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Women's civil society organisations working with security institutions

Nepal presents valuable examples of women's organisations collaborating with security sector institutions.

Civil society played a significant role in combating the alliance of the army and the monarchy: civil society organisations collaborated to form the Civil Society Movement for Democracy and Peace, organised mass non-violent demonstrations and joined with the Maoists and other political parties to force King Gyanendra to relinquish power and agree on a democratic transition.¹

Nepal's security sector institutions face many challenges in addressing gender-related problems:²

- In the absence of a law relating to domestic violence, the police are not responsive to cases of domestic violence such as sexual assault. Police tend to treat domestic violence as a trivial family matter and are reluctant to press charges against the perpetrators of violence.³
- While Women and Children Service Centres have been established in many districts to help address cases of violence against women and children, officials at these Centres frequently lack the sensitivity, skills and perseverance to deal with the most sensitive cases.
- Women's access to justice is complicated. If a victim of abuse seeks justice independently, the police often do not give her case serious attention. However, if the victim approaches the police through a social organisation, her case is more likely to be considered.

Over the years, many organisations have conducted orientation and training programmes for different stakeholders in an effort to combat violence against women and children. The purpose of these trainings has been to raise awareness of the different dimensions of violence, analyse the role of involved actors, build the capacity of those who directly or indirectly deal with cases of violence and strengthen networking. The participation of police personnel and NGO workers at various training sessions has contributed to a fruitful interchange of ideas and experiences, as well as to bridging the gap between police and NGO activists.⁴

In collaboration with the military in 2003, women's organisations provided training to circa 200 senior officials on international human rights, including the specific rights of women and children.⁵ Through interactive programmes involving senior military personnel and villagers, this training highlighted the negative impact of harassment and violence in the military. In 2004, a Steering Committee including representatives from Save the Children, the armed forces police, the general police and the Prime Minister's office was created in order to support the creation of a training manual for military personnel in the field.

Women were instrumental in facilitating the 2006 peace process and continue to play a crucial role in Nepal's post-conflict phase. Community- and district-level women's groups have been very active in advocating for the enhancement of women's participation in meaningful dialogue with political and security institutions.⁶ PACT, a national NGO mandated to bring successful local initiatives to the attention of national forums through the development of better linkages between community women's groups and their counterparts who work at the national level, has been extremely active in calling for greater female participation in

¹ Dhungana, Shiva K., "Security Sector Reform and Peacebuilding in Nepal: a critical reflection," *Journal of Peacebuilding and Development*, Vol.3, No.2, 2007, 70-78.

² Ibid.

³ Saferworld, *Policing in Nepal: A Collection of Essays*, September 2007.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Naraghi Anderlini, S., and Pampell Conaway, C., "Security Sector Reform," in *Inclusive Security, Sustainable Peace: a toolkit for advocacy and action*, International Alert and Initiative for Inclusive Security, 2004, 36.

⁶ International Alert, "Supporting Civil Society in Building Peace in Nepal," 2007, http://www.international-alert.org/pdf/Supporting_Civil_Society_in_Building_Peace_in_Nepal.pdf

NEPAL

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the interim government.⁷

- ▶ The involvement of women's organisations in oversight of the security sector is discussed in section 4.8 of the *Civil Society Oversight in the Security Sector and Gender Tool*.
- ▶ Civil society networks are discussed in section 4.9 of the *Civil Society Oversight in the Security Sector and Gender Tool*.
- ▶ Gender training of security sector personnel is discussed in section 4.7 of the *Civil Society Oversight in the Security Sector and Gender Tool*.

7

Pact World web-site, <http://www.pactworld.org/>