



## Association of International NGOs in Nepal

<http://www.ain.org.np>

# An INGO Appeal to Release Pending Projects and Reform System

The Association of International NGOs in Nepal expresses serious concern over the obstruction of **42 project agreements** submitted by International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs) working in Nepal and the serious impact this is having on development and humanitarian projects. We are also extremely concerned over the situation of 20 expatriates whose visas have expired or will expire on 25 January.

NGOs commonly experience protracted waiting time for approvals. These delays are usually incurred at General Agreement and Project Agreement levels. However the **average waiting time** for agreements currently pending is unusually long, i.e. **in excess of 8 months**, as reported to the Association of International NGOs (AIN).

The vast majority of agreements are currently held up at the Project Approval and Facilitation Committee level which is normally convened by the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare (MoWCSW). INGOs have met with authorities concerned and shared their views on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2010. We have not seen any progress since then, in spite of verbal assurances that the matter would be resolved within a week's time.

Delays in approving projects and visas have or will have various repercussions, including but not limited to:-

- **Serious consequences on human lives:** lack of protection for the most vulnerable and lack of access to life-saving services that could result in injuries, life-long disabilities or even death.
- **Delays in project approvals are directly affecting the most vulnerable groups in Nepal**, namely women, children and persons with disabilities and marginalized groups.
- **All sectors are affected**, including work in health care, education, human rights, anti-trafficking, community-based rehabilitation, infrastructure, poverty alleviation and many others. In some cases, the ministries have created additional delays to project approval by insisting on the inclusion of infrastructure projects, even demanding these of INGOs that work with governance, capacity building and human rights, i.e. non-infrastructure projects.
- **Repercussions on INGO staff, foreign experts and their families:** their visas are expiring and cannot be renewed prior to the approval of Project and General Agreements.

The current administrative stalemate between two Government entities has challenged the **one-window policy** which has been in existence for years. INGOs are being shuffled from government office to government office in search of someone willing to process the pending general/project agreements, to no avail.

The Government of Nepal has committed itself on numerous occasions to provide full access by development and humanitarian personnel to all people in need of assistance, to make available all necessary facilities for their operations and to promote the freedom of movement of such personnel.

### We are calling for:

- **An immediate decision** on all pending Project Agreements, General Agreements and Visa Applications;
- **An overhaul of the Project Approval and Facilitation Committee procedure** which involves too many actors and appears unnecessarily bureaucratic. As per the one window policy we need one, not two entities to be responsible for approving projects. Decisions on projects (approval or denial) should be taken within a three month period to prevent any delays in programme delivery and services.