

**IN THE KNOW**

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**Strengthening the capacity of the Election Commission to administer elections**

**Support to the peace process**

UNDP's **Institutional Strengthening and Professional Development Support for the Election Commission of Nepal**

project, has been organising trainings at the national level on *Building Resources in Democracy, Governance & Elections (BRIDGE)*.

A total of 82 District Electoral Officers (DEOs) and their deputies have participated so far to obtain an in-depth knowledge on the electoral administration and voter registration process.

BRIDGE is a comprehensive course in electoral administration developed by the Institute of Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC), the United Nations



**Participants undertaking field interview exercise with a local community in Pokhara**

Election Assistance Division (UNEAD), UNDP and International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES).

Last month, the project delivered two modules on Electoral Administration and Voter Registration in Kathmandu, Pokhara, Nepalgunj and Biratnagar.

Trainees from all 75 districts actively participated in the BRIDGE discussions and activities.

More trainings are scheduled for the year 2009 to further build up the capacity of the Election Commission staff.

**A warm welcome to the new Deputy Country Director!**



UNDP Country Office Nepal welcomes the new Deputy Country Director, Jørn Sørensen, Danish nationality, who joined officially on 26 March 2009.

Jørn brings with him almost 15 years of UN experience and has held positions of increasing importance in the UN System in a number of countries.

Prior to coming to Nepal he headed the Strategic Planning and Partnership unit in Iraq, overseeing UNDP's response to the recovery and crisis prevention work, looking after several multi-million dollar projects and programmes, including transport infrastructure. There he managed a large team operating in very difficult conditions.

As a UN staff, he has worked in UNDP headquarters in New York (Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific, Regional Bureau for Arab States) and with field assignments in places such as Mongolia, China, DPR Korea and Iraq.

## “Post conflict experience of UNDP has been very useful in supporting the peace process in Nepal”

*In early 2007 the Government established the Nepal Peace Trust Fund (NPTF) to mobilize donor funding to consolidate the peace process. At the request of the Government, UNDP deployed experts to help design, set up and manage the fund and to train Government officials and the fund’s staff.*

*The fund, first of its kind, has provided an important means for donors to pool their resources in a government-owned fund. By February 2009 more than \$102 million dollars has been pledged, with the Government contributing \$70.5 million and the five bilateral donors (DFID, SDC, Finland, Denmark and Norway) \$30.8 million.*

*The Secretary of the Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction (MoPR), Madhav Prasad Ghimire recently gave an interview for the UNDP bulletin. Here are excerpts from the interview:*

### **How do you see the role of the Peace Fund in the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Accord?**

Soon after the Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA) was signed, there was a mammoth task ahead of the Government to implement the social, economic and political agenda ranging from managing elections to reconstruction. The Government was seeking both technical and financial support to implement these activities. The Nepal Peace Trust Fund (NPTF) concept came as a completely new undertaking for the country.

The two outstanding contributions of the NPTF have been: support to the April 2008 Constituent Assembly elections and secondly, support to the management of the



**Secretary of the Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction (MoPR),  
Mr. Madhav Prasad Ghimire**

cantonments. Managing the cantonments meant arranging for proper housing, providing basic utilities such as health centres, toilets, electricity, and access to roads including providing subsistence allowance to the Maoist Army. This was all financed from the NPTF and successfully implemented.

There is a greater importance attached to the role of the Peace Fund because of its flexible mechanism to address the immediate needs and provide quick support. Huge resources are required to implement the agenda of the CPA and I believe the NPTF can fulfill this role.

### **What are the sectors in which the Peace Fund has been utilised and what are the possible areas of future interventions?**

Initially five sectors were supported: the CA elections, the cantonment management, safety and security related to the national police force, support to the peace process and addressing the issue of Internally Displaced People (IDP). After the NPTF was relocated from the Ministry

of Finance (MoF) to the Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction (MoPR) in 2008, the overall scope was revised and the sectors were expanded to include support to the election and constitution making process, reconstruction of physical infrastructures, cantonment management and supporting the conflict affected persons and families.

Recently, the Board meeting of the Peace Fund Secretariat approved the 2009 work plan, the major areas of which are supporting conflict affected persons and families, access roads, health services and drinking water supply in the cantonments, safety and security through the construction of police posts, reconstruction of physical infrastructures especially schools, health posts, Village Development Committee buildings; support to the constitution making process and by-elections and establishment of peace structures (local peace committees) at the local level and promotion of peace through outreach and coordination.

The most important part is the ‘peace campaign’. The peace process will not

come to a logical end unless it reaches the grass-roots. There has to be reconciliation. Only a 'peace-campaign' can bring about this healing process for unity and social harmony and we will need a very good communications strategy to implement the campaign at the district, village and community level.

**Could you comment on the monitoring and evaluation aspects of the Peace Fund?**

Monitoring and evaluation have been our greatest focus after the relocation of the NPTF to the MoPR. The objective of the Peace Fund Secretariat is to make the use of resources transparent and to conduct regular monitoring and evaluation of the projects funded by the Fund. In fact, the Secretariat has also made it mandatory for the project implementing agencies to build in monitoring and evaluation in their delivery mechanisms. We intend to have timely audits and resolve any audit comments in a timely manner.

In December 2008, we conducted a Government and donors joint monitoring visit to the cantonments in Kailali, Surkhet and Chitwan to observe the project progress. The team also submitted a satisfactory monitoring report. Two years from the establishment of the peace fund, the plan now is to have an overall evaluation of the NPTF which will further help to utilize the Peace Fund efficiently.

**How do you assess the response and assistance from the donors to the fund?**

The overall response from the donors has been very encouraging and they have been contributing to the Peace Fund. I appreciate our valued donors for responding to our needs in a positive way.

Currently, the donors to the Peace Fund are the UK Government's Department for International Development (DFID), Denmark, Finland, Norway and the Swiss Development Corporation (SDC). We have European Commission (EC) and the German Government in the pipeline. Recently the US Government has also shown interest to support the NPTF. The World Bank has provided substantial assistance for the peace support operation in close coordination with the NPTF.

The estimated resources required to implement the planned activities for three years from now are US\$ 385 million. For the year 2009 alone, our required estimated budget through the NPTF is US\$ 127 million. The CPA has a vast agenda and substantial resources are required to translate it into action.

**What have been the challenges to the implementation of the Peace Fund till now?**

The implementation has been going on smoothly, however, we need to prioritize the agenda which is so broad; we cannot address all the requirements at once. Secondly, the donor resources still need to be scaled up to meet the requirements of the peace process.

I can proudly say that Nepal may be the first country in the world to have managed this kind of **Multi-Donors Trust Fund (MDTF)** that is entirely managed by a Government. Since this is a new concept, it is yet another challenge; hence the capacity of the Peace Fund Secretariat needs to be strengthened. We have excellent ideas but we need to translate these ideas into project documents and implementable concepts.

Again looking at the peace support context, there has been more donor support in softer and process-oriented areas; but there is a substantial funding gap for reconstruction of physical infrastructures. Many development partners are reported to be working in the peace building areas of Nepal and coordination with Government remains an urgent agenda for improvement.

**How do you look at UNDP's contribution in providing technical assistance to the Peace Fund?**

I appreciate UNDP for its technical and advisory support to the Peace Fund. The post conflict experience of UNDP has been very useful in supporting the peace process in Nepal. We have further requested UNDP to strengthen the capacity of the MoPR.

We have also held discussions with the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator's office for harmonisation between the Nepal Peace Trust Fund and the UN Peace Fund.

I am glad that the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, Mr. Robert Piper is positive about supporting this initiative. The UN's assistance is important for us to bridge the funding gap.

I am myself committed to make this innovative Nepal Peace Trust Fund mechanism, an exemplary trust fund and the best practice in the world, which can be replicated in other post conflict countries. I think the UN System is the best partner and especially UNDP, to help promote and replicate this best practice in other post conflict countries. Lastly, we further look forward to UNDP's support to strengthen the peace fund.

## Support to the constitution making

## 'Communicating with Authority'

The **Centre for Constitutional Dialogue (CCD)** recently organised a training on 'Communicating with Authority' for the Constituent Assembly (CA) members and Civil Society. The session included topics such as giving short speeches and statements. The training covered both theoretical and practical sessions where the participants delivered short speeches in given time and structure.

A total of 20 CA members and 16 people from Civil Society have been trained so far on 'Communicating with Authority'. The training put a lot of emphasis on practical exercises where participants were taught to be aware of their body language and maintain eye contact while giving interviews.



CA member Meena Pandey who was one of the participants during the training said, "I could apply the skills learnt during the training when I had to appear for the live TV programme." She further added, "The importance of the body language came to my mind while in the programme and I actually turned theory into practice."

## New techniques of farming on sandy soils

## News from the field

Seed grants and advice for growing watermelons, cucumbers and tomatoes on the banks of the Dodha river, Kailali have boosted the income of 15 of the poorest members of Ram Laxman Community Forest.

The **Western Terai Landscape Complex Project (WTLCP)**, funded by the Global Environment Facility/Small Grants Programme together with several other partners such as SNV and IUCN, brought in an expert to demonstrate the special techniques and timing needed to grow crops on the very sandy soils. Each household earned an extra between 3,000 to 6,000 rupees each in the first season.

These farmers also planted *saccharum* grass around their fields. It provides a



good wildlife habitat and also helped to reduce flood damage to surrounding households during the September 2008 floods. The grass binds the soil together and slows down the passage of water.

Jagani Chaudhari, one of the members of a user group says, "I was able to save a total of Rs. 5,000 by selling watermelon and cucumbers which I used to buy stationary for my school going children".

## Raju's journey to become an entrepreneur

Raju Kumar Maharjan, 34, of Panga, Kirtipur has transformed his life since starting up a small business. He was an alcoholic but has turned away from drinking as he is now busy making colourful candles for sale. He makes at least 100 candles of various sizes in a full day's work.

"I became an alcoholic by falling into bad company. I was working as a sub-contractor for construction works but the contractors stopped trusting me and I no longer had any work," he recalls. His health was deteriorating and his wife, daughter and sisters pleaded with him to stop drinking as his habit was getting worse day by day. The family admitted him to the Richmond Rehabilitation Centre supported by the **UNDP's HIV/AIDS** programme. The Centre also helps people to give up alcohol dependency.

During the course of his recovery at the Centre, Raju attended a 'Start Improve Your Business', a 9-day course, supported by the National Enterprise Development Centre for Nepal (NEDC/N) and UNDP's **Micro-enterprise Development (MEDEP) and HIV/AIDS Programme**. There he learned how to make candles.

Also, his participation in a two-day training on 'Appreciative Inquiry' conducted in July-August 2008,



**Raju taking out the candles from the frame**

helped him to develop positive thinking.

During the course, Raju was inspired by watching a documentary film of people who had taken similar training courses and had gone on to establish successful small businesses.

After spending six months at the Rehabilitation Centre, Raju returned home to set up his candle-making enterprise.

MEDEP supported him to buy the initial raw materials of wax, thread and a frame for making candles.

In his first five months, supported by his family, Raju has invested 25,000 rupees and has made a profit of 10,000 rupees so far.

He sells his candles to the nearby shops. The many hours of daily

power cuts mean there is a high demand for candles.

More than the financial aspect of his business his family is very happy that he has completely recovered and is busy working.

His family and neighbours are amazed at his speedy recovery and are helping him to regain his confidence and build up his business.

Raju says, "I have not been able to meet the demand for candles but I can expand this business if I can get more resources and put in more hours."

These days, his family and neighbours see him as an emerging entrepreneur rather than an alcoholic. Inspired by his success, his sister is now starting to learn the business from him!

## Memoirs of Lalita– the living legend of UNDP

After 38 years of service in the UN system, Lalita Thapa is happily retiring with a number of thoughts already in her mind to expand her role in supporting the social work that she is already active in.

Her knowledge of the UN System runs deep. To try to write about her time in the UN system is like descending into a well that she called as 'unfathomable'.

She started her career with FAO in 1970 and moved to UNDP in 1976. Thanking the senior management for entrusting her progressively with quite huge responsibilities, she says, "during these 38 years I had the opportunity of heading almost all the units with programmes ranging from agriculture, forestry, watershed management, telecommunication, general administration and civil service reform, economic reform, tourism, decentralization, NGO support programmes to the infrastructure sector."

She has worked with 9 Resident Representatives, 11 Deputy Resident Representatives and one Country Director. Her long journey in the UN system has seen successes and failures in terms of programme implementation.

"Change is inevitable and time is the biggest factor to judge what is suitable and what is not suitable. Some programmes become outdated with the progress of time and what worked five years ago may not work now," she adds remembering some failed interventions of UNDP and some great successes it had.

She further adds, "another important aspect to make an organisation successful is to draw on the unique assets of both national and international staff. It is natural for the national staff to think that only they have to cope with the difficult process of change, however, we the national staff should understand and sympathize with the fact that the whole country, its environment and culture also represents a big change and requires for the international staff as well to adapt. They also wonder if they will be



able to meet the expectations of the nationals. This is an international organisation where people from different parts of the world have to throw aside their differences to achieve a common goal."

Her experience in the past 10 years has been quite different. "The organisation in Nepal has grown very big especially with the changed security situation and the new interventions of UNDP especially in the peace building area," she adds.

With a bright and untiring patience she says, "98% of my tenure with the UN system was most enjoyable and fulfilling. The greatest moment of happiness was when the senior management in late 90s 'Nepalised' the Country Office with units headed by nationals. The programmes started to be developed by nationals and under their leadership with sound knowledge of ground reality rather than by hired outside consultants. I fully acknowledge the contribution of the then senior management to make it happen. We felt proud to be serving in an organisation that respected its nationals and their capacity."

Lastly, she deeply believes that motivation is the biggest factor for the staff members to produce qualitative results. They are institutional memories and foundation of an organisation. One of the best practices of this Country Office has been to award its long serving staff members. Recognition of the contribution of staff members and the success of organisation go hand in hand!

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