



COLLECTIVE CAMPAIGN FOR PEACE (COCAP)

Monthly Newsletter

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Focal Point Meeting - July 26, 27

COCAP secretariat held two days meeting with its focal point facilitators and focal point coordinators working in the Eastern, Western, Mid-western and Far western regions of the country. The meeting was chaired by Suvash Darnal, COCAP's incumbent chairperson. Four interns from The Advocacy Project, USA, who are currently working in the focal points, also attended the meeting. COCAP board members Prakash Bhattarai and Sahek B.K were also present during the meeting.



Participants in the Focal Point meeting, July 26

Madhab Bastakoti warmly welcomed all the participants to the two days meeting and discussions begun on Thursday at noon. On both days of the meeting, participants discussed a number of topics pertaining to the effective working of the COCAP focal points. Both focal point facilitators as well as focal point coordinators shared their experiences. Nar Bhadur Sawod, the coordinator of Far-western Region Focal Point (SWEET-Nepal), shared that geographical and financial constraints at times made it difficult to give services to member organizations working in different districts within the region. Shiva Lal Pandey, the coordinator of Mid-western Region Focal Point (SAC-Nepal), suggested that a detailed guideline should be made for the focal points to function effectively. The four visiting Advocacy Project interns

Welcome

Welcome to this, the first edition of the COCAP Newsletter. The purpose of this newsletter will be to keep everyone informed of COCAP and its members' activities throughout the country. COCAP has a diverse membership spread throughout Nepal. These members are working towards an improved peace and human rights situation each with their own unique approach and in their own regions. Through this newsletter we hope to spread information about issues facing each region of Nepal, and also what activities our members have done to address them. So we thank you for your readership and welcome any comments and suggestions you may have.

from the USA also shared their experiences at the four focal point offices. The interns offered a short presentation on possible solutions for focal point challenges and also briefed the participants about the collective proposals being prepared for the four regions.

Resulting from the meeting was the conclusion that the objectives with which the focal points have been established are very good; however their working areas have to be clearly delineated to further achieve their goals. The focal point facilitators requested that the job role defined for them be made more specific and expressed a desire for more guidance from the COCAP Secretariat. Topics regarding the future of the focal points will be further discussed in detail during the upcoming general assembly.

Round Table Conference

Three of COCAP's Eastern Region members participated in a peace-related Round Table Program to help stabilize the Terai Region on August 6, 2007. "The Big Round Table Conference" was organized by a committee made up of 25 LNGOs committed to mediating between the government and groups agitating in the Terai.

As Nepal moves to elect a constituent assembly in November, disturbances by various groups in the Terai are increasing day by day. The government has yet to fully address any of these group's demands and the fire in the Terai is growing unchecked. In order for successful elections the government must initiate discussions with these groups and bring them into the process of building a new Nepal.

The purpose of the Round Table discussion was to identify the demands of these groups and to form a declaration for how the situation can be addressed. This information might then be presented to the national government in the hopes that they can begin to stabilize the region in time for the coming election. Guest participants

from civil society included former member of the National Human Rights Commission Susil Pyakurel, lecturer, Madheshi leader and newspaper editor Bijay Kanta Karna, and journalist Ram Rijhan Yadav. Guest political leaders included JP Gupta, Suresh Karki, and Jagannath Khatiwada. In addition to these national civil society and political leaders there were also national NGO Leaders and local leaders from 5 of the most affected districts.

Leaders of various agitating groups attended, include The Madheshi Forum, Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN), and the leader of Jantantrik Terai Mukti Morcha (Jawala Singh) who participated by phone.

The final Lahan Declaration produced by these discussions included calls for an end to discrimination and a greater respect for human rights. It also emphasized the need to move forward peacefully and work together towards building for Nepal's future.

COCAP in Baglung Starts Radio Program

The Collective Campaign for Peace (COCAP) Western Region Focal Point has started a radio program entitled 'Constituent Assembly and Human Rights' in collaboration with Baglung F.M., COCAP's regional member organizations, and institutions working in the field of human rights.

Beginning on August 12, a 30 minute program will air every Sunday between 7:30 to 8:00 a.m. The program will make an effort to clarify the issues surrounding the upcoming CA to remote villagers, Dalits, women and Janajatis. Under the banner of social inclusion, the program will strive to educate disadvantaged groups about their responsibility in a democracy as well as the responsibility of the government representatives to the people. This civic awareness campaign will feature interviews with

leaders of marginalized communities and commoners throughout the region.

Furthermore, the program will help to familiarize citizens about the CA candidates and to follow up on issues concerning caste, disadvantaged peoples and gender problems. The expectation is that this program will allow citizens to elect candidates that solve their problems. This will empower these disadvantaged groups to establish their position, status and roles in the new constitution. We hope that the program will create an open environment for victimized people to receive compensation and justice regarding human rights and transitional justice. Baglung FM has agreed to conduct the program until the culmination of the CA election.

COCAP Members Conduct Constituent Assembly Interactions

On July 5 to 6, 2007 in Dang District, COCAP Member Chetana Club Dang (CCD) organized a two day workshop focused on the constituent assembly. This workshop targeted Freed Kamaiyas and Women, and emphasized their right to participate in the fast approaching elections. Discussion topics for the workshop were decided upon through a series of interactions with the target groups in select VDCs of Dang District. More than 150 participants from different sectors participated. Representatives came from political parties, NGO's, GO's, and also included civil society members, journalists, freed Kamaiyas and women. During the conference relevant papers were presented to the participants. Each presentation was followed by open discussion. Finally, the workshop concluded with a 16 point commitment announcement decided on by all the participants.

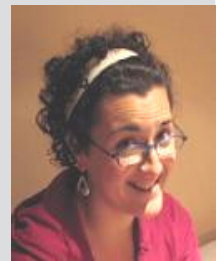
Similarly on July 13 in Kapurkot of Salyan District, a one day workshop was organized on the subject of "Establishment of Peace and constituent assembly" by People's Participation for Sustainable Development (PASS) Nepal, Salyan. In Salyan organizers focused on the responsibility of workshop participants to actively spread awareness in their communities. Participants in this workshop were teachers, NGO staff, CBO members, GO staff, members of civil society and journalists.

One more COCAP member has also recently dedicated itself to raising awareness about the constituent assembly. Sarada Salyan, is working through CBOs to raise awareness about the elections in rural areas through street dramas and cultural activities. This program covered 60% of district VDCs and has made great strides in empowering rural people to fully participate in the election.

The coming elections offer an important opportunity to elect a representative and

responsible constituent assembly to produce a constitution that will be the cornerstone of a lasting and complete peace for all of Nepal. For successful elections there needs to be a full and representative voter turn out with voters truly understanding why and for what they are voting. To meet these conditions more programs like those conducted in Dang and Salyan will be needed to raise awareness about the constituent assembly and the opportunities it will provide for all Nepali people.

Intern from the Advocacy Project: Nicole Farkouh



When I was offered a fellowship by the Advocacy Project to work with COCAP for the summer I was very excited. I knew that COCAP had played a very important role in the 2006 People's Movement and I was interested to learn from them and work with them to help make their network of organizations as effective as possible. I am based at NESPEC in Gaighat, Udayapur which is the focal point of the Eastern Region. I have been very inspired by the work being done by all the member organizations in my region. I am working to help them improve their collaboration and also to address the financial and logistical challenges of working together. I hope that they will be able to negotiate these challenges and do good work together far into the future.

I am learning an incredible amount this summer and meeting wonderful Nepali people. I am so grateful to have had the opportunity to get to work with COCAP and the members of the Eastern Region.

Kamalhari Custom And Seventh Liberated Kamaiya Day

On 2nd Shrawan, 2057 B.S., the government publicly declared that keeping kamaiya would be prohibited throughout Nepal. Seven years on Nepal's government has still failed to provide basic needs for the freed kamaiyas. Liberated kamaiyas are still being treated like second-class citizens throughout the country and the children of many freed kamaiyas are still compelled to work as the household slaves.

Even today the practice of Kamalhari still forces Tharu children to serve in households and restaurants after being purchased for an entire year. In such places children work like animals and are deprived of their basic children's rights. Kamalhari workers will never be educated or even understand what education means. These children are sometimes chained inside the households of landlords and suffer from excessive work, fatigue, mental, physical and even sexual violence. After such terrible experiences at such a young age it is almost impossible for them to lead fulfilling lives. Thankfully the practice of Kamalhari has been reduced, but it has not yet been fully eradicated.

Perhaps the sustainability of this custom is due to our own lack of honesty and commitment as a community. In our speech we oppose this custom, while we ourselves keep child household workers. This kind of hypocrisy is an obstacle to the eradication of this custom. If we truly desire a just nation we need to uproot this custom of slavery. We should publicly boycott those who have kamalhari at their houses, so the

cost of having household slaves will be too high. The government should act and make a declaration eradicating the practice and begin to punish those who keep kamalhari workers. All political parties, the government and society as a whole needs to seriously ponder on this issue and work to bring an end to this evil practice.

COCAP and its member organizations must also take action to end slavery. Already in the Far-Western Region organizations like Human Rights and Social Development Center (HURADC) Kailali, have began working to raise awareness about this terrible practice. HURADC also is helping Kamaiya families sustain themselves without selling their children through income generation projects. If we as a society can all take responsibility and support and initiate more programs like these than certainly we can end the Kamalhari system and help the Kamaiya people raise their standard of living.



Presentation from an AP intern during the Focal Point meeting, July 27

CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY FOR THE INCLUSIVE DEMOCRACY
AND RESTRUCTURING OF THE STATE.

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