

Naya Nepal : Challenges of Governance and Institutions

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Introduction

Nepal has been one of the most significant countries for India. Notwithstanding very brief periods of disenchantment that Nepalese have displayed toward India, it has been integrally connected from time immemorial. In terms of the diverse relationships that they both share with each other, Nepal remains by far the closest country to India. Naturally then, any significant transitions that Nepal undergoes have important ramifications for us. The present paper briefly examines the various aspects of this relationship, glances through the very recent violent conflict that impacted Nepal most severely and goes on to assess the challenges and achievements that the current situation in Nepal has on governance and institutions. It then winds up with the analysis of these changes that have taken place in the country to locate them in the wider context of India Nepal relations.

The Relationship

Nepal has been one of our closest neighbours, not only because it shares an extraordinary long, more or less, open border (1751km) with India¹, but also as there has been a remarkable continuity in our relationship with this country. The treaty of 1950 (MEA, 1950) that enables the borders to be more or less open, commits to the 'National' treatment of the citizens of each other's country. This treaty is variously seen more as a consequence than a cause of mutuality between our two states. Various provisions of the treaty enabled free and uninterrupted mobility between people and goods between the two countries that led to further enrichment of our relationship.

The people of both the countries have a majority of Hindu population (about 80%) and they share a common cultural heritage. The holiest shrines for the people of the two nations lie across each other's boundaries. Ganga remains the holiest of rivers for most people of Nepal as well as India and Himalayas remain the 'abode' of most of the Hindu Gods. Many religious rituals of Hindus continue to be performed on the sites that do not take cognizance of the fact that the sites lie outside their state territories. Shradha (A Hindu ritual related to death) are performed in Gaya (India) by the Hindus of both Nepal and India. Not only the Hindus but also the Buddhists routinely pay homage to Buddha in Lumbini (Nepal) and Sarnath (India).

Ethnically India and Nepal more or less share a similar caste structure (the Chaturvarna). This has resulted in interstate marriages that are still mostly negotiated by the families instead of the couple themselves. Such marriages take place not only amongst the people from the plains but are also common amongst the hill regions of the two countries. Consequently there have come to prevail strong familial ties and have also resulted in generating shared elite between the two countries.

As observed earlier the treaty of 1950 grants 'national treatment' to each other's citizens. Though India has come forward to incorporate the clause in word and spirit Nepal is yet to achieve mutuality in this sphere. Notwithstanding this unusualness of the treaty implementation, Indians and also Nepalese have come to enjoy a significant shared space. It is estimated that about one third of Nepali population lives in India and about more than 10 lakh Indians have made Nepal their home. Though most of the Nepalese in India are engaged in service sector, Indians settled in Nepal have trade and commerce interests in Nepal. This has further necessitated the mutuality that the two countries need to have.

Thus there has been a great deal of shared space, literally and metaphorically between the two countries: history, geography, culture and tradition. Not only in the plains but also among the hill people there are bonds that go way beyond marriage and customs.

The Strains

Having said that, it is important to keep in mind that like other neighbours, Nepal too is currently engaged in her own 'nationalism project' of which propelling anti India feelings come as a ready tool. Some of the major issues mentioned in the forty points demand made by the Communist Party of Nepal(Maoist)related to the 'Imperialist expansion of India'. The foremost concerns of the Maoists were the

Treaty of Peace and friendship between India and Nepal, Tanakpur and Mahakali treaties, India Nepal border openness, Gorkha recruiting centres and the 'cultural pollution' by the Indian songs and movies. Years later when the conflict was over and the peace agreement signed between the seven parties of Nepal and the Maoists, we still come across the acrimony revolve around various issues that were once voiced during the armed conflict. One major point around which much of the anti-India campaign focuses today is the issue of encroachment by India on Nepali borders. The main area in which there has been a dispute on Nepalese borders is Pasupatinagar in the east, Susta in the south and Kalapani in the west.² Though talks between the home ministries of both the countries have more or less sorted these discrepancies, pending an agreement on the issue largely due to political instability in Nepal, there has been a routine anti India sloganeering by the ultra-leftist forces on these sites in the past.

On the other hand India suspects her neighbours of flooding India with fake currency notes that according to the Indian intelligence estimates are reportedly around \$6 billion. It is commonly held belief that the main origin of these fake currency notes is in Pakistan, Nepal having open borders with India is looked upon as one major route of this flooding. The problem gets so acute that in Nepal where Indian currency notes are commonly used, notes of a higher denominator than one hundred had to be declared illegal. Yet it is interesting to note that Indian currency in these high denomination notes flows freely in Nepalese markets. The issue nonetheless remains one major irritant between the Nepalese law enforcing agencies and the Indians settled especially in the tarai (plains) region that are suspected of using these denominators more than their Nepalese counterparts right under the watch of the central government not only in Bhootahiti³ but also in Durbar marg.

There have also been many other serious issues concerning the relations between these two neighbours. One of the foremost issues of late has been the question of the use of porous borders by the militants from third countries. This came to light during the horrendous Mumbai attacks when some of the militants were perceived to have entered India via Nepal borders (Upadhyaya, 2011). The arrest of dreaded terrorist like Yasin Bhatkal on India Nepal borders has been put forth as one example of the border between the two countries being used for illegal activities.

The Conflict

Nepal has recently come out of a violent conflict that lasted for ten years (1996-2006). Described as 'the People's war' the conflict focused on bringing about changes

in the basic structure of not only the government but also the hierarchical social structure. There have been various studies to examine the causes of the conflict that have emphasized diverse factors at the root of the conflict. Some of the earliest studies often reached to contradictory findings. For instance Bray et al. (2003) have suggested that the Maoists found support from the oppressed lower castes (Bray, Lunde, and Murshed, 2003). This study has found further endorsement by subsequent works (Sengupta, 2005) that conclude that the Maoists 'People's war' got support from the longstanding grievances that the oppressed ethnicities had against the upper caste groups. On the other hand Gersony (2003) asserted that caste and ethnicity was not the major cause of conflict. This study is further supported by Thapa and Sijapati (2004) who conclude that the major cause of the war was poverty and underdevelopment. Many studies have emphasized the role of landlessness or relative deprivation (Deraniyagala, 2005; Murshed and Gates, 2005; Macours, 2011). More recently exclusion was identified as the 'single most important cause' of the conflict (Surhke, 2014). Landlessness, discriminatory practices against certain ethnic groups, caste discriminations, combined with poverty and acute underdevelopment of major areas within Nepal all led to support the violent conflict that had far reaching consequences.

Conflict in Nepal has had nonlinear consequences. During the ten year long armed struggle that the country experienced, the Maoists attempted to bring about a basic change from an autocratic unresponsive elitist rule to a more inclusive democratic egalitarian system. However, since the process that attempted to bring about this change was violent, the established institutions and the calm that many described was only superficial, was disrupted.

The Aftermath

Once the peace was agreed in 2006 and the Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed between the seven Parties and the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoists) the process of transformation has been peaceful. This itself is no mean achievement.

The first and the foremost task of the post conflict Nepal was to restore law and order. For this Disarmament, Demilitarisation and the Rehabilitation (DDR) process of the former Maoist combatants had to be undertaken, a task that was expected to be completed in six months took nearly five years to complete. However notwithstanding the criticism and the gaps in the implementation of this process, it should be looked upon as a major achievement of governance of the post conflict Nepal. In not many post conflict countries has the DDR process been as smooth as in Nepal.⁴

Elections for the Constituent Assembly (CA-I)⁵ for framing of a new constitution were also completed smoothly without much serious challenge. And though the constitution could not be framed by this mammoth assembly of 601 representatives despite several extensions, elections for the second CA too have taken place amidst protests from the disgruntled splinter group from the former Maoists. Yet it goes to the credit of governance of Nepal that this task too was completed with utmost smoothness.

The judiciary in Nepal is three tiered: The Supreme Court at the apex, Appellate courts numbering 16 and district courts in each of its 75 districts. In comparison with other institutions of governance, the judiciary fares well. According to a recent study by Transparency International, less than half of citizens who had regular interaction with the judiciary reported encountering corruption, as opposed to a major proportion of respondents in many other countries of the region (World Bank, n.d.).

Similarly, Nepal has shown positive trends in the social sector indicators. In 2010, Nepal received Millennium Development Goal (MDG) award for its national leadership, commitment and progress toward improving maternal health. In 1990, Nepal had 850 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births. After two decades, Nepal's Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) was reduced to 229 deaths per 100,000 live births. And by 2013, two years ahead of the deadline, Nepal has already achieved one of the two key indicators of the MDG-5. This is no mean achievement for a country that is just coming out of a decade long violence, notwithstanding the fact that MMRs among Muslim, Madheshi and Dalit women are still higher than those among Newari, Brahmin/Chhetri and Janjati women. The Nepal Human Development Report-2014, published by the NPC and the UNDP, clearly demonstrates that regional, caste/ethnic and gender inequalities not only continue to exist in Nepal but have also impeded the country's overall human development growth (UNDP, n.d.).

Challenges of Governance

Efficiency and accountability in public institutions is still lacking. Corruption remains one of the major concerns of the citizens and scams are a plenty: Dhamija episode, Chase air issue, China South West Airline deal, Lauda Air sale, purchase of law makers and human smuggling to name a few. Bureaucracy suffers from poor incentives (World Bank, n.d.). So does academia. Some major steps have been

taken to redeem the situation. A National Vigilance Centre and a Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA) has been set up. While the record on enforcement and prevention has improved, considerable work remains in improving the capacity, professionalism, and outreach in these units. Yet another redeeming feature is that there prevails a free press and a vibrant civil society.

But the most pressing challenge in recent years has come from the debris of the conflict in the form of humanitarian costs. It is never easy to come to exact number of casualties, or the amount of damage that a country has suffered as a consequence of civil conflict. Therefore it is not surprising that there have been revisions on the number of persons that died or were disabled or even displaced during the Maoist conflict of Nepal. Nepalese government has revised the number of casualties from 16, 278 now 17625 (Nepal Monitor, n.d.).

The number of people forcibly disappeared have also varied. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) estimated in June 2014 that there were 1,359 people missing in Nepal due to conflict-related causes. However, some local NGOs or family groups put the number of missing much higher. For example, the Society of the Families of the Disappeared (SOFD) has said that there are about 5,700 cases of conflict-related disappearances in Nepal.

The number of people who have been forced to leave homes due to conflict cannot be estimated. According to the March 2011 data from Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction (MoPR), the number of internally displaced people (IDP) owing to conflict was 78,675. The same source puts the number of disabled to 4305, as a result of the conflict. These are losses that are high, given the total population of Nepal being only 26,494,504 in 2011 (CBS 2012).

The two most promised commissions: Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappeared Persons and Truth and Reconciliation Bill has received approval by the legislature (25th April, 2014) has been labelled as far from satisfactory from many quarters (Human Rights Watch, 2014) The Bill has failed to come up to the international standards of transitional justice in as much as it eludes the very process of prosecution. The Supreme Court had, in the month of January, directed the government that the Attorney General's office be empowered to prosecute, but the bill has not paid any heed in this direction. Similarly the Court's directive that torture and disappearances be criminalised by law has been bypassed. Even the statute of

time limitations for prosecuting rape cases has not been amended. The bill thus fails to bring the culprits to books, making grave crimes not cognisable.

Commenting on the bill, Kanak Mani Dixit, one of the leading Political analyst of Nepal said

The government of Sushil Koirala has succumbed to Maoist blackmail in presenting the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and Disappearances bill before Parliament, as if the people who voted in November for transparent governance and rule of law did not matter a whit. This action does not bode well for the Constituent Assembly's work-a leadership that cannot stand up to the pressure of demagogues on human rights can hardly be expected to guide us through the shoals towards a democratic constitution (Dixit, 2014).

The International Commission of Jurists, the Human Rights Watch and also the Amnesty International has criticised the bill severely. Sam Zarifi, Asia-Pacific regional director at the International Commission of Jurists is quoted saying, "The Nepali government seems to have simply tabled a mildly reworked version of the 2012 ordinance despite the Supreme Court's landmark judgment on transitional justice....This deliberately undermines the judiciary, and raises serious concerns over the government's respect for the rule of law in Nepal".⁶

The agenda of decentralisation remains yet another prominent one in popular discourses of state restructuring and thus governance. The issue has intermingled with the demand for a federal Nepal. The matter of Federalism was at the very centre of the struggle during the five years from 2008 until 2012 and occupied great deal of political and social space. It was discussed and debated in the Constituent Assembly, media, seminar rooms, living rooms of people and also in the social media.

Yet no agreement on this issue could be reached and this became the final straw on the camel's back. The CA-I disintegrated without reaching any conclusion on the new constitution mainly on account of no agreement being reached on federalism. The CA-II is yet to start functioning. None the less, the nation remains quite fixed on the federal system as it seems the best option for a state as diverse as Nepal, to now even consider any other option than a federal form of government. Here too any major change in the internal instruments of governance in Nepal is likely to

have consequences that are least anticipated. China's interest in Nepal for instance is likely to grow in an unanticipated manner once Nepal becomes a federal state, for the obvious reason that this is likely to promote assertion of ethnic identities within Nepal having cross border repercussions for China.

The Local Self Governing Act that was passed in 1999 has been hailed as one of the best instruments for decentralization. However, as the situation currently stands, the local village/district councils in Nepal are not functional. The last elections that took place were some sixteen years ago and though Village Development Council (VDC) and District Development (DDC) are expressions that are frequently used in common parlance across the country, what this actually boils down to is the village or the district level clerk who sits in the council building and more or less represents the state authority. After the expiry of the term of the elected councils and once peace was brokered and yet the prospects of fresh elections were nonexistent, there was a home grown technique of co-opting all party representatives in the local council. Representatives from the three leading political parties, the Congress, the UML and the Maoists continued to be informally nominated at these Committees till very recently when this too was withdrawn. The absence of any form of representative body at the local level has an extremely damaging impact on the representative nature of the institution and the mediation or governance in which the institution is indulging in.

In the wake of absence of proper functioning organs of the state, there is enough space in the Nepalese theatre of governance for innovative institutions. It is in this context that the work being done by committees known as Local Peace Committees (LPC)⁷ and Paralegal Committees (PLC) becomes significant. We will now proceed to discuss the working of these two committees as aides to governance institution at some length. The paralegal committees too were brought into existence and also became effective in resolving minor disputes and issues of justice.

This was to support the work of Peace building. Peace building is the process of restoring normal relations between not only the warring parties but also communities that are severely disturbed by armed conflict. It requires the reconciliation of differences, apology and forgiveness of past harm, and the establishment of a cooperative relationship between groups, replacing the adversarial or competitive relationship that prevailed in the past. The LPC was an attempt to provide local support to the national peace building process. It is an acknowledgement of the capacities of the local people to transform, resolve or manage conflicts at the grass

roots level, and also an assertion of the fact that the local and national conflicts are interconnected. It is important that agencies in whom both sides of the party have faith should address the dynamics of local conflict reduction techniques and be a strong source of conflict resolution.

In Nepal during the post conflict period, LPCs were installed to play a positive role in this direction. Given the trust deficit of the post conflict , especially as the elected local councils were neither in place nor was there a probability of the same being established in near future, the LPCs were mandated to work at the local level, they were expected to work under the full mandate from and support of the national political leadership.

The political discussions that led to the formation of LPCs were complemented by consultations held among political party and civil society representatives in forums such as the Peace and Conflict Management Committee (PCMC), Nepal Transitions to Peace (NTTP) and in the cabinet's relevant sub-committees. Similar consultations took place in the United Nations and among the donor agencies. Since this effort was in line with the peace agreement, it did not take any opposition to set up these institutions. Initially set up under the Peace Trust fund, that was later on transferred to the Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction formed a Local Peace Committee (LPC) in every district with the aim of building peace at local level in the district. The LPCs were legally mandated and guided by a set of Terms of Reference (ToR). The LPC comprises of representatives from political parties, civil society organisations, local organizations, human rights activists, victims of conflict, business personnel, indigenous groups and women who play an important role in peace building in the district at grass root level.

The major task of these committees was to create an environment conducive for a just system in a transitional period through restoration of sustainable peace by resolving the remnants of conflict at the local level and systematically promoting the processes of peace and reconstruction through mutual goodwill and unity. Thus LPCs should have been a source of strength to the task of peace building. However in many cases, the remnants of conflict hindered smooth functioning of the LPCs towards achieving their objects. In absence of elected local representatives, political cadres or persons backed by political parties have been involved in various activities and institution formation. National level political and policy complications affected the formation process, structure and activities of the LPCs significantly.

As mentioned earlier, LPCs were established to institutionalize the peace process

at the very local level. Their to reinstate a sustainable peace by ensuring mutual understanding and reconciliation among the victims of the conflict, to provide relief to the displaced persons by conflict, to return their properties, to rehabilitate them and to make the devastated infrastructures reconstructed by reinstating a sustainable peace with participation of all sides. They did contribute to resolve disputes in some districts but were heavily politicized and thus could not help in building mutual trust and confidence in the community.

The concept of Local Peace Committees was first discussed at a joint meeting of some key political parties (Nepali Congress, CPN-UML, Nepali Congress (D), Nepal Sadbhavana Party (A) and the CPN-Maoist) and the then Peace Secretariat in July 2006. Subsequently Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) of November 21, 2006 mentioned that local structures would be formed as mechanisms to secure the peace at local level. These committees started working under the Ministry of Peace and reconstruction.⁸

The LPCs, right from the beginning were under tremendous pressure of working neutrally. Though members were appointed informally in proportion to the elected political parties in the CA, yet since the Ministry under which they were working was headed by a member of a Political Party that then did not quite represent the orientation of the 'revolutionaries' the committees were almost non-functional for a long period. The Terms of Reference (TOR) were also not much known to the members, who thought these committees were more in the tradition of arbitration than reconciliation.⁹ The membership positions were honorary, members were constrained to act with the kind of enthusiasm that they would have otherwise done. In some cases monetary support was offered to the members to conduct a particular task, their sense of pride did not allow them to accept support that came from individual initiatives. Most importantly the committees, despite being owned by the people and looked upon as their very indigenous idea (though it was mooted by South Africa and supported ideologically by the United States of America) remained replicas of the larger political picture. They were then obviously far from reaching any consensus on matters of dispute. The National contentious politics more or less replicated at the local level. That was equivalent to an almost surgical division along party lines.

There were issues of competence too. The officials were not trained enough to carry out diverse training programs and there were not enough resources to outsource the task. They also lacked dispute resolution skills. Though in addition to

the political parties they had representation of conflict affected people, women, lawmakers, but the Committees simply replicated the patronage politics as opposed to the policies of conciliation. Corruption as was mentioned earlier remained rampant at the VDC and the DDC level. Bribes were common to provide documentary evidences that were needed for compensation to conflict affected people. The LPCs though not accused of such corrupt practices helped conflict victims. But that too was along party lines. 'Conflict has actually sliced the entire country across party lines, and so although we are concerned with victims per se, but the victims approach us through the party lines only' said one of the active members of a LPC.

Members were nominated by the All Party Mechanism, thus it was natural that its decisions and works were heavily influenced by the politics. Political parties had proxy presence. Victims who had no party affiliations were either sidetracked or were forced to accept one party patronage or the other. It also failed to reach the grass roots of the society, especially in the village areas, an area where its services were most needed.

In addition to the above, people have become institutions, because a single person often ends up being nominated in different institutions, thus affecting the work of LPC and other government organizations, and helping to benefit the private organizations on the basis of their political attachments.

In contrast to the LPCs the Paralegal Committees set up across several districts of Nepal were much more successful. Though set up to address the issue of gender based violence focusing mainly on domestic violence these committees were established to ensure security and justice to women. Gender based violence (GBV) in Nepal has been a major phenomenon. In some of the districts as many as 80% women have faced GBV.¹⁰

The formal launching of the 'Paralegal Movement' in Nepal dates back to the 1990s. This was then focused on preventing trafficking of women and girls for sexual exploitation. It also focused on elimination of discrimination based on sex, a factor largely responsible for GBV. Institutionally the concept was first used by Centre for Legal Research and Resource development in partnership with UNICEF-Nepal. It established its VDC and DDC level committees and named its initiative as the Community, Surveillance System against Trafficking (CSSAT). Supported by the DFID, this initiative provides legal and human rights advice to disputants and refers serious and criminal cases to the relevant authorities. The apparent success of the

PLC too is questionable. In the enthusiasm for peace, matters of justice have often been overlooked. However, with the overburdened judiciary and the highly sceptical credentials of the police, the justice gap, the PLCs do fulfil some role, that may be inadequate as per parameters of absolute justice (Tamang, 2013).

No discussion on governance in Nepal can be complete without a mention of a very important player in Nepalese socio- political system: The Nepalese Civil Society.

Civil society in Nepal has flourished since the late 1980s, with significant expansion after the democratic revolution of 1990. Donors have played a major role in these processes: donor-led economic liberalization was accompanied by a thrust toward decentralization of governance-spawning the emergence of user groups (of forest resources, irrigation and so on) and savings/credit associations throughout the countryside and urbanized areas. In addition, many development projects seek to work through 'local service providers' or NGOs constituted within localities to deliver their project programmes. As part of their contracts with service providers, projects place conditions on the modes of operation and the nature of these organizations being inclusive of gender and caste. While these are notable aims, they nevertheless represent significant influence extending into the realms of everyday practice. The mandate for and activities of these groups increased many fold in the aftermath of and during the political turmoil of the last decade, when formal institutions of governance broke down. Though much of the positive work in Nepal is being done with the donor money, there have been two major mostly unintended outcomes of the same. First of all with the presence of a large donor community in Nepal there seems to be a culture of dependence growing. This has been pointed out by many activists themselves who question the very negative impact that these donor agencies make on the Nepalese sense of self reliance and indigenous mode of development. And secondly this phenomenon is then resulting in a unwarranted interference of outside powers in the region. Though of late there has been gradual withdrawal of donor agencies (Denmark and Germany) yet their presence is still a significant presence.

To conclude, Nepal has come a long way from the time when violent conflict had gripped more or less the entire country. Even after the 2006 peace agreement much has been achieved. The language of the agreement as one observer has remarked was 'progressive, reformist, and, in the Nepali context, radical' (Surhke, 2014). Article 3.5 of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement committed to change the Nepalese system to an 'inclusive, democratic progressive system'. The Interim

Constitution of 2007 bore promise to this commitment. As has already been mentioned there are positive signs towards making Nepal a more democratic, egalitarian and inclusive society. Yet there are major road blocks that need to be attended with urgency. Though the peace process has formally ended, Nepal is still in a prolonged transition period. Many of the promises that were made during negotiating peace are still not fulfilled. One of the major promise that was made during the peace process was of bringing the guilty to book, a promise that is not likely to be fulfilled due to the various lacunae in the bill on Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Commission on the enforced Disappearance of people that has been passed by the Parliament. A whole new generation has grown up since the 'war' broke out in 1996 and is waiting for 'Naya Nepal' to emerge. There are issues of urgent nature as well as those of long lasting importance. Unless Nepal focuses on these with utmost sincerity common citizen is losing faith in the efficacy of the state institutions. And this does not bear a good omen for her immediate and closest neighbour.

Notes

1. Ministry of Home Affairs, Department of Border Management. n.d. Online. http://www.mha.nic.in/hindi/sites/upload_files/mhahindi/files/pdf/BM_Intro_E_.pdf (Accessed on 21 June 2014)
2. Gyanu Adhikari. 'Nepal-India agree to find missing border pillars, enhance security.' Online. <http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/south-asia/nepalindia-agree-to-find-missing-border-pillars-enhance-security/article4778679.ece>
3. A less fashionable shopping street of Kathmandu
4. For a detailed analysis of the DDR process in Nepal, please refer to report by Bleie and Shrestha (2012).
5. There have been two elections for the Constituent Assemblies in Nepal. One in 2008 that was in office up to 2012 and the other more recently in November 2013. Here they are being referred to as CA-I and CA-II
6. Proposed Measure Contravenes International Law (HRW, 2014); National plan for action on 1325 and 1820 is in place. Eight years have elapsed since the peace accord was signed. Though much has been achieved there is scope for a great deal of improvement still.
7. A local peace committee is a generic term for a committee comprising of a representative group of people from various sectors of the community. The committee addresses the local issues of reconciliation, peace building and conflict resolution. The other names of this committee are: District Peace Advisory Councils; District Multi-Party Liaison Committees; Village Peace and Development Committees, Committees for Inter-Ethnic

Relations, etc. They have been instituted in many post conflict communities. Thus, the LPC helps local people to come to face each other, talk to each other about the problems of the present and the past, to find solutions and to make sure that a new future is built with the help of each other. Since the structures of government are weak in a post conflict state, the LPCs are put in place to handle the task of reconciliation and transformation so that the society moves forward. The task of such committees is of course transitional and is meant to cease to exist once proper institutions of governance are brought back in place.

8. The Interim Government formation upgraded the Peace Secretariat to the Peace and Reconstruction Ministry.
9. Based on personal interviews in Rupandehi, Siraha, Kathmandu and Lalitpur districts of Nepal during 2012-13.
10. This is based on a study conducted by Saathi/UNFPA in 2008 that relates to the situation in Surkhet and Dang districts of Nepal.

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