.5 approach is a form of problem-solving technique involving an interactive process, conducted by an international NGO with informal participation of middle-level decision makers and government representatives.

# Strengthening Community Stabilization

- Substantial growth of civil society organizations (CSOs) and NGOs after 1990 opened scope for women to play a key role in community building, thus strengthening community capacity for peace in Nepal.
- The CSOs that emerged after 2000 were willing to respond to escalating conflict, particularly its impacts on women and children. Such CSOs or NGOs grew both their organizational strengths and technical capacity to handle various aspects of conflict during both the conflict and post-conflict periods.
- Women's involvement in health service delivery and community-building activities, including promoting access to justice at the local level, are numerous. Local capacity for peace is demonstrated in the form of peace institutions, formal and informal structures, and other good local practices.
- CSOs and NGOs have been engaged in responding to the needs of internally displaced persons, the disabled, single women,<sup>1</sup> and orphans; psychosocial counseling for trauma victims; community infrastructure building; community reconciliation; economic engagement and recovery; and advocating for the rights and representation of women in the Constitution, peace structures, and political processes.
- Women have established networks and alliances at the community level for various causes, including voter education during elections of the constituent assembly, lobbying for women's representation in the national peace process and peace structures, and advocating for women's rights in the new Constitution. Women play a significant role in community stabilization through various social and economic activities. The richness and local institutional capacity of a few initiatives are presented below.



Sharada Jhawali

Conflict-affected women accept nontraditional jobs to generate income.

## WOMEN IN GOVERNANCE

- At the grassroots level, women's involvement in users' groups and committees is gradually being institutionalized. An assessment of the Local Governance and Community Development Program<sup>2</sup> on gender equality and social inclusion has shown significant presence and participation of women in various management structures, such as in the ward citizens' forums, Integrated Planning Committee, Citizens Awareness Center, and district and village social mobilization committees. As a result of capacity development training programs, more women's groups are seen approaching the local authorities for resources.

## WOMEN IN INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

- With more men displaced during the conflict and at the same time attracted to foreign employment, women took the role of building community infrastructures such as rural roads, drinking water supply systems, community halls, and marketplaces.

<sup>1</sup> In Nepal, widows are called single women to display higher respect.

<sup>2</sup> ADB. 2009. *Support to Local Governance and Community Development Program*. Manila (Grant No. 42158-012). Project data sheet. [www.adb.org/projects/42158-012/main](http://www.adb.org/projects/42158-012/main)

## Women's Empowerment through Cooperative Management, Project Monitoring, and Peacekeeping

Unnati Mahila, a cooperative in Durlung Village Development Committee (VDC) of Parbat district, comprises more than 300 women of varied ethnicities, castes, and economic status. The cooperative has an inclusive management committee, led by an ethnic leader. It conducts democratic elections to select the board members, is registered in the Department of Cooperatives, and complies with bylaws and regulations in operations. It has constructed a community building with major support from Local Governance and Community Development Program and matching grants from the District Women and Children Development Office, the VDC, and private donors. The community building includes a retail consumer store, office space, and meeting hall for women's activities.



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The active women in the zone of influence monitor the work plan and implementation progress, as well as ensure that there is financial transparency.

In terms of peacebuilding, some of the notable features of the cooperative are inclusiveness, state–citizen relations, and transparency and accountability. Membership in the cooperative not only includes the neighborhood but all caste and ethnic groups as well as other VDCs, thus helping build a socially cohesive society. It has been able to build relations with the local government, thus gaining trust of the local institutions during fund-raising activities. Members are also aware of transparency and accountability issues and have knowledge of program planning processes. Cooperative chairperson Hira Devi Magar relates that “We used to take shelter in a corner of the VDC building; now we have our own office and meeting space. Before, the VDC would hesitate to call us for meetings, but these days we are well recognized and invited to all local events and consultations.”

Likewise, the women of Surunga VDC of Jhapa district keep a close watch on the rural road that is being constructed under the ADB-supported Rural Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Sector Development Program. The active women in the zone of influence monitor the work plan and implementation progress, as well as ensure that there is financial transparency. The VDC secretary in the area regularly consults with women on development issues, thus building trust and close state–citizen relations.

Similarly, the peace pressure groups, supported by the United Kingdom's Department for International Development and CARE in Makaising VDC of Gorkha district, have issued a citizens' charter in the area to reduce domestic violence against women. The charter imposes the following restrictions: Gamblers and those selling playing cards are penalized, retailers are not allowed to sell tobacco to children below 18 years old, farmers are not allowed to plant marijuana, traders are prohibited from selling alcohol after 8:00 p.m., and buying alcoholic beverages from other local districts is restricted. The groups liaise between the citizens and local authorities for taking action against those disobeying the charter. The local bodies have authorized the groups to charge penalties, which go to their operating funds.



## Women's Role in ADB Infrastructure Projects

ADB's Decentralized Infrastructure and Livelihood Project works in 18 conflict-affected districts, benefitting about 70% of the population; 11% of the families are women headed, and 63% of males have migrated for employment.<sup>a</sup>

In the ADB-supported Water Supply and Sanitation Project in Dang district, the water infrastructure was operated by a women's group who would not stop working despite threats of attack from armed groups to government infrastructures even during heightened conflict. In spite of several government infrastructures being damaged, the women's commitment and capacity to cope with conflict contributed to the successful completion and maintenance of the drinking water project.



Sharada Jnawali

More women participate in labor-intensive infrastructure building.

The Rural Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Sector Development Program engages a significant number of women in road construction; they are also members of the road-building groups and actively involved in supplementary activities. Payment of equal wages to women is one of the replicable approaches to equality in this project.

A project study conducted by the Government of Norway and the United Nations Development Programme on Livelihood Recovery for Peace in three Terai districts shows that women's involvement in infrastructure is a new phenomenon in the operating districts, where they supervise and manage a community building, keep financial records, buy iron rods and bricks (traditionally men's job), and practice transparency and accountability of funds.<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> ADB. 2012. *Cashing in on Infrastructure*. Manila. [www.adb.org/features/cashing-infrastructure](http://www.adb.org/features/cashing-infrastructure)

<sup>b</sup> Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and UNDP. 2011. *Nepal: Discovering Peace through Livelihood*. Kathmandu. [www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/crisis-prevention-and-recovery/nepal\\_human\\_storiesfromthefield](http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/crisis-prevention-and-recovery/nepal_human_storiesfromthefield)

## WOMEN IN A MEDIATING ROLE

- The country's justice system comprises formal and informal mechanisms. With the local citizens' lack of awareness of the formal justice system, lack of access or complications in using the formal system, difficult geophysical conditions, and issues of affordability, the informal system—mainly run by women—plays an important role and has been very effective in Nepal.
- Women's role and representation in such transitional justice mechanisms, in both conflict and post-conflict environment, prove to be effective. According to the Nepal Bar Association, only 8% of the country's

lawyers are female. Community mediation, paralegal committees, and local peace committees are the key transitional or informal approaches that involve a significant number of women across the country.

## WOMEN IN POVERTY REDUCTION AND EMPLOYMENT GENERATION

- Women are an integral part of the cooperative movement in Nepal for livelihood support. Cooperatives, as part of the mixed economic development approach, have provided direct employment to about 27% of women. There

## Community Mediation in Nepal's Villages

Community mediation programs in several villages of the country are supported by multiple donors. More than 40% of mediators are from a marginalized community, and 30% of them are women.<sup>a</sup> Mediators are usually trusted and respected in the community. Cases handled by such mediators include personal debts, boundary issues, and some types of domestic violence situations. The cases are resolved right away. The success rate of the community mediation program, according to The Asia Foundation, is 85%. Due to the successful results of the process, the Mediation Bill 2011 is under consideration for approval.<sup>b</sup> Community mediation was originally conceived to reduce the court's burden and provide the rural community easy access to justice during armed conflict.

At first, it was hard for women to appreciate their value in the mediation process, but when the project had demonstrated the role of women in dispute resolution, women started traveling to district headquarters for training. They experienced significant changes in their lives—increased confidence, social recognition, respect from their families, leadership enhancement—and eventually saw it as a breakthrough in society. The women mediators even started getting seats in politics. Hasina Begam, one of the nominated members of a political party, comes from a mediation background.



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<sup>a</sup> The Asia Foundation. *Nepal*. <http://asiafoundation.org/country/overview/nepal>

<sup>b</sup> Integrated Regional Information Networks. UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. 2012. *NEPAL: Community mediation – boon or bust?* [www.irinnews.org/Report/95806/NEPAL-Community-mediation-boon-or-bust](http://www.irinnews.org/Report/95806/NEPAL-Community-mediation-boon-or-bust). 5 July.

are 2,544 cooperatives exclusively for women registered under the government, where more than 40,000 women members are engaged in various income-generating activities.<sup>3</sup> With the government celebrating 2012 as the Year of the Cooperative, the number is expected to increase. Cooperatives are also a tool for social cohesion of multiple castes and ethnic groups and for socioeconomic reintegration of victims of conflict.

- Microfinance has been one of the few effective approaches to poverty reduction and empowerment for Nepali women. More than 1.6 million women, or 8% of the total population, are associated with the



ADB Photo Library

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<sup>3</sup> Government of Nepal. Department of Cooperatives. 2012. *Statistics on Cooperatives of Nepal 2011*. Kathmandu.



## Microfinance Programs for Women

The **Women Empowerment Program** (1997–2001), known as WORTH in 2001, introduced the “package of literacy and women in business” to 125,000 women in Nepal. Around 1,500 groups received training to become informal village banks. As a result, the number of women engaging in business increased from 19,000 to 86,000. The amount of savings also increased from NRs720,000 to NRs1,800,000. According to a survey, 47% of the women said WORTH had helped them cope with the effects of conflict in the country.<sup>a</sup> While engaging in economic activities, WORTH was also quite successful in managing local disputes during conflict. Other program outcomes are women’s leadership, active involvement of women in community activities, reduction of discrimination, and improvement in social cohesion. The program has been self-sustaining since the official closure of external assistance in 2007.



Kiran Pandey

Women’s savings through cooperatives contribute to micro-enterprise development.

**Samjhauta Nepal** has engaged in community education and women’s empowerment since 2001 through interventions in literacy, savings and credit, microenterprises, health and sanitation, sexual and reproductive health, HIV/AIDS, democracy and governance, peacebuilding and dispute resolution, and community housing. It has a network of 245 district-based nongovernment organizations in 19 Terai and 3 hilly districts. It has established a reputation for providing women with skills necessary to improve their livelihoods, strengthen their organizations or groups, and raise their voices in local government through participatory planning and action as a peacebuilding approach. The program manager of Nawalparasi district relates “I was abducted by the Maoists; without the negotiation technique of the women groups, I would not have been released.” Samjhauta has published 17,000 booklets on conflict resolution techniques and trained around 20,000 youths on the topic in the Terai region.

More than 75% of women are engaged in the **Poverty Alleviation Fund** (PAF), which is supported primarily by the World Bank. The PAF recently signed a memorandum of understanding with the Government of Japan to promote local skills, focusing on women and youth empowerment under the project Making Markets Work for the Conflict Affected in Nepal. As of 2012, the PAF reached 20,000 poor communities with 600,000 households in 40 districts of the country.<sup>b</sup> The activities of PAF have been very effective in contributing to the national post-conflict rehabilitation and recovery process.

More than 4,000 families were targeted under ADB-supported project Strengthening Decentralized Support to Vulnerable and Conflict-Affected Families and Children. Thirty-one village development committees in five conflict-affected districts in western Nepal were selected for skills training and provision of small grants for income generation—one of the key interventions under the project. The project is expected to contribute to rehabilitation through income generation by women.

<sup>a</sup> WORTH. *PACT: Building Local Promise*. [www.pactworld.org](http://www.pactworld.org)

<sup>b</sup> Poverty Alleviation Fund, Nepal. [www.pafnepal.org.np/en](http://www.pafnepal.org.np/en)



microfinance system.<sup>4</sup> They use it for investments, for emergencies, and for loans for productive purposes leading to increased incomes.

- Microfinance has also had impacts on governance, women's participation in political processes, women's leadership, social inclusion, and peacebuilding. Of the total users of microfinance services, 42.5% are female-headed households and 6.5% are widows. The results indicators identified by the Center for Microfinance show that many have benefitted from microfinance: 65.6% have improved sanitation with toilets, 48.7% of women are either employed or self-employed, and 94% of children go to school.<sup>5</sup>

Members of the Center for Microfinance are trained experts in resolving local disputes.

- As of 2012, there were 1,026 paralegal committees operating in 59 districts. Paralegal committees are a community-based mechanism to prevent and respond to rights violation experienced by women and children. To improve service delivery and management, the government plans to integrate the paralegal committees into the regular programs of the women's and children's development offices. The Integrated Women and Children Development Program, which will be piloted in 165 village development committees, will focus

## Single Women Group Strengthening the Social Fabric

The Single Women Group in Banke district helps strengthen the social fabric, especially between the women victims of government security forces and the armed groups. Formed in 2002, the group is affiliated with Women in Human Rights. Through this network, about 1,200 women victims from both the state and Maoist groups join hands for the common cause of livelihood in the district. The group not only addresses issues related to single women, but also serves as a think tank on what can be done to prevent conflict, support the emergence of a new state, and create a peaceful and cohesive society. Shova KC, the chair of the single women's group, says, "We had barriers to break before we reached this stage—first is the family objection against single women getting out of the house, which is not a widely accepted practice for single women in Nepal; second, the society that looks at us as a confused group without any skills or capacity trying to intervene in the social affairs; and third, the misconceptions that we have to fight while we empower ourselves with social and economic skills."

Breaking all these obstacles, the group members have demonstrated their capacity in social integration and reconciliation while at the same time gaining skills to sustain their livelihoods.

Individual members are trained in poultry and dairy farming, house painting, handicrafts making, and as beauticians. There are around 7,000 women victims in the police force alone and there is no recorded number of victims on the rebel side. Gradual recognition of single women's existence in the community has resulted in increased trust and confidence. The women are asked to participate in community activities, users' groups, and local government consultation processes. The group has become an integral part of society that has drawn attention from all development actors in the area.



Sharada Jnawali

Shova KC chairs the Single Women Group that has created social harmony among women victims of armed groups and armed forces.

<sup>4</sup> Microfinance Summit Nepal, 2010. <http://microfinancesummitnepal.org/mfs2010/>

<sup>5</sup> Centre for Microfinance, Nepal. [www.cmfnepal.org](http://www.cmfnepal.org)

more on prevention than mediation (in terms of women's and children's rights violation) as well as on monitoring and follow up.<sup>6</sup> ADB supported the establishment of paralegal committees in 82 village development committees in 15 districts, followed by the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID). The Women Development Office and the associated programs in the districts were the least affected during the conflict, according to DFID officials.

## WOMEN IN COMMUNITY RECONCILIATION

- Women's contributions to community reconciliation and stabilization during the conflict and post-conflict periods remain equally significant. At the grassroots level, some of the ongoing activities include peace rallies, peace roundtables, peace talk shows and street dramas, mediation and negotiations, election education to women, and peacebuilding training.
- Women work with school management committees and parents' committees in disseminating peace messages and organizing peace units and clubs to assist the citizens, demonstrating

their capacity to stabilize an affected community. Their involvement in microenterprises, social and economic activities through cooperatives, health service delivery through community health volunteers, psychosocial counseling of conflict victims and families, and building small infrastructures are some examples of community stabilization activities by women.

## WOMEN IN SERVICE DELIVERY

- Mobilization of female community health volunteers (FCHVs) is one of the good practices in Nepal in terms of service delivery.<sup>7</sup> It is a multidonor initiative established in 1990 under the Ministry of Health and Population, wherein about 50,000 women volunteers are mobilized as community health service providers. The initiative's key objectives are developing at least one FCHV per ward (a ward is the lowest administrative unit of the local bodies), empowering volunteers with the necessary skills, increasing community awareness of health and communication activities, and strengthening community ownership and sustainability of the strategy.

### Female Community Health Volunteers Help Achieve Millennium Development Goals for Nepal

According to the World Health Organization country office in Nepal, 97% of the villages have mobilized female community health volunteers. Their activities continued even during the armed conflict, when most government institutions were either attacked or chased away from villages. During this period, routine immunization, polio campaigns, HIV/AIDS awareness raising, care of new mothers and newborns, and counseling during pregnancy continued through community-based services that spend at least five hours of working day. A revolving fund has been created in each village development committee to institutionalize and strengthen this mechanism. Due to their ongoing contributions to health services, the female community health volunteers were a major factor for achieving Millennium Development Goals 4, 5, and 6 in Nepal.<sup>a</sup> The Global Leaders Council for Reproductive Health has nominated Nepal for the Result Award in recognition of its efforts toward achieving universal access to reproductive health as set by the Millennium Development Goals. The Safe Delivery Incentive Program introduced in 2005 encouraged women to give birth in health institutions. Likewise, the Aama Suraksha (mother safety) Program provides women in 75 districts with birth preparedness packages that include reproductive health services at any public health facility and selected private institutions.

<sup>a</sup> The Aspen Institute. Global Leaders Council for Reproductive Health. [www.aspeninstitute.org/policy-work/global-health-development/what-ghd-will-do/global-leaders-council](http://www.aspeninstitute.org/policy-work/global-health-development/what-ghd-will-do/global-leaders-council)

<sup>6</sup> Department for International Development. [www.dfid.gov.uk](http://www.dfid.gov.uk)

<sup>7</sup> WHO Country Office, Nepal. *Female Community Health Volunteers*. [www.nep.searo.who.int/LinkFiles/Home\\_Female\\_Community\\_Health\\_Volunteer1.pdf](http://www.nep.searo.who.int/LinkFiles/Home_Female_Community_Health_Volunteer1.pdf)





The initiative on female community health volunteers has empowered women with the necessary skills, increased community awareness on health and communication activities, and strengthened community ownership and sustainability of the strategy.

- Given the country's diverse health problems, complex geography, and lack of human resources in the health sector, the FCHVs serve as voluntary health educators and promoters, community mobilizers, referral agents, and service providers, especially in family planning, reproductive health,



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prenatal care, and immunization. They have been most effective in treating pneumonia, diarrhea, and whooping cough, which has helped reduce child mortality in Nepal. The FCHVs receive substantial support from the community and from the national and local government health offices.

## Peacebuilding through ADB Projects

- Gender equality and social inclusion is a key focus of the country partnership strategy of the ADB Nepal Resident Mission. ADB's comprehensive gender action plan includes specific activities, features, and targets for women's participation in each project outcome. All ADB projects are required to identify opportunities for assisting the poor, women, the underprivileged, disadvantaged castes, and ethnic groups, including those living in remote locations. ADB's Strategy 2020 identifies gender equity as a driver of change that is essential for poverty reduction, improved living standards, and sustainable economic growth. ADB works with the government counterpart organizations in mainstreaming gender policy and actions.
- ADB conducts a rigorous consultation process during country partnership strategy preparation and project design. Midterm reviews of the strategy and similar reviews of projects try to identify what has been achieved from the consultation process, where the gaps are, and how to fill them.
- In line with OECD's Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States, the ADB Nepal Resident Mission uses the peacebuilding tool as a peace-sensitive approach for analyzing projects and programs. A simple framework for understanding a country's local context for development, the tool is also used to monitor selected projects and assess potential risks and opportunities for peace in relation to the

projects. It also includes analysis from a gender perspective, wherein key gender issues are listed with associated questions in the framework.

- For Nepali women, peace not only means political dialogues or peace talks, but also entails human security aspects such as food, shelter, health and education services, access to safe water, personal security, freedom from physical violence and torture, end of domestic violence, protection of civil rights, favorable environment for employment, safety of children, and protection from natural disasters, among others. Keeping such indicators in consideration, ADB project designers are mandated to identify opportunities to assist poor and disadvantaged women, among other target groups. In doing so, district- or village-level consultations are conducted, wherein local context is analyzed and stakeholders' recommendations are incorporated in the project design by using the peacebuilding tool.
- Under a secondary town development project, use of the peacebuilding tool during stakeholders' consultations in district municipalities has led to sensitization of municipality officials to issues of women, internally displaced persons, and victims of conflict. Women were also involved in consultation to identify suitable income-generating activities under the technical assistance project components.
- Issues of special interest to women, such as human trafficking, HIV/AIDS, skills development, and entrepreneurship and awareness activities were incorporated under the project interventions of

the Subregional Transport Enhancement Project following the analysis using the peacebuilding tool.

- In general, the peacebuilding tool helps assess how women are differently affected by conflict and helps identify the appropriate development responses. It also assesses women's role in the peace process and their participation in mediation, reconciliation, community building and stabilization, social cohesion, local governance, service delivery, and political leadership. The peacebuilding tool helps identify local capacities to support peace and provides information about the local context, thus guiding ADB projects so they can operate in a more secured environment during project implementation.
- The analysis provides information on women's roles in project management, infrastructure building, and environment conservation as part of their participation in local governance. The information also includes the level of women's capacity in terms of relating to local authority, generating and mobilizing local resources, and financial management. In addition, it assesses the hiring practices of the project team and implementing bodies and the number and quality of jobs created for women. From 2010 to 2012, a total of 18 projects were analyzed and 2 projects monitored in 18 districts using the peacebuilding tool. Though the analysis does not provide quantitative data, it helps ensure effectiveness of project design and implementation approaches.
- ADB staff members also use the peacebuilding tool and coordinate with development partners and

## Local Peace Committees' Key Role in Social Reconciliation

Local peace committees (LPCs) were established in 2008 through ADB assistance as part of the transitional justice mechanism in order to support community stabilization and foster an enabling environment for implementation of the Local Governance and Community Development Program in 75 districts in Nepal. Though not all LPCs are successful, some have demonstrated good practices in providing relief to victims of conflict and community reconstruction works. The LPC in Arghakhachi district set up village-level committees in selected locations, organized rallies and interaction programs for awareness on LPCs, paid home visits to all victims' families, organized skills training for 50 victim families, and provided scholarship funds to children of the victim families. Likewise, the LPC in Dhankuta district established village-level units in all village development committees and rebuilt about 85 small infrastructures damaged during conflict. The LPC in Kapilvastu successfully prevented the escalation of a religious conflict. In most cases, LPCs play a significant role in social reconciliation between the state and the victims of Maoist groups. Women's participation has greatly contributed to reaching all these achievements.



## Women Monitor ADB Project and Contribute to Decision Making

Women's groups in the Surunga Village Development Committee of Jhapa district have the capacity to monitor the Rural Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Sector Development Program. They are vigilant of the road construction, its benefits to the local community, and any negative impacts that the road might bring. In terms of transparency and accountability as important aspects of project analysis and monitoring, the Surunga women keep track of road construction progress, issues, and budget allocation. In a visit of the peacebuilding advisor to the community, the women pointed out that the road construction needed to include security posts to control human trafficking and cross-border smuggling of timber, small arms, drugs, and herbs. They particularly noted that the police checkpoint that used to be there should be revived for the security of women. The local leaders stated that women in this village development committee have significantly contributed to the decision-making process in terms of development activities in the area.

civil society in Nepal.<sup>8</sup> International Alert's research on what works in fragile situations revealed that Rural Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Sector Development Program is a highly gender-sensitive project, with excellent inclusive practices, equal wages paid to laborers, users' groups led by women, and women actively participating in project activities. The areas of participation include beneficiary group representation, involvement in construction works, participation in supplementary activities, technical and life skills training, and local dispute resolution.<sup>9</sup>

- The United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID) midterm review of multilateral aid effectiveness reveals that ADB's approach to fragile and conflict-affected situations has contributed to DFID's development objectives.<sup>10</sup> Among the criteria used by DFID to assess aid effectiveness are the ability to work in fragile states and focus on girls and women.

- After the signing of Nepal's comprehensive peace agreement, the ADB-supported project Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women was implemented by the Department of Women Children and Social Welfare. The project stands on four pillars: economic empowerment, social empowerment, institutional strengthening, and legal empowerment of women. A number of women have been mobilized under this project in five districts of western and central regions. More than 50% of the trained women sustained microenterprises, 30% used paralegal services, 80% engaged in community activities, and 30% were involved in decision making regarding community works. In addition, there were increases in the number of cases of gender-based violence reported to the police, the number of civil registrations, and the number of women's rights cases processed.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> S. Batmanglich and M. Stephen. 2011. *Peacebuilding, the World Bank and the United Nations: Debates and Practice in Burundi, Liberia and Nepal*. London: International Alert. [www.international-alert.org/sites/default/files/publications/082011WorldBankUN\\_final.pdf](http://www.international-alert.org/sites/default/files/publications/082011WorldBankUN_final.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> International Alert mid-term validation seminar held on 30 July 2012. (Final report is under preparation.)

<sup>10</sup> DFID. 2011. *Multilateral Aid Review: Ensuring maximum value for money for UK aid through multilateral organisations*. London.

<sup>11</sup> ADB. 2004. *Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women*. Manila. [www.adb.org/projects/34306-013/details](http://www.adb.org/projects/34306-013/details); and Government of Nepal. Department of Women, Children and Social Welfare. Presentation for the quarterly review meeting on Gender Equity and Empowerment of Women. April 2012.

# Challenges and Recommendations

## ADDRESSING GENDER GAPS IN THE PEACE PROCESS

- Women-led initiatives are usually sidelined despite their regular advocacy and lobbying activities and their willingness and capacity to support the peace process. Women's voices are seldom heard and their skills rarely recognized.
- Emerging youth organizations could play more creative roles; however, they are perceived as male organizations, hence there is very little room for women to act.
- Though balancing gender dynamics has always been a challenge, a transitional situation offers

opportunities for women, especially during the making of the new Constitution, which can be a good timing to make interventions. These interventions may include programs focused on equitable socioeconomic advancement, strengthening quality participation of women, visible empowerment of women at the community level, ensuring active representation of women in formal and informal institutions, and creating enough space to ensure gender equity in development.

## STRENGTHENING CIVIL SOCIETY PARTICIPATION

- Most women's groups or nongovernment organizations are engaged in community-level reconciliation and stabilization. There is no link established to combine the top-down and bottom-up approaches in the peace process.



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Investments that address the root causes of conflict in Nepal, such as lack of employment, education, access to resources, property rights, and equal opportunity, might be more strategic and directly beneficial to women.



- Despite civil society's role in restoration of democracy, policy advocacy, and capacity building, the CSOs still need to earn the government's trust in their institutional capacity to contribute to the peace process.
- Given civil society's capacity in women's development, partnerships between the government and civil society organizations can combine skills and resources, therefore optimizing the outcomes. Investments that address the root causes of conflict in Nepal, such as lack of employment, education, access to resources, property rights, and equal opportunity, might be more strategic and directly beneficial to women. Small infrastructure projects, for example, are more likely to produce instant results, generate local employment, and promote social integration by creating participation opportunities in planning and implementation processes.

### **ADOPTING PEACE SENSITIVITY IN PROGRAM PLANNING, IMPLEMENTATION, AND MONITORING**

- Peace-sensitive program planning requires special consideration for activities that promote women's rights and empowerment and provide opportunities for employment, improved livelihood, and equal access to resources.
- The programming flexibility to link women, peace, and security issues to main activities can improve the quality of a project. Knowledge and understanding of the local context informs the planning process, allows changes to be made to the activity design even during implementation, and helps produce the expected results. From a peacebuilding perspective, the needs of ex-combatants are different from that of the Dalits or minority women. Cash relief to victims might not be practical; certain victims might need counseling or longer-term medical support.
- To improve women's access to services, use of the gender equality and social inclusion framework in sector-wide approaches should be sustained. The National Planning Commission needs support in incorporating inclusive and peace-

sensitive monitoring indicators in its periodic plans. Sustaining the co-funding mechanism helps reinforce the key crosscutting issues, improve aid effectiveness, maintain neutrality, and maximize resources.

### **ADDRESSING GENDER DISCRIMINATION THROUGH POLICY REFORMS**

- Despite new laws and regulations in place, there are many discriminatory laws that constrain women's empowerment. Amnesty International in 2007 pointed out that there are 118 discriminatory provisions in 54 laws.<sup>12</sup> These need to be amended.
- While there are a significant number of women lawmakers, there is a need to amend discriminatory laws regardless of the percentage of women in Parliament in order to strengthen the justice system and improve access to security and justice for women.
- Persistent mental and physical attacks on women human rights defenders in the country calls for provisions and implementation of policies and legislation to secure their rights.

### **MEETING WOMEN'S NEEDS AND PRIORITIES IN A POST-CONFLICT SITUATION**

- The risks associated with stigmatization of women who carried arms could be a challenge in terms of social integration or return to civil life and to their families.
- Various actors in the development process should coordinate to assist women with social integration, psychological recovery, accessing economic opportunities, and attaining peace and security—as peace dividends to women.
- A concerted effort is required to address the impacts of conflict on women and girls and to provide inclusive access to health and education services, opportunities for income and employment, social justice, reparations, access to land and resources, and rehabilitation of ex-combatants. Special attention must be given to women's needs and priorities in post-conflict situations, such as addressing a

<sup>12</sup> M.V. Arino. 2008. Nepal: a gender view of the armed conflict and the peace process. Barcelona: School for a Culture of Peace. [http://escolapau.uab.cat/img/qcp/nepal\\_conflict\\_peace.pdf](http://escolapau.uab.cat/img/qcp/nepal_conflict_peace.pdf)

range of structural causes of conflict or gender gaps, refining discriminatory policies, and addressing women's issues in program planning.

## MAINSTREAMING GENDER SENSITIVITY IN GOVERNMENT

- Supporting gender mainstreaming in government institutions should continue. It is deemed useful to have a periodic gender audit of government programs, including gender-sensitive budgeting and analysis of the amount of funds that has benefitted women.
- It is also important to support relevant state institutions such as the Women's Commission, Dalit Commission, Social Inclusion Committee, and Remote Area Development Committee in terms of inclusive practices. Female representation in civil service and security forces should be monitored to ensure that equality in staff hiring and promotion is fostered in state institutions.

## REINFORCING AN INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT APPROACH

- Women in peace building should be part of the ongoing discussions among development partners in Nepal conducted through the auspices of International Development Partners Group or other sectoral groups. The ongoing cofinanced programs of energy, local governance, rural infrastructure, and education are also suitable platforms to reinforce gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment issues to address inclusive development approach.
- The thematic groups on crosscutting issues such as gender, environment, peacebuilding, governance, and law and justice can also serve as vehicles for identifying the potential needs of women in post-conflict situations and making efforts to



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The thematic groups on crosscutting issues such as gender, environment, peacebuilding, governance, and law and justice can also serve as vehicles for identifying the potential needs of women in post-conflict situations and making efforts to attain their participation in the peace process and representation in institutions.

attain their participation in the peace process and representation in institutions.

- Implementation challenges of UNSCR 1325 faced by the government include the need for extra staff time and resources and, more importantly, political commitment. Gaining such commitments might be challenging during fragile or unstable political situations. A concerted effort between government and development partners is necessary to overcome these challenges.

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