

# Human Rights

Project: Capacity Development of the National Human Rights Commission (CDNHRC)

## > Background

Deep-rooted hierarchical power structures, discrimination, and social and economic inequality mean that human rights abuses continue to be commonplace in Nepal, particularly against women, Dalits, Janajatis, Madhesis and other marginalized communities. The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) was set up in 2000 after prolonged pressure from the political parties and civil society to establish a high level body for protecting human rights in Nepal. The need for such a body became particularly acute in its early years as the violent conflict escalated.

## > The project

From 2002, the multi-donor funded Capacity Development of the National Human Rights Commission project, supported the commission to fulfil its mandates of protecting, promoting and enforcing the human rights enshrined in the country's constitution, laws and the international human rights instruments Nepal is party to.

## > Phase 1 achievements

The five-year-long Phase 1 helped the commission establish itself as a force for protecting and promoting human rights. The project helped it set up its basic infrastructure, its management and IT systems, and a network of four regional offices and five district contact offices for monitoring the human rights situation across the country. This included setting up a system for the commission's core task of handling complaints and monitoring human rights violations. The commission now deals with hundreds of cases a year and in the first 11 months of 2008 investigated a total of 207 cases.



An NHRC officer investigating a human rights incident

Amongst its many other achievements, the project assisted the commission to: map out its priorities and future activities in strategic plans; host discussions and report on the human rights situation; produce human rights education materials, including Nepali versions of the international human rights instruments; review

## Project details

**Nepali name:** राष्ट्रिय मानव अधिकार आयोगको क्षमता विकास परियोजना

**Phase 1:** April 2002 to December 2008

**Phase 2:** Two years starting in 2009

**Phase 1 budget:** \$4.7 million

**Phase 2 budget:** \$2 million

**Phase 2 funding gap:** Not yet known

**Implemented by:** National Human Rights Commission (NHRC)

**Implemented in:** NHRC and its regional offices

**Phase 1 donors:** DFID (\$1m), UNDP (\$1m), Canada (\$0.9m), Norway (\$0.6m), Finland (\$0.3m), SDC (\$0.3m), Ford Foundation (\$0.2m), USAID (\$0.2m), Danida (\$0.1m), UNICEF, AusAID

**Phase 2 donors:** Most Phase 1 donors are interested in supporting Phase 2

**Phase 2 partners:** OHCHR Nepal, national human rights NGOs

**UNDP's role:** Fund manager and major donor in Phases 1 and 2 and technical assistance in Phase 1

the human rights orientation of the secondary school curriculum and media and security related laws, and finalise the draft bill for the commission's new upgraded status.

A major landmark was passed in 2007 when the Interim Constitution recognised the commission as an independent constitutional body.

### > Phase 2 objectives

The commission has a very important role to play in taking forwards the peace process and heightening respect for all citizens' rights. This is a challenging task as the human rights situation remains precarious and a culture of impunity continues with many serious human rights cases waiting to be investigated.

The focus of Phase 2 will shift to enabling the commission to promote and protect socioeconomic, political and civil rights, including opposing caste, gender, ethnic and religion-based discrimination.

Phase 2 will work with the commission to strengthen its abilities to:

- collect and process human rights cases, hold public hearings and implement case-wise recommendations;
- educate and raise awareness about human rights amongst the general public, government officials and Constituent Assembly members;
- audit Government plans and programmes from a human rights perspective;
- review discriminatory laws and monitor the implementation of Nepal's international human rights treaty obligations; and
- help build a national network for human rights protection.

The project will proceed by training the commission's staff and by improving systems, with inputs and advice from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Nepal (OHCHR). The project will also train human rights NGOs.

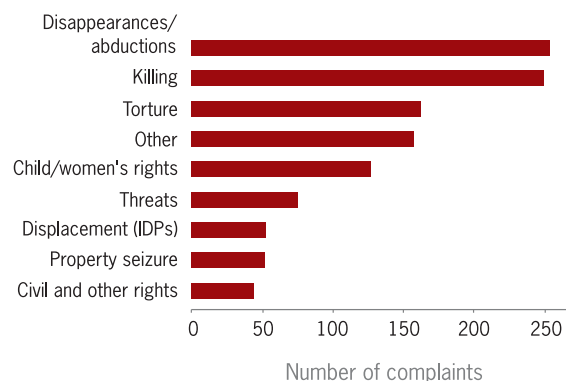
### > Phase 2 funding

As of January 2009 several donors have expressed a strong interest in supporting Phase 2.

### Importance of this project towards achieving the MDGs and consolidating peace

A reduction in the number and seriousness of human rights abuses is fundamental to consolidating peace and achieving the MDGs. Fewer abuses will lead to a more democratic and equitable society where all Nepalis, regardless of caste, ethnicity and religion, can gain equal access to services and realise their full potential.

### Complaints received by NHRC, 2007/08



Source: NHRC annual report, 2007/2008



NHRC officers discussing prisoners' grievances



NHRC's strategic plan, 2008–2010 and its election monitoring report

#### For more information:

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- 🌐 the commission's website at <http://www.nhrcnepal.org>

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- 🌐 <http://www.undp.org.np/>