



Association of International NGOs in Nepal

An informal grouping of INGOs working in Nepal

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

Expanding the Space for Development by I/NGOs During Nepal's Transition Process:

Learning from Case Studies

Report by the Association of INGOs in Nepal (AIN)

AIN
January 2007

Foreword

The Association of International NGOs (AIN) is an informal network of INGOs working in Nepal. AIN has come together to promote mutual understanding, exchange information and share experiences and learning of our work in Nepal for better collaboration. At present, the AIN comprises 67 INGOs, working on a wide-range of issues and sectors to contribute to development efforts in Nepal.

Acknowledging the emerging necessity to work in a Nation afflicted by endemic conflict and poverty, AIN is committed to *Expand its Space for Development* on behalf of all disadvantaged and deprived people in Nepal, especially those affected by the decade long struggle and unrest. During these periods of turmoil and pandemonium, INGOs have played a very vital and imperative role as key stakeholders and partners in the development process of Nepal. We were equally committed and involved in the peace accord thereby harmonizing our effort towards the restoration of a New Nepal.

Poverty alleviation and sustainable development have been our leading objectives. However, there have been many challenges for Nepal in its development efforts. The discord and instability observed in Nepal since 1996 have conspicuously abridged the country's outreach to rural corners of the state and have drastically curtailed implementation of various development activities.

Now we are in a new era where the chances exist as never before, to reconstruct a socially responsible inclusive order. As an Association of invigorated INGOs network, we are set to make fair progress in this endeavour of the establishment of a better Nepal.

Despite the various odds and challenges, AIN Members have been continuing with their Development Efforts. A Task Force was formed comprising of Eleven AIN Member Organizations with a purpose to contribute in expanding the Space for Development by I/NGOs in Nepal's Transition process. AIN Members recognized the need to share their experiences of working within the conflict and to examine this experience in order to generate learning and recommendations for the future. The document draws learning and recommendations from 32 case studies collected from various Member INGOs. The information has been broadly grouped around three topics: *Dialogue* with and involvement of conflicting parties, *Networking*, collaboration and complementarities among I/NGOs and practice of *Transparency*, accountability & impartiality.

The learning can provide inspiration and advice to I/NGOs while AIN can build upon this information to expand its role as an I/NGO advocate and source of expert guidance.

This document portrays innovative ways to address dialogue, transparency, and networking. Examples of practices that have achieved specific goals and contribute to an organization's standard of excellence are described with the aim of encouraging other organizations both to think in innovative ways about their programming and to potentially adopt successful practices.

We are grateful to all the Task Force Members involved in the preparation and production of this report. We would like to acknowledge Ms Deana Zabaldo, a Consultant, for preparing the first draft, Ms Reshma Shrestha, Programme Coordinator AIN, for helping in the collection, collation, and compilation of cases/information from AIN; Mr. Georg Weber of Helvetas Nepal and Mr. Anil Pant of ActionAid Nepal for coordinating the Task Force & editing the report and providing their support in all stages of the report.

Finally, we would like to thank all the AIN Member Organizations who have shared their experiences and knowledge through their cases.

With best wishes,

.....
Dr Shibesh Chandra Regmi
Chairperson AIN
Country Director ActionAid Nepal

..... Eiichi Sadamatsu Secretary AIN Representative SCF Japan Jennie Collins Treasurer AIN Executive Director United Mission Nepal Reinhard Fichtl SC Member Representative Terres des Hommes Alka Pathak SC Member Country Director CARE Nepal
---	--	--	---

..... Asha Basnyat SC Member Country Director Family Health Intl David Purnell SC Member Country Director World Vision Intl Chij Shrestha SC Member Country Director World Education Ram Risal SC Member Programme Director HELVETAS
--	--	--	---

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	<u>53</u>
SUMMARY	<u>64</u>
Dialogue	<u>64</u>
Transparency	<u>75</u>
Networking	<u>75</u>
RECOMMENDATIONS	<u>75</u>
Recommendations for Transparency	<u>108</u>
Recommendations for Networking	<u>119</u>
Supportive Tools	<u>1210</u>
Background	<u>1311</u>
Rationale	<u>1311</u>
Methodology and scope of study	<u>1311</u>
LEARNING	<u>1412</u>
Overview	<u>1412</u>
Dialogue	<u>1412</u>
Patterns of Learning	<u>1412</u>
Modalities of Dialogue.....	<u>1513</u>
AIN Basic Operating Guidelines	<u>1614</u>
Innovative Practices	<u>1614</u>
Letters to SPA and Maoists.....	<u>1614</u>
Public Fact Sheet.....	<u>1614</u>
Further Examples of Innovative Proactive Dialogue	<u>1614</u>
Transparency	<u>1715</u>
Patterns of Learning	<u>1715</u>
Spreading Demand for Transparency	<u>1715</u>
Innovative Practices	<u>1816</u>
Final Day Training Expenditure Sign-Off.....	<u>1816</u>
Display Board.....	<u>1816</u>
Networking	<u>1816</u>
Patterns of Learning	<u>1816</u>
Innovative Practices	<u>1917</u>
Responding Collectively to Shared Problems	<u>1917</u>
Compiling Rates and Developing Norms	<u>2018</u>
Rotating Meeting Hosts.....	<u>2018</u>
Programming in a Conflict-Affected Society	<u>2018</u>
Summary of Learning	<u>2119</u>
Dialogue	<u>2119</u>
Transparency	<u>2220</u>
Networking	<u>2220</u>
Programming in a Conflict-Affected Society	<u>2321</u>
APPENDIX 1: Supportive Tools	<u>2422</u>

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

AIN would like to thank the following organizations for their time and energy in contributing the case studies that were essential to this report:

Action Aid CARE Nepal Educate The Children Lutheran World Federation Ockenden International German Nepalese Help Association Helen Keller International Helvetas SNV	Plan Nepal Practical Action Nepal Save the Children – USA Save the Children – Japan Save the Children – Norway The Mountain Institute United Mission to Nepal Water Aid
--	--

We would like to thank the Task Force organizations for their contribution of Task Force members engaged in the production of this document.

Action Aid CARE Nepal Lutheran World Federation Helvetas International Alert SNV	Plan Nepal Save the Children – USA Save the Children – Japan Save the Children – Norway United Mission to Nepal
---	---

Special thanks also to Reshma Shrestha, Program Coordinator, for her bountiful energy in coordinating among task force members and AIN contributors.

This report was prepared by Deana Zabaldo as a consultant, together with the AIN Task Force, and the Task Force would like to especially acknowledge her effort and the skillful summary that was drawn from diverse case studies.

The views in this report do not necessarily represent the views of AIN or that of any individual member of AIN. This booklet is mainly the documentation of different learning of AIN member agencies on certain specific aspects of working in Nepal's 10 years long conflict.

SUMMARY

The Association of International NGOs (AIN) is an informal group of more than 60 INGOs working in Nepal. Its members have faced many challenges over the past years in continuing their development in spite of the armed conflict in the country. Members of AIN recognized the need to share their experiences of working within the conflict and to examine this experience in order to generate learning and recommendations for the future. The result of that endeavor is this document. It is in no way exhaustive but is meant as a contribution to AIN members and the wider development community indicating learning for widening space for development work in conflict situations.

The document draws learning and recommendations from 32 case studies collected from INGOs. The information has been broadly grouped around three topics: Dialogue, Transparency, and Networking. The learning can provide inspiration and advice to I/NGO's while AIN can build upon this information to expand its role as an I/NGO advocate and source of expert guidance. Specific tools and practices are mentioned in the Annex.

Within the three learning topics, guidelines for effective programming are given. These guidelines may at first seem to be common practice or common sense, but many organizations emphasized that they learned the importance of these items first hand, either by not doing them and observing the resultant problems, or by adhering to them and noticing that their programs ran more smoothly.

Dialogue

The simplest and most profound suggestion is to engage in proactive communication. This means to open communication with relevant parties on all sides of the conflict *before* problems arise. Initiating communication repeatedly produced more cooperation and understanding than responding to problems after the fact. I/NGOs should inform all district officials, security forces, and political parties (including Maoists) of their program plans and their working guidelines (i.e., AIN BOG) in advance and in writing. Failure to do so can create suspicion and antagonism, while practicing proactive communication cultivates support and a sense of mutual respect. Organizations can prepare one-page fact sheets for each project and use them as a basis for initiating communication and dialogue. These fact sheets can be distributed at the local and district level.

Dialogue requires confident and well-informed staff. If staff have detailed information about the project, its funding, and its efficacy, they will be far better prepared to respond to queries. Capacity development can help to empower staff for dialogue, stand on their principles, and be patient about program suspension, without pushing for a quick solution.

Neutrality and respect are also critical components of effective dialogue. Staff should be advocates for their program, not for a political stance or outcome. Only through vigorously maintaining this neutrality will I/NGOs be able to navigate the power struggles occurring between conflict parties.

Case studies demonstrated the power of coordinated dialogue taking place at multiple levels and in a coordinated manner. Both Maoists and security forces were more receptive to programs and staff when they had been informed about the program through their own organizational hierarchy.

The common Principles and Operating Guidelines of AIN and the Basic Operating Guidelines of various development agencies have effectively helped to maintain a space for development work. While some organizations use the guidelines as part of their standard protocol, other organizations fail to mention them as a negotiating tool. AIN needs to further promote the use of these guidelines as a standard for all organizations. While the adherence to the guidelines is an individual organizational decision, security forces, Maoists, etc. should be able to question why an organization is not adhering to this standard and receive information accordingly. Advocating for the AIN BOG as a standard provides a basis for informed discussion in dialogue as well as promoting good practice among I/NGOs.

Active and involved communities were repeatedly cited as one of the most effective tools for dialogue. While the responsibility to provide specific program information and financial transparency is of I/NGOs, the responsibility of convincing local representatives of the Security Forces or the Maoist of the program need and benefit will be of communities. I/NGOs must be careful not to place undue pressure on communities to be representatives in dialogue. Regardless, I/NGOs must send more than local program staff for dialogue.

Mediators for dialogue play a prominent role in creating consensus between I/NGOs and conflict parties. It may prove effective for organizations to have designated mediators at various levels, so that these individuals can be appropriately trained. AIN may inform about and coordinate training opportunities to mediators.

Transparency

Specific practices for engaging in transparency include conducting social audits, paying local partners directly, and making local communities responsible for the financial management of activities. Rules surrounding their frequency need to be established, as well as who conducts and attends them. Placing money and fiscal responsibility into the hands of communities educates local individuals about the flow of finances and the methods of tracking and reporting finances. Display boards are also appropriate for some projects and make the details of the project permanently available for examination and discussion as opposed to social audits where the information is mainly available during the meeting.

Organizations need to institutionalize and codify specific rules and practices related to transparency. AIN can, through its members, lay out specifics for achieving transparency and promote these as best practices among its members. Financial transparency must occur at all levels of the organizations. It should become pervasive within an organization.

Networking

Effective networks cited major benefits to participating organizations in conflict areas. District-level networks have helped to unite I/NGOs, share information about field situations, promote collaborative programming, and reduce duplication. Knowledge from successful district networks can be used to create a standard setup for district networks including frequency of meetings, meeting coordination, systems for sharing program information, and monitoring complimentary programs.

When organizations function as a unified whole, their demands have greater legitimacy and carry greater weight. Participating members should explicitly discuss when the network is the appropriate point of contact versus individual organizations and members should then rely on the network in these instances in order to achieve their goals collectively. In addition to negotiating as a group, networks can also become a local clearinghouse for information on programs in the area.

Networks have reported difficulty in achievable goals. They need to set attainable goals and dedicate meeting time specifically to reducing duplication across programs and generating complimentary programs. These have repeatedly been cited as important issues.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following tables summarize the main recommendations of this report. In addition, each recommendation is correlated to specific actions on how it can be taken forward. Most of the recommendations require commitment and action within an organization. Some, however, require a joint commitment to action from multiple organizations.

After the set of recommendation tables, there is another table showing “Supportive Tools” which we think useful for the readers of this report to collect further information and to start applying those recommendations.

Recommendation to AIN for coordinated action

<p>Coordinate efforts which ensure the respect for INGOs as forceful and effective actors for development under the conflict and transition period</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Become an example for networking among INGOs in conflict through transparent information management. - Promote information sharing and concrete action on social inclusion among AIN-members. - Continue to advocate for minimum organizational standards in development which defend and create space for development in conflict and transition. - Become a source for innovation, information, and guidance for working in and on conflict. - Offer training and support (see separate item below). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Update the existing AIN-compilation of INGO profiles, their main project work and working districts. Share widely to encourage complimentary programming. - Encourage the NGO-federation to do similar efforts in all districts. Update the existing NGO-profiles in districts where they exist and have general guidelines for such district compilations. - Take concrete steps for promoting social inclusion to address one of the root causes of conflict. Share through AIN experiences from other relevant networks and groups (e.g. social inclusion group; contact see Annex 1). Promote equality in hiring for socially excluded groups among AIN's members through information sharing on job opportunities and candidate profiles (e.g., Dalit information network, see Annex 1). - Continue to pro-actively publish and communicate AIN BOG at all levels, ensuring that all conflict parties are informed about the AIN BOG and the standards that I/NGOs are recommended to adhere. - Remind AIN-members on concrete steps and tools to operationalize the BOGs. For example, collect and distribute useful sample information to share what organizations are doing to operationalize the BOGs (e.g., the supportive tools appendix included here). - Generate templates for effective practices in order to save I/NGO's time, encourage immediate implementation, and allow for rapid review. Examples: one-page fact sheets, training/workshop final session expenditure review. - Generate stories about good practices and other topics to encourage replication. These can be a source of stimulation, collaboration and/or local innovation by others. This can be an important encouragement and confirmation for field staff working in conflict areas. - Establish newsletter for quarterly dissemination of relevant information to I/NGOs. Simple and short guidelines may help field staff to compile information in a concise story-like writing. - Gather information from organizations at multiple levels, document innovation, and disseminate as a reference to promote sharing.
<p>Promote coordination and collaboration among I/NGOs at district and regional level for defending and widening the space for development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Emphasize benefits of networking and collaboration. - Support district / regional networking . 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Set up networks with a clear purpose. Such clarity is more important than simply instituting a network. - Publicize benefits of networks through reports, stories, website, etc. in order to inspire networking. - Promote district level networks or other coordination mechanisms (see recommendations on Networking above). - Strengthen regional coordination among AIN-members through regular formal meetings and assignment of responsibilities.
<p>Coordinate and facilitate training and support to I/NGO staff for working in and on conflict. Thereby ensure that the best knowledge and skills become available to AIN members in the most efficient and harmonized manner.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conflict analysis - Meeting facilitation - Use of technology - Good practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collect and share information about opportunities and resource persons or organizations for capacity development for AIN staff members to work in conflict situation. - Gather conflict mediation materials and publish summary as reference. Include information from interviews with Nepali staff who excel in dealing with conflict-related dialogue.

Recommendations to AIN member Organizations

Recommendations for Dialogue

Recommendations	Possible Actions
<p>Make dialogue with all relevant actors an integral part of the I/NGO working modality. It is effective if staff are confident and well-prepared from capacitation, and if supportive tools are used.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Be proactive - Ensure reach to all relevant actors - Train and support staff - Use appropriate tools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Integrate dialogue into the regular project cycle and the planning schedule for projects. - Communicate before starting the project, share during implementation. - Train staff, in particular field staff, on communication skills. Coach and regularly update staff. - Assign lead persons for dialogue by project or working area who can support field staff in the task. - Prepare and use supportive tools for effective dialogue. See Appendix 1 for suggestions (e.g., letters, fact sheets, sign boards, public hearing-review-audit).
<p>Ensure clarity in the organization and for staff about the principles of work and the positioning of the organization.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use AIN BOGs as the baseline - Define the principles of the organization in terms of neutrality and impartiality. - Internalize with staff and partners - Use appropriate tools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promote the BOGs actively in the organization. Reflect with staff about each clause in the BOGs, train new staff on the BOGs. - Partners, not the INGO itself may be upfront locally. Thus, organize reflection workshops with partners on BOGs. Ensure that the basic principles are understood and internalized by the partners. - Share among organizations working in the same district the BOGs and ensure a consensus on the common principles by all organizations (see networking). - Remain politically neutral. Clarify among staff what this means and ensure with staff and partner organization that this is practiced. - Clarify for the organization and staff its engagement on Human Rights and a rights-based approach to development. Ensure to be impartial. Define how pro-active the organization wants to / can be in this field. Look for coordination among organizations and comparative advantages among organizations. - Prepare and use supportive tools. See Annex 1 for suggestions (e.g. AIN BOGs, AIN Partnership Guidelines, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Declaration on Right for Development).
<p>Ensure multi-level dialogue with all relevant actors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Define lead roles - Field and higher level staff to be involved - Support partners and communities as needed - Use appropriate tools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure that communities are at the forefront at local-level communication. Clarify with them the principles of the organization for the local level. - Make district and field visits by higher level staff to effectively communicate and build trust. - Clarify with partner organizations the roles in communication. Play a supportive role to partner organizations and communities. Do not force them for dialogue. - Prepare and use tools that provide a consistent communication to all actors and at all levels. See Annex 1 for suggestions (e.g. BOGs, Fact sheets, Public Sign boards, ...)
<p>Make transparency an essential part of effective dialogue at local level.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - See recommendations and actions under Transparency
<p>Consider a joint effort among organizations for dialogue, in particular, if problems of common concern need to be addressed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - See recommendations and actions under Networking

Recommendations for Transparency

Recommendations	Possible actions
<p>Codify and institutionalize transparency procedures within an organization to keep all actors equally informed and for building trust in development organizations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Institutionalize social and public audit procedures in all projects - Engage in event-based, periodic, and year-end transparency practices. - Institute transparency at multiple levels in the organization. - Use appropriate tools, including dialogue. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conduct social audits for each and every project according to a pre-defined time schedule (e.g. before starting, half-way through, at the end; periodically, e.g. once a year; ...). - Institutionalize the public audit process for infrastructure projects (e.g. public hearing before start, public review during implementation, public audit at end / during payments) - Institute rules about frequency of audits and ensure staff attendance during audits to listen and respond to queries. - Engage in transparency for all events, trainings, and activities. For example, initiate expenditure reviews at the end of trainings or other events. Allow participants to raise questions and then have them sign off on expenditure (event-based). - Institute transparency practices above the project level. Include all levels of the organization and make it a culture of the organization to publicly communicate its activities and expenditures to all actors and the public. - Support transparency practices through appropriate tools: use of social audit guidelines, public audit guidelines, project booklets, fact sheets, standard forms, display boards, etc. See Appendix 1 for suggestions.
<p>Reinforce transparency at local level with partner and community organizations to keep all actors at local level informed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Transfer management and accountability to lowest level possible - Advise and train partners and user committees on social and public audit. - Ensure that User Committees share widely and openly information about projects - Provide and advise on appropriate tools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pay local partners directly. Make fund allocations transparent. Advise and train partners on appropriate tools for social or public audit of such funds. - Make communities responsible for financial and material management at local level but ensure a transparent management and accountability to the community. - Strengthen transparency processes within communities and between executive committees of User Groups and their assemblies. Transparency should be not only among User Committee members, but to all User Group members and to all interested parties. - Provide User Committees at community level with simple tools for transparency of fund and material use, train and coach them on using these tools. This includes public boards, local fact sheets, project books at local level, meeting minutes, payment sheets, material use sheets—all publicly available and read out in front of the community.

Recommendations for Networking

<p>Establish district-level networks to build consensus on the priorities, working modalities and wide acceptance of development work in conflict areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Build consensus among organizations and assign lead roles. - Generate consensus at district level on operating and meeting modalities. - Encourage district teams, assign staff and time. - Use networks to generate a strong common position and voice during conflict. - Share information on conflict related matters. - Use appropriate tools. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Build consensus among organizations (at head office and district level) for the formation of a network and assign lead roles to some organizations to initiate the process in a district: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establish regular meeting among interested I/NGOs in the district. - Clarify objectives, meeting arrangements, funding, etc. in order to form network. - Set attainable network goals and clearly discuss barriers prohibiting goal achievement. - Determine who will coordinate meetings. Consider rotation of meeting host to distribute the burden. - Keep it simple, practical and focused on the common interest of staff in the district to create a space for development in conflict. - Head offices need to encourage district staff on transparency, collaboration and flexibility among organizations to better work in and on conflict. - Position networks, not individual organizations, at the point of contact for government officials, security forces, and conflict parties for appropriate issues of common concern by having the network communicate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a list of all I/NGOs and projects, working VDCs in the district - the AIN or network BOGs - shared concerns about working situation - Have staff from all organizations report field situation and conflict-related challenges to network immediately after returning from field visits. - Identify common problems and address collectively. Create a unified approach to shared issues through brainstorming and network response. - Support the network with appropriate tools (e.g. NGO profiles, AIN BOG, Examples from other district networks, etc.) See Appendix 1 for suggestions.
<p>Promote mutual collaboration and coordination among organizations for effective and efficient development work in and on conflict</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support concerted development work. - Encourage staff for harmonization. - Share information. - Reduce duplication across organizations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support systems for efficient information sharing among all relevant actors at district or village level both in and out of meetings for concerted development work at local level (in collaboration with and in support to local bodies of government if and where possible). - Encourage staff and provide sufficient flexibility to discuss the harmonization of procedures, rates and norms (e.g., allowances) in the district to reduce confusion and mistrust by local actors. - Share their annual progress reports, study reports, and case studies. - Periodically share program plans and procedures and identify opportunities for complementarity and collaboration. - Dedicate meeting time to generating possibilities for complimentary programming, reducing duplication, and documenting accomplishments in this area. - Take it as a common challenge for innovation. Consider the use of supportive tools and learn from other experiences (e.g. coordination through Development Organization Networks, Disaster Preparedness Networks).

Supportive Tools

This table shows tools available from AIN members. Details may be requested from the indicated source.

Category	Tool	Brief Description	Available From
Dialogue	AIN BOG	Basic Operating Guidelines for I/NGOs	http://www.ain.org.np/html/opr_guide.html
Dialogue	AIN Partnership Guidelines	Guidelines for INGO-NGO partnerships	http://www.ain.org.np/html/opr_guide.html
Dialogue (Neutrality, Impartiality)	International Human Rights Instruments and Humanitarian Laws	<p>Universal Declaration of Human Rights</p> <p>International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights</p> <p>International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights</p> <p>Declaration on the Right to Development</p> <p>Geneva Convention</p> <p>International Humanitarian Law</p>	http://www.ohchr.org/english/la/w/index.htm
Dialogue Transparency	Fact Sheet	One-page summary of program information including area, beneficiaries, time frame, donors, and budget.	www.ain.org.np
Transparency	Expenditure Review	Sheets detail event expenditure. All participants can ask questions before signing off on final day.	shaha.b.gurung@umn.org.np
Transparency	Display Board	Permanent board erected in project area detailing project, infrastructure, budget, community contribution, etc.	www.ain.org.np
Transparency	Social Audit	Guidelines for conducting social audits.	www.ain.org.np
Transparency	Public Audit	Guidelines for conducting public audits.	www.ain.org.np
Networking	Database of Dalit Professionals	Database of Professional Dalits worldwide	xx
Networking	District Disaster Preparedness Networks	Coordination among governmental, non-governmental and other actors in the district to coordinate humanitarian assistance work for conflict affected or disaster affected people	www.ain.org.np
Networking	District Coordination NEDSOD Case Study	External development organizations form a coordination group in the district: Coordination of work, mapping of VDCs, understanding about norms and rates, exchange of conflict related information, joint communication with actors in conflict	www.ain.org.np
Other	Guidelines for Safe and Effective Development in Conflict	Practical guidelines for capacity building to staff and partner organizations for working in conflict. English and Nepali versions available.	DFID/GTZ Risk Management Office (RMO) (xx977-1-) 5525431

INTRODUCTION

Background

Established in the year 1996, the Association of International NGOs (AIN) is an informal group of INGOs working in Nepal. As a vital actor in the development sector since its inception, AIN has made a niche of its own through the implementation and accomplishment of various people-centered development programs all over the country. At present the AIN comprises more than sixty INGOs working on a wide-range of issues and making noteworthy contributions to development efforts in Nepal. AIN as an umbrella organization has stood as a paragon organization for the diverse range of INGOs working in the country. AIN has been keenly facilitating and supporting its members' ideals and objectives, promoting mutual understanding, fostering camaraderie and harmony. As an ultimate platform to facilitate development cooperation, AIN has been a vehicle to transfer knowledge and information through sharing experiences and learning of the member organizations.

AIN's development work in Nepal is primarily people-centered in partnership with local organizations. AIN engages with other alliances, civil society organizations, networks and stakeholders, including the government, as appropriate in identified areas. Programs conducted by I/NGOs are for poverty reduction and sustainable development in Nepal. Improving governance, transparency and accountability of I/NGO sectors in Nepal becomes ever more important under the recently restored democratic processes as this will potentially be the right moment to demonstrate I/NGOs' capacity to contribute more towards ensuring transparent and more inclusive development. This will also help to improve the overall image of I/NGOs.

Rationale

Recognizing the growing need to work in a country afflicted by endemic conflict, AIN is committed to expand its resources on behalf of all disadvantaged people in Nepal. Over the years I/NGOs have played a crucial role as key stakeholders and partners in the development of Nepal, and we would like to continue to engage with the government, donors, various sectors of the civil society, NGOs, and poor and excluded people on these issues.

Immediately after the positive political change, I/NGOs began to consider the next steps that would be worthwhile during the transition period. AIN members understood the need to reach conflict-affected areas, so it was necessary for I/NGOs to think about how to target politically sensitive areas for future development assistance. AIN felt that there was an urgent need to exercise more space for development and that a joint initiative was required at this transitional phase. AIN recognized the need for I/NGOs to share their experiences of working within the conflict and to examine this experience in order to generate learning and recommendations for the future. The result of that endeavor is this document indicating learning about how to create space for development work during Nepal's transition process.

Methodology and scope of study

AIN set up a task force in May 2006 charged with determining how both AIN as an organization and individual AIN members can best create space for development. The task force collected 32 case studies from members over two months. Case studies were then standardized and analyzed, with additional information provided as necessary. A consultant was engaged to compile the information and draw out the learning from the documents. Case studies were reviewed to draw patterns of practices. In addition, specific best practices were noted. Learning was compiled and categorized (see Learning section) based on similarity in practice. The task force held several meetings and came to consensus on the patterns of learning and the recommendations. Based on the above, documentation of the case studies was prepared, learning was synthesized, and recommendations were made (see Recommendations section). The Task Force completed its work at the end of October 2006.

This report is not intended to be exhaustive. Other specific limitations of this report include the following:

- Much sensitive learning was not reported by organizations.
- Case studies were more oriented to rural issues than urban ones.
- Case studies reflected greater emphasis on issues surrounding Maoists than Security Forces.
- Learning was drawn more from success. Fewer studies discussed failure.
- Some learning in this document are the consolidated ones drawing on different case studies

Individual case studies are not published and are not publicly available as they may contain sensitive information. However, some of the tools and methods AIN members have used are listed in Appendix 1.

LEARNING

Overview

Reviewing the 32 case studies submitted by AIN members reveals both patterns of effective programming as well as specific innovative practices to achieve particular goals. The learning drawn from AIN's case studies can be broadly grouped around three topics: Dialogue, Transparency, and Networking.

Within these three learning topics, guidelines for effective programming are given. These guidelines may at first seem to be common practice or common sense, but many organizations emphasized that they learned the importance of these items first hand, either by not doing them and observing the resultant problems, or by adhering to them and noticing that their programs ran more smoothly.

Additionally, AIN members have documented innovative ways to address dialogue, transparency, and networking. Examples of practices that have achieved specific goals and contribute to an organization's standard of excellence are described with the aim of encouraging other organizations both to think in innovative ways about their programming and to potentially adopt successful practices.

Finally, while not documenting a specific type of practice or learning, a number of case studies described the impact of development programming on the lives of individuals. These proved to be powerful stories that should be considered in their own right. While they are not sources of best practices, they still offer learning that can inspire effective development. These studies are grouped as Programming in a Conflict-Affected Society.

Dialogue

Dialogue and coordination with various actors are essential skills for conducting work during the transition. As power, authority, and social position shift for conflict-related parties, organizations should expect that government officials, politicians, former guerillas, and local community leaders will all be highly concerned with dialogue and information. Engaging in effective dialogue will be integral to the success of programming during Nepal's transition.

Dialogue is discussion directed at exploration of a particular subject or resolution of a problem. In the context of Nepal, dialogue is often used to indicate the process of resolving conflicts. Dialogue, however, is not limited to communication with conflict parties and authorities. In the broader view, dialogue also includes the communication with communities, stakeholders, partner organizations, etc. about development programs. Effective dialogue reaches out to all concerned parties and at all levels, from community to government. It is achieved through an interactive process, written information, meetings with stakeholders, public audits, donor reports, and other means. Most importantly, dialogue is not just explaining about an I/NGO and its project, it is also about listening to the other parties' concerns and acknowledging them.

Patterns of Learning

Both informal and formal dialogues with concerned parties have been utilized successfully, based on the requirements of the situation. Priorities for dialogue are to communicate about programs and to answer questions, ensuring two-way communication. **To have the greatest impact, dialogue needs to be conducted at multiple levels.** Partner CBOs might dialogue with Maoists* at the local level while partner NGOs often dialogue at the district level, and INGOs/Funding Partners dialogue at regional and national levels. This strategy works both for resolving conflict and also for facilitating smooth implementation overall.

Case studies repeatedly revealed the importance of having informed, confident, and respectful staff when engaged in dialogue. In many instances the community or project staff were initially perceived as not respecting conflict-related parties, either through ignoring initial requests for information or not consulting with the parties prior to decision-making. This cannot be over-emphasized: a respectful approach is necessary for all dialogue and serves program goals more effectively.

Dialogue should be the opening phase of all programming in order to gain acceptance of the program by all parties before activities are started. All stakeholders and concerned parties should always be invited and encouraged to participate in community consultations and meetings. It was a common error that organizations or communities ignored initial contacts by conflict parties or failed to include them as planning progressed. In this way, organizations

* Throughout this document, the term "Maoist" is used to collectively denote combatants, non-combatants, and militia of the Communist Party Nepal.

sometimes created the impression that conflict parties were not equally respected participants in dialogue. Parties or individuals who feel left out of dialogue are more likely to be a source of program disruption later. One respondent elaborated, “As Maoists are also part of the communities, their presence in planning and implementation process is inevitable. Inviting them to participate in and be part of the development of their community and area eases the implementation process because if the responsibilities are accrued to them, it somehow ensures a sense of ownership and pride in doing good for their own community.”

In addition, dialogue is an inherent part of participatory planning and implementation, a standard process for effective development. Ensuring through dialogue that programs are people-owned places local beneficiaries at the forefront of program implementation and as vested mediators in conflict resolution. Local NGOs (not necessarily district based) usually have closer relationships with local communities and can implement project activities effectively during transition.

Space is created for dialogue in part through regular communication and visits by all concerned parties including the staff of funding agencies and INGOs. Studies consistently stressed that regular visits and communication are more important than a one-shot event. This applies to project staff visiting sites but also to higher level staff who were often less visible. In some instances, although local staff shared information with communities, the chairperson of the local partner organization and main project implementers did not and they had less presence in the village. Such notable absences were a common error and were the source of doubt or other problems later on. One caveat to this is that in some instances the presence of outsiders can raise the expectation of Maoists or political parties and complicate the situation. INGOs may at times need to effectively support local NGOs from a distance.

Modalities of Dialogue

In the case of meetings regarding specific problems with conflict parties, selecting the appropriate team as the mediators for dialogue and empowering them with information is critical. They need to be well-informed about all aspects of the program and organization, possessing up-to-date knowledge about working modality, strategies, funding modality, security guidelines, activities, and budget. Mediators should be able to answer questions about the program thoroughly and provide supporting evidence as necessary. They must also be individuals with a high level of emotional maturity due to the inherent stress and tension entailed in such meetings.

In dealing with conflict, development workers must maintain neutrality and impartiality.* Conflict parties are often concerned about biased alliances and flow of sensitive information. It is essential to actively communicate with relevant parties and convince them of neutrality. I/NGO's are present to aid people in need, not to influence political outcomes. Money is also regularly a source of concern. I/NGO's can support their position of neutrality in part by communicating clearly from the beginning that they do not raise funds to support any political bodies or entities. **If programs have transparent budgets as well as clear benefits to people in need, parties are more likely to be convinced that funds are dedicated to program goals.**

Dialogue for conflict issues should again occur at multiple levels. Additionally, community involvement in conflict resolution is essential. Communities are in the best position to resolve certain types of conflict because they are the program beneficiaries and can directly attest to their need and the program benefit. **Clear project impact, dedicated staff, and strong community support are the best ways to help make space for development. Communities should demonstrate high satisfaction and demand to continue programs and activities.** Many studies showed that this is what created the space for their programs, though few asked communities to coordinate in advance for program permission—an approach that some organizations found effective. At the same time, it is that I/NGOs must be careful not to put undue pressure on communities to be the representative for dialogue with Maoists. Maoists may view this as a misuse of communities or may become more aggressive towards a community. The communities themselves should decide if they want to enter dialogue and how they want to. If they are reluctant to do so, I/NGOs should not hesitate to be the representatives in dialogue.

Dialogue helped to create space for programming in some instances by identifying the actual sources of conflict. In multiple studies, I/NGOs stated that Maoists were unhappy with programs because their cadres were leaving the force to be involved in program activities. They were losing their labor force, and people's revolutionary zeal was being “calmed” by programs. Dialogue about these issues helped to pave the way for programs to continue by acknowledging their concerns as valid without necessarily giving way to them.

* Neutrality indicates that I/NGO's do not take a stance on particular political systems or thought. Impartiality indicates that on issues where I/NGO's do take a stance (e.g., human rights, social inclusion) they deal fairly with any parties involved based on internationally enshrined human rights standards. In this report, we use neutrality to encompass both issues because this is the way information was reported in the case studies.

It is important to note that dialogue does not mean compromising principles. I/NGO staff should be clear about their organization's principles and firm about upholding them. **In many cases, it is necessary to temporarily stop work in order to maintain the integrity of a program.** Staff should not be afraid to cease work until issues can be resolved satisfactorily. Such patience has resulted in Maoists, security forces, and government bodies recognizing an organization's impartiality and integrity.

AIN Basic Operating Guidelines

Worthy of particular note for general dialogue and for conflict resolution are AIN's Basic Operating Guidelines (AIN BOG). The AIN BOG were repeatedly cited as a useful tool for explaining about procedure and convincing conflicting parties about what I/NGOs can and cannot do, as well as convincing them of I/NGO neutrality. I/NGOs must agree to adhere strictly to the AIN BOG if they are to use them for dialogue; otherwise, the organization's credibility will be undermined. The AIN BOG are also a more effective tool when an entire group agrees to their use and presents them to concerned parties collectively (see networking section below). AIN BOG can also be publicly displayed on a fixed board for the reference of staff and community alike. AIN members consistently report that using the AIN BOG for effective dialogue enables local staff to implement programs more confidently, fearlessly, and effectively. The AIN BOG serve as a basis for discussion and a convincing standard that is guiding the behavior of program staff.

Finally, as most studies revealed, dialogue and transparency go hand-in-hand. Transparency is often a subject of program dialogue as well as a tool for empowering communities and resolving conflict. It will be addressed in a separate section below.

Innovative Practices

As Nepal moves through transition and conflict-related parties are both more accessible and more open to dialogue, engaging in proactive communication will be increasingly important. Case studies specifically revealed the importance of proactive communication. Two innovative practices were tied to proactive communication.

Letters to SPA and Maoists

In the past, engaging in dialogue has posed specific risks, such as having an NGO labeled by the government as colluding with "terrorists" if they were known to be communicating with the Maoists. During Nepal's current transition, such risks are at a new low. Maoist leaders are more easily seen, found, and met than in earlier times. Organizations are now taking advantage of this space to communicate openly and clearly with all relevant parties.

One field-level organization began to inform both Seven Party Alliance (SPA) and Maoists about programs and activities planned for implementation in their area. Letters were sent not only to the Maoists but to all political parties to obtain their support for the programs to be executed. In addition, the letter requested that they pass the message through their channels to their staff at the village level. In some cases, their views on particular aspects of implementation were requested. For example, they were asked how they can help the organization to reach and benefit the poorest community members.

As a result of these proactive letters, both SPA and Maoist officials were found more positive and cooperative because they felt included and respected/valued. At field level, the Maoist workers were found to be more liberal and flexible than in earlier times, because they were informed through their own channels that the organization has met the Maoist leaders in their party office.

Public Fact Sheet

Two organizations prepare one-page fact sheets for each project and use them as a basis for initiating communication and dialogue. The fact sheets can indicate project title, goals and objectives, procedures, beneficiaries, budget, contribution of different stakeholders, time frame, donors, and other relevant information. One organization distributes the fact sheets at the local and district level. Another displays it in the implementing partner's office (where it is accessible to the public) with a note that the office will show the details to interested persons. These fact sheets are also a useful tool for transparency.

Further Examples of Innovative Proactive Dialogue

Members have learned over time that initiating dialogue and engaging in proactive communication can create a more favorable environment for development. As one respondent has remarked, "It is always good to have pro-active communication and coordination rather than doing at the last minutes [or] only when felt necessary." Ideas used by AIN members for proactive communication include:

- Providing a brief written introduction *in Nepali* about INGO/funding partners to clarify organization's purpose.

- Engaging in capacity development of local partners to develop their confidence and make them more proactive for local-level dialogue.
- Clarifying to locals at the beginning of a project how threats or donation requests will be handled.
- Initiating the dialogue process instead of waiting for concerned parties to approach the local NGO.
- Issuing a press release emphasizing AIN's BOG and asking concerned parties to respect these guidelines.

Transparency

“Financial transparency is a buzz word used in all types of organization, be it a government organization, non-government development organization or financial company. In most of the cases, financial transparency is a much talked about, but less practiced issue.”

This succinct statement on transparency by an AIN member conveys both the prevailing view in many organizations about the importance of transparency as well as the inherent barriers to its practice. Transparency, however, holds the key not only to creating space for development during transition, but also to setting a new organizational standard across sectors during Nepal's transition.

Patterns of Learning

What is most noticeable across the case studies is the lack of patterns for specific practices. Patterns of general or broad strategies exist, but specifics remain idiosyncratic or not explicit. This emphasizes the relative nascency of actual transparency practice in most organizations. Many AIN members stressed the need to institutionalize transparency. Most are currently achieving transparency in various ways and to varying degrees, but few have specifically codified standards for transparency in practice. One point on which everyone agrees, however, is that transparency develops trust and promotes accountability. Learning from AIN's case studies is a combination of broad patterns and specific practices.

Social and public auditing is becoming more common for achieving transparency in development work. It is more commonly used among AIN members, less so by national and local NGOs. The audits entail clearly explaining a project budget and detailed allocated breakdown for all activities as well as payment rate and working procedures of the project. Multiple studies mentioned the effective practice of using large flip charts for greater visibility at public meeting. Another clear practice was that audits should be organized not as events but as a part of the dialogue or orientation process.

Organizations are beginning to establish clear rules surrounding audits and other forms of transparency such as conducting a final public audit at the end of each program or requiring public audits at least three times in each and every activity. One organization has specified that the presence of program staff at audits is mandatory. Another has initiated a system of informing the group at the end of each activity/training about the norms and funds used for the particular activity or training.

Transparency should occur at multiple levels: community, district, and national. Case studies which reflect multi-level transparency report broad spectrum benefits and spontaneous transfer of the practice. **To program for transparency at different levels, there is a need to strengthen processes and procedures that encourage transparency within communities, between executive committees of User Groups and their assemblies, between I/NGOs and training participants, etc.** Transparency should also be pervasive, occurring for all activities, events, and trainings.

Most case study organizations have made a standard practice of paying local partners directly. This often also entails making local communities responsible for financial management of activities. Doing so builds trust and local organizational capacity. Moreover, by implementing transparency from the ground up in this way, I/NGOs not only alleviate concerns about how money may be diluted as it filters through organizations but also establish a credible norm for instituting transparency: giving the money directly to the people spending it at the grassroots level.

Spreading Demand for Transparency

One of the most potent examples of the power of transparency goes beyond simply building trust within a particular project. When effectively and reliably implemented, transparency can massively empower local people and can help to spread good governance. One case study reported that social audits had been used as a participatory process of evaluating program achievements and shortcomings, as a forum for revealing financial information to relevant stakeholders (especially addressing expenditure and cost effectiveness), and as a way to communicate organizational policies of inclusiveness and transparency. After participating in the social audits, communities in various program districts started pressuring other organizations to become more transparent and accountable. As reported: “Thus, social audits have also empowered poor and excluded people and have succeeded in making them aware about their right to

information. Local communities started questioning the transparency of various government institutions. Due to their unrelenting efforts a number of schools and health post have also made their accounts transparent. During the process the villages also managed to dig out the misappropriated funds proving its own accountability [and also its ability to advocate for] transparency and accountability to improve and strengthen good governance....Social audits can be an effective forum to empower the poor and excluded people to demand for their rights.”

Innovative Practices

Final Day Training Expenditure Sign-Off

One exemplary model of transparency occurring immediately after the completion of the training or workshop between I/NGOs and local partners was discussed in case study. At the final session of the final day expenditures for the training or event are clearly written with different headings on large paper or on register. All participants are informed of the total expenditure in different headings, and then participants get a chance to raise any questions related to the finances and budget. After all questions are addressed, the participants sign the expenditure sheet.

This practice of transparency has been very well received by local NGO partners. Participants of trainings and workshops gave a very positive response and affirmed that they have never seen this done before. Some participants indicated that they always had suspicion about the expenditure made for such programs/trainings, but this type of action has eliminated their mistrust. One participant even said now that he knows such a big amount had to be spent for the training, “he will be more responsible to practice the knowledge and skills learnt during the training.” Participants are pleased with immediate transparency and this is a prime example of an I/NGO modeling the type of transparency they expect from partners and incorporating transparency at multiple levels.

Display Board

In order to increase transparency and to preempt questions from community and concerned parties, one idea is to create a display board in all project areas as a form of social auditing. The board displays major information on the particular project such as project area, settlement, demographic information, total infrastructure as relevant (e.g., tap stands, latrines, length of pipelines), socio-economic status of the community, total project budget, and people's contribution towards the project. Display boards offer easy accessibility of information, greater transparency, and easy monitoring. They also provide the basis for dialogue since community and concerned parties have access to accurate information. Moreover, they have also helped to reduce hardships for project staff by effectively reducing the frequency of questioning by both the community and rebel forces.

Networking

Whether evolving organically based on common need or more explicitly under the influence of a well-established organization, networks of development organizations offer a much-needed forum for sharing program achievements, information, lessons learned, good practices, and constraints and issues of operating environment. They hold the potential to increase the frequency of collaborative and complementary programs, not only among I/NGO's but also with other institutions including government offices and agencies.

While some networks are clearly functioning effectively, as the case studies reveal, the challenge now is twofold: standardizing good practice so that new networks can learn from the experience of others and determining the barriers and effective practices for achieving group goals.

Patterns of Learning

Networks must function through consensus. Multiple case studies revealed that **clarifying expectations among members during the earliest stages of network formation is integral to their success.** This includes not only setting objectives for the group, but also discussing financial support, staff allocation, and logistics of meetings. Successful groups have made these points very clear. In one situation where ambiguity remained, the network failed to coalesce. During planning for a collaborative event, substantial initial interest was expressed about creating a network. As soon as the event ended, however, the interest fizzled out. People who tried to move the process forward found it difficult to even organize a meeting, whereas prior to the event, meetings were held with good turnout. This was attributed to different expectations and visions for the group on the part of various INGOs.

Case studies revealed that effective networks articulate clear objectives and implement systems to achieve those objectives. Common group objectives entail information sharing, problem-solving, program coordination/cooperation,

and reducing duplication. Even the most fundamental goal of sharing program information requires a system of doing so when a dozen organizations, each with multiple programs, are involved. Setting up the basic information sharing can prove to be a challenge, so systems and formats for achieving this objective need to be shared across networks. A useful practice of compiling I/NGO information can be creating an I/NGO profile for all organizations working in the area. One network with such a system in place still reports that while study reports are shared, periodic sharing of plans, procedures, and annual progress reports is not in practice. Other networks will no doubt face the same challenge.

Widespread concern exists regarding duplication of effort/resources and lack of coordination among I/NGOs working in overlapping sector or geographic areas. By sharing and exchanging available resources such as information, human resources, materials, and money, I/NGOs can heighten the impact of their programs and better serve communities. One network has actively pursued this and the result is multiple programs where one organization's project is integrated with another for synergistic effect (for details see District Coordination through NEDSOD, reference in Annex 1). This serves communities better and also maximizes organizational resources. One study reports that two clusters of INGOs and NGOs—the former with financial resources and the latter with other types of resources—can work in the same platform effectively and on equal footing, if collective planning is made for some specific purpose (like a special event). Programming for a very specific purpose or event can be an excellent method of initiating collaboration due to its more manageable nature, as well as the motivating factor of a clear result. Successful collaboration will help organizations to establish effective processes for collaboration which they can then build upon for future projects. One caveat here is that special events generate more interest and motivation than day-to-day programming. Collaborators should take this into account as they transition to larger projects.

Reducing duplication and promoting complementary programs are primary objectives of most networks, but methods of achieving these objectives appear to lack codification or follow through. For instance, even when sharing of project plans is specified as a means of reducing duplication, organizations are not actually doing this in the network. Most positive outcomes in this area seem to arise spontaneously on a case-by-case basis as networks meet and share information. Due to close coordination among some network members, some development agencies have begun complementing each other's activities in the field for synergistic effects. Monitoring the processes and outcome of these initial projects will be crucial to spreading the practice more broadly. Reducing duplication is directly related to working in conflict areas because Maoists may view donor money as lining pockets not serving people. Duplication of programs confirms the idea that programs are not effectively serving communities while reducing duplication can increase the confidence of Maoists, security forces, and government that programs are intended to serve the populace in the most effective way.

During the period of conflict, networks learned first-hand the power of unity. Multiple studies described the advantages of functioning as a unified whole to address common problems. When conflict was severe, staff shared information with the whole network on the field situation immediately after returning from each field visit. This greatly increased the knowledge available—far beyond what any organization would have alone. Moreover, one network came to a consensus to abide strictly by the AIN BOG. The network, as opposed to individual I/NGOs then approached the district administration and security forces to familiarize officials with the working areas, modality, partner NGOs, and CSOs of network members. The network also shared the AIN BOG and established their neutrality. The result was that government officials and the army had greater confidence in the honesty of network members, and staff were able to work with the cooperation of line agencies and without harassment. The unity of the network helped to establish the legitimacy of their message. Unified networks have greater power when entering into dialogue. This is particularly important in periods of conflict because having greater power and political weight becomes integral to program implementation.

Network meetings can be monthly, quarterly, or otherwise based on group needs, but their frequency should be clearly articulated. Networks need to take into account the limited time and travel resources for most staff. One group has addressed this by trying to coordinate the date of the meeting with other district level events that most members attend. Moreover, case studies reveal a considerable burden placed on staff responsible for coordination. **This is generally a responsibility added-on to a full-time position, but coordination for large groups (including planning meetings, communicating with members, and creating and disseminating minutes) can become a full-time job in and of itself. There is a need to build appropriate understanding within organizations about this reality.**

Innovative Practices

Responding Collectively to Shared Problems

During the period of conflict, I/NGOs in one district decided to respond collectively to their shared problem. When Maoists called staff for a meeting, the actual meeting location was never given beforehand, therefore I/NGO representatives were always unsure where their meeting would be and how long it would take. After receiving another request from the Maoists, local organizations came together and brainstormed about the consequences of accepting or

rejecting the request. The group decided to send a collective letter telling the Maoists that they cannot come to meet them because they do not know the purpose of the meeting and location. No I/NGO representative went to the Maoist's place for a meeting. After that, the organizations received no response from the Maoists. However, I/NGOs interpretation of the situation was that Maoists were more cooperative than before.

This is an example of the ability of a group to take action that no individual member wants to take alone. When a group or network is united, it has much greater strength for problem solving and dialogue. Surprisingly, in this instance, the reporting AIN member says, "I do not think NGOs/INGOs in [the district] have reflected on this event for learning purposes. I think not learning from such simple event is the weakness." Networks may not realize their own power and transfer learning from one situation to another.

Compiling Rates and Developing Norms

One network realized that communities across the district had questions about finances such as DSAs, subsidies, etc. To minimize such ambiguities, the network compiled the training/workshop and other field allowance rates practiced by its members. Now this information is available to members who want to check on area norms. The network also wanted to standardize such rates and develop a common norm, but they have not yet managed to achieve this second step. Nonetheless, being aware of the need and moving towards a solution is an excellent example of how a network can promote coordination among I/NGOs.

Rotating Meeting Hosts

One approach for addressing the burden that coordination places on staff has been to rotate the network meeting location and host organization. At each network meeting, the group determines the next meeting's host organization/project, date, and venue. The host organization plays the role of convener and coordinator throughout the time until the next meeting. Rotating the meeting in this fashion distributes coordination work across all members.

Programming in a Conflict-Affected Society

Many AIN members, when solicited for case studies on the topic of creating space for development, responded with stories about the impact development programs have had on the lives of individuals deeply affected by Nepal's civil conflict. While both the programs and outcomes are idiosyncratic, these very personal stories of suffering, aid, and achievement highlight the profound effect development can have during the transition to begin to address fallout from the conflict. They subtly highlight the effect of programming that addresses impacts of the conflict including internally displaced persons (IDPs), trauma-affected individuals, and inclusion of disadvantaged groups. In some cases, substantial space existed for development and programming filled an important role in those areas. Such programming has received bipartisan support because it is clearly aimed at assisting the members of society most in need. As one study noted regarding support of all parties for people in remote areas, "when it comes to coffee promotion program, it was a password for accessing even the remotest area in the districts."

Studies on programs aimed at inclusion of Dalits, ex-Kamaiyas*, and other disadvantaged groups reflected how exclusion leads to individual frustration about lack of employment opportunities, unfair social treatment, etc. Disadvantaged groups are at a high-risk for recruitment into conflict. Government policies support inclusion, but programming for inclusion has long been limited in execution. As one respondent remarks, "Despite the policy and plan, there was not much work done on Dalit inclusion neither from government sector nor from non-government sector. As a result Dalits were more attracted by the Maoists capturing their frustration with the existing regime." In order to minimize this, programming during the transition can and should promote inclusion at multiple levels of society. Effective programs are helping to bring disadvantaged children into the mainstream school system (as well as monitoring their attendance and exam pass rates), to employ Dalit teachers as part of educational programs, and to increase professional employment opportunities for Dalits. Employing Dalits as teachers not only creates jobs for the disadvantaged populace but also places them in a position of being a role model for Dalit children. Creating a database of professional Dalits helps to track their employment. The collected quantitative data are then a strong instrument for policy change. Social inclusion is also being modeled by I/NGOs through diversity and affirmative action in hiring for their own organizational staff.

Individuals who have been internally displaced due to the conflict are often confronted with the impossibility of supporting themselves in new areas where they have no land or need different skill. One respondent comments, "Everywhere one can find people who have left their families and homes in their villages hoping to find a better life in

* Dalits are a socially excluded caste. Ex-Kamaiyas are freed bonded laborers, also socially excluded.

the city. One can find youth who have turned to often violent means in frustration being unable to fend for themselves.” Many studies discussed the powerful impact of small skill training or income generation programs on individual lives. Women trained to be SAFA tempo drivers, farmers trained to plant coffee as a cash crop, and women’s cooperatives which are now self-sustaining, income-generating development groups of their own—these are all examples of small-scale programs which are reaching out to poor and displaced people and helping them to reestablish themselves and reintegrate into society. Without such programs, transition is more likely to lead back into conflict instead of into a stable peace.

At times when the immediate goal of the program met with resistance, I/NGOs have engaged in more “software” programming which is intended to build awareness around certain issues. This has proven effective in opening the door for “hardware” programming to proceed with greater participation and support. Promoting awareness can be very useful for gaining trust and commitment to a program.

A final point of learning is only touched upon in these case studies. Society is rife with individuals who have witnessed or directly experienced violence or who have lost family members and often the family’s primary wage earner. This is forcing children into roles of earners and caregivers and is creating a broad spectrum of psychological issues in Nepal’s society. While psycho-social support is beyond the scope of this report, anecdotal evidence suggests that this dimension of working in the transition period may need special attention from I/NGOs. Stories of individuals and families whose lives have been transformed through the assistance of I/NGOs are a powerful indicator of the need for programming and the benefit it offers to this conflict-affected society.

Summary of Learning

Dialogue

Approach

- Proactive communication is essential and highly effective. Engaging in communication at the last minute or after a problem has emerged, is not effective. Communication initiated before the project starts is most effective.
- Partner organizations can coordinate to conduct dialogue at multiple levels: community, district, regional, and national.
- Organizations have learned the necessity of addressing problems immediately. “A small event can create great problems if not responded in time.”
- Dialogue does not mean compromising principles. Patience and willingness to temporarily cease work will result in recognition of an organization’s impartiality and integrity. Pushing for a quick result is not the best course of action.

Tools

- The AIN BOG have been used to shift decision-making responsibility away from individuals engaged in dialogue. AIN BOG are presented as organizational rules which must be adhered to.
- Organizations maintain neutrality through transparency and dedication to program objectives.
- Organizations can use letters to political parties, fact sheets, capacity development of local NGOs, and press releases to facilitate dialogue.
- Dialogue can be used to ascertain/acknowledge concerns of relevant parties without succumbing to agreement pressure.
- Clear project impact, dedicated staff, strong community support, and the AIN BOG have been shown as the best basis for using dialogue to help make space for development.
- Dialogue is listening to others’ perspective, not just explaining about an I/NGO and its project.
- Commitment to transparency is a key element of dialogue.

Actors

- Staff who demonstrate they are responsive and confident in their project by answering queries in a timely fashion and with conviction in the benefits of the project are better representatives for dialogue.
- Effective mediators of conflict possess a high level of emotional maturity and are well-informed and up-to-date on all aspects of the program and organization.
- Ensuring through dialogue that programs are people-owned places local beneficiaries at the forefront of program implementation and as vested mediators in conflict resolution. However, no undue pressure should be placed on communities to **be** at the forefront of dialogue.

- Regular visits and communication with all parties and by higher-level staff have proven more important than one-shot events. Having only local staff visiting communities or engaging in dialogue with conflict parties has created obstacles.
- Respectful, honest, and clear communication has proven important for development workers at every level.

Transparency

Approach

- Actual transparency practice is in its nascence in most organizations. Transparency is perceived as important but a profound need exists to institutionalize it and codify specific rules and practices.
- Transparency can be practiced at multiple levels: community, district, and national.
- Transparency can be more pervasive, occurring for all activities, events and trainings.
- Benefits of transparency spread and grow. Implementing transparency empowers local people to demand transparency from other organizations including government institutions. This in turn promotes good governance.

Tools

- Social auditing is standard practice for achieving transparency.
- Establishing clear rules facilitates transparency, such as making the presence of program staff mandatory at audits and specifying how often audits should occur.
- Engaging in expenditure transparency during the final session of workshops is a way for I/NGOs to model transparency at higher organizational levels.
- Processes and procedures for transparency, specifically within communities, between executive committees of User Groups and their assemblies, between I/NGOs and training participants, etc., are not yet strong enough.
- Posting display boards detailing project, budget, and beneficiaries has greatly helped to promote transparency in communities.

Actors

- Paying local partners directly and making local communities responsible for financial management of activities builds trust and develops local organizational capacity.
- Paying local partners directly and making local communities responsible for financial management is also a new and replicable standard for implementing transparency from the grassroots level upwards.

Networking

Approach

- Networks offer a much-needed forum for sharing information and concerns and for increasing the frequency of collaborative and complementary programs among I/NGO's, government offices, etc.
- Development agencies have begun complementing each other's activities in the field for synergistic effects. Monitoring the processes and outcome of these initial projects will be crucial to spreading the practice more broadly.
- The unity of a network can help to establish the legitimacy of their message. Unified networks have greater power when entering into dialogue. This is particularly important in periods of conflict because having greater power and political weight becomes integral to program implementation.

Tools

- There is a need to standardize good practice so that new networks can learn from the experience of others and determine the barriers and effective practices for achieving group goals.
- Clarifying expectations early is integral to success—including setting objectives, financial support, staff allocation, and meeting logistics.
- Network meeting dates can be coordinated with other district level events that most members attend in order to facilitate attendance.
- Programming for a very specific purpose or event was shown as a good method of initiating collaboration due to its more manageable nature, as well as the motivating factor of a clear result.
- Multiple studies described the advantages of functioning as a unified whole to address common problems.
- A useful practice of compiling I/NGO information can be creating an I/NGO profile for all organizations working in the area. Additionally, networks should pro-actively share study reports, work plans, procedures, and annual progress reports to make networking more operative.

Actors

- Network meetings place a considerable burden on staff responsible for coordination. Rotation of host organization and coordination responsibilities can alleviate this burden.

- Reducing duplication directly relates to an I/NGO's ability to work within conflict because it is convincing evidence to the Maoists, security forces, government bodies, and political parties that the priority of funding is to serve the populace effectively, not promote the organization and its staff.

Programming in a Conflict-Affected Society

Approach

- Programming has promoted inclusion at multiple levels of society by ensuring that disadvantaged peoples (e.g., Dalits, Kamaiyas) are targeted for programs and are also hired by I/NGO's at the project level.
- Social inclusion has also been modeled by I/NGOs through diversity and affirmative action in hiring for their own higher-level organizational staff.
- To create a stable political and economic situation, programs are reaching out to poor, disadvantaged, and displaced people to help them to establish themselves financially and integrate into society. For urban IDPs and disadvantaged castes, development is having a profound impact on individual lives.

Tools

- Concrete stories can be good for sharing, seeing impact of development, and identifying benefits to target groups.
- Some programs have generated greater trust and participation through a balance between awareness and other "software" programming and more quantifiable, action-oriented "hardware" programming.

APPENDIX 1: Supportive Tools

This table shows tools available from AIN members. Details may be requested from the indicated source.

Category	Tool	Brief Description	Available From
Dialogue	AIN BOG	Basic Operating Guidelines for I/NGOs	http://www.ain.org.np/html/opr_guide.html
Dialogue	AIN Partnership Guidelines	Guidelines for INGO-NGO partnerships	http://www.ain.org.np/html/opr_guide.html
Dialogue (Neutrality, Impartiality)	International Human Rights Instruments and Humanitarian Laws	Universal Declaration of Human Rights International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights Declaration on the Right to Development Geneva Convention International Humanitarian Law	http://www.ohchr.org/english/la/w/index.htm
Dialogue Transparency	Fact Sheet	One-page summary of program information including area, beneficiaries, time frame, donors, and budget.	www.ain.org.np
Transparency	Expenditure Review	Sheets detail event expenditure. All participants can ask questions before signing off on final day.	shaha.b.gurung@umn.org.np
Transparency	Display Board	Permanent board erected in project area detailing project, infrastructure, budget, community contribution, etc.	www.ain.org.np
Transparency	Social Audit	Guidelines for conducting social audits.	www.ain.org.np
Transparency	Public Audit	Guidelines for conducting public audits.	www.ain.org.np
Networking	Database of Dalit Professionals	Database of Professional Dalits worldwide	xx
Networking	District Disaster Preparedness Networks	Coordination among governmental, non-governmental and other actors in the district to coordinate humanitarian assistance work for conflict affected or disaster affected people	www.ain.org.np
Networking	District Coordination NEDSOD Case Study	External development organizations form a coordination group in the district: Coordination of work, mapping of VDCs, understanding about norms and rates, exchange of conflict related information, joint communication with actors in conflict	www.ain.org.np
Other	Guidelines for Safe and Effective Development in Conflict	Practical guidelines for capacity building to staff and partner organizations for working in conflict. English and Nepali versions available.	DFID/GTZ Risk Management Office (RMO) (xx977-1-) 5525431