



## Peace Building from Below

### Reconciliation and Peacebuilding through Livelihoods and Income Opportunities



*Utilisation of locally available natural resources like Allo*

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#### The Context

Poverty, hunger and lack of opportunities for dignified livelihoods were some of the root causes fueling a decade long conflict in Nepal. Nearly a half of the population of Nepal is reported as resource poor, hunger stricken and has limited or no access to livelihoods opportunities and sources of income. Such deprivations had triggered discontent among people on several occasions in the past.

The decade-long (1996-2006) armed conflict had affected the local government bodies, destroyed infrastructures, impacted livelihoods and damaged social relations. In this context, the Peace Building from Below (PBB) project seeks to address the underpinning root causes of rural poverty, exacerbated by income disparities and unequal socio-economic development opportunities drawn along class, caste, geography, ethnicity and gender lines. The PBB is thus, designed to facilitate the creation of development opportunities to conflict affected

communities in a way that would address the underlying causes of conflict and promote reconciliation. Along these lines, the PBB had already facilitated some avenues for livelihoods supports in the forms of vocational training, on-farm and off-farm income generation, seed money and revolving funds. These supports have been instrumental not only for poverty and vulnerability reduction but also supporting reconciliation and peacebuilding at local level.

#### The interventions and results

While addressing the issue of poverty, vulnerability and needs of the people; PBB is setting good examples of creating livelihoods opportunities, mainly based on agriculture, forest, livestock, as well as through supporting of on and off farm skill trainings, long and short term vocational trainings and provisions of seed money to start micro enterprises.

Most of the beneficiaries of the project (i.e., DCAPs. women, Dalit, Janajati and poor and



*Demand based training enabled establishing of needed services in villages like veterinary shop*



*A mobile phone repair centre established by ex-combatants after the training*

**The project learnt that supporting livelihoods of the needy people is assisting reconciliation and peace building process at individual, household and community levels.**

excluded) who received the livelihoods related training are now engaged in income generation activities. They have started producing vegetables, making handicrafts, raising pigs and goats that supplements their family income. Farm based training in particular is also contributing to the nutritional intake of the household members with variety and plenty of produce. Similarly, through vocational trainings, many beneficiaries are self-employed by undertaking micro-enterprises (e.g., establishing mobile-phone repairing centres, desk top

publishing, grocery shops and veterinary services).

There has been a significant change in the rural livelihoods and market systems through rural agricultural roads constructed under the initiation of the project. Through these roads, farmers have been able to sell their farm products like vegetables, fruits, tea, cardamom, chicken, rice, meat, fish, etc., to the nearby markets and buy necessary goods for the households and agricultural inputs from these market facilities.

These endeavours have helped in releasing the tension of individuals and groups by developing peaceful environment and empowering the community in general. The assurance of regular income and livelihoods opportunities consequently enables the family environment for quality education of children, access to health services, nutritious food and access to other basic goods and services. The project learnt that supporting livelihoods of the needy people is assisting reconciliation and peace building process at individual, household and community levels. The aggregate impact of which will ultimately pass onto the higher levels

## Livelihood assurance brings peace and happiness in the family

Ms Saraswati Dudhpau, 24, is a married woman living in Khandbari Municipality -13, Tumlingtar, in a joint family of 8 members. She is just literate, can read and hardly write in Nepali. Owing to her poor economic condition, she and her family members had to visit the village money lenders even for a small amount, which was humiliating for her. In 2011, she received a month long training from PBB/RRN in bamboo handicraft and, PBB/RRN also gave her tools necessary to put into practice the learned skill. After successfully graduating from the training, she started making different bamboo furniture such as *Muda* (a stool), bracelet stands, hangers, racks, etc. Last year alone, she made 80 *Mudas* which she sold in the local market earning about NRs 24,000. Her only son, who is 6 years old now, is receiving a quality education in a private school out of this amount and she also contributes for miscellaneous expenses in her family. Until now, she had not faced any problem selling the bamboo crafts but rather has been receiving order in advance from the locals. She says **“after I started earning, it brought peace of mind and harmony in my family life; there is peace in the family and the family members are now happy.”** She said so because now, whenever there is monetary need in the family, they do not need to borrow from outside at high interest rates and she can contribute to household expenses too which makes the family members happy. It has provided a great relief to the family members as they do not have financial tensions.



Now she is also able to deposit monthly savings regularly with the women savings group. This has further promoted friendship and trust among community members, said she. Currently, she is providing training on bamboo handicraft to two other members of her group.

The case of Saraswati Dudhpau shows how such small enterprise development training (with provision of tools to put it in practice) support the livelihood, reduce family tension, develop friendship and help live a dignified peaceful life.

## Skill development training enhances positive relationship among family members

Mr Krishna Kumar Karki, a physically challenged local of Pyauli VDC-1, Bhojpur is a household head, making his family's livelihoods from subsistence farming. As the income from farming was not enough to meet the daily requirements of the family, there were quarrels and disputes in the house all the time. Krishna was always frustrated, he used to speak very less and had a very poor self esteem, because he was always ridiculed, dominated and insulted by his family members for not being economically productive due to his physical disability.

The life of Krishna significantly changed after he attended a 23 day long extensive training on Bamboo Craft Production organized by PBB. Krishna was selected by Ranke Community Forest Users' Group for

the training as he was economically weak and physically challenged. After the training, Krishna started making bamboo furniture such as muda (stool). The mudas are taken to the local weekly markets (Hat Bazaar) and sold with the help of his other family members. Krishna spends the earned money in buying the daily household requirements such as sugar, salts, spices and books and stationery for his children. "Now I feel so dignified that I am also contributing to the household income though I am physically challenged", says Krishna. On the other hand, the family members are also happy that Krishna is earning bread and butter for the family. Now, the family members respect him and take care of him and there is no more family quarrel. Instead, his wife and children help with the muda business. "There have



been many changes in my life and family's happiness. My wife and children respect me after I started making bamboo stools and started contributing to family income. Now, I have a plan to diversify the bamboo handicraft products. I am also making, racks, hangers and photo-frames," says Krishna. The story of Krishna illustrates how a simple skill development training can restore harmony and peace within the family.

of districts, regions and the whole nation. The project validated the hypothesis that when people have reasonable access to their livelihoods needs and priorities, they would abstain from fighting or revolting on these grounds. In addition, the availability of opportunities for income generation and livelihoods in the villages itself has helped to retain youths back in villages without having to migrate, also contributing to harmony and peace at household levels.



## Some other success stories

- **Mr Samsheer Bahadur Lohar**, a directly conflict affected person of Palung Community Organisation in Kharang-5 attended pig raising training and initiated the pig farming with two sows, with the seed money provided by PBB. He has been able to produce more piglets that he sold in the local markets earning NRs.50, 000.
- A poor and excluded woman, **Ms Krishna Kumari Tamang** of Kanchanjanga women's group Khandbari, Sankhuwasabha, completed a mushroom growing training. After the training, she received the mushroom seeds and she started cultivation that enabled her to utilise her learned skill. She has produced and marketed the mushroom in local markets and Hat Bazaar, which earned NRs. 20,000.
- **Mr Suva Man Rai** from Makalu VDC and **Mr. Jir Bahadur Rai** from Num VDC jointly started a mobile repairing center in Num Bazaar, after attending the Mobile repairing training held at Khandbari through the support from RRN/PBB.
- **Ms Renuka Subedi**, a CBPO member comprising of ex-combatants in Sankhuwasabha attended one month Bamboo handicraft training with the support of PBB and Small Cottage Industry Development Board (SCIDB). After the training, she applied learned skills and started to make bamboo stools and other decorative and souvenir items and now she is also working as a resource person for the training.

## From War to Entrepreneurship

Mr Lal Bahadur Tamang of Barhabise, Sankhuwasaba is a former combatant and now living at Conflict Rehabilitation Center in Khandbari. With the support from PBB project, he was able to join a three month long training on Basic and Diploma Computer Course. To encourage him and support his business, PBB/ RRN also supported NRs. 15,000.00 as a seed money. After completing the training, he borrowed additional money as loan and purchased a desktop computer and a printer, and started designing and printing service in Khandbari. Now, he is a well established service provider for desktop publication. The schools and colleges of the surrounding areas are his regular clients. Similarly, his wife has also attended the mushroom cultivation training under PBB. After the training, she started cultivating mushroom and already sold 25 Kgs for NRs 7,500.

Like Lal Bahadur and his wife, many other former



combatants have jointly started a community pig farming and commercial vegetables cultivation, mobile-phone repairing and earning their livelihoods. They have become as a regular member of the community with the support of the project.

The project supported different types of livelihoods opportunities that have helped the local youths to find jobs of their choice and skills. The ex-combatants who have returned to their villages and have already crossed the school going age have equally benefitted out of the livelihoods initiatives offered by the project. The enthusiastic engagement of people in different enterprises catering to livelihoods opportunities is really noteworthy. Some are

involved in farm based enterprises like growing vegetables, raising goats and rearing pigs, while others are engaged in off-farm enterprises like making fibre cloth from locally abundant nettle plants, making bamboo furniture, running retail shops, etc. Some youths who graduated from vocational training courses are engaged in providing agriculture, veterinary, electrification, electro-mechanics and plumbing services to the communities.

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**Rural Reconstruction Nepal (RRN)**, established in 1989, is a Nepali non-government, social development organisation involved in rural development, action-oriented research and policy advocacy focusing on peasants, poor women, dalits and indigenous nationalities, and other vulnerable communities through the process of facilitation, social mobilisation, empowerment and self-organisation. RRN's work is based on the four-fold approach of rural reconstruction covering education to combat illiteracy and empower people to access their rights; sustainable livelihood to fight poverty; health to prevent disease, and self-government to overcome civic inertia.

**The Peace Building from Below** (2009-2012) pilot project is an initiative of Rural Reconstruction Nepal (RRN), supported by Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) with the goal to contribute towards sustainable peace building in Nepal. The purposes of the project are: (a) to develop and promote circumstance-based model(s) for community-based reconciliation that can be replicated nation-wide, and (b) to strengthen and mobilize Community-Based People's Organizations (CBPOs) for peace building and conflict transformation.

The project covers 19 Village Development Committees and one Municipality of Bhojpur and Sankhuwasabha districts located in the Eastern Nepal. The project adopted demand based development approach as means for facilitating reconciliation and peace building as the end results at the grassroots. It has included number of thematic areas of development, all of which eventually divert to reconciliation and peace. The main thematic components of the project are social mobilisation, infrastructure development, livelihoods support, capacity building, environmental conservation and gender and social inclusion.



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