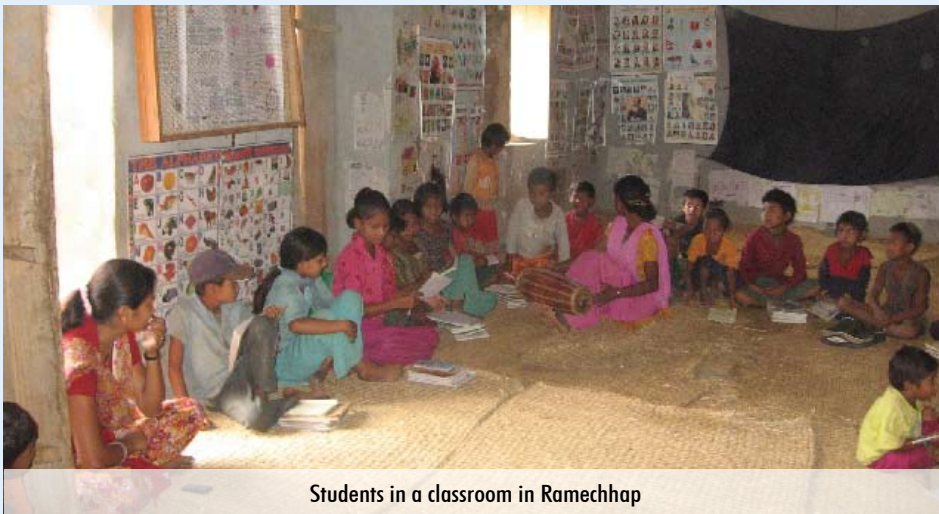


Child education support in Ramechhap



Students in a classroom in Ramechhap

Ramechhap, LWF Nepal: Launched in 2004 in Ramechhap district, the Socio-Economic Empowerment Project (SEEP) has designed activities to bring about holistic development of children. So far, eight child development centers were supported in four working villages. Namadi-1 of Bittari is the latest village to see a child development center; altogether 40 children have benefited from it.

Seven such centers were supported with education materials, exclusively for Dalit children. They were also provided with sets of playing materials such as carrom board, chess and volley ball, musical equipment and record books with support from LWF Nepal and DEPROSC-Nepal.

The project also strives to improve the physical infrastructure to create a favourable learning environment at schools and to reduce early drop-out of school children. For instance, three schools were handed over 40 sets of iron angles for making desks and benches. The schools contributed

wooden planks for the same. As a result, 200 children can now sit comfortably and safely in their classrooms.

Construction and renovation of school buildings are part of the project activities. Renovation of Setidevi Primary School in Bhatauli-5 was completed in the second quarter of this year, whereas that of two others in Pharpu-8 and Namadi-4 VDCs is nearing completion. Four other schools have been selected for such support.

With a view to inculcating the habit of reading extra-curricular books among the children, LWF Nepal provided five schools with books on a variety of subjects. Students and teachers have been increasingly using the library for reading and sharing resources.

As an incentive for school enrollment, scholarships were awarded to 50 children who belonged to disadvantaged families. The deserving students were given school uniform and education materials to encourage continuity of formal education. The parents of these children were associated with the

saving credit co-operatives so that they could afford to send their children to school in the future. In order to ensure transparency in the selection process, school management committees identified needy students on the basis of certain criteria.

Stop trafficking through safe migration

It's been nearly seven months since LWF Nepal launched an Anti-Trafficking Project (ATP) in Ramechhap, a hill district in central Nepal. As a component of the Socio-Economic Empowerment Project (SEEP), ATP aims at generating awareness among the general public about human trafficking and advocacy for legal reform, and effective implementation of laws against human trafficking.

Most of the migrants of four Village Development Committees—the project areas—are illiterate and poor, and are consequently vulnerable to human trafficking.

So far, 1,254 people have received service from information desks set up with LWF Nepal's support for those who aspire to migrate from the country. Since the establishment of the information desk of Manthali VDC at the Office of Chief District Officer (CDO), the people from other VDCs are also getting services at the time of issuing passports from CDO office. Information Desk operators were selected from among peer educators.

Dissemination of knowledge about anti-human trafficking and safe migration has been made effective through peer educators; 49 peer educators have

developed 109 co-peers in six months. The co-peers also help transfer knowledge to the community.

Members of pressure groups held meetings with the purpose of sharing information about anti-trafficking, safe migration and basic human rights in each ward of four Village Development Committees (VDCs)—Manthali, Bhatauli, Pharpu and Namadi—

LWF Nepal works in. This also helped collect information about the conditions of migrants in VDCs.

More efforts are needed to expand the project coverage. Attempts have been made to cover more people through outreach activities, door-to-door programs and operation of an information desk at the District Administration Office.

As part of the project activities, various promotional materials for safe migration were distributed and awareness raising activities such as street drama and Dohari (an extempore singing competition between female and male groups) on safe migration were organized. The project established linkages with district human rights organizations and activists.

Rozario visits resettled Bhutanese refugee families



Bhutanese refugees in Shanishchare camp

Kathmandu, LWF Nepal: Country Representative of LWF Nepal Marceline P. Rozario traveled to North Dakota in June to see how the newly resettled Bhutanese families, who had refugee status in Nepal, were doing there.

The two families that he met were from Shanishchare camp in eastern Nepal; they now live in two apartments in the same building in Fargo, the capital of North Dakota. Both the families were found to be very happy with their new life and with the generous support that they had received from the Lutheran Social Service (LSS)—the organization which is directly involved in extending all possible support to the resettled Bhutanese families in that state.

Upon arrival a month ago when they were received at Fargo Airport by a social worker

of LSS, these families found with pleasure that a furnished and carpeted apartment with sofa in the living room; fridge, electric oven, utensils, crockery, cutlery, detergent powder, Bhutanese spices, rice, Dal, vegetables, juice, milk etc. in the kitchen, dining table with chairs, two bedrooms with beds and clean linen and towels were all waiting for them. It was a signal of a good beginning.

Within a month's period, they received proper orientation from LSS on "how to live a life in America." Two members of the family have already managed to get employment in one of the big hotels in the state.

When Rozario asked them whether they had any message to send to the refugees in the camps in Nepal, they said in unison, "All of

them should come to America for a new and better life".

The country representative had gone to the US to participate as one of the four panelists in the National Conference of the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services (LIRS) that was held from 10-12 June in Bloomington, Minneapolis.

The conference was attended by about 200 delegates from all over the US. The other panelists were from UNHCR Regional Office in America, the Refugee Admissions Office of the U.S. Department of State, and the Office of the Refugee Resettlement of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The theme of the conference was "Partnering for Success in Community Integration".

In a separate workshop attended by 35 delegates from LIRS affiliated voluntary organizations, which are closely involved in the resettlement of Bhutanese refugees, Rozario made a presentation on "Coming to America : What to expect from Bhutanese Refugees".

LWF Nepal has organized various training events for the Bhutanese refugees with the objective of equipping them with the skills that will be useful if they decide to opt for third country resettlement and if they are accepted for the same. The training program covers basic computer appliances repair, driving, food catering and housekeeping training, among others. So far, 2,809 refugees have benefited from this program.



LWF DESK

New Nepal

W With the election of its new Constituent Assembly, Nepal now has an historic opportunity to put 10 years of brutal and destructive civil war behind it, to re-write its Constitution, and to renew its entire system of governance in order to better serve its 27 million people. The fact that the elections on 10 April 2008 were conducted in largely peaceful conditions is a very welcome sign of the potential for democratic participation to take the place of armed conflict.

Those who have been elected to the Constituent Assembly have a collective responsibility to faithfully fulfill the mandate entrusted to them on behalf of and in full accountability to all the people of Nepal, and to ensure that peace process does not fail. Nepal's partners in the international community also have a responsibility, whether they like the election outcome or not, to respect the democratic process and to support the ongoing struggle for sustainable peace and human development in the country. This election and its outcome is a key landmark in that process. It is an opportunity that Nepal and the international community cannot afford to miss.

The Lutheran World Federation has been present in Nepal since 1984, supporting projects and programs for the empowerment of the poor and for the most marginalized groups – Dalits, freed Kamaiyas, Haliyas and Janjatis. The LWF has also sought to promote the full recognition of the dignity and rights of women in Nepal. We call for the Constituent Assembly to ensure that the new Constitution and system of government will guarantee equal rights and opportunities to all Nepalis, and that the most marginalized groups are fully integrated in the process of rebuilding the nation.

Respect for the human rights of all the people of Nepal is the best and only assurance of sustainable peace and development in the country. It is a currency that cannot be received from outside, but can only be granted by Nepalis to themselves. But even the most progressive and best-written Constitution will not by itself be sufficient to realize those rights. The promises the new Constitution will make to the people of Nepal must be implemented in practice, or those unfulfilled promises will simply set the stage for further conflict. The expectation of all those who care for the future of Nepal is that the Constituent Assembly will not only write a good Constitution, but will also set in place the systems and mechanisms of governance that will translate constitutional pledges into meaningful actions. The suffering of Nepal's people in the past, and the hopes of its children for the future, demand it.

Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko
General Secretary
The Lutheran World Federation

Social Integration

By Dr Surendra Bahadur Thapa

In Nepal, poverty is highly concentrated in rural areas, in particular among vulnerable communities such as landless peasants, small farmers, freed bonded laborers (Ex-Kamaiyas), Dalits ("untouchables"), urban poor, and indigenous people. Along with poverty, traditional rules and behavioral norms embedded in ethnic and caste systems have resulted in caste- and ethnicity-based exclusion. This type of exclusion has spawned social conflicts within and among vulnerable communities, which subsequently affect development goals. This was and is one of the main causes of various forms of conflict in Nepal.

To address the prevalent social exclusion issues in Nepalese society and to reduce the ongoing and potential conflicts, a two-year bilateral project "Socio-Economic Improvement Program for Ex-Kamaiyas and Other Vulnerable Communities (SEIPEV)" of The Lutheran World Federation Nepal (LWF Nepal) and the European Commission (EC) was launched. It was completed successfully in December 2007. The project made a planned effort to challenge the deeply entrenched poverty and social exclusion between Ex-Kamaiyas and vulnerable communities, especially Dalits, through income generation and empowerment programs.

The project had some unique characteristics. For the first time in Nepal, this type of project was launched. It was a pioneer in the sense that it made attempts to integrate Ex-Kamaiyas and other nearby vulnerable communities by ensuring community cohesiveness and solidarity, and by engaging them in sustainable livelihood opportunities.

After the Nepalese government abolished the bonded-labour system on 17 July 2000, thousands of Kamaiyas were re-settled in the same territory where Dalits and other vulnerable communities had migrated from hills years ago, and who have been eking out their living in the area for the past two decades. From the beginning, these migrant communities, which also happen to be vulnerable from a socio-economic perspective, have been systematically excluded from the development mainstream as they were given "Illegal Settlers" status by the Government of Nepal. Even after two decades, the state has failed to legitimize their status and to ensure their socio-economic rights.

The freed Kamaiyas, who have been settled in the area more recently compared to the "vulnerable communities" who have been residing in that area for many years, have received attention and development priority from both government and non-government organizations. They are legally settled by the government and their access to and control over

resources is relatively better compared to that of the other vulnerable communities. Socio-cultural diversity, inequity in development priorities, and increasing competition for resource utilization and management between Ex-Kamaiyas and vulnerable communities, including Dalits, was the main ground of conflict between the two parties.

The SEIPEV project of LWF Nepal and EC designed activities to enable both Ex-Kamaiyas and other surrounding vulnerable communities so that they can make positive contributions to socio-economic development initiatives as well as to enjoy tangible and intangible benefits of their own efforts. Throughout the program, emphasis was put on identification of points of integration where both communities would have equal opportunities to participate and be equally benefited. For example, the project supported construction of school buildings to which children from all households will have equal access, irrespective of their caste and class. Through advocacy activities, the two target groups were made to realize that both are marginalized communities, that they have common issues to address, and that they should make concerted efforts to raise their socio-economic status.

In the course of implementation, the project experienced that participation by all community members in the decision-making process of resources utilization and management is essential. However, without positive attitude and behavior of Ex-Kamaiyas and other vulnerable communities towards collective action for development and conflict transformation, their role in social inclusion and effective participation cannot materialize.

(The writer is Sustainable Livelihood Improvement Project Coordinator, LWF Nepal)



Freed Kamaiyas using LWF Nepal-supported water facility

NEWS IN BRIEF

Consultancy for resource mobilization

LWF Nepal is one of the first LWF/Department for World Service Programs to establish a Resource Mobilization Committee (RMC), which has been active since early 2007.

"The Program should be congratulated for the steps it has already taken in communications, in setting up management information systems, and in becoming more prepared for [mobilizing the Committee], to mention a few," said Bobby Waddell, consultant for Resource Mobilization, LWF/DWS. The RMC meeting provided an opportunity to look at the achievements and challenges and come up with some recommendations on the way forward, he said at the end of his week-long visit to LWF Nepal program in late May.

During the visit, he went to LWF Nepal project sites and met with RMC members to review the functioning of RMC and progress made thus far, and shared advices and relevant information with the Nepalese colleagues.

Although LWF Nepal staff members have become more sensitized about resource mobilization, they said that they would benefit from further training and guidance on how to implement the resource mobilization strategy.

How resources should be mobilized in a sustainable manner after localization of the organization was another issue that surfaced prominently during the interaction with RMC members. LWF Nepal's plan to set up an advisory board this year would contribute to developing an action plan for localization by 2013, wrote Waddell in his travel notes in June.

Senior staff meeting held

Senior staff members of LWF Nepal gathered in Kathmandu on 23 June for a three-day meeting to discuss a wide range of issues—from program activities and research possibilities to management and staff welfare. Advocacy, Gender, HIV & AIDS and procurement policies were brought under discussion for refinement. The number of staff members who attended the senior staff meeting totalled 35. The meeting is usually held once a year to review projects and programs, and staff issues.



Welcome new National Staff Council!

LWF Nepal welcomed a new National staff Council (NSC) on 17 June. Program Officer for Refugees Chanakya Adhikary was elected chairperson, Program Officer Kamal Rokaya vice chairperson, and Communication and Documentation Manager Beena Kharel secretary of NSC. The chairperson is based in Jhapa, the vice chairperson in far-west Nepal and the secretary in Kathmandu. Their tenure is for one year.

NSC advises the Country Representative through the National Review Committee for LWF Nepal on matters related to the common well-being of all staff, communicates with staff and oversees the complaints lodged with the Council.

After the NSC election, meetings were held in LWF Nepal offices to discuss a wide range of issues mainly pertaining to staff welfare and motivation.

The rule of simple majority (51%) of those voting shall be applied to all issues put to the vote, except for amendments to the NSC Constitution where a two-thirds majority is required.

Multi-faith approach

Country representative Marceline P. Rozario and three coordinators of LWF Nepal programs attended a conference on "Peace and Human Rights in Multi-faith Context in Jerusalem" from 31 March to 4 April.

On the sidelines of the conference, the senior most staff of LWF Nepal discussed humanitarian and development issues, problems and constraints with their counterparts of other LWF/DWS country programs and of LWF Secretariat, Geneva.

Organized by LWF/Department for World Service, the conference offered a valuable opportunity to LWF Nepal staff to present their working experience in peace and human rights from the multi-faith standpoint.

"Pursuance of non-violence approach is the best weapon available for fulfillment of human rights," said Anoj Chhetri, program coordinator of LWF Nepal, who attended the conference.

Learning about the socio-economic and political situations in the multi-faith context that is affected by national and international political interests was one of the most interesting aspects of the conference, said the participants from Nepal.



"Leaders from multi-faith backgrounds can play a vital role in quelling communal violence that Nepal has witnessed several times in the past," said Chhetri.

LWF Nepal has also mobilized religious leaders in uprooting deep-rooted social discrimination and injustice, particularly for its HIV & AIDS awareness-raising programs.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Capacity-building of female staff

A meeting of the Central Region Women's Staff Forum held in late June formed a three-member committee that is entrusted with the responsibility for identifying the training need of female staff members and preparing a proposal to the human resource unit. The proposal is expected to assist the human resource section of LWF Nepal in making plans for capacity-building programs for female staff in 2009. The meeting held in Kathmandu discussed gender policy and staff welfare as well.

Communication and Documentation Manager Beena Kharel, Training Officer Pabitra Sharma and Accounts Officer Ram Kumari Manandhar were nominated to the committee to finalize the proposal by September this year. The next meeting will be held in late August.

"It's our right!"

With the objective of building the capacity of staff members of AZEECON member countries, a training workshop on "Planning Advocacy Communications" was held from 23 to 26 June in Rangpur, Bangladesh.

The Asian Zone Emergency and Environment Cooperation Network—known as AZEECON—consists of four member countries viz. Bangladesh, Cambodia, India and Nepal. They are the program countries or associates of LWF/Department for World Service, Geneva.

Out of 18 participants in the workshop, four were from Nepal. Communication and Documentation Manager Beena Kharel, Program Officer Kamal Rokaya, Human Rights Officer Karna Nepali and District Advisor Mina Parajuli of LWF Nepal participated in the workshop hosted by RDRS Bangladesh—an AZEECON member. During the four-day workshop that upheld the slogan "It's our right", the participants discussed communications strategic planning, rights-based approach, elements of a strategic plan, and communications tools that can be used as an advocacy instrument in the rights-based approach. Three resource persons were from LWF Cambodia.

The participants visited an RDRS project area in Thakurgaon district, northwest Bangladesh, to develop appropriate communications tools to address prioritized advocacy issues.

Sometimes something is almost enough

They live in Marati of Dhodari Village Development Committee (VDC) in Bardiya district. The village has 36 households that belong to Dalits ("untouchable" community). Every year they lose crop to flood. They possess some hundred sq feet of land which is supposed to feed them for a year.

Their village is in a slightly raised area. Flood does not reach this area that easily. They never get any relief support from government, I/NGO or from other sources because their homes are not destroyed, their stored grain is not damaged "on time" when the low-lying Terai districts are submerged in water. Therefore they are not categorized as "flood victims."

Nevertheless they face the effects of flood, but slowly. Their standing crop is destroyed by inundation due to heavy rainfall and lack of drainage facility. The Karnali River, which is near their village, flows over their fields and paddy remains submerged for 15-20 days. Sometimes more. They are now in search of water logged resistant variety of rice.

They are facing another problem. School is far from the village. The only school road passes through the same field. During the monsoon, the road is inundated. Children cannot walk through the flooded road.



Children playing near a river in south-west Nepal

The people of this village have neither sufficient land for agriculture nor they have any entrepreneurial skills to survive. Therefore they are depended wholly on wages. Their main worry is food. Not a single government agency has yet come forward for community development.

Under the food-for-work program of the Post-Flood Disaster Rehabilitation Project (PFDR)—a joint initiative of ACT International and LWF Nepal—people are getting employment in their own village. At the same time, they are working for development without having to worry about food because each beneficiary of this project gets four kg rice per day for contributing their labor.

Clean drinking water is another concern of the community. Many people became sick after using water derived from hand pumps in the aftermath of the 2007 floods. They still remember the previous situation and are afraid to drink the pumped water. "If we were able to raise the hand pumps, we could drink pure water even during the flood period. There will be no health hazards caused by impure water," says Ritu Nepali, a villager.

Road reconstruction and repair work has started, taking into account the maximum flood level and other precautions such as check dams so that the roads will not be washed away by floods.

(LWF Nepal Feature Service)

COMMUNITY VOICE

Sustainable relief package



In Kailali district, there are several severely flood-prone villages that are situated near river banks. ACT/LWF Nepal launched the Post-Flood Disaster Rehabilitation Project (PFDR) in this district of far-west Nepal in 2008.

Most of the beneficiaries of this project are from marginalized and disadvantaged communities such as Dalit (“untouchable”), indigenous, freed bonded laborer, and physically challenged people and female-headed households.

Rajmati Chaudhary lives on the bank of the Orai River, Suryapatuwa-5, Chodkitaduwa of Kailali. It was not like this before. Until July 2007, she had a good place to live and enough land to cultivate. She was known as a “landlord” because she had 33.3 ha land whereas most of her neighbors possessed less than 0.33 ha.

It was 26 July 2007. There had been incessant rain for the past three days. She lost her grain stock, utensils and valuables to the flood. After 12 hours, the flooding receded. Then she managed to go to her field. To her shock and dismay, her paddy field had turned into a huge lake. She was no longer the “landlord”.

The 0.14 ha land she has is not enough to feed eight members of her family. Immediately after the flood, she received a small package of relief support of food and non-food items.

But how long will it last? “I was in search of a sustainable way of living,” she said.

Two months ago, PFDRP came in to generate some hope among the flood-affected people. “This project seems to be somewhat sustainable-oriented. Twenty-two victims, including myself, received composite packets of off-season vegetable seeds and orientation on cultivation. I hope it would fetch something in the market,” she said.

She is very happy because the project has introduced the food-for-work program, which she describes as a “tangible benefit.”

This project provides valuable technical ideas to the community so as to enable them to improve their traditional farming system, and new installments of hand pumps for potable water in those areas where people are suffering from water-borne diseases.

“Our damaged roads are being repaired. Hand and treadle pumps are being installed. This will raise hope among those who have lost many things to the flood,” she said

The major part of this project contains food-for-work (FFW) program, orientation on disaster preparedness, HIV & AIDS and life-skill programs. Through FFW, people will become self-reliant and develop a certain level of resistance to flood effects, alongside the repair and construction of community infrastructure.

(LWF Nepal Feature Service)

Western performance

In this quarter of the year, the Western Region Coordination Unit (WRCU) of LWF Nepal was involved intensively in implementation, monitoring, facilitation, coordination, linkage building and overall review of its various projects.

WRCU organized a two-day workshop with nine partners to review the progress made so far, to plan for the rest of the year and to discuss openly about current issues and problems the projects faced. LWF Nepal’s staff oriented the partners on conducting baseline survey, keeping activity logbook and preparing project documents.

With the objective of strengthening the capacity of the members and staff of the federations of community-based organizations (CBOs), different types of five-day training for trainers, and other training events related to finance, public health and HIV & AIDS were organized.

From among the groups, CBOs and their federations—supported by LWF Nepal—6,712 (including 4263 female) and 6,675 (including 4,502 female) people were selected for their capacity building in the areas of Peace, Reconciliation and Human Rights, and Sustainable Livelihood Improvement Project (SLIP) respectively for organizational and program effectiveness.

Under the SLIP project, LWF Nepal and its partners helped construct CBO buildings, provided seed money to groups, organized capacity building training for 300 community workers. Likewise, 1,763 farmers received farm inputs such as improved seeds followed by kitchen and semi-commercial vegetable training. They are using fresh vegetables for consumption and selling them. Altogether 226 treadle pumps and pump sets are being installed in this region with the view of putting a good irrigation facility in place for farmers.

On the media mobilization front, 13 episodes of Kiran and Nagarik Manch radio programs were aired with the purpose of generating mass awareness and sensitizing primary duty bearers about HIV & AIDS, and the minorities’ rights. Supported by LWF Nepal, a new radio program “Prakop Ka Kura” kicked off in order to highlight the rights of disaster survivors in Banke.