

INTERNAL PROJECT EVALUATION REPORT

Enhancing Youth Participation in Decision Making in Nepal

A Project implemented by
Search for Common Ground (SFCG) Nepal

With Support from
National Endowment for Democracy

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Executive Summary

In March 2009, Search for Common Ground (SFCG) concluded the implementation of the project “*Enhancing Youth Participation in Decision Making in Nepal*”. The project, funded by the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), had the overall objective of *building leadership capacities of youth to analyze and address the root causes of conflict, and to foster the process of democratization at the community level*. The project was implemented through 18 locally formed youth clubs in four districts of eastern Terai namely Dhanusha, Mahottari, Siraha and Saptari. The project lasted for 12 months and involved two major components: Training of Trainers (ToT) followed by District Youth Leadership Development Workshops and Community Peacebuilding projects implemented by the participating youth clubs under the seed grants provided by SFCG.

The objective of this evaluation is to disclose and underline the results of the project funded by National Endowment for Democracy (NED). Since the project was implemented as an entry point for a deeper and wider engagement in eastern Terai in the near future, SFCG decided to conduct an internal and formative evaluation to draw qualitative lessons for the next steps. It intends to inform the program leadership and staff to make decision on how to move further SFCG’s program in eastern Terai, both in terms of programmatic objectives and in overall methodologies.

The present evaluation found that the project has been largely successful in achieving the desired results. The ToT and the District Youth Leadership Development workshops have provided youth with knowledge and skills on importance of youth leadership, their role in development of the community, conflict transformation and peacebuilding, providing them especially with basics of conflict analysis and mediation skills and the realization that youths are the agents of positive change in the society. The youths who underwent the leadership development workshop are found to internalize the concepts learnt in the workshop and apply them into their daily lives and community activities. The main results of the projects are summarized below.

- A group of 34 youths who have undergone a training of trainers (ToT) are equipped with the skills of organizing Youth Leadership and Peacebuilding Training in the future. Further, a group of 60 youths have been trained on basic tools of conflict analysis and peacebuilding with particular focus on youths' role in community peace and harmony.
- The majority of youth clubs organized youth leadership and peacebuilding training in their communities, as a result of which 464 youths have been made aware on the basics of conflict analysis, conflict transformation and peacebuilding and youth leadership skills. This is an encouraging achievement in such a short span of time working in a high conflict sensitive zone.
- The youth clubs in Dhanusha are already organized into District Youth Network, whereas those in other districts are discussing among each other to form such networks.
- The youth mobilization through the project has resulted in the adults’ and political stakeholders’ in the community recognition of the youth power in their community and are regularly inviting them formally in all meetings and social gatherings.
- The youth clubs working with SFCG have already been successful in convincing at least seven youths involved in armed groups to return to communities.
- The project implemented by the clubs through the seed grants given by SFCG has played a vital role in mobilizing the youths in the community. Youths are gaining recognition of the community by utilizing seed grants for the 'common good' of the community.
- The peace rallies, dramas, debate competitions have been able to reach a broad public and generate awareness among the critical mass in the community about community harmony, empathy, reconciliation and coexistence.
- The sport festivals organized under the theme “sports for peace” have been able to bring large number of people together, especially youths from across various dividing lines, to value friendship and harmony in a divided society.

The project was not free from shortcomings. No base line assessment was done prior to the project implementation, which posed challenges to measure the progress over the duration of the project. For some unavoidable political circumstances (the election of constituent assembly), the project was delayed by two months. Even after the start, the project could not generate momentum and the ToT was organized only in August 2008. The seed grant disbursement took place only on October 2008 and, as a result, some of the community peacebuilding projects were yet to be completed at the time of evaluation.

The project lacked systematic project implementation (process guidelines) and financial management guidelines, which, to some extent, created minor hindrances to smooth implementation of the activities. There was also not enough communication with and monitoring of the activities of the clubs, which resulted into minor conflicts in few clubs regarding financial transactions and into a delayed or disrupted progress of the community peacebuilding projects. The objective of bringing together youths across the dividing lines, with special focus on Madhesi and Pahade youths became secondary priority. The project has in fact focused more on bridging dividing lines among the different groups of Madhesi communities.

In no way, the shortcomings explained above diminish the positive contribution of the project. Every member of the youth clubs expressed a positive reception of and appreciation for the project implemented by SFCG. The project has given new hope and provided the youth with a platform to lead their community towards peace and harmony. The project has made the youths realize their potential to contribute to the positive change of their own community.

Below, recommendations are put forward for future improvements in the project implementation:

- SFCG should avoid discontinuing the project at this moment and leave the youths in a limbo where they have just started to contributing in building peace and harmony in their own community. More youths need to be trained in peacebuilding practices and a larger mass of young change-makers need to be developed.
- It is advisable to develop the trainings conducted at the district and community level for five days to achieve a more exhaustive and intensive preparation and a higher level of knowledge.
- SFCG needs to put effort in selecting working areas with mixed population from Madhesi and Pahade communities so that the ethnic antagonism existing can be minimized by mobilizing youths from both communities.
- Finally, SFG should come out with some innovative ideas about how the community peacebuilding projects implemented by the local partners/youth clubs can be made more effective in promoting harmony, empathy and reconciliation among different communities in the project areas, especially among youths.

I. Introduction and Project Overview

Nepal is undergoing a period of political transition in which conflict dynamics are changing rapidly. The gravity of the conflict in Nepal has shifted from the Maoist conflict, particularly in the hills of Nepal, to a conflict in Terai-Madhes, becoming, over the last two years, more than a mere political conflict. The conflict has exposed the age-old, but latent, conflict in the region to the surface and has already created a division among different ethnic communities, castes and classes, otherwise made to live in harmony as a result of the existing social structure in the region. The peacebuilding intervention of Search for Common Ground in Nepal (hereinafter called SFCG) has coincided with the described environment in Nepal, especially with the emergence of both the political/identity movement and the operation of armed groups in the region.

In the past two years, the conflict dynamics in Terai have drawn the attention of the entire nation as well as the international community. One of the major focuses of the peace process in Nepal has been to address issues raised by the people of Terai reflected through the Madhes-Movement of 2007 and the election result of the CA Election 2008. There have been 23-Point and 6-Point agreements between the Government of Nepal and the Madhesi Janadhikar Forum and United Madhesi Democratic Front (UDMF) in the past year. Despite such political breakthroughs and the participation of the Madhesi Janadhikar Forum (MJF), one of the major stakeholders of Madhes politics, the region still remains vulnerable to violence.

The general overview of conflict in Nepal shows that the driving force of conflict has been unemployed youths, and children, who are manipulated by political parties. This has been further corroborated by the formation of various youth groups by almost every political party whose major focus has been to counter the activities of similar groups belonging to other political parties. Further, it has been reported that there are 43 armed groups currently operating in the region and these groups are increasingly motivating and luring unemployed youths to join them into a culture of violence. Most of the youths are motivated to join such groups as it ensures easy access to three M's (Money, Motorbike and Mobile)¹ through extortion and ransom. Such a trend clearly indicates the high level of vulnerability of the youth groups in Nepal, especially in Terai as the concentration of conflict has been higher in the region in the recent years.

Thus, SFCG implemented a project which aimed at enhancing the capacity of local youths to understand and analyze the root causes of conflict, address them and organize themselves and engage in the decision making process at their community level and become part of the democratization process. The project was implemented in four districts, Saptari, Siraha, Mahottari and Dhanusha, over the 12 months period from April 2008 to March 2009. The project areas selected by SFCG continue to be the most affected by the conflict as well as by the operation of the armed groups in the region. Thus, taking into account the challenges faced by the youths in these regions, SFCG believes that this project is of utmost importance and relevance in an effort to support youth participation in positive decision making and to foster democratization at the local level.

The project carried out the following activities:

- a. Mapping of Youth Clubs: SFCG completed a mapping process of youth clubs in Siraha Saptari, Dhanusha and Mahottari districts. Following a youth mapping form template, the collected information about the youth clubs have been compiled.
- b. Development of Manual for the Youth Leadership Workshop: Prior to organizing a Training of Trainers (ToT), a three day workshop was conducted with SFCG field staff to develop a Youth Leadership Training Manual. Special effort was given to make a manual that addresses the leadership issues of rural young people in youth friendly format. It lays out a process for bringing

¹ International Alert/FFP, 2008. Perception of Community Security among Youths in Eastern Terai, January 2008.

young people together from across dividing lines, facilitating dialogue about the clashes they are facing and fostering cooperative action among them.

- c. Training of Trainers (ToT) Workshop: SFCG conducted a ToT workshop from 14 to 16 August 2008. The participants were youth leaders from various youth clubs, students and local youth networks from across the country. The workshop provided the participants with tools and techniques to run youth leadership training at the community level; informed youth leaders about common ground approaches and imparted the tools used to analyze conflicts. It also provided platform for the youths to interact among themselves, understand the issues of other districts and establish relationship with other youths.
- d. Youth Leadership Workshops: SFCG organized two district-level Youth Leadership Workshops in August and September 2008, bringing together a total of 60 youth leaders from across dividing lines. The first training took place in Janakpur and the second training took place in Lahan. The participants included young leaders from the main ethnic and identity groups of the region - Madheshi, Pahade, Dalit and Muslim.
- e. Community Peacebuilding Projects: Most of the youth clubs received seed grants from SFCG to implement micro projects in their community to help the youth leaders identify their role in building peace at community level and to enforce their presence in community leadership and decision making mechanisms. The activities implemented included sports activities, youth leadership training at community level, micro community infrastructure projects, dramas on social transformation; and peace rallies.

II. Evaluation Objectives

The primary objective of this internal evaluation is to describe the results of the project funded by National Endowment for Democracy (NED). Since the project was implemented as an entry point for SFCG's deeper and wider engagement in eastern Terai in the days to come, it was decided to conduct an internal and formative evaluation to draw qualitative lessons for the future. It intends to inform the program leadership and staff to make decision on how to move further SFCG's program in eastern Terai, both in terms of programmatic objectives and in overall methodologies. Due to the deteriorating security situation and mutating political scenario, it is helpful to identify what changes have occurred, if any, due to SFCG's program. The secondary goal of this evaluation is to document and analyze the successes and challenges in the implementation mechanisms and processes, providing a feedback to the program team to make the necessary changes and cope with potential challenges generated by the rapidly mutating conflict dynamics in the region.

The internal evaluation was led by SFCG's Design, Monitoring and Evaluation (DM&E) Coordinator with the support of the NED project staff in Kathmandu and in the districts. The evaluation was also advised by SFCG Director of Programs. The report was prepared by SFCG's DM&E Coordinator.

The short duration of the project has resulted only in immediate outcomes rather than a societal-level of impact. SFCG considers this program as entry point to a wider engagement in community peacebuilding programs with youth and media in the region. This evaluation will serve as a learning exercise with specific project evaluation components to it.

The evaluation focuses on looking into the implementation process and achievements in relation to the set project objectives, that are listed below:

- Build leadership capacities of young people to analyze the root causes of conflict and address them in their communities; i.e. in the four districts of the eastern Terai namely Saptari, Siraha, Mohattari and Dhanusha;
- Bring young people together from across dividing lines to foster tolerance, acceptance and cooperation;

- Facilitate channels for youth participation in community decision-making by increasing receptiveness of local government institutions.

III. Evaluation Scope and Methodology

The scope of the evaluation rests on looking into three aspects, process/methods of the project implementation, output of the projects and the result achieved, though the feedback of the youths targeted by the project.

The field visit of the evaluation was carried out during the second week (9-14) of February 2009 (see Annex 1 for Evaluation Plan). The evaluation team collected data and information from different sources.

The evaluation plan was prepared based on the consultation with the Program Director, the Program Manager, the Youth Program Coordinator and the Associate Youth Program Coordinators stationed in the field. The evaluation was carried out taking into account the information and data gathered through the program

Districts	Total Participants	Male	Female	Madhesi	Pahade
Dhanusha	8	7	1	8	0
Mahottari	10	8	2	10	0
Siraha	40	31	9	32	8
Saptari	10	8	2	6	4
Total	68 (100%)	54 (79%)	14 (21%)	56 (82%)	12 (18%)

staff, document reviews, focus group discussions with the participants of the TOT, District Leadership Development Training, Community Level Training on Youth Leadership and Conflict Transformation organized by youth clubs/organizations, individual interviews with program staffs and leaders of the club, Key Informants Interview (KII) with civil society people and observation of the field programs. The interviews and Focus Group Discussions were organized according to semi structured questionnaires prepared in advance (See Annex 2).

The participants from Dhanusha and Mahottari were invited to Janakpur for the discussions because of the security vulnerability and continued strikes in those districts. The security concerns made observation of the field programs in those districts impossible whereas all (functioning) four clubs in Siraha and three out of six clubs in Saptari were visited and discussions were held with the club members on the field. The sudden strike in Saptari, Sunsari and Morang did not allow enough time to visit all six clubs in Saptari... Further, the lack of clear baseline at the beginning of the project posed a challenge to measure the change brought about by the project implementation among the youths and the community. However, effort was put to address this gap, and the participants of the FGD were asked about the level of knowledge and the relationship among dividing lines with reference to the before and after the project implementation.

IV. Achievements/Results

The section summarizes the achievements of the project implementation in the four districts in eastern Terai.

The main indicators of the project achievements are:

- The number of youths organized into youth clubs,
- Number of youths involved in youth leadership and peacebuilding trainings,
- the number and types of activities implemented by the clubs and their positive influence in communal harmony and in engaging youths into the decision making mechanisms at their community level.

The following section documents the achievements of the project to support the further step in the evaluation and analysis. The first part of the section (Section IVA) records the achievements in organization skills and capacity building of youths in the four districts where as the second

part (Section IV B) deals with the achievements of the Cooperative Action projects implemented by the local youth clubs through the seed grant provided by the SFCG.

A. Training of Trainers (ToT) and District Leadership Development Trainings

i. Main Findings:

- The project implementation was delayed for two months because of the election of the Constituent Assembly on 10 April 2008 and it formally started with the engagement visit in April 2008. As a first step, a three day workshop with SFCG field staff was conducted in June 2008 to develop a Youth Leadership Training Manual to ensure coherence in the content of the youth leadership workshops planned for the future. The training was comprised of 10 participants with equal number of male and female. A training of

<i>Training Locations</i>	<i>Total # of Participations</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Pahade</i>	<i>Madhesi</i>
Janakpur	27	23	4	9	18
Lahan	33	25	8	7	26
Katmandu ToT	34	27	7	26	8
TOTAL	94	75(79.8%)	19 (20.2%)	42(44.7%)	52(55.3%)

Trainers (ToT) was organized in August 2008 in Kathmandu. It was attended by the Youth Program Coordinator and two Associate Program Coordinators responsible for the Dhanusha/Mahottari cluster and the Saptari/Siraha cluster. Immediately after the TOT, two district level youth leadership development workshops were held in Janakpur (Dhanusha) and Lahan (Siraha) involving 60 youths from four districts Dhanusha, Mahottari, Siraha and Saptari. All these trainings/workshops lasted for three days. See table 2 for the output of the trainings.

- Every participant involved in the FGD during the evaluation said that the training was extremely useful, as it taught new things, unheard before. Those who participated in the ToT and were interviewed confirmed that the training made them capable of organizing youth leadership and conflict transformation training at the local level with minimal support from other trainers. Those who took part in the FGD said that the trainings came as “eye opener” to identify their constructive role in the community and support local level peacebuilding endeavors. The active participation of 55 youths in the youth leadership training organized in a remote village (Tinuwapatti VDC) in Siraha district clearly reveals the commitment of youths in the community towards building peace. The participants of the FGD during evaluation specifically mentioned that the trainings taught them:
 - How to organize a training on youth leadership and peacebuilding
 - How to organize youths and how youths can lead the society for peace and harmony
 - How to avoid violence among youths and how to transform conflict into peace
 - How to get away from political manipulation of the political stakeholders
 - How to analyze conflict, find its causes and address them locally
 - Realization that the youths are connectors and not dividers
 - Conflict is not bad, but when it takes violent forms, it can be destructive.
- Those participants of the ToT who were interviewed stated that their involvement in the curriculum development and the participation in the ToT had given them immense confidence in running training at the local level. They were able and ready to prove this by working as resource persons in the trainings organized by the local clubs through the seed grants.
- All the young participants to the FGD mentioned that the training and follow up activities carried out through the seed grant upgraded their role in the community. They mentioned that the training changed their perspective on community engagement and started to express concern with regards to delays in work at the community level. Such an involvement of

youths in the community affairs boosted the engagement of youth in the community decision making. The elders in the community started to recognize the role of young people in the development of the society. If before, they used to consider the youths as “a bunch of noise makers”, now their confidence towards the youth brigade has grown and they are regularly inviting them in all meetings related to community affairs.

We were in a deep slumber for long and the training provided by Search has awakened us.

Ram Aahish Chaudhary, Mahottari

Few participants present in the FGD said that, earlier, girls were not allowed to attend the community gatherings, and now are listened and their suggestions appreciated. Girls feel that they have been empowered as a result of the training. One of the girls said that she already attended community meetings more than five times in the past few months.

- It was found that the participants of the training shared their learning through formal as well as informal means. Many participants shared their learning with colleagues, friends, and relatives, and many of the clubs formally organized youth leadership and conflict transformation training for the members of the club as well as outsiders. These formal trainings organized by various youth clubs in the four districts helped to increase the knowledge and skills of 464 youths on youth leadership and conflict transformation. These youths are applying what they learnt through various activities. See annex 4 for detailed breakdown of the participants.
- Most of the participants said that the training helped them to improve their self-confidence and ability to express their opinion among adults and political leaders. The girl participants in the FGD informed that they were reluctant to speak in front of the elders and never attended meetings earlier. However, after taking part in the training, they now attend the community meetings and can express their opinion confidently.
- The empathy among youths from different ethnic/caste/religious background seems to have improved when looking at the way the participants of the FGD expressed their opinion during the evaluation on the regional conflict dynamics and on the relationship among the various backgrounds. (This is clearly evident from the selection of issues of interaction such as the caste discrimination among Madhesi community, organizing activities (such as sports) to build relationship among youths from across dividing lines. Similarly, organizing discussion between the youths involved in armed groups and other youths to understand the perspective as well as their motivation to join such groups, organizing debates among school students on issues such as inter-caste marriages, bringing more and more dalit youths and girls in the trainings and other activities organized by the clubs are some of the examples which indicates towards increased empathy of youths as a result of the project. The selection of the dalit "Dalan" (community hall) for repair also indicates their changed perception with increased the acceptance of dalit community.
- The youth clubs are organizing themselves and forming district level youth network in Dhanusha whereas the clubs in other districts are initiating dialogue to form such networks. The youth network in Dhanusha is already in the process of legal registration.

B. Cooperative Action Projects

i. Main Findings

- Out of the 20 clubs which sent participant to the District Youth leadership Workshops organized by SFCG, 18 continued partnership with SFCG and implemented community projects through the seed grants provided by SFCG. Only two clubs failed to continue the partnership. One of them brought participation to the project activities to an end immediately after the training whereas the other received the first disbursement of the seed grant and then avoided any contacts with SFCG, despite SFCG's repeated efforts to communicate with the

club. The seed grants given to the participating clubs varied from NRs 5000 to NRs 14,500. In total SFCG provided NRs 188,500 as seed grants to 18 youth clubs (four in Dhanusha, four in Mahottari, four in Siraha and six in Saptari). The programs designed and implemented by those clubs include Youth Leadership and Conflict Transformation Training (14), street/stage drama on role of youths in community peace and harmony (7), sports tournaments such as Cricket (4), Soccer (1), Volleyball (1) bringing clubs from different parts of the districts across dividing lines, peace rally (1), quiz and debate competition among school students (2), Wall Magazine Journalism training to children (1), common interest projects such as community hall construction/repair (4), road repair (1), providing electric bulbs to street polls (135 bulbs).

Pragatishil Samaj, Theliya, Saptari organized a Volleyball Tournament among youths from different villages from Saptari District. The organizers invited the Military Commander of the Madhes Virus Killers attend the program. He accepted the invitation of the local club and quite impressed with the idea. Later on, he went on to organize similar Volleyball tournament in his area and invited the club to participate in the tournament. The members of the Pragatishil Samaj have taken this as a major achievement of a youth club to transform the mindset of a Military Commander of an armed group to replicate the idea.

- The community level youth leadership and peacebuilding trainings organized through the seed grants have developed a pool of 464 youths with knowledge on basic tools of conflict transformation and peacebuilding. Further, a group of 60 youths capable of training local youths on basic concept on conflict transformation, peacebuilding and youth leadership has been developed and they are already working as multiplier youths in the community.
- The interaction program organized by the Sangharsha Youth club in Mahottari gave a platform for people divided across caste lines as a result of the inter-caste marriage between a dalit girl and high caste boy to vent out their grievances as well as dissatisfaction and synthesize them among a larger mass. The interaction program turned out to be a turning point to ease the tension between the dalit and high caste family in the village as they listened each other in front of larger gathering. After the interaction, the hostility developed as a result of the marriage slowly faded away.
- The football, volleyball and Cricket tournament organized in different communities or districts helped bring youths from across dividing lines from within the Madhesi community as well as Pahade community to play together and become friends. The evaluator also witnessed a pleasant scene of Madhesi, dalits and Pahade youths playing cricket together in two of the villages of Siraha (Tinuwapatti and Sukhipur) during the evaluation. The FGD was also discussed in the middle of the cricket ground after the game was over.
- The Shanti Bal Tatha Yuva Club in Dhanagadhi successfully brought youths involved in anti-Pahade actions during the Madhes movement 2007 into the training and later, inducted them as the members of the club. The evaluator himself discussed with the youths, in particular, during the evaluation and observed their changed behavior.
- The volleyball tournament organized by a commander of one of the armed groups in Saptari could be seen as an unintended, but a very encouraging, result of the project

V. Reflecting on results

- The ToT has helped the participants to increase their skills on handling trainings at local level and they are working as “multipliers”, spreading the knowledge and skills acquired to a wider mass of youths in the districts. The involvement of project staff in developing the manual for the district Youth Leadership development workshop has proved to be fruitful as it helped them to confidently deliver the training at the community level.
- The trainings have certainly increased the participants’ familiarity on youth leadership, conflict transformation and peacebuilding, particularly on conflict analysis, on the role of youth in social harmony and various tools of conflict transformation. During the formal as

well as informal discussions the young participants have expressed that the trainings have transformed their ways of thinking and of approaching issues.

- The youths who underwent the District Youth Leadership Trainings have become some sort of “multiplier agents”, imparting the knowledge gained through the workshops to other youths in the community. The skills and knowledge gained through the trainings is slowly helping the youth in finding space in the community decision making mechanisms. Most of them have already become regular participants and contributor of creative ideas in community meetings.
- The formation of District Youth Networks has empowered youths to voice their concerns at the district level in an organized and collective way.
- The activities under community peacebuilding projects have helped to foster a better relationship among youths and other community members across dividing lines in those districts and have set examples to other people. The concept of “building relationships through sport” or “sports for peace” across dividing lines is working well as many youths from different ethnic/religious communities among the Madhesi population and among the Pahade population are playing together and re-establishing the friendly relationship that over the past years had started fading away as a result of the increasing ethnic antagonism in many parts of the region. The successful completion of all sport tournaments without any controversy in such a conflict ridden community is a strong sign of a disciplined and dedicated youth mobilization.
- The trainings and the community projects implemented through seed grants have helped youths to realize their responsibility towards the community and their potential role in the community activities. Previously, the activities of the youth clubs were limited to playing sports tournaments; now, on the contrary, they are getting involved in many activities related to the improvement and transformation of society.
- The youths involved in the clubs are working as change agents in the community by bringing out and debating issues through the interactions, street dramas, peace rallies and other types of creative activities (such as debate competition, quiz contest, poetry contest) involving community people, especially youths and children.
- The youth clubs in Dhanusha, Mahottari and Siraha have been able to convince at least seven youths to detach themselves from armed groups and return to normal life. One of the youths is already working in a store in Janakpur for a monthly allowance of Rs 2000.
- Most of the participants of the FGD claimed that the activities of the youth clubs (the training and other activities) have engaged youths in creative and productive activities and lured them away from bad habits such as drinking, gambling and quarrelling. Although, at the moment, there are no specific data to demonstrate this success, the change in behavior is clearly seen during the interaction with young people, most of all in the Siraha district.
- The sports for peace concept seems to be gaining popularity as evidenced by the fact that one of the armed group commanders also organized such activities and invited the members of the youth club to witness the program.
- The small amount of seed grant given to each club is bringing in a short period of time greater results than expected.
- Although, not yet inducted into any community decision making bodies, the youths and their clubs are being given due recognition by the community leaders and other political stakeholders and are regularly invited to be part of the meetings and decision making process

I only realized today that we also have youths in our community who can change the face of the community and the country.

A local political leader in Bhawani Patti VDC in Mahottari after attending a program organized by Suryodaya Youth Club on caste discrimination

in the community. They are earning the respect of the community by utilizing the seed grant support to improve community infrastructures.

- The empathy among youths from different ethnic background is slowly increasing.

VI. Challenges

Some challenges remain to improve the effectiveness of the project in the future and allow a greater impact on youths. Some of the shortcomings/challenges observed during the evaluation are:

- The lack of a baseline assessment conducted prior to the implementation of the project triggered difficulties in measuring in comparative terms the progress and change brought about by the project during its implementation.
- Although the project agreement was signed on 1 February 2008, the actual implementation of the project was delayed by the election of the Constituent Assembly in April 2008 as before the situation was considered not favorable for the realization of the project. Moreover, many obstacles to the project implementation plan were encountered because of the frequent strikes in the region.
- The mapping of the youth clubs has been carried out but the data is yet to be compiled
- We have not been able to implement a formal process for seed grant disbursement to the youth clubs. Different amounts have been given to different youth clubs without proper justification. The request for the seed grant was not accompanied with the minutes of the club meeting and this lead to complications once the fund was given to individuals from the clubs.
- In some cases, our management of seed grant seems to develop internal conflict among the youth club members. Jana Jagriti YC has been split into two, whereas one of the club members of Savyata Batabaran YC disappeared with the first installment of the grant and the other members are questioning the money disbursement methodology. If the seed grant would be bigger, the conflict could reach higher scale, thus affecting the project implementation. The main reasons for the described difficulties are linked to the lack of clubs' bank accounts, the lack of registration of the clubs, and the lack of clear financial and project implementation policies.
- The trainings organized at the community level are too short (most of them a one day program) and include of mixture of information on human rights, peacebuilding/CGA/conflict transformation and leadership development, lacking focus.
- There is lack of clear understanding regarding the financial management of the project between actors involved in fund release, fund disbursement/financial reporting.
- The major objective of the project, bridging the gap among youths across dividing lines of Madhesi and Pahade, has become a secondary priority. This was, to some extent a result of the district leadership training. The clubs, in general, seem to put little effort on this topic, probably linked to the larger selection of Madhesi VDCs for the project implementation. However, the project has been successful in bridging the gap among the youths from different castes/religion within the Madeshi population.
- The location of staff (for example the VDCs in Saptari) is often not convenient and too remote, reducing their accessibility. .
- The seed grant was disbursed only in the last quarter of the project. This led to a hastier designing and implementation of the community peacebuilding projects. As a result, at the time of evaluation, some of the projects were not yet completed and some were completed in a rush.
- The sport festivals organized as part of the peacebuilding endeavors can improve further in the deliverance of messages of friendship and solidarity among the winners and losers, rather than having a celebrating winner and a defeated loser.
- The project has raised the expectations among youths in the region, especially among those who are directly or indirectly benefiting from the project, and it would be a set back for those

youths, should the project not be continued in the future. SFCG faces now the major challenge to define how to continue the work started, maintain the energy the project produced among young people and continue putting effort towards building peace and bridging the attitudes and the behaviors of young people from across dividing lines.

VII. Conclusion and Recommendations

Despite the outlined challenges, the project was able to achieve the intended results to a large extent. As already mentioned, it is unrealistic to expect major behavioral changes among youths in a conflict ridden society in a short period of time and through a small project. However, the project was quite successful in its aim of enhancing the level of knowledge and mobilize youths towards peacebuilding. The youth clubs, originally focusing only on playing sports tournament, have now started working as change agents of society. Such change of approach among the youths in the community has obliged the adults to realize the potential role of the youths in social transformation, and otherwise considered as the 'bunch of noise makers' by the adults.

The project has also contributed to develop the knowledge of the youngsters belonging to the clubs. The project has already achieved to form a group of more than 400 youths with some knowledge of conflict transformation/peacebuilding practices and with some conflict analysis capacity and mediation skills. Although, not formally involved into any local level decision making mechanisms, the recognition of the youths' potential role in community building has already paved the way for the inclusion of the youth representatives in the constitution of the local government bodies (especially VDCs), local peace committees (LPCs) and other community organizations such as Community forest Users' Committees (CFUGs), School Management Committees, and other civil society mechanisms in the days to come.

The projects implemented by the clubs thanks to the seed grants given by SFCG have played a vital role in mobilizing the youths in the community. They have also managed to bring youths from different dividing lines together and to be part of the activities organized by the clubs and build relationships. The evaluation has shown that the project has given a new hope among youths in Terai and shown them a new path of creativity, organization and positive change.

The following recommendations are meant to further improve the project achievements in the future.

- It is important for SFCG to give continuity to the project in the districts with wider reach among youths in the region. It will be a mistake to put an end to the project and leave the youths in a limbo, at the beginning of their proactive role of change agent in their community.
- SFCG needs to avoid unnecessary delay (except in unavoidable circumstances) in project implementation. This will help achieving the desired results.
- It is advisable to carry out a baseline survey before the implementation of the project to allow the monitoring of the progress of the project and of the result achieved.
- SFCG needs to develop clear financial and project implementation mechanisms and explain them clearly to all concerned field staff and partners.
- The field based staff should constantly monitor the internal dynamics of the youth clubs to allow a timely response to conflicts occurring within the club.
- Priority needs to be given in selecting youth clubs with mixed population of Madhesi and Pahade youths and in selecting working VDCs that include VDCs with mixed population (Madhesi and Pahade).
- It is better to work with locally registered partners, with a bank account to administer the seed grant. This may help minimizing financial conflicts in the clubs.
- The length of the training should be extended, up to five days to make it more intensive.
- The training content should focus on one specific issue only.

- There is a need to improve the database management system to be able to measure results appropriately.
- There is a need for continuing the project to sustain momentum. The discontinuity could cause frustration among the youths involved and lead them to return to their previous unproductive (or negatively productive) activities.
- It is important to find innovative approaches to transform the sports activities into peacebuilding tools so that the winner-loser approach will be dominated by a more harmonious winner-winner approach.

ANNEXES

Annex-One

TOR of the Evaluation and Evaluation Plan/Time Frame Terms of Reference for the Evaluation of NED Project “Enhancing Youth Participation in Decision Making Level”

These are the Terms of Reference for Evaluation of the project “Enhancing Youth Participation in Decision Making Level” implemented by Search for Common Ground Nepal. The project is funded by the National Endowment for Democracy.

Background and Project Summary

During the project implementation period, many significant changes in Nepal’s political scene have occurred, impacting on the effective implementation of the project activities. Despite the successful completion of the Constituent Assembly elections and the formation of a Government lead by the Community Party of Nepal - Maoist, many challenges remain at the national and regional level.

Despite, several political breakthroughs in the past couple of months, the Terai still remains vulnerable to violence. There are continuous incidents of violence perpetrated by different armed groups and political factions demanding that the entire Terai be an autonomous, Madhes region. It has been reported that there are 43 armed groups currently operating in Terai. These splinter groups are increasingly motivating and attracting unemployed youths to join them into the culture of violence. Furthermore, newspaper reports that these factions have decided to form an alliance to intensify their fighting and compel the Government to respond to their demands. In an effort to have dialogue with all rebels/insurgents, the Government has formed a Peace Dialogue Team led by the Minister of Peace and Reconstruction to talk with the rebels or the armed groups. The Ministry has already organized some rounds of talks with the groups and signed an interim agreement to continue the dialogue and reach a logical conclusion. In the meantime, the presence of the armed groups in Terai and the absence of a strong Government have made the security situation highly vulnerable.. Such a situation in Eastern Terai is threatening the peace process: the events taking place there will probably affect the entire country.

There are reports of youth and children being exploited by political parties and armed groups. The project areas selected by SFCG continue to be the most affected and are proving to be a demanding environment to work in. At the same time, the challenges faced by the youths in these regions, enhance the relevance and importance of this project to support youth participation in positive decision making, and to foster democratization at the local level.

Program Objective

The aim of the project is to build leadership capacities of youths, for them to be able to analyze and address the root causes of conflict, and to foster democratization at the community level in four districts of Eastern Terai, namely Saptari, Siraha, Mohattari and Dhanusha.

The specific objectives of the project are to:

- a. Build leadership capacities of young people to analyze the root causes of conflict and address them in their communities;
- b. Bring young people together from across dividing lines to foster tolerance, acceptance and cooperation;
- c. Facilitate channels for youth participation in community decision-making by increasing receptiveness of local government institutions.

Staffing: Four new staff members have been recruited to implement the project at the field level, with two associate program coordinators covering two districts each. Each is supported by a community mobilizer. The team includes three people of Madhesi origin and one of Pahade origin.

Organizational goal:

SFCG is committed to conduct programmatic evaluations in order to maximize the effectiveness of the programming and engage in continuous improvement and learning within programmes and across the organization.

Evaluation Objective:

The primary objective of this evaluation is to reveal the results of the project funded by National Endowment for Democracy. It should serve to inform the program leadership and staff to make decisions on how to move SFCG's program in eastern Terai further, both in terms of programmatic objectives and of overall methodologies. Due to a deteriorating security situation and a mutating political scenario, it is helpful to identify what changes have occurred thanks to SFCG's program.

Within the short duration of the program implementation, it might not be possible to see a significant impact of the project. SFCG takes this program as entry point of its deeper and wider engagement in the region in community peace building programs with youth and media. This evaluation will serve as a learning exercise with a specific project evaluation component in it.

The overall objective of this evaluation is to understand SFCG's program impact in the span of 18 months among targeted youths

Specific Objective:

- To Build leadership capacities of young people to analyze the root causes of conflict and address them in their communities;

In what capacity are young people taking leadership role in the community level?

Have youth-club members and youths who have participated in the training developed the capacity to analyze the root causes of conflict?

Are there any specific incidences in which youths played a positive role in address existing conflict and transformed it?

After the implementation of program in the targeted areas (youth clubs and groups), what percentage of youths have developed their leadership capacity? Are they taking leading role in the community activities? Have they become active?

- To bring young people from across dividing lines together and foster tolerance, acceptance and cooperation;

What kinds of dividing lines exist in the society and how did they impact on youths?

Is SFCG successful in brining youth across the dividing lines?

Is there less incidence of violence among the youths?

Is there any significant cooperation among the villagers (adult) with youth?

Has there been initiation of cooperative actions taken by youths across the dividing lines?

Is there less incidence of violence in the targeted areas?

- To facilitate channels for youth participation in community decision-making by increasing receptiveness of local government institutions.

Are they invited in Community level events and activities?
 Do they participate?
 Do they feel heard?
 Are youth participating in community level decision making?
 Are they involved in the community level work?
 Has there been any coordination with the local government institution in our project areas?
 Is there any village level advisory council formed?

Methodology:

After the initial consultations with the field staff and coordinators of the program; the following methods were used to collect the information for the evaluation.

- Document review (desk study)
- Interviews with participants of the workshops and key informants
- Focus Groups discussion with youth clubs and network members.
- Questionnaires/Surveys; semi-structured questions will be used for documenting information with key informants.
- Observation of the field program

Name of the Activities	No of days	Responsible Staff	Date	Remarks
Initial study of the proposal and reports	3	D& M E Coordinator	January 2009	Understanding the basic information of the project
Designing the evaluation	3	„	3-4 Feb 2009	Methodology and communication with field staff
Field Visit	4	D & M E coordinator, Youth Coordinator, APCs and CM	9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 Feb 2009	Data collection and information gathering
Report writing	2	DM& E coordinator	27 Feb 2007	Compiling and submission

Annex-Two

Questionnaires used for interviews and FGDs for NED Project Evaluation (2009)

1. Questions for the APCs and their assistants
 - 1.1 What are the criteria for selection of VDCs?
 - 1.2 What are the process and criteria for the participants' selection? What do you mean by youth?
 - 1.3 How do you keep track of the project activities
 - 1.4 How do you administer the seed grant approval process?
 - 1.5 How do you monitor the implementation of the seed grant project?
 - 1.6 How do those projects bring people across dividing lines together?
 - 1.7 Have you seen any significant achievement/incident as a result of our initiative?
 - 1.8 Have you experienced any complications or problems in administering the seed grants or selecting the working VDCs?
 - 1.9 How are you connecting yourself with them now??
 - 1.10 How do you coordinate your work with other district level stakeholders (GOs and NGOs)?
2. Questions for the Participants of Training of Trainers (ToT)
 - 2.1 What did you learn from the training?
 - 2.2 How did you apply the learning from the training into practice? Examples.
 - 2.3 How many leadership training did you conduct until this date? How many people did you train in total?
 - 2.4 Did you share your skills with individuals or organizations outside the Search Project? Examples.
 - 2.5 Did the skills gained through the training have brought any changes in your role in community?
3. Questions for the Participants of Leadership Development Workshops
 - 3.1 What did you learn from the training?
 - 3.2 How have you applied the learning into practice?
 - 3.3 Do you learn some specific skills through the training? If yes, what are those?
 - 3.4 How important is the training to improve your role in community/village decision making process?
 - 3.5 Have you been inducted into any local level decision making bodies as a result of the knowledge gained from the training? Do you feel heard in those mechanisms?
 - 3.6 Have you shared the knowledge gained from the training with other people around you?
4. Questions for the Members of Youth Clubs
 - 4.1 Did the training bring any difference in your working approach?
 - 4.2 Have you observed any changes in the role of the club in making decisions at the community level or contributing to community activities?
 - 4.3 Have you received seed grants from SFCCG?
 - 4.4 If yes, how much and for what purpose?
 - 4.5 How do you prepare projects? What are the criteria?
 - 4.6 What types of projects you have implemented after the training?
 - 4.7 What was the major objective of implementing the project?
 - 4.8 Who are the beneficiaries of the projects?
 - 4.9 Why do you organize such programs?
 - 4.10 What activities are you implementing currently?
 - 4.11 Do you coordinate your work with other organizations or offices??

Annex-Three

Selected Youth Clubs for Implementing Community Peacebuilding Projects

Dhanusha District

1. Shree Saleha Youth Club, Dabdiha VDC - 3, Akaura
2. Om Shanti Sports Yuva Club, Gathaguthi VDC -1, Lagma
3. Santa Janta Pustakalaya, Naukhor Prasahi VDC - 6
4. Shavyta Batabaran Yuva Club, Yagya Bhumi VDC- 9
5. Brahma Baba and Biswakarma Youth Club, Laxmipur Bageba VDC - 9

Mahottari District

1. Shree Hanuman Yuva Club, Bathnaha VDC- 6
2. Shree Maharani Yuva Club, Bijulpura VDC - 9
3. Shree Suryodaya Yuva Club, Samshi VDC - 7
4. Yuva Sangharsha Club, Vatauliya VDC - 1
5. Shree Krishna Yuva Club, Suga Bhawani Patti VDC - 1

Saptari District

1. Asal Saathi Yuva Club, Ghoghanpur VDC – 5, Maleth
2. Shree Gorraj Janjagriti Yuva Club, Kamalpur VDC - 9
3. United Youth Club, Jagatpur VDC - 1
4. Paribartanshil Dalit Yuva Club, Kanchanpur VDC- 1
5. Shree Pragatishil Samaj, Thelia VDC - ?
6. Koshi Janajagaran Yuva Club , Pipra Purba VDC - 2

Siraha District

1. Janjyoti Yuva Samaj, Chandrapatti VDC – 4, Vidyanagar
2. Janajagriti Yuva Club/Jana Jagriti Yuva Kendra, Sukhipur VDC - 3
3. Shanti Bal Tatha Yuva Samuha, Dhangadhi VDC -3, Nayanpur
4. Jankalyan Yuva Club, Tenuwapatti VDC - 1

Annex 4

TABLE 2: TRAINING ORGANIZED THROUGH SEED GRANTS							
<i>Youth Org</i>	<i>SG Amount</i>	<i>List of activities other than training</i>	<i>Participants</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Madhesi</i>	<i>Pahade</i>
Saleha	10,000	Stage Drama, Cricket team formation	20	20	0	20	0
Om Shanty	10,000	Supply electric bulb to 135 street polls, Organize Cricket team, bought badminton racket and shuttle	40	31	9	40	0
B & B	11060	Community Hall under construction	-	-	-	-	-
Savyata Batabaran*	5,000	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	Na
Maharani	10,000	Community Hall	35	35	0	35	0
Sangharsha	10,000	Dalit Dalan (Community Hall Roof Repair)	-	-	-	-	-
Suryodaya	10,000	Road construction	24	17	7	24	0
Shree Krishna	11,440	Interaction program and debate competition	-	-	-	-	-
Hanuman	10,000	Community Hall construction (incomplete)	30	24	6	30	0
Shanti Bal Tatha Yuva	9,000	-	39	17	22	21	18
Jana Jagriti	14,500	Cricket Tournament	43	28	15		
Jana Jyoti	14,500	Quiz Contest, Joint Cricket Tournament					
Jana Kalyan	5,000	Cricket Tournament	55	51	4	55	0
Pragatishil	13,000	Volleyball tournament	64	52	12	64	0
United	10,000	5 Street Drama	41	29	12	41	0
Paribartanshil	10,000		With gaur raja				
Koshi Jagaran	10,000	Football Tournament	40	23	17	28	12
Gaur Raja Jana Jagriti	10,000	3 days Wall Magazine Journalism Training	33	23	10	28	5
Asal Sathi	10,000	Peace rally, Street Drama	-	-	-	-	-
	188,500		464	350	114	429	35

* The club received Rs 5,000 for organizing a football tournament, but did not organize the activity and remained out of contact.