

FACT SHEET

Democracy and Governance Program

Singha Durbar (The Lion's Palace): A Media Program and Creating Role Models for Good Governance



Photo: USAID

Consultation meeting in Biratnagar

Nepal is undergoing a rapid political transformation since the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA) between the government and the CPN-Maoist in November 2006. After missing deadlines of the first historic Constituent Assembly (CA) to complete its mandate and its 2012 dissolution, concern remains about the second CA's – elected in November 2013 -- ability to produce a constitution by the early 2015 deadline. This concern stems largely from the impasse among political leadership during the first CA over a number of key issues, including state restructuring based on a federal system, local government elections, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. These issues remain and public perceptions of political leadership and the Government are increasingly negative.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Singha Durbar is a two-year, \$1.003 million project that seeks to mitigate public disillusionment and dissatisfaction towards the Government and political process using multi-media communications and story-telling approaches. Specific project goals include:

- To increase public knowledge of government functions at the local and national levels and foster constructive citizen-government engagement;
- To foster dialogues at multiple levels to create a shared national vision for leadership and governance; and
- To promote positive role models for leadership and governance through popular culture.

The initiative centers on the production and broadcast of 13-episodes of a political TV drama series, *Singha Durbar*, and a 52-episode radio drama series, *Gaun Gaunma Singha Durbar*. It uses these two media products in addition to think tank events and policy papers to catalyze dialogue among key stakeholders on governance, collaborative leadership, and policy issues in Nepal. This is expected to increase public understanding of how government works at local and national levels, increase interest in constructive civic engagement, and help identify possibilities for collaborative political culture in Nepal. By neutralizing partisanship and conflicting points of view by portraying issues in the form of a story with the public as observers, the project aims to build trust and promote values of inclusion, transparency, honesty and collaborative government through good leadership by creating role models. The media products developed will reach citizens in all 75 districts through local FM stations.

SNAPSHOT

Life of Project: January 2014 to January 2016

Goal: To create possibilities for collaborative political culture in the Nepali public imagination.

Implementing Partner: Search for Common Ground (SCFG)

Geographic Focus: National (with coverage from Kathmandu, Janakpur, Biratnagar, Dhangadhi and Nepalgunj)

The project is implemented by Search For Common Ground (SFCG) in partnership with the Antenna Foundation, Common Ground Productions and local contractors for the production of radio and television dramas.

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

- Participatory development of core messages and curricula by selecting topics that target audiences identify for radio and television dramas based on opinion surveys and interviews.
- Broadcasts and outreach of a radio drama series in all 75 districts and a television drama series through national television stations.
- Develop white papers for informing policy by consultations with national level think tank forums.

“Citizens should be aware of their rights and duties, and government officers also should be sensitive and mindful as a duty bearer. The overseeing role of civil society organizations is key to achieve good governance. The state unilaterally or citizens alone cannot ensure accountable and responsible governance. The two-way, state-citizen collaboration is the only the way to ensure good governance.”

– Guru Subedi, Local Development Officer, Dhanusha, Addressing the consultation meeting at Janakpur

KEY RESULTS

- Audience members will understand that ‘good’ leadership and ‘good’ governance encompass values of inclusion, transparency, honesty and collaboration across dividing lines.
- Audience members will have an increased understanding of how their government works at local and national levels, thereby increasing their abilities and interest in civic engagement.
- Audience members will express expectations that their political and government leaders act in collaborative ways and in the interest of the larger public.
- Upcoming political and government leaders will have role models who exhibit behaviors of collaboration, transparency, inclusiveness, and solution-oriented decision making.

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