NEW! USAID Launches SAMBAD: Dialogue for Peace, a new Conflict Management and Mitigation Project

After launching the Community Initiatives for Common Understanding and Inclusive Resource Management Initiative projects in June 2013, USAID launched the third of its Conflict Management and Mitigation projects, titled Sambad: Dialogue for Peace, in August this year. The project seeks to promote peace through increased mutual trust and social harmony in the targeted districts of Rupandehi and Nawalparasi of the western Terai region.

Implemented by CARE Nepal, Sambad: Dialogue for Peace is a three-year, $1.15 million effort to mitigate conflict at the local level in 30 VDCs of the two conflict-affected districts. CARE will work in partnership with local NGOs, Namuna Integrated Development Council (Namuna) and Legal Assistance and Research Center (LARC), to address the root cause of the decade-long conflict by bringing together representatives of conflicting groups to interact purposefully in a safe space. The project will support conflict-affected communities by strengthening and promoting linkages between victim groups and the Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction's peacebuilding policy, mechanisms, and programs.

PROGRAMS: ELECTION-RELATED UPDATES

Training for Poll Watchers

The USAID-funded Strengthening Political Parties, Electoral and Legislative Processes program organized a series of simultaneous trainings for political party poll watchers in all five developmental regions of Nepal in September and October 2013. The training covered more than 1,600 participants, representing nine political parties, from 10 districts: Kathmandu, Dhankuta, Morang, Parsa, Kaski, Rupandehi, Banke, Surkhet, Kailai and Dadeldhura. Officials from these districts' Election Offices facilitated mock election polling station exercises for participants, using sample ballot paper, ballot boxes, and voter lists. USAID's implementing partner, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) furnished pocket-size party poll watcher manuals and checklists to participants for reference and use on election day. Some political parties replicated the party poll agent trainings in various districts, while all major parties have requested additional trainings in Kathmandu.

Civil Society Media Campaign calling for 33 Percent Representation of Women

Also in September, NDI supported a media campaign calling for 33 percent representation of women in the upcoming Constituent Assembly (CA). The campaign included TV and radio adverts, delivering messages about the importance of supporting women to achieve 33 percent representation. Also, the campaign representatives met with the country's President, Ram Baran Yadav, to solicit his support and commitment to their cause and share the campaign poster and pins. After the candidate deadline on October 4, the advocacy group is now exploring additional support for women running under the first-past-the-post system. Out of 5,678 first-past-the-post candidates, 646 are female.

Printing Proportionate Representation Ballot

On October 5, in preparation for the November 19 elections, the state printing facility, Janak Education Materials Centre (JEMC), started printing proportionate representation system ballots under tight government security. JEMC had printed first-past-the-post ballots for the 240 constituencies with the names of more than 6,000 candidates by mid-October. As mandated by law, JEMC used a color system with pink proportionate representation ballots and blue First Past the Post ballots. Post-production activities including ballot perforation, numbering, cutting, and packaging ran simultaneously with the printing process. USAID's implementing partner, International Foundation for Electoral Systems, provided on-site technical support, ballot monitoring, and guidance to ensure the smooth functioning of the three refurbished and one new press procured with USAID funding. JEMC completed ballot printing by the end of October.

The Carter Center Observed Election Preparations Nationwide

Carter Center International Long-Term Observers monitored election preparations in all five development regions since their deployment in Nepal on September 23. In addition to regular meetings with election stakeholders, the Long-Term Observers observed the Candidate Registration Process for proportionate representation and first-past-the-post seats in several districts prior to the October 4 deadline. Long-Term Observers reported a generally positive sense among stakeholders about the election and the political environment, but found very little evidence of political party campaigning in the districts. Earlier, on October 1, the Carter Center released its Sixth Interim Report on Voter Registration. The report applauds the Election Commission of Nepal's efforts to finalize a new voter roll for the November Constituent Assembly election while expressing concern for the potential voters not registered. A "major step forward in improving the quality of the voter register and Nepal's electoral process" is the Election Commission- and Ministry of Home Affairs-coordinated program to link voter registration and citizenship registration outside of district headquarters via mobile camps from March-July 2013. The report also covers the claims and objection processes implemented after the original July 15, 2013 registration cutoff date, as well as the reopened voter registration window in August. The full report can be found on the Carter Center's website.

Interested in learning more about USAID's work to support the elections? If you missed the snapshot in our last edition of the Newsletter, you can view the update here.

Combating Trafficking: USAID and its Partners Join hands with the Ministry of Education to Launch Anti-Trafficking Curriculum

In September 2013, the USAID-funded Combating Trafficking in Persons (CTIP) project rolled out a curriculum on anti-trafficking and safe migration, developed in collaboration with Nepal's Ministry of Education. It is anticipated that the curriculum will become a part of the formal school curriculum in the next academic year. In addition, USAID's partner World Education worked with the Ministry's Curriculum Development Center to train local public school teachers to deliver key messages and information to young men and women vulnerable to trafficking and illegal labor practices. The Curriculum Development Center led the training programs in the six CTIP program districts in coordination with District Education Office. This pilot will reach 82 schools serving grades 6-12 found in Nepal's primary trafficking source, transit and destination districts.

IMPACT

Since 2010, the CTIP project has worked closely with the Government to address the prevention of trafficking, the protection of victims, and the prosecution of human traffickers in Nepal. This five-year, $6.79 million project targets six trafficking-prone areas identified by the Government of Nepal and adjudicating human trafficking cases. This training directly contributed to 28 convictions—and 3 landmark cases—in 2012.

• Developed the National Minimum Standards for Victim Care and Protection with the Ministry of Women, Children, and Social Welfare, now being implemented by the National Committee on Combatting Human Trafficking.

• Reached about 32,000 vulnerable community members, raising their awareness of trafficking, safe migration, and their role and responsibilities in the process.

• Strengthened the operational capacity of 7 shelter homes established for TIP survivors on victim-centric approaches. This support contributed to 143 TIP survivors benefitting from basic TIP shelter services, such as food, skills training, and health, in a safe and secure environment.

• Developed and implemented a training curriculum, on communication skills and advocacy for community level facilitators to improve safe migration strategies in all six project districts.

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