



The RECONSTRUCTION

Newsletter of Rural Reconstruction Nepal (RRN)

EDITORIAL

New challenges in the aftermath of the Jana-Andolan II

Nepal is currently undergoing a transitional period of rapid political change. This political change has been visible from the Jana Andolan- II, a mass movement across the country that successfully ended the feudal autocratic monarchical rule and paved the way for inclusive democracy in the country.

The marginalised, disadvantaged and excluded segments of society were overwhelmingly represented in the movement. They perceive the success of the movement as one step closer to the attainment of credible opportunities in relation to their basic Economic, Social and Cultural (ESC) rights such as access to food, housing, clothing, education, health, and employment and livelihood prospects. For them, Jana Andolan II was about demanding the redress of their age-old problems.

The new government, backed by the mandate of Jana Andolan- II, has proclaimed some affirmative declarations to address the overlying socio-political issues. However, these new initiatives at the central level have still been an inadequate response to the needs and expectations of the excluded that have been ignored for centuries by mainstream development initiatives and severely affected by decade-long armed conflict. People in conflict affected or prone areas such as Karnali have remained ignored by the state and have been hard-hit by starvation, malnutrition, deprivation and other types of hardships as a result of state negligence. Their renewed freedom of speech has meant nothing to them because of their daily struggle with hunger. Moreover, no visible support exists for the conflict-affected people and the peace dividend does not seem to be set to be equally enjoyed by the people at large.

Instead, while the political leaders have been enjoying the exercise of political power, the victims of systematic historical discrimination and the decade-long conflict have again been marginalised. For instance, price hikes of commonly-consumed

commodities have deliberately disregarded to the common Nepali people. Such actions contribute to gradual loss of government's credibility.

Presently, Nepal is all set to provide a peaceful resolution to the political issues raised by the decade-long Maoist insurgency and strengthen democracy at all levels, there still exists the uncompromising need to address the socio-economic problems of the marginalised groups. Not only do the socio-economic and livelihoods problems of the people need to be considered but also support for the full enjoyment of civil and political rights. Therefore, the efforts of government and civil society must now focus on how to rationally address economic, social and cultural rights of people in a holistic manner through a participatory methodology.

It is, hence, crucial that during this process orderly and result-oriented mechanisms are established that furthermore protect the interests of the marginalised, excluded, disadvantaged groups and

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grassroots community. And that helps the country obtain sustainable development; eliminate poverty and other social anomalies that consequently contributes to the establishment of a peaceful, equitable and prosperous society. The failure or delay in the addressing of these issues may otherwise lead the poverty-trodden people of Nepal to be so disappointed and resentful that new forms of rebellion will come to life even if the current political conflict is settled.

To this end, civil society is instrumental in bridging the divide between government policy and the rights and needs of the marginalised. RRN, in its capacity as civil society organisation, has explicitly adopted a rights-based pro-poor approach to its development programmes in order to promote the livelihood opportunities of the marginalised and disadvantaged communities. It has taken this approach to development from its very inception –through both social and physical reconstruction and has been fully

devoted to establishing social justice, democratic governance and unhindered exercise of economic, social and cultural rights, as well as the right to development. As such, RRN has welcomed the recently signed “Peace Accord” between the Government and the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoists) as it believes this action demonstrates the political will of the State to address the entrenched socio-economic and cultural problems of marginalised, disadvantaged and excluded groups. However, RRN also believes that enactment of these agreements into reality will be very complex. For this reason, RRN will continue to engage with the relevant stakeholders and communities in the attainment of peoples’ economic, social and cultural rights through the successful conduction of the constituent assembly election and the restructuring of the State in order to institutionalise inclusive democracy and achieve sustainable peace from below. ✍

Hopes of farmers increased after they get their lands irrigated

Bankatuwa-9 is one of the remote & conflict affected villages of Banke district. The village, which is mostly occupied by Tharu ethnic group, represents the poorest of the poor community and they lack access to minimum development facilities. Most house holds have 5-15 kaththas of land and in the past had limited or no irrigation facility. Agriculture was mostly based on rain fed irrigation. They were dependent on a very old water course that was going to be filled up. This has led to flooding in rainy season and was needed to be immediately checked. The community people were compelled to see the barren lands in lack of proper irrigation system and spent considerable time and energy irrigating their lands. This ultimately increased food security problem.

However, a check dam was constructed by RRN under Rural Community Infrastructure and Livelihood Support Program (RCILSP). RRN supported in terms of external materials and skilled labour where as community contributed in unskilled labour. After the construction of check dam water loss have been minimized and sufficient water is available for irrigation. Now 900 bigha of land can be irrigated with the facility provided. Rice transplanting has been faster than previous year.

A permanent resident of this village Din Dayal Tharu expressed his pleasure, “We left no stone unturned in discharging our duty to utilize the facility and had wonderful experience by increasing rice yield by 5-8 quintal/bigha this year.

Due to the access of irrigation facility, farmers have started

multiple cropping systems, including vegetable farming rather



A dam constructed by a local community with RRN's support in Banke district

than totally relying on rice farming. Kundan Tharu, the president of user's committee voiced, "We requested in different government sectors for support but we failed getting support. RRN has given us new life providing the facility."

Inability to work in their own fields due to lack of irrigation facility was one of the main reason why most of the bread earning population migrated to India and different cities of Nepal to undertake seasonal unskilled labour. Now, the villagers not only consume the food grains and vegetables they produced but also sell the left over quantity. This is how rural livelihoods have changed from the small irrigation project in the village. ✍

The importance of micro-credit: A case study

Mrs. Gita Tolangi is a resident of Khandbari Municipality-11 of Archale in the Sankhuwasabha district. She is 35 years old and lives in a small hut along with her husband, three sons and two daughters. Her children are all under 15 years of age. The family belongs to the Dalits community and its income is generated from traditional occupational activities like leather work and agricultural production. Mrs. Tolangi owns only one ropani of land, where the family has built its house and grows a small amount of food. However, this food is only sufficient for about three months a year. She and her family are among the poorest of the poor in their community. To survive, the family leases some additional land from the neighbours on which they cultivate different types of cereals and vegetables, some of which are sold at the weekly bazaar. The small cash income is spent on school fees, books and the dresses of the children, as well as other materials.

Rural Reconstruction Nepal (RRN) introduced the 'Sustainable Rural Livelihood Programme (SRLP) in the Sankhuwasabha district in 2002. Mrs. Tolangi's community was one of those selected to take part in the programme activities. The formation of a women group was the prerequisite for implementing the SRLP project. As such, Mrs. Tolangi and 13 other female members of the community created the "Santi Women's Group" in April 2003. In the year, 'Santi women's group' requested RRN's assistance in providing non-formal education classes. RRN agreed, and the entire group members participated in these classes over a nine-month period. As a result of the training, most of the members acquired basic reading and writing skills. Mrs. Tolangi's life has also changed as a result of this initiative; she has managed to successfully complete the course and can now read books and write letters.

In order to empower the women, some capacity building trainings were also designed for the women's group representatives. Mrs. Tolangi said, "Women in the community were marginalised in every aspect, but by forming the group, we have received training on important issues such as leadership development, human rights, child rights and legal literacy. Now we are much more aware of our rights and capable of conducting group meetings, stating our thoughts, needs and solving problems." She went on to say: "We are from the untouchable caste and socially excluded strata.

Previously, we were neglected by the community, but now the situation is changing. We are participating in all the community activities and the community has realised that we all are Nepali people. If women are self dependent, aware of their rights and can earn an income, they are stronger and able to provide for the family, as well as the community."

The Santi women's group meets monthly, and collects NRs 10 per month from each member. To date, the group has managed to collect NRs 7,147.00 for the group savings. The money is disbursed as loans to group members, which they use to pay school fees and support small business ventures. However, despite the successful monthly savings scheme, the group has also realised that they require additional loans to support more livelihood development activities, such as commercial vegetable cultivation, pig/swine farming and the establishment of local retail outlets.

In this regard, women cooperatives might play an important role for the sustainability of the group. RRN has so far helped to facilitate the formulation of thirteen such women apex groups within the SRLP areas, including the "Navadurga Women Apex Group" of which the Santi Women Group is a part.

The "Navadurga Women Apex Group" is a micro credit programme and the interest obtained from the programme is given to the Santi Women group, as well as the management cost for implementation of a micro credit programme in the locality. Mrs. Tolangi has borrowed NRs 10,000.00 from this group, which she has used for vegetable cultivation, including for the production of potato, cabbage, cauliflower and brinjal. She has earned NRs 5,700.00 thus far, but estimates that she can earn a further NRs 3,000.00 from the additional harvesting and sale of potatoes. Although Mrs Tolangi was initially hesitant about starting the business, she has managed to repay most of the loan and interest and is now reaping the rewards.

Motivated by the success of her small venture, Mrs. Tolangi became keen to receive training on vegetable cultivation. RRN provided this training, and as a result, she now plans to cultivate off-season vegetables to earn additional income. Mrs. Tolangi wants to be seen as a 'model farmer' in her community, and RRN's support is helping her to achieve this aim. ✍

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Food Crisis in Bajura

Bhanu Parajuli, DC, Kanchanpur

“No data... Please bring poison first.” These words are not those of the author, but rather those of the Bajureli people who have been severely deprived of food during the last few months. Last year’s hailstorm and drought were identified as the causes of this critical condition, but in fact, this article will discuss the more complex scenario playing out in Bajura that have caused the food insecurity.

Under the coordination of the Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ESCR) of Human Rights Treaty Monitoring Coordination Committee (HRTMCC), a monitoring team has visited the crisis areas of Bajura in August 2006. The team had found that hardly 5 percent of the total population of the district could be fed with the local produce in a year, and the majority had to resort to seasonal migration to India in order to survive. A number of factors led to the low productivity of crops including landlessness, fragile land pattern, and the lack of irrigated lands. The result was that most people could only obtain enough food to feed themselves and their family for six months.

At the present time, people in food deficit districts like Mugu, Humla, Kalikot, Jumla and Dolpa are struggling to remain alive.

The food corporation dipo lie in two places: Martadi in the northern belt and Kolti in the district administration office premise. No food has been available in such Dipo. While in Martadi, the only way to collect food has been from Sanfe Bagar 12 miles away, the dipo in Kolti has only been accessible by plane chartering. Villagers who walked 2 days to obtain food from the dipo have returned home empty-handed. Ironically, the Food for Work programme under the RCIW through the District Development Committee has created more serious problems. In several areas of the district, the workers who have constructed the new roads have not been paid by the local authority. It is also the case that Nepali government is not taking the matter seriously. For example, it has failed to enlist the transportation cost of food in the Red Book during the last fiscal year budget and this has added to the vulnerability of the respective workers. In addition, most of the people have not received the proposed food packages (consisting of four kilograms of rice and four rupees per day of work) provisioned by the RCIW. Their children have been deprived of for the promised “Moto chamal”, a kind of rice meal that costs only thirty rupees per kilogram if bought in the local market.

Thus, it can only be concluded that the food insecurity situation in Bajura is the result of labour exploitation. Chief District Officer (CDO) and Local Development Officer (LDO) have agreed that people have been victimised in Bajura, but have been unable to address the prevailing crisis. In fact, the only action they have taken is to ask the central office and concerned authorities to look into the crisis.

The goal of food security initiatives is to ensure that every individual has access to sufficient quantities of food to lead an active and healthy life, taking into consideration diverse cultural and religious factors. However, in Bajura, food accessibility and utilisation were far from realised.

Not only food availability was ignored, the food production



Children waiting for food

and transportation both failed and the labours were not paid for their hard work. The areas worst hit by the food crisis seem to have clustered in the hills and mountains, where people were unable to grow enough food for even six month. In the mountains the lack of physical infrastructure, roads and transportation facilities hindered food availability as people have no other source of income.

Women, children, Dalits and economically very poor and marginal farmers have been particularly deprived and vulnerable. For instance, many children are on the verge of suffering from “Dimagi-Bodopan”, a disease that severely affects the mind. Women have also been dually affected by the traditional cultural and social norms and values that have further marginalised them from obtaining access to food.

At the present time, people in food deficit districts like Mugu, Humla, Kalikot, Jumla and Dolpa are struggling to remain alive. For example, in the Sapata VDC of the Bajura district, people that once ate Sisnu, Gittha and other fruits of the forest trees have now succumbed to eating the sticks of these trees. A teacher by the name of Man Bahadur Rokaya reported that one 22-year-old woman named Champa Lohar who lived in a village in the Sapata VDC died, along with her baby, during child birth as a result of the malnutrition caused from eating only these sticks.

To conclude, it is high time that people are given adequate protection from starvation and its related problems. The state must own up to its responsibility to ensure food security of all its citizens. Food security is a fundamental socioeconomic right. Governmental organisations, NGOs and INGOs today are key players in promoting food security and implement various projects such as relief programmes and Food for Work initiatives. They, too, must play their roles in ensuring that the right to food becomes a reality for all.

Lastly, it is the author’s suggestion that the Government of Nepal should respect the hard work of the road construction labourers in the Bajura district and immediately provide the proposed rice allocated to them, as well as operate other immediate relief programmes to alleviate the ongoing food crisis. ✍

RRN's Engagement in Defending Human Rights in Nepal

Ram Prasad Gautam, Human Rights Officer, RRN

I. Context and Issues

The people of Nepal have led, in a way, inhuman lives for centuries; in the form of oppression, suppression, discrimination, exclusion and deprivation. Lack of access to food, shelter, equitable distribution of development, education, employment, land including other resources, and political participation in governance has severely affected the lives and livelihoods of the rural mass. Moreover, the decade-long conflict has caused the death of many lives, wide-spread and systematic torture, abduction, disappearance and displacement of tens of thousands of people. Owing to the conflict, the state has been heavily militarised in which all dealings are settled by force rather than due process of laws. In addition, the conflict has heavily caused the destruction and disruption of infrastructures and socio-economic development, which resulted in gradually endangering the very survival of the Nepalese people. The royal coup - with the consolidation of all state power by the king on February 1, 2005 - further worsened the country situation. In this backdrop, the Nepalese people, in

April 2006, finally decided to launch a massive pro-democracy people's movement, popularly known as the Jana Andolan II under the convenership of the Seven-Party Alliance (SPA) and backed by the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoists), for the restoration of peace, democracy, human rights and social transformation.

2. The Jana Andolan II

The movement lasted for 19 days, filled with tremendous depth and breadth, sweeping across the cities, towns and villages of Nepal. Scared with the popular mass movement, the government imposed prohibitory orders and bans on political gatherings followed by curfews in various parts of the country including Kathmandu and Lalitpur, in order to limit the exercise of democratic rights enshrined by the international human rights laws and standards. The government harshly restrained the peaceful demonstrations outside the ring road initially and upon failure to control the masses, it further extended the prohibitory order on gatherings to two hundred meters away from the ring road in Kathmandu and Lalitpur.

Hundreds of thousands of people spontaneously defied government curfews, shoot-to-kill orders, police batons and tear gas to take to the streets demanding an end to the feudal monarchy. Despite the hard efforts of the government, the movement continued to grow, spread and involve every section of the Nepali society. Workers, students, intellectuals, journalists, doctors, lawyers, professionals, politicians, trade unions, development workers of national and international agencies, travel agencies, business organizations related to trekking and tours, teachers, users groups, Dalits, children, women, the disabled and the aged were joined by civil servants and even employees at the dreaded Home Ministry participated in the protests.

Nepal faced extraordinary human casualties during the 19 days of peaceful demonstrations across the country. In response to the peaceful protests, the police rained bullets, baton-charge and teargas shells at the demonstrators throughout the country including Kathmandu. As a result of using excessive and unwarranted force, 25 persons were killed during the movement and more than five thousand were injured and jailed by the police; the majority being women and children. And, some are still missing.

Finally, the movement got success on 24 April 2006, paving the way to further resolve the socio-economic and political problems in Nepal. The new government formed from among the SPA members initiated dialogue with the Maoists to establish sustainable peace in the country. Some remarkable

Nepal faced extraordinary human casualties during the 19 days of peaceful demonstrations across the country

RRN Human Rights defenders





 **Monitoring team discussing with the villagers in Bajura**

declarations were also passed to satisfy the immediate demands of the people. The new initiatives of the government at the central level, however, even if implemented unhindered, are still inadequate to fulfil the expectations of the people that have been excluded and ignored for centuries by mainstream development and who are also severely affected by the decade-long armed conflict.

3. RRN's engagement in defence of human rights

RRN has been active at national and international levels in defending human rights of people. RRN maintained partnership, communications and networking with several human rights organizations including the offices of the UN and the EU for the protection and promotion of human rights in the country, crippled by the conflict as well as the royal takeover. Besides, RRN also joined hands in numerous monitoring and observation of human rights violations during the mass demonstrations and rallies which dominated the year, taken out in the name of democracy, peace and human rights in the country.

3.1 National level

i. Human rights monitoring: Realizing the humanitarian crisis, during the Jana Andolan II, RRN had heavily involved in participatory monitoring and rescue operations from the very beginning of the pro-democracy movement. RRN mobilized its fellow human rights defenders based at the central office in Kathmandu – Dr. Arjun Karki, Dr. Rishi Adhikari, Mr. Ram Prasad Gautam, Mr. Dhan Bahadur Air, Ms. Laxmi Karki, Ms. Prerna Bomzan, Mr. Arpan Gurung, Ms. Rachana Rasaily, Ms. Karen Bernstein and Mr. Tanka Upreti - in possible confrontation zones and formed a central mobile team using the office vehicle to monitor and also rescue victims from the

brutality of the security forces in Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur. Similarly, human rights violations were monitored/ observed by RRN human rights defenders in the major cities of Nepal; Biratnagar, Nepalgunj, Mahendranagar and the like. Moreover, RRN had identified the need to step up efforts to protect the people from human rights violations at a time when the very elemental of all rights, the right to life itself was seriously threatened.

ii. Pro-democracy Activities: RRN was involved actively in pro-democracy activities which included sit-in-protests, processions, demonstrations and rallies. In addition, RRN raised the issues of peace, democracy, social transformation and development

in the public arena through various forums and publications. “Financial mismatch during the king’s direct Rule”, “Country’s Situation and Future Strategies”, “Economic, Social and Cultural Reconstruction in Post Conflict Context” are the some of the issues presented by RRN staff including Dr. Rishi Adhikari and Ram Prasad Gautam during the period. RRN also organised a panel discussion on ‘Peace, Democratisation and Reconstruction for Sustainable Development and Inclusive Nepal’, in Kathmandu, to contribute towards the nation building endeavours.

3.2 International level

RRN’s significant engagement in the area of human rights was the strong lobbying and advocacy with the international community. The President of RRN, Dr. Arjun Karki, in his campaign for the restoration of democracy, human rights and peace in Nepal, participated in a high-level panel discussion in Brussels to discuss the political and human rights situation in Nepal; and also potential policy avenues towards a peaceful and democratic solution. He addressed representatives from the European NGOs, EU Member States, European Commission, European Parliament, academics, Nepalese diaspora as well as journalists from across Europe. The highly successful panel discussion on the ‘Nepal Crisis’ concluded with a presentation of two new reports by Dr Arjun Karki to Mr. Michael Matthiessen, Personal Representative of the Secretary General Javier Solana/ High Representative for Human Rights. A series of demonstrations were held across Europe against the autocratic king’s rule. Mr. James Moran, Acting Director for Asia from the European Commission visited the demonstration and received a statement of solidarity and petition from Dr. Karki. In addition to the events in Brussels, a series of meetings with politicians, policy-makers, CSOs, the Nepalese diaspora and solidarity groups was

Human rights monitoring: Realizing the humanitarian crisis, during the Jana Andolan II, RRN had heavily involved in participatory monitoring and rescue operations from the very beginning of the pro-democracy movement

organised to carry out lobbying and advocacy on the Nepal Crisis; specifically pushing for Including travel bans and asset freezes on the royal family, senior officials and military officers; review the army's lucrative involvement in UN peacekeeping missions and review all development assistance channelled through the government.'smart sanctions', in different European cities, which included Paris, Antwerp, London, Copenhagen, Helsinki, Geneva, Bern and Dublin. The visit of Dr Karki to these countries attracted media attention as well.

RRN's Development Interventions to protect promote and realise the human rights of marginalised communities

RRN has been implementing various development programmes to contribute to promote, protect and realise the human rights of rural people. These programmes, which have directly benefited countless men, women and children in the rural communities, are the Rural Community Infrastructure and Livelihood Support, Sustainable Elimination of Bonded Labour, Sustainable Rural Livelihood, Food Security and Livelihoods.

Promotion for Poor, Social Mobilization under Community Ground Water Irrigation Sector, Rural Water Supply and Sanitation, Mobilisation and promotion of self-help organisations (Rural Programme Nepal), Brighter Future of Nepalese Children, Sustainable Resource Use and Management, Life and Livelihood for Helpless and Vulnerable Children, Relief and Rehabilitation Support for the Disaster Affected Communities in Nepal etc. are the other development endeavours to support the local community.

RRN has explicitly adopted the rights based, pro-poor approach to its development programmes. This means changing systems, actions and priorities to respect and empower people with their rights. Respect for human rights –economic, social and cultural rights (ESCR) and the right to development – is integrated into all levels of programme policy and planning at RRN. Rights based perception for change offers its value addition to development interventions in Nepal, and recommends some alternative ways of thinking and acting that can be applicable in future activities of RRN in the community.

Way forward

There is an utmost need to address the socio-economic and livelihoods issues of the grassroots people through their active participation at all levels

of decision making and in the peace building process in order to ensure their share of the peace dividend. The peace process can be made sustainable if the human rights issues of the grassroots people are properly discoursed and addressed. Unless, concrete activities pertaining to the economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights are designed and implemented to ensure and respect the social security of the grassroots people, especially the vulnerable groups, the nation will not rest in peace. Therefore, there is a need to improve the political, economic and social conditions through restructuring the state and conducting the elections of the Constituent Assembly; which ultimately would contribute in ending violence, restoring peace and thus, sustainable development in the country. Although the path to democracy and lasting peace is complex, it can only be streamlined when the people's basic needs are fulfilled. Most of these basic needs fall within the gamut of the economic, social and cultural rights or ESC Rights. In addition, proper observance of the "Peace Accord" recently signed between the government and the Maoists; social and physical reconstruction of the rural infrastructures; translation of government declarations into actions and enhancing the capacity of grassroots people to exercise them; is equally important to enjoy the much awaited change by the grassroots people. In this context, the ongoing peace process is likely to create the conducive environment required to address the people's needs. We, therefore, warmly welcome the Peace Accord as a landmark bid to restore peace and development in the country, nevertheless, hoping for its true implementation RRN is devoted to establishing and ensuring social justice, democratic governance and unhindered exercise of ICESCR, ICCPR along with the Right to Development, in the country. With this determination, RRN is actively involved in defending and promoting the human rights of people in the days to come. ✍

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Dr. Arjun Karki, in the centre, participated in a high level panel discussion in Brussels Belgium on 1st February 2006



Public auditing: A quest for transparency

Binesh Roy, D.E. Dang

Public auditing is an effective and popular concept utilised by I/NGOs to maintain transparency among all community members and stakeholders within the project cycle. In this system, transparency is achieved through a type of 'public monitoring; the financial records of the programme are publicised and financial information provided to the community

The public auditing system generally becomes a part of regular monitoring and encourages the community to maintain transparency and make the UGCs more responsible and accountable.

Quality outputs are the result of the successful implementation of a programme. Although some mechanisms are already in place to monitor the production of quality outputs, the establishment of a fully transparent system is difficult. One of the most alarming problems is that of financial transparency. It is for reason that RRN established a system of Public Auditing (PA) that has proved to be a very significant initiative in regards to community work.

PA is an effective and popular concept utilised by I/NGOs to maintain transparency among all community members and stakeholders within the project cycle. In this system, transparency is achieved through a type of 'public monitoring; the financial records of the programme are publicised and financial information provided to the community (i.e. stakeholders, observers). Whenever RRN staff members visit programmatic construction sites, they provide information to key personnel on the budget, quantity of materials and any cash contributions. This process is especially effective when working with illiterate community members, as the later are mindful of the help they have received from the organisation. This also helps to make User Group Committee (UGC) members responsible and more accountable when using public money. The practice of public auditing not only helps to establish a system of transparency in the rural areas, but also to establish a system of conflict resolution that adheres to democratic principles and encourages people to respect development workers.

The public auditing system works in several stages. Firstly, the project activities, budget, quantity of materials, cash contributions and unpaid labour contributions during the agreement are disclosed to all the beneficiaries. To begin with, whenever

materials are bought, information on the rate they received, the quantity of the materials purchased and any cash contributions is released. The next public auditing is done after the cash has been disbursed in instalments. Here, the quantity of the material purchased, the rate and labour payments provided are cross checked to make sure that the prices do not exceed market value. Some respondents from the communities are asked whether they know the programme's spent expenditure of cash and materials. The inquiry ensures the accurate and reasonable rate of purchased materials from the local market.

Accordingly, the final public audit is done when the project has been completed. The entire public audit encompasses the presence of stakeholders, neighbouring communities, RRN staff and all the beneficiaries. Generally, the bills of purchased goods are checked that the amount spent meets the expenditure, and that all the community members are aware of the going rate. Only after the beneficiaries, stakeholders and others agree that everything is in order does the committee declare that the process was successful.

As a result of the use of the PA system, RRN and its staff are very well regarded by the communities, stakeholders and observers inside and outside the district with which they work. The public auditing system generally becomes a part of regular monitoring and encourages the community to maintain transparency and make the UGCs more responsible and accountable. Often, the community adopts this kind of auditing practices in their own community financial affairs, and dishonest practices and finger pointing decreases in relation to activities within public works. ✍

Public Policy Analysis

Dr. Rishi Adhikari, Director, RRN

National and international initiatives in identifying key determinants of health and the realisation of those initiatives have proven insufficient at the current time in Nepal. National governments and international agencies frequently talk aloud about equity in access to health. However, their actions adversely have not addressed the fundamental determinants of health like poverty, health rights, empowerment, the responsibility of the state in this sector and so on. Their good intentions and energy have been spent on limited focus areas and priority approaches and programmes have been neglected.

For this reason, civil society has made enormous efforts at the national, regional, and global levels to draw the attention of policy makers to these issues. The People's Health Assembly (PHA) in 2000 is one example of such an initiative taken by civil society in this regard.

The PHA was the culmination of a collective effort to open up opportunities, as well as draw in communities and civil society organisations, towards the realisation of just and equitable health for all. Additionally, civil society initiated the People's Health Movement (PHM) at the global level. Both the PHA and the People's Health successfully made an impact by identifying new and effective global strategies in 2004, the World Health Assembly was called to act upon the social causes of ill health and unequal access to health care services and facilities. In 2005, the World Health Organisation (WHO) constituted the Commission on the Social Determinants of Health of which the People's Health Movement became a founding member. Currently, in the follow-up to this initiative, national level consultations are being organised in different parts of Asia to further discuss the social determinants of health.

Poverty factors such as stagnant economy, lack of education, health services, infrastructure, socio-politic inequality and so on have a direct link to ill health. As a result of policies that push for the privatisation of basic services, such as those of international financial institutions and the WTO, poverty has deepened, and discrimination and exclusion increased in poor countries like Nepal. Social progress has been the victim of these privatisation policies, and hence, agricultural productivity and exports have also fallen.

In conclusion, access to affordable health care is a key priority for developing countries and policy priority must be given to ensuring the availability of drugs to doctors, hospitals, and individuals at lower and competitive prices. The realisation of health as

a basic condition essential for the establishment of quality of life is the right of all people. As such, the associated key issues and elements related to providing quality health care for all must be addressed.

Public policies

The health sector is drastically affected by the public policies of the WTO, TRIPS and national governments. The following is an analysis of their policies and the associated effects on the health sector:

WTO

The World Trade Organisation (WTO) is the main international body that deliberates on the rules that govern international trade. The WTO believes it promotes 'free trade' by getting rid of the regulations that restrict big business or the free flow of goods.

Nevertheless, free trade does not automatically lead to poverty eradication or environmental sustainability. In fact, it can increase the rate of poverty and be harmful to countries at different stages of development. Unfair agreements negotiated between rich and poor countries benefit the former and often the danger exists that poor countries will be forced to make concessions that are not good for their economies. Rich countries attach conditions to aid, loans and debt cancellation that require poor countries to adopt certain trade policies. Often these conditions force countries to make commitments that go far beyond what they have negotiated at the table.

The WTO designs rules that benefit industrialised nations by providing them with stronger economic and trading systems. Nepal, who became a member of WTO in 2004, is unlikely to benefit from these rules as it is an unindustrialised, redeveloped, and subsistence - economy country characterised by poor infrastructure, huge supply side constraints, and a lack of competitive markets. Thus, the Nepali

Poverty factors such as stagnant economy, lack of education, health services, infrastructure, socio-politic inequality and so on have a direct link to ill health.

health care system is at risk of WTO's pressure to privatise when it is really not in the country's interest to do so. In fact, the WTO's trade liberalisation instruments are bound to adversely affect public health in Nepal as a result of the following characteristics of its policies:

- They are based on existing level of development; the availability and access to health facilities; the country's pharmaceutical production capacity; and availability of human resources, and research and development capacity – all of which Nepal lacks;
- Rapid expansion of private health sector, which is beyond Nepal's capacity;
- Globalisation and privatisation are hallmarks, both of which have negative consequences on the poorest sectors of society;
- Emphasis of a pro-market economy;
- De-centralisation;
- Exclusive non-participatory methodologies utilised; and
- Non-targeting approaches used, so that social inclusion factors are neglected.

Private providers are not responsible and accountable to people and communities, and their policies reflect this reality;

Privatisation

The privatisation of basic services such as the neo-liberal agendas promoted and imposed by International Financial Institutes and WTO is also counter-productive for the following reasons:

- Basic services shift from government control to private providers (i.e. big national and international corporations), thus creating erosion of national sovereignty and human rights, and affecting the quality of lives of people. Private providers are not responsible and accountable to people and communities, and their policies reflect this reality;
- Takes away the access of poor women, men and children to health care services;
- Leads to deepening poverty, increased discrimination and increased exclusion of women and marginalised communities;
- Social progress decreases as a result of the adoption of privatisation policies;
- Fails to redistribute gains of economic growth in accordance to regional, caste, class, and gender factors;

- Attracts resources away from rural areas where about 90% of the people in Nepal live;
- Causes the fall of agricultural productivity and exports;
- Takes away alternative employment opportunities, particularly in the rural areas;
- Increases poverty and inequality in both the political and economic dimensions;
- Helps perpetuate debt servicing, which itself decreases foreign exchange values;
- Weakens the economy that is already on the verge of collapse;
- Helps to perpetuate the conflict as unequal growth patterns push disadvantaged young people from rural areas to engage in the conflict;
- Allows the government to spend more on the defence budget at the cost of social investments. Already, over the past decade, this has become increasingly the norm; from 1997/98 to 2002/03, the social sector budget dropped from 18.40 % to 14.98 % of budget. Lastly;
- It is an abdication of government responsibility to provide health care to all;

TRIPS

Finally, TRIPS (trade-related aspects of intellectual property rights) are also adverse to providing access to health care for the poorer sectors of Nepali society for the following reasons:

- The price of patented drugs and amount of patent royalties will increase with the strengthening and prolongation of patent holders' (along with the multinational corporations) monopoly over finished or semi-finished export products (rather than transferring technology in which individual countries could produce their own);
- The relationship between intellectual property polices and access to medicine is controversial. There is bound to be many obstacles in terms of access to medicine:
- inadequate public health infrastructure, insufficient funding, cumbersome regulatory procedures and high prices of medicine;
- The cost of medicine will be high due to powerful, patent monopolies of pharmaceutical companies in the health sector;

- Pharmaceutical companies are unlikely to invest in the research and development (R&D) of the drugs used to treat the diseases of the poor as is evident from their failure to do enough to assist the millions of people dying from HIV/AIDS in accessing anti-retroviral drugs; and
- Undue pressure is put on developing countries governments to prevent the local manufacturing or import of cheaper generic version of drugs produced in countries where patents are not available or respected.
- Underlying socio-economic inequalities contributing to health status variation; and
- Lack of political will and commitment to social development rather than economic development.

Thus, opposing TRIPS in regards to their effect on the health sector is important. Developing world countries, such as Nepal, have contradictory goals to that of TRIPS including:

- Promoting early competition from generic medicines in order to foster competition, stimulate price reductions and expand access to drugs; and
- Helping to ensure that drugs are available to doctors, hospitals and individual at lower and more competitive prices.

Poverty factors

The following poverty factors have a direct link to ill health, particularly that of the poor and marginalised communities:

- Stagnant economy, unemployment;
- Unsafe and unfulfilling employment;
- Declining social status;
- Relative deprivation and poor health;
- Lack of essential health care;
- Inadequate health services judged to be unjust and unfair;
- Uneven distribution of health hazards;
- Lack of educational health care and welfare;
- Lack of physical and social environment;
- Weak biological factors;
- Poorer working condition;
- Inadequate clean water and sanitation;
- Inadequate and safe housing;
- Unsafe and less nutritious food supply;

Additionally, it has also been found that the different socio-economic groups in societies with less inequality in income, less variation in housing standards, and better working conditions do not display a wide disparity in health status like those in societies that do exhibit these characteristics.

Public Private Partnership (PPP)

PPPs are particularly useful for implementing large-scale projects, primarily based on contractual relations between public and private entities, and mostly through design–build–finance and operate/maintain (DBFO or DBFM) type contracts. Social projects (i.e. health, education) have not been successful so far in relation to PPPs. The biggest danger of health-related PPP projects is overtly benefiting the private sector while wasting public funds and community contributions.

Way Forward

It is recommended that the following be done in order to provide all with access to affordable health care:

- Realise that health is a basic requirement for the establishment of quality of life and the human right of all;
- Ensure that multilateral trade Agreements are consistent with international human right commitments and treaty obligations;
- Restore and uphold rights of the communities to control and have access to basic services;
- Ensure that all have the right to health through equitable health policy, health promotion and education, and access to health care and health care services;
- Stop the corporatisation of basic services including health care services;
- Stop the privatisation and liberalisation of services; de-regulation; trade liberalisation; and the utilisation of aid instruments, trade and debt to create disparity;
- Totally cancel the debt incurred by the least developed countries;

The relationship between intellectual property polices and access to medicine is controversial. There is bound to be many obstacles in terms of access to medicine:

In the rural areas, food, shelter and clothing are areas that prioritised, while health care and education are secondary.

- Utilise foreign aid in social services and rural infrastructure;
- Provide untied grant aid for basic services;
- Address the root causes of poverty and inequality;
- Develop and implement strategies for production and distribution of products and services;
- Improve transport routes connecting the urban and rural areas in order to increase income and employment, especially in the latter; and
- Enhance the interaction between trade and health policy makers and practitioners and their greater awareness of the aforementioned related issues;

It can also be concluded in relation to these recommendations that:

- Persistent and or increasing unemployment increases poverty and poor health; and
- Military aid does not address the root causes of poverty. Reciprocate ceasefire and a conducive environment for peace dialogue need to be created.

In summary, the main highlights of the presentation were:

- WTO controls international trade governance;
- The underdeveloped and developing countries should lobby for trade justice rather than free trade; and
- We should stop being totally dependent on other nations and try to uplift the nation's health status through local resource mobilisation.

The discussion that followed the presentation touched on the following:

- Without empowerment, 'Health for All' goals cannot be achieved. Civil society should contribute to this;
- Women health issues should also be addressed; and
- In the rural areas, food, shelter and clothing are areas that prioritised, while health care and education are secondary. Hence, health care and education should be promoted as primary needs.

(This article is a recap of the presentation given by Dr. Rishi Adhikari in the National Workshop on the "Socio Political Determinants of Health: The Role of Civil Society" on December 29, 2005, Kathmandu) ✍



Rural Development: Concept and Connotation

Rajendra Adhikari, RRN, Surkhet

Development basically means 'unfolding', 'revealing', or 'opening up' something, which is latent. In relation to human beings, it therefore implies the 'unfolding' or 'opening up' of their potential power. Generally speaking, the term 'development' implies a change that is desirable. Since what is desirable at a particular time and place and in a particular culture may not be desirable in other places and times even in the same cultural milieu, it is impossible to think of a universally acceptable definition of development. At best, development in the context of society and culture could be conceptualised as a set of desirable societal objectives which the society seeks to achieve. Thus, development is cherished by all individuals, communities and nations irrespective of their society and culture, religion and spatial location.

The term 'rural development' connotes the development of rural areas with the goal of improving the quality of life of rural people. In this sense, it is a comprehensive and multidimensional concept, and it encompasses the development of agriculture and allied activities, village and cottage industries, socio-economic, infrastructure, community services and facilities, and above all, the human resource in rural areas.

According to Robert Chambers: as a phenomenon, rural development is the end-result of interactions between various physical, technological, economic, socio-cultural and institutional factors. As a strategy,

it is designed to improve the economic and social well being of specific group of people-the rural poor. As a discipline, it is multidisciplinary in nature, representing an interaction of agricultural, social, behavioural, engineering and management sciences" (Chambers, 1983, p147)

Rural development is a strategy to enable a specific group of people, poor rural women and men, to gain for themselves and their children more of what they want and need. It involves helping the poorest in the rural areas- including small-scale farmers, tenants and the landless - to demand and control more of the benefits of the rural development. In a nutshell, rural

development is process which leads to sustainable improvement in the quality of life of poor people, especially the rural poor.

Basic elements of rural development

There are at least three basic elements, which are considered to constitute the 'true' meaning of rural development. These three elements are sine qua non in terms of rural development; They are

i) Basic necessities of life

People have certain basic needs, without which it would be very difficult to survive. The basic necessities include food, clothes, basic literacy,

Rural development is a strategy to enable a specific group of people, poor rural women and men, to gain for themselves and their children more of what they want and need. It involves helping the poorest in the rural areas- including small-scale farmers, tenants and the landless - to demand and control more of the benefits of the rural development. In a nutshell, rural development is process which leads to sustainable improvement in the quality of life of poor people, especially the rural poor.

primary health care, and security of life. When anyone or all of them are absent or in critically short supply, we may state that a condition of 'absolute underdevelopment' exists.

ii) Self respect

Every person and every nation seeks some sort of self-respect, dignity, or honour. The absence of self-respect indicates a lack of development.

iii) Freedom

Freedom refers to political or ideological freedom, economic freedom and freedom from social servitude. Servitude reflects a state of underdevelopment. ✍

Potable Water Solution: A success case study

Bal Krishna Chaudhari

RRN Regional Coordinator, West Nepal



People of Uttarkurahariya gathered at project handover ceremony

While the question had been put in front of busy women at shallow well of what's the taste of safe and potable water from new shallow tube well? The sound of happiness while pulling up pail full of water from the well and happiness on the face of women washing clothes around the circular well reflected.

This is the general problem during April to June where most of the wells get dry as level of ground water decrease in Dang. Most people of Dang who are depended on such shallow well they have to face this type of problems every year and forced to get water from nearby river for use. Some of the villagers have to walk for more than an hour to fetch a pot of water.

The community of Utter Kurariya village at Manpur-6 initiated to construct new shallow well and started working day and night. They dug around fifteen meter deep and four meter circular well to find fresh water spring at the bottom. All the women and men worked equally to dig ground as they need fresh water. The community contribution was very encouraging as they contribute unpaid labor around two thousand six hundred man days. RRN had provided technical and social support with some construction material and cash. The local skill masons from the same village were employed to construct RCC well until it got final.

Total of 701 people of 87 households are benefited from the drinking water shallow well. Majority of benefited people belong to Tharu community who are known as ethnic minority in Nepal while 10 people are belong Dalits community who are totally disadvantaged community in Nepal. When we see contribution patterns; total actual cost of project was NRs. 217,397.00, RRN/DFID contributed NRs. 80,657.00 of the total cost while community contributed NRs. 136,740.00 of that cost.

Watching bright face of women and children it was evident of water solution at this village. Ms. Geeta Chaudhari said "The water problems was with women only, we have to go long way to fetch a pot of water. Our children were not able to take bath in every week in summer season but now we have worked hard and contribute number of days to construct this well." She again added with smiling "I hope this well will long last for new ancestor."

When the question was posed, "what do you do with new well?" fingers snapped and eyes lit up. "I

like bathing—before we didn't have enough water to take bath," said Shyam Chaudhari a ten years old student.

As Ms. Sarita Chaudhari one of the beneficiaries said, "We the women were engaged to fetch water from nearby river while men just use water, so it was totally burden for women. But now we are very much happy because we constructed the well in our village, our work of burden is going to be reduced relatively, and so we can utilize this saved time on other productive work for our family."

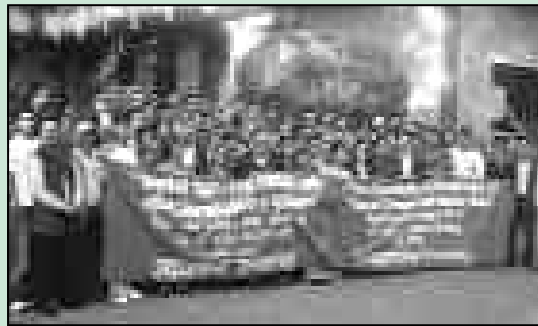
At Utter Kurariya their sense of pride and ownership is evident as they look after their new shallow well they are already planning how they can repair and maintain the well even more. They are also encouraged to implement projects on their children's education, skill and livelihood supports programs at their village. They hope that RRN/DFID funding will continue in rural areas and expand to provide access to potable water in all target group of all VDC of District. ✍

RRN ACTIVITIES

RRN observed its 13th Annual General Meeting

Rural Reconstruction Nepal (RRN) has observed its 13th Annual General Meeting (AGM) and Annual Planning Meeting (APM) in Kathmandu on 27-28 October 2006. On the auspicious occasion, RRN has organised a Panel discussion Programme entitled "Peace, Democratisation, and Reconstruction for Sustainable Development and Inclusive Nepal" for contributing towards the nation building endeavours. Renowned guest speakers from different political parties and activists were invited to put their views on the programme theme and the current socio-economic and political development in Nepal.

The invited guest speakers were: Ms Durga Sob, Senior women /Dalits activist; Advocate, Sapana Malla, Senior women/ human rights activist; Mr. Bam Dev Gautam, Senior leader of CPN-UML and Ex- Deputy Prime Minister; Mr. Dev Gurung, Senior leader of CPN –Maoists; Dr. Narayan Khadka, Senior leader of Nepali Congress Democratic and Ex Vice-Chairperson of National Planning (NPC); Dr. Mathura Prasad Shrestha, Senior human rights defender; and Dr Jagadish Chandra Pokharel, the Vice-chairman of National Planning Commission (NPC).



AGM Participants



Panel discussion during the Annual General Meeting

Poem

Don't Beat Emotionally

Rishi Adhikari

Yes, my lord, my husband,
You have not beaten me,
You have not kicked me
Yes, my lord, I am lucky!
I am proud, I am boastful.

But, my lord, my husband,
I have been beaten,
I have been kicked,
Not by your fists,
Not by your feet,

But by your frowning eyes,
Yes my lord!
I have been beaten,
By your words,
By your banging of the door,
By your rejection of the food I offer,
By your outright rejection of my suggestions,
By your coming late,
Soaked with alcohol,

If you please, my lord,
Beat me or kick me physically,
For I may forget and forgive you,

But don't beat me emotionally,
My lord, don't beat my feelings,
I cannot forget and forgive you

RRN's Ongoing Programmes and Projects in 2006

S.No.	Title	Programmes/Projects Purpose
1	Rural Community Infrastructure and Livelihood Support	16 districts covering Eastern, Mid- Western and Far Western Development Regions of the country.
2	Sustainable Elimination of Bonded Labourer	Mainly targeted at the children, who are still de facto in debt bondage or at risk of falling back into bondage, and those who had worked as bonded labourers and are staying at home for having nothing to do, of ex-Kamaiya families to support them for education and integrate into society through implementation of sustainable livelihoods opportunities
3	Sustainable Rural Livelihood	Being implemented in four village development committees and one municipality of Sankhuwa Sabha district.
4	Food Security and Livelihoods Promotion for the Poor	Being implemented in two Village Development Committees (VDCs), namely Chainpur and Birendranagar of Chitwan.
5	Social Mobilisation under Community Ground Water Irrigation Sector Project	The Community Ground Water Irrigation Sector Project (CGISP) is solely focused on women farmers and aimed at tackling the problem through the installation of shallow tube wells (STWs) through water users' groups (WUGs), and their associations, and individual users.
6	Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Programme	The project covered Ward No. 7 and 13 of the Khandbari municipality, and Ward No. 7 of Kharang VDC of Sankhuwa Sabha district, which suffered from the serious problems clean and safe drinking water. Much of the project areas, though lie within the Khandabari Municipality,, are in fact having more of the rural characteristics.
7	Rural Programme Nepal	The Rural Programme Nepal is currently in implementation in 15 northern VDCs of Bhojpur district. The project, initially commenced in the year 2000, is to continue until 2007. The main goal of the project is to improve the socio-economic status and quality of life of the poor and marginal people of the project VDCs.
8	Brighter Future Programme	RRN has been implementing the Brighter Future Programme focusing on the education of children aged 10-14, who are at risk of hazardous forms of child labour in Morgan district. This programme has targeted those children who never had an opportunity to go through the formal school system or were forced to drop out due to household responsibilities or other social, economic and cultural constraints. The project has targeted a total of 500 children -290 girls and 210 boys, in this year.
9	Arun Valley Sustainable Resource Use and Management	RRN has implemented Arun Valley Sustainable Resource Use and Management (AVASRUM) project in the Upper Arun valley
10	Life and Livelihood for Helpless and Vulnerable Children	Supporting the conflict affected children for formal education and social Psychological rehabilitation, and the youth and widows for employment opportunities through vocational training.
11	Integrated Pest Management through Farmers Field Schools Programme	RRN has implemented the Farmers Field School (FFS) project for the promotion and implementation of the Integrated Pest Management (IPM) concept in Banke, Bardiya, Kailali, Kanchanpur, Jhapa, Morang and Sunsari districts
12	Preparedness and Relief for the Disaster Affected Communities in Nepal	The project 'Preparedness and Relief for the Disaster Affected Communities in Nepal' was jointly implemented by Rural Reconstruction Nepal and Caritas Austria in ten disaster affected and/or disaster prone districts of the country. The project focused mainly on the preventive actions against the water induced disasters, such as floods and landslides.

Advisors: Dr. Arjun Karki, Dr. Rishi Adhikari, Mr. Sarba Raj Khadka
Editorial Team: Ram Prasad Gautam, Karen, Bernstein, Purna Bomzan. Design: Ms. Sushila Thapa

For more information:

Rural Reconstruction Nepal (RRN)
 GPO Box: 8130, Lazimpat, Kathmandu, Nepal
 Tel: 977-1- 4415418, Fax: 977-1- 4418296, Email: rrn@rrn.org.np, Website: www.rrn.org.np