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Supporting Progress through Equality

# In the Know

UNDP Nepal Newsletter

News of the Month

## The biggest all-female expedition to Mount Everest begins two-months journey

The biggest all-female expedition to climb Sagarmatha (Mt. Everest) began on 17 April 2008. The expedition is carrying an MDG 3 (United Nations Millennium Development Goal 3-Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women) banner, handed over by His Excellency, Mr. Finn Thilsted, Ambassador of Denmark to Nepal.

The expedition consists of 10 women, representing a range of castes and ethnic groups in Nepal.

The women are climbing the world's highest peak to show that they are equally skilled, courageous and strong as male climbers. They will also draw attention to gender equality and women empowerment, the effects of climate change in the Himalayas as well as raise awareness about the millions of children who go to school hungry in Asia.

At the Press Conference organised before the departure of the women, the Embassy of Denmark handed over a cheque of US\$ 25,000 to the expedition.



The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Food Programme (WFP) have provided nearly a quarter of the total expedition cost.

H.E., Mr. Finn Thilsted said, "To achieve sustainable development, it is important to promote women's economic and political empowerment. Women must be a driving force for development. We support girls' and women's right to education and land which are equally important for women to contribute to economic growth and poverty reduction."

Ms. Susmita Maskey, Coordinator and

Team Leader, First Inclusive Women Sagarmatha Expedition 2008 said, "We want to thank the Government of Denmark, UNDP, WFP, the BP Koirala Foundation and all our other contributors. Their financial support enables us to make this historic expedition and raise awareness on many critical issues that Nepal is facing." The members of the expedition hope that their efforts will not only open up mountaineering to all Nepalese but will also encourage women from all communities to work together to pursue their goals.

# Peace and Development

## CPN-Maoist chairman Prachanda meets donors at the UN House

On 24<sup>th</sup> April, the United Nations Office in Nepal organised a meeting between the donor community and the leadership of the CPN-Maoist to discuss Nepal's development priorities.

UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative Robert Piper received the party chairman Prachanda and his deputy, Dr. Baburam Bhattarai. The duo presented their priorities for the

post-election transition to the diplomatic and development community and also took questions from a wide range of participants.



UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative, Robert Piper, addressing the press after the meeting

**(From the right: SRSR Ian Martin, RC/RR Robert Piper, CPN (Maoist) chairman Prachanda and Dr. Baburam Bhattarai)**

## Government replicates performance based grant system in 75 District Development Committees

The Government of Nepal (GoN) has decided to replicate the performance based grant system in all 75 District Development Committees linking the results of the performance assessment with its own development grant.

The district's performances will be evaluated annually based on Minimum Conditions (MCs) and Performance Measure (PMs) indicators. The MC/PM assessment manual was approved by the Ministry of Local Development on 17 April.

Started by the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) and

Department for International Development (DFID) in 2004/2005 in 20 programme districts, these Minimum Conditions are the minimum safeguards for proper utilization of public resources, identifying the basic absorption capacity and maintaining financial discipline. Performance Measures are designed to create incentives for Local Governments to improve their performance.

Based on the assessment results, the UNCDF/Decentralised Financing and

Development Programme (DFDP) was providing approximately US\$ 100,000 capital development grant per district/year.

With financial and technical support by DFDP, the Local Body Fiscal Commission (LBFC) will be conducting the national Minimum Conditions and Performance Measure assessment by mid June and the results of this assessment will have an effect on the part of the GoN unconditional capital development grant allocated to DDCs for the fiscal year 2008/09.

### Latest News Update

### Women's participation in peace building

In the UNDP 'Participation in Peace' project, the BBC World Service Trust recorded the 24th edition of the discussion programme *Sajha Sawal* (common questions) with Pampha Bhusal, the Minister for Women, Children & Social Welfare (prominent member of the CPN-Maoist) and Durga Ghimire, a women's activist.

The programme was recorded at the Nepal Tourism Board Hall in front of an audience of more than 90 people. The audience was composed of Dalit, single mothers, Janjati and Madhesi groups as well as student groups. The programme discussed the role of women in the newly elected Constituent Assembly.

Questions from different parts of the country (pre-recorded) were asked about gender equality in work and education, land ownership and citizenship, discrimination in the far-west region, dowry and witchcraft tradition.



**Minister Pampha Bhusal (in the middle) along with Durga Ghimire in *Sajha Sawal***

Questions were also raised about the discrimination faced by Badi and Dalit women and the trafficking of girls. The panelists were challenged by the audience on how gender equality would be incorporated into the new constitution.

*Sajha Sawal* is broadcast every Sunday evening at 9 pm on the BBC Nepali Service and FM radio partner stations across Nepal. It is also broadcast every Wednesday evening at 9 pm on Kantipur television and every Tuesday at 8:15 am on Radio Nepal.

### Building partnership with the private sector

Last month, UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative Robert Piper and the UNDP Country Director Anne-Isabelle Degryse-Blateau, visited the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industries and met some leading business figures of Nepal.

"The UN in Nepal would like to expand its partnership with private sector in order to support Nepal in the post conflict situation," said Robert Piper. He suggested that the private sector should also take the initiative in this regard as it plays a crucial role in achieving the development goals.



## Youth and Employment

Feature of the Month

### Unemployed Madhesi youths turn into entrepreneurs

Nine youths aged 17 to 27, in Bateshwor VDC, 25 kms north of Janakpur are successfully running a cooperative that manufactures *Mitha* (molasses) from sugarcane juice. The co-operative has manufactured 9,000 kgs of *Mitha* since December 2007 and has been able to earn Rs. 18,700 within two months by selling 8,000 kgs. in the local market.

Under the **UNDP Quick Impact and Peace Support Initiatives** started in December 2007 in the 10 Tarai districts, Micro-enterprise Development Programme (MEDEP) launched 'Start and Improve Your Business' training specially designed for the youths. The community selected these nine unemployed youths for the training. After the training, the group invested Rs. 93,460 taken as loan from family and friends, to start the cooperative while MEDEP provided the rest of the support to buy sugar cane crusher and rice mill machines, under the provision of Common Facility Centre for hardcore poor, excluded or conflict vulnerable groups.

Ram Ekwāl Mahato, 28, a member of this co-operative says, "This programme has provided a great opportunity for livelihood in our own community for unemployed youths like us. Earlier our parents were



reluctant but now they are willing to invest some money to expand the business. We have already started repaying the loan also."

The Bateshwar Village Development Committee office also provided a motivational grant of Rs. 20,000 to the co-operative for electrical wiring and meter installation as a reward for their success.

In the near future, the cooperative is planning to establish a saw mill and also produce cement blocks, which will lead to more employment opportunities for the local youths.

## Farewell and Welcome

### Farewell to our retiring colleagues !

**We wish both of them, a very happy retired life !**

Bimala Chitrakar, Visa and Freight Clearance Associate, retired after 33 years of service in UNDP.



Janak Shrestha, fellowship assistant in UNDP Operations division, retired after 29 years of service.



### Welcome to Ghulam and Martin

Ghulam Mohyuddin Sherani from Afghanistan joins UNDP Nepal as Disaster Management specialist. Prior to this assignment, he was working as a Programme Officer in the Recovery, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction unit of United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).



Martin Hart-Hansen joins the UN system in Nepal as the Special Assistant to the Resident Coordinator. Prior to this assignment, Martin was working as a Project Manager of corporate financial project with the largest telecom company in Denmark. He has also worked with UNICEF in Bhutan, India and the Maldives in Monitoring & Evaluation and Programme Coordination.



### CNN films UNDP GEF Small Grants Programme's initiative to save the environment

The bio-briquette production initiative to save the environment by reducing carbon dioxide emission and at the same time providing opportunity for income generation to the poor communities, mostly women, has been a huge success. This enterprise has also helped in improving the forest quality by removing the unwanted banmara (weed that destroys forest).

CNN, following-up on the bio-briquette story published in one of the UNDP Newsletters, started to film it soon after the elections were over and while the correspondents were still in Kathmandu. The film crew led by Dan Rivers, CNN correspondent along with two more correspondents, Rajesh Mishra (New-Delhi based) and Manesh Shrestha (Kathmandu based) visited Bishankhu Narayan in Bhaktapur district and filmed the entire process of briquette making, from collection of banmara, charring and moulding to finally the use of briquette and its marketing prospects. The CNN team spent nearly 4 hours filming and interviewing the forest users group, consumers and the briquette making groups. The film is expected to be broadcast in mid-May.

Under the *Community Based Biobriquette and Livelihood Project*, UNDP GEF Small Grants Programme has established 4 briquette production units in Lalitpur (Bishankhu Narayan), Banke, Tanahu and Jhapa.

