

# ARCHIVING AT THE LALITPUR DISTRICT COURT



Photo: Lalitpur District Courthouse, Lalitpur, Kathmandu, Nepal 2005

By: ARD/ Strengthened Rule of Law and Respect for Human Rights in Nepal  
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The ARD Rule of Law project arranged for a consultant in court management and administration to come Nepal. One of the consultant's activities was to work with the courts and develop a plan for organizing Nepali court archives.

Standardized archiving in Nepali courts would facilitate case management and record keeping with the following benefits

- Optimal use of court space
- Improved ability to track cases
- Faster and easier retrieval of archived cases

The consultant reviewed Nepali law for the requirements for record retention and prepared a brief outline of procedures to be used by staff in organizing archives.

The consultant also worked with the courts and designed a file storage box which would replace the burlap bags used to store archived files.

## **LALITPUR DISTRICT COURT ARCHIVES**

The Lalitpur District Court has approximately 50,000 case files in its archives. The archive room is overwhelmed with documents. Case files are held together with string and shelved on metal shelves. Multiple case files are filed in cotton sacks which are usually left on the floor. All files are kept indefinitely on-site. The archive does not have a fire extinguisher, smoke detectors or staff procedures in the event of a fire.



Some of the archived files are more than 100 years old. Many of the files are in very bad shape with missing or damaged file documents, faded ink or indelible writing.



Locating and sometimes simply retrieving an archive file can be a problem.

File retrieval is sometimes a source of corruption with the court staff unable to find a particular file until they are encouraged to do so by a small contribution.



In summary, the Lalitpur Court archives could be fairly described as controlled chaos and inefficient.

## ORGANIZING LALITPUR COURT'S ARCHIVES

ARD worked with court officials and staff and developed a plan for organizing the archive files. The plan consisted of

- On-the-job training in archiving and document retrieval
- Cleaning and screening of documents according to a maturity schedule
- Preparing brief notes of case files more than 12 years old
- Destroying files and documents which meet the retention guidelines
- Boxing and shelving case files required to be retained
- Developing a computerized file retrieval system



ARD provided financial support for the project including the purchase of file storage boxes and shelving.

Due to the large number of files and staff workload, the staff worked on weekdays, holidays and before and after court hours to complete the training and the clearing and organizing of the archive files.

## RESULTS

- 33% of the archived files were destroyed as allowed by retention requirements
- 28,000 case files repaired, boxed and shelved
- 2,000 files of supporting documents were returned to the government agencies from which they had been borrowed
- 801 man days were use to organize the files



After the ARD/USAID supported activities to clean and organize the Lalitpur District Court's archives,

- The room is organized.
- Files are boxed and stored on metal shelves.
- There is space for additional files.
- The atmosphere reflects professionalism.



The automated file retrieval system has been installed at the Court and the staff is entering the data showing location, etc.

