

The background features a stylized white radio tower with signal waves at the top, set against a blue gradient. A large, semi-transparent white microphone is visible in the middle ground. The bottom foreground shows a close-up of a wooden radio chassis with various electronic components and a blue pen.

Waves of Peace

Experiences of Nepali Radio

Edited by
Mohan Mainali

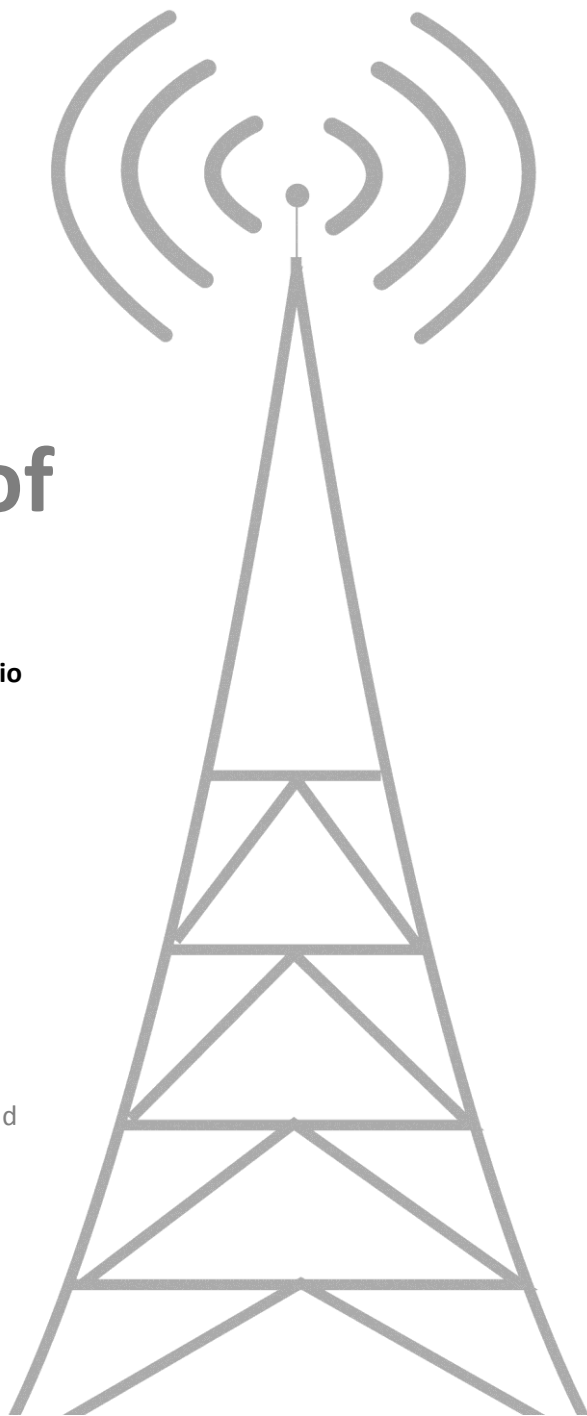
Contributions to Peacebuilding
by Nepali Radios

Waves of Peace

Experiences of Nepali Radio



Search for Common Ground
2010



Waves of Peace

A Compilation of Nepali Radio Experiences in Contributions to Peacebuilding

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Search for Common Ground

Search for Common Ground (SFCG) is an international NGO working in the field of conflict transformation and peace building. Established in 1982, SFCG currently works in 23 countries, including Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan and Timor-Leste in Asia.

SFCG's mission is to transform the way the world deals with conflict: away from adversarial approaches, towards co-operative solutions. SFCG promotes solution-oriented dialogue and co-operative action, bringing people together from across dividing lines to seek common ground.

SFCG in Nepal

SFCG has been working in Nepal since 2006 with the mandate of supporting the ongoing peace process. It works in close coordination with local and national NGOs, media organizations and civil society to:

- Increase local ownership and participation in the transition to peace and democracy;
- Involve multiple stakeholders, particularly those who have been traditionally marginalized, in democratic processes at local and national levels;
- Strengthen inter-communal relations among ethnic, caste, and geographical, and political lines;
- Promote reconciliation to reweave the fabric of society that has been torn apart by war.

In partnership with local and national partners - Antenna Foundation Nepal, New World, Far Western Media Development Centre and FM stations across the country, SFCG supports the production of original radio dramas, talk-shows and magazine programs.

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Publisher's Note

Popularity of radio has not diminished even in today's era of television and internet. In Nepal, the increasing number of radio stations proves this. The consistent usability of radio media can also be credited to the fact that it is easier to establish and operate radio stations while also easy for the audiences to listen to radios.

Along with the popularity and usage, the impact of radios on the society is apparent. It can have an effect across various levels and groups. The impact of radio (or any other media) on the listeners and the changes that occur on the knowledge, attitude and behavior of the listeners is often the subject of researches and studies. However, the impacts on the people directly or indirectly involved in producing the radio programs are equally important, if not more. For instance, changes occur in the writers and artists of radio dramas or in the producers, presenters or the guests participating in the discussions of radio talk shows. These are quickly seen and can have a ripple effect.

Radio and other forms of media can have both positive and negative impacts in society, examples of which we have seen from time to time. There have been horrific results created by media fueling conflict. However, the more the media professionals are sensitive to conflict, the larger their effect will be on peace building. The role of training and coaching is very important to ensure positive impacts. Whilst it is not true that only trained radio professionals can bring about positive changes, there is more risk from untrained radio professionals of creating negative impacts.

While working in the media sector in Nepal, Search for Common Ground's objective is to create positive changes at both levels mentioned above. Working with various media organizations, it produces, distributes and broadcasts media materials that aid in local and national level peace building. It also trains media professionals to produce such media materials (like radio programs). Because it is more effective when local media professionals produce local content, Search for Common Ground also works with these professionals to develop and disseminate media content after such trainings.

There are many examples in Nepal of radio programs helping in peace building. A few of these examples are included in this book. The personal stories of the radio producers are as interesting and inspiring as the examples of positive impacts their radio programs had in their societies.

Success stories like these boost our confidence with working in peace building.

Yubakar Raj Rajkarnikar
Media Manager
Search for Common Ground, Nepal

Media for Peace

Mohan Mainali

“War is kind,” writes American poet Stephen Crane as he praises war in his poem with the same title. He was not only a poet, but a journalist as well. He had seen war with his own eyes and even then felt war was kind. The only reason for was that he was a war correspondent. He reported from the perspective of only one side involved in the war. His pen was put to battle in order to help his side win and his foes lose. This meant he was not approaching the war in a neutral way. Thus, he saw war as kind.

The over-hundred-year-old history of Nepali journalism is in many ways similar. Journalists working in the state approached their work from one side of the conflict. After the Maoists started an armed conflict in 2052, this tendency to approach news from one angle was further exposed.

As the conflict intensified, a countrywide emergency was proclaimed in 2058 that pushed the nation towards even greater perils. Many were killed, disappeared, or imprisoned. Many more were subjected to physical and mental torture. Extensive damage to infrastructure also resulted. Even after the extent of the damage was clear, purposeful, sensitive contributions towards peace building were not made through Nepali journalism. Nepali journalism generally contributed to spreading the war.¹

Meanwhile, the Nepal Press Institute and the Centre for Investigative Journalism organised training on peace journalism in Kathmandu in Srawan, 2051. There was also organised a trainer’s training program also focused on peace journalism. The trainers for both trainings were journalists and trainers with peace journalism and

¹ For more information regarding this, please see: *Nepali Press Under Emergency: A Survey of the First Six Months*, Binod Bhattarai, Himal Books for Centre for Investigative Journalism, 2004, Kathmandu.

international experience, Jake Lynch and Annabel McGoldrick. Following the trainer's training program, an extensive number of trainings were held on the subject. Nepali journalists were introduced to the thoughts of people such as Johan Galtung, a proponent of the thinking that conflict and violence need to be explained in a modern way and efforts need to be made towards peace building, and Ross Howard, an expert on conflict sensitive journalism.²

According to the concept of peace journalism, or conflict conscious journalism, a reporter must first make an effort to understand the conflict, violence, war, etc. before reporting about them. Journalists should also be aware of experts' thinking about on the conflict. According to Jake Lynch and Annabel McGoldrick, conflict is consists of two or more parties trying to achieve goals that do not match each other and, as a result, create obstacles for the other in achieving their goals. This is seconded by Yohan Galtung, a conflict transformation and peace achievement expert, who notes that conflict, is a relation between two parties (people or groups) with goals that do not match or that think their goals do not match.

After becoming familiarized with these explanations, journalists stop treating conflict as defined by dictionaries, as fighting, war, strife and turmoil. They understand conflict as something continuously happening within society and as a means by which a society moves ahead in keeping with the times.

Journalists are likewise familiarized with an alternative explanation of violence and how it is spread. According to this explanation, a person's work, words, ideas and social or state restructuring or systems can spread violence. For violence to erupt, the use of physical strength or violent words is not necessary. A person's fundamental needs going unfulfilled can also cause a rise of violence. These trainings also provided exposure to various manifestations of violence, such as 1) brawls, clashes, killings, murders, etc. that are easily seen, 2) personalities that spread ill will, intolerance towards particular communities, exaggerated explanations of the qualities of one side involved in war, holy war, jihad, and/or gender based violence, and 3) poverty, oppression, corruption and nepotism.

When reporters who understand these concepts address the roots of violence, they assist in establishing peace. It is not enough just to report on visible forms of violence.

² While there has been some practise of peace journalism, these practises were not conscious or extensive. For example, Jake and Annabel during the training used a feature from the Nepali Times, published in Nepal, as a good example of peace journalism. However, the journalist who wrote the feature only realized that he had produced a piece of peace journalism when they spoke about it. They have also mentioned the feature in their book, Peace Journalism. For further information please see: Jake Lynch and Annabel McGoldrick, Peace Journalism, Hawthorn Press, UK, 2005.

In an ideal situation, the media should be run conscientiously. Journalists have their codes of conduct. Thus, the media should not lead the society towards violence. However, as it is not always aware, such an ideal situation may not be possible. In this way, the media can foment violence. Even in Nepal there have been violent incidents abetted by the media. The Hrithik Roshan incident involved the media spreading violence. After 12 Nepalese were killed in Iraq and with the media not handling it properly, the violence spreaded with a lot of destructions. Since then, the media still has been misused in order to spread sporadic, communal violence. This is not to say it is always misused; n Kailali, the meida have made major contributions in preventing Tharu-Pahadey clashes.

In contrast, if the media works determinedly, it can stop such outbreaks of violence. Sometimes, not bringing to light provocative, violence-inciting activities can help to prevent violence from spreading. Later, when the violence prone situation is over and when people begin to think more rationally, the exposure of such activities does not harm the society.

However, always hiding things does not necessarily lead to building peace. The media can play an important role in resolving situations that can break peace, such as issues of different lifestyles, culture, values and beliefs, unequal distribution of wealth, oppression, discrimination, etc. or finding peaceful resolutions to conflict that does occur.

The media needs to pay attention to resolving situations of potential violence that arise because conflict that is not resolved may compel people to resort to violence. In order to express their intense anger, an oppressed and suppressed community may turn to violent protest. By expressing their anger, they cry out for help. Before violent expressions soliciting help break out, the media can play an important role in finding creative, peaceful and legal solutions to conflicts.

In Nepal, there have been many violence-inciting situations. The lack of representation for all communities in the society is a primary cause. The media can help them increase their representation. In places like Ilam, Jhapa and Sunsari in Eastern Nepal, there are examples of the media spreading awareness on the need to involve Dalits, Janjatis, women and the disabled in social forestry consumer groups. Likewise, in Bara, the media raised the issue of efforts to recruit as teachers those not covered by a quota reserved for women and the disabled.

The media can play a good role in promoting peace building by providing a voice to communities that are invisible within society. By bringing forward the voices of previously unheard communities, the society come to know of them and, before an outbreak of violence occurs, the society is roused to resolve their issues. Recognition also gives the communities some self-respect.

Differences are another significant reason for inciting violence. The media can play a big role in removing the conflict due to differences present in a society. The local radio played such a role in reducing the tension that arose out of differences between the Southern and Northern areas of Mahottari.

Harmful practices, like untouchability, child marriage, and dowry, are problems that come in the way of a lasting peace. In Rupandehi and Kapilavastu, media work was able to abolish them by mobilizing the community against the practices and by encouraging those people involved in them - giving them strength and support.

The situation in Solukhumbu provided an excellent example of the media preventing multiple groups ready to break out into violence from doing so. By organising a communal dialogue between political parties there, violence was successfully averted. Likewise, by starting a dialogue between two religious communities on radio, violence was stemmed in Mahottari. In Parsa, a school that had been closed after a brawl got opened because of successful radio dialogue.

During an outbreak of violence, just listening to victimised groups involved helps lend strength and support. During times of war, journalists on a tour of the Western Hills have experienced such an effect.

The media can also create a mandate for peace building by spreading people's aspirations for peace. When the peace building efforts of a community are in the media, it encourages the people involved in those activities, spreads the message of peace and encourages people to start similar activities in places where they are absent. The effort of leaders from all religions in Nepalgunj in Banke district has found good coverage in different media.

Running programs related to peace building in the media raises the social status and trust of program presenters. This can be seen with one radio presenter in Salyan who, while on a visit to a village, was asked to remedy an incident that was headed towards violence.

To spread the message of peace, media sources can employ a variety of methods. The example of Equal Access has shown that radio can mix drama, news and dialogue.

Thus, communication mediums, by establishing communication in the society has, bringing to light problems of all sides, creating an environment of trust between different sides, giving everyone a chance at expression, providing a platform for presenting different perceptions and looking up to searching for solutions along with influencing others to do the same, have made significant progress towards peace building. While doing this, what they keep in mind is that when peace is established, it will have to give all warring sides something or the other or that all sides need to experience having received something. However, it is not necessary

that everyone gets everything once peace is established. For peace building the impasse has to be broken. Otherwise there can be resurgence in violence.

This compilation includes a few efforts by Nepali Radio for peace building. Not all efforts or program types made by Nepali Radio are included.

After looking at the work done by Nepali Radio for peace building, if ever a Nepali journalist writes a poem, it'll say 'war is unkind, peace meanwhile is kind' instead of 'war is kind'.

A Message of Goodwill

Meena Sharma

Among the important issues that emerged during Nepal's long period of conflict is the issue of marginalised communities. Recently, people from such communities have become aware about their issues it is important to engage the marginalised communities and move forward without violence. With each community raising its voice for rights, a failure to address their demands may lead to an outbreak of violence. With an aim of making possible an environment of dialogue between marginalised communities and those who can address their question and advocate for them, the radio discussion Farakilo Dharti (Wide Earth) was broadcast starting in Srawan, 2065.

This radio discussion began, with support from Search for Common Ground (Search), simultaneously on 29 FM stations across the country. During this first stage, the broadcasts occurred every Sunday morning at 7:30 am from Bheri FM, 105.4 Mhz, Nepalgunj. After 23 weekly episodes were broadcast between Srawan, 2065 to Poush, 2065, the program went on a break. After some time and research by Search in various places, Farakilo Dharti was restarted with a new agreement starting in Baisakh, 2066 and run the previously broadcasting stations as well as a few more.

The program consists of a 30-minute radio discussion with a report of between 2-3 minutes and some vox pop included. The discussion following is based on the report and/or vox pop. Depending on circumstances, the discussion presented was recorded or live.

We focussed the program focused on the rights of local communities, as well as on questions and initiatives for peace building at the local level. We ran important discussions were run on inter-religious harmony, potters, freed bonded-labourers,

washer-men, barbers, fishermen, khatik, disability, dalits, muslims, kushwadiya along with feudal society and improvement of the education, health, political, economic and social situations of endangered communities.

Our radio program made an important contribution towards the reduction of conflict by removing misconceptions, encouraging communal harmony and influencing the solving of problems of marginalised communities. Some examples are as follows:

Removing misconceptions

Banke district has a big Muslim community, especially in the densely populated Muslim village in Nepalgunj municipality. Some families of the Muslims community have been reluctant to participate in the Polio Drop program. Children were not given the drop due to the fear that a child would not bear children if it was administered to them. We had a discussion based on this issue was held with a religious leader of the Muslim community and a representative of the district health office and broadcasted. After they talked about the value of the polio drop and its function, children from that community started taking those drops. After we learnt of children from a few houses who had missed the drops, we held another discussion with a female health volunteer and a leading woman from the Muslim community on the issue. After that, even the children who had missed out were administered the drops.

Encouraging communal harmony

Due to religious and communal intolerance, violence sporadically breaks out in Nepalgunj. For tackling such problems, various religious leaders and adherents have had to be vigilant.. We ran a discussion was broadcast that focussed on the issues. The religious leaders have stated that after positive content was presented in a medium generally devoted to political content, they have felt more responsibilities. To maintain religious harmony, religious leaders have also been persuaded steps undertaken for peace building other's festivals. The message of all religions moving ahead while maintaining social harmony has been continually broadcast. The credit for this can be given to Farakilo Dharti. Even in Banke, which is known as a religiously sensitive region, radio has proved, through steps taken for peace building in its programs that it can work positively for peace building.

Influencing the solving of problems of marginalised communities

Due to the discussions featured in some episodes, people from marginalised and backward communities have started to feel that radio is also concerned about the poor and helpless. A majority of our episodes on these topics have brought about positive transformation. In Banke, we covered topics on the issues of potters, freed bonded-labourers, washer-men, barbers, fishermen, khatik, disability, dalits, muslims, kushwadiya, along with feudal society and

the improvement of the education, health, political, economic and social situations of endangered communities. For example, the stipend sent by the education office to a school was not reaching the targeted group. In this situation, after running a discussion between the school managing committee, representatives of the education office and the targeted group, the school received the stipend. Also, people have benefitted after learning about free health care that can be received from the health office.

Through phone calls the program received, we have heard that everyone in the community wants peace. After discussions that focussed on positive initiatives were aired, people from other areas have come to the realisation that they also need to work towards peace building.

In our program, people from backward classes sit with people from other communities and concerned authorities and have discussions. Due to this, the people from backward communities have started believing that they too have a role in the community. Knowing that various incidents in their own communities can become topics on 'Farakilo Dharti', they have started reporting those incidents to us from time to time:

"I also have some fun experiences with my friends related to the program."

"I used to have morning classes in my campus. But in the morning I had to reach my radio (station) at 5:30 myself. Thus, mostly I did not go to my campus. Meeting my friends elsewhere, they used to advise me to leave radio and go to my campus regularly and attend classes. I used to turn a deaf ear to what they had to say."

"It was a Saturday. We had gone for tuitions. The sir didn't come. I was sitting, talking with my friends. It was time for my program to come on air. I suggested to my friends that we listen to my program. "Only if you buy us tea," they said smiling. I said, "Fine." Thereafter we all listened to the program. The topic that day was hot the Supreme Court's decision to grant citizenship to the third gender according to their identity was being implemented in Banke. As guests, there was a third gender, legal professional and a representative from a political party."

"After listening to the said program, they apprised me of another topic. During that time, Tribhuvan University had hiked its fees. My friends suggested that we hold a discussion on that. The following week, I hosted a discussion on how students can lose due to fee hikes. This was not an issue that could be resolved locally. Even then it had a good effect. Even though all problems are not solved, since the topics raised are good, my friends praise the programs focussed on other topics as well. They listen to the program."

To include the varied issues of the society and to get regular program feedback, the program advisory committee meets every three months. The committee includes political leaders, religious leaders, legal professionals, journalists, social workers and students. A large portion of the topics that are aired come out of such discussions.

The committee meetings and discussions held with specific people makes the radio program effective, conversations with listeners found. Listeners suggested to us that the programming continue to run it, that discussions be held in the villages and that the producers have discussions in the field with people we met during the course of news gathering in the villages.

Many listeners have also suggested that listeners be given a chance to ask questions during discussions and that this may make the program even more effective. Once a certain topic has been raised, it was also suggested that we conduct follow up research on the topic after some time.

Sometimes while presenting programs, there are bitter experiences both in the studio and in the field. After working hard for a full day, we feel happy to prepare reports and broadcast them, but it is difficult when our friends sometimes say that we run NGO programs and because of that act high and mighty. There are also difficulties in the studio: we need to host programs for minimal compensation, reach the studio between 5-6 in the morning to broadcast the news, and everything from news gathering to reading needs to be done ourselves.

For discussions on Farakilo Dharti, 2 or 3 guests are required. At times, some guests arrive as late as an hour. Other times, despite giving their word, they don't come at all; instead, saying they'll come some other day. When this happens, the discussion has to be moved to another day. Due to this, regular guests lose faith. Individuals who initially suggested that there was no future in radio, later started to talk threateningly which increases tensions. I don't usually tell these things to anyone since I worry that if it reaches my home, it'll create tension in my family.

Sometimes it's awkward to put backward communities and concerned authorities face to face in the studio and have a discussion. One day, I had called a representative from an endangered community in Banke and a representative from a political party together for a discussion on the education and political reach of the endangered community. The representative from the political party arrived first, followed shortly by the representative from the endangered community. The representative from the political party said with a grimace that we needed to consider the status of participants before inviting them.

I was already tense because the representative from the education office had not arrived. Hearing his words got me even more worked up and annoyed as well. I went outside and, after sending a friend to talk with the representative from the

endangered community, I came back in. I was scared. I told him, “Being the public’s representative, why do you hesitate to sit with the public and talk to them?” I then placated him with some other talk; I told him, “The program format comes from Kathmandu. Even your name was recommended by the centre.”

Thereafter he agreed to participate in the discussion. After the recording, he called me over saying, “Kid, I have some work with you,” and told me, “Earlier, I was just kidding, thinking of you as my own daughter. What you are doing is good. Henceforth, whenever you call me, I’ll come.”

By putting on the program, if somebody’s life truly gets transformed or if someone gets employment, I feel very happy. I feel much fulfilled. I like writing and producing programs on disability. I have been including issues like the problems faced by the disabled because efforts are not being made during the planning and construction of houses in Banke to facilitate the movement of the disabled, the problems faced by the blind due to a shortage of books in Braille, the problems faced by the deaf and dumb due to education not being delivered in sign language, the problems faced by disabled women and the problems faced by children with intellectual disabilities.

There is a prevailing practice among various groups and organisations of giving them stipends. Thus, they ask for money when I go to talk with them. I used to feel very frustrated with this. On the other hand, I have been left without answers when some journalists used to remark that journalists who cover such issues were flush with funds. But the disabled and the concerned authorities treated me well. Meanwhile, I was encouraged when I was honoured on the 17th International Disability Day for good work in the field of disability in the mid-western region by the Women Welfare Office, Banke, Women Welfare Department of the Women Child and Social Welfare Ministry. Now I’m invited to programs and trainings on how to work well with the disabled.

Sometimes, even religious leaders tell me that I need to continue having discussions in case of any trouble that could arise. When I invite people, even if they have been invited by other radio programs, they come to my program first. Despite the problems, these encourage me.

About Mutual Harmony

One life was lost in the communal riot of 2063 in Nepalgunj. Thereafter, the religious leaders there have been working together for peace and harmony. It is the duty of the journalists to spread the work and words of such ambassadors of

peace. I have given a place of importance to such thought in my radio discussion program.

When head-priest, Mahanta Chandranath Yogi remarked in one of my discussion programs, "If it was possible to drink the enmity and conflict arising in the community, I would have drunk everything and brought peace to the community;" the other participants nodded their heads in support.

Banke is hit by strife because of sporadic anti-social activities. After the religious leaders of different religions started working towards stopping violence in the name of religion by establishing a harmony forum, praises have come all around. Benjamin Shrestha, pastor of Jyoti Church says, "When everyone says, 'You have done a good job,' we felt added responsibility on our shoulders and that we should work even more determinedly."

Muslim religious leader, Maulana Abdul Manjari says, "to maintain harmony in the community, we need to have meetings from time to time and prepare plans of action. Each religious body has consistently preached to its adherents to maintain harmony."

As per Yogi, the work of a religious leader is to maintain perpetual harmony in the community. "We, the religious leaders, are the charioteers of harmony. Thus, we are working for the good of the society rather than for somebody's selfish motive," he said. Whether it is an interview on radio or television or while participating in any other program, he starts his talk with a verse, 'asthadasham puryanashu vyassay wachanam daiwam, paropkar pundaya papaya paripindam', meaning, "There is no bigger sin than causing suffering to others and there is no greater good than compassion."

Because of the effort of the religious leaders, harmony has now been achieved in Nepalgunj. Just some time back, when the leader of one religion saw the leader of another religion, they avoided crossing ways and did not talk to each other. "It isn't so now. We respect each other. We drink tea sitting in one place. We preach to our respective adherents to maintain harmony among each other," Pastor Benjamin Shrestha says.

Muslim religious leader, Maulana Abdul Manjari says, "Including greetings from one religious community to another and celebrating its festival through programs has also lead to harmony and trust among each other. The practice of sending greetings during all religious festivals has taught the people to maintain communal harmony. Everyone has an important role to play in keeping this practice alive."

Sometimes, the support of the religious leaders is solicited for selfish political motives. There are also those who want to start communal riots. But the inter-religious and social harmony forum has been negating such work so far.

Communication in the Frontier of Peace and Conflict

Arjun Upreti

Naya Sansar, an organisation established by journalists, started peace building activities in collaboration with Search for Common Ground (SFCG) in 2007. Initially Naya Sansar and SFCG broadcast radio messages and later, along with a few FM stations and an organisation from the Far West, started a radio program called Farakilo Dharti. The program included the marginalised and the voiceless and was produced at both the local and regional levels.

These are a few of the examples:

Conflict had arisen because the working committee of Sunsari's Baklauri Community Forest Cooperative Society lacked a dalit representative. To resolve the conflict we (Naya Sansar) conducted a discussion between the dalit and non-dalit consumers, along with the chairperson of the working committee. Immediately after the discussion, the working committee was reconstituted and a dalit woman was made treasurer.

Likewise, after conducting a dialogue over the lack of representation for the disabled in Sunsari's Nepali Congress district committee, the committee decided to have a disabled member and invited one to join.

The Madhesi Janadhikar Forum was established as a new political party after the Madhes movement. As its organisation spread from district to district, a 40-member working committee was formed – without a single woman. We invited the district-level leaders for a discussion on Farakilo Dharti. Immediately after, the district working committee was reconstituted with 13 women included, for a total

of 53 members.

Following successes such as these, the first phase of the program ended. However, people from the *advasi*, *janajati* and marginalised communities, youth and a few political parties advised us to continue the program which we ended up doing. At this point, we focused our attention towards minimising the tangible and intangible conflict at the local level.

In this second stage, *Farakilo Dharti* became even more effective. The program helped to resolve issues at both the local and regional levels. We searched for dormant issues around big problems that hadn't been discussed in dialogues. By finding these issues, there were big transformations. A few such examples are given below:

People from the Lepcha community live in 15 VDCs of Ilam's eastern region. They are a minority group of *adivasi janajatis* from that region. They are animists and worship rivers, rivulets, forests, trees and plants. Despite this, they have no representation in community forest management. We conducted a discussion that involved Kamal Gadal, chairperson of the Association of Community Forest Consumers of Ilam district, and Bir Bahadur Lepcha, leader of the Lepcha community. Kamal Gadal promised to have Lepcha representatives involved with community forestry. Later, after a discussion at the scheduled meeting of the Association, the Lepchas were represented in the working committee of the Community Forest Consumer's Group of Pashupatinagar. The general meeting of the Association decided to include Lepchas along with other marginalised communities at the decision-making level of Ilam district's community forest management.

Even in Mechi town, Jhapa in the south of Ilam, minority farmers were not represented in discussions about the community's forest. After a dialogue between office-holders in Jhapa and members of the farming community, the farmers were included in the Magurmari Community Forest Consumer Group.

Even after peace committees were established in 15 districts of the Eastern Region, the committee could not be formed due to political wrangling. We conducted a discussion on *Farakilo Dharti* on this issue. The chief district officer and representatives of the political parties took part in the discussion and, during the program, promised to form the committee soon.

During the production of *Farakilo Dharti*, I got to know the various aspirations of

people in regards to peace. In Bhadra of 2066 BS, during the course of program production, I talked to Kapurani Devi Yadav of Pragati Tole, Dayaniya VDC, Morang. She said, “if there was peace, if my sons had got employment here itself, they wouldn't have gone to Punjab. Lately, I eat on those days that I get work. If not, I stay hungry. I have two sons, but both aren't with me. I'm alone at the age of 85.”

I was numbed by her response. I thought, due to the absence of peace, she had to live alone at that age. It became even clearer about who needed peace and who we were trying to help.

Under an initiative called Radio for Peace, through a training organised by Search for Common Ground, I learnt the skills to manage conflict, to raise the issue of conflict in a program, to bring out people's aspirations, to address varying stances and to form consensus. After the training, I felt that I had been hosting programs for the previous four years at Saptakoshi FM without really understanding the issues. I learnt about my errors and the ways to rectify them. While working on radio, what I had become sure of was that radio could help a person during good times and the bad. It can help to change a person's behaviour. Radio can become a partner in problem solving.

After being trained on this topic, I came to realise that I had known very little about conflict and peace while I was working in radio. Prior to the training, I used to invite people from two opposing groups to the program and was only focussed on ways to make one group claim victory and the other, accept defeat. After the Radio for Peace training, I learnt that a basis of consensus needs to be found between groups, and the program needs to end with a feeling of a win for both. Now, I've become capable of providing radio based training. In a year, I will work as a trainer at least six to seven times, teaching on topics that include conflict, peace, dialogue and common ground.

In course of time, we analysed the increasing conflict in the Tarain closely. On one hand, there was a peaceful movement underway for access and rights throughout the nation, while on the other, at the ground level, there were rising number of incidences of killings and kidnappings in the name of the Tarain. After learning about the involvement of youth in those activities, we felt the need to work on that issue to try and foster peace. We worried about the ways to bring the youth - who were, knowingly or unknowingly, destroying lives and the society by being involved in violent activities during an age when they are at their creative best – towards building the society. During a discussion with journalists and legal-workers, we resolved to run a radio drama in Maithali and, through that, spread awareness

among the youth. Thereafter, we started a radio drama called Sangor.

Initially, this drama was broadcast for a fee through six FMs in the east Tarain. Later, it started getting simulcast through 15 FMs, including one in the Capital, and a lot of FM stations requested the broadcast of that drama. It's now playing on an additional nine stations. I feel that we've started a good thing to reduce the conflict in the Tarain. But a lot of work still remains. We are yet to take social messages to the villages.

Beautiful, Peaceful and Vast

Vinay Shekher

A mountainous village in central Nepal; Deurali is its name. There is a primary school in this village. It has one teacher. His ancestral home falls in the mid-eastern Tarain. He is interested in history and politics. That's why he knows a lot. He relishes long conversations. There is a teashop near the school. It's called Lahureydai's Teashop. Not only is this pensioned soldier interesting to talk with, but so is his wife, Batuli. What more does the teacher need? As soon as school's over, he reaches the teashop. Many Nepalis do not like their young wives talking to other men. But this soldier does not care. His shop does not appear like a teashop. It's more like a chat-shop, where the three sit and compare Nepal's 10-year war with wars and non-violent movements all over the world, try and find similarities, analyse differences. Have dialogues that help salve the wounds of war and rouse those responsible. Sometimes, three more people get added to the shop.

This is the perimeter of radio program, Sundar Shanta Vishal (Beautiful Peaceful Vast). This program is prepared by including talks that are known and heard, victim experiences and the interesting general discussion that takes place at Lahuraydai's Teashop. The dialogue between these people is heard by people across the country. Those who like it, write back with praises. Those who don't write harsh words asking, "How will conducting dialogue on political questions help the peace process?" Those letters are also included in the program.

This program was started in June, 2009. It inspired and helped salve the wounds of the People's Movement of 2063/64. A lot of letters are received saying, "More than the other segments of the program, liked Lahureydai's Teashp very much." As the stories of victims are more personal than talk mixed with the difficult words of

experts, Lahuraydai's way of speaking is interesting and the language and presentation easily understood by the villagers; Lahuraydai's Teashop is quite talked about.

This program ran as Sundar Shanta Vishal for six months. After the development community agreed that the questions included in it matched those pertaining to the making of a New Nepal, its name was changed to Naya Nepal (New Nepal). The duration of the program was 30 minutes. The program was produced and broadcast twice each week for almost one-and-half years. This program was broadcast through 25 radio stations as well as Radio Nepal's national transmission. Apart from that, it was also heard by the 1000+ Worldspace Satellite radio sets in community organisations and clubs in villages spread across Nepal. A local edition was also produced in 10 FM stations. Those stations broadcast three New Nepal radio programs per week, including the local version.

Four local organisations also cooperated in the production of the local edition. 14 members of the organisations were trained on community journalism. After the training, they also received equipment with which they talked to people not getting adequate coverage in the media. Using such collected material, the FM program producer and community journalists got the local edition ready. The content compiled by them was also used in the program produced in Kathmandu.

The aim of this program was to inform the general public about questions related to the Peace Process, analyse the impact of the war and find means for resolutions, while informing them about the questions related to the changing context. During the inception of the program, issues like the causes of conflict and the means of resolution were included.

There was a group of three, Upendra Aryal, Vidhya Chapagain and myself, who ran the production of this program. Senior journalist, Vinay Kumar prepared the discussion for Lahureydai's Teashop. Slowly, the focus of the program got refined. But the program's main question still revolves around the Peace Process and conflict management. The main issues included in this program are: insurgency management, peace process, constituent assembly, women, minority questions, constituent assembly elections, voter rights, and the role of journalists during voting, etc. Of late, this program is focussed on important questions connected to the Peace Process like the role and responsibilities of the youth and civil society in general security.

Currently, this program is also broadcast in Maithali, Bhojpuri and Tharu languages.

Naya Nepal also included the call for the camaraderie between people of different fields, stability, peace and harmony.

Mausami Malla made a documentary on single women. Kiran Chitrakar made a sketch. Ani Choyang sang a song. Durgalal wrote a song. Amrit Gurung sang across the country. Jiwan Sharma spread positive awareness through song. Nisham Sharma raised this issue through plays and Anup Baral from the stage. Naya Nepal took their efforts across the country. "Assembling everything together, Naya Nepal became a substantial radio magazine. It continued the work of informing the citizens about the needs and work of the Constituent Assembly while picking the roots of conflict," says Nirmal Rijal, former country director of Equal Access. It raised a voice against the negative practice of burning tyres and imposing strikes that inconvenience citizens.

A listener's club was also established. Inspired by this program, a youth organisation in Dang called Our Access declared a prohibition on tyre burning and became successful with its goal.

Through this program, an able group who work in connection to issues related to peace has been created. 12 radio workers from 11 local FM stations got trained in the production of quality programs on questions of peace. According to Chandra Neupane of Saptakoshi FM, Naya Nepal gives radio workers training even in an intangible way because a lot can be learned by just looking at the production process. A few of the community journalists involved with this program were conflict victims whose abilities have also been enhanced. "Initially, we were afraid to talk. Now we make others speak. We don't feel apprehensive interviewing government officials on things that we have borne," says Shiwa Yogi from Dang. During the course of production of Naya Nepal, Sajani Chaudhary, who had been trained as a community journalist, worked for a radio program prepared by UNMIN, based in Nepalgunj. She held a microphone for the first time through Naya Nepal. Now she is working for the United Nations. Naina Biswakarma from Dhankuta says without any hesitation, "Equal Axis's program, Naya Nepal, has played the main role in me reaching my current position." She is currently in the role of a program director at Radio Makalu. Apart from that, she's also involved in the production of radio programs for various non-governmental organisations connected to the Constituent Assembly and Peace Process. Sunita Pakhrin of Makwanpur, who was rescued from a circus, learnt about the value of life after starting to work in this program. As a community journalist, along with Nisha Lama and Purnima Golay, she played a leading role in producing programs that included the plight of many women like her.

Under this program, about 1800 youth got leadership oriented training on questions about peace and rehabilitation. It worked towards fostering peace and harmony, rehabilitation and holistic dialogue between communities that had not been talking to each other for years at a time. When young men and women, involved in radio listener's clubs established in numerous villages, started assembling together to listen to the program, they started saving their community side by side. The idea to turn a bunker at Maneydara in Ghorlikharka, Dhankuta, made during the conflict, into a peace park was also perceived through this very program. Currently the peace park is under construction. The work got underway through an initial donation of about Rs. 10,000/- made by Equal Access to the local radio listener's group. Thereafter, some funds were allocated by Solve Nepal, the District Development Committee and the Village Development Committee. Now the Ministry of Peace has decided to give Rs. 5,00,000/- for it. The first level of the view tower being constructed there is now complete.

It has been five years since the start of the Naya Nepal program. It broadcasted the voice of the neglected and the marginalised. It conducted discussions connecting the questions of women and children with the Peace Process. It held a debate on why women should be represented in the Constituent Assembly. It has also cautioned the Constitution makers.

Like other radio programs, this program also has challenges. Now I feel that the message given through a radio program may not be able to do much. Our regular listeners say that there is a hunger for knowledge among the people, but knowledge alone does not give one food to eat. There will be some impact only if, along with the radio program, some assistance is provided in terms of sustenance and some link is established between information and supply services. The Peace Process is an issue directly connected with politics. But the general public is not very interested in politics. Thus we face criticism occasionally that Naya Nepal has become a political program. People say, "It says big things; Says things that are incomprehensible. But for us, things about income generation are more important than politics. Politics does not give us food to eat. Do we get to eat by listening to radio and having discussions? Rather than going there, we earn by going to work."

Even when listening to such talk, we get satisfaction about one thing. The people who say that today were afraid to speak earlier. The radio program has a role in making them able to speak out. The fruit of information does not come immediately, but donors want to see immediate results. On top of that there is the big challenge of continuity and stability. But I feel a program will not be able to achieve its goals by producing radio shows for a short time, relying on the trust of

the FM stations for broadcasts and only paying the radio stations in lieu of broadcasts.

Local FM stations lack the required manpower, means and sources to produce quality programs even now. Able manpower is unsteady. There is a dearth of quality programs on radio. If radio is unable to provide quality programs to the youth desperately looking for opportunities, the Peace Process will be at even more risk. But it does not mean that work is not happening nor is it impossible. Work can be done. Even though the country may be headed towards ruin, there are good people in the society who are doing good work. Their contributions may be small, but they can have far-reaching importance. Such members of the civil society making important contributions are still ignored by the mainstream media. The radio can contribute a lot by focussing on, and making programs about, characters that are hidden in the society, contributing to the society and spreading big messages through minor initiatives and incidents. Equal Axis' Naya Nepal is making such a contribution.

Radio's Strength

Dinesh Prasad Harijan

I belong to one of the most backward castes in Nepal. Many people do not drink the water that I have touched. In 2061, I got a chance to sit for the SLC (School Leaving Certificate) exams. I was the first in my village community to do so. To be able to attend the exam, I rented a room in a Bahun community in the district headquarters at Bhairawa where my centre was. The house owner happened to be the centre head of my exam centre. While checking the candidates into the exam centre, he looked at me and noticed my caste from my admit card. Subsequently, he flogged me right in the examination hall. Calling up his home, he ordered my belongings to be thrown on the road.

After that day's exam ended, I held a press conference because the centre head had discriminated against me on the basis of my caste. Later, this news was printed in local newspapers and those published out of Kathmandu.

After taking my SLC exams, I got into journalism. Also during this time, the Maoists kidnapped me. This caused the village's residents to be scared of me. The young people in the village went to India during the day. They returned home only in the evening. The Maoists made me set off bombs in three places.

In early 2064, during the second Peoples' Movement, the Maoists set me free. Following this, I decided to pursue journalism in Butwal. I started doing some minor reporting for Butwal's Lumbini National Daily. Sometimes I also wrote features. Meanwhile, Nepal's first dalit-managed FM, Radio Jagaran, opened and I got a chance to work there. I continued my career and studies from there. I started producing a discussion program on the differences between dalits and non-dalits

and on human rights. I placed a lot of focus on the practice of untouchability by non-dalits on the dalits in the terrain region.

Meanwhile, an election was to be held for the school management committee of the Peparwaha Primary School in Kapilavastu district. A Brahman and a Harijan filed their nominations for the position of president. The head mistress of the school, Sharda Pandey, proposed the name of Krishna Chaudhary (Kurmi) for the post. During the election, the Harijan candidate won. However, the school's head mistress, teachers and elder did not let the elected president stay in the school. They didn't allow him to work. He was restricted from going outside the village. They threatened to flog the elected president.

After hearing about it, I went there from Butwal with two other journalists. After recording a discussion with the district education officer and a human rights worker, the program got broadcast. It was also covered in newspapers. After an investigation by the education office and concerned officials of the education ministry, a workable environment was created for Santosh Harijan and he accepted his post. He became the first dalit president of a school-managing committee in the entire district.

In Asar 2065, Search for Common Ground invited two people from Radio Jagaran for training. The radio sent Deepa Bardewa and me along. We returned after five days of training. The outline of a program called Farakilo Dharti (Wider Earth) got drawn up. The same year, Butwal's Tinau river broke its banks and swept away 250 houses of a squatter settlement on its banks. Four people died. The state of the squatters worsened.

We raised the issue of solving the problems of the squatters on Farakilo Dharti. To address the issue, we conducted a discussion between the Water Resources minister the head of the municipality and a representative of the squatters. The Water Resources minister, Bishnu Poudel, promised to start a Tinau river embankment project. In the fiscal year 2065/66, money was set aside by the finance minister for the Tinau river embankment project. Due to the program's broadcast, work started on stopping erosion by the Tinau.

Another issue we raised was child marriage. Child marriage is widespread in Rupandehi district. Due to this, female violence and incidents of dowry is on the rise. Girls married early become mothers when they are still minors. In this situation, they often lose their lives during pregnancy or delivery.

In Asoj 2066, we brought together the chief district officer, representatives from political parties and concerned authorities for a discussion on the issue. After the talks, it was decided that child marriage abolition committees should be formed in villages. Right after that, with support from Care Nepal, Challenge Project was conducted held for eight months. It consisted of work against the practices of child

marriage and dowry. In Asar 2067, a district child marriage abolition committee was also formed.

The committee has been formed by listeners of the radio program Farakilo Dharti. To stop child marriages, they have started a campaign to send children to school.

Thus, Farakilo Dharti has played a very important role in reducing social violence. A lot of transformation in me has come from Search for Common Ground's training. I have started playing a role as a mediator in local level conflict management. Now, no one discriminates against me for being a dalit.

A Radio Program Successfully Averts a Big Calamity

Sujata Tamang

Community radio Solu FM and Search for Common Ground have been working together on program production and broadcasting for the past 3 years. A discussion program for peace building, Farakilo Dharti, is produced and broadcast in partnership between the two.

The aim of this program is to reduce the conflict emerging at the local level and help build peace in the society. This program has had some good effects in the society. Among these, the story presented here is one of the successes.

An indefinite strike was called by the UCPN-Maoists from May 1 or Baisakh 18, on the occasion of Labour Day, to apply pressure from the streets to the Assembly. This strike made daily sustenance difficult for many people. Two half-hour programs were prepared on Farakilo Dharti about the suffering caused to the public and the security situation in the district.

Though the protest remained peaceful in the initial few days, starting from the fourth day, when groups started appearing on the streets in retaliation, the protest took a violent form. In Solukhumbu, the student wing of the CPN-UML, NRSYU, and the student wing of the Nepali Congress, NSU, came out in retaliation of the protest.

On one side was the Maoist protest and, on the other, the procession in retaliation. Due to them, residents of Salleri were quite frightened. At the district level, the district administration and the police called the political parties for a discussion, although the parties refused to comply. To assist with this, Solu FM tried to bring the parties to one table through the program Farakilo Dharti.

A lot of effort was made to bring the fighting parties to one place. Meanwhile, a clash had already happened between the police, the protestors and those in retaliation. Though the clash had abated, the groups were ready to clash again after renewing their strength in the evening; we tried to persuade the leaders of the parties to come to one place for a discussion the following morning. We also collected ample statements from the frightened public. We had felt a major sense of success just being able to bring the heads of the three main parties of the district to one place.

When assembled in place, initially, the leaders either didn't talk to each other or only disagreed. Even then, we made them listen to the voices of the public saying that they were in politics for the public so it was only fair they hear what the public had to say. After that we asked them - regardless of the kinds of protest that happen in the centre, in the district level is there an option for everyone to agree not to let protests become violent? During the course of the discussion, the Maoist agreed not to raise provocative slogans, to only have peaceful processions and to have the procession only between 11 and 3.

Thereafter, a discussion was held to get an agreement from others to not retaliate against the Maoist procession during the specified time. After the Maoists were ready to allow very essential government offices to work - since the public was suffering due to the strike - allow shops to remain open and allow relaxation during the weekly market to allow for transactions, the CPN-UML and Nepali Congress agreed not to hinder the peaceful procession by the Maoists. Due to these agreements, dangerous violence in Solukhumbu was averted.

The district police and administration praised our work for not letting violence break out. The district administration officially thanked Solu FM and the Farakilo Dharti program for averting a big crisis in the district. Likewise, the public thanked us by telephone and some by coming to the station itself.

We felt very happy when people, who had come to the headquarters from far and had waited long for the government office to open and get their work done, came and said, "You've been like gods for us." Though we had to face a lot of difficulties in the course of producing the program, now thinking of those moments and the success makes me feel very happy.

Additional Role Necessary

Umid Bagchand

“We don't get to eat when it's time to eat. We don't get to sleep when it's time to sleep. There are no children, daughters-in-law and youth in the village. We 81-year-olds wish we could die. How will there be peace in this country? Should the government be doing this? Should the parties be doing it? Should you, journalists, be doing it?”

I still remember the words of Kalu Singh Darji of Kotwada village in Kalikot district on Srawan 8, 2061 BS. As the war was raging, while reporting from the field with a group of journalists in Kotwada, the elderly couple, along with a few toddlers, had stopped us and recounted their misery.

Those days, everyone from the towns to the regional headquarters was terrified. The situation was worse in the far-off villages. Even journalists were scared to venture out to the villages. Will we be caught in a skirmish? Will the army bother us, alleging that we've returned after meeting the Maoists? Will the Maoists also trouble us, alleging that we are spying for the army? Journalists were hounded by many such notions. Thus, they could not bring out news fearing the worst.

In a situation when journalists and human-rights workers were unable to go to the villages, it was impossible for the voices of the rural population to come out. The Far West Media Development Centre (FMDC), Kailali, working in the Far West region had then sent 10 journalists from various media to gather news from the field to alleviate the suffering of journalists, human-rights workers, civil society and

the general public. This group under my leadership included, Sharad K.C. from Himal Khabarpatrika, Shyam Bhatta from Samay Weekly, Rajendra Nath from Kantipur Daily, Ravi Dhami from Annapurna Post, Khagendra Pant from Rajdhani Daily, Ramesh Palpali from Sapthahik Sahakarmi and Rajendra Kunwar from radio program, Aacham Serophero. During the course of this 17-day media trip, from Jobbuda in Dadeldhura district to Kotwada in Kalikot district, on reaching Kotwada village, the residents had used us as a means to vent out their suffering. Birkha Devi Bista, whose house was near the airport under construction at Kotwada, spilt out the horror of having her son, working in the construction of the airport, being lined up in her courtyard along with 27 other labourers and shot by the army.

We all tried to expose the doings of the Royal Nepal Army and the Maoists in the villages that fell on our way by using our respective media. I used to be agitated at times to see the misery of the villagers forced to bear the brunt of an armed conflict, and at times, tears welled up in my eyes. What I felt during the trip was that by reaching the villages from time to time and listening to the tales of sons and daughters being lost, husbands being lost, hearing news of killings each day and meeting the aggrieved and hearing them share their misery, provided them with emotional assistance. After this on-field news gathering campaign, I felt that the medium of journalism could help in reducing conflict and building peace. I became even more active in this work.

After this tour, my journey in peace journalism became effective. I felt that a lot could be done through the media sector while remaining at FMDC. An interaction was held between the security forces, journalists, human-rights workers and civil society to create an easy environment for journalists, human-rights workers, civil society and the general public in all 9 districts of the Far West. Every month, an experience sharing meeting started to take place. Immediately after the interaction and sharing of experiences, things improved for the people. During such an interaction, the residents of Darchula district complained about the inconvenience caused due to the bridge between the Nepal-India border being closed at 5pm. We conducted an interaction with the local administration and the security forces. Thereafter, the bridge started to get closed only at 7pm. After a rumour that the Maoists were about to launch an attack on the headquarters of Bajura at Martadi, the security forces had boarded up the doors and windows of the houses of the residents that faced them. An interaction was held at Martadi on that issue. After that, the residents could open their doors and windows.

I also remember action being taken against the guilty as a result of journalists doing their work. After a soldier of the Royal Nepal Army, who was on leave was

killed by the Maoists in Imliya village in Kanchanpur district, a group of soldiers from the nearby Shuklapanta forest protection unit of Singhapur had taken all the men and women of the village into custody. Thereafter, alleging that the 'Maoists had killed their man at their behest', they had made 35-40 people lie prone on the ground and had flogged them. After hearing that news, Chitrang Thapa, Mahendranagar correspondent of Kantipur Dainik, and I reached there. When we reached there, initially, the villagers of the Rana and Tharu community did not want to talk. But later when we told the Bhulmansa (traditional community leader) that we were journalists and had come to report about the difficulty they had had to face, they talked openly. Even the women showed us the scars and marks on their backs, caused by batons. On the request of the commandant of the army's 25th corp, Daman Ghaley, we showed the photographs before we sent the news. After seeing the photos, the army issued a dispatch about action being taken against the group at the Singhapur post.

After the second People's Movement, the war ended, but the work of the journalists in pursuit of peace was not yet over. Thus, in favour of peace, a radio program 'Shantiko Sachetna' (Consciousness for Peace) was started. The said program was broadcast on three FM stations of Kailai and Kanchanpur districts for roughly a year. The program tried to make the public aware about peace related consensus, agreements, press freedom and civil rights.

After that, FMDC produced a radio dialogue program, Farakilo Dharti (Wide Earth), in partnership with Search for Common Ground. This program was broadcast through seven FM stations of west Nepal. A lot of problems of west Nepal found place in this program. Among those problems was the practice of bonded labour. After the liberation of bonded labourers was announced, Haruwa Sarki (a bonded labourer) from Budali village of Dadeldhura district was evicted from his hut built on the edge of his master's field. He was homeless. Farakilo Dharti took up this issue. The local leader of the ruling party, representatives from the legal profession and local administration were included in the discussion about the problems faced by him. In the program, they promised to assist Haruwa. After a little effort, Haruwa's family got assistance. He was allowed to live in his own hut.

The soldiers and policemen who had deserted during the war were agitating time and again for their reinstatement. During the course of their agitation, they had closed the national highway twice and had also resorted to vandalism. They announced the closure of the national highway for a third time. They threatened to enforce the closure strictly. The local administration talked about receiving orders to shoot those who tried closing the national highway as per the announcement

made by the government banning the closure of national highways. In such a time, the issue was raised on Farakilo Dharti. A discussion was held between Uttam Bahadur Singh, police chief of Kailali district, Prem Bahadur Bista, representative of the deserters from the army and police, and Khadakraj Joshi, representative from the civil society, on the program. Thereafter, the 3-day program to close the national highway was withdrawn and a possible clash was averted.

The corpse of Shyamraj Pandey of the Pahadey (hillfolk) community was found with his motorcycle beside a bridge near the hut of a freed bonded labourer in Gota, Kailali district. The Pahadey community set fire to the hut alleging that the family of freed bonded labourers had killed him and discarded the body. Later, the Pahadeys set fire to a Tharu village. A Tharu NGO issued a release asking for all Tharus to unite. Thus, a situation arose where a big clash between the two communities was possible. After consultations with all the journalists, it was agreed to hold the news for some time, and that helped the conflict from escalating. Appeals were made to the Red Cross to distribute aid and they made the distribution. The police started an investigation. It was proved that Pandey had died in an accident. Three people were arrested by the police for setting fire to the hut of the freed bonded labourers. After that the situation returned to normal.

I have given more priority and have tried to raise the issues and problems of communities who are backward socially, economically and in other contexts through the communication media I've been employed with. Among such news reports, one such news from Dadeldhura gives me satisfaction.

The two daughters of Haruwa Sarki of Budali village of Amargadi municipality in Dadeldhura district, Manu Sarki and Devi Sarki were unable to get an education due to poverty. I reported this through B.B.C. Nepali Service, the communication media I was employed with. The program was broadcast. After hearing the report, over 30 people offered to help them through email. Many even sent money to them through me. I took the money and handed it over to them at their home, in the presence of Mahadev Giri, district education officer of Dadeldhura, members of social organisations working in the field of education and some journalists. I also made clear that the money was to be used for Manu and Devi's education. Both the sisters go to school now.

Good Steps Can Garner Support

Sudip Kumar Jha

When FM radio was established at Jaleswor in Mahottari in 2063, I got interested in working in radio. I reached Radio Apan Mithila's office in the hope of getting a job. After a simple interview, I was selected as an RJ. My dream of speaking on radio got fulfilled. After a month or so, I started hosting a music show called Rangtarang with a lot of zeal and happiness. While on my way from my village, Madhwa, to the radio station, I was in a shop at Chakba village. It was the month of Srawan. Quite a big flood had hit Mahottari. We had been facing quite a lot of difficulties on the way. In the teashop, Raghunath, who was almost 60 years old, asked me, "Son, where do you work?"

I said with pride, "I work at Radio Apan Mithila." Hearing the radio's name gave him hope. He said, "I had been trying to meet someone working in a radio." It raised my interest.

"Why uncle?" I asked.

"You go to the radio. The telephone rings. You ask who and from where and then play a song. But the road you walk on has been taken away by the flood. It's not just this year, but it's the same every year. Why don't you talk about this?"

My perception changed after hearing his words. I thought seriously after reaching the radio station. It was time for my program. The first call came from Mahottari itself. I asked the caller's name and address.

He was from the eastern part of Mahottari.

“What are the problems in your village?” I asked.

“The village school has been closed for the past 6 months due to a mutual dispute. No one has made any effort to get it open.”

Hearing his words, I got even more encouraged and felt that something had to be done.

I returned home after my program and pondered all night long - it isn't enough just to play songs. The community also wants radio to raise its issues and thoughts. Thereafter I changed my program profile. Going to the villages and profiling them, I started hosting a program called 'Hamar Gaam' (Our Village). I included the village's problems and ways of solving them in it. After the villagers' troubles, problems and positive reactions from the concerned authorities were broadcast, some changes did come to a few villages. I became even more encouraged. I started bringing audio bytes from not only Mahottari but also from villages of neighbouring districts.

After I started visiting the villages, I saw activities of conflict and violence in the society. To raise those issues on radio, I started an interview based program, Garma Garam Bahas (Hot Debate). This took my career to new heights. The program became popular due to the heated debates and arguments between the two participating sides, but later while tracing back the issues, the problems appeared unresolved.

I then started researching ways to reduce domestic conflict. Meanwhile, I got an invitation to attend a training related to radio programs organised by Search for Common Ground at Bhedetar, Dhankuta. That training was about peace building. After the training, filled with the self-belief that peace can be established, I started a program called Khulla Dharti (Open Grounds).

I made the northern region of Mahottari my first subject. In Mahottari district, development work is not uniform everywhere. The people in the southern regions felt that there was more developmental work in the northern region since there were more Pahadey (Hillfolk) villages there. The Madhesis (Plainsfolk) meanwhile prevail in the southern areas. Due to this, there was tension between the two communities. I made my first program on this issue. In the talk, I included political and civil society leaders from both the regions as well as the problems of the public there. As the talk progressed, what became clear was that the thought that there were more Pahadey villages in the northern region was wrong. Thereafter, the way the two communities viewed each other changed.

What I felt from the success of the program was that radio does play a big role in reducing conflict resulting from a lack of proper facts. I got more resources for it.

I got most enthusiastic when we were able to avert a crisis that could shake the entire nation and not just Mahottari.

This incident was from Mathihani in Mahottari. Some Muslim squatters made their houses in a five bigha garden belonging to the Laxminarayan Math, a historical monument and a symbol of faith for the Hindus settled there. The police interfered there. This incident threatened to flare up communal issues between the Hindus and Muslims. Based on that incident, the Hindus and Muslims started getting organised into two factions. In the event of communal violence breaking out, it would shake up the entire nation.

After the Madhesh Movement, the Muslims were also conscious of their rights. I dared to solve this in the local level. I organised a talk between the leaders of both the sides working along with the then chief district officer, Sagarmani Prajuli. During the talk, it was agreed to solve the land problem of the Muslim community and the Muslim community in turn agreed not to encroach on the Math's land. The peace and calm established then still stands to this day. Efforts are ongoing to provide land to the Muslim squatters.

That problem got solved without going outside Mahottari. After that incident, I started being called to play the role of a panchayat facilitator in many villages. That day onwards, I started saying with even more self-belief, "radio program brings peace."

Problems also arise during the making of a radio program. Challenges also need to be faced. But when you dare to step ahead, I feel that you get a lot of helping hands.

A Strong and Reliable Medium for Peace Building

K. C. Lamichanne

The support of your radio program, Farakilo Dharti (Wider Earth), was important in the opening of our school. I was satisfied after Anil Singh of Birgunj Sub-Metropolitan, Ward No. 19 commented in the context of Farakilo Dharti, a radio discussion that I had been producing, "If we had not given our word on radio, the school may not have opened."

I feel society should always get something positive from the work I do. But I had thought little about doing what would bring about such an outcome. My zeal increased after the impact of the program I was producing started becoming visible. I started pondering what kind of program to produce.

A dispute arose between the managing committee, school administration and parents over changing the name of Nepal Lower Secondary School (Nepal Nimna Madhyamik Vidhyalaya) in Birgunj, Ward No. 19. The president of the managing committee had tried to attach the name of his father to the name after giving about 3 kattas of inferior land to the school. The parents meanwhile, not finding the process of changing names far-sighted, were not ready to agree. Due to this dispute, the society itself got divided into two camps. The two sides even stopped talking to each other. The parents even started condemning the head-master. After that, the head-master published a notice about the school being closed for an indefinite period.

The parents, in protest of the decision to close the school, padlocked the school. The studies of almost 350 students at the school were put at risk. We decided to have a radio discussion on the issue. On 12 December 2001, we had a radio

discussion between the school administration, school management committee and representatives of the parents. In the discussion, they agreed to conclude with the naming of the school according to education laws and regulations and to reopen the school right away. Immediately after the program, the school opened.

Later, despite minor disagreements, the parents and school managing committee agreed on changing the name. Now the school's name is Harihar Shah Champadevi Lower Secondary School. Dialogue helped quite a bit in bringing people, on the brink of conflict over the issue of name change, towards consensus.

In Parsa district, the functioning of the public offices is also responsible for disrupting the peaceful situation. Since work does not easily happen in the offices, the public has to face difficulties and people are dissatisfied. This arose because of improper use of investments by the government office in physical construction. Four years ago, the District Development Committee had raised a tender of Rs. 1 crore and 25 lakhs for the construction of a metalled road from Gardaul to Pokhariya. For the construction of this road, from the grant received by each of the 52 VDCs of Parsa district, the VDCs falling on the road had invested Rs. two lakhs each, and the others, Rs. one lakh. This project is the biggest investment for the Parsa District Development Committee. But even after four years, the construction is not yet complete.

We had a radio discussion on this issue. As a result of it, the road construction work commenced. However, the work has again been disrupted since the District Development Committee did not function properly.

The conflict in Parsa has also increased due to the parties' cut in the distribution of grants received by the VDCs. It isn't that there haven't been racial divisions, but those conflicts have been in a dormant stage. Problems come up because funds allocated for dalits, women, disabled and old citizens are not being given. The conflict has also escalated because projects of development construction have not been finished in time and because there is a tradition of people trying to recruit their own people in schools.

The District Education Office had declared relief posts for one female and one disabled teacher on Ashar 19, 2066, at the Nepal National Primary School in Pakah Mainpur VDC of Parsa district. However, the school managing committee, without publishing the vacancy in a transparent manner, demanded approval to appoint males in both the relief quota on the pretext of lack of applicants. The District Education Office asked for directions from the regional authority. The regional authority directed them to proceed according to the rules. According to the rules and, in the case of a lack of women applicants and with the recommendation of the education officer, a male teacher can be appointed; there is no basis for any change in the quota for the disabled.

Based on that issue, a group supporting the disabled came out in protest. We raised the issue during a radio discussion on Farakilo Dharti. The district education officer refused to support the appointment of another person in the post meant for the disabled. Later, the education department safeguarded the rights reserved for the disabled by annulling the appointment.

Now the Nepal Government is working on a policy to bring the madrassas managed by the Muslim community into mainstream education. Under it, 34 madrassas in Parsa district have come into the mainstream. However, even after one-and-a-half months of the academic session had elapsed, books were not provided to the madrassas. Even oil was not sent for the Oil Program where oil is distributed to the children to attract them to schools. Scholarships were not given. Due to this, the minority Muslims felt suppressed.

We raised this issue on a radio discussion. The district education office, while accepting deficiencies in its functioning, promised to provide all the required materials within 15 days. Likewise, other matters also progressed as promised.

By not just highlighting the problems but by making the victims a part of the problem resolution, radio has managed to solve many things that were without solution in the past. It has managed to find out the basis for the society's progress. The above examples have established this fact. The sides in conflicts aspire to achieve their desires. They can be prevented from taking a path of destruction for achieving those desires.

If radio works toward a resolution-oriented communication, then radio can be a good medium for an informal legal system that forever works in favour of peace and development in the society.

This does not mean that there are no challenges in the path of resolution-oriented communication. In many situations, one side among those in conflict might want to escape from the process of dialogue. This happens because of the society's awareness level, the ways and types of thinking and the lack of social accountability. One should also be careful about maintaining neutrality while raising issues. Despite these challenges, radio can become a reliable and strong medium for peace building.

Success Story

Shiva Raj Basnet

Without knowing how a radio program can impact a village and society, I got involved with radio only wanting to let my voice be heard. I just wanted everyone to know me. However today, I feel proud to hear how the radio program Farakilo Dharti (Wider Earth) has brought change in the community. I feel like talking about social transformation with my head held high.

Let's talk about Manpur in Bhituriya Ratgain village in Dang District. Despite a majority of Damais, Kamis and Tharus, Chettris and Bahuns also live there. Since the dalits do not have enough land to make a living from, they have been following the ancestral trades of tailoring and blacksmithing. However, it's difficult to make ends meet on that alone. For sustenance, they used to sell spirits. Even among the Tharus, while some worked as tenant farmers, some sold spirits. For the Chettris that have land, the persevering farmed their land while others sold alcohol and spirits.

Due to the sale of spirits, getting intoxicated, creating a din, fighting and even teasing had become a regular feature in this village. The practice of untouchability had also not ended in this village.

One day, people from that village called me up and invited me to their village. After reaching the village, I found out that I was the first media person to meet the villagers.

I conducted a discussion with people of all ethnicities on alcohol and untouchability. At the end of the discussion, they said, "We will prohibit alcohol in this village and put an end to untouchability, but you'll need to assist us."

"First of all, please come together and start your initiative. I'm with you. If you want, I can come again," I said.

I made a presentation on the radio program Farakilo Dharti based on that discussion. Everyone heard about their issues on radio and got excited. They told me that they had formed a committee to prohibit alcohol, had started an alcohol prohibition movement, and invited me again. I reached the village in the evening. I found it strange. All the men and womenfolk of the village had assembled and the president of the alcohol prohibition committee was a former spirits vendor, Keshar Bahadur Dangi. The other office bearers of the committee were also similar vendors, both male and female, of different castes.

The president, Keshar Bahadur Dangi, said, "Now, no one sells spirits in this village. Drunkards raising a ruckus are also not to be found. Our village is peaceful."

Former alcohol vendors say these days, "Then, being told that we could not sell spirits and even being bathed in it did not stop us from selling it. But everybody's behaviour has changed due to Farakilo Dharti. Now no one sells alcohol."

"We had never thought our village would be so peaceful. Now, we aren't scared to even walk alone," teacher Kokila Dangi says. Kamala Gautam says, "Before you change yourself, you cannot change others. The people who used to criticise us, now support us after seeing our work. The men who used to be drunk 24-hours-a-day before now drink only occasionally."

Now Bhitiriya Ratgain village has become a model village. People of all ethnicities have organised groups and do development work. Everyone from the village recently came together to build a drinking water tank. The practice of untouchability is also rapidly receding. Dalits and non-Dalits now collect water together from the same source. The Dalits have started paying more attention to hygiene.

The radio program Farakilo Dharti has done a lot of work towards peace building and changing bad habits of people. In Bal Chetana Nimawi in Dhamkapur, Duruwa 6, after a dispute between parents and the managing committee over teacher appointment, the school got closed. After a dialogue between both the sides on Farakilo Dharti, the school reopened. A dispute between recently settled people and the affluent residents in Tarigaun was brought to an end by the radio program through consensus. They now live peacefully together.

I'm happy seeing this program's impact because I'm even called to resolve household disputes. This has enhanced not only my reputation but the radio's as well. I feel an additional responsibility looking at the way the community has treated me. I'm eager to know more, learn more and share that knowledge with the community.

Dialogue Leads to Resolution

Shanker Prasad Pandey

After a dispute in the West Zone Truck Transport Employees Committee, some transport workers formed the Lumbini Truck Transport Employees Union. Thereafter, a squabble flared up between the two unions.

After the dispute intensified, there was a lot of slanging between the two sides. Trucks could not run.

We tried to have a program on this issue. In the discussion, we decided to include people from both the unions and the industrialists and employees who bore hardships as a result of their dispute. Initially, it was quite difficult to bring together the two disputing groups in one place. However, later we tried to forge a consensus by bringing together the president of the West Zone Truck Transport Employees Committee, Guptabhadur K.C., the secretary of the Lumbini Truck Transport Employees Union, Bikash Rayamajhi, and industrialist/professional Sashi Neupane in the studio for a discussion.

Finally, both the unions agreed to work together.

Thus, radio played a good role in bringing together people, who had stopped talking to each other, in one place and forging a consensus.

A Mediator Behind a Program Presenter

Hiralal K.C.

The programs Hello Sharda and Tito Piro used to address issues on transforming conflict into peace. We tried to find simple and scientific solutions to conflict through those programs. After my program, people started asking me about the

different facets of conflict. They also started asking me for suggestions. The impact of my program was such that I even had to play the role of a mediator in conflicts.

In the course of reporting on Srawan 11, 2067, I had reached Dakadam VDC, Ward No. 8, Salyan District. People from two areas had had a fight there. A boy from one area had taken a girl from the other area to his home to get married. The relatives of the girl came to the boy's house and took her back. While the girl's family was quite provoked to find their minor daughter taken away to be married in a kidnapping style, the boy and his relatives were as angry at having the girl taken back. The fight between the two families had spread and had almost become a fight between two villages. The tensions were such that whenever anyone from one side met anyone from the other, there would be a fight and there were cases filed against each other with the police administration.

People from both the sides met me after knowing that I was in the village. They requested I resolve the matter while there. I tried to bring together a few representatives from some political parties, teachers, other people and members from both sides. The people from the village did not believe that they were meeting in one place.

With great difficulty, I managed to assemble some teachers, representatives from political parties, and other people from both areas as well as those in conflict in one place. We understood their position, desires and aspirations. While the boy's family insisted that the girl should be theirs, the girl's side stood firm that on no conditions would they let their minor girl be given to the boy. The girl's family also threatened the boy's family of cutting them down wherever they met. There was extensive discussion between the two sides. It was agreed that the boy's side could not claim a minor girl as a wife. The girl's side also agreed not to resort to violence against the boy's side and also not to take legal proceedings against the boy. Now there is a good relationship between both the villages.

(In order not to disclose the identity of the child, the area has not been named.)

USEFUL MATERIALS FOR PEACE JOURNALISM

Journalism for Peace, Hasta Gurung, Himal Books, Patan Dhoka

Radio Talkshows for Peacebuilding Nepal: A Guide, Search for Common Ground and United States Institute of Peace

Peace Journalism, Jake Lynch and Annabel McGoldrik, Hawthorn Press

An Interactive Media: Reflections on Mega FM and Its Peacebuilding Role in Uganda, Patrick William Otim

http://www.beyondintractability.org/case_studies/mega_fm.jsp?nid=6814

An Operational Framework for Media and Peacebuilding, Ross Haward, IMPACS

Conflict Sensitive Journalism: A handbook by Ross Howard, IMPACS and International Media Support

[http://www.ifj-
asia.org/page/conflict_reporting_conflict_sensitive_journalism.html](http://www.ifj-asia.org/page/conflict_reporting_conflict_sensitive_journalism.html)

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<http://www.peacejournalism.org>

WRITERS' INTRODUCTION

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She has reached far flung areas of the district during the course of radio program production. A believer that many local disputes can be resolved by mutual dialogue, she tries to dig out such issues and resolve them. She has had numerous successes through her program due to her constant efforts, despite being a mountainous district, having a lack of funds and geographical difficulties.

Shivaraj Basnet : Basnet is a senior program producer at Radio Tulsipur, Dang.

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