

Towards a New Nepal

Youth Acting for Human Rights, Transforming Conflicts and Building Peace



Global Youth Connect

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Our mission is to build and support a community of youth who are actively promoting and protecting human rights, and to educate and inspire the next generation to work for peaceful change.

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Dear Friends:

Much damage was done in Nepal during the so-called "People's War," a decade-long civil war between Maoist rebels and the Nepali government. As a result, Nepal's children and youth have paid a heavy price. From being recruited to fight to fleeing their homes and losing family members, the impact of the conflict will continue to resonate for some time.

Furthermore, in their lifetime, Nepali youth saw democracy thwarted by their king. But they also experienced the power of protest to end autocratic rule. Too many youth have also experienced the effects of entrenched discrimination, exploitation and poverty. At the dawn of a "New Nepal," youth live at a crossroads between conflict and peace, filled with hope and promise, anger and fear.

The end of armed hostilities is only the start of resolving the country's deep-rooted social and political problems. Much work remains to be done to bring a true peace to Nepal. Inclusive and broad human rights changes must underpin the formal peace process.

At this critical moment of time when the very fabric of peace is being negotiated and woven together, it is particularly important to listen to the voices and perspectives of Nepal's youth. Approximately 46% of Nepal's population is under the age of 18. They will inherit the long-term effects of violent conflict and human rights abuse. Furthermore, changes underway in the political, economic and social structure will profoundly impact the country's ability to prevent future conflicts from arising. As such, youth have a vital stake in working towards development, peace and stability in Nepal.

*It is for these reasons that **Global Youth Connect (GYC)** partnered with **Backward Society Education (BASE)** to work with young human rights defenders who are committed to promoting constructive, non-violent ways of dealing with conflict and to protecting human rights in their communities. GYC and BASE know that youth must be given the tools to serve as active peacemakers – not as passive bystanders to conflict and war.*

In this report, we share some initial steps taken by our organizations to build the capacity of a diverse group of young leaders to act together for human rights, conflict transformation and peace. We hope this project will serve as a model for similar projects and an inspiration for others who wish to educate for peace.

*This program would not have been possible without the support of our funders -- the **United States Institute for Peace** and the **Third Millennium Foundation**. We would also like to especially thank Vahidin Omanovic, Muny Chhit and Joseph Nkurunziza, for traveling to Nepal to share their peacebuilding experiences in Bosnia, Cambodia and Rwanda, respectively.*

Finally and most importantly, we strongly encourage government and civil society leaders in Nepal and around the world to increase the level of resources allocated to projects which engage youth in human rights, conflict resolution and peacebuilding. In Nepal, this is particularly needed at the grassroots level among vulnerable and traditionally-marginalized communities in the Tarai region.

Best wishes,



Jennifer Kloes
Executive Director
Global Youth Connect

Towards a New Nepal

Youth Acting for Human Rights, Transforming Conflicts and Building Peace

Faced with the unacceptable consequences of decades of exploitation, discrimination, and poverty, Nepal's youth have often taken it upon themselves to seek social change. As the country now enters a period of intense and rapid transformation, there is an air of hope among youth that the building blocks for sustainable peace will be put into place. But many youth are also afraid that the reforms will be insufficient, the peace will not hold and that the county will slide back into violence. As the dust of the Maoist conflict begins to settle, one path to peace must not be overlooked: **the potential of youth to act as peacemakers at the grassroots level.**

The violent involvement of youth in the Nepali conflict is one sign that insufficient resources have been leveraged to provide young people with peaceful alternatives to pursue social justice. More than 4,500 Maoist rebels were under the age of 18 when they began fighting. While many were forcibly recruited, for some, the choice to fight was a perceived necessity, a desperate and urgent response to a government which, for too long, has failed to create an atmosphere of respect for human dignity and the protection for fundamental rights.

At the same time, the non-violent leadership of Nepali youth has also helped win important human rights victories. In April 2006, large numbers of youth marched peacefully on the streets of Kathmandu to demand King Gyanendra relinquish the power he had stolen from Nepal's people. Youth risked their lives, refusing to join the ranks of the Maoist rebels despite the potential risks that standing up might pose to themselves and their families. Young activists have been working tirelessly at the grassroots level to provide basic services to their communities -- such as education, health care and opportunities for economic development -- and to empower oppressed groups to understand and claim their human

rights. On a daily basis, these young leaders encourage their peers to walk with them on the journey to peace by holding workshops, organizing events, forming youth clubs and creating projects to educate and employ youth. Despite the overwhelming systemic challenges they often face, the efforts of these young human rights defenders have made a difference. Their courage has brought hope to many, even at the darkest and most difficult periods of conflict.



Nepali youth activists from across the country gather in Nepalgunj to discuss conflict transformation, human rights and youth empowerment

Young activists have been working tirelessly at the grassroots level to provide basic services to their communities and to empower exploited and oppressed groups to understand and claim their human rights.

Nepal has entered a promising period of post-conflict transition: the war is over, democracy has been reinstated, a peace process is underway and elections for a Constituent Assembly charged with creating a new constitution and deciding the fate of the monarchy are scheduled for November 2007. But this transition remains tenuous. As GYC has seen in other post-conflict zones such as Bosnia, Cambodia and Rwanda, the road to peace is fraught with the challenges of addressing deep-rooted, historical grievances

and can be paralyzed by uneven and slow progress, creating a fertile atmosphere for new conflicts to take hold.

Such fractures are already evident just less than one year after the signing of a comprehensive peace agreement. Nepal is grappling with tensions in the Tarai region resulting from demands for greater political inclusion of the Madhesi community. At the writing of this report, the Maoists have withdrawn from the government; among other demands they wish to see an immediate end to the monarchy. This move is prompting concerns that the entire peace process may collapse. There is anxiety surrounding the indefinitely postponed elections for a Constituent Assembly, a body to be charged with drafting a new constitution for Nepal. Clearly, the post-conflict landscape in Nepal is dotted with potential landmines.

Recognizing that approximately half of all post-conflict nations slide back into violence, it is clear that Nepal cannot afford to ignore the post-conflict concerns of youth. These include reintegrating those youth who were fighting, meeting the needs of child and youth victims of the conflict, and stepping up the provision of basic education and social services to conflict-affected regions. But it also means increasing support for efforts aimed at engaging youth as peacemakers and democratizers. A “New Nepal” must incorporate the voice and concerns of youth, empowering them to be co-creators of positive and peaceful change in their communities and at the national level.

Young civil society leaders at the grassroots level are working hard to learn the lessons of Nepal’s violent past by starting up new initiatives to support post-conflict recovery that include building and supporting communities of youth peacebuilders. Across the country, Nepali youth activists are seeking to understand why the conflict started, how to avoid the possible barriers to realizing a lasting peace and what is needed to ensure all citizens enjoy the basic rights and freedoms they deserve. It is these youth leaders that this project was designed to serve.



Pinky Dangi of BASE, a Nepali NGO working with the Tharu community, reflects on her work as a human rights activist

Critical Questions

What might a “New Nepal” look like if more youth were trained in the powerful tools of non-violent action for human rights?

How can young people in Nepal make sure their perspectives on peace are heard by the country’s leaders?

How can we increase the number of youth who are engaged as peacemakers?

What new strategies can youth use to peacefully fight for human rights and to reconcile conflicts at the grassroots level?

How can youth help heal long-standing wounds of discrimination and exploitation and remove the root causes of conflict in Nepal?

What can Nepali youth learn from the experience of other post-conflict nations to avoid the potential perils and pitfalls of a fragile peace?

What lessons can be drawn from the conflict to prevent new violence from taking root in Nepal in the future?

Program Goals

With these and other questions in mind, US-based Global Youth Connect (GYC) and Nepal-based Backward Society Education (BASE) joined forces to launch an initiative to support young civil society leaders who wish to strengthen their ability to peacefully resolve conflicts, enhance their on-going efforts to promote and protect of human rights and play a key role in peacebuilding.

Specifically, we aim to strengthen the role of Nepali youth in creating a more inclusive, just and peaceful future for Nepal by:

- Building the skills, knowledge, and confidence of young NGO professionals in Nepal to take action to promote and defend human rights
- Promoting collaboration between young Nepali activists and connecting them to a supportive global network of young human rights defenders
- Increasing understanding on the role that young leaders play in promoting human rights and conflict resolution and how the international community can and should support their efforts
- Supporting and nurturing existing and new youth-led projects in Nepal aimed at promoting peace and addressing the roots causes of the conflict



Conflict Transformation and Human Rights Learning Community

The centerpiece of this initiative was an intensive and interactive training workshop. The workshop was designed to enhance the skills and knowledge of youth leaders to collectively engage in dialogue, critical thinking and problem-solving about the challenges of and opportunities for building peace in Nepal. From March 2-11, 2007, GYC and BASE gathered together in Nepalgunj, Nepal, with 21 young activists representing 10 grassroots organizations from across the country.¹

“By attending this workshop I will gain knowledge and skills on how to mobilize the community and build a permanent peace. I hope to learn how to optimize our resources to solve problems and increase harmony among the various diverse communities.”



Transportation strikes holds up bus traffic for hours in Nepalgunj

The symbolism of holding this workshop in the Tarai at a time when new conflicts have been unfolding in this long-neglected southern region was not lost on the participants. Neither was the fact that the majority of the workshop participants were from the Tarai region,

¹ See appendices for background information on the NGOs represented and for participant bios.

representing diverse groups in terms of region, ethnic and caste groups, and gender.

The start of the workshop was marked by crippling transportation strikes called by members of the Madhesi community in the Tarai. Unfortunately, as these strikes coincided with the workshop dates, several of the participants originally invited to attend the workshop were unable to participate. For a while, we worried that the strikes would threaten our ability to host the workshop at all. Yet, because they understood the importance of joining the learning community, participants risked travel to Nepalgunj, even if it meant enduring a roundabout journey through India.

Workshop Content

The learning community workshop blended training on conflict transformation skills with learning on strategies and tactics for human rights activism. Significant time was given for networking, community-building and action planning among participants. Furthermore, participants were given a unique opportunity to learn about and draw inspiration from peacebuilding strategies in Bosnia, Cambodia and Rwanda.



Working together to solve problems through an interactive game called the "human knot"

Drawing on their own experiences and skill sets, facilitators weaved together community-building and action planning activities with sessions aimed at enhancing understanding of human rights and peacebuilding issues and building participants' skills to become more effective NGO professionals. Sessions were designed to incorporate as many of the following themes as possible:

- Creating a loose network of Nepali youth activists grounded in strong personal relationships and a commitment to shared goals
- Analyzing and defining conflict and exploring its relation to violence
- Constructive and creative approaches to conflict resolution and transformation
- Group identity, affiliation, inclusion, exclusion, discrimination, and oppression
- Privilege, power, responsibility, and the importance of building alliances
- The importance of story telling and healing in peacebuilding efforts
- The role that the promotion and protection of human rights plays in peace building
- Analyzing and defining human rights and their relation to conflict and peace
- Human rights documentation, including learning how to interview people and effectively re-tell their stories to raise awareness and promote action
- Effective non-violent strategies for human rights protection
- Teaching methods in human rights, conflict resolution/transformation and peace work
- Leadership development
- Mapping the needs of youth activists in Nepal
- Assessing obstacles to human rights and peace work in Nepal
- Creating strategies to address these needs and obstacles
- Identifying possible collaborative and individual follow-up projects using the new understanding, awareness and skills gained at the workshop

Learning from Other Conflict Zones

One unique aspect of this workshop was that it promoted learning and exchange of ideas from across conflict regions. Participants were joined by facilitators not only from Global Youth Connect and BASE, but also by facilitators from three post-conflict countries: Bosnia, Cambodia and Rwanda. The facilitators who joined the workshop from these conflict zones all work with GYC as part of our international human rights delegation and training programs and represent the following NGOs: *Center for Peacebuilding* (Bosnia), *Youth for Peace* (Cambodia) and *Never Again-Rwanda* (Rwanda).



Facilitator Vahidin Omanovic from Bosnia introduces the “cycles of revenge and reconciliation”

This cross-conflict sharing provided a distinct opportunity for analyzing how Nepal might apply strategies used in other countries that have experienced violent conflict. This allowed participants to better understand the context within which they are working in Nepal, while drawing on lessons from the other parts of the world.

Educational Methodology

GYC believes the techniques used in human rights education must engage, empower and inspire participants to action. As such, the methodology used for all of our workshops draws heavily on popular educational techniques. Such experiential learning models work with and rely on the real experiences and

existing knowledge base of the participants. Rather than presenting information and ideas in a “top-down” approach, our workshops incorporate activities which promote group-based learning, reflection and dialogue. Our methodology was quite different than the participants had experienced in other training workshops. Most people were accustomed to a lecture-based format where the answers are provided by the teacher. However, after having gone through the experience, they were excited about the use of a participatory educational model to engage youth and others in their communities. Innovative pedagogies such as “Theater of the Oppressed” and “Open Space Technology” were particularly well received.

“Our facilitators didn’t try to impart things forcefully on us. Rather they extracted things from within us. They showed a way to make us feel worthy enough to have wonderful ideas, creativity and tactfulness to solve conflicts.”



As members of a learning community, participants spend significant time learning from and teaching each other as well as learning from the facilitators

Workshop Highlights

Over the course of the 10-day workshop, participants had ample time to learn from each other and share dialogue on the state of human rights in Nepal. While it is impossible to capture the depth and richness of each and

To further elaborate and illustrate these points, the facilitators asked participants to consider the analogy of conflict to an iceberg. We often don't or can't see the whole conflict. Like an iceberg, 90% of the conflict generally remains hidden from our direct view. Therefore, most of what we see or hear are conclusions, positions and opinions. Furthermore, because people have different experiences it can be difficult to understand their point of view.

Participants were then asked to think about a personal conflict or disagreement that they experienced recently and shared how they had dealt with that conflict, analyzing what strategies worked and which did not work.



“Now I believe that conflicts can be resolved if studied from the root cause and with a ‘win-win’ theory being applied. I will share in whatever ways I can the things I learnt from this training in my community. I will try to use those techniques taught in this program to resolve the conflicts in my community.”

Basic Responses to Conflict

People have different “conflict styles,” or ways of responding to conflict. Facilitators provided an overview of these conflict styles and led the group in a discussion about the merits and negative sides of each style.

AVOIDANCE is when we try to shy away from a problem. Often avoidance can result from fear. Avoiding a conflict may make a person feel physically or emotionally safer. At the same time, the needs of the conflicting parties may not be fully met and therefore, may escalate the conflict under certain circumstances.

“Negligence, avoidance, and compulsive sacrifice never help to solve problems; rather understanding others needs and concerns, respecting yourself and others, and listening to unheard voices are the keys to solving any problems.”

COMPETITION happens when one group feels that it has the power and does not show an interest in the needs or concerns of other party. Competition is usually based on an ego-centric mindset: “There can only be one winner and I will pursue my personal interests in order to win.”

ACCOMMODATION usually means sacrifice or giving in on the part of one person or one group so that the conflicting parties can live peacefully. However, an accommodation strategy may not be successful in resolving conflict, especially if important needs continue to go unmet or the accommodation causes feelings of resentment.

COMPROMISE requires each party to lose or give up something. You give up something to gain something. Compromise is an important part of negotiation but is not always easy, especially if you don't like the other person.

COLLABORATION is a mutual discussion and dialogue in order to reach a final conclusion. In collaboration, conflict is seen as a positive thing. In order to reach a resolution, you need to tolerate each other, practice active listening and cooperation.

Communication & Negotiation Strategies

Communication and negotiation strategies were introduced to participants as ways of constructively dealing with conflict through a problem-solving approach.

As activists we often need to get our point across and build understanding among disparate groups. Facilitators also introduced the differences between “debate” and “dialogue,” emphasizing that open dialogue is usually a very effective way of resolving differences and transforming conflicts.

Debate

- All about “me”
- Participants are leaders
- Talk about others
- OK to attack = NO TRUST
- Facilitators encourage attack
- Talk to people who think like you
- Express opinions
- Listen to fight back
- Statements are well-known for everybody
- Needs and values are well-known
- Differences are not visible

Dialogue

- Building relationships
- Participants are anybody
- Talk about ourselves, own experiences
- Safe environment, code of conduct
- Facilitators keep safe environment
- Talk to each other
- Differences are visible
- Express concerns and doubts/opinions
- Listen in order to hear
- Non-verbal communication is important
- Statements have no new information
- Values and needs are to be explored

In addition to discussing the differences from a theoretical level, participants used both of these techniques, first debate and then dialogue, to discuss whether they feel that the Holi festival,

an important Hindu festival during which people often throw colored powder and water at each other, is fun or not fun. In reflecting on their experience, participants noted:

- In the debate, everyone started shouting and we didn’t try to understand each other. We knew what we were saying was right and we were ready to fight and attack. The process was very chaotic and negative. There were a lot of voices and tempers were rising. It was not an enjoyable experience.
- Dialogue felt more comfortable and safe. Therefore, dialogue would be very useful tool for conflict transformation
- Debate can be accidental; dialogue is more intentional.



After practicing their dialogue skills, participants join together to celebrate Holi

Identity

On a large, blank piece of paper divided into six sections, we asked participants to use a list of different identities they had brainstormed (e.g., caste, nationality, language, political affiliation, age) and write down the six most important identities for themselves as individuals, one in each square. After completing the task, we requested that participants eliminate two of the six identities they had chosen, leaving four identities remaining on their sheet of paper.

At this point, many participants shifted in their seats uncomfortably as they thought hard about which two identities to remove. The task completed, we then asked participants to eliminate more identities, leaving only two. The knitted brows and looks of concentration of participants indicated that they were taking the task quite seriously. A look of relief swept over the group as they all finally managed to decide on their top two.

Looking around the circle, the facilitators could tell that the participants were anxious, as by now they knew what was coming next. They would be asked to choose only one identity they felt best represented them. “OK. It was hard enough to choose six, narrow it down to four and then to two again. How can we possibly choose only one identity?” they asked. But choose they did.

Once the tough task of narrowing down their identities had taken place, participants had a chance to deepen their dialogue skills as they explored their personal identities and related privilege in the context of Nepal and beyond.

At the end of the activity, several important points were noted:

- Identity is a huge part of conflict.
- Conflict may be created as a result of identification with different identities.
- In conflict transformation work, it is important to identify the different identities of people involved in a conflict, including those they feel most strongly about.
- By focusing on identity as a cause and consequence of conflict, identity changes according to the conflict.
- This process can help build relationships and find the way to solve conflict.

- For us to understand conflict better, we need to understand ourselves better. We also need to understand the “other” better.
- If you understand conflict better, you can do a better job in finding solutions to conflict.

“It’s very important to know cultural differences and individual perspectives. After perceiving from the other’s perspective, we can estimate what actually is the cause of various conflicts that occur. Hence we can initiate peace works right from the local community by respecting individual rights and accepting cultural and ethnic differences. The root cause of any conflict is insensitiveness and disrespect of other people’s culture, identity and rights.”

Building off of this, the group then worked in small groups to explore the notions of “sex” and “gender” and to analyze the roles of men and women in Nepal. Most of the discussion centered around the difference between sex and gender, including a consideration of difference between physical characteristics and socially constructed roles of men and women.

Cycles of Revenge and Reconciliation

Olga Botcharova’s model of the “cycles of revenge and reconciliation” provides a tool for understanding different ways to break free from a cycle of victimhood and aggression which can escalate conflict, and move toward a cycle of forgiveness and reconciliation, which can help heal conflict and trauma.²

Facilitator Vahidin Omanovic from Bosnia talked the group through the cycles of revenge and reconciliation by sharing his own story of becoming a refugee during the Balkan wars of

² From Olga Botcharova’s article Limiting Characteristics of Official Diplomacy in Helmick and Petersonen’s (editors) *Forgiveness and Reconciliation: Religion, Public Policy, and Conflict Transformation* (2001, 279: 204).

the late 1990s and his subsequent journey to becoming a peace educator.

Vahidin then asked participants to physically place themselves on a point on the map of the cycles of revenge and reconciliation, which had been laid out in a diagram on the floor that related to one of their own personal conflicts. Those who felt comfortable were then asked to share their personal stories with the whole group. The conflicts shared ranged from disagreements between friends or family members and youth opinions not being respected in the family to a forced Maoist abduction and anger at the government.



Cycles of revenge and reconciliation activity

Towards the end of the session a discussion was initiated about the fact that the government and Maoists had signed a peace accord that had achieved official reconciliation. So why, the participants asked, did they still need to learn about the cycles of revenge if reconciliation had already been achieved in Nepal? A distinction was made between the government and grassroots levels and participants then discussed what was necessary for them to have reconciliation on the ground. The cycles of revenge and reconciliation activity focuses more on analyzing the impact of a conflict on the victim, not on the conflict as a whole.

The Basics of Human Rights

At first glance, the idea that all people are guaranteed certain rights – regardless of race, ethnicity and other difference -- by the very fact of being human seems quite straightforward and simple. However, at a philosophical, theoretical and practical level defining, agreeing on and implementing human rights is complex and challenging. As one example, the international community has agreed on the gold standard of human rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The details of these rights have been further elaborated in a web of international treaties which, when ratified by a state, possess the force of law. Yet, these obligations are not realized for the vast majority of the world's citizens. Excuses are made, treaties are ignored and as a result, the world's citizens either accept this fate and struggle to survive or they decide to demand that these rights be fulfilled.

As the focus of the workshop shifted to human rights advocacy and activism, we started our discussion by asking for participants' personal perspectives about the idea of human rights. As a starting point, participants drew up a list of words, concepts and ideas that they associated with human rights. The associations were written on different colored cards and placed on the floor. Participants were then asked to look at what was written on the cards and note similarities and differences in their ideas and identify any missing concepts.

The articles of the UDHR were introduced to provide a conceptual framework for a deeper discussion on human rights. Each participant was given an article from the UDHR. In small groups, participants were asked to consider whether they thought in Nepal these rights were: 1) respected for everyone, 2) respected only for some people, or 3) not respected at all. A chart was put up with columns that represented each category and one after the other participants were invited to put up their articles in the column they felt represented the

consensus of their group's discussion and to explain to the rest of the participants why they made that choice.



Shakti Ghimire of IDEA Action presents his working group's thoughts on the realization of the human rights guaranteed by the UDHR

Building a Human Rights Framework for a New Constitution

Drawing off of the previous conversation about the international human rights framework in comparison to the real situation of Nepal, participants were asked to take some time to think about the ten most important rights that they would want to see included in the new Nepali constitution. They were subsequently asked to pair up and use their new negotiation skills to come up with a combined list of the ten most important rights that their group of two people would like to see included in the new constitution. Upon completing their negotiation, the pairs were asked to join up with other pairs and repeat the process after which the quads joined with other quads to repeat the process again. At the end of the activity, two large groups shared and compared the list of priority rights they had negotiated.

During the de-briefing of this activity, participants noted that:

- Surprisingly, there were very few rights between the two lists that were the same.

- It was easy to negotiate rights when only two people were involved in the discussion, but the negotiation became much more difficult as the group size increased.
- It was easier to “give up” some rights than others.
- Finding and agreeing upon the most important rights was quite difficult.
- Not everyone felt included in the process of negotiating rights. As the groups got bigger, more opinions were excluded.
- Participants were open to compromise but, noted it doesn't always work like that in real life.

We also discussed whether it is really possible to “compromise” on rights, agreeing that we can sacrifice (or prioritize) some rights but we can't give them all up. When asked how it felt to fight for their rights, participants stated that it made them feel proud, happy, and respected.

To wrap up the activity a role-play was conducted in which each team sent a mock youth delegation to promote their list of ten rights to a newly formed Constituent Assembly.

Top 10 Rights

Group One

- Right to survive
- Right to equal participation
- Right to freedom with responsibility
- Rights to quality education and equal opportunity in employment
- Right to vote
- Right to information
- Right to prosperity
- Right to return and reintegration of conflict victims
- Right to secrecy

Top 10 Rights (cont'd)

Group Two

Fundamental rights implementation
Civil rights
Justice
Democracy and good governance
Freedom of information and expression
Engagement of employment
Equality in policymaking
Access to ICT
End of impunity – sign ICC
Participation in state affairs

Human Rights Advocacy

As participants noted in the previous session, even when agreements on human rights are created, the implementation of these human rights in everyday life are not always guaranteed. As human rights defenders we believe the standards set in the UDHR give us a clear guideline to follow. When governments or other groups do not respect treaties, constitutions and laws we need to advocate and demand that our leaders ensure that human rights are realized for all peoples.

After doing a quick brainstorm about the kinds of advocacy that everyone had been involved in, we asked participants to create posters that displayed their successful and unsuccessful attempts at human rights advocacy. The resulting posters show stories of participants' efforts to address the rights of displaced people, eliminate dress codes for widows, provide employment for unemployed youth, stop and resist Maoist interference with schooling, and resist condemnation of so-called "witches," army harassment, and oppression of Dalits. The reasons for success and/or failure were analyzed and discussed.

During the de-brief discussion, participants noted the following important points:

- Successful advocates need to know the actors involved, their relationships to each other (as well as the context of the problem) and then cater their advocacy approach accordingly.
- Sometimes different approaches are needed simultaneously, targeting different groups and related issues.
- It is important, moreover, to stay on top of the changing context and change your strategy as needed.
- There are a variety of different factors which impact our success or failure. These include a lack of training, cultural obstacles, a lack of awareness on basic rights on the part of people we are trying to help or interference from outside parties.

We learned the activity also demonstrated that everyone in the workshop room was playing an important role in their community to advocate for change and gave everyone a chance to learn more about the work of other NGOs across the country.

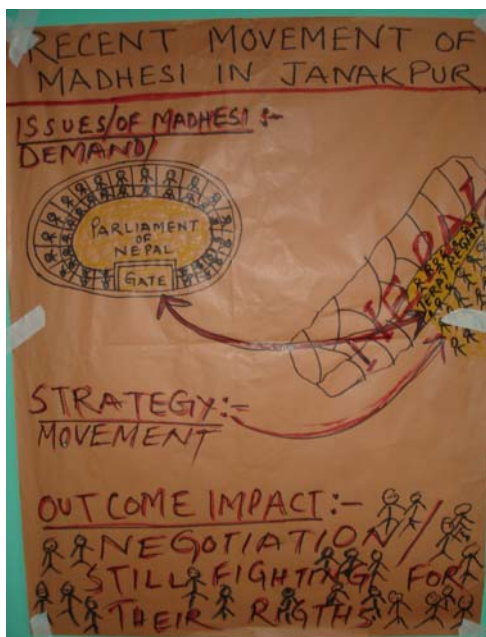


“Creating my advocacy poster made me realize who I am, what I mean to my family and my community and that I am a leader of my community to do advocacy for human rights and peace. We are unknowingly doing so many human rights activities within our community.”

Human Rights Mapping of the Madhesi Situation³

Inspired by the work of the “New Tactics for Human Rights” project, facilitators encouraged participants to begin thinking about new ways to advocate for change. As we recognize that much of advocacy is unsuccessful or does not generate the level of broad changes that we know are needed, we must find ways to connect our efforts and collaborate, learning from each other’s successes and failures. Furthermore, we must use new tactics to tackle old problems.

Drawing on the advocacy poster shared by one participant on the Madhesi community’s demands for a higher level of inclusion in the political structure – a very hot topic in Nepal that has dominated the news throughout 2007 – participants were asked to create a “tactical map” that would serve as a tool for identifying possible new collaborations and strategies to address the issue.



Advocacy poster created by participant on the Madhesi issue in Janakpur

Working in small groups, participants were asked to identify two groups related to the Madhesi issue – a victim and a perpetrator. Having done that, the next step was to identify the people, organizations and institutions related to the issue and map them in relation to each other, indicating their relative importance to the victim and perpetrator. Once the map was completed, participants were asked to identify areas of existing tactical intervention. From there participants identified those areas on the map that had not yet been targeted by a specific intervention. Once the map was complete, each group came up with a new intervention to target that particular relationship, ultimately helping to promote change on the main issue being analyzed.

The two tactical maps created by each group were fascinating examples of how to view and approach the same issue from very different perspectives. Whereas one group analyzed the issue from the perspective of the Madhesi being victimized by the government of Nepal, the other group looked at the conflict from the angle of citizens who were victims of Madhesi protests. In the de-brief of this activity, we talked a lot about different ways of looking at the same situation, the possibility of one group being both perpetrator and victim, and how our perspective on the issue impacts our work and the tactics we choose to use.

Documentation as a Tool for Advocacy

Human rights documentation is a “process of researching and reporting on specific situations and human rights violations to advocate for change on those issues.” Such information should not just be collected for the sake of collecting data. It should be used in such a way to promote action or change in relation to a human rights problem. Various examples of documentation and the role it plays as part of our advocacy efforts were discussed by drawing on earlier parts of the workshop and facilitator and participant experiences.

³ Activity adapted from New Tactics for Human Rights, www.newtactics.org

Originally, we had planned to combine the documentation skill-building workshop with an opportunity to practice these skills in the field by visiting and interviewing communities served by GYC's partner organization, Backward Society Education (BASE). Participants were going to be asked to collect information that would help BASE in raising awareness about their work. However, because of the on-going transportation strikes in the area, a field visit became impossible. Instead participants practiced interviewing techniques on each other. While it was a shame that the field visits had to be cancelled, the participants were able to learn and practice some their interviewing skills and learn a lot more about each other's work.



Practice interviews

Identifying Obstacles and Challenges

In preparation for the action planning phase of the learning community, participants were asked to build off of earlier discussions to identify challenges that they face in their work. The facilitators also introduced a variation of Image Theater, an interactive educational methodology from Augusto Boal's Theater of the Oppressed.⁴ Essentially, this involved participants creating "human sculptures" to illustrate the obstacles they face in their work.

⁴ For more information: www.toplab.org or www.theateroftheoppressed.org.

Using such a technique provided participants with a different way of expressing themselves and a creative way of analyzing the problems they face in creating change. Various obstacles were explored, including: political leaders trying to divide communities, women being prevented by their community from going to court, and Dalits being prevented access to basic resources.



Participants use image theater to share and analyze the challenges and obstacles they face in their work

Action Planning

The action planning piece of the workshop was introduced through a very hands-off, democratic educational methodology called "Open Space Technology".⁵ This loose workshop structure would allow participants to take charge of the action planning session and use the time in the ways they felt would be most useful to them as individuals and as a group. To help guide their action planning discussions, participants were asked first to identify the issues about the transition that taking place today in Nepal that concern them as youth activists, and secondly, to identify the most important changes that they would like to see take place in Nepal.

⁵ For more information: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open_Space_Technology

Action Plans

The following represents a summary of the action plans developed by the members of the learning community.

Youth Network for Peace and Human Rights

Not surprisingly, participants feel there is a need to create a stronger network of youth activists working on peacebuilding and human rights issues in Nepal. In this way, they hope to increase their impact, promote collaboration among organizations from different regions of the country, enhance their effectiveness and encourage the involvement of more young people in their activities. Plans of action inspired from workshop conversations included:

- An online forum to connect youth activists and to serve as a means of sharing information about organizations and initiatives working towards conflict resolution, peace and justice in Nepal. Youth activists will be encouraged to share their stories of success as well as their challenges online, so as to be able to build a supportive “e-learning community.”
- Youth networking will also be initiated in other ways, through participants’ organizations, communities, and by leveraging existing networks and relationships. Media will be employed to disseminate information about conflict resolution and human rights to the community, especially youth.

Incorporating New Voices in the Political Process

As many people in Nepal do not feel that their perspectives and concerns are adequately represented in the existing political system, structure, and constitutional framework, workshop participants identified several

projects aimed at encouraging a more inclusive and democratic political process:

- In order to ensure that the youth voice is heard and represented in the Constituent Assembly process, participants intend to create an alliance group of concerned youth. Participants would also like to initiate a campaign that raises awareness among youth about the Constituent Assembly and the election process.
- Participants also noted the importance of encouraging women to get more involved in the Constituent Assembly. A campaign was conceived of that will use conventional media as well as traditional singers, public assembly meetings and other ways in which to raise awareness and spread the message among women, encouraging them to get more involved in Nepal’s political process.



Participants in small group discussion during action planning session

- New ideas to promote the inclusion of the Madhesi community in the political process were also identified. Specifically, a wide-spread campaign aiming to mainstream the Madhesi community in the ongoing political process will be initiated. Through awareness raising and training programs the initiative plans to also empower women and other marginalized communities through human rights and legal education.

- A final project aimed at the political process in Nepal focuses on informing people from Dang, Banke and Bardiya districts of proportional representation in the government and plans to create pressure groups.

Youth Unemployment & Sustainable Development

Participants also recognized the issue of youth unemployment as being a root cause of conflict and violence in many communities and created the following plans to promote sustainable development.

- One participant-led initiative plans to promote local goods production and consumption in order to allow for employment to be created in his community.
- Another project aims to mobilize youth for sustainable development. Through youth clubs and street drama youth will be educated and mobilized to work on local community projects.
- Street drama and training will also be used by some youth participants to go into remote areas to educate people to combat superstition.
- Finally, a project was designed that aims to provide access to education, training and income-generating opportunities for conflict affected and displaced youth to help them reintegrate into their communities.

“This learning workshop has stimulated us to recognize our potentials and utilize that in contributing to nation building and making a New Nepal. This is now our responsibility to think for the coming generation and we must not do anything that handicaps their future as our present has been.”

“Personally, I feel that this workshop has helped to build a lot of confidence and motivation to work in the field of human rights. There are a lot of fellow activists who are also interested and motivated in the work of human rights. Now I know a lot of activists here in Nepal through networking. And I am going to cooperate with them to work for the country itself.”



Learning community participants share their appreciation for each other during closing activities

Next Steps on the Road to Peace

This conflict transformation and human rights learning community served as one model of building peace through training, collaboration and action. The connections built and the inspirations generated will show up in new and unexpected ways in the participants’ work. Furthermore, many participants left the workshop committed to sharing what they had learned with youth in communities around the country. We hope that the “butterfly effect” of this workshop -- the idea that tiny changes at the grassroots can enact a chain of events causing the whole system to change -- will add to the existing efforts to build peace already underway.

Just a few weeks ago, GYC received an e-mail from Deepak Chaudhary, the youth president of BASE, our partner organization in Nepal, demonstrating how the impact of the training has spread beyond the 21 youth gathered in a hotel conference room in Nepalgunj.

In his e-mail Deepak notes:

“I have adapted the GYC training and used it with all of our 23,000 youth members in five different districts. The youth participants were very happy to learn and know more about human rights and the role of youth in conflict management.”

This indeed is just one powerful example of the strategic impact that a training for a committed group of youth leaders can have at an incredibly critical time during the peace process.

GYC and BASE continue to look for ways to support the on-going efforts of the workshop participants and the issues they are working on, and to bring similar workshop experiences to an even bigger network of youth in Nepal.

Specifically, we will distribute this report to policymakers and concerned citizens and youth

around the world who may be able to support the peacemaking efforts of youth in Nepal in ways beyond our own limited capacities. We will publish articles in our newsletters and share information on our website, encouraging those who know little about Nepal to learn more. Our greatest hope is that these awareness-raising efforts will result in drawing new resources – from foundations, NGOs, international institutions, youth and other concerned citizens across the globe -- to support the involvement of Nepali youth in peacemaking and human rights activism.

If we have inspired you in any way through the stories we’ve shared here, please contact us to find out how you can get involved.

Global Youth Connect
15 Gage Street
Kingston, NY 12401 USA
Tel: (845) 338-2220
E-mail: contact@globalyouthconnect.org

Mission Statements of Participating NGOs

Backward Society Education (BASE)

BASE is a membership-based people's organization that promotes participation of its members in all activities by nurturing human potential to the optimal extent to ensure full and abundant life for everyone in the community. Their mission is to empower the kamaiyas, as well as other excluded and deprived communities in Nepal through economic and socio-economic development, the protection of human rights and indigenous culture. BASE utilizes education and communication in order to raise a collective voice against prevailing exploitation and injustice at the community level. www.basenepal.org

Creation of Equitable Society

CES supports Dalits in education, health, and social sectors to fight the child labor system and also to improve the lives of disadvantaged women and children.

Idea Action

Idea Action provides a national forum on Information Communication and Technology (ICT) and promotes ICT in Nepal for youth. It is also concerned with human rights and sustainable development, as well as how to develop a culture of peace. www.idea.org.np

Indreni Forum For Social Development

IFSD strives to create a constructive and self-reliant society.

Janaki Women Awareness Society

The *Janaki Women Awareness Society* (JWAS) was founded in 1993 by a group of women social workers to provide sustainable development, self-help promotion, and empowerment and equality to rural women. The mission of JWAS is to "improve the economical, health, and social condition of rural women by proper mobilization of local resources with community participation."

SAHAMATI

SAHAMATI is a non-governmental, non-political and non-profit making member-based social development organization committed to equitable development. It was established by a group of

development workers/professionals with experience in community development in different parts of Nepal, i.e. terrain, hills and Himalayan areas. www.sahamati.org

Shree Ganesh Community Rural Development Organization

Shree Ganesh's mission is to raise the consciousness about development and human rights; to provide education to backwards society through a peacemaking process; to provide self-help activities; and to develop backwards society in all aspects.

Support-Nepal

Support-Nepal is a not-for profit, non governmental organization serving for a peaceful and independent environment in which effective social, economic and environmental development can occur in Nepal since 1995. Their purpose is to join with others to strengthen our community, in measurable and sustainable ways, for the benefit of all citizens, especially those who are disadvantaged, marginalized and excluded. They're committed to be an efficient development activist and a responsible steward of those actions, and convener addressing crucial community needs and a constructive catalyst for changing systems to better serve people. www.supportnepal.org

Yog Amrit Youth Association

Yog Amrit Youth Association works to build a healthy, wealthy, educated, and friendly society, where discrimination, domination, injustice and exploitation are transformed to support justice, love, care, compassion and affection.

Youth Initiative

Youth Initiative informs young people about issues and affairs that concerns them through discussion, debates, dialogues, interaction, etc. Young people are empowered to develop to their fullest potential, take part in decision making and exercise active citizenship. Young people are further involved in all the stages of their own personal development and that of their communities through volunteering, civic engagement, advocacy, etc. www.youth.org.np

Participant Biographies

Karmadhani Chaudhary **Backward Society Education**

Karmadhani is a hardworking and ambitious woman of 27 years. She grew up in a low-income family. She loves working with children and has worked as a teacher in a boarding school. She is currently studying to receive her Bachelors degree while continuing to work as a Youth Mobilizer in BASE's Youth Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation program. She has a beautiful voice and has already been recorded on the Tharu album. Past experience includes having been a public moderator and journalist. She has also been involved in Tharu Students Society in her college.

Anita Kumari Chaudhary **Backward Society Education**

Anita was born in a village in Kanchanpur (western Nepal). She comes from a simple family and is an energetic woman living in Mahendranagar Municipality. She currently works for BASE as a Youth Mobilizer for the Youth Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation Program in Kanchanpur District. She has been directly involved with 143 youth clubs. Anita works as an Assistant Trainer as well. Before joining BASE, she worked as Midwifery Field Worker at Seti Zonal Hospital in Kailali District, and at Mahakali Zonal Hospital at the Public Health Center of Kanchanpur District.

Deepak Chaudhari **Backward Society Education**

Deepak is a 25 year old youth from Dang. He went to school at the Galaxy Public School in the Kathmandu District. He continued his university studies at Everest College, where he was President of the Student Council and motivated the students in various community services, including blood donation and cleaning the streets. He has also worked as a Program Presenter in Classic F.M. and in a local television channel called "Channel Nepal" to support himself while in college. For the past two years, he has been involved at BASE as its Youth President. He works to fight illiteracy for village youth, especially those in western Nepal. His work at BASE encourages youth to participate in decision-making bodies, and he informs them about their rights and how youth can mobilize.

Ashok Chaudhary **Backward Society Education**

Ashok is 23 years old and is a student at Saundiyar Dang. He was completed high school in 1999, and subsequently became Treasurer of the board committee of a local club. The club has performed many community service projects, collaborating with the District Development Committee and Village Development Committee. Two years later, he completed the intermediate level of study at Mahendra Multiple Campus Dang, and became President of Tharu Student Society on his campus. During that period he ran many programs and activities by mobilizing students. Ashok is now a secretary of BASE Youth Committee, board member of Free Student Union of the Mahendra Multiple Campus Dang, and elected member of the board committee which represents 40,000 Tharu youth all over Nepal.

Pinky Dangi **Backward Society Education**

Pinky has worked at BASE for the past four years, holding a variety of positions including office secretary, administrative assistant and youth coordinator. She is now a youth representative and is working with the creation of youth committees designed to increase coordination and unity between Nepali youth from different districts. Pinky is currently focused on seven districts, where BASE works with 11,704 young people. During her time in these areas, Pinky has spoken with many youth about how they have been affected by the conflict and has helped document and compile these accounts into a report. She is also active in the organization of youth camps focused on conflict mitigation, experiential learning, and meaningful dialogue through the sharing of knowledge and experiences. As a youth coordinator, Pinky believes that she has the responsibility to mobilize Nepali youth to engage in capacity building and advocacy, as well as provide them with opportunities to make change. She has reached the Proficiency Certificate Level at Tribhuvan University, and is now at the Bachelor's level. She is also fluent in Nepali, English, Tharu, and Hindi.

Ayesha Singh (Dulal)**Creation of Equitable Society**

Ayesha was born in the Dalit community in 1987. At 20 years old she is studying for her BBA (2nd year) at the International Institute for Special Education, Lucknow, India. She is a board member of Creation of Equitable Society, Banke, where she has worked with Dalit youth clubs for the last two years to empower women. Ayesha has also worked with Save the Children-US, the Banyan Tree Foundation (US), and as a teacher in the rural mountain villages in Salyan for 6 months.

Babu Lal Tirwa**Creation of Equitable Society**

Babu Lal was born in the Dalit community in 1986. In 2006, he was a Creation of Equitable Society scholar, receiving a six-month Dalit student scholarship from CES. He is studying BSC (3rd year) at Mahendra Multiple Campus, Nepalgunj. Babu Lal has worked to improve lives of Dalits, also called ‘untouchable caste’. While he still a student, he began working for CES and has formed several Dalit youth clubs. He has good leadership and mobilization skills and currently serves as the president of one Dalit youth club.

Shakti S. Gimire**Idea Action**

Shakti is an ICT-literate human rights youth campaigner. He founded *Idea Action* (IA), a non-profit organization led by youth for youth, with the vision of creating equal access to information among Nepali youth. It is concerned with youth, human rights and sustainable development related issues, and strives to develop a culture of peace and non-violent and informative society in Nepal. Similarly, Idea Forum, an initiative of *Idea Action*, provides a virtual platform for Nepali youth to connect with other young people around the world to access resources, raise awareness of their projects, share ideas and discuss challenges. Youth share information through forums and blogs and can send e-cards on peace, human rights and other social issues. He received the International Youth Foundation and NOKIA Youth Award in USA in 2006 and Best Idea to Change the World Award from International Youth Summer School in UK on 2004. He has published several articles on social issues & international travel features. Furthermore; he has traveled USA, Australia, UK, Thailand, and India.

Laxmi Ghimire**Indreni Social Development Forum**

Laxmi is 24 years old. She was born in a rural village in Nawalprasi. She graduated from her college at Divyajyoti Multiple Campus in humanities and social science. Since 2005, she has been working as a volunteer for Indreni Forum for Social Development, Nawalprasi, where she works closely with the community in problem solving.

Ranjana Subedi**Indreni Social Development Forum**

Ranjana was born in the western part of Nawalprasi. She is a graduate student of Divyajyoti Multiple Campus in Chisapani where she studies English. She has completed a diploma course in computers. Ranjana is interested in being a social volunteer and hopes to expand her career in social work and peacebuilding. She has worked as a social mobilizer in various communities. Since 2005, she has been working as a volunteer for Indreni Forum for Social Development, Nawalprasi. She is working very closely with the communities to identify their problems and solve them.

Bishnu Tamang**Janaki Women Awareness Society**

Bishnu has completed his Bachelors degree from North Eastern Hill University (Shillong), Meghalaya (India) in 1993. After finishing, he returned to his hometown, Bardibas, Mahottari District, Janakpur. In 1997, he joined a women’s rights organization called Mahila Sahayogtmak Samaj, Mahottari as a volunteer. He has worked there for one year in its water supply and sanitation program. After the program was phased-out, he joined another local NGO called IRDS Samaj Bardibas as a computer operator and office administrator. In the meantime, he got an opportunity to join Janaki Women Awareness Society, a Janakpur based organization working for development and awareness of women rights. He is working as a telephone counselor under the Legal Aid and Consultancy Center service (LACC) program. The program provides legal services to the exploited women in the rural areas.

Binita Adhikari**Janaki Women Awareness Society**

Binita has completed her Bachelors in law from the government college Dhankutta. She joined the Nepal Bar Association Nepal in 1999, and has worked as a volunteer mediator in Samaj Kalian Biksah Nepal, Saptari, as a legal advisor for women and as a team leader in a community awareness program, Saptari. Currently, she is working as a Legal Counselor in Janaki Women Awareness Society (JWAS), Janakpur under the Legal Aid and Consultancy Center service (LACC) program.

Bindu Acharya**SAHAMATI**

Bindu was born in a village in Kaski district. She completed her school level education from a secondary level school in the same village and completed her intermediate level education in 1997. She has worked as a teacher at the Blue Belt Hostel in Pokhara for two years. She got married in 1998 and moved to her husband's village in Nawalparasi. Currently, she is a graduate student. Bindu was interested to work for her community since her early school days so she joined Vijay Development Resource Center (VDRC), a social organization in Gaidakot, and started to work as a volunteer community facilitator. The organization had launched its SAMARPAN program in partnership with Care Nepal and she has been working under this program. Her work as a social activist for rights-based approach has inspired others to raise social issues that have hindered the freedom of women and marginalized people. One of the successful women's movements that she has facilitated includes the movement against color discrimination of single women and widows. Currently, Bindu is a facilitator of the Nawalpur area Women Advocacy Forum and she is affiliated with the District Women Security Pressure Group.

Ramesh Kafle**SAHAMATI**

Ramesh is from Gaidakot-5 Vijaychowk and he has completed a Master's degree in Sociology and Political Science. Ramesh has extensively worked with local communities (Bote Majhi, Mushar), community-based organizations, civil society organizations and local bodies as a community development facilitator. Prior to this, he worked with Advocacy Forum for six months where he monitored police custody and child rehabilitation at home. He has worked with publication and media

called Saptik Abaj, Janmabhumi and Pardarshi Daily as a reporter. Since July 2006, he has been working with a food security program that partners with *Action Aid-Nepal*. The program for the Bote Majhi, Mushar Community is implemented in fifteen VDCs of Nawalparasi.

Durga Bahadur Gurung**Shree Ganesh Community Rural Development Organization**

Durga is an executive member of Shree Ganesh Community Rural Development Organization. He has been involved in the community development field since he was a student. He worked with the *Junior Red Cross Circle* and a rural community service to help raise the consciousness of the deprived people. He completed his Bachelors degree in 2006. Durga has worked in the sectors of community development, education, leadership development, environmental sanitation, conflict management, community empowerment, and human right instructions through his involvement in the programs of INSEC.

Bhim Prasad Pathak Jaishi**Shree Granesh Community Rural Development Organization**

Bhim Prasad is an executive life-member of *Shree Ganesh Community Rural Development Organization*. He was Chairman of *Junior Red Cross Circle* in his high school. He is currently completing his Bachelors degree. He has been working in different organizations affiliated with social welfare service. He is now a volunteer in the fields of education, leadership development, environmental sanitation, conflict management, community empowerment, and human right instruction activities.

Rakesh Ranjan**Support-Nepal**

Rakesh, 29 years old, is from Dhanusha district and for the last 3 years has served in a non-profit, non-governmental organization and is trying to make a difference in his community and country by focusing on promoting youth role in sustainable peace and development related to conflict management and peace building. He is a management graduate who engaged in youth-focused development before graduation. For the last couple of years, he has been working with youth in different organizations. He started his career in the development sector as a community youth worker

five years ago. Since then, he has joined different projects targeting youth at the grassroots level in the Dhanusha, Mahottari, and Sarlahi districts of southern Nepal. Since 2002, he has been engaged as planner, designer and coordinator for several peace projects targeting internally displaced persons (IDPs), particularly the young women and men in Janakpur Zone. Through the project, their team is proving to be a safety net for children and youth who need trauma counseling, economic empowerment, social mobilization for peace, community mediation through community based peace centers and advocacy on the rights issue of IDPs. Most recently, he has been able to coordinate with the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and Office of the High Commissioner for the Human Rights (OHCHR) in Nepal to advocate the rights of IDPs. He has also been published on the rights of persons with disability and the internally displaced.

Mona Kharel**Yog Amrit Youth Association**

Mona has completed a Bachelors course in Business Studies from TU in 2004 and her interests led her to work in the field of community-based activities, such as human rights, child rights, and the empowerment of women. Mona has worked with *IDF Nepal* and with vulnerable and economically disadvantaged people in her community. She aspires to develop her career by working with the community in the field of backwards society (such as Dhimal, Sataar, and Tajpuriya) education for peacebuilding activities. Currently, she is the Founding President of *Yog Amrit Youth Association*, Jhapa.

Phanindra Sharma**Yog Amrit Youth Association**

Phanindra was born in a remote village of Jhapa to a middle class family. He spent his childhood and completed his schooling in Jhapa. Since then, he has been actively participating in various activities including peace rallies, cultural dances, and street drama. He has worked as the Chairman of Koseli Yova Club, Lakhanpur, Jhapa, and Program Officer in *IDF-Nepal*, Jhapa. Now, he regularly visits different schools and colleges to create awareness in his local community on human rights in order to bring understanding to youth regarding human rights, protection and promotion for economic and socio-economic development of the community, and in the country as a whole.

Anita Thapa**Youth Initiative**

Anita was born in Kathmandu .She went college for further studies and she got an opportunity to attend the Asian Youth Assembly in India in 2001, through *Youth Initiative*. The assembly made her feel that youth have a lot of potential, and that they must take initiative if they want to make a difference. Since then, she has been working with *Youth Initiative* on youth-related issues. She has also been supporting *Nepal Children Organization* (NCO) through their project called *Organization of Supporting Nepali Children* (OSNC), supported by Japan. She is a knitting facilitator, and the girls who make the goods receive part of the proceeds. She also worked for a year in *Hospice Nepal*, an organization where terminally ill patients are taken care of. Currently she is pursuing a Masters of Business Administration (MBA) at Apex College.

Prakash Pyakurel**Youth Initiative**

Prakash was born in middle-class joint family in a rural part of Nepal where he completed his primary and secondary education in a government school. After his schooling, he moved to Kathmandu to pursue a higher education. His first exposure to the development field was as a volunteer in 1999. He was selected as a volunteer for the British-based charity *Students Partnership Worldwide* (SPW). He worked with SPW for 5 months in rural communities of the western part of Nepal. This experienced served to be was a turning point in his life, in which he realized how much a small contribution works towards bringing positive change in a community. This led to him joining the youth-led and youth-run organization, *Youth Initiative*, in 2001.

Facilitator Biographies

K.B. Chaudhary Coordinator Backward Society Education (BASE)

K.B. is a Nepali human rights activist who works defending the most vulnerable and oppressed in his country. He works for Backwards Society Education (BASE) as the coordinator of their Nepal Women's Poverty Alleviation Project. With a strong interest in media, K.B. has worked in both radio and print media, as a reporter and editor respectively. During the most turbulent period of the Nepali civil war, K.B. covered the many incidents of human rights violations in his community radio program, Sahara on Radio Sworgadwari. He was also a magazine editor for many years. K.B. is an educator, with eight years of teaching experience. He was honored with the teacher of the year award at Hindu Vidhyapeeth. K.B. was also honored as the best president of the Tharu Student Society, for the contribution that he made to students' rights. K.B.'s mother tongue is Tharu and is fluent in Nepali.

Shanta Chaudhary Trainer Backward Society Education (BASE)

Shanta is a Nepali trainer and facilitator who has dedicated her professional life to the defense of human rights, with a special focus on Dalit, women's and children's rights. Shanta's own experience growing up in rural Nepal, was one of struggle. It inspired her to do the work she does today. In a community that doesn't value educating women, she was supported by her parents to attend school and with the additional support of Backwards Society Education (BASE) she was able to complete her studies. Shanta has worked with various women's groups over the years and has successfully organized women's movements across Nepal. Shanta has been involved with BASE since the 1980s and is currently the Income Generating Program Coordinator and a Central Board Committee member. Shanta has attended a range of international workshops revolving around gender issues, democracy and community organizing. She has participated in various training of trainer workshops, most recently through MS Nepal, Danish Association for International Cooperation. Shanta's mother tongue is Tharu. In addition, she is

fluent in Nepali and speaks Hindi, English and Maithili well. She was honored in 1998 with a scholarship award from the Asian Rural Institute in Japan.

Muny Chhit Trainer Youth For Peace

Since 1999 Muny has worked as a trainer for Youth for Peace, a Cambodian organization dedicated to providing education in peacebuilding, conflict resolution, leadership, democracy and human rights to Cambodian youth. In his role as a trainer, he designs and facilitates workshops for youth ages 15-25 on topics such as building a culture of peace, conflict resolution, human rights, leadership and non-violence. He plans to assist YFP in developing a new human rights and democracy education initiative for Cambodian youth. Muny has also led field visits for YFP and is helping to build a network of Cambodian children and youth involved in peacebuilding. He is also trained as a secondary school teacher and has taught English to Cambodian children and youth ages 8-20. Muny served as a member of the organizing committees for the Southeast Asia Youth Camp for Peace and the Adult Investment for Non-Discrimination (AIDS) Campaign. He also acted as an observer of the commune council election in Phnom Penh in 2002. Also in 2002, Muny attend the Youth Camp for Democracy and Peace in Indonesia as a Cambodian youth representative and in 2004 he participated in the Conference on Peace Education around the World in Munich, Germany. He is currently finishing a degree in Peace Studies at the University of Cambodia.

Jennifer Kloes Executive Director Global Youth Connect

Jennifer has served as Executive Director of Global Youth Connect since 1999. In addition to overseeing the general organizational and program development of GYC, she has organized and led human rights delegations to Rwanda, Guatemala, Cambodia, Nepal and developed human rights, peacebuilding and activism training workshops for young human rights defenders from around the world. Prior to her work with GYC, Jennifer worked as the international programs coordinator for Street Law, an international organization that

runs educational programs in the areas of law, human rights, democracy and conflict resolution, on projects in El Salvador, Northern Ireland, Southern and Eastern Africa, and the Newly Independent States. Her background also includes working with Amnesty International, Children's Rights, Inc., and Global Rights on a wide range of human rights issues such as political prisoners in Cuba, Haiti, and Western Africa and children lost in the foster care system of the U.S., among others. Jennifer also conducted an extensive research project on the impact of the UN World Conference of Human Rights (1993). VOICE International published a practical manuscript she wrote entitled *"To Promote and Protect Women's Human Rights: A Handbook of Mobilization Strategies for Women's Non-governmental Organizations."* She has also consulted on fundraising and program evaluation and implementation for the Louis August Jonas Foundation, the Artemesia Foundation and Midwives for Midwives/Women's Health International. Jennifer holds a M.S. in Foreign Service from Georgetown University and a B.A. in International Studies from American University and concentrated her academic studies on international development and human rights.

Joseph Ryarasa Nkurunziza
Chairperson
Never Again-Rwanda

Joseph completed his studies at the Medical School in 2005 at the National University of Rwanda and is currently working with the Millennium Villages project as a Program Implementer and planner in the health sector. He is involved with two organizations, Health Development Initiative as the vice chairperson and Never Again-Rwanda as the chairperson. He was the president of the Medical Students Association of Rwanda (Medsar) from 2004-2005 and through this position he initiated numerous community health based projects in the Huye District-sourthen Province of Rwanda, including an HIV/AIDS sensitization project in the Mugombwa Districts and various projects providing mothers with pre-natal consultations and family planning education. Between the years of 2001-2003, he was involved in the University Women Students Association and the Students Guild Council of the National University of Rwanda, where he was the Assistant Guild Minister of Gender and acted as a representative in the faculty council. He has also played a key organizational

role in various national and international conferences, workshops, and public lectures, such as the Rwanda Forum in London in March 2004 and an Interuniversity Workshop on Gender Promotion at Kigali Institute of Science and Technology.

He has attended numerous events as well including a sexual education conference in Birmingham, UK, Overseas Volunteers conference at Bristol University ,UK, the International Federation of the Medical Students Associations' meetings in Turkey and Egypt, a sexual, reproductive health & development workshop in Zambia, African Medical training Congress in Ghana, and many other seminars on Rwandan politics, reproductive health, HIV/AIDS, and gender awareness. In November 2005, he organized a training program for peer Educators in Reproductive Health. He is also the chairperson of Never Again Rwanda. He has organized youth debates and forums among Rwandan youth, facilitated trainings on youth human rights learning communities (June 2005), organized a global youth genocide prevention forum in Kigali, initiated a youth project entitled "Mobilizing of Youth to Overcome Social Prejudices and Manipulations in the Former Kibuye Province" (Rwanda) (2005), initiated a project in the western province entitled "Engaging Youth in the Improving their Social Economic Conditions" (July 2006), organized a workshop on unity and reconciliation as a pillar to development (Oct 2006). His extra-curricular activities include reading, debating, and studying international politics and public relations. He plans to be engaged in peace building, conflict management and also treating people with tropical diseases.

Vahidin Omanovic
Director
Center For Peacebuilding

Vahidin is a founder and director of the Center for Peacebuilding, a non-political, non-governmental organization based in Sanski Most, Bosnia and Herzegovina. He has worked as a liaison, trainer, and project manager for this organization whose goals are peacebuilding, reconciliation and the prevention of violence. Vahidin has designed and facilitated workshops and interpersonal dialogue groups, taught non-violent communication and conflict transformation, supervised personnel, created budget and grant proposals, and trained

youth camps in Macedonia, Kosovo, and all across Bosnia and Herzegovina. He holds a master's degree in International and Intercultural Management from the School for International Training in Vermont and a Professional Certificate in Intercultural Peacebuilding. Vahidin is also an Imam, and he graduated from Islamic theological school with an Imam, Teacher, and Preacher Diploma in 1998. Before establishing the Center for Peacebuilding, he worked as a Foreign Language Instructor in primary and middle schools, and an Administrative Assistant to the Bosnian Army. During the war in Bosnia, while still in his teens, he served as a counselor, liaison, teacher and religious leader at refugee camps in Slovenia. Vahidin has given numerous presentations on Bosnia and Intercultural Conflict Transformation in numerous European countries and the United States. Vahidin is fluent in Bosnian, English, Arabic, and Slovenian, and has strong conversational skills in Spanish, Italian, Turkish, and Russian.

Marieke Van Woerkom
Training & Curriculum Design Consultant
Global Youth Connect

Marieke is a facilitator, trainer and educator, who has worked in the field of conflict transformation and peace education since 1996. She holds a double Masters Degree from the University of Amsterdam in Cultural Anthropology and International Relations, with an emphasis on identity formation and conflict transformation. From 1996 to 2005, Marieke worked with Seeds of Peace, a preeminent conflict transformation program that brings together young people and educators from regions of conflict and war. As Director of Education, she designed, facilitated and supervised conflict transformation programs for groups of Arab and Israeli, Cypriot, Balkan, South Asian and American youth and educators. Since working at Seeds of Peace, Marieke has strengthened her conflict transformation experience by working on a range of projects that raise awareness, promote understanding and empower diverse groups of people to make positive change in their own lives and that of their communities. She developed programs for Children of Abraham, an organization that brings young Jewish and Muslim students together online to explore their faith through photography and dialogue. She designed and facilitated a cultural exchange program with Arab and Western students through Hostelling

International. With WinterMedia, a Dutch production company, she has been developing a television show that helps promote understanding between diverse groups of people through entertainment media. In addition, she recently designed and ran a retreat for Columbia University's Project Tolerance to address a growing rift on campus resulting in part from the conflict in the Middle East.