



Nr.3, september 2005

Norge- Nepal foreningen inviterer til medlemsmøte:

Experiences from training programme on peace building and conflict management in Nepal.

New Era (Nepal) and the Centre for Peace Building and Conflict Management Norway (CCM) will in early September conduct a 5 days workshop on Peace Building, Conflict Management, Human Rights, Development and Democratic Practice as an introductory event to a possible Training for Trainers programme to be conducted in the future. 30 participants from NGOs and community organisations will take part in the workshop.

The workshop will be conducted by Graham Dyson, Ane Haaland and Hem Gurung. They will on our member meeting inform about the present situation in Nepal and give report from the workshop.

20. september 2005, kl 18.30

Bygdelagssamskipnadens Hus, Nordahl Brunsgate 22, Oslo.

Neste medlemsmøte blir tirsdag 25.oktober 2005

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Hamro Patrika er Norge- Nepal foreningens medlemsavis som utkommer fire- fem ganger i året. Forespørsler angående avisen, foreningen og Nepal kan rettes til styremedlemmene.

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Momos and Memories

Our next member meeting will be October 25.

The topic for this meeting will be "Momos and Memories"

We will make and serve momos – and we want YOU to participate and share your memories from Nepal with us.

Do you have any stories, memories and/or photos from Nepal? Would you like to share them with the members in NNA? Then tell us!

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Community-run schools make progress

IRINnews.ORG



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A young girl in Dang village of western Nepal stands with a poster: Give us the chance to go to school

KATHMANDU, 9 Aug 2005 (IRIN) - A government initiative to hand over the management of all state-run schools to local communities has given new hope to parents and teachers alike in Nepal, where the education sector has suffered due to years of conflict.

Since the Maoist campaign to overthrow the government began nine years ago, education has been one of the hardest hit development sectors. On the advice of aid agencies, the government is continuing the process of decentralising the public education system in line with the Local Self Governance Act of 1999.

In the past two years, nearly 2,200 schools have been handed over to local community control. The move followed calls by experts for the government to relinquish power over a sector it could not control, especially in Maoist-controlled villages. It was believed that poor, local communities would meet with less interference as the Maoists tried to hang on to dwindling local support.

Under the Community School Support Programme (CSSP) the government provides a grant of nearly US \$1,500 to each community-managed public school. Supported and spearheaded by the World Bank, these schools will now be run independently without any interference from the government.

"Such an initiative can help Nepal to achieve its education goals," said education expert Sanphe Lhalungpa from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

The programme has already proved to be a big success in enrolling children in many districts, he said, noting one of the agency's key challenges was preventing children from dropping out of education.

"What makes the programme special is that we will be able to keep a lot of children in school, which otherwise would not have been possible," Rajendra Joshi, a senior education specialist of the World Bank, added.

Retention of students, especially at the primary level, has always posed a big challenge in the country of 28 million, which according to the United Nations has one of the highest school dropout rates in the world. Analysts note that the Himalayan kingdom had a record 70 percent dropout rate for children between the ages of six and 10 years even

before the armed Maoist rebellion began. They believe with some certainty that those rates would undoubtedly have worsened since.

Experts cite a lack of school supplies, irresponsible and untrained teachers, combined with a lack of child-friendly school environments, as the main causes.

"Most of the government schools are so under-funded that they have to manage with an annual budget of less than \$150," Helen Sherpa from the World Education Group (WEG) explained.

But now experts believe that there could be progress. The government has plans to hand over all 27,000 schools in a few years, providing a unique education model to the developing world, according to international education specialists.

The community schools will be controlled by locally appointed committees consisting of local social workers, teachers and parents who are primarily farmers, labourers and ordinary villagers. They have the power to hire good teachers and terminate those whose services fail to reach the required standard.

"In the past, all the government has managed to do is appoint those teachers who were politicised and not good enough," explained Joshi. "One thing is for sure. When the community takes over, they would lose all the bad teachers," he added.

Indeed, according to the government's district education officers, many politically appointed teachers neglect their duties altogether and remain absent for months giving the Maoist problem as an excuse.

One success being cited is community-managed schools in western Nepal, a region badly affected by the Maoist insurgency. In the course of this year in Banke district, nearly 700 km west of the capital Kathmandu, 21,632 children were enrolled compared to just 17,318 in 2004, according to the World Education Group.

"In addition, 4,000 more children stayed in school, which proves that with such effective community-based programmes, conflict is not necessarily the real obstacle," said Sherpa.

While many feel that this is an effective programme, they also note that the government must continue monitoring school activities and provide more guidance to local communities so that they can manage the schools effectively in the long run.

Under its Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Nepal seeks the enrolment of all its children in education by 2015 but analysts claim that the problem is providing continuity to programmes. In the past, Nepal has had effective programmes which were phased out even before the goals were achieved.

"The government should realise that its responsibility does not end by handing over its responsibilities to communities. Giving grants is not enough," education expert Labaraj Oli asserted.

Meanwhile, there is some concern among educators whether communities are in fact capable of managing the schools since they are not well educated themselves, neither are they professionally trained.

"Such prejudice only proves that we tend to look down on grassroots communities," said Joshi, who believes that communities are more responsible and accountable when it comes to their children's schooling.

"This is not about undertaking technical responsibilities but knowing who is a good or a

bad teacher," added Joshi

Shankar Sharma, vice-chairman of the government's National Planning Commission, maintained that at the core of the issue is the objective of securing peace for Nepal.

"There is a sign that we may be able to achieve our Millennium Development Goal. It all depends on the intensity of the conflict. Once there is peace, we could achieve about 75 percent of our goals," he said.

Growing concern over vigilante groups

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One among hundreds of homes burnt down by vigilante groups in Kapilbastu

Such attacks at the hands of the vigilante groups, who have taken up arms to campaign against the Maoist insurgents are reportedly increasing, a new report by Amnesty International (AI) released on Wednesday maintained.

In its 'Fractured Country, Shattered Lives,' report, AI said it was alarmed at an increasing number of armed civilian groups in many districts of the Himalayan kingdom.

"These groups, which clearly enjoy considerable support from the government of Nepal, are responsible for a growing number of human rights abuses," the watchdog group charged.

AI had initiated an investigative mission to six districts of western Nepal where there had been regular reports of an increasing number of repeated violations of human rights at the hands of the vigilante groups.

NAWALPARASI, 4 Aug 2005 (IRIN) - Prahat Sahni is just an ordinary villager living in Sarabal village of Nawalparasi district, about 200 km southeast of the Nepali capital, Kathmandu. He makes a meager income from his small farm and has no political interest at all.

But sitting at home after a hard day's work, a group of armed villagers calling themselves members of the 'village defence force' broke into his house and brutally beat him, accusing him of sympathising with the Maoists, who have been waging a nine year insurgency against the government.

"The emergence of these village defence forces is aggravating existing fault lines in Nepali society and contributing to an increasing number of civilians being displaced by the conflict," it said.

Meanwhile, human rights activists and journalists based in Nawalparasi told IRIN that their movement had been severely restricted by members of the vigilante groups accusing them of being too critical about their anti-Maoist campaigns.

"We will not spare anyone who accuses us of violating human rights," Muna Khan, a leader of one such group in the district, said.

"The vigilantes have not stopped harassing and torturing civilians in the name of eliminating the Maoists from their district," said journalist JB Pun, who had been kidnapped by the group only a few months back for his critical reporting about their activities.

"Journalists and human rights activists are not allowed to enter the affected areas by the armed vigilantes who receive the protection of the local administration," he claimed.

Indeed, according to activists, the security forces had purportedly provided training on use of military arms in the district. This has been substantiated by Khan who told some journalists that his group members were now more confident about fighting with the rebels following 15 days of military training.

In November 2003, the government had proposed to launch a "Civil Military National Campaign" to counter Maoist violence which included plans to institute "Rural Volunteer Security Groups". The proposal was severely criticised by the international community fearing that this would lead to an escalation in human rights abuse.

"The civilian casualties at the hands of the vigilantes are growing and we are seriously concerned that the rights abuses will grow if immediate steps are not taken to control their activities," human rights activist Subodh Pyakhurel said.

AI also reported that there was mounting evidence that the creation of village defence forces had led to a sharp deterioration of human rights rather than the protection of the civilians.

"The civilians are now facing similar threats, intimidation and extortion at the hands of the vigilantes like they did with the Maoist insurgents," activist Krishna Gautam claimed.

The activists add that the villagers are now being forced to join the vigilantes and take up arms to attack both the Maoists and their sympathisers. "Those who refuse are accused of supporting the rebels, which is why the people are seen joining the groups out of fear," said Pun.

Meanwhile, the office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) told IRIN that it would conduct its own independent investigation into the activities of the vigilante groups.

"That's definitely a case we need to get some first hand information as to what is happening on the ground and that is certainly amongst our priorities," Ian Martin, head of the newly established OHCHR office in Nepal, told IRIN in Kathmandu. "We will be making visits to areas where alleged vigilantes are operating and to look what their relationship is between them and security forces," Martin added.

The AI report further added that one of the worst human rights abuse at the hands of

vigilante groups took place in Kapilbastu, 300 km west of the capital. On 17 February, over 700 houses were burnt and 31 people were killed. It further said that three Maoist suspects were released to an angry crowd by the army and were lynched in front of watching soldiers.

Local army officials estimated that after the killings and house burnings in Kapilbastu in February, 40,000 Nepalis from that district alone crossed the border within a few days.

During its field investigation, AI was told by the local people in Kapilbastu that the village defence forces conducted searches of people's homes very late at night and constantly harassed women and girls during their searches.

"The overarching conclusion to this 'snapshot' view of the human rights situation in six districts of rural Nepal is that civilians are caught in the middle of a brutal conflict. They are coerced by all sides - including by newly emerged village defence forces - to become participants in the conflict," the AI report revealed.

AI believes that alarm bells are ringing over this new trend in human rights abuse and the consequences are dire.

"There is an urgent need for measures to be taken that begin to reverse this and actively seek to realise the human rights and immediate safety of children, women and men in Nepal," the report said.

Activists call on UN monitoring mission to act quickly

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KATHMANDU, 11 Aug 2005 (IRIN) - Since King Gyanendra



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Children have increasing fallen victim to the Maoist insurgency

have passed since OHCHR and the Nepalese government signed an agreement to allow a UN human rights monitoring mission in the Himalayan kingdom.

"Extra-judicial killings by the state are increasing and more innocent civilians are being killed by the Maoist rebels. The mission has a challenging job but it needs to move fast before more human rights violations take place," human rights activist Krishna Gautam, said in the capital Kathmandu.

"Human rights activists are no longer able to work freely like before. All our hopes now rest on the mission," Gautam added, explaining that after parliament was dissolved in February, the state restricted the movement and work of rights activists, thus limiting their role in advocating against human rights abuses around the country.

However, now that OHCHR has also established its contacts with the Maoist rebels, activists are asking the UN team what they have achieved so far.

"The mission needs to move faster as it can really play a key role - especially in calling on the rebels not to destroy the infrastructure and public service systems badly affecting the civilian population," activist Subodh Pyakhurel said.

According to reports in the local media, Maoist rebels have begun to destroy water supply systems in some parts of the country in order to prevent government security forces from using them. Recently the rebels destroyed the water supply system in Sankuwasabha, nearly 400 km northwest of Kathmandu. This has already led to a water shortage for thousands of civilians.

Activists add that the Maoist militants had never previously directly targeted innocent

took over direct rule of Nepal six months ago on 1 February, at least 1,115 people have been killed according to a report published by Insec, a local human rights group. The report says 738 have died at the hands of the state and 377, including both civilians and security personnel, have been killed by Maoist rebels.

As a result, activists have become increasingly concerned over the human rights situation and are asking when the Nepal-based Office of the United Nation High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) will begin active field work as per its mandate. Nearly four months

civilians but had now been responsible for killing a large number of men, women and children.

The most tragic incident took place on 6 June in Chitwan, 100 km west of the capital, when 31 adults and seven children were killed in a landmine explosion.

The Insec report said that the rebels had been responsible for the death of 114 innocent people since 1 February, adding that the number of abductions nationwide had also risen to a total of 3,816 over the last six months, compared to 3,290 over a seven year period from 1996 to 2003. However, those figures pale to 2004, when Maoists abducted over 26,000 students and forced them to attend Maoist indoctrination courses.

"Civilian casualties are increasing at the hands of the Maoists, security forces and vigilante groups. What kind of pressure is the mission putting on these groups? Every day of delay means another death," warned one activist from a prominent rights organisation, who wanted to remain anonymous as he did not want to jeopardise his relationship with the mission team.

"The state and rebels should be made to sign a human rights accord. So, what efforts are the mission making towards this end? Everyone is asking the same question," he added.

In response to these desperate remarks, OHCHR told IRIN that the mission had hardly kept still and was actively preparing for the implementation of its mandates.

"There are a lot of things happening that people don't see. We are taking up a lot of issues directly with the state authorities and the Maoists regarding abductions and other issues," OHCHR chief, Ian Martin, explained. He added that the mission had already started actively investigating a number of key issues.

"Certainly we are not very present in the field yet and that won't happen unfortunately until we get more staff and are able to open an office out of Kathmandu," added Martin.

He went on to explain that his office already had been given the right of access to army detention centres, where they are able to visit unannounced. However, activists are sceptical whether such visits are possible in reality.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) suspended visits to detainees at army barracks throughout the country in May, after the Royal Nepali Army (RNA) allegedly failed to comply fully with the terms of an agreement with the ICRC.

"The visits to the military barracks have not resumed yet," Friedrun Medert, ICRC's delegation head in Nepal, confirmed to IRIN.

However, OHCHR explained that the agreement with the Nepalese government will be respected and it had already been working closely with the army on the cases of a number of disappearances. The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has recorded 1,100 unexplained disappearances of people.

"The Royal Nepal Army (RNA) at the moment has teams out in the regions, one of whose aims is to try to clarify outstanding cases of disappearances. We are now for the first time receiving lists of detainees in the army barracks," explained Martin.

Martin added that his team was already addressing cases of concern to the Maoist rebels as well.

"Again, it is early days to see how serious and effective the response would be," he added.

The mission aims to start full field operations in October when it will have a much larger team in place. In two months time, it will also submit its first Nepal report to the UN General Assembly in New York, which the king plans to attend.

"We are expecting a lot from the report, based on which the UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, will also be addressing the assembly about Nepal," said Pyakhurel.

However, Pyakhurel, like many other activists, believes that the mission should not wait for further staff to arrive in the country and that it urgently needs to start work immediately.

"Even the presence of a handful of monitoring will make a huge impact in the villages at a time when human rights abuses are growing," he said.

NGOs next

Changes to the Social Welfare Act will tighten controls on civil society
NEPALI TIMES, 12-18.08.2005

After crackdowns against politicians, journalists, human rights activists and other democratic institutions the regime now has non-governmental organizations in the crosshairs.

In a move that for many harks back to the bad old Panchayat days, the Social Welfare Council has been revamped and given powers through royal ordinance to issue directives and supervise NGO activities. Earlier it was only directed to 'extend support' to NGOs. Next up is a code of conduct being prepared by the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare.

Although the SWC is an autonomous body, Minister Durga Shrestha has already hinted at what is to come by sacking member secretary Prabha Basnet and all senior members on 29 July, replacing them with a handpicked team.

Basnet, a 33-year veteran civil servant, told us her sacking came as a complete surprise. "I was really shocked, and I don't know why the ordinance is being introduced—ask the minister," she said.



GROUND ZERO: The Royal Nepali Army Karnali Highway road construction camp that was attacked on Sunday is located on this exact spot where children applauded at the end of a nine-hour Maoist public meeting in October. At least 80 people were killed in the raid, and first pictures of dead soldiers at the site are too gory to print.

One government source told us the minister had been miffed at SWC members who had constantly disagreed with her efforts at extending controls and with her working style.

The new staffing and rules have further harmed the government's deteriorating relationship with national and international civil society which feel the government is trying to control their activities. Although the government has not yet officially informed INGO reps in Kathmandu about the changes, they have been informally told the amendments in the SWC act will not affect their work.

International donors and the UN have not commented officially, but have voiced private misgivings. Nepali NGOs fear they will suffer political harassment through the SWC and want the INGOs to be more vocal. "If the INGOs feel that they are our real partners it's time they spoke out," says Gauri Pradhan of Child Workers in Nepal (CWIN).

CARE Nepal's Balam Thapa says the process for any big changes in the SWC should have been consultative and participatory.

"Instead there is much confusion and frustration among the development community," he told us.

Shibesh Regmi, chief of Action Aid Nepal, says the existing act already had strong legal provisions to take action against any NGO not complying with government agreements. He adds: "There really was no need to introduce any new codes of conduct."

New SWC member secretary Sharad Sharma told RSS the changes would enable the government to monitor and regulate NGO activities, especially outside the Valley. But Arjun Karki of the NGO Federation of Nepal says the new rules will demoralise development workers. "On one hand, we have to work under immense pressure from Maoists and now you have the government creating more problems," he adds.

Recently, the Maoists announced a one-year moratorium on NGOs in Tehrathum district, and there are reports of similar restrictions elsewhere.

CWIN's Gauri Pradhan says this is a witch-hunt, and an attempt by the government to sideline NGOs that are critical of the government.

The policy change has apparently infuriated even government officials, who argue it will only jeopardise the work of INGOs, who bring in Rs 7 billion annually to Nepal. The estimated 30,000 non-government groups countrywide are planning protests to pressure the government to leave them alone.

New NGO law spells end of autonomy

KATHMANDU, 17 Aug 2005 (IRIN) - Some national and international NGOs in Nepal say they are seriously concerned



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NGOs undertake vital aid and development work in Nepal - particularly in rebel-controlled areas - now they say they are under threat from a new law that will regulate their activities

over the introduction of the Social Welfare (First Amendment) Ordinance 2005. The new government ruling was promulgated during the last week of July and gives new powers to the state to enable it to control and regulate programmes run by NGOs and their activities.

Under the ordinance, the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare, will be given full authority to issue directives and supervise NGO activities instead of just 'extending support' as laid down in the existing Social Welfare Act, introduced in 1992.

"The notion of NGOs working independently and as counterparts to the

government development agencies has been seriously undermined with this amendment. The decision has demoralised all of us," said Arjun Karki, president of the NGO Federation of Nepal (NFN).

Karki and several NGO representatives said that the government already has powerful legal instruments like the Social Welfare Act, Societal Registration Act and Project Agreements to both monitor NGOs and take legal action against any organisation violating the Himalayan kingdom's laws.

"We see no rationale about bringing in the new ordinance. We want to know what the government's motives are behind this new change," said Shanta Lal Mulmi, an NFN official.

International NGOs are equally concerned that the new regulation will have a negative impact on their work in Nepal.

"There is so much confusion and frustration among the development community over this new but unnecessary ordinance," said Balaram Thapa, chief of Care Nepal. He added that there had been no consultation with NGOs before the ruling was made.

Observers say the ordinance is already having an impact on organisations that traditionally operate independently of government.

The semi-autonomous Social Welfare Council (SWC) has already come under the direct control of the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare. In the first week after the new ordinance was passed, Minister Durga Shrestha sacked senior members of the SWC

and replaced them all with her own handpicked team.

"I came to know of a new team [at the SWC] after it was announced on state television. We were all too shocked with the news," said Prabha Basnet, former secretary of the SWC, who along with five other senior members, were removed from office without prior notice.

"The government has no real cause for our removal but the new ordinance gives it all the authority it needs to do these things," explained Basnet, who had held his post for almost 33 years.

Some government officials who wished to remain anonymous, said the move could also draw hostility from donor governments who currently inject nearly US \$100 million into the desperately poor Himalayan nation that has been in the throes of a Maoist rebellion for the past nine years.

"We are based in villages and all the places where the government is absent. This decision only demoralises our workers further," said Karki. "On one hand, we have to work under immense pressure because of the Maoists and now you have the government creating more problems," he added.

In order to pressure both the government and Maoists to keep politics out of development and aid work, nearly 30,000 NGOs from all over Nepal are planning a series of protest campaigns in the near future.

"Our protest has no relevance to party politics. We just want our voices to be heard by both state and rebels," explained Mulmi.

Meanwhile, the ministry is already preparing a new code of conduct for NGOs. Development experts fear the new rules will emphasise the need for NGOs to follow a pro-government and nationalist agenda rather than pursuing impartial development goals.

Kathmandu has argued the changes were needed to tackle the misuse of funds and lack of transparency that some NGOs have been accused of. Aid and development workers argue the move will defeat the whole object of an NGO sector.

"NGOs can't be told to do what the government wants," explained Shibesh Regmi, chief of Action Aid Nepal.

Others fear that cooperation between the state and non-state actors will now be jeopardised by the new law.

"The spirit of NGOs and the government working together is now over," said Gauri Pradhan from Child Workers in Nepal (CWIN).

Nepal's children suffer in civil war

The Guardian
Tuesday July 26, 2005

Nepal's civil war has seen a significant increase in violence against children, with murder, illegal detention and rape being used as weapons by both sides, according to a new report by Amnesty International.

Amnesty says the Royal Nepalese Army has arbitrarily killed children, and subjected others to illegal detention and torture.

The report, entitled Children Caught in the Conflict, also shows that during their nine-year uprising the Maoists have killed children as young as one year old, terrorised schools, and forcibly recruited teenagers as young as 13 into their ranks.

"We have put these findings to both sides but are facing denials from the government and the rebels," said Clare Castillejo, Amnesty's researcher on Nepal. "The future is not very bright when the human rights of children are being abused on such a scale."

The war between the government and Maoists has taken a turn for the worse since February, when the king seized power in a coup and jailed elected politicians.

Although there have been protests by Britain, India and the US, three countries that are coordinating their actions over Nepal, all appear to have decided that the king is a better bet than the Maoists. The result is a softly-softly approach to the king and the army.

Nepal's war is now the bloodiest in Asia, with more than 12,000 lives lost in less than a decade. Of particular concern are unexploded landmines, increasingly becoming a feature of the conflict.

Indicating the extent of the casualties, the Nepal Campaign to Ban Landmines reported that mines and unexploded ordnance had killed 92 children during the first six months of 2004.

With half of Nepal's population living on less than a dollar a day and many parts of the country facing acute food shortages, Amnesty says there "is little doubt that many more children are dying from poverty and disease exacerbated by the conflict".

Snow leopards spotted on top of world

Rare, resilient big cat makes comeback near Mount Everest
Monday, May 23, 2005

(CNN) -- For the first time in more than 40 years, scientists have spotted the elegant and endangered snow leopard on the southern slopes of Mount Everest.

Doctoral student Som Ale photographed the animal October 24, 2004. He has been studying the animals for many years, both as a biology student at the University of Illinois at Chicago and as an investigator for the research and conservation group Earthwatch Institute.

"Snow leopard sightings are very, very rare," said Ale, who grew up in Nepal.

There are only an estimated 4,500 to 7,000 of these big cats left in the wild. But that population is spread across 12 countries and nearly 775,000 square miles. This habitat includes some of the most remote regions of the world, from Afghanistan, across the Himalayas, to Lake Baikal in south central Russia.

Because the leopards are so elusive, Ale had been studying their likely prey in the Everest region, a wild goat called the Himalayan tahr. For the past several years, he said there had been increasing talk both among locals and tourists of snow leopard sightings, but nothing to document those sightings.

Ale suspected there might be a leopard near his camp when he heard a commotion from some of the goats.

"I heard the tahr whistling and making sounds that they were frightened," said Ale.

He said he was very excited when he spotted the leopards, but kept calm enough to focus his camera and get some photographs. Along with the two animals he saw, Ale saw the tracks of two more, the first confirmed sightings in the area since the early 1960s.

While word of Ale's observations made some local news in Nepal last autumn, he said he did not realize the significance of his photographs until he returned to the United States and talked with his former colleagues at Earthwatch Institute.

Working with evolutionary biologist Dr. Joel Brown, Ale had been studying the habits and the feeding behaviors of the tahr to gather clues about the snow leopards whereabouts and abundance. The 2004 field study was funded by the Wildlife Conservation Society, International Snow Leopard Trust, WWF-Nepal, Ev-K2-CNR (an international high altitude research project) and Provost's Award.

From 1999 to 2001, while working for Earthwatch Institute, Ale and others studied the behavior and habitat of blue sheep, or bharal, the snow leopard's prey in the Annapurna Conservation Area in Nepal.

Ale says in protecting the snow leopards, conservation groups must be conscious of the realities of the people living harsh lives in this remote part of the world. While it is a spiritual belief in much of the region that animals are to be respected; a serious conflict arises if a snow leopard attacks a local herd.

"People who live in this area depend on livestock, raising goats, sheep, cows, yaks and horses," said Ale.

"Snow leopards go for baby yaks, and they kill sheep and goats," said Ale. He said the loss of an animal killed by a snow leopard may cost a family a good portion of its annual income.

He said conservation groups have tried to come up with education programs to discourage local herders from killing snow leopards, by improving herding techniques and coming up with more effective ways of guarding their animals.

While the snow leopard's future is still seriously at risk, Ale says his sightings on Mount Everest are a testament to the animal's resilience, and give some hope for the future.

Interview with Ian Martin, head of UN human rights monitoring

10 May 2005
Source: IRIN

KATHMANDU, 10 May (IRIN) - Agreement was reached between the United Nations and the government of Nepal on 11 April 2004 to allow United Nations human rights monitoring in the country. Ian Martin arrived in the capital, Kathmandu on 7 May to head the new Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Nepal.

With over 30 years experience in human rights, Martin has led significant missions to conflict-ridden countries like Rwanda, Bosnia, Ethiopia, Eritrea and also recently to Darfur in western Sudan. He spoke to IRIN on Tuesday about the challenges facing him and his team, in launching a human rights monitoring operation in Nepal.

QUESTION: Your arrival has brought a lot of hopes for human rights protection. Are we expecting too much?

ANSWER: I hope that we can fulfil the expectations, although one must be realistic about what a limited number of people can do. Monitoring human rights and humanitarian law in a conflict situation is inherently very difficult. But so far I'm getting assurances of cooperation that suggest that our work should be able to make a real impact.

Q: Can you tell us about your mandate?

A: There is a very clear agreement as well as assisting the development of local capacity. As per our mandate, we will certainly assist the national human rights commission and of course, civil society organisations. Ultimately, that is where the protection of human rights depends. But in the meantime, we also have a mandate to do independent monitoring of the human rights situation and have very strong commitments to having complete freedom of movement and access to places of detention, as well as high-level channels of communication with the authorities including the army. That puts us in a position where we ought to be able to be effective.

Q: What challenges do you foresee?

A: One of the challenges is going to be able to carry out independent objective investigations as a result of reports of violations of human rights and humanitarian law. But our responsibility is not just to depend upon reports from others but to assess those ourselves. Access is difficult in the terrain to get promptly to places where incidents have occurred. So it's not going to be easy always to carry out the investigations first hand we want to carry out.

I certainly see that as a challenge. In an armed conflict and highly politicised environment, it is not easy to ensure that we approach things with the standards of testing the credibility of information that the UN must apply.

Q: What will be your priority?

A: Our immediate action is to open the channels of communication which I have already begun doing in discussion with the government and to begin to assemble the team that we need, then orient and train the first of the human rights officers to join this operation. People have to understand that it takes time.

We are a functioning team. Once we can open offices in other parts of the country we will start to function from there. How soon we can do that, also depends on how quickly the donors are willing to give resources that are necessary for this operation because it is dependent on voluntary funding.

Q: What would be the profile of the independent monitors?

A: We won't be able to find people who have both previous experiences in human rights investigation/monitoring and are fluent in Nepali language. We would like to recruit some Nepali speakers as human rights officers and we are also giving some basic training in Nepali to those who have arrived. But we also need to have the assistance of interpreters.

Q: So when will the deployment start?

A: Our initial team (about 12 monitors) is already here and as soon as they complete their training, we will begin to operate. The UN has already begun to operate and has a human rights presence through the human rights advisor and the human rights information unit that is being established. We will be operating at the initial level from next week.

Q: How would the monitors operate in Maoist controlled areas?

A: We clearly need to get some guarantees there won't be any threat to our personnel moving around the country and there have been public statements that indicate support for the operation. So we'll have to test that out. My expectation is that all parties will cooperate with this operation and guarantee the security of our personnel. Certainly the international community would be very concerned if that was not going to be that case.

Q: Do you think the operation will help towards negotiations in future?

A: I have been making very clear that my mandate is confined to that of human rights monitoring and assistance, but I certainly believe that if we can contribute to an improvement in the human rights situation that can be a positive factor in the overall path to peace. That's been the experience in other countries. So, it's not my mandate to explore possibilities of negotiations. However, the [UN] Secretary General has made it clear on a number of occasions that the United Nations is willing to offer its services to assist towards peace. But that is not my mandate. My mandate is to contribute to an improvement in the human rights situation.

Q: Where will the monitors be reporting to?

A: Our report will go to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Louise Arbour, and she is asked in the agreement to report to the General Assembly and of course the Secretary General.

Q: Will you be opening up previous investigations as part of the operation mandate?

A: I wouldn't separate monitoring from investigation. I think we have quite enough to do addressing the current situation and fresh reports of incidents rather than open up retrospective investigations. But of course, one of the objectives is to address impunity and therefore, the extent to which there is proper follow-through on investigations into past incidents is very important.

People power

Citizens are increasingly vocal in calling for peace and democracy

Nepali Times, 19.08.2005

The square was festooned with banners, placards and even cartoons. Poets, writers and academics spoke and there was even a 12-minute silence to mourn those who have died in the past nine years of conflict. On stage, women held 36 peace lanterns "to show the way back to democracy" and others dressed as widows sat cross-legged amidst a performance depicting grief and bereavement.

The opinion of people in the streets of Kathmandu this week:



All pics: MARTY LOGAN

Thousands attended the huge sit-in for peace and democracy on Tuesday afternoon that filled up Basantapur.

"If the king really is thinking about the future, he should think about the poor and the indigenous people. The rebellion started because only the rich had power, unless poverty and caste are tackled, the situation in this country is not going to improve."

Ram Bahadur Bika,
security guard from Charikot

"The political parties can't show the way, the king and the Maoists are busy fighting and the people are confused. I think the people need some hope."

Keshab Man Shakya

Janajati rights activists "Most Nepalis are illiterate and uneducated, and since 1990 they started thinking democracy may not be suitable for Nepal. King Gyanendra is using this. But eventually the people will rise up. It may take a long time, or it may take a short time, but it will happen."

Third Year arts student Sagun Poudel

"Everybody knows what happens: people talk, people listen, then next week everyone forgets about it...they want peace. I also want peace but the government doesn't listen."

Man playing chess at Basantapur

"I thought young people would be for a republic, but even older people are now saying it. They are the ones who previously would have backed the king as some sort of god."

Former Nepali diplomat

"We expected the king to take the lead, but we see it is not happening, the politicians are also up to no good and the country is being torn apart by the Maoists. I see no way out."

Jay Lama, taxi driver from Kabhre.

Fanget i kryssild

MARGUNN GRØNN



Mens kongekupp, streiker, blokader, tortur og drap er i ferd med å sette det nepalske samfunnet 30 år tilbake i tid, prøver vanlige folk å holde hjulene i gang.

Det er kveld, og vi sitter godt påkledd rundt et sprakende bål som skal varme de få gjestene som har kommet ned til nasjonalparken Chitwan ved grensen til India for å se tigere og neshorn. Den tørre veden truer med å falle ut av arnestedet, før Rabindra dytter trerota på plass.

Plutselig høres skudd. Salvene kommer bare noen hundre meter bortenfra.

Alle blir helt stille.

– De bare renser geværene sine, sier Ganga, etter en stund.

Mon tro det, tenker vi. Ganga har nok ikke lyst til at gjestene skal reise med en gang.

Statskupp

Kongens løfte etter at han inntok makten ved et såkalt fredelig statskupp den 1. februar i år er å gjeninnføre demokratiet innen hundre dager, reetablere menneskerettigheter og å skape fred. Ifølge kongen var kuppet et uttrykk for folkets vilje; kaos og anarki var i ferd med å ta overhånd, noe de færreste bestrider.

Men folk •est har ingen tillit til kongen. Noe av det første han gjorde etter maktovertakelsen var å frata borgerne rett til informasjon, forsamlingsfrihet, organisasjonsfrihet, ytringsfrihet, privat eiendomsrett, retten til privatliv, samt å fjerne forbudet mot forebyggende varetekt. Og det er ikke lov å gå sammen •ere enn •re personer.

– Hva med de foreldrene som har fem eller seks barn? sier Rabin Sayami i Himal Magazine og ler.

Effektive veisperringer

– Kongen er ikke egentlig interessert i skape fred, sier en akademiker vi møter på en kafé i Kathmandu. Han ser seg nervøst rundt i lokalet. Bak oss sitter en eldre mann i tradisjonell hatt og drikker te. Kan han være fra myndighetene? Utenfor kaféen står politiet og sjekker førerkort.

– Om natta kommer maoistene og forlanger at vi skal sperre veiene med kampesteiner og trær. Dagen etter kommer sikkerhetsstyrkene og forlanger at vi skal fjerne de samme sperringene, sier en mann vi møter langs fortauet nær Butwal. – Det er helt umulig å komme seg til markedet for å få solgt varene våre.

Langs hovedårene i Chitwan hives det store lass med tomater og helles ut melk, varer som aldri kommer fram til markedsplassen på grunn av veisperringer som ofte inneholder bomber. Maoistene viser med dette at de har den reelle makten i Nepal. Det

vil si; med ett viktig unntak: Katmandu. Med sine 30.000 soldater postert rundt i dalen er byen en slags siste festning for den ikke spesielt populære kong Gyanendra.

Døde stemmer

Den dagen kongen tok makten var alle telefonlinjene døde, det meste av offentlig kommunikasjon var stanset og de få nyhetsmediene som fortsatt var i funksjon, sendte alle kongens tale. De mer enn femti lokale radiostasjonene rundt omkring i Nepal, ble enten lagt ned eller de sender bare musikk.

– Vi vet ikke engang om det er greit å sende nyheter om savnede og kidnappede barn, vaksinasjonsprogrammer og barnehelse, sier Raghu Mainali, leder i The Community Broadcasters Association.

De fleste aviser på landsbygda har allerede lagt ned.

Siden kongens overtagelse er mer enn femten hundre personer arrestert, de fleste politikere og demonstranter.

Matmangel og folkeopprør

I Nepals midtvest er det igjen oppstått akutt matkrise, i år enda mer akutt enn før, siden det har vært umulig å transportere ris langs landeveiene. I disse tider begynner de første rapportene om barn som har dødd av sult å komme. De som kan, rømmer til tettsteder, bare for å bli henvist til de dårligste jobbene, dersom de i det hele tatt får noen jobb.

Ved minst to anledninger har vanlige folk tatt loven i egne hender og fanget eller banket opp maoister for så å levere dem over til sikkerhetsstyrkene. I Dailekh, i november, begynte en kvinne å rope slagord som «Down with maoism», «Down with Prachanda», fortvilet over å se alle barna bli kidnappet.

Krishna Shahi, en av kvinnene som startet opprøret sier: – Når de sa at hver familie måtte gi en sønn til militsen, forsvant frykten min. Vi sa: drep oss, men dere får ikke ta sønnene våre. Vi hadde ikke mer å gi dem, vi holdt ikke ut mer.

Snart hadde ryktet gått og opprøret spredde seg til flere distrikter, både øst og vest i Nepal. På spørsmål om hvordan de kunne gjøre det som mennene deres ikke kunne, svarer en av kvinnene gråtende:

– Vi er ikke redde lenger. Nå som de har tatt barna våre, har vi ingen ting mer å miste.

Torturerte gravid med drill

Noen få dager i forveien har sikkerhetsstyrkene drept en mann som ble tvunget av maoistgruppen til å lede den lokale regjeringen.

Den dreptes familie slo og jaget bort maoistene da de kom for å drapere liket i sitt ågg. Etter hvert banket landsbyboerne alle maoister de kom over og leverte dem over til sikkerhetsstyrkene, som senere henrettet tre av dem. Etter dette har maoistene straffet og drept folk som deltok i opprøret. Folk fra tolv landsbyer rømte i en fart, noen av dem rakk ikke engang å låse huset sitt, husdyrene ble sluppet løs.

Mens hjemmene deres ble ranet, dro landsbyboerne til distriktskontoret der det er militære tropper. Rundt 2000 familier reiste til Dullu, hvor de bosatte seg i telt i området rundt distriktskontoret.

Flere skoler er forlatt siden det verken er elever eller lærere igjen. Senere ble seksten personer fra the Peoples Front Nepal, et annet kommunistparti, ifølge nepalsk media,

torturert av maoister i Baglung som straff for at de hadde agitert mot maoistene. Både kvinner og menn skal ha blitt boret i bena med drill, ved en misforståelse ble også en kvinne som var seks måneder på vei tortuert på denne måten. Flere ble transportert til Katmandu for behandling.

I Dullu er landsbyboerne fortsatt livredde for represalier og ber om beskyttelse fra hæren og det internasjonale samfunnet.

Vi trenger fred

Men selv om folk har fått nok av maoistene, betyr ikke det at de støtter regjeringen.

– Fred er alt vi trenger. Fortell dem det! sier en mann. – Det vi trenger er beskyttelse fra hæren.

– Vi vil gjøre det vi kan for å maksimere patruljering og å etablere sikkerheten i området, sier militær operasjonsleder i Dailekh, Rishikesh Niraula.

Men de militæres nærvær gjør at landsbyboerne føler seg like utrygge, fordi det øker sjansen for trefninger.

Etter kongekuppet vurderer Storbritannia og USA å trekke tilbake den militære støtten til Nepal. India har også of•sielt kuttet støtten. Hva de gjør uof•sielt er det ingen som vet; landet har selv en gryende maoistbevegelse å slite med mange steder på landsbygda.

– Uten ris er du ingenting

Det er kveld igjen. Vi er de eneste gjestene og de hotellansatte lurte på om ikke vi vil komme å sitte ved bålet. De sparer veden til gjestene, og hvis ikke vi vil sitte der, må de fryse. Vi sitter foran det knitrende bålet under en mørk stjernehimmel. Man tar seg selv i å fortelle de utroligste ting. Batsjo er full og begynner å fortelle. Han liker ikke jobben sin.

– Hver dag drar jeg ned til busstasjonen og leter etter nye gjester, sier han. – Men det er en forferdelig jobb. Vi er kanskje 80 stykker totalt som gjør det samme, fordelt på et par og seksti hoteller. Og det kommer bare noen få turister hver dag. Vi maser ikke på dem, jeg bare holder opp skiltet med navnet på hotellet. Noen ganger kommer noen som har hørt om hotellet fra før, andre ganger kommer det ingen.

På grunn av den politiske situasjonen ligger turistindustrien i Nepal nede med brukket rygg.

– I dag kom det ingen, sier Batsjo med et sukk.

– Jeg tar store sjanser, sier Ganga. – Hver gang jeg henter turister fra •yplassen er jeg redd for at de skal stoppe meg og si at de trenger bilen min. Det er masse damer som jobber for maoistgeriljaen nå. Du ser en dame og hun åpner jakka si og vips så er det en gunner der.

– Vi tilhører ingen av sidene i denne krigen, sier Batsjo. – Vi er uavhengige. Vi prøver bare å tjene til livets opphold. Vi må ha linser og ris. Uten ris er det ingenting, uten ris kan du ikke gjøre noen ting, uten ris er du ingenting.

Kan være et viktig skritt

– Kongens initiativ er tatt i fredens navn, men vi føler at kongens handling kan være riktig skritt av feil grunner, eller feil skritt av riktige grunner, sier Baburam Giri, leder i

Nepal Human Rights Associatio, en av de som foreløpig ikke har vært fengslet, tydelig ubekvem over å svare på politiske spørsmål.

- Vi føler det ukomfortabelt at menneskerettighetene er strammet inn på, det er ikke velkomment, sier han og antyder i kryptiske vendinger det enkelte håper, men ikke kan si, at kongens handling kan ende med et politisk selvmord. I mellomtiden forbereder folk seg på neste blokade.

- Vi har ikke mulighet til å tenke på demokrati, først må vi ha fred, sier Shalik Ram, en av hundre tusener som har rømt fra landsbygda og inn til Katmandu.

Så langt er mer enn 11.000 mennesker drept i konflikten. Ingen land har i dag flere kidnappinger og forsvinninger enn Nepal.

10 000 barn flykter fra maoistene i Nepal

Av Tane Holm Høisæter i Flyktninghjelpen: (15/07/2005)

Opprørshæren i Nepal trapper opp rekrutteringen av barnesoldater etter at konflikten i landet øker i omfang. FN regner nå med at mellom 10 og 15 tusen barn vil flykte fra hjembyene sine i år. Siden 1996 er rundt 40 000 barn fordrevet av konflikten i landet.

Dette kommer frem i en ny rapport fra Flyktninghjelpen. - Mange av barna flykter til byene der de lever under dårlige hygieniske forhold og uten mulighet til å gå på skole. Rundt 5000 barn bor på gaten i landets største byer, der seksuelt misbruk, trusler og barnearbeid blir en del av hverdagen, sier generalsekretær i Flyktninghjelpen, Raymond Johansen.

Regjeringen bidrar til problemene

Maoist-geriljaen er ikke alene om å tvinge folk på flukt i landet: Myndighetene er også en årsak til at sivilbefolkningen flykter; sikkerhetsstyrkenes drap og tortur sammen med matvareblokkader tvinger folk på flukt. Regjeringens begrensninger av pressefriheten har gjort at omfanget av disse problemene er lite kjent.

Helt siden konflikten startet har myndighetene i Nepal gjort en utilstrekkelig og diskriminerende innsats overfor de internt fordrevne, og dermed sviktet sine forpliktelser til å beskytte dem.

Den hjelpen som tilbys, kommer gjerne bare ofrene for maoistene tilgode, mens de som flykter pga regjeringens sikkerhetsstyrker ikke får noe tilbud.

Fra utvikling til nødhjelp

Internasjonale hjelpeorganisasjoner har i perioder måttet innstille sitt arbeid i deler av Nepal på grunn av manglende sikkerhet, særlig da kampene ble trappet opp i 2004. Nå tvinges mange av dem til å prioritere humanitær nødhjelp fremfor langsiktig utviklingsarbeid, sier Johansen.

Det er vanskelig å fastslå sikkert hvor mange internt fordrevne som finnes i Nepal, siden verken myndighetene eller internasjonale organisasjoner registrerer antall internt fordrevne i landet.

Ifølge anslagene var det mellom 100 000 og 150 000 internt fordrevne i 2003, og tallet har trolig økt kraftig de siste årene.

"Paramilitarisering" i Nepal

Av Richard Skretteberg, Flyktningshjelpen (05/08/2005)

Fremveksten av private væpnede forsvarsgrupper øker volden og overgrepene mot sivilbefolkningen. Det er solide bevis for at regjeringen i Nepal gir disse gruppene støtte, inkludert militær trening, i følge en ny rapport fra Amnesty International.

Det er et kjent internasjonalt fenomen at private væpnede grupper er med på å tilsøre skillet mellom stridene og ikke-stridende, og slik sett er med på å øke de sivile tapstallene i konflikter. De første meldingene om eksistensen av slike paramilitære-liknende grupper i Nepal kom i februar i år da 12 personer, beskylt for å være maoister, ble drept av medlemmer av en slik gruppe. I tiden etter har Amnesty intervjuet landsbyboere som har stadfestet at væpnede grupper har ankommet landsbyer, tvangsrekruttert ungdommer, ransaket hus, ofte midt på natten, og begått fysiske overgrep og seksuell trakassering. Representanter for de nepalske myndighetene uttrykker både forståelse for og støtte til slike grupper og begrunner det med at hæren ikke kan gi beskyttelse alle steder.

Både metodene som er beskrevet i Amnestys rapport, båndene til hæren og myndighetenes reaksjoner, eller rettere manglende reaksjoner, minner sterkt om Colombia midt på 1980-tallet. Der vokste de paramilitære gruppene i løpet av få år til å bli de største menneskerettighetsovergriperne i den blodige colombianske konflikten.

"Paramilitarisering" betyr økte overgrep

En "paramilitarisering" av konflikter har alltid store menneskelige omkostninger. Vi så utallige grufulle eksempler på dette under konfliktene i Mellom-Amerika på 1980-tallet og vi har sett det i Colombia siden. Banking på dører om natten, folk med gevær og finlandshette utenfor, slag, spark og så skudd, ellers et familiemedlem dras bort og du ser det aldri igjen. Paramilitarismen har de samme metoder om det er under Himalayas fjell eller i Amazonasjungelen. Konsekvensene av denne type terror er spesielt store for mennesker drevet på flukt. Disse er i utgangspunktet i en svært sårbar situasjon, mistenkeliggjort og med lite eller intet beskyttende nettverk rundt seg. Folk føler seg maktesløse, spesielt også når de vet at ved denne type overgrep er det ofte lite eller ingen beskyttelse å hente hos egne myndigheter.

Minimal assistanse til de fordrevne

I følge Flyktningshjelpens Global IDP Project er nærmere 200 000 mennesker drevet på flukt i Nepal. Praktisk talt alle de 75 distriktene landet er delt inn i er nå berørt av konflikten.

De fleste som er drevet på flukt, er ikke registrert og de mottar liten eller ingen assistanse. Det er mange FN organer og internasjonale frivillige organisasjoner i Nepal, men nesten ingen har folk på flukt som målgruppe. Regjeringen har heller ikke utarbeidet en strategi for å hjelpe eller informere folk drevet på flukt. Infrastrukturen er mange steder ødelagt. Lokal handel og transportmulighetene er sterkt redusert, og lokale tjenestemenn er redde for å bevege seg utenfor distriktssentrene.

Mange fordrevne tar seg over grensen til nabolandet India, mens andre drar inn til byene. De som blir værende på landsbygda, søker tilflukt hos slektninger som vanligvis har svært sparsomme ressurser fra før. I følge Verdens matvareprogram er kronisk matmangel utbredt og svært mange av de underernærte er barn under 5 år.

For hjelpeorganisasjonene har sikkerheten, spesielt på landsbygda, vært et stadig økende problem. Demokrati og respekt for menneskerettighetene er avgjørende for effektiv bistand og internasjonal hjelp er avgjørende for det nepalske utviklingsbudsjettet.

Økende polarisering

Det er økende internasjonal uro over utviklingen i Nepal etter kongekuppet 1. februar i år. Kong Gyanendra hevdet det var nødvendig å oppløse den sittende koalisjonsregjeringen og erstatte den med en utnevnt av ham selv. Det som har skjedd i ettertid er imidlertid en stadig forverring av menneskerettighetssituasjonen og en ytterligere polarisering i det nepalske samfunnet. Både maoistgeriljaen, regjeringsstyrkene og nå, såkalte væpnede forsvarsgrupper, begår grove brudd på menneskerettighetene. Mange mennesker har rett og slett forsvunnet etter å ha blitt arrestert og geriljaens kidnappinger av elever og lærere i stort omfang har i seg selv vært en utløsende faktor for at mange flykter. Flere av de siste regjeringene i Nepal har lovet økt støtte til de internt fordrevne, men lokale ledere har beskyldt myndighetene for å komme med tomme ord.

Den viktigste årsaken til at det sliver lite informasjon ut fra Nepal etter kongekuppet, er de sterke begrensningene i pressefriheten. Mange journalister er arrestert, flere aviser er stengt og denne uken ble en radiostasjon truet med å lide samme skjebne.

Norge vil vurdere bistanden til Nepal

Norge vil i neste måned vurdere bistanden til Nepal etter kong Gyanendras "kupp" i februar. Men Redd Barna vil fortsette sitt arbeid i fjellandet.

Aftenposten, juli 2005

Norske myndigheter kalte hjem vår ambassadør til Nepal som en synlig markering, men forholdt seg ellers avventende da kong Gyanendra 1. februar satte grunnloven til side, avsatte den lovlig valgte regjeringen og innførte sensur og unntakstilstand.

- Det som er viktig nå, er at donorene står samlet og forsøker å presse regimet i riktig retning, uttalte statssekretær i utenriksdepartementet Leiv Lunde den gang.

I mellomtiden er den 100-dagers frist kongen påla seg selv for å gjenopprette lov og orden og gjeninnføre demokratisk styresett gått ut, uten at så mye annet er skjedd enn at mer enn 700 mennesker, de fleste uskyldige sivile, er drept, påpeker The International Crisis Group, en uavhengig institusjon i London.

Tålegrense?

I siste nummer av Bistandsaktuelt, et fagblad om utviklingssamarbeid utgitt av NORAD, stiller ansvarlig redaktør Jon Bech i en signert lederartikkel spørsmål ved Norges bistand til Nepal etter det som er skjedd i vinter og vår.

"Hvor er tålegrensen når det gjelder korrupsjon, vanstyre og despotisme? Er vi gjennom vår fortsatte tilstedeværelse og vårt bistandsengasjement med på å gi myndighetene i disse landene troverdighet? Hvor langt skal vi strekke vår optimisme når det gjelder forventninger om en utvikling til det bedre? Kort sagt: Når er nok nok," spør Bech.

Og nå signaliserer UD at en revurdering er i kjømda. - Norge følger situasjonen nøye, og vil i tett dialog med andre givere foreta en samlet vurdering av bistanden i løpet av juni, sier utviklingsministerens informasjonssjef Espen Gullikstad til Aftenposten. Han påpeker også at "etter 1.februar er planlegging av nye tiltak stanset".

- Et samlet internasjonalt press var bl.a. avgjørende for at Nepal nå har godtatt internasjonal overvåking av menneskerettighetene. Norge har bevilget en million kroner til etablering av kontoret til Høykommissæren for menneskerettigheter, og vi vurderer samtidig økonomisk støtte til selve driften, sier Gullikstad.

Redd Barna blir.

Redd Barna er størst av de norske hjelpeorganisasjonene i Nepal med omkring 80 ansatte og 60 prosjekter spredd over hele landet. Den har ingen planer om å trappe ned, forsikrer generalsekretær Gro Brækken i en samtale med Aftenposten.

- Vi kommer til å være der, og er blitt oppfordret av begge parter til å jobbe for de svakeste, nemlig barna, sier hun. Ifølge Brækken har Redd Barna "et veldig godt forhold til maoistene", og greier å gi barna skolegang selv "i de vanskeligste områdene". Maoistgeriljaen kontrollerer store deler av landsbygda i Nepal, kongen og hans hær har kontroll i hovedstaden Katmandu og andre byer. Brækken er kjent med at geriljaen avkrever utenlandske bistandsorganisasjoner en "skatt" for at de skal kunne arbeide trygt. - Men vi har ikke betalt et øre, forsikrer hun. Brækken ser heller ikke noe etisk dilemma i å jobbe i et land der normale demokratiske spilleregler ikke gjelder og der menneskerettighetene krenkes.

The Government of Norway decides to reduce development assistance to Nepal.

UD Pressemelding no.01/05

- The Government of Norway considers the development after 1 February as a serious setback in regards to multiparty democracy, to constitutional monarchy, to human rights, and to finding a peaceful solution to the ongoing violent conflict. As a result, the Government of Norway has made the decision to reduce the planned bilateral financial assistance for 2006 by NOK 15 mill. (10%). On the same basis, the decision has been made to terminate, with immediate effect, the bilateral agreement on financial support to the Melamchi Water Supply Project, says H.E. Ambassador Tore Toreng.

- In addition, the decision has been made not to enter into any new bilateral agreements between Norway and Nepal. We would like to underline that the decision to reduce our financial support to Nepal in 2006 will not effect our ongoing commitments under the Education for All Programme (EFA), says H.E. Ambassador Toreng.

The development cooperation will now focus more on efforts to promote democracy and human rights, including support to the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNOHCHR) mission in Nepal.

- We would like to underline that the Government of Norway will reconsider the development assistance if concrete efforts are made to re-establish multiparty democracy, to improve the human rights situation, and to engage in a peace dialogue, says H.E. Ambassador Toreng.

The decisions made by the Government of Norway have been conveyed to His Majesty's Government of Nepal, in a meeting between the Minister of Finance and H.E. Ambassador Toreng.

The Royal Norwegian Embassy, Kathmandu

20 July 2005

Over to millioner drevet på flukt

Skolebarn er blitt uskyldige ofre i konflikten som er blitt mer brutal etter kong Gyanendras "statskupp" i vinter.

Aftenposten

I de sydøstlige delene av Nepal er minst 50 maoistopprørere og ni soldater i landets sikkerhetsstyrker drept i et av de voldsomste sammenstøt i landet på lenge. I de vestlige delene stormet 300 tungt bevæpnede opprørere en TV-stasjon og ødela utstyr.

Hver dag kommer det nye meldinger som disse om den ni år lange konflikten mellom regjeringssoldater og geriljaen, som har hentet inspirasjon fra kommunistiske frigjøringsbevegelser i India og den kinesiske kulturrevolusjonen. Hittil har nesten 12 000 mennesker dødd.

Hva er det som skjer i Nepal, verdens eneste hinduistiske monarki, landet hvor Buddha ble født og som har Mount Everest, verdens høyeste fjell?

Revolusjon.

Nepal var et turistparadis, men er ikke det nå lenger. Når kommunismen i resten av verden sies å være passé, fortsetter den maoistiske geriljaen i Nepal å verve tilhengere på landsbygda, skremme andre på flukt og å kidnappe skolebarn for noen dagers indoktrinering i revolusjonær ideologi.

Disse elevene har ofte kommet uskadet tilbake etter noen dager. Men bortføringene har opprørt internasjonale menneskerettsorganisasjoner som har anmodet og i blant lykkes med å få geriljaen til å slutte å blande skolebarn inn i konflikten.

Siden 1. februar har maoist-opprørerne, som kjemper for å styrte monarkiet og skape en kommunistisk republikk, trappet opp sine aksjoner.

Kongens kupp.

Det var da kong Gyanendra gjorde gjeldende at det bare fantes én måte å få slutt på den blodige borgerkrigen på, nemlig ved at han selv overtok regjeringsmakten og lot arrestere over 300 politikere, journalister og studentledere (hvorav mer enn 200 fortsatt sitter fengslet), og ved å erklære unntakstilstand.

Siden har geriljagrupper i vestre Nepal igjen begynt å kidnappe skolebarn. Bare de siste dagene har de tatt minst 450 stykker i tre ulike områder. Regjeringssoldater har befridd elever som var tatt av opprørere. Flere hundre lærere og elever har, ifølge nyhetsmeldingene, noen steder rukket å flykte fra skoler som geriljaen har forsøkt å ta kontroll over.

Slike nyheter er blitt vanlige i Nepal, og setter ikke lenger dype spor i mediene i hovedstaden Katmandu. Befolkningen på landsbygda er presset mellom maoistgeriljaen og hæren. Maoistene tvinger folk på landsbygda til å bidra med mat, men anklager dem samtidig for å være politystere og angivere.

Så kommer soldatene og beskylder landsbyboerne for å ha gitt geriljaen mat. Ifølge uavhengige kilder som siteres i avisen South China Morning Post, har mellom 200 000 og en halv million mennesker fra landsbygda flyktet til byene. To millioner nepalere har tatt seg over grensen og lever nå i India.

MR-brudd.

Både maoister og regjeringssoldater anklages av Amnesty International for å gjøre seg skyldige i brudd på menneskerettighetene i forbindelse med kampene.

Maoistene skyter tilhengere av myndighetene og politifolk. Regjeringen lar sine motstandere "forsvinne" og henretter opprørere og deres tilhengere. Maoistgeriljaen antas å ha en kjerne på cirka 5000 personer og kanskje ytterligere 20 000 trofaste støttespillere. Den kontrollerer områder i de vestlige og sentrale deler av Nepal. Målet er å ta kontroll over landsbygda for deretter å omringe byene.

Kampene springer ut av langvarig undertrykkelse. Gnisten som tente bålet i 1996 var den nepalske regjeringens forsøk på å slå ned et opprør på landsbygda. Da hadde maoistene, som krevde monarkiets oppløsning og slutt på undertrykkelsen av ulike folkegrupper, besluttet å forsøke å drive sine krav igjennom ved hjelp av vold.

Siden er sivilbefolkningens lidelser blitt stadig verre, og noen løsninger på konflikten er ikke i sikte.

Ungdom snakker om fred

20 barn og unge fra åtte land var samlet i Oslo for å delta på workshop for fred. De unge skal dele erfaringer og lære om fredsbygging. Senere denne uken starter den internasjonale konferansen Childhoods 2005 på Universitetet i Oslo.

REDD BARN

De unge kommer fra Guatemala, Kosovo, Uganda, Sri Lanka og Nepal, de aller fleste for første gang på en utenlandstur. Også ungdom fra Somalia og Afghanistan som bor i Norge, deltar, sammen med tre norske.

Fredsagenter

Workshopen i Redd Barnas regi heter "Building peace out of war – Children and young people as agents of peace". De kommer fra land hvor de kjenner godt til hva det vil si å leve i konflikt. De fleste representerer barnrettighetsklubber og andre organisasjoner i sine hjemland, og er kommet til Oslo for å snakke på vegne av sine jevnaldrende.

- Barn er ikke bare de hardest rammede ofrene i krig, de glemmes ofte når det skapes fred. Til tross for de massive og varige effektene væpnet konflikt har på den yngre generasjonen, blir barn og unge nesten aldri invitert til å delta i selve fredsprosessen, påpeker Gro Brækken, Redd Barnas generalsekretær.

Internasjonal konferanse i Oslo

Senere denne uken går den internasjonale konferansen Childhoods 2005 av stabelen på Universitetet i Oslo. Den handler om barn og unges oppvekstvilkår i land preget av utvikling og endring. Formålet er å la noen av verdens fremste eksperter på barn dele sine erfaringer og øke sin forståelse av hvordan sosiale endringer påvirker de unge, og hvilke politiske grep som kan bidra til å gi barn og unge bedre liv. Et samfunn som legger ned våpnene med intensjon om å skape fred er et godt eksempel på et land i endring.

- Dessverre ser vi at det er svært uvanlig å finne formuleringer til beste for barn når fredsavtaler skal undertegnes. Heller ikke etter konfliktene på Balkan eller i Midtøsten er det undertegnet avtaler der barnas rehabilitering er nevnt, sier Brækken.

Hvis man leser gjennom fredsavtaler som inngås rundt om i verden inneholder de som regel forpliktende ord om gjenoppbygging av nødvendig infrastruktur. Det vil si bygningskonstruksjoner, nødvendige institusjoner, FN-overvåking, politi og militære styrker. Dette står i sterk kontrast til mangelen på omfattende planer for å gjenoppbygge tapt barndom som kan peke mot en realistisk fremtid for barn og ungdom.

Talks between political parties and Maoists

IRINnews.org

KATHMANDU, 23 August

Nepal's seven main political parties say they are preparing for talks with the leaders of the nation's Maoist rebels, who have been waging a violent campaign against the state for the last nine years. Over 12,000 people have died in the continuing insurgency.

On Monday, party leaders reached a consensus on forming a monitoring committee to ensure the rebels adhere to promises made not to attack civilians, NGO staff or political party workers in areas of the country they effectively control.

Party representatives have said the success of the talks with the Maoists will become clear when the results of the monitoring process are known. They said that the talks would fail if the level of violence against their party workers or civilians escalates.

The monitoring work will start in a few days and negotiations are due to start following confidence-building measures leading to an atmosphere of greater trust.

In early July, Maoist supreme leader Prachanda proposed talks with Nepal's seven leading political parties aimed at uniting against the government led by King Gyanendra, who suspended parliament and assumed direct rule on 1 February, 2005.

Despite promises by the Maoists leaders to abstain from violence towards civilians, their fighters have been involved in killings, torture and brutality, according to political party workers. The number of Maoist abductions of civilians is rising and there has been no attempt to respect human rights on their part, they add.

In spite of this the politicians remain optimistic.

"So far, we are positive that the political environment will improve but we are also actively observing whether they [the Maoists] will keep the word of their leaders," explained Sashi Shrestha, spokesman for the People's Front Nepal (PFN).

"But if they continue with their threats and violence, the political parties have to think twice about talks with the Maoists," added Shrestha. The Maoists have still not released several PFN workers who were abducted nearly a month ago in Pyuthan district, about 300 km west of Kathmandu, the party said.

Observers say that similar promises to abstain from violence have been made by the rebels in the past. The difficulty at that time was ensuring that the undertakings of the senior leaders were adhered to on the ground by junior members of the movement.

Nepali Society in Ås (NEPSA)

Vi har fått en artikkel fra de nepalesiske studentene på Landbrukshøgskolen på Ås, hvor de presenterer sin organisasjon NEPSA.

Background

Under bilateral cooperation between Nepal and Norway, the Norwegian University of Life Sciences (UMB) has been providing training to Nepalese students particularly on natural resources management and development studies. Since early eighties, every year the university has been receiving students from Nepal for higher education. Started with Masters and Doctoral programs, the trend has been extended to Bachelors level study in recent years. The number of Nepali students and accompanying families is growing every year. To enhance social welfare and academic activities among Nepalese, there was a

growing concern to create a society in Ås. This concern has been materialized by the establishment of "Nepali Society in Ås" (termed as NEPSA hereafter) in 2004. NEPSA, based in Ås Kommune Norway, is a non-profit making, non-political, social organization which values diverse culture, religion, race and nationalities.

Aim

The main purpose of NEPSA is to help the community in professional, social, cultural and welfare matters. It aims to help every Nepalese happy and successful during their stay in Norway. It aims to strengthen and coordinate with other Nepali societies and organizations within and outside Norway.

Annual Activities

The activities of NEPSA are developed through wide consultation with its members. The activities are recognized as regular and occasional activities. The regular activities observed round the year are: New Year (AD), Holi, New Year (Bikram Era), Constitution day (Norway), seminar (defending thesis/life after study), farewell for second year master students, children's graduation programme, welcome to the new comers (picnic), Teej, Dashain, children's Deusi/Bhailo, Christmas, and sports/cultural events. All the above activities are subject to change according to the decisions that would be taken by the members. In these activities, NEPSA tries to involve the maximum number of Nepalese residing in Norway.

Nepali School

In line with the aim of NEPSA, a Nepali school is being run by a group of parents. The school was started in March 2003. Ås Kommune has been providing us with space facilities to run the school from beginning and we hope their help in future too. The parents are teaching the children every weekend.

Members and Organization

Nepalese affiliated with UMB or living at Ås are eligible for the general membership of the society. The membership will be renewed every year. The children under 18 years are considered as non-voting members. The society may offer honorary membership to individuals and foreign friends for their outstanding contributions in the welfare of Nepalese.

The Annual General Meeting elects members for the Executive Committee. The executive committee will be responsible for carrying out different activities and acting as solution center.

The Executive Committee (EC hereafter) will have the following positions:

1. **President:** Heads the committee, tries to get cooperation from other organization, establishes link among possible partners.
2. **Secretary:** Does all secretarial works, calls meetings, and disseminates the information.
3. **Treasurer:** Takes responsibility of financial part, maintain accounts.
4. **Members (4)**

The EC will, generally, be elected for one year. The EC can appoint advisor(s) if needed. The EC will form the working committees to carry out different functions smoothly.

Membership fee

For the establishment of a revolving fund to carry out the activities of NEPSA, annual membership fee of NOK 100.00 will be charged to the general members. All non-voting members are refrained from the membership fee.

Annual General Meeting (AGM)

AGM will be called once in a year, in January/February. The AGM approves the activity plan prepared by the EC, elects new EC, and resolves other necessary issues. This document can only be amended by the simple majority of members in the AGM.

Information details: Location: UMB, N-1432 Ås, Norway

URL: www.geocities.com/nepali_society

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B



«Hamro Patrika»

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MEDLEMSKONTINGENT:

Enkeltmedlem	kr 125,-
Familie	kr 175,-
Organisasjon	kr 300,-

Kontonummer: 6219 05 79358

Norge - Nepal foreningen

