



Nepal at a Crossroads: Strengthening Community Security in the Post-Settlement Context

Donor Briefing Paper
July 2007



IA/FFP Engagement in Community Security

International Alert (hereafter Alert) and Friends for Peace (FFP) began focusing on community security in mid-2006 in an effort to understand and address community security as a conflict prevention measure in support of sustainable conditions for peace and development. Alert/FFP's current work¹ on community security seeks to facilitate the inclusion of vulnerable and marginalised groups in a future community dispute resolution mechanism. In doing so, it seeks to understand the particular experiences and needs of these diverse groups and to disseminate these findings at the national and international policy-making levels. Through this research, Alert and FFP also seek to raise awareness at the local level of the concept of community security and all it encompasses, and its importance at this fragile stage in Nepal's peace process.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

| | | |
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| CA | - | Constituent Assembly |
| CPA | - | Comprehensive Peace Accord |
| CPN (M) | - | Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) |
| DDR | - | Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration |
| EPA | | Eight Party Alliance |
| FFP | - | Friends for Peace |
| IA | - | International Alert |
| IDP | - | Internally Displaced Person |
| UNMIN | - | United Nations Mission in Nepal |

¹ This preliminary phase of Alert/FFP's community security work brings together stakeholders from the government, political parties, security forces, civil society and the development community for dialogue regarding the proposed 'Peace Committees', with the aim of understanding perceived security needs and experiences of diverse groups at the local level. The districts covered during this phase were Jumla, Kailali, Makwanpur and Morang. Phase 2 of the project (commencing in September 2007) aims to further develop the dialogue process initiated in phase 1, institutionalizing forums where appropriate that have been identified by the community as mechanisms for facilitating the resolution of local security concerns. Following this, phase 3 will focus on sharing learning inter-regionally, nationally and internationally, thereby informing future policies in developing sustainable and community-owned mechanisms that can help resolve and mitigate problems related to local security, both in the Terai and throughout Nepal.

Summary of Recommendations for Donors

Ensure that the language and approaches used in relation to security-related technical assistance and programming complement the nationally driven peace process. This requires

- Understanding of the sensitivities and needs of the context at the national level and district-by-district, rather than taking a template approach.
- Orientating interventions towards local level processes and/or mechanisms for inclusion in decision-making around security provision and ensuring there are avenues that link the local to the central level, and back again.

Focus interventions on the establishment of locally-owned community security mechanisms by:

- Assisting in developing inclusive processes to enable communities, security forces, judicial representatives and political parties to debate the idea of Peace Committees in a safe space to ensure common support and to link local discussions to the central level;
- Providing support for Nepalis to better understand and learn from indigenous dispute mechanisms;
- Drawing lessons from international experience through, for example, the Gacaca courts in Rwanda.

Support the inclusion of local needs in the work of Peace Committees (PCs) through:

- Raising awareness among communities outside district headquarters of the PC proposal, their potential impact and the role of communities;
- Working with communities, as part of on-going development activities, to identify gaps and opportunities that PCs may fill in those contexts;
- Ensuring development programming is designed in alignment with activities of the Peace Committees and other development activities (see also recommendation 5).

Help to address political party rivalry as an obstacle to community security by:

- Encouraging questions around whether Peace Committees should include representatives of all the political parties of the power-sharing Eight Party Alliance (EPA) in order to increase their accountability;
- Encouraging members of political parties to address the issue of exclusion by putting forward candidates from diverse ethnicities and both genders at the local level;
- Analysing the potential for providing resources through local government mechanisms (via central government) to which political parties can apply as a pool, in collaboration with local communities.

Strengthen community-based provision of security by:

- Encouraging a broader mandate and providing training for the Nepal Police Force to prevent localised conflicts turning violent by gathering information and facilitating local dialogue to address grass-root-level disputes;
- Providing extra funds and technical support for public-relations exercises between the police and communities, which are accompanied and facilitated by trusted, local leaders;
- Supporting forums that consider whether Peace Committees should include representatives of the security forces to help increase their accountability and provide a forum within which they can regain lost credibility and address past mistakes.

Help link security and development needs by:

- Strengthening understanding of conflict dynamics and insecurity at the local level, and analysing the intended and unintended impacts of development activities on these (e.g. will inclusion policies or allocation of resources trigger potential violence?)
- Capitalising on the positive links between development and security
- Ensuring development activities do not reinforce unrealistically high expectations regarding the peace process. This requires better understanding of the link between rights, expectations and opportunities, and longer term peacebuilding.

Nepal at a Crossroads: Strengthening Community Security in the Post-Settlement Context

1. Introduction

The current unpredictable security situation in Nepal poses numerous challenges to stakeholders, both national and international, who are seeking to ensure sustainable peace and development in the country. The provision of security and justice is one of the main requirements for a peaceful society and sustained social and economic development. This is particularly important in 'fragile' societies, such as Nepal, that are prone to, or emerging from, conflict. However, in such contexts, sources of insecurity for the general population are substantial and diverse, with security itself meaning different things to different people.

This briefing draws on research and interactions carried out in Jumla; in the mountainous Mid-West region of Nepal, Kailali; in the southern Far-West, Makwanpur; in the central hills and Morang; in eastern Terai, between December 2006 and March 2007. The research brought together stakeholders from the government, political parties, security forces, civil society and the development community with the aim of understanding perceived security needs and experiences of diverse groups at the local level. The briefing first gives an overview of the current security situation and efforts being made at the national, local and international levels in support of peace in Nepal. Section 3 then seeks to highlight some of the key community security issues that emerged from the research and offers a number of recommendations to donors who wish to address them. This donor briefing paper provides a synopsis of a more detailed report, available from International Alert and Friends for Peace.²

2. Current context & interventions in support of peace

2.1 National level

With the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA) between the Government of Nepal and the Communist Party of Nepal – Maoist (CPN-Maoist) on 21 November 2006, Nepal has entered a 'post-settlement' phase³. The CPA-related *Agreement on Monitoring of the Management of Arms and Armies* in November 2006 outlined the process whereby Maoist combatants and an equivalent number of Nepal Army troops are confined to cantonments and barracks respectively. The Maoists, under the supervision of the UN, have demobilised over 30,000 of their militia and handed in over 3,500 weapons. However, as is widely being stated by all sides, the continued high level of insecurity in the country threatens to undermine the upcoming Constituent Assembly elections in November 2007, which will, amongst others key issues, decide on the future fate of the monarchy in Nepal.

This insecurity is not just a reflection of a lack of security provision, which is being utilised by criminal opportunists and vigilante groups, but also a manifestation of long-standing grievances that the peace process has been unable to address. This is causing the emergence, in ever more aggressive forms, of demonstration against the state as few non-violent alternatives to inclusive participation in the political process exist. The most immediate example of this is the emergence of violent conflict in the Terai region. This reflects a focus within the peace process on issues of national security over community security, and physical security over human security. As a result, the potential for communal violence throughout Nepal among marginalised caste, ethnic, linguistic and regional groups and communities remains high in the post-settlement context.

² See the full report entitled: *Nepal at a Crossroads: The Nexus between Human Security in Rural Nepal and Renewed Conflict*, July 2007 available at www.international-alert.org, or contact the Alert office to request a copy at nepal@international-alert.org

³ With the causes of the conflict still remaining, the current context in Nepal cannot be termed post-conflict.

2.2 Local level

Based on the research carried out in Jumla, Kailali, Makwanpur and Morang the majority of respondents felt that they had seen a gradual improvement in the overall security situation since the declaration of a ceasefire and the signing of the CPA. However, the CPA raised hopes and expectations and the peace dividends that people assumed would come have been slow to materialise. Research indicates that levels of insecurity (both actual and perceived) at the local level remain high, particularly around cantonment sites as ex-combatants regularly leave the cantonments to acquire basic subsistence from villagers and demonstrate against unfavourable Government decisions and proclamations. Communities still believe that the Maoists are concealing weaponry, particularly their less antiquated guns. Furthermore, citizens' faith in the state and the ability and willingness of its security forces to ensure their safety is minimal. Issues such as food insecurity, domestic violence and access to economic opportunities also continue to undermine the ability of the most vulnerable to benefit from, and participate in, political decision-making and peacebuilding processes. There are some processes, nevertheless, that aim to address some of these issues at a local level.

In recognition of the fragility of Nepal's peace process and the need for community mechanisms to be in place to address issues of contention as they arise, the newly-formed Ministry for Peace and Reconstruction has proposed a bill to the cabinet to establish 'Peace Committees' across all 75 districts in Nepal⁴. The Ministry itself recognises that these committees, if they are to be effective, need to be inclusive. However, a lack of understanding of the diversity of experiences at the local level and the particular issues facing vulnerable and marginalised groups, threatens to undermine good intentions.

The voices and experiences of those living outside the capital cannot be underestimated at this critical juncture in Nepal when elites in Kathmandu and other urban centres struggle to connect national level debate with the realities of rural communities. Past efforts to find lasting solutions to the conflict have suffered from the exclusion of local voices, with disenfranchised groups such as women, Dalits (lower caste groups) and ethnic minorities (Janajati) marginalised by elite political and civil society leaders. The creation of avenues for dialogue and discussion among marginalised groups, and between them and those that claim to represent them, is therefore vital. In a country where 86 per cent of the population live in rural areas, the establishment of local level mechanisms and processes that will help manage disputes in an inclusive and participatory manner is essential.

2.3 International level

In the post-settlement context in Nepal, donors are increasing their aid/engagement in post-reconstruction and peacebuilding projects via non-state and, increasingly, state apparatus. This includes the monitoring of arms and armies by UNMIN and donor support through the Peace Trust Fund.⁵ It also includes the delivery of aid through the national three year interim development strategy, as well as through bi- and multi-lateral state and non-state funded projects in infrastructure development, basic services and so forth. These efforts, including support for Nepali-led security sector reform processes, preparation for elections (due in November this year) and the delivery of humanitarian and development aid to conflict-affected populations, aim to help address key causes and consequences of the ten-year conflict. However, donor commitments to expend funds, particularly through an under-capacity state, and the propensity to rely on template approaches that are not fully grounded in the country context means that there are risks of doing more harm than good.

Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) and security sector reform (SSR)-related activities are, for example, critical components of the CPA which require donor support. However, care should be taken by donors in the use of language and type of approach within

⁴ The bill for the establishment of the Peace Committees was presented to the Cabinet on 2nd August and is awaiting approval.

⁵ The five core areas of support through the Peace Trust Fund include: Management of Camps and Reintegration of Former Combatants; Rehabilitation of Internally Displaced People (IDPs); Preparation for the Election of Constituent Assembly; Strengthening of Law and Order and Police Administration, and Support to the Peace Process.

the Nepali context as it can undermine trust and the process itself. There is a danger of a one-size-fits-all approach which will fail to capture the diversity of security needs across the country. This, ultimately, will fail to address the roots and legacy of the conflict, which has lasted over a decade and claimed the lives of over 13,000 Nepalis.

In addition, the huge dislocation between central level decision-makers and local constituencies represents a major cause of exclusivity and grievance in Nepal. This includes limited understanding of how security is really experienced by different groups in society based on their age, gender, employment status and standing within a community. This can lead to a lack of local ownership of, understanding about and support for the very programmes which are meant to enhance security at the local and national level. Donor understanding of the causes and impact of the conflict will be part of how development strategies are framed, which could either reinforce or help bridge the exclusion gap. In order to contribute to a lasting and sustainable peace in Nepal, and ensure that aid is delivered in a conflict-sensitive way, international agencies must target their interventions at addressing the real and perceived security concerns of communities.

3. Community Security Issues & Recommendations

Whilst recognising the diversity of people's perceptions, expectations and experiences of community security, there were a number of common issues that emerged across the four research districts, Jumla, Kailali, Makwanpur and Morang. This section groups some of the key concerns⁶ into five categories; the mandate and capacity of the security forces, lack of local ownership and inclusion of local needs in security provision; suspicion and mistrust amongst and between communities and returnees; linking security and development and political party rivalries; and gives recommendations on ways to address them.

3.1. Mandate and capacity of the security forces

Issues identified:

- *A mistrust and lack of faith in the police force and wider security forces to provide security to ordinary people.*

The powers of the security forces have been seriously attenuated by the ten year conflict and credibility and morale are low. The conflict has also increased the impunity of the security forces, rendering them unaccountable to the people they are supposed to protect. Across the research locations it was apparent that the activities of the police and security forces during conflict had resulted in a loss of credibility and public mistrust. While the re-establishment of police posts is well under way, there remains significant opposition. These challenges relate not only to their physical re-establishment, due to ongoing resistance from Maoists and the lack of co-operation of, and manipulation by, the political parties, but to winning support from communities who in the past have suffered at the hands of the police.

- *The security vacuum*

The CPA called for the dismantling of parallel Maoist structures. In some instances, this has created a considerable vacuum in the provision of security at the local level, which the government has failed to address effectively and efficiently. The result has been an increase in crime at the local level as criminal gangs and emergent militias and political factions move in to take advantage of the weakened government mechanisms. This ranges from a rise in cross-border smuggling of timber, vehicles and synthetic drugs in the Terai districts to an increase in domestic violence in Jumla⁷ with the end of the alcohol 'dry zones' enforced by the Maoist administration. Senior police officers expressed frustration at their perceived powerlessness in the face of increasing militia activity and criminality resulting from the security vacuum at the local level. One senior security force representative in Morang⁸ felt that the role of the police force in local security had been reduced to that of a mere 'spectator', post-peace agreement.

- *The persistence of parallel Maoist structures*

Due to the fact that government systems have been slow or unable to take the place of Maoist structures, some continue to operate. In Makwanpur, members of the Maoist women's wing All Nepal Women's Organization – Revolutionary (ANWO-R) openly admitted that they were still approached by women asking them to address cases of domestic violence and violence against women.⁹ The local women preferred the Maoist brand of instant justice (in this case public humiliation) over the inefficient and inaccessible government judiciary system. At the time of research in Makwanpur district, the rapid emergence of the Young Communist League (YCL) failed to go unnoticed by other stakeholders. Whilst district level CPN (M) leaders claimed to be filling a much needed gap in community security, civil society leaders and representatives of

⁶ For more detailed information on the findings of the research see the full report entitled: *Nepal at a Crossroads: The Nexus between Human Security in Rural Nepal and Renewed Conflict*, July 2007 available at www.international-alert.org, or contact the Alert office to request a copy at nepal@international-alert.org

⁷ Interview, Women's Rights Activist, Jumla, January 2007

⁸ Interview, Biratnagar, November 2006

⁹ Interview, ANWO-R Representative, Makwanpur, March 2007

other political parties feared the motivation behind the setting-up of the YCL.¹⁰ Although reports of YCL involvement in acts of violence and intimidation in Makawanpur district were yet to be received, their very presence and growing numbers lead many stakeholders to cite the growth of the YCL as a significant potential threat to security in the locality. It appears that the Maoists have been unable (or unwilling) to give up the considerable power that they wielded in the rural areas and were struggling to get to grips with their new role as part of the government system rather than an alternative to it.

Recommendations:

- Provide extra funds and technical support for public-relations exercises between the police and communities that are accompanied and facilitated by trusted, local leaders;
- Encourage a broader mandate and provide training for the Nepal Police Force to address grassroots-level disputes through inclusive dialogue and information gathering. This will enable allow them to become a preventative force regarding community security through addressing small disputes before they can feed larger conflict;
- Encourage the security forces to adopt recruitment and personnel-development policies which facilitate the inclusion of marginalised groups, thereby making sure that the diversity of Nepal's population and the diversity of needs and experiences are represented within the state security forces. This will enable forces to address the security needs of grassroots and marginalised communities more effectively.
- Supporting forums that raise the question as to whether Peace Committees should include representatives of the security forces to help increase their accountability and provide a forum within which they can regain lost credibility and address past mistakes.

¹⁰ It should be noted that the YCL is not a new phenomenon; it was decided to re-establish this organisation at a CPN(M) Central Party Committee meeting in Bhaktapur in December 2006. The media and SPA have roundly condemned YCL activities and suspect the YCL of putting the Maoists back on a war-footing, as well as committing violent atrocities and extortion. However, while the establishment of parallel structures in the current context risks embedding alternative law, order and justice mechanisms; there is little doubt that the YCL is providing some security and justice that the state is currently unable to provide to its citizens.

3.2. Lack of local ownership or inclusion of local needs in security provision

Issues identified:

- *Lack of community ownership over security provision*

One of the legacies of the conflict is that many in Nepal's rural areas now understand the provision of security to be the preserve of armies with guns. Where once communities had sophisticated and effective indigenous governance systems through which disputes could be resolved and community security issues addressed, these indigenous systems were largely replaced by parallel Maoist mechanisms during the conflict¹¹. The exclusion that pervades all areas of Nepali society applies to the provision of community security also - grassroots communities and those belonging to vulnerable and marginalised groups have little say in issues of their own human security.

- *Vulnerable and marginalised groups*

The tendency to focus on security as a national level issue has resulted in a failure to consider the diversity of security threats to people and a corresponding lack of understanding of what 'peace' means to different groups. There is a common feeling amongst those belonging to vulnerable and marginalised groups¹² (for example, women, youth, Dalits, Janajati, Madhesi and the economically marginalised) that the security situation has only improved for the 'strong' (i.e. those with economic and/or political power). Many marginalised groups participated in great numbers in the recent *jana andolan* and as such have high expectations of peace dividends. However, the often-used phrase, '*murda shanti*' (dead peace) by such groups to describe the current situation in Nepal reflects their failed expectations and increased levels of anger and frustration that may pave the way for a return to conflict.

- *The Terai "tinder box"*

In both the Terai districts under study, Kailali and Morang, the increase in cross-border criminality was perceived as a key threat to community security. The security vacuum in these districts, coupled with the failure of mainstream political parties to address the needs of marginalised ethnic groups have given rise to numerous emergent splinter groups and groups claiming to represent the needs and concerns of those of Madhesi origin. Tensions between the Madhesi people indigenous to the plains (*Madesh*), who make up around a third of the population and who have been excluded and marginalised from socio-political arenas, and people of hill origin (*Pahadis*) have simmered for decades in the Terai region.¹³ In the current situation, existing security mechanisms are failing to cope with increasing ethnic tensions in this area and emerging factions and militias provide a fertile recruitment ground for large numbers of frustrated and disaffected youth.

¹¹ During previous FFP research into the local peace agendas of people in the districts (see *Local Peace Agendas: Voices from the Villages*, FFP, forthcoming July 2007), a significant number of respondents referred to indigenous governance mechanisms as effective forums within which disputes could be resolved. However, in many villages this system became defunct when replaced with a parallel Maoist system.

¹² The research highlighted the multiple forms of discrimination experienced by vulnerable groups. Freed-Kamaiya women in Kailali for example face discrimination on the basis of caste and economic status as well as gender. Madhesi Dalits in Morang and Kailali felt particularly insecure, being excluded on the basis of being Madhesi, as well as on the basis of caste.

¹³ Commentators warned of future trouble in the Terai as early as 2003, see for example, C.K. Lal "The Terai cauldron", Nepali Times, Issue #134, 28/02/2003.

Recommendations:

With the exception of some local Maoist opposition, there was general consensus around the potential for locally owned community security mechanisms to help build sustainable peace in the districts. Unlike international approaches to DDR and SSR, which risk impinging on the nationally-owned political peace process, this would assist in preparing conditions for peace at the local level. Such mechanisms could:

- i. Play a monitoring role to ensure accountability of locally-based security forces;¹⁴
- ii. Create a safe dialogue space within which fear and mistrust can be addressed and reconciliation can be built through sharing common and diverse experiences around issues of exclusion and competition for resources (e.g. to address issues arising during the return of IDPs as well as economic migrants and ex-combatants);
- iii. Provide a non-violent dispute-resolution role that is established and monitored by communities to strengthen local legitimacy and ownership over local security and justice;
- iv. Bring political parties together, making them accountable to their constituents and encouraging cooperation to ensure community security and an atmosphere for safe and fair elections.

Donors could focus interventions on the establishment of locally-owned community security mechanisms by:

- Assisting in developing inclusive processes to enable communities, security forces, judicial representatives and political parties to debate the idea of Peace Committees in a safe space to ensure common support and to link local discussions to the central level;
- Providing support for Nepalis to better understand and learn from indigenous dispute mechanisms;
- Drawing lessons from international experience through, for example, the Gacaca courts in Rwanda.

¹⁴ It should be noted however that the Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction at present does not envision the inclusion of the police forces in the Peace Committees.

3.3. Suspicion and mistrust amongst and between communities and returnees

Issues identified:

- *Mutual suspicion and growing mistrust*

Like many transitional societies, the post-settlement context in Nepal is characterized by mutual suspicion and mistrust among and between stakeholders. There is a growing dislocation between the national command and the local cadres of many political groups. There is growing concern amongst stakeholders about the potential for violence and unrest in the run-up to constituent assembly elections later this year and the ability of the police force alone to deal with issues arising at this time. The suspicion and mistrust so evident in the districts also extends towards international actors involved in the peace process, even I/NGOs do not escape suspicion.

- *Fear of localized revenge*

There is a widespread belief that the national level rhetoric around reconciliation and cooperation fails to address the experiences and concerns of those at the grassroots who had suffered most during the conflict. A common concern raised was the potential for acts of revenge and retaliation for abuses committed during conflict at the local level. Victims of the conflict from both sides have received little in the way of compensation or rehabilitation support from the government. The issue of localized revenge is also more multifaceted and complex than simply a reaction to abuses committed during war. Many emergent 'revenge' conflicts are retaliations against the generations of exclusion and oppression - social, political and economic – that constitute a fundamental cause of the conflict in Nepal. Recent violence in the Terai region demonstrates that the causes of the conflict there still remain unaddressed and, until they are, frustrations and mistrust manifested in localized conflicts threaten to escalate and return the entire country back to civil war.

- *Tensions between communities and IDPs*

IDPs have begun to return to their homes and land, however, many remain in the district headquarters, unable to return to their villages. Many of those still facing obstacles to their reintegration are large landowners and political party cadres displaced by the Maoists. They may have lost their homes and land, and those whose homes have been returned have been emptied of all household items and fields are barren making it impossible to eke out a living. There is little financial or logistic support for those who are yet to return and the responsibility for acquiring information about IDPs and supporting and monitoring their return has fallen largely upon the shoulders of I/NGOs. Even for those who have been able to return the difficulties are not over. Suspicion and tensions run high because in some cases IDPs are considered returned criminals or conversely because neighbours may have caused or supported their displacement. The government has recently drafted and endorsed a National IDP Policy, designed to address the problem of IDPs, however, without any local mechanism for implementation it is unlikely to be successful.

Recommendations:

The proposed Peace Committees have the potential to be an important means for addressing and preventing tension and dispute at the local level. However, in order to have a chance of success they must:

- i. be active outside district headquarters and focus on human security rather than purely state security and state security mechanisms.
- ii. be locally owned and inclusive if they are to be sustainable. They must take into account the diversity of community security needs at the local level, including the particular and diverse needs of women and vulnerable and marginalised groups.
- iii. recognise and learn from past and existing mechanisms for community security and local governance. This includes indigenous mechanisms, the mechanisms and systems of the 'People's Government', and existing state security provisions.
- iv. be a preventative rather than curative mechanism, aiming to address disputes and tensions at the grassroots level, before these issues evolve into and fuel wider conflicts.

Donors could support the inclusion of local needs in the work of Peace Committees (PCs) through:

- Raising awareness among communities outside district headquarters of the PC proposal, their potential impact and the role of communities;
- Working with communities, as part of on-going development activities, to identify gaps and opportunities that PCs may fill in those contexts;
- Ensuring development programming is designed in alignment with activities of the Peace Committees and other development activities (see also recommendation 5).

3.4 Political party rivalry as an obstacle to sustainable peace

Issues identified:

The ability to tackle some of the security challenges identified, or indeed support or establish mechanisms to tackle community security issues, is severely hampered by the lack of political willingness to address such matters. In all districts there was an evident lack of cooperation between the seven political parties and the CPN-Maoist, with the latter clearly reluctant to let go of their considerable power and influence. Political party leaders concurred that the Maoist cadres were struggling to adapt to the democratic system and conceded that it would take time and patience on their part before this would happen. Nevertheless, the post-settlement context in Nepal has seen the (re) emergence of a 'culture of blame' within and between parties, with many finding the CPN-Maoist a convenient target on which to lay the blame for the various shortcomings of the peace process. Most, if not all, political parties remain exclusive and have failed to internalise key issues and hopes of their constituents regarding a 'New Nepal'. In the Terai, emerging political party factions promoting ethnic nationalism and violent forms of protest further threaten stability in this area¹⁵.

Recommendations:

Donors could help to address political party rivalry as an obstacle to community security by:

- Encouraging questions around whether Peace Committees should include representatives of all the political parties of the power-sharing Eight Party Alliance (EPA) in order to increase their accountability;
- Encouraging members of all political parties to address the issue of inclusion through putting forward candidates from diverse ethnicities and both genders at the local level;
- Analysing the potential for providing resources through local government mechanisms (via the central government) to which political parties can apply as a pool, in collaboration with local communities. Criteria for such an approach could include the level of inclusion of a broad range of local constituencies and level of cooperation between partners. The aim would include strengthening cooperation between parties through existing local government channels (where they exist) around areas of the common interest to their constituents, such as community security and the re-establishment of the police posts.

¹⁵ The lack of cooperation of political parties as an obstacle to peace is covered in more depth in a forthcoming FFP publication, *Local Peace Agendas: Voices from the Villages* (forthcoming July 2007).

3.5. Linking Security and Development programming

Issues identified:

Issues such as food insecurity, domestic violence and access to economic opportunities continue to undermine the ability of the most marginalised to benefit from, and participate in, political decision-making and peacebuilding processes. The *Kamaiya* people, who are former bonded labourers, usually from the Tharu community in the Terai, are, for example, particularly vulnerable to exploitation by armed groups as they often have no or limited access to land, property, extensions services and water resources.

Development organisations are often active at the local level undertaking tasks, such as the rehabilitation of IDPs, which would normally have been the responsibility of local government. These programmes and other activities such as rural infrastructure projects may not, at first glance, be seen to directly impact on the security situation but in fact can have a significant effect, either positively or negatively.

Recommendations:

Donors could strengthen the link between security and development programming by:

- Strengthening understanding of conflict dynamics and insecurity at the local level, and analysing the intended and unintended impacts of development activities on these (e.g. will inclusion policies or allocation of resources trigger potential violence?)
- Capitalising on the positive links between development and security (e.g. facilitating reconciliation processes around a common interest)
- Taking into account the plurality of experiences, needs and perceptions existing within and between districts;
- Ensuring development activities do not reinforce unrealistically high expectations regarding the peace process. This requires better understanding of the link between rights, expectations and opportunities, and longer term peacebuilding.

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For enquiries please contact:

Dr Natalie Hicks,
Country Director,
International Alert,
Kathmandu
Tel. +977 (1) 426 8471
E-mail: nhicks@international-alert.org