



शान्तिका पहलहरू PEACE INITIATIVES

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF FRIENDS FOR PEACE (FFP)



EDITORIAL

The failure of the Interim Government to hold Constituent Assembly Election by June 2007 as agreed upon in the Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA) of 22 November 2006 and the lack of consensus on a new date for the election has emerged as a serious threat to the ongoing peace process. The factors leading to this situation are too obvious for any one to miss. The protests of Janajatis, Madhesi people and Dalit groups, conspiratorial activities of the retrogressive elements and, of course, the anarchic activities of the Maoist cadres could be pointed out as obvious reasons for the emergence of this situation. The slow pace with which the interim government is moving entangling itself in trivial matters while ignoring issues of national significance is also equally responsible for the present impasse.

It cannot be denied that the unnecessary delay in taking action against the defaulters of the past royal regime, failure to initiate prompt step towards inclusion of indigenous and other marginalized people and the too many blank spaces left un-filled in the Interim Constitution, 2007 have given rise to resentment, which is apparent in the manifestation of the Terai protest. This has not only created a deep psycho-communal divide among the hill and the Madhesi populations, but has also triggered insecurity among other minority ethnic and indigenous peoples egging them on to demand space.

The tendency of different stakeholders to take recourse to unconstitutional means, like forcible closure of transport and educational institutions for days on end, preventing law from taking its course, frequent violence and anarchic activities resorted by the Maoist Young Communist League (YCL) cadres and their interference in the reestablishment of the police posts displaced during the conflict are very serious matters of concern. The Maoist leadership has finally agreed to resume the second phase of verification, which they were putting off citing bad living condition at their cantonments and the government's failure to remunerate salary to their

combatants. There are definitely reasons for them to become dissatisfied with their condition. By the same token, government's slackness in meeting their demands can also not be immune to censure. It is only expected that the foreign powers and even the United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN) have warned that the Constituent Assembly Election may not take place altogether unless all the concerned stakeholders start to behave properly.

In view of the tortuous path ahead and in the light of analyzing the peace processes elsewhere, what we are currently experiencing may be just minor hiccups. But we should not forget to bear in mind that these very hiccups may be a symptomatic warning of bigger eruptions in the future. The country has been brought on the track of peace process at the cost of more than 13,000 lives and the destruction of infrastructure worth billions of rupees. A high level of prudence and accommodation is indispensable on the part of all the stakeholders to ensure success in restoring durable peace in the country.

In this critical juncture fraught with both risks and opportunities, Friends for Peace (FFP) has, as always, been playing an important role in identifying crucial current issues and generate relevant knowledge and information to help the concerned stakeholders address a host of problems concerning the restructuring of the state. Community security and Constituent Assembly Election are two of the important areas in which FFP has been placing emphasis on at present.

This newsletter reflects the chain of events FFP has organized over a period of four months. In the days ahead, it has plans to start studies on restructuring of the state, reintegration of internally displaced persons (IDPs), democratization of the security sector, peace and reconciliation and other issues of concern significantly contributing to help accomplish the mission of building sustainable peace in the country.

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Discourse on Inclusion and Federalism

The First Phase

Friends for Peace (FFP) organized a national workshop on "Discourse on Inclusion in the Context of Federalism" on 10 March 2007. The workshop provided a forum for lively discussions on various models of federalism and possible inclusive mechanisms. More than 100 participants from different NGOs, INGOs and civil society organizations took part in the program. Presenting his paper Mr Vijay Kant Karna, FFP Executive Board Member and a political scientist belonging to Madhesi community, presented paper entitled "Madhes and Restructuring of Nepali State: Issues for Discussion". He argued that the state had deliberately subjected the people of Madhes to injustice, discrimination and exploitation for the last 238 years. Mr Karna went on to conclude that the present unrest in Terai was an eruption of a long pent-up dissatisfaction of the Madhesi people stemmed out of socio-economic injustice and disintegration, and that their patriotic sentiment should not be questioned.



Mr Balkrishna Mabuhang, FFP Executive Board Member and former Secretary General of Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN) presented another paper titled "Federal State with Ethnic Autonomy: Based on Population Distribution by Ethnicity". In his paper, he argued that the minority ethnic and indigenous peoples have been deliberately excluded and marginalized. He enunciated that the restructuring of the state would not be complete unless it was federated on the basis of ethnicity. He also produced a visual chart of demographic composition of the Nepali society to bolster his argument.

Dr Prem Sharma and Mr Ananda Aditya commented on Mr Karna's paper, while Dr Meena Acharya and Dr Bishnu Raj Upreti commented on Mr Mabuhang's paper.

The Second Phase

The second phase of the national workshop on "Discourse on Inclusion in the Context of Federalism" was organized on 28 April 2007. The workshop discussed on the relevance of federal structure for Nepal. Professor Dr Lok Raj Baral, while presenting his paper entitled "Nepal: Federalism in the Divided Society," stated that the federalism had become an agenda of national commitment, but it should be based on the principles of unity and integrity, harmony among communities and regions, economic viability and distribution of power and resources. Prof Baral further connoted that Nepal is a pluralistic society and it is not possible to restructure it along the ethnic or linguistic lines. The procedures of restructuring the state of Nepal would be best suited on the basis of "cooperative federalism", which means a grand coalition is crucial in the state mechanism, inclusive of variegated ethnic and indigenous groups.



Dr Sanjeeb Upreti presented his paper entitled "Federalism, Social Justice and Democracy" and observed federalism from the multi-dimensional perspective of multiculturalism, inclusion, and social justice. He argued that the future federal structure can not be separated from linguistic, cultural, developmental and economic issues, and it is extremely necessary to consider these issues in an interdisciplinary manner in order to form a road map for the future.

Dr Lal Rapacha and Mr Ajay Bhadra Khanal commented on Prof Baral's paper while Mr Narayan Gurung and Ms Chetana Lokshum commeted on Dr Upreti's paper.

Research on Developing Community Security Mechanism

Friends for Peace and International Alert jointly carried out a research on Community Security Mechanism from 30 October 2006 to 17 March 2007. The idea behind the research was to explore the views of the grass roots on the need and feasibility for developing security mechanism in the rural areas to cope with the security challenges in the post-conflict transition. It was a qualitative research focusing on four different districts, Morang in the East, Makawanpur in Central foot-hill, Kailali in Far-West and Jumla from Karnali Region.



The methodology of the research was to undertake intensive interview with a range of stakeholders such as the political parties, NGOs/INGOs, administrative and security agencies, professional organizations, trade unions, conflict victims, women, Dalit, ethnic, indigenous and people's organizations. The interview was followed by a district level interaction in which the findings of the research were debated and discussed for verification. The objectives of the research were as follows:

- Assessing ideas on how to regulate militia (of all hues)
- Understanding how people view their personal security
- Generating a safe dialogue space for inclusive discussion on local community security issues and mechanisms for addressing them
- Understanding how communities feel reintegration could take place in a peaceful way
- Understanding if there is a way to build inclusive, sustainable and community-owned security mechanisms
- Gaining community input on how local governance could be more inclusive and responsive to community security needs (short and long term)
- Produce a synthesized report of the findings and share with local, national and international stakeholders
- Feed the findings into national-level debate

Morang was the first district chosen for the research. Dr Natalie Hicks, Country Director of International Alert and Narad N Bharadwaj, FFP Senior Researcher were involved in carrying out the research. The research work was facilitated by the NGO Federation of Nepal, Eastern Regional Office. At the end of the research, an interaction program was organized to discuss and debate over the findings of the research. FFP Chairperson Mr Laxman Prasad Aryal chaired the interaction program.

In Jumla, the research concluded with an interaction program in partnership with Karnali Integrated Rural Development and Research Centre (KIRDARC), a development research and peace building NGO. It was participated by FFP Vice-Chairperson Dr Meena Acharya, Secretary General Mr Gauri Pradhan, Researcher Shiva Kumar Dhungana and Senior Program Officer of International Alert, Charlotte Watson. It was attended by more than one hundred people. During the interaction, a host of issues related to security and post-conflict reintegration were discussed among a wide range of stakeholders.

FFP carried out a week-long field study on Community Security Mechanism and organized an interaction in Dhangadi, Headquarters of Kailali District. The program was organized jointly by Friends for Peace and International Alert in collaboration with Far-Western Office of the NGO Federation of Nepal. The research was carried out by Narad N Bharadwaj, Senior Researcher of FFP and Rebecca Crozier from International Alert. FFP Board Member Mr Vijay Kant Karna chaired the function.

Study on Community Security Mechanism in Makawanpur was carried out by Narad N Bharadwaj and Rebecca Crozier, culminating in an interaction on 16 March 2007. The interaction program was organized in collaboration with the Central Regional Office of the NGO Federation. More than sixty people representing a range of stakeholders participated. FFP Board Member Mr Narayan Gurung presided over as Chairperson.

Research on Constituent Assembly Election and State Restructuring

FFP has commissioned Prof Krishna Khanal to undertake a research on Constituent Assembly Election, incorporating the latest development and emerging challenges in the process of Constituent Assembly Election and constitution making. The theme of the research will be "Constituent Assembly Election and Constitution Making: Processes and Mechanisms". Similarly, Mr Anand Aditya has been assigned to undertake a research under the working title "Inclusive Nepal : A Case for Restructuring of the State".

DISCUSSIONS

Immediate Implementation of Interim Constitution

FFP organized a round-table discussion on "Immediate Implementation of Interim Constitution: A Prerequisite for Constituent Assembly Election" on 7 January 2007. It was organized to help expedite the process of promulgating the interim constitution. Various constitutional experts, political party leaders, intellectuals, civil society leaders, FFP Board Members, Advisers and FFP staff participated.



Interaction of Reintegration of IDPs, Transitional Justice and Gender Issues

On 23 January, Friends for Peace organized an interaction program in Kathmandu on "Reintegration of IDPs, Transitional Justice and Gender Issues in Post-conflict Situation". In the interaction program, renowned Indian scholars Prof Dr Ranabir Samadar, Dr Paula Banerjee and Dr Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhuri from Calcutta Research Group were invited as the guest speakers. After their presentations, a lively and meaningful discussion took place among various Nepalese stakeholders on the above issues, which have now occupied the central stage in the on-going peacebuilding efforts.

Coordinating Peacebuilding Activities

FFP participated in a round-table discussion organized by International Alert on "Coordinating Peacebuilding Activities" on 31 January 2007. The interaction outlined the needs for peace building organizations to coordinate and cooperate with like-minded peacebuilding organizations. The objective of the interaction was to begin an assessment as to how both NGOs and INGOs could coordinate on peacebuilding activities in the current context of Nepal. Executive Director of FFP Mr D B Gurung, Senior Researcher of FFP, Narad N Bharadwaj and Researcher Shiva Kumar Dhungana participated in the meeting.

Similarly, FFP and International Alert organized a discussion on 1 February 2007 on exploring the "Impact of India's Economic Relationships with its neighbors on the Prospects of Lasting Peace in South Asian Region." FFP Executive Director, International Alert's Director of Asia Program, FFP staff and other scholars and academics participated in the discourse.

FFP-CMI Round-table Discussion

Friends for Peace (FFP) and Crisis Management Initiative (CMI), Finland have implemented a project to study the EU and member states' action for an inclusive peace process in Nepal. As part of the project, FFP and CMI jointly organized a round-table discussion on "Donor Support for the Inclusiveness in Peace Process in Nepal" on 17 May 2007 in Kathmandu.



Strategic Planning

Friends for Peace (FFP) and International Alert (IA) jointly organized "Annual Strategic Planning Meeting " on 4 and 5 February 2007. The members of FFP Executive Board, Advisers and staffers and representatives of IA participated in the meeting. The two-day event reviewed the activities carried out by FFP during the last year, declared to continue partnership between the two organizations and prepared a shared program vision for the year 2007.



The two-day long meeting began with sharing of expectations in which all the participants expressed their views in a democratic manner. The discussion mainly boiled down to a continued partnership between FFP and International Alert, and drew up an innovative and long-term program to address new and emerging issues.

After the expectation sharing, IA Director of Asia Programs Mr Phil Champain delivered a brief overview of IA works world-wide and emphasized as to how FFP-IA partnership had created a positive environment in conflict transformation and peacebuilding efforts in Nepal.

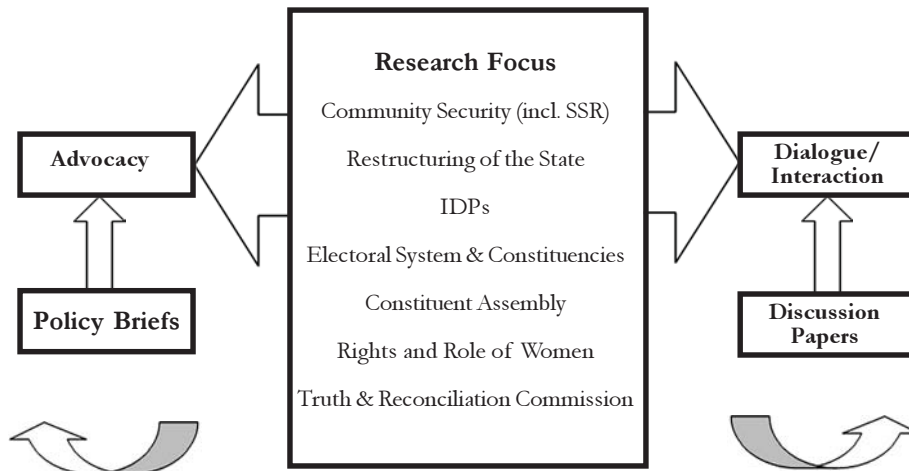
Following Mr Champain's presentation, FFP Executive Director Mr D B Gurung presented vision for FFP's future development.

On the second day, there was serious deliberation on the strategic plans for the year 2007 and following issues were agreed upon for research:

1. Research on Community Security Mechanism
2. State Restructuring on Federal Basis
3. Reintegration of IDPs
4. Electoral System and Constituencies
5. Rights and Role of Women
6. Truth and Reconciliation Commission

In addition to above deliberations, International Alert's Ms Lindsay Alexander presented an overview on Education for All (EFA) project as a potential opportunity for supporting peace. Her concept was endorsed by the meeting and a decision was made to jointly push the project to obtain endorsement from Nepal's Ministry of Education and Sports and the donor community.

Diagram of future research priorities of FFP



Friends for Peace and Action Asia have decided to organize a joint training program on a range of issues on peacebuilding beginning from 25 June through 14 December 2007. The broad theme of the training course is “Building Peace and Trust in Nepal”. The course is designed to provide training in peacebuilding and conflict transformation skills, and involves participation in four intensive training workshops (each of 5-day length). Three of the four workshops are held in Kathmandu. The third module is proposed to be held in the field, requiring visit to other peace projects.

The course “Building Peace and Trust in Nepal”, which is being offered for the first time this year, uses a variety of case studies and problem-posing scenarios from the Nepali and Asian context, and is conducted by an experienced team of Nepalese and Asian practitioners/trainers. Participants are drawn from a cross-section of civil society, government agencies, business and the media enabling a wide range of perspectives and connections.

The course examines current theories and practices as they apply to emerging issues in Nepal and the development of the participant’s individual and organizational capacity. The purpose of the course is to develop and support a ‘community of conflict transformation and peacebuilding practitioners’ with skills training and resources in order to enhance the capacity of institutions in Nepal to peacefully manage, resolve and prevent conflicts.

Ms Emma Leslie from Australia, Mr Carlitto 'Kaloy' Manlupig and Mr Lerio 'Baht' Latumbo from the Republic of the Philippines, Ms Nan Rong Zahkung from Myanmar, Mr Soth Plai Ngarm from Cambodia and Ms Yashoda Nakarmi Shrestha, Dr Ramji Prasad Neupane, Shiva K Dhungana and Tulasi Nepal from Nepal, will be the resource persons for the training.

This program is jointly supported by the CIDA/Canadian Cooperation Office (CCO) in Nepal, and the UK based organizations Responding to Conflict (RTC) and Skillshare International (SI).

PUBLICATIONS



An updated version of FFP's brochure has been published in English and Nepali languages.

Forthcoming Publications:

- Voices from the Villages : People’s Agendas for Peace
- Report on Community Security Mechanism
- Report on Federalism (A compilation of four research papers with comments)
- Report on Constituent Assembly Election and Constitution Making : Processes and Mechanisms
- Report on Inclusive Nepal : A Case for Restructuring of the State

Appointments

The Executive Board of Friends for Peace (FFP) has appointed Mr D B Gurung in the capacity of Executive Director from 15 January 2007. Mr Gurung is a prolific writer and has 6 books to his credit.

Likewise, Ms Sagun Basnet and Ms Srijana Baidya have joined FFP as Communications Officer and Librarian respectively from 15 March 2007, and Mr Ujjwal Rana, a part-timer, is promoted to a full-time IT Officer with effect from 1 April 2007.

INTERVIEW

Excerpts from the Interview with FFP'S Executive Director Mr D B Gurung

On joining FFP

I have three specific reasons that inspired me to join FFP: first, our Executive Board Members and Advisers are highly respectable individuals of national stature, and I felt it would be real heartening to work under their guidance in an orchestrated manner – to make a difference. Second, we have a marvelous team of staffers, well qualified, duty-oriented and cooperative. In my observation over the last few months at FFP, their tenacity and perseverance in their professional engagement has amply convinced me that they are excellent personnel to work with. Last but not least, it is Dr Natalie Hicks of International Alert (IA), who has impressed me by her intellect and professional integrity, and who I believe would be a wonderful working collaborator.



Vision

In my capacity as Executive Director, apart from establishing it as a tangible resource and research center of international standing, my vision is to turn FFP into a credible independent think-tank, dedicated to conflict transformation and peacebuilding through holistic approaches – creating a culture of hope, justice and sustainable peace for the upcoming generations of new Nepal.

On peace

As the core theme of FFP's mission and objectives is "peace", I presume, it is equally paramount to create peace within ourselves first – by exploring and touching the heart of it, or let us recall the words of Nancy H Rothstein, a peace exponent, "The way to peace is through the heart." In this noble humanitarian endeavor, as active peacemakers, let us mull over this simple but a very complex view that, "if we want to change the society, we must begin by changing ourselves." We must embark on a practical project of personal transformation through the development of peace consciousness within us, and materialize it in the society on the whole. So let us awaken ourselves to our own personal power as genuine peacemakers. Finally, I insist on my advocacy that "peace" must be made the cornerstone in our national policy - an idea, I believe, every one will stand up for.

Library



FFP, as a research and resource centre, dedicated to conflict transformation and peacebuilding in Nepal, maintains a library in which it has a collection of over 4,500 books, journals and magazines in the field of conflict transformation and peacebuilding, human rights, war studies, terrorism, strategic studies, gender studies, international relation, life stories of world political figures, law, Nepal studies, world constitutions and other relevant subjects. It also subscribes all national daily newspapers, magazines and other relevant periodicals along with international magazines, such as India Today, Times, Newsweek, Himal South Asia, Frontline etc. FFP library has compiled large volumes of newspaper clippings covering news related to conflicts in Nepal. The main objective of the library is to facilitate researchers and other stakeholders involved in conflict transformation and peacebuilding.

FFP library is efficiently disseminating information and resources on related fields after regularly reviewing the information needs by organizing discussion among the regular and prospective users. Over the past few months, around 200 new books and a few journals have been added to the library.

All the resources are sorted out using the standard Dewey Decimal Classification System (DDC) and the readers can easily access them through our computerized database installed in the library. The database allows the user to search for the books from title, author, keywords, ISBN and ISSN number, place of publication and publisher. As FFP library is a reference library, there is no provision for membership or borrowing of books. However, we have a provision for photocopying service to the users on payment. Internet and e-mail facilities are also available for the library patrons.

In addition to the regular update of our library, we subscribe on-line resource through Program for the Enhancement of Research Information (PERI) for the benefits of our library users. We have disseminated information about the library resources for the advantage of the prospective users through various extension materials, such as pamphlets, brochures, emails and internet.

The library opens Monday through Friday, 9:00am through 5:00pm. About 10-15 users visit the library daily. We are planning to expand its collection by including more books, international journals and research reports as well as audio-visual materials. In conjunction with this, the library will also focus on the linkage with other resource centers and libraries, compiling more resources on conflict transformation and peacebuilding. The on-line database of FFP library can be logged on at <http://www.friendsforpeace.org.np/library.htm>

Mailing Address for Feedbacks and Suggestions

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