

# USAID/OTI Nepal Field Report

October 2006

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## Program Description

This quarter USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) inaugurated a program to help advance Nepal's transition to peace and democracy. The objectives of the USAID/OTI program in Nepal are to:

- Increase access to information and diversify public debate on issues critical to the peace process and democratic norms; and,
- Increase engagement among government, civil society, and communities to support government responsiveness to its diverse constituents.

USAID/OTI is commencing its program at the request of, and in close coordination, with the Embassy and the USAID Mission to Nepal.

The implementing partner for USAID/OTI in Nepal is Chemonics International, Inc. The program will consist of a series of small grant and short-term technical assistance activities in furtherance of Nepal's transition process.

## Country Situation

The month of October saw plenty of optimism in the Nepali political spectrum and peace process. The government of the Seven Party Alliance - SPA and the Maoists - CPN(M) entered into the much awaited summit level peace talks.

- On October 8th, the 1st round of peace talks were held with an initial agreement to form interim government by December 2006 and conclude constituent assembly elections by mid June 2007.
- On October 10, the 2nd round of peace talks was held with the conclusion to appoint Election Commissioners for Constituent Assembly elections.
- On October 12, the 3rd round of talks were held with no conclusion. Civil society groups, political activists from various parties went on a sit in protest in front of Prime Minister's residence- the venue for talks.
- The forth round of talks could not commence according to the schedule on 15th of October. After less than a 10 minutes argument and counter argument on arms management and the status of the King between the Prime Minister and the Maoist Leader Prachanda, it was declared that the talks were stalled for an indefinite period.

To put pressure on the government, Maoist cadres created minor disturbances in the Kathmandu. On October 20th, Maoists took out an armed march just outside the ring-road in Lalitpur district citing a rumor that their 'Chairman's life was on threat'. On the evening of October 24th, policemen and Maoists had engaged in minor scuffle in Koteshwore after the Maoists "arrested" an Armed Police Force (APF) personnel. On October 25th, Maoists imposed two hours of traffic blockade from 8 to 10 am in the morning protesting 'police atrocities.' Additionally several ceasefire violations in Kathmandu occurred during the reporting period.

Increased reports of reprisals against Maoists occurred outside of Kathmandu. On October 25th, local people of Sarlahi district vandalized two barriers at Ranijung area of the district Irate by the continuous excesses of the Maoists. Other incidents of reprisals also occurred in various areas throughout Nepal indicating a growing frustration with Maoists and their inability or desire to halt extortion, demand for donations and other activities.

## PROGRAM UPDATE

### A. Narrative Summary

Due to two big festivals in October, Dashain and Tihar, government, Chemonics and the Mission were closed for almost half of the month thus delaying the implementation of program activities. However, October did see a significant increase in project activities. Activities in support of the NMCC were ongoing and all of the initial equipment needs were fulfilled and the equipment handed over. A billboard was erected in front of the NMCC with a peace slogan and the number to contact the NMCC. 35,000 NMCC booklets and 150,000 brochures are currently being distributed to the 75 districts throughout Nepal. Additional requests by the NMCC are currently in progress.

Activity development was active in light of the festivals and five activities are pending. These activities include mobile radio, live radio talks shows, national radio satellite uplink, and communications upgrades for the Peace Secretariat.

## **B. Grants Activity Summary**

### **Ceasefire Monitoring: Filling Gaps in NMCC to Inform & Engage Public - KAT005**

The first set of equipment including tents, sleeping bags, back packs, video and digital cameras, MP3 voice recorders, battery packs, alternate power sources were purchased and handed over to the NMCC. The USAID project vehicle donated to NMCC was also painted and tuned up however there still remain some additional mechanical issues requested by NMCC that will be planned for November. Additionally, a cost amendment for the purchasing of additional equipment including televisions, VCRs, laptops, satellite phones, cell phones, and a digital projector was prepared and approved by OTI.

### **Expanding Public Awareness of Nepal's Ceasefire - KAT006**

The billboard with a peace message and the contact address of NMCC has been completed. The billboard is located in Babarmahal in front of the NMCC office building. The distribution of the 35,000 booklets and 150,000 brochures to the 75 districts of Nepal has begun. The delivery of 60,000 brochures and 7,000 booklets to the NMCC was completed. There still has been no final approval for additional brochures and posters and remains at the level of the NMCC

### **Translation of NMCC Documents - KAT007**

The unofficial translation of the NMCC 2nd report summary was completed and approved by the NMCC. The translation process for the detailed monitoring reports has been requested by the NMCC and will begin in November. Additionally it is anticipated that the 3rd monitoring report of the NMCC will be released in November with a subsequent request for translation.

### **NMCC PSA and Trailer screenplays - KAT008**

This activity final commenced after the festivals and the grant agreement was finally signed with Media Alert. At the writing of this report, it is anticipated that the first draft of the screenplay will be ready in approximately 3-4 days for NMCC review.

### **Informing the Public: Peace Process Accords from the Summit Talks - KAT009**

This grant is developed with the expectation that Summit Talks between the SPA and CPN(M) would produce peace accords and/or documents related to the talks however the talks stalled towards the end of the month. It is also possible that the 3rd printing of the NMCC booklet with additional addendums will be implemented through this grant.

### **Informing the International Community: NMCC Documents in English - KAT011**

Under this activity, this activity will print 10,000 copies of the official English translation of the Peace process document published by NMCC. The documents materials have been sent to the printing house and Chemonics is currently negotiating the rate of the printing costs. However, the printing cannot begin until the NMCC signs the grant agreement.

During the month, five pending grants were elaborated and entered into the database.

### **Increasing Access to Information via Radio - TMPKAT010**

This activity will provide satellite uplink equipment to Communication Corner, a for-profit media organization and is the only legal satellite audio broadcasting organization of the country and is leverage resources with the Open Society Institute (OSI) who will subsequently provide a cash grant of approximately \$380,000 (final figures not yet available). The overall program (Chemonics and OSI) will ensure free access to the satellite transmission to 32 FM stations throughout the country, provide radio programming air time free of cost to 8 leading production houses, and ensure the broadcasting of PSAs in support of transition related subject material. A memorandum of understanding (MoU) has been developed between OTI, Chemonics, and OSI. Additionally, the 8 major production houses and the Communication Corner are in the process of developing and approving a MoU between them.

### Overall Activity Targeting

The activities carried out to date during the initial stage of the program are of an innovative nature. The work with the NMCC will be catalytic to gain political leverage in the future as it will bolster the image of the government in peace messaging as well to make increase its capacity to effectively communicate about its interventions.

A variety of activities has been targeted to support free and independent media in Nepal and will be complementary to diversify public debate on issues critical to the peace process and democratic norms.

Upcoming activities targeting civil society groups and NGOs in the pilot areas will be community based and also catalytic in nature to increase engagement between the government, civil society and communities to support government responsiveness to its diverse constituents.

Activity Approval Summary

Nepal Office	New Grants in October		Total Committed	
	Grants	Amount (\$)	Grants	Amount (\$)
Kathmandu	1	\$4,000	10	\$127,824
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>\$4,000</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>\$127,824</b>

**C. Indicators of Success**

Re-targeting/Flexibility

Based upon a stall in the Summit Talks, the team assessed programmatically areas where the program may want to give priority to pilot areas for project activities. Tentatively more research will be conducted on Morang and Kathmandu Valley as these were determined to be areas for "low hanging fruit". Research is currently ongoing.

Resource Leveraging

The Open Society Institute will co-fund a major media grant with the Nepal program for approximately \$380,000.

Policy Leveraging

Chemonics and OTI staff developed a detailed analysis of the NMCC 2nd monitoring document that was then presented to the U.S. Embassy staff.

**Next Steps/Immediate Priorities**

- Continue to research and identify organizations in pilot areas for activity programming in Kathmandu Valley and Morang. Assessment missions should be conducted during the month of November. Research will also focus on the identification of other potential areas where local peace initiatives, local SPA - CPN(M) collaboration are occurring and innovative programming is being implemented.
- To finalize any potential grant activities with INSEC.
- Antenna Foundation Nepal- live talk show. Budget line will be discussed and finalized and grant will be signed.
- Antenna Foundation Nepal-Mobile Radio. Budget line will be discussed and finalized and grant will be signed.
- Antenna Foundation Nepal- Training of Journalists on Peace process reporting. Budget line will be discussed and finalized and grant will be signed.
- Radio Humla-establishing a FM station in remote Humla district. List of required equipments be obtained and feasibility study done in coordination with Antenna Foundation.
- Finalize the concept with the Nepal Press Council to begin activities in November.

- Finalize the pending grant activity with the Peace Secretariat and begin implementation.
- Continue implementation with current grants: second round of equipment being handed over to the NMCC (KAT005), finalization of the distribution of booklets and brochures in the 75 districts (KAT006), detailed translation of the 2nd monitoring report and commence translation on the 3rd report if available (KAT007), and printing of the English translation of the NMCC booklet (KAT011).
- If possible and dependent upon NMCC, a 3rd printing of the Nepali NMCC booklet.
- Printing of any peace accord documents if they become available during the month.
- Continue to develop grants with other organizations that are identified throughout the month.
- Finalize location for the Team Building Session in December.
- Opening ceremony for the office in late November.