SAFERWORLD

PREVENTING VIOLENT CONFLICT. BUILDING SAFER LIVES

SAFERWORLD IN NEPAL

INTRODUCTION

The 2006 Comprehensive Peace Agreement ended a decade-long conflict in Nepal. The final formal component of this process was a new constitution, promulgated in September 2015. While welcomed by many, some of the constitutional provisions led to protests, particularly in areas already affected by conflict and fragility, including the Terai's southern plains bordering India. The new constitution ushers in a new form of governance that devolves power to federal states. However the delineation of federal states and the deciding of federal capitals continue to be politically contested. Additionally, Nepal is still recovering from a devastating series of earthquakes that hit the country in April and May 2015.

Post-earthquake, the Constituent Assembly jump-started its progress on drafting Nepal's new constitution, given the increasing pressure from within Nepal and externally to deliver after severe delays. And after almost a decade, the new constitution came into effect on September 2015. Violent political protests followed in many parts of Nepal, particularly in the Terai and Far and Mid-West regions. Dissatisfaction with federal delineation of states, state restructuring, electoral provisions and citizenship rights were all highlighted as contentious issues. For many, the new constitution appeared to embed entrenched social stratifications in Nepali society. Protests against inequalities based on caste, class, labour, ethnicity and gender surfaced on a larger scale than anticipated. Within six months 59 people including security personnel and civilians had died.

The road ahead for Nepal seems rocky on two fronts: persisting inability of political actors and the state to effectively address issues of social exclusion and marginalisation; and, whether the state can now create a conducive environment for economic development and generating employment opportunities, particularly since the youth bulge continues to grow in the next decade. It is vital to seize opportunities offered by the new constitution to build sustainable peace in Nepal.

SAFERWORLD'S ACHIEVEMENTS IN NEPAL

- Pioneered a community safety programme and informed other national and international actors approach to public security and conflict prevention.
- Ensured local beneficiaries effectively advocated with the government and police for the establishment of police posts, deployment of women police officers and receiving Village Development Committee (VDC) grants.
- Provided technical support to develop the National Action Plan of United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820, which focus on women, peace and security.

- Championed conflict-sensitive approaches to development. Provided multiple trainings to national, district and VDC-level civil society, community members and international actors.
- Worked with the Nepal Police to support their efforts to promote democratic policing and conduct a monitoring and evaluation needs assessment.
- Identified large numbers of married women and girls deprived of citizenship certificates as a key security threat and facilitated the acquisition of citizenship certificates for more than 400 women and girls in the Far West region.
- Developed innovative tools for monitoring and evaluation which promote community-based approaches to tracking progress and change whilst training local communities in the process.

SAFERWORLD IN NEPAL AT A GLANCE

WE DIRECTLY REACHED

41,005

COMMUNITY MEMBERS, INCLUDING

21,684 WOMEN

19,321 MEN

WE REACHED MORE THAN

20

DISTRICTS ACROSS FIVE DEVELOPMENT REGIONS WITH OUR ADVOCACY IN MORE THAN

40

LOCATIONS

WE WORKED IN

11

DISTRICTS OF NEPAL

WE HAVE PUBLISHED

27

PUBLICATIONS SINCE 2007

ABOUT US

" We believe that everyone should be able to lead peaceful, fulfilling lives, free from fear and insecurity."

Saferworld is an independent international organisation working to prevent violent conflict and build safer lives. We are a not-for-profit organisation with programmes in 20 countries and territories across Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Europe. In Asia, Saferworld works in Bangladesh, Myanmar, Nepal and Pakistan and has presence in Afghanistan, Sri Lanka and India. Saferworld has been working in Nepal since 2009 on issues of community safety and policing, gender, peace and security, conflict-sensitive development and justice as prevention.

Our goal is to ensure that government actors, civil society and communities engage constructively to create social, political and institutional conditions that enable people, including vulnerable groups, to fulfill their aspirations and lead lives free from fear, conflict and insecurities.

To do this, we:

- enable communities and civil society to engage constructively with government stakeholders to contribute to more **effective, accountable and transparent governance and security provisions**
- improve people's capacities to identify and resolve their local security concerns to prevent and manage risks associated with conflict and violence through **community safety approaches**
- empower communities, youth, civil society and government stakeholders to **advocate against and address gender and social inequalities**, and change traditional concepts, attitudes and behaviour that perpetuate gender and social inequalities
- introduce and engage in **conflict-sensitive local development practices** in collaboration with local development stakeholders including VDCs, community based organisations and civil society organisations
- improve capacity to undertake **conflict analysis** and identify **early warning mechanisms** in Nepal

OUR APPROACH

STRENGTHENING SOCIAL COHESION BY BRINGING TOGETHER CONFLICTING AND AT-RISK GROUPS

Saferworld uses a people-centred approach to tackle issues causing insecurity, whether they emerge from peace, security or development deficits. We use a multi-level approach which combines national advocacy with activities and technical support to peace and security structures in districts and villages. Saferworld's experience shows that using evidence from local interventions increases the effectiveness of advocacy for structural change nationally and internationally. Our programme therefore seeks to use evidence and analysis from our work with communities to influence the policies and legislative agendas of the Nepali government, state security agencies including the police, civil society and international donors. Core values that underpin our work include conflict sensitivity and gender sensitivity.

Saferworld uses its community safety approach to enable communities to carry out development activities in collaboration with local authorities in an inclusive and participatory manner. We encourage social cohesion – defined simply as the willingness of community members to cooperate with one another – by bringing together (potentially) conflicting, marginalised and vulnerable groups in 15 VDCs across the five districts of Nepal.

- We facilitate initial group discussions emphasising collaborative dialogue and development. This mutually enhances the capacity of communities to voice their needs and concerns, including community-based organisations, civil society organisations and local authorities.
- We then support community members to engage, contribute and take ownership of inclusive, local development processes by challenging social and cultural malpractices, traditional norms and values through action.
- We share learning and best practices with local stakeholders to demonstrate the importance of conflict-sensitive practice in local development.

OUR WORK

A COOPERATIVE APPROACH TO COMMUNITY SAFETY

Insecurities at local and national levels create fear among people and obstruct broader development. This creates a cycle of reduced opportunities, poverty and migration. Community safety is a bottom-up approach that puts people at the centre of security and governance initiatives. Working with a wide range of government and civil society stakeholders, our approach seeks to ensure that the security concerns of all women, men, girls, boys and sexual and gender minorities are heard and addressed by relevant authorities such as the police, Women and Children Development Offices and VDCs, among others.

The Nepal Police have implemented community policing for more than 30 years. However police initiatives have faced multiple challenges – primarily ongoing conflict, political instability and limited resources allocated to community-based policing initiatives. Addressing these challenges internally remains a key issue for the Nepal Police. Importantly, there needs to be greater civic awareness about democratic policing and community security to ensure that all Nepalis are able to contribute towards and access security provisions.

WHAT WE DO

In partnership with local organisations, Saferworld has worked in eight districts of Nepal to improve social cohesion and community safety. We support local people, including youth, people affected by conflict, and vulnerable and marginalised individuals and groups to engage with the police and local authorities to tackle local insecurity concerns together. We work with civil society to advocate for more gender-responsive, socially inclusive, conflict sensitive, transparent, and accountable security, justice and local governance provisions. We use findings from these projects to influence district and national level policy and practice.

Conflict analyses in the eight districts Saferworld works in identified key areas for action including establishing mechanisms that ensure equal and increased participation of different community groups within VDCs in decision-making and implementation processes. We worked in 21 VDCs, with communities and their local police and government authorities to enhance trust and create a conducive atmosphere for social cohesion and development. We have seen tangible improvements within communities.

At the national level we directly engaged with the Nepal Police Research and Planning Directorate to promote democratic policing and evidence-based investigation. We shared best practice in community policing from other regions in Asia as well as Northern Ireland.

We promote inclusive local planning and implementation of activities, supporting communities to identify their pressing safety and development concerns. We enable communities to come up with their own unique actions to address concerns – through community mobilisation, collaboration with civil society organisations, and advocacy with local government entities.

In Pahalmanpur VDC, Kailali district, Saferworld has supported more than 400 women to acquire citizenship in collaboration with district authorities. Our conflict analysis identified that more than 250 married women were deprived of citizenship and unable to secure the necessary documents due to lack of awareness and family support. Saferworld conducted awareness-raising campaigns and collected names of those without citizenship to advocate with local government.

Community members in Ayodhyanagar and Kachanapur VDC lived with fear and insecurity because of a high prevalence of crime coupled with an absence of a police post to assure security. Additionally, local people had negative perceptions of security forces as a result of their role during the armed conflict which included making arbitrary arrests and a lack of responsiveness to local safety concerns.

Saferworld successfully supported local communities to advocate with district authorities to establish a police post. We then supported community members and local police to conduct community outreach activities including collaborative dialogue to enhance trust and mutual respect between communities and the police. In 2015 during unrest in Terai, community members saved the Ayodhyanagar police post from a fire outbreak. We advocated for deploying women police in Uttarganga VDC, Surkhet district to improve women's access to justice.

ADDRESSING GENDER AND SOCIAL INEQUALITIES

Two ward settlements in Laukahi VDC, Sunsari have high populations of Uraw – a highly marginalised and poor caste group in Nepal. Uraw in Laukahi VDC are either Hindus or Christians, which has resulted in frequent eruptions of community-level conflicts over accusations of witchcraft, land conflicts and interpersonal disagreements. Saferworld has held a series of meetings, dialogues and individual and group consultations to promote intracommunal harmony and reconciliation. This resulted in acceptance of religious differences and reduced tensions, evident from a decreased number of cases brought to local police.

1 Central Department of Sociology/Anthropology (CDSA) (2014), 'The Nepal Multidimensional Social Inclusion Index: Diversity and Agenda for Inclusive Development' (Kathmandu: CDSA/Tribhuvan University)

2 Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction (MoPR) and Saathi (2012), 'Nepal National Action Plan on Implementation of the UNSCRs 1325 and 1820 First Year Monitoring Report 2012' (Kathmandu: MoPR and Saathi)

3 Harmful traditional practice that restricts menstruating women and girls for 4 days of their menstruation to unsafe sheds outside of their homes and bans them from coming into contact with men and public resources

Women in Nepal make up over half of the country's population of 27.8 million people. The national female literacy rate stands at 57.4 per cent, compared to 75 per cent for men. Less than 25 per cent of women own land[1] and only one in seven bureaucrats is a woman within the current Nepali civil service. Women's participation in the judiciary stands at an average of 2.3 per cent.[2]

In Nepal, men are considered superior and hold authority in public leadership roles and within the family. These patriarchal values underpin socioeconomic and cultural practices that make women, girls, sexual and gender minorities vulnerable to violence. Practices such as dowries, chhaupadi[3] and preference for having sons make it difficult for women to have an equal place in society. Inadequate institutional responses from service providers often deter reporting against violence, especially sexual violence perpetrated by men. These gendered barriers perpetuate violence against women and prevent women from taking up decision-making positions in all state bodies whether locally or nationally.

Although the Government of Nepal is improving its prioritisation of gender equality in the new constitution, gender-based social inequalities and violence continue to exist as implementation of laws and policies are often weak or inadequate.

WHAT WE DO

Understanding the connections between gender, peace and security is a vital part of effectively tackling violent conflict and insecurity. In Nepal, gender has been at the heart of every Saferworld project since 2009. We pioneered research that explored widely-held ideas about what it means to be 'a man', including the use of violence and its impact on sexual and gender-based violence in Nepal using participatory learning methods.

We explored needs and concerns of then-Maoist Army combatants – the recommendations of which fed into the Technical Committee for Supervision for Integration and Rehabilitation of Maoist Army combatants and the development of the Nepali National Action Plan on United National Council Resolutions (UNSCR) 1325 and 1820 on women, peace and security. Our community safety projects have focused on identifying and improving local safety and security concerns for women and men.

We partnered with the Nepal Police to produce a docudrama that showcases the effective role of women police officers in public security provisions. We have produced research reports that look at women's insecurities in the workplace and have conducted gender analyses within multiple conflict assessments since 2013.

Our gender sensitivity resource pack for advocacy and outreach within community safety programmes supports capacity-building of civil society at district and national levels so they can promote gender-responsive public security provisions. We also serve as technical advisers to the Nepal MenEngage Alliance, an alliance of more than 100 NGOs working on gender equality in Nepal.

SUPPORTING DEMOCRATIC, ACCOUNTABLE AND TRANSPARENT GOVERNANCE

An inclusive, accountable and transparent local government is needed to address drivers of conflict. Enhanced citizen representation in local governance processes was interrupted in 2002 when the then King dissolved the elected local government and gave power to remote officials indifferent to local public opinion. Rather than an elected local government, a 'multi-party mechanism' was established to make decisions on local development and to represent peoples' voices in governance processes. With increased public corruption, politicisation of the development budget and a lack of responsive public services, the multi-party mechanism has failed to meet citizens' needs. The majority of citizens do not challenge official governance structures but rather rely on informal means, such as personal connections, to gain access to services and resources. As a result local development processes are dominated by corruption and lack of transparency.

WHAT WE DO

Accountable and responsive government requires participatory and active citizen engagement, including inclusive and strengthened partnerships between civil society and government. Saferworld is working with rural communities, marginalised and vulnerable social groups and Nepali civil society to encourage active citizenry and inclusive participation in local governance to promote accountable and responsive public services. We are working with a range of donors to develop new and conflict-sensitive approaches to governance programming in Nepal, informed by peacebuilding need, theory and practice.

Nepal is a candidate country to join the Open Government Partnership (OGP) – a multilateral agreement that aims to secure concrete commitments from governments to promote transparency, empower citizens, fight corruption, and harness new technologies to strengthen governance. We are collaborating and empowering civil society, media, business community and political actors to adhere the OGP principles.

BUILDING LOCAL CAPACITIES FOR PEACE

In partnership with NepalMonitor.org – Collective Campaign for Peace's (COCAP) online portal – Saferworld has coordinated and published an online blog that produces quarterly collective conflict analyses. These quarterly reports track early warning information on various themes identified by local civil society groups namely peacebuilding NGOs such as the Peace Action Group – Nepal (in the Eastern region), Nepal Madhesh Foundation (in the Terai), Informal Service Center (INSEC), academic departments such as the Conflict and Peace Studies Department at Mid-Western University, and regional think tank Centre for South Asian Studies.

There are six main themes: governance, social cohesion/ tensions, political tensions/mobilisations, resource-based tensions, issues related to access to justice/transitional justice, and challenges related to post-earthquake aid distribution. Blog contributors have received multiple trainings from Saferworld since late 2013 and have produced regular reports since early 2015.

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For further information about us and our work, please visit **www.saferworld.org.uk/Nepal**, email us at **general@saferworld.org.uk**, follow us on Twitter (@Saferworld) or like our Facebook page (Facebook.com/Saferworld).

You can keep up-to-date with our work by signing up for email alerts at **www.saferworld.org.uk/stay-informed**.

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