Reconciliation: 
*For Sustainable Peace Building*
Annual Report 2011

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The country is in sixth year of peace process. In this period, many remarkable progresses were seen. 3902 ex-child soldiers were verified as minor and discharged from the Cantonments. For rehabilitation and reintegration of discharged minors and other conflict affected children, Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction came up with ‘National Plan of Action on Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Children affected by armed conflict’ in 2010. Implementation of NPA is very crucial for addressing the issues of CAC and challenging in the same time.

There are still many conflict related issues that need to be addressed by both conflicting parties. Several policies and provisions have been promulgated and victims are partly provided with relief packages; and justice is still distant reality for most of them. Voices of conflict affected children from marginalized communities are still unheard and they have very nominal access to justice. Thus, it is very important to facilitate them in access to justice and bring them in reconciliation process.

We started Reconciliation program with conflict affected children in ten districts in 2008. In 2008 program, participants shared that one of the major challenge was difficulties in their reintegration at home, schools and society was being non-empathetic and unsupportive from their families, friends, teachers and community people. Thus, in 2009, we conducted reconciliation workshop with community people, teachers, and guardians for their effective reintegration. Furthermore, public dialogues were also conducted in those districts. Reconciliation workshop helped community people, teachers and guardians to internalize their roles in reintegration of CAC whereas, public dialogue served as the very best platform for CAC to voice their issues and share their testimonies. It also made stakeholders accountable for past violations and ensuring justice to the victims.

Based on the achievement of previous years’ program, we felt urgency to expand these programs in other districts. This year, we selected four new districts, Makwanpur, Bardiya, Kanchanpur
and Ilam and implemented reconciliation workshop, public dialogue and exhibition of artworks made by CAC.

We worked with more than 200 CAC with different experiences of conflict. Trauma healing, development of positive self-image and confidences are some of the major outcomes of the reconciliation workshops. On the other hand, public dialogues were able to bring CAC from very marginalized and excluded communities who are out of touch from justice process and to facilitate their voice to be heard at larger level, mainstreamed them in justice process.

Similarly, artworks prepared by CAC were exhibited at district level which served children’s voices and experiences at larger people. These exhibitions helped to increase empathy towards CAC which ultimately helped in community reintegration process. These artwork are displayed at United Nations headquarter in New York by WatchList on Children and Armed Conflict. Similarly, few poems and personal stories are translated in English and process to be displayed in Peace Museum, Patan Dhoka.

In addition to it, Mural painting program on Paris principle on Children and armed conflict is also carried out in Rautahat to sensitize on illegal recruitment and re-recruitment of children by armed forces and armed groups especially in Terai region. The vivid graphic murals along with slogans were center of attention of both locals and travelers and to sensitize of both literate as well as illiterate people.

Furthermore, we produced a TV serial, ASMITA, against sexual violence and aired on Nepal Television. The objective is to create massive awareness and to forward the message on sexual violence. This serial highlights the daily harassment of girls faced on sexual violence as well as the positive supportive role of individual, teachers, community people and law enforcement agencies to end such pervasive violence. We are able to take this message forward at wider level audience. Many appreciated this serial and suggested to make these episodes available in CDs and DVDs. Stakeholders and policy makers recommended to extend few more episodes on different aspects of sexual violence.

Likewise, people watched this serial across the country; many said that in the increasing scenario of sexual violence this serial could be very important tool to address this problem. Similarly, discussions were done with local people from Humla and Jumla regarding the impact of the serial. People from those places said it was very important and should be continued. Furthermore, the children who acted in the serial are also from very remote areas and this was their first experience.
We successfully conducted three different programs with conflict affected children in four districts as a part of community reconciliation. We are able to bring children affected by both sides of conflict. Throughout the whole process, we have seen children with strong feeling of revenge transcending such feeling into compassion and forgiveness.

In this context, I would like to extend my gratitude to all the children from 4 districts for trusting us in each process and sharing their stories, issues and time in making this initiation a huge success.

I immensely appreciate UNICEF for their support. I would also like to thank UNICEF child protection and communication department especially Karen Anderson, Radha Gurung, Bhawana Subedi, Evan Rai and Sanju Bhattarai for their support in this whole process.

I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation to all the district coordinators and focal persons without their vigor and tireless effort reaching our target participants would not be possible. Similarly, my sincere appreciation goes to the Resource person, Moderator, Psychosocial Counselor, Artist and Rapporteur: Ramesh Kumar Paudel, Shiva Adhikari, Prakash Upadhaya, Gita Subedi, Padma Chanda, Sukumaya Sunar, Rajan Khadka, Pancha Ratna Dangol and Rajan Maharjan. Similarly, I am thankful to entire team of TV serial, Madhav Pradhan from Peoples Audio Visual and Event Management, actors, and technical team as well as Swapna Batika School. I am equally grateful to Nepal Television for giving time to telecast this serial.

Once again I thank and applaud the participants, CDOs, LDOs, Police officers, Political party representatives, especially Maoist, NGOs, UNICEF partner organization and entire HimRights team for contributing in successful completion of this project.

Anjana Shakya
Chairperson
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Abbreviation

CAAFAG: Children Associated with Armed Force and Armed Group
CAC: Conflict Affected Children
CDO: Chief District Officer
DAO: District Administration Office
DDC: District Development Committee
DEO: District Education Office
IDP: Internally Displaced People
LDO: Local Development Officer
LPC: Local Peace Committee
NHRC: National Human Rights Commission
NA: Nepalese Army
NPA: National Plan of Action
NGO: Non-government Organization
PLA: People’s Liberation Army
UCPN (M): Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoists)
UNICEF: United Nations Children’s Fund
VDC: Village Development Committee
**Background**

Countless children have been traumatized by grave human rights violations during the conflict in Nepal. The Maoists and the governing state at the time (and other armed groups) have tortured and often killed individuals suspected of being associated with their opposition in front of their families. Children have witnessed their parents kidnapped at guns points, and in some cases, they have seen their schoolteachers mutilated, hanged, and/or shot in the school premises. Often times, children have been directly tortured or killed. Many children were maimed or killed during intense crossfire or from landmines and IED explosions. Moreover, they have been used as child soldiers and even now, they are being re-recruited by armed groups. This is especially the case in the Tarai region.

As a result, conflict-affected children (CACs) are facing many problems, psychologically, physically, emotionally, socially and economically. For instance, having been tortured themselves and/or seen loved ones kidnapped and brutally tortured, many children overcame with a need to retaliate and avenge themselves and/or their family members. And as children are facing the trauma of past conflict, given that armed groups still remain, more children are being victimized or re-victimized. There are new cases of abductions, mine explosion related killings and injuries, torture, and imprisonments. Moreover, CACs that are struggling with the trauma of violence and/or those who are struggling to survive may willingly join various armed groups hungry to recruit more new members.

In this transitional post-conflict period, steps to facilitate the reconciliation process amongst the conflict victims are absolutely critical for social cohesion and long term peace building so that violence does not continue. Efforts to foster trust and faith between victims from both sides of the conflicting party are necessary. Children can play an important role in this process, one of the main obstacles for conflict victims in Nepal has been the absence of safe spaces for them to share their grievances and discuss their experiences during the conflict. This has implication not only for the rehabilitation of the individual victims but also for strategies that are being developed for the country as a whole. Children voices have been particular absent in any discussions related to the conflict, and when they been included the focus has been mainly on CAAFAG. Hence, less attention has been given to children who were victims of violence during the conflict and this project aims at rectifying the current approach by providing children affected by conflict with a platform to discuss their experiences and to put forward their grievances and demands to relevant decision makers through a process which ensures that they are empowered as a agent for change in their own lives and communities. CACs must receive support and assistance to overcome the plights and trauma from conflict. This methodology will ensure that CACs become agents of peace rather than agents of violence are necessary.

Adult family members, who are often victims themselves, do not necessarily take steps or are empowered to ensure that their children are properly supported. Without understanding that physical, emotional and social trauma can elicit eccentric behavior, community members often marginalize “eccentric” CACs. Thus, unless the individuals that surround CACs have an understanding of the difficulties they face, an environment that is sensitive, empathetic and caring towards CAC will not be possible; this is a message that was emphasized in our program last year. One participant, a teacher shared, “This workshop has been very beneficial for us, as we realized our role in CAC’s reintegration and got a deeper understanding of the impacts of conflict on children.”

A special group among, CACs are ex-child soldiers who are experiencing difficulties in their reintegration with their family, schools, community and their country. Individuals and institutions often ignore, stereotype, ostracize, and/or marginalize and victimize children, thereby re-victimizing CAC and aggravating past wounds.
Furthermore, during and post armed conflict situation, children were not only the group who are seriously affected by armed conflict; another such vulnerable group is the many girls and young women that were victims of rape and sexual abuse. Women were affected in a major way during the prolonged armed conflict initiated by the Communist Party of Nepal (CPN-M). According to INSEC Yearbook 2007 data, 820 women were killed by the state and 193 women were killed by Maoists during the conflict.

However, many who were raped, sexually abused and harassed do not want to speak about it for fear of losing social dignity and respect in their society. In this culture, women’s and girls’ chastity and sexual faithfulness to their husband/family is of immense importance for family honor and repute. In most cases, girls and women who are sexually abused, harassed or raped are viewed with contempt and blamed. As a result, there is a culture of silence amongst victimized women. They have to carry the burden of painful secrets, making it difficult to live fulfilling lives with their family members. Shame, self-contempt, and hate may consume girls affected by sexual violence. This trauma, if not addressed could be transmitted to their future generation too.

In UNICEF and HimRights efforts on Reconciliation Workshop, there has been few participants who were victim of sexual abuse and rape. Similarly, In the Comic book farewell to firearms-May 2005, Path to Reconciliation-August 2007 and the Reconciliation workshop for conflict affected women HimRights worked with victims of sexual violence. We have initiated various programs to ensure their rights and empower them to voice their rights at various levels. In the initial phase, the participant had strong feeling to take revenge and committing suicide. They find hard to participate and open up but later in process, are able to articulate their experiences and transcend their traumatic and vengeful feelings and developed positive self-image. The entire process became a healing experience for them and felt empowered to voice their issues and fight for the rights. They realized many women with similar experience like themselves or even worse, and who were not able to voice their experiences should get rights to justice. They felt they should have a platform to voice their issues and their rights ensured.

In the international experience of post conflict countries, when the violence in public space ends violence in private space increases. In Nepal although there are no systematic documentation on sexual violence during and in post conflict situation. Recently, there has been more reporting of Rape. It is reported that in the fiscal year of 2065/66 there are 466 cases reported under sexual abuse according to Nepal Police Women and Children Cell. Among them 68% cases are of child under 18 years: (NayaPatrika, December 25, 2009)

Thus, it is crucial to ensure that girls and women affected by sexual-based violence are able to voice their issues and concerns loud and clear with dignity, respect and their right to privacy maintained. They should get supportive role from every individual, community and law enforcement agencies. Thus, to ensure this, it is important to take this message forward to the wider people, to create massive awareness. Our effort is small step towards providing them empathetic and supportive environment in the community at large.
Objective
1) Protect and prevent against the unlawful recruitment of children from armed groups and armed forces.
2) To empower conflict-affected children and young women victim of sexual violence to claim their rights.
3) Develop opportunities to promote the perspectives of children and young girls and women victim of sexual violence at policy level.
4) To break the silence surrounding sexual violence in the society and contribute to a change in societal attitude towards its victims.
5) Support conflict affected children’s empowerment to become agents of change in their own lives and in their community.

Target Groups
1) Children affected by armed conflict (e.g., mine victims, "disqualified" minors, child soldiers, the physically challenged, victims of communal violence, and the internally displaced) and
2) Girls and young women victims of sexual violence; sexually abused/raped during and post armed conflict period.
3) Government stakeholders, Political parties, community, parents, teacher and school children.
Three major activities have been carried out in 2010. **Workshop on Social Cohesion and Peace Building, Public Dialogue and Exhibition of Artwork** were conducted as Community Reconciliation Initiatives in 4 districts; Makwanpur, Bardiya, Kanchanpur, and Ilam. Similarly, another program- Mural painting on Paris Principle on Children and Armed Conflict was conducted in Rautahat district. Likewise, a TV serial against sexual violence was produced and aired through Nepal Television to create awareness on what girls are facing daily on Sexual Violence.

### 1. Workshop on Social Cohesion for Peace Building through Art

*Promoting reconciliation, empowering conflict affected children...*

In each district, 30 Children with different experiences of armed conflict were selected for the 5 day ‘**Workshop on Social Cohesion and Peace Building**’. They were victims from both conflicting parties including ex-child soldiers, orphans, victims of explosives/mines (IED) and children from families of killed, disappeared and displaced. Throughout the program, a safe, respectful and dignified platform was ensured to share their experiences and be part of healing process with mutual empathy and compassion towards both sides of conflict. The participants received training on root causes and impact of armed conflict; vicious revenge cycle and means of reconciliation; and transitional justice. Different tools like role plays, group discussions, video documentary, sharing sessions and games were used to ensure effective participation. This participatory approach proved to be the most effective and lively tool for internalizing the contents. In the last 3 days, they were provided with training on various forms of artwork and literature to express their experiences of armed conflict and voices for peace, reconciliation and justice. Children’s perspective on conflict and peace building were brought in the form of artwork as drawing, poem, song, personal story etc.
2. An exhibition of artwork of CAC created in the Workshops

Our Voices and Experiences 2010.....

“Our Voices and Experiences”, the exhibition of artwork, songs, poems and stories of CAC created during the workshop were exhibited for two days. The aim of the exhibition was to sensitize stakeholders and community people to the problems that children are facing due to the armed conflict as well as to take forward their voices and aspirations for the peace and reconciliation to the larger audience. The artwork prepared by the participants in the district and others districts were exhibited in places where local people have easy access. This activity is also a follow up of ‘Our Voices and Experiences 2008 and 2009’ exhibition by CAC to sensitize and reemphasize the children’s realities and experiences from the 10 different districts.

Art became a powerful and center of attraction to raise the awareness among the stakeholders and larger community including both literate and illiterate. Furthermore, artworks articulated voices and experiences of CAC and it proved to be effective approach to make people internalize the current situation of CAC. It undoubtedly helped to create an empathetic environment as well as reduce their marginalization in the community. At the same time, comparative experiences and perspectives from other districts have been shared through the variety of artwork from the other districts.

Stakeholders from government offices, journalists, schools, colleges, police offices, and army offices were invited in the exhibition. Many shared that the community reconciliation initiative through artwork approach was effective and very new in the district.
District level dialogue program was conducted to share voices and experiences of conflict affected children with the concerned Government stakeholders. It was a platform for CAC to have a direct dialogue with concerned stakeholders and share their testimonies. In each of the four districts, 50 CAC participated in the dialogue program including 30 participants of reconciliation workshops. One day orientation was given to them on the issues relating to armed conflict and its impact on their lives as well as systematic way to raise their concerns, issues and queries with relevant stakeholders. District level Government stakeholders present on the Public Dialogue were Chief District Officer, District Education Officer, Local Development Officer, and representative from UCPN Maoist and District Child Welfare Board. Major CAC issues have been shared during the program and the issues addressed after the program were: case registration, relief and compensation, scholarships and medical support.

Furthermore, these Public Dialogues were proved to be a first time experience for many of the district stakeholders to realize present status of the CAC through the direct dialogue with them. Moreover, it helped to make political parties more accountable. Many participating children were able to touch the hearts of the stakeholders. Child empowerment, compensation, accountability and child participation in transitional justice were seen as major outcomes.
4. Mural Painting Program on Paris Principle on Children and Armed Conflict

In Terai regions, newly emerging armed groups are using and recruiting CAC and other children for their activities. Therefore, there is need for preventive work in targeted area to prevent recruitment of children in those groups. One of the important tools for this work is awareness rising of Paris Principles on Children and Armed Conflict. Thus, Mural Painting program on Paris Principle on Children and Armed Conflict was carried out in Shree Janajyoti Higher Secondary School of Chandranigahapur, Rautahat. Nineteen participants including school students and teachers have participated in the program. Two days orientation was conducted on Paris Principle which helped them to develop better understanding. After orientation, Six different group were formed who developed drawings and slogans based on the Principle. They jointly made seven beautiful murals illustrating concepts of the Paris Principle on Children and Armed Conflict. They continuously painted for 3 days. The Artist just assisted them on color combination and proper use of color. In each group, some of the participants were good in drawing and some were good in writing slogans. The teamwork was very effective resulting into beautiful murals. During the program, there was overwhelming number of visitors and many shared that the painting is very effective and powerful to raise awareness on unlawful use of children in armed conflict.

“All the schools walls and public places should be painted with such educative murals; it is important to take this initiation forward as a campaign”. – A visitor

At the end, a commitment paper has been jointly signed by the representative from Students Union, teachers, students and representative of HimRights district office to protect these Murals.
5. TV Serial against Sexual Violence

Television is one effective way to take the message forward at larger level, since most people do like to watch TV serials. Four episodes TV serial, ASMITA, was produced and aired on Nepal Television to take the message forward, to create awareness and sensitize on the issues of sexual violence. The ASMITA carries the meaning of social dignity/prestige. Few renowned actor/actress, school students and socially conscious people were the main characters of the serial which became effective to deliver messages. First two episodes of the serial dealt with sexual abuse and harassment in schools like eve teasing, sexual abuses by teachers, and sending nude photos through Multimedia Messages (MMS). Third and fourth episodes were on Rape. The contents of the serial were gathered from experience of young girl participants of Second National Girl Child Consultation 2010. It highlighted the issues of sexual violence experienced by girls, as well as its impacts and implications in their future development. Furthermore, the legal provision, message to socially boycott the perpetrator as well as the importance of positive support role of individual, community and law enforcement to ensure the right of the victim were well presented in the serial to take these messages forward at larger audience.

“I hope this serial will create massive level awareness on the sexual violence so would like to suggest HimRights to extend more episodes on other different context of Sexual Violence”. - Deputy Chief District Officer Makwanpur during pre-test of TV serial

This serial aired every Friday 9:30 to 10:00 pm from 9th September onwards; all Fridays of September 2011 (September 9, 16, 23 and 30, 2011). This time was selected with the objective to that the whole family members could sit together and watch the serials.

This serial is far better than Indian TV serials. It is very informative and educative and this kind of serial should be promoted. – A guardian
1. **Lack of sustainable livelihood support for ex-child soldier/CAAFAG**: In the program, many of the participants were CAAFAG. They involved with conflicting parties at different times of the conflict and worked as child soldier, porter, spy, sentry, member of medical team and cultural troupe. The government does not have any clear provisions for relief packages and compensation to CAAFAG due to supposed need to keep their identities confidential. CAAFAGs are seeking sustainable educational support and skills development training from the government. Currently, some of them are being supported by NGOs and CBOs with substantive education and training packages. But, many of them feel insecure with this temporary support packages and they are demanding for sustainable support from the Government. It is very important to provide them with livelihood support to empower to be able to get back to life. A CAAFAG said during the Public Dialogue program, “How long will NGOs support us? We want sustainable support from the Government.” He emphasized that Government should be more accountable to address issues of CAAFAG. District Education Officer (DEO) responded, “We have some set of fund for the education support but it is remaining unspent because no one of CAAFAGs approaches our office.”

2. **Children as the heads of household:**
   Many children lost their parents; they are forced to take care of their household work which used to be dealt by their parents. They have to take care of all the needs of their younger siblings and their grandparents at the same time. This has led to high drop out from schools though they were very good in their studies.

   “After my SLC I could not continue my higher education as I had to take care of my grandparents and my younger brother; I could not leave them in helpless state.”—A participant of workshop shared

   Likewise, many of the participants said that they have to prioritize their household work for family income rather than their study. A boy in Kanchanpur, said that he has plough his farm after he lost his father during the armed conflict. Furthermore, he showed his young palm with blisters due to over work in his farm. Children with no family support are highly vulnerable to trafficking, involve in worst form of child labor and sexual exploitation as well as influence them to be involved in criminal activities.

3. **Problems of disappearances remained unheard:**
   Large numbers of cases of disappearances were found in Bardiya and Kanchanpur in the comparison to other districts. Most of them were forcefully disappeared by the State Security Forces. Many of them have not received relief packages due to the pending issue of disappearances.

   The district stakeholders were reluctant to make commitments on issues of disappearances. The District Education Officer in Bardiya said; “We have some difficulties to make concrete decision over the disappearance cases, however, we will provide scholarships to the children from families of disappeared. The process would be based on provisions made on the Directives.”
The question of resolving disappearance cases has remained one of the most pending issues in the peace process. Participants from families of disappeared demanded to know truth behind whereabouts of their loved ones rather than relief packages and compensation.

“It is not the matter of relief and compensation; we want to know the truth behind the disappearance of our members.”

4. **CAAFAG girl facing difficulties in familial and community reintegration because of the social stigma:**

The CAAFAG especially girls are facing more difficulties in the process of social reintegration because of social stigma associated with them. They are not easily accepted in their families and communities most of the times. The community people have developed negative disposition about their stay with male combatants that they were sexually abused. A girl from Kanchanpur shared, “After the verification, I was labelled as disqualified. When I got back home, my father blamed me and he scolded me saying that I have joined PLA as of my interest so that I should not come back to home.” She added, “Now, I am living with my aunt in Dhangadhi instead my natal family.”

Thus, families being unsupportive and non-empathetic towards CAAFAG girls are identified as a major problem in reintegration process. Thus, special measures need to address their problems.

5. **Justice is denied for victims of sexual violence:**

Many children were physically and sexually abused by both conflicting parties during the armed conflict. These issues never came to surface due to fear of losing social dignity and respect. They are still suffering with bitter experiences. A participant, who was sexually abused, wanted to share her experiences but she could not. She burst into tears all the time when she recalled her bitter experiences. The State policy does not have any specific provisions to ensure justice for them. Hundreds of such cases are remained unreported. Based on our lobbying, we shared this issue of sexual violence in UNCSW session but the Nepal Government representatives admitted that there are no such cases of sexual violence during armed conflict.

6. **Medical support to victims of injury:**

Many victims who have undergone through medical treatment in private hospitals and hospitals abroad (especially India), have not received any form of medical support. The State Policy does not grant them with medical expenses. In Kanchanpur, a mine victim shared, “I got medical treatment in India because of easy access and security reasons of then conflict. I know I am a conflict victim, but the Government does not recognize me as a conflict victim. I have not received reimbursement for medical expenses.” Most of the people near border areas had gone to Indian hospitals for medical treatment at that time.

7. **Cumbersome process:**

People from rural area find it very difficulties to go through all the lengthy process for relief packages. Many of them have to come to district headquarters bearing expensive costs in travel, food and accommodation for application procedure. Some of the
participants from remote area said they had to walk for more than two days to reach district headquarters. A boy from Phaparbari VDC of Makwanpur said,

“I do come to district offices following the commitments made by the officials, expecting that I will receive relief packages on time; but it took a long time to get the relief package.”

Many children from remote areas suggested that the applications should be processed from VDC offices.

8. Need of familial support:
Children from marginalized communities and ethnic groups are suffering much. They are finding many difficulties to overcome trauma and pain due to the lack of substantial care and family support. Children with no family support are still living with trauma and impact of conflict.

9. Psychosocial Problem:
Large numbers of children are still suffering from psychosocial problems. They are in dire need of psychosocial support. Many of the children who witnessed dreadful events of killing, maiming, and torture have nightmare of those incidents. A boy who have seen dreadful incident of Gaur massacre finds very difficult to share his experience and showed very abnormal expression while he was recalling those dreadful incident.
1. **Shared reconciliation platform for children**
   Reconciliation workshops were able to bring victims from both conflicting parties in a common reconciliation platform. Through the process of sharing experiences, learning about root causes of conflict, structural violence, revenge cycle, reconciliation and getting opportunities to express their voices and concerns for peace and justice, we witnessed angry and forlorn participants transcended the need to take revenge and transform into glowing, laughing, sharing their stories, and becoming friends and empathetic with victims from opposing sides.

2. **Art as Cathartic:**
   The reconciliation workshop with these children was conducted through artwork approach. They expressed their experience, sufferings and perspectives in the form of drawing, poem, and personal stories. Every session of the art became very cathartic and helped many of them release their sufferings that had been suppressed for long time within them. The major outcomes were trauma healing, development of positive self image and confidence, leadership building and empathetic to victims from opposing sides regardless of conflicting party.

3. **Dignity and Respect to others:**
   Participants were from diverse communities including Madhesi, Dalit Brahmin and indigenous Janajati. Despite huge differences, this shared platform which proved to be a dynamic to create social harmony, process sense of victimhood and empathy. Children became empathetic to each-other, prioritized their problems and encouraged each other to raise their issues during public dialogue and reconciliation workshops.

4. **Understanding on root causes of conflict, vicious revenge cycle:**
   The workshops and its every session became a productive learning platform for conflict affected children. Many of them were able to understand the root causes of conflict and internalize adverse impact of vicious revenge cycle. They realized that revenge is not a solution it perpetuates avenge and killing. A combatant girl from llam shared:
   
   “I have not been able to understand conflict although I have worked long time as a child soldier. This workshop really helped me to understand the conflict and its root causes. That’s what I realized at the end of this program.”

5. **Reactivation of Local Peace Committee:**
   During all project activities, we worked closely with Local Peace Committee (LPC) to identify CAC, facilitated access to legal and social justice for the victims and foster peace building from local level. In some districts, inactive LPCs were activated as committed in the Public Dialogue. This institution is very crucial for the conflict affected people as all the processing has to be done through this local institution. In Banke and Makwanpur HimRights is serving as an active member of LPC.
6. **Strengthened collaboration with Government offices:**
   Government stakeholders realized the effectiveness of the program. In some of the districts, government officers shared availability of relief packages to conflict victims and requested HimRights to disseminate their information. In Makwanpur DEO sent a letter to HimRights branch office to circulate information on availability of scholarships to conflict affected children.

7. **Bridging Relationship:**
   The direct dialogue between CAC and government stakeholders helped them in creating linkages with government stakeholders. It made them feel easy to approach government authorities. As a result many children started to approach district authorities from very next day of the program and ask authorities about their commitment for them.

8. **Facilitating reparation process:**
   Past experiences of HimRights proved to be a credential in facilitating conflict victims in reparation process. After the public dialogue, HimRights issued several referral letters on behalf of conflict affected children for the evidence in district offices. HimRights lifeline has a good working experience during the armed conflict and the referral letter helped many to approach reparation process.

9. **Collaborating locally:** HimRights worked closely with local level organisations working with conflict victims, human rights organizations and conflict victim groups. It helped bridging conflict victims with district stakeholder. It also strengthened collaborative capacity of the local organisations to address the issues of armed conflict and ensure sustainable peace building from local level.

10. **Informed about their rights:** Most of the participants were unaware about their rights and government provisions. In both workshops and public dialogue program we conducted every session with due emphasis to inform them about the state legal provision so that they could share their testimonies based on those policy. For many it was for the first time they informed with their rights.

11. **Artworks recognized nationally and internationally:**
    The artworks created by children were widely used in national and international level for advocacy as well as to portray children’s voices and experiences at larger level. This gave meaning to what happened in last decade and stakeholders to see war from children’s lens and address their issues. Some of the artworks were displayed by Watchlist and also shared by German Mission in New York July 2011 in the Security Council's Open Debate on Children and Armed Conflict, and the subsequent vote for a new thematic resolution. Similarly, few poems and personal stories are translated in English and in process to be displayed in Peace Museum, Patan Dhoka.

12. **Mural painting program became exhilarating experience.**
    Mural painting program proved to be an effective awareness raising tool to prevent children recruiting from armed conflict. The vivid graphic painting in the wall of school is able to catch the attention of community people at large level. Furthermore, the pictures with slogans is easy to understand the meaning of painting for both literate and
illiterate. Likewise, the participating children and teacher expressed that they got an opportunity to work together for the first time.

13. **Request form other schools for Mural painting**

After mural painting in Jana Jyoti School, some other schools from the same district requested HimRights to conduct mural painting programs in their schools. School Principal and teachers came to HimRights branch office and request for Mural painting program in their school.

14. **TV Serial**

The TV serial became effective in presenting such a sensitive issue to a wider national audience. It increased awareness and sensitized large numbers of people including government stakeholders and policy makers. Lawyers and government stakeholders appreciated this effort and suggested to extend this serial incorporating other aspects of sexual abuse, harassment and violence.

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### Challenges

1. During the workshop, few participants had hard time to share their experiences.
2. Some key stakeholders had difficulties to manage time for the public dialogue due to their busy schedule.
3. Frequent transfer of stakeholders is another challenge to implement the commitments made by their predecessors during the public dialogue.
4. Duration of Mural painting program should be few days longer. Because of time constraint, participants and the organizers had to work continuously in a very short time.
1. The stakeholders made several commitments in Public Dialogue. In some districts, the district stakeholders are transferred to other districts. Newly appointed, district stakeholders should internalize these issues as institutional responsibility and work on addressing them as soon as possible.

2. The Government should conduct Reconciliation Programs through print and electronic media to take reconciliation and peace building forward at a massive level in the communities.

3. Peace building and reconciliation programs should focused on youths as they were direct victims of then conflict. They should be provided with educational support and other livelihood supports.

4. The Government provision grants scholarships to the children who are below 18 years old. But there are many children, who dropped out their studies due to the armed conflict, have crossed the Government limit of scholarships. Hence, they are still deprived of education. Similarly, the Policy grants scholarships to only 3 children of a conflict affected family. It does not seem to be fair for those who have more than 3 school going children.

5. Peer groups and community child clubs should be mobilized to promote community reconciliation process.

6. Mural painting on peace and reconciliation should be expand in other schools and public places to massively disseminate messages as well as create social cohesion at community level.

7. In some of the Hill districts, many conflict victims are still to be incorporated in Government relief process due to geographical difficulty and lack of information dissemination. Hence, the process for relief and compensation should be decentralized to district and VDC level.

8. There should be child friendly hearing mechanisms to encourage and voice the past suppressed violations and share testimonies.

9. Close and confidential platform should be established to voice the grave human rights violations like sexual violence during and post armed conflict.
Conclusion

Children undoubtedly suffered the most during the decade long armed conflict and they are still suffering from post conflict consequences. The impact of prolonged armed conflict is deeply in the mind and life of these children. They had to spend every moment in fear, threat and mental torture, abduction, and sexual violence during conflict. Furthermore, we found children from marginalized and socially-excluded are less familiar with justice process. They hesitate to approach stakeholders and voice their issues by themselves. Therefore, it is felt that the support has to go them not the way around.

We believe that both workshop and the Public dialogue have positive impact on participants for their empowerment, reconciliation, reparation, and trauma healing. The program proved to be a safe, respectful, and dignified platform for raising armed conflict related issues and its impact. However, there are still large numbers of youths who were the direct victim of then conflict. Thus, it is crucial to bring them in reconciliation process and mobilize them as a change agent for social harmony from community level.

After the program, many participants have initiated application process for scholarships and relief and some have received from the District. This program is successful in facilitating them and empowering them to access justice. Hence, such programs now with youths need to be facilitating at larger scale to build harmony and cohesion.
Program Districts:

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<tr>
<th>Far-western</th>
<th>Mid-western</th>
<th>Central</th>
<th>Eastern</th>
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<tr>
<td>Kanchanpur</td>
<td>Bardiya</td>
<td>Makwanpur, Rautahat (Mural Painting Program)</td>
<td>Ilam</td>
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Makwanpur
Makwanpur is surrounded by 10 different districts including Kathmandu, Lalitpur and other districts from Hills and Terai. It carries difficult mountainous terrain. So, it was a safe haven for Maoists to carry out their activities. Numerous incidents of killing, cross fire, abduction, torture and violation of human rights took place in different places at different times. The major incidents in Padampokhari, Hatiya, and Jhurjhure of Phaparbari took lives of many Maoist cadres, security personnel and civilians.

In Makwanpur, many children have lost their lives, became disabled, and lost their loved ones in the family during the armed conflict. But, there is no precise data on children affected by conflict neither with Government nor NGOs. Despite the end of armed conflict in the country, children are still affected in different ways. Some are orphaned; some are still living with wound scars; some with psychosocial problems; and still others facing economic problems due to loss of breadwinner of the family. The existence of explosives and land mines are still taking lives of innocent children. Many of them are still living with shrapnel and/or as disabled. Children from Raigaon, Phaparbari, Betini, Hatiya, Harnamadi, Chatiwan and Shikharpur are found to be most affected. Here is some information on impact of conflict on children:

- 9 children lost their lives and 7 got injured (killed in Kulekhani VDC, while innocently playing with abandoned explosives as toys and during cross firings)
- Around 250 children are directly affected by the armed conflict

Program Detail:
Workshop on Social Cohesion and Peace Building:
There were 33 conflict affected children from 18 different VDCs of the district. For majority of the participants, they were participating in this kind of program for the first time. The program was completely a new experience for them. It provided them with an opportunity to meet many friends who were also going through similar kind of suffering but with different life stories. Participants were from the families of killing, injured; displaced, disappeared, and majority of them were CAAFAG children. It was the best platform for them to process feeling of victimhood. Here are the details of some of the participants:

- A 15 years old boy from Dhiyal VDC, who is currently studying in 8th grade, was forcefully taken by Maoists for their program in 2063 BS at the age of 11. Later he was forced to carry their goods and explosives from Dhiyal to Singaul of Bara.
- An 18 years girl from Basamadi VDC voluntarily joined the cultural group of Maoists at the age of 14. She stayed there for few months. She thought she could explore her singing talent but she could not. Later her parents took her back home.
- A 16 years old girl from Gogane VDC is looking after her old aged grandparents. Her father was killed by Maoists accusing him of spying.
Four of the participants were mine victims from Phaparbari VDC. Likewise, some participants lost their parents during the armed conflict. The children, who were affected from the conflict, are now facing several psychosocial problems. Some witnessed their loved ones being killed in front of their own eyes whereas others were tortured. One of the participants witnessed the dreadful Gaur incident of Rautahat (March 2007). He witnessed all kinds of human cruelty during that incident. He never thought that he would come back alive from there. The suffering caused by the armed conflict was still visible in many of the participants. The boy witnessed the Gaur incident, was still severely traumatized by the incident. He found it very difficult to share his experiences. It was clear that he was also looking for an outlet to release his feelings and the program was able to provide him that platform. He still had feeling of taking revenge to the perpetrators. At the end of the program he expressed that revenge is not the solution but compassion is.

The participants voluntarily shared different incidents which they had experienced during armed conflict. The sharing session enhanced the feeling of victimhood amongst the participants who had gone through similar kind of incidents. It also created some kind of division between participants who were victimized by the Maoists and the Government Security Forces. A participant shared that the sharing of those incidents must be in person not in group. However, some of the participants admitted that sharing sessions only unfolded their past event. Some participants succeeded to disseminate positive message of forgiveness and reconciliation among the participants.

A participant shared, “My father was active member of Maoist Party. He had spent almost six and half years in prison for political reasons. My father was said to be brutally killed in 2060 BS. We never got his body. I was so upset then. I wanted to eat the flesh of that person who killed my father. One day I went to house of the person who killed my father with a purpose to take the revenge. I was ready to kill him or be killed by him at that moment. But when I saw four of his small children, my eyes filled with tears. I thought if I kill him, the children would be orphaned and they would be in far more trouble than I had been through. I know the pain of losing a father. After that, I completely gave up the feelings of revenge. If the perpetrator apologizes in public, I am ready to forgive him. I realized that revenge is not the solution, but forgiveness is. I can’t get my father back with revenge.”

Participants were much concerned about the causes of conflict and its positive and negative consequences in their society and the country. On the first day, they expected to learn new issues on conflict and peace building process; the government efforts in peace building process and the changes brought about by those efforts. Most importantly, they expected to learn about Government provisions on relief and compensation, conflict management, and appropriate punishment to the perpetrators.

Some of the CAAFAG children were facing psychosocial problems like difficulty in concentration, feeling fear and loneliness, anxiety, worrying and insomnia. The main reason behind these problems was the dreadful incidents they had witnessed during the conflict. A participant from Gadhi VDC, survivor and witness of Gaur Massacre (March, 2007), showed very unusual behaviors while interviewing. He was feeling very anxious and uneasy. He was holding his hands tight and biting key rings while sharing his experiences. He witnessed all levels of human cruelty including women being gang raped, cut their organs and body parts slashed and burnt alive.
The Public Dialogue:
There were 45 conflict affected children from 18 different VDCs of the district.

The stakeholders of Public Dialogue were:

1. Mr. Dinesh Bhattarai, Chief District Officer
2. Mr. Bishnu Prasad Adhikari, District Education Officer
3. Mr. Ram Krishna Thapa, Social Development Officer, District Development Committee
4. Mr. Indra Bahadur Pariyar, District Secretary, UCPN (M)
5. Mr. Jhabindra Gyawali, Human Rights and Child Rights Activist

Majority of participants expressed their discontent over the scholarship issues. Even after so many years of end of armed conflict, they have not received any support or scholarships from the District Education Office. Some of the participants did not know about provisions on scholarships to children of conflict victims. They were completely unaware of those provisions. A participant residing in Hetauda Municipality said, “I have not heard about these provisions of relief and compensation for conflict victims though I am staying here in the city area. Then how could people in remote villages know about these provisions?” Therefore, there should be proper mechanisms for disseminating information in every VDC of the district. Many participants were upset to know that there is no provisions of relief and compensation to the children who were involved with Maoist party or any other armed groups for some months or some years.

A boy from Phaparbari, who is still living with shrapnel of bombs, asked Chief District Officer about the Government provisions on medical support to the children who were injured during armed conflict. He is still living with scabs of wound. Participants also raised their concern over the reconstruction of destructed school buildings in the villages. The Social Development Officer admitted that DDC has released budget for reconstruction of schools in different VDCs. He added, “For reconstruction works, the respective schools have to submit application in DDC.”

A participant from Phaparbari visited CDO Office on the very next day to submit application for medical expenses. He was injured in bomb blast in his porch while innocently playing with abandoned bomb. HimRights also issued referral letter to him. Some of the participants admitted that they would visit concerned stakeholders very soon. This is the immediate output of the program to the participants and the change and empowerment it has brought about.

It is primary responsibility of the State to provide education to conflict affected children. The Representative from Maoist Party admitted, “Maoist Party is also concerned about education of conflict affected children. We have been planning to open Martyr Memorial Boarding Schools in different places where children of Martyr and conflict victims could continue their education. We have started a school in Dolakha. About 12 children of conflict victims from Makwanpur are studying in that school.” On the other hand, Government has started Open Schools in different places where conflict affected children can pursue their education even after some years of gap. Open Schools offers fast track education to the children who were dropped out of schools due to armed conflict.
At the end of the program, the panelist stakeholders signed on the Commitment Paper. They internalized the magnitude of suffering of conflict affected children are facing. They were also empathetic towards the problems raised by the participants and realized their accountability on addressing the issues of CAC. Likewise, Panelist stakeholders appreciated the systematic and disciplined way of raising children’s issues.

**The Exhibition:**
The artworks, poems, songs, and memoirs created by conflict affected children in five day workshop were displayed in the program. The exhibition displayed 48 artworks created by children from the Makwanpur and other districts. The exhibition was observed by representatives of government and non-government agencies, school children, district security personnel, journalists, and local youths and enthusiasts. The visitors found the exhibition very new in its kind in the district. They appreciated children’s creation as they represent their voices and their aspirations for peace and reconciliation in the country. Some participants said that the children should be given further trainings on painting so that they could create finer artworks. The exhibition is observed by more than 500 enthusiasts.

*These creations and artworks portray the past incidents that children had gone through. These are very heart touching. Hopefully this exhibition would be helpful in establishing Peace in the country.*

- A Visitor
Bardiya
Bardiya lies in Bheri zone of Mid-western region. The majority of the people in this district are from Tharu community. During armed conflict, several incidents took place in different parts of the district. Bhawara Tappa of Rajpur VDC was most badly affected during the armed conflict. Major crossfire VDCs of Chisapani, Ganeshpur, Mirchiya took lives of large number of Maoists, State security forces, and civilians. According to District Administration Office, the number of fatalities during armed conflict is 399, out of which 47 were women. Likewise, large numbers of people were tortured by both conflicting parties, so were injured and disabled.

Bardiya is the district with highest number of conflict-related disappearance cases mainly by the State Security Forces and few by the Maoists. Most of the cases were related to enforced disappearances. They were taken away from their home, their fields, and their neighborhoods accusing them of being spy or supportive to the opposing parties. Twenty six of the disappeared were below 18 years of age.

In Bardiya, very few conflict victims have received relief and compensation as provisioned by the Directives, 2009. The Local Peace Committee of the district is not actively working on raising voices of conflict affected children. There are several NGOs working on different issues of conflict victims especially of disappeared.

**Program Detail:**
**Workshop on Social Cohesion for Peace Building:**
The program was organized in Gulariya Municipality of Bardiya. There were 35 participants from 14 different VDCs of the district. Two third of them were female participants. Majority of them were participating in this kind of program for the first time. The program was collectively inaugurated by all the participants. It provided them time to intermingle with each other from the very beginning. They found the inauguration process very new in its kind. Here are the details of some of the participants:

- An 18 years old girl from Hasanapur of Motipur VDC was associated with Maoist party for more than 3 years. She was involved in the crossfire that took place in Dallapur of Mohamadpur VDC of the district. She was later transferred to YCL for being underaged.
- A girl from Patabhar VDC was only 12 years old when she joined Maoist Party as a member of their cultural group. She spent almost 5 years there. She came back from there because she wanted to study and identify her own destiny.

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<th>Cases of Disappearances in the Bardiya District</th>
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Source: Advocacy Forum, Bardiya
• A 12 years old boy was seeking justice and compensation for disappearance of his father. His father was taken away by the State Security Forces. His father was disappeared more than 7 years ago. (Prem)
• A 14 years old girl from Manpur Tapara VDC was deprived of her father’s love when she was only 5 years old. Her father was taken away by State Security Forces accusing him of being Maoist.

After being part of the inauguration, they felt like they were also significant member of the society. The sessions were fully participatory. Different tools like role plays, group discussions, video documentary, sharing sessions and games were used for their effective participation. Moreover, the role plays proved to be the most effective and lively tool in internalizing the contents. Their participation level was appreciative.

In five days workshop, the participants showed great enthusiasm on each and every session and made very productive participation. The sessions were two way interaction rather than disseminating information from the organizer’s side. The issues raised by the participants were given high priority for the discussion. Since, most of the participants were from Tharu Community, they were calm in the first day. Tharus, by nature, do not open up easily in the public forum. But in following days, they were more open and they actively participated in sessions and group activities.

Majority of them expressed that they gained confidence and they are now able to put forward their issues in every forum. The sessions on armed conflict and violence were conducted through role plays. They were very effective in internalizing the messages of peace building and reconciliation.

The children who were associated with Maoist Party are still facing problems in their society, especially if they are female. They are discriminated or treated differently for being associated with Maoist party. Sometimes they have feeling of revenge against those who mistreat them.

Participants enjoyed the artwork sessions very much. Majority of them were very new to artworks. They have been suffered in different ways. They find it very difficult to express their past experiences orally. Hence, the artwork approach proved to be best medium to articulate their feelings, suffering and plights. In 3 days of artwork session, the participants made 50 fine and original artworks, poems, and life stories relating to the past experiences of armed conflict. The children played with colors to give perfect creations. The significant messages of these artworks were that all conflict affected children want peace in the country. Likewise, some of the children portrayed the exact incidents that they had witnessed. A participant who was associated with Maoist Party made a picture of crossfire. In a picture, a person is held tied in trees and beaten by two armed persons. The participant who made that picture shared that

“I have learned lot of new things about armed conflict and its impact on children and the whole society. Now, I am able to disseminate the information to others as well. I am now confident enough to speak and put forth my problems in any forum without any hesitation. The program was also helpful in decreasing my grievance.”
- A participant
he has witnessed same kind of incident during armed conflict. This shows how such kind of incidents has long lasting effect on child psychology. Participants also created picture of Buddha, Dove, Swayambhu Nath and flag of Nepal, which show that they want peace and justice in the country.

The participants learned about peace building and social cohesion; rights of conflict affected children; efforts of government and non-government organizations in the five-day workshop.

**The Public Dialogue:**

The stakeholders of Public Dialogue were:

1. Mr. Jaya Prasad Aacharya, District Education Officer
2. Mr. Tilak Sharma (Himal), District In-charge, UCPN-M
3. Mr. Santa Bahadur Dhakal, Administrative Officer, District Administration Office
4. Mr. Bhuwan Aaryal, Local Development Officer
5. Mr. Kashi Ram Dhungana, Human Rights Activist

Twenty one participants raised their issues directly in front of panelist stakeholders. Most of the issues were related to relief packages and scholarships to the children in armed conflict, whereas others were concerned about social and legal justice to the victims. Those whose family members were disappeared admitted that the state must reveal the whereabouts of disappeared people.

The participants raised issues on distribution of sustainable relief to families of conflict victims. They opined that victims (of death and disappearance cases) get one time relief package of one lakh rupees; that is not sustainable in itself. They have lost the breadwinners of the family. Therefore, sustainable support is very important rather than instant economic reliefs.

Sita Sapkota of Kalika-4 VDC asked Maoist Representative, “*My father was forcefully abducted by the Maoists from home. I would like to ask Maoists when will they investigate on my father’s disappearance and reveal facts about him. I urge them to make him public as soon as possible.*” The representative of Maoist could not answer her question properly. However, he said, “*We are investigating on disappearance cases within the district. Whenever we find out the facts about your father, we will inform you.*” His statement cannot bring happiness in the faces of victims of disappearance. The Government should form Disappearance Commission to carry out concrete investigation on disappeared persons.

A CAAFAG from Patabhar VDC was forcefully taken from home by Maoist cadres; they claimed that they would guarantee her bright future. She was involved with Maoist Party for four and half months where she worked as a member of cultural troupe and as a porter. She asked stakeholders, “*I have worked for Maoist party for so many years. Due to that, I was detached from my regular studies. Who is responsible for all this, the Maoists or the State?*” She admitted that neither state nor UCPN (M) is showing any concern on those issues. Representative of CPN (M) defended the party saying that the children are not the conflict victims but participants of conflict. On this very issue, Child Rights Activist opposed the statement made by Representative of Maoists. He said, “*The rights of children were visibly violated by the activities of Maoists. Hence, Maoists should be responsible for what had happened to children. On the same time, the State should provide them with necessary support including relief packages.*”
Some of the participants were displaced from hill districts of Surkhet, Salyan, Jumla and Dailekh after the incident. So, they are getting difficulty in processing for relief and compensation from host district. However, the government stakeholders admitted that they would make necessary arrangement in home districts to address their issues.

**The Exhibition:**
The exhibition was organized for two days on 21\textsuperscript{st} and 22\textsuperscript{nd} of August, in District Development Committee Hall. The artworks, poems, songs, and life stories created by the children during five days workshop were displayed in the exhibition. It displayed 50 creations of children from Bardiya and some others from ten different districts.

Through these creations, the children expressed that they seek the justice for what had happened in the past. They wished peace and justice would prevail and the grievances which they experienced in the past would not repeat again. One of the life stories by a participant reads, "Maoists abducted my father on 2060 Falgun 29. Later we came to know through media that he had been killed. But we have not got his body yet. We will not do death rituals until we get some concrete proof of his death. We need justice; we want to know about whereabouts of my father; and we want the perpetrator be punished. I know the agony of losing my father."

The exhibition was observed by representatives of government and non-government agencies, school children, district security personnel, journalists, and other enthusiasts. The visitors found the exhibition very new in its kind in the district. A student said, "This kind of exhibition should be taken to the different schools of the district." The exhibition was observed by more than 700 people.
Kanchanpur
Kanchanpur, a district of Far-western region has faced adverse consequences of the decade long armed conflict. Children were easy target of both conflicting parties during armed conflict. They were used in some or other way during and after armed conflict. Even after end of armed conflict, children have been suffering in several ways. Children were killed and/or injured in land mine explosions and they are abducted by criminal armed groups for ransom.

Around 259 children were directly affected during armed conflict; they were used for trafficking of arms and weapons, spying in different places, messenger and collect donation. Moreover, they were used as human shield at different times. Using children for such purposes might have fulfilled goals of the conflicting parties or armed groups, but it has long term impact on protection of children. They are deprived of their fundamental rights.

Program Details:
Workshop on Social Cohesion and Peace Building:
There were total of 30 participants from 18 different VDCs of the district. Majority of the participants were from Tharu community and were basically from agriculture background. There is still lack of access to justice for many of them as they are hesitant and fear to speak out for their rights. Here are the details of some of the participants:

- 15 years old boy from Kalika VDC: his father was a Maoist cadre and killed by Security Forces after abduction. His family lost their bread winner followed by stumbling family economy. He is now facing psychosocial problems.
- 18 years old girl from Krishnapur VDC was involved with Maoist party and their activities. Due to her involvement in Maoist party, she is not well accepted in her family. She is now living with one of her aunt. She seeks skill development and/or job oriented trainings.
- 18 years old boy from Shankarpur VDC is still living with shrapnel in his left hand. He was severely injured in an explosion set up by Maoist at the age of 12. He has not received any kind of medication or other supports.

For most of the participants, this kind of program was very new and they were very excited from the very first day of the workshop. They were very inquisitive to know about the rights of conflict affected children. A participant said in an expectation collection, “I want to know more about how our problems can be addressed for sustainable solution.”

Some of the participants shared their experiences and the incidents they had gone through during armed conflict. A participant shared, “My father was killed by Security Forces 6 years ago. Now, my family’s economic condition is very weak. My mother had to go through hardships all the time.” He is a brilliant student and he sought for educational support. He is also facing psychosocial problems. Four participants shared their experiences in the Sharing Session. The session was ended as many of others burst into tears after
listening to their colleague’s experiences which were very similar to their own. The session also ended with positive message that they are not alone in this world who are suffering due to the armed conflict.

The Psychosocial Counselor carried out several psychosocial counseling sessions both individually and through group relaxations. These sessions helped them to get relieved at least for short period. Majority of the participants had periodic headache and they faced such problem during and after the armed conflict. Some of them had negative thinking and feeling of hopelessness and loneliness. Few of the participants were going through moderate psychosocial problems and they need further psychosocial support. However, they were provided with several counseling during the program.

The workshop was a first time experience for majority of the participants. They were reluctant to open up in the beginning, but they became more and more comfortable with the entire process in the following days. The use of role plays, games, group work activities and so forth really helped in bringing about a harmonious atmosphere. Moreover, they internalized the workshop contents. The participants identified some essential prerequisite for reconciliation as rebuilding communal relations, providing justice for victims, reveal whereabouts of disappeared people and establishing social harmony. The participants emphasized to punish perpetrators regardless of their affiliation.

The participants also pointed out their roles in peace-building and reconciliation process. Their major concern was on social justice at the community level. They were directly victimized during the conflict, and then re-victimized subsequently by the society. Some of them are still facing discrimination in the society for being conflict victim.

The participants realized that collective voices are more likely to be heard, rather than one individual voice. This further led them to understand the necessity for a unified voice and action towards peace. Similarly, they stressed on need for their own meaningful and structural participation in the constitution making process. Participants expressed their experiences and sufferings in the form of artwork, stories, and other literary works. They found it as an ideal way of expressing their feelings. They created more than 80 artworks.

**The Public Dialogue:**
There were 48 participants from 18 different VDCs of the district. They were prepared to put their issues/queries in front of the Stakeholders about relief and compensation to the victims of armed conflict and about their right to social and legal justice. The Stakeholders of the Public Dialogue were:

1. Mr. Buddhi Bahadur Khadka, Chief District Officer
2. Mr. Shyam Kumar Adhikari, Local Development Officer
3. Mr. Prem Nath Paudel, District Education Officer
4. Mr. Bhuwanraj Chataut, Child Rights Activist
5. Mr. Bipin Adhikari, Representative, UCPN (M)

Manraj Upadhaya, the district focal person, presented Working Paper on situation of conflict affected children in the district. He emphasized that children should be put far from armed conflict and their
right to survival should be ensured. He mentions in his Paper, “All political parties have to guarantee that they will not use children for political purpose. Children’s rights should always be given first priority.”

Majority of the participants raised their issues regarding educational support to them. A participant from Dumrah VDC asked District Education Officer about provisions on scholarships to children of conflict victims. His father was killed by Security Forces and his family has received Rs. 1 lakh and Rs. 25 thousands as relief package, but he has not received scholarships yet. District Education Officer committed to provide him scholarships next year if he submits completed application and gets approved from the center.

The application procedures are very vague and the applications get pending for long time due to incomplete or unclear submission of applications. Chief District Officer said, “Most of the applications do not meet requirements as provisioned on the Directives 2009, due to which we cannot refer the application to the Ministry. The most difficult part is providing evidence to the cases of killing, disappearance and capture of properties.” He accepted there is lacking in provision on providing relief to the injured victims. He said, “The District Committee can not refer the cases of injury for medical treatment and expenses if the treatments are carried out in private hospitals and/or abroad. I agree, there are some drawbacks in the provisions.”

A participant from Daiji VDC asked CDO, “My father was a teacher. He was taken by Security Forces stating that they have to discuss with him. They killed my father and one of my uncle without any reason. So, I would like to ask whether the perpetrators would be punished or not. I demand for strong action against those who killed my father and my uncle.” CDO replied, “NHRC has initiated process of investigation on killing of civilians using excessive force. I will definitely assist in investigation process.” Child Rights Activist added, “There are numerous cases of killing of civilians and all cases should be investigated.”

A participant from Laxmipur VDC asked about his concern regarding sustainable support to the families of conflict victims. He said, “Government provides relief of 1 lakh to the families of killed. That amount is not sufficient for their sustainable livelihoods.” CDO admitted that he would raise the issue at central level as they need to be discussed at policy level.

The issue of medical support and medical expenses to the injured during armed conflict emerged as the highly prioritized agenda during the Dialogue. Due to lack of documents and provisional difficulties for victims who had undergone treatment in India and in private hospitals during the conflict period; the legal state policy doesn’t grant them right to reimbursement for medical expenses and further medical support. A participant from Shankarpur VDC was injured in bomb explosion. He is still living shrapnel in his body. He had not received any kind of medical support. CDO committed to refer the case to Ministry of Health if he submits complete application with referral of concerned doctors.

They raised different issues on compensation and relief for the loss of their loved ones; scholarships; medical expenses and further medical treatment; whereabouts of the disappeared and justice at the large. The panelist stakeholders were very positive from their side. They made some concrete commitments but most of the issues were directly linked to the policy level; so they could not do much on those issues because of procedural difficulties. It was simply out of their jurisdiction. Moreover, they suggested the immediate need for a restructuring of some of the state policies regarding armed conflict and its victims. The procedures of the state policies have been implemented to some extent. But due to
inherent lack of procedural clarity on the issues of CAAFAG and the lacking of provision of scholarships
to the children of conflict victims, who are above eighteen years of age, very little can currently be done
for them. Both of these concerns were raised time and again by the participants during the dialogue.
The District Education Officer could not make concrete commitments on the scholarship issue because
without a change in the central policy mechanism, the office alone cannot go ahead and grant these
participants with scholarships.

The Exhibition
The exhibition was organized in District Development Committee hall. The exhibition was observed by
more than 300 persons including students, government staff, representatives of different organizations
and journalists. The observers found that this kind of program was held in the district for the first time
and they appreciated the hard work of the children in creating the artworks. Large number of school
students observed the exhibition and were keen to observe each and every artwork. Many of them
appreciated when they came to know the entire process. They admitted that the event would definitely
be helpful in making government and political parties accountable in addressing the issues of conflict
affected children. An observer expressed, “The artworks and literary works are so realistic. It gives perfect
meaning and face of situation of children in armed conflict.”
Illam

Illam, a district of Eastern Development Region, faced numerous cases of human rights violations during the decade long armed conflict. In the district, large numbers of people were killed by both conflicting parties, civilians were abducted, tortured accusing them of being supporter of opposing party.

A total of 189 persons lost their lives in Illam. Major clashes in Malate of Maipokhari took lives of 17 security forces, 6 police personnel and 4 Maoist PLAs. Likewise, there were clashes between Security forces and Maoists in Illam Municipality, Kyabung of Mangalbare, Pashupatinagar, Danabari, Fuetappa resulted into loss of lives of several security personnel, Maoist PLA and civilians.

During armed conflict, Maoists abducted children from their schools and homes and forcefully engaged them in armed trainings and other purposes. Children were the easy target of Maoists. Similarly, large number of children voluntarily joined the Maoist Party following the whim. It resulted into deprivation from education. Moreover, they had to live under fear all the time. It had negative psychological impact on them. Even after Comprehensive Peace Accord, the children who were directly involved with Maoist Party were utilized by number of unidentified armed groups as cadre of their armed wing. Pallo Kirat, Kirat Janabadi Workers’ Party, Limbuwan Rajya Parishad and Sanghiya Loktantrik Rastriya Manch are still using children as their cadre and/or volunteers. Large numbers of civilians were arrested or abducted by State Security Forces, Maoists and other armed groups in the district. A total of 2359 persons were arrested or abducted and tortured by the State Security Forces and 824 by Maoists. On the other hand, 85 were tortured by an armed group called Kamrang Group.

Program Details:
Workshop on Social Cohesion and Peace Building:
There were 28 participants that included 13 girls and 15 boys from different VDCs and Illam Municipality of the district. Majority of them were Janajatis and others were from Dalit, Brahmin and Chhetri community. Majority of the participants have the cases of arrest or abduction of their family members by the Security Forces and later they were found to be tortured in detention. Likewise, some of the participants had lost their family members. A participant was victim of Illam attack. Her father was killed in crossfire in Illam Municipality. Few of the participants were directly associated with Maoist Party. Some of them had worked as PLA and others as member of cultural troupe, medical personnel, and porter. Here is brief description of some of the participants.

- A participant from Panchakanya VDC was kept in detention by the State Security Forces in 2062 BS. She spent more than a year in detention in different places including Illam, Jhapa and Biratnagar. She had submitted applications for relief and compensation, but there is no hearing.
- A 20 years old participant from Chulachuli VDC, joined Maoist Party in 2062 BS. He worked as medical personnel. After leaving the Party, he continued his studies. He does not expect any relief and compensation from the government, but he wants the Government to be responsible towards the issues of conflict affected children.
A participant from Rolpa is currently studying in the district. He was associated with People’s Liberation Army while studying in 6th grade in Rolpa district. He was injured in crossfire Thanawang of the same district. Later, he was able to run away from the district to settle in Ilam district.

Majority of the participants were participating in workshops related to peace and reconciliation for the first time. Hence, they were pleased to be a part of the workshop. They were very much concerned about their rights. They were willing to learn about role of the State for the protection and upliftment of conflict affected children. They were much inquisitive to learn about the provisions on relief and compensations to the conflict victims from the very first day. They experienced conflict from very near and have been suffering till date. Therefore, they raised one voice as ‘let the peace prevail in the country.’

Participants shared their experiences of armed conflict and its impact on their daily lives. Those who have lost their family members had gone through very difficult times of poverty and helplessness. Likewise, majority of children joined Maoist Party because of their influence and/or threat. They left studies for some years; however, they are facing difficulty to resume their studies with their juniors. Ms. Tara Rai, one of the participants has published a book based on her experiences of being ex-combatant and a child soldier. She said, “After returning home from the Maoist party, I was not well accepted in the society. There were many people who backbite me. I did not get positive support from anywhere except my mother.” She also appreciated the program as it gave her positive strength. She added, “This program is really helpful for me. Although I have been a combatant for six years, I have not been able to understand the root causes of the armed conflict but this workshop made it clear for me.”

Children admitted that expressing their experiences of the armed conflict in the form of artworks and literary works was a very new concept for them. They enjoyed the artwork sessions and playing with the colors. All of them created artworks based on their past experiences and others wrote memoirs and poems.

Majority of the participants realized that the program was very helpful in learning about the rights of conflict affected children and was a very new exposure for them. They were provided with opportunity to speak their mind and they were happy to meet up with other conflict victim children. They also got to know about application procedure for relief and compensation to conflict victims. They were very happy to express their experiences and feelings with other conflict affected children.

The Public Dialogue:
There were 47 participants in Public Dialogue program including 28 participants of the Workshop and 19 new participants from different VDCs. The stakeholders of the Public Dialogue were:

1. Mr. Kosh Hari Niraula, Chief District Officer
2. Mr. Bhupraj Rai, Local Development Officer
3. Mr. Mahendra Poudel, District Education Officer
4. Mr. Bikram Chand, Deputy Superintendent of Police
5. Mr. Ajit Yonjan, Child Rights Officer, District Child Rights Board, Ilam
6. Mr. Bhishm Khatriwada, Representative, UCPN (M), Ilam
Dipendra Khanal of Peace Action Group presented working paper on impact of armed conflict on children. The paper gives the brief information on human casualties, the incidents that had been carried out in the district and their impact to children.

The children were very excited to put forth their problems in front of district Stakeholder. Moreover, they felt proud to be in the same forum with people of high profile Chief District Officer, Local Development Officer, and District Education Officer. Majority of the participants raised their issues regarding to scholarships to the children of conflict victims.

The Stakeholders were very positive on providing relief and compensation as per the Government provisions. They urged the participants to submit application along with all required documents which then would be referred to concerned bodies.

A Dalit participant from Danabari VDC was skeptical about receiving scholarships. Her father was killed during armed conflict. She has not received any scholarships so far because of information gap. District Education Officer committed to proceed the process for scholarships if she submits application in the Office with necessary documents.

Participants were not only concerned about relief and compensations. Bipin Karki, a participant from Chulachuli VDC, has very positive attitude. He was associated with Maoist Party for more than a year and worked as medical personnel. He said, “I am discontent with both the State and Maoists. Though the State bears the primary responsibility of all children affected by the armed conflict, there is no presence of the State in my locality. The State should have searched victims like us and provide this kind of platform; unfortunately the State is not doing so but NGOs are.” Similarly, he asked the representative of UCPN (M) about the responsibility of the Party towards thousands of children who were associated with them during armed conflict. He was of the opinion that the programs like Public Dialogue should be initiated by the State to ensure legal and social justice for the victims.

Majority of children who were associated with the Maoist Party have not received any support from the State, however, some NGOs are providing them with assistance in their studies and/or promotion of their livelihoods.

Participants also raised their concern on distribution of relief and compensation to the fake victims. District Administration Office has distributed relief to 7 fake conflict victims so far. Chief District Officer made commitment to investigate on those cases and take necessary steps not to repeat such mistakes. However, he defended the steps taken by District Administration Office. He said that the relief was distributed as per the referrals made by different committees and political parties in the district.

**The Exhibition:**
The exhibition of artworks prepared by children was organized in Karmachari Milan Kendra Hall. The program was observed by students, representatives of different organizations, government offices and journalists. Most of the visitors found the program very new and appreciative as the voice of conflict affected children are expressed in the form of artworks, memoirs and literary works. The children mainly showed their experiences and the impact of conflict in their lives. The children had strong aspiration for
establishment of peace and harmony in the country. A visitor said, “This exhibition is successful in displaying the exact situation of conflict affected children and the grievance they had gone through.”

The exhibition was overwhelmingly visited by more than 1000 enthusiasts. The exhibition successfully conveyed the positive message on establishing peace and harmony in the country. The artworks also represent children’s aspirations for peace, justice and reconciliation among all.
Annex

Glimpses of the Program:

Participants in inaugural session of workshop

A participant greeting during introduction session

Participants expressing their experiences in the artwork
A participant sharing her experiences of armed conflict

A participant explaining about her creation during exhibition

Two students reading personal stories during the exhibition
Artworks made by participants
Panel of stakeholders during Public Dialogue

A participant asking question to the stakeholder during public dialogue

Chief District Officer responding to the questions raised by participants
School Wall before Mural Painting

School wall after Mural painting

No Arms for us... a mural painting
Promotional banner of Ashmita, the TV serial

Screen shot of main characters of Asmita, the TV serial (Episode 2)

Screen shot of main characters of Asmita, the TV serial (Episode 3)
Media Coverage
### District Focal Persons and Local Partner Organizations:

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<td>Bardiya</td>
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