

# IN THE KNOW

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## News of the Month

### Viewing progress towards peace: UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board members in Nepal

Eight members of the joint Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) from donor and programme countries visited Nepal from 18-25 April. The participating member states were Angola, Azerbaijan, Mexico, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Sweden and the United Republic of Tanzania.

During their field visit to Nepal, the Board members saw first hand some of the challenges and opportunities for Nepal, UNDP and UNFPA during this critical period of transition in Nepal's process of development, as it moves from conflict to peace, from monarchy to republic, from a unitary to a federal state.

#### Meeting with the Government and non-Government stakeholders

The UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board members interacted with key Government and representatives from NGO communities, donors, UN Youth

Advisory Panel, local communities and UN partners.

The Ministry of Finance organised a briefing meeting of the Executive Board with some Line Ministries, the implementing partners of UNDP and UNFPA.

The meeting was chaired by the Secretary of the Ministry of Finance, Mr. Rameshwar Khanal. The secretary expressed that the UN should execute its programmes more through Government's treasury than direct implementation in order to encourage national ownership in real sense.

#### Constitution making process

The Board members met with Subash Nembang, Chairperson of the Constituent Assembly and visited the Centre for Constitutional Dialogue (CCD) to meet some Constituent Assembly members. At the CCD, the team met with Ms. Sapana Pradhan Malla, member of the Constituent Assembly representing the Communist Party Nepal-United Marxist Leninist (CPN-



Ministry of Finance hosting a meeting for the UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board members with the Line Ministries

UML) party, Mr. Mrigendra Kumar Singh Yadav, Chair of the Committee on Capacity Building and Resource Management representing Madhesi Janaadhikar Forum (MJF) and Ms. Ang Dawa Sherpa, Constituent Assembly member representing the Community Party of Nepal (Maoists). The CA members talked to the Executive Board members about the domestic violence bill recently passed by the Constituent Assembly, aspirations of the people from the new constitution and concerns on environment and climate change.

**UNYAP:** The team also met with the UN Youth Advisory Panel (UNYAP) composed of 10 young women and men aged 15-29. The UNYAP was

established in 2008 to open dialogue and advise the UN Country Team on the strategic opportunities and necessary actions for addressing adolescent and youth issues. During the meeting with the Executive Board members, some of the important issues raised by the UNYAP was youth unemployment, need for more value based education in schools,

youth being more vulnerable to HIV/AIDS, increasing migration in search of work, lack of fund for students to pursue higher studies abroad and the need for improved data for implementation of the law for disabled people.

**NGOs and Donors:** The Executive Board members met some NGO representatives and donors. The donor community expressed an urgent need to gain international-political support in order to lead the fragile ongoing peace process to a logical end. They highlighted that the International community can play a positive role in assisting Nepal in dealing with humanitarian and development issues in the post-conflict context.

**Nepal Army:** The Board members were also briefed by the Nepal army on UN Peace Keeping missions from Nepal army to different countries. Nepal became a member of the United Nations in 1955 and the participation of the Nepalese Army in the UN peacekeeping operations spans a period of 50 years covering 33 UN missions, in which over 68,000 personnel have participated. Nepal ranks fifth in the world as a troop contributing nation.

**Cantonment:** In Nawalparasi, the Main Cantonment Site (MCS), Division IV, the team interacted with the Maoist



**UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board members leaving for their two-day field visit**

Commander, Yam Bahadur Adhikari. The commander expressed his thanks for the support of UN agencies to improve the condition of the cantonment.

He further added that the war had been fought to bring peace but the peace process will not be complete without the completion of reintegration process.

The Executive Board members were briefed on the role of UNMIN in the peace process of Nepal and the support provided by UNDP and UNFPA during the registration and verification process.

The team also inspected the health post in the cantonment where UNFPA has been assisting with health service provision.

#### **Field visit to Dang district**

The Executive Board members travelled to the field to observe the districts recovering from the conflict and how support to enterprise development and rebuilding of local infrastructure is improving the quality of the lives of people and bringing communities together to build peace.

The members also observed UNFPA's integrated range of activities on reproductive health, population and gender which is supporting national efforts to reduce maternal mortality, to empower young girls and women, and to ensure that population dynamics are included in the national plans and budgets.

The Board members visited two schools that have received support from the UNDP **Quick Impact programme** in Pawannagar village and observed a product fair organised by the micro-entrepreneurs supported by UNDP **Micro-enterprise Development Programme** in Tulsipur Municipality.

At the UNFPA programme site in Pawannagar village, the team interacted with the Female Community Health Volunteers (FCHVs) who explained about how the young girls and mothers have become more aware about safer reproductive health.

Team Leader of the visiting members, Mr. Aldo Aldama Breton from Mexico, Director of Economic and Social Issues, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said, "I am highly impressed by the dedication of these communities. It is wonderful to see so much of enthusiasm among these men and women. They are aware that their children need good education. I am equally overwhelmed to see that these women and young girls have so much of enthusiasm to learn about health issues and are now doing a wonderful job of educating the others also. It is impressive to see how both UNDP and UNFPA are working in synergy for a common cause."

## Loktantrik Sambaad (Democracy Dialogues)

The UNDP/Support to Participatory Constitution Building in Nepal (SPCBN) project has been active in organising 'Loktantrik Sambaad' (Democracy Dialogues) throughout Nepal. The project has funded 15 NGOs, representing the historically marginalized communities of Nepal, including: *Dalits, Indigenous Peoples, Madhesi, Disabled, Remote Areas and Youth*, to collect submissions for the Constituent Assembly (CA).

Fifteen NGOs conducted their Training of Trainers (TOT) for their field facilitators in this inclusive and participatory methodology. Soon after, each NGO initiated their field programming to collect initial submissions for the Constituent Assembly.

To-date, these 15 NGOs have conducted nearly 1,000 'Democracy Dialogues' and civic education orientations in over 50 districts, both at the local Village Development Committee (VDC) and district levels. By mid-April, all 15 NGO partners were able to provide detailed submissions from these 'Loktantrik Sambaad' in various public ceremonies to each of the CA Committee Chairs for inclusion in their concept papers.

On 27 March, the Madhesi NGO Federation (MNF) presented their initial submissions to 29 CA members, including the chairpersons of nine thematic committees, as well as handed these submissions to the Honorable Subash Nembang.

On 31 March, 14 of the UNDP NGO partners, representing the historically marginalized communities, presented



Participation of people in loktantrik sambaad

their initial submissions at the Centre for Constitutional Dialogue (CCD). There were nine CA members present, including Amrita Thapa Magar, Chair of the Committee on Natural Resources, Economic Rights and Sharing of Revenues, and Lokendra Bista Magar, Committee for the Restructuring the State and Sharing of the Power.

An "Impact and Indicators Workshop" is planned for early May with all 15 NGOs. This workshop will discuss appropriate strategies by which the NGOs can continue to work closely with the Constituent Assembly on the issues identified by the historically marginalized communities of Nepal. These NGO submissions are currently being translated into English.



Constituent Assembly Chair, Mr. Subash Nembang, receiving submission from MNF president

## Allowing more children to go to school.....

The Bhuidahar Higher Secondary School, in Pawannagar village of Dang district is the only soon to be high school in the locality. The school children come from four villages to the school.

The school was facing financial problems in adding more class-rooms. As a result, children who wanted to be enrolled in the school were deprived of education. In 2009 the school was able to add one more floor for four additional class-rooms through UNDP/**Quick Impact for Peace Support Initiative (QIPSI)**.

The total cost of the project was US\$ 7750 and QIPSI's covers 39%. The rest was contributed by the local community (6%), the DDC and VDC (32%) and the school management committee (23%).

The total number of students enrolled in the school is 580 of which 118 are Dalits, 252 belong to Janajati and 210 others. The total number of girl students is 347.

Now the children will be able to stay close to their families for their higher studies.



**Bhuidahar Higher Secondary School, Pawannagar, Dang**



**Team leader of the visiting UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board members, Mr. Aldo Aldama Breton, inaugurating the school in Pawannagar**

### Balapur Secondary School

Similarly the Balapur Secondary School in Pawannagar village was able to add two classrooms to the school through the UNDP/ QIPSI support.

The total cost of the project was US\$ 5500. The contribution of UNDP is 38%. The rest was contributed by the community (6%), DDC ( 23%) and the school management committee (33%).

The total number of students enrolled in the school is 675 of which 101 are Dalits, 425 Janajatis and 149 others. The total number of girl students is 370. Local Development Officer,

Mr. Madhusudan Poudel expressed his sincere thanks to UNDP for providing support to the children. "We have greatly benefitted from this support as more children will be able to go to school. We aim at 100 per cent enrollment of girls and boys from this village," says he.



**Two more classrooms of Balapur Secondary School constructed with the support of QIPSI**

## News from the Field

## Make everyone literate by 2010 !

It is five in the morning. Man Kumari Subedi has been up for some time now. She cannot sleep. She has to finish her homework but she is stuck on one sentence and is waiting for her grandson to wake up so that she can ask him for help.

At the age of 75, Man Kumari has started going to school !

"I look forward to it and can't wait for 11 o'clock to come. This is the best part of my day," says she.

Women like Man Kumari who do not know how to read or write have enrolled themselves in the housewives programme. This programme educates women from 16 - 75 years of age or beyond to recognize numbers and do basic reading and writing. Thanks to the initiative of the Non Formal Education Centre!

This Non-Formal Education Centre has started a

number of literacy campaigns to meet the objective of the Government to make everyone literate by 2010. The program mobilizes 85,000 volunteers and 4,013 supervisors, who are paid a monthly allowance of Rs. 1000 each.

The UN Millennium Campaign further aims to strengthen this programme in

the days to come by building the capacity of the Non Formal Education Centre.

"I read the newspaper now and discuss the news with my husband," says Krishna Karki, a 30 year old woman with two children. She no longer feels left behind.

"It is amazing how enthusiastic these women are," says Kamala Karki, the teacher of all these students who are much older than her. "When they came here a month ago, not one could recognize any letters or numbers. Now they can read simple sentences in Nepali and English and are beginning to learn their sums."

All these women who come to *Manohar Basti Samudayik Learning Center* have one goal in mind – to know what is happening around them. Most of them are there because their families encourage



In the classroom, Man Kumari is exchanging notes with Kamala Shrestha, 45, another enthusiastic learner. They giggle and whisper like little girls, discussing their homework and the mishaps and adventures they went through to complete it. The room is lively with chatter of over 50 women, all housewives, who have come to the class after taking care of their household chores. They have come here to spend a couple of hours to learn to read and write so that they can fulfill a long cherished dream of being literate and not having to depend on others for simple information.



### Goal # 3: Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women

**Target 3A: Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and at all levels of education no later than 2015**

them to learn, read and write. "My grandson can't stop laughing when I say my ABC", says Man Kumari with a smile on her face. "Sometimes we study together and he loves correcting me."

There are 90,000 informal classes in 75 districts all over the country. Some districts show overwhelming success, while some remote districts in the Far Western region of the country are struggling with it. The government of Nepal data shows that 92% of children attend primary school. The number goes down to 60% by the time they reach secondary school and it goes down further to 50% in high school.

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## Enterprising Tharu women .....

The *Sheetal Mahila Samuha* (womens group) constituted by Tharu women in Raikhaliyan village of Dang district have become successful micro-entrepreneurs. They started a mushroom enterprise with an initial investment of Rs. 20,000.00 (US \$ 250 approx.) in 2008, through technical and financial support of the **UNDP Micro-enterprise Development Programme (MEDEP)**. They started their mushroom production business from one hut, sized 18 ft x 12 ft.

When the women started seeing the fruits of their effort, they expanded one more hut, investing Rs. 20,000.00 (US \$ 250) more from their income. The total cost of MEDEP support for this venture was NRs. 30,700.00 (US\$ 388) for the group.

"We sell the mushrooms in the local market for Rs. 100 per kilogram. People come to buy the mushrooms directly from our store as well. When we started we were just 8 but now we are 20 and are training some more women also," says Dharmasila Chowdhary, chairperson of the Womens Group.

Now, the women have 56,000.00 (approx. US \$ 710) cash deposited in the bank and are planning to construct another hut to further expand their business. They are trying to produce mushroom during the summer season and have already put 200 additional packets. The group has also included other women in their group to develop the community as Mushroom Enterprise Village.

These entrepreneurs have won several awards at the district and central level for their outstanding entrepreneurship. After the MEDEP intervention, the social status and the living standard of these Tharu women's group has increased. Now the women have money in their hands and are independent decision makers for their choice of enterprises. Most importantly, they have become money-lenders in their community.

Mangali Chowdhary, 25, says, "we are very happy to be engaged in this kind of enterprise. It has proven to be very beneficial for uneducated women like us who had no source of income before. We now are able to fulfill our basic needs and are also looking forward to starting new enterprises."



**Mangali Chowdhary, one of the successful mushroom entrepreneurs**



**Tharu women of Dang district displaying their mushroom production in the exhibition organised for the visit of UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board members**

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