Dear Readers

I have been at the helm of the Delegation of the European Union to Nepal for nearly a year now as its first resident ambassador. The past ten months I must say have been quite intensive and productive in that we at the Delegation have been working at our full potential to assist different development sectors both through sector budget support and bilateral cooperation.

In June, we signed a joint financing agreement with the government of Nepal to support the School Sector Reform Programme that will benefit from budgetary support of 26 million Euros, half of which is being borne by the European Union and half by the UK Department For International Development.

We have also been evaluating the final reports from projects implemented under the Vulnerable Communities Package (VCP) with a total disbursement of €6,750,000. All of the eight projects implemented under this budget support will complete their 48 months of full operational cycle in October.

The feedback I have received from the projects is something to take note of. They seemed to have toiled hard to meet the set objectives and bring about positive changes in their respective sectors of work mainly focussed on addressing the concerns and problems of those affected by the past conflict.

It must be reckoned that development initiatives last longer and are more meaningful when the stakeholders have a feeling of ownership in the projects launched. All that the EU can do is share its expertise and extend whatever financial assistance possible in the form of a goodwill gesture. It is up to the government and the community to give continuity to the best practices and inculcate a sense of ownership towards projects at the local level.

This alone can contribute in a meaningful way to the ongoing process of speeding up the development endeavours in diverse sectors. I take this opportunity to draw your attention to the fact that the EU assistance has been focussed on giving impetus to the efforts of the Government of Nepal in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Whilst there has been a positive stock taking of the impact of EU funded projects in Nepal; there always exists the question of how can we really multiply the impact and reach out to Nepali citizens who are in dire need of help.

This would only be possible if the political parties in Nepal succeed to overcome the hurdles and forge a consensus to steer Nepal’s peace and constitution writing process ahead. The twin goals should indeed be accorded top priority. In relation to the same, the Delegation of the European Union joins hands with the 15 other diplomatic missions and warmly welcomes the consensus among the parties to seek an extension of the UNMIN’s role in Nepal by four months.

Being the well wishers of Nepal, we urge the parties to uphold the provisions in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) and the provisions in all the past agreements to take the peace process to a logical conclusion.

Finally, I would like to draw your attention to some major events in Europe in the past weeks and months. As you may recall, the European Union initiated changes in its institutional structure and functions after the enforcement of the Lisbon Treaty on the 1st of December, 2009.

Two fixed term permanent posts — one that of the High Representative for Common Security and Foreign Policy to be executed through the institution of the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the other – President of the Council of the European Union were created.

The Council of the European Union established the EEAS on 26 July and set out its organization and functioning. It will work in cooperation with the diplomatic services of the Member States and comprise officials from relevant departments of the General Secretariat of the Council and the Commission, as well as staff seconded from the national and diplomatic services of member states.

The other major development was that Belgium took over the rotating presidency of the European Union from Spain starting 1st of June, 2010. After the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, the role of the rotating presidency was changed. In some of the fields like General Affairs and External Relations Council or European Council, the rotating presidency has given its place to permanent Representative or President of the European Council.

Nevertheless, the role of the rotating presidency remains important in sector specific work of the EU Council (energy, transport, education, environment etc). The Embassy of Denmark has assumed the role of the local presidency on behalf of Belgium here in Nepal.

Last but not least, I would like to reiterate the fact that the institutional changes will not have any impact on the policy of the European Union towards Nepal. The EU will always stand by and assist in whatever way possible to establish itself as a true friend of Nepal.

Alexander Spachis
Ambassador
European Union Delegation to Nepal
EU partners witness changes in the lives of the conflict affected

All projects under the Vulnerable Communities Package to end in October

The decade long conflict displaced many Nepalese from their homes. Many were forced to flee their villages for fear of intimidation. The problems that came in a row got them confused and completely distress. Following the signing of the peace agreement in November, 2006, the Delegation of the European Union to Nepal and the Nepal Government felt the pressing need to launch projects directed at restoring the confidence of the internally displaced people, creating an environment for them to return to their homes and start their life afresh amidst renewed hopes.

In 2007 the EU launched the Call for Proposals: “Assistance to Vulnerable Groups and Communities (VCPs) most affected by the internal conflict in Nepal”. This Call was announced shortly after the Peace Agreement was signed. Eight projects were selected in order to address the basic needs of vulnerable groups and communities most affected by the conflict for a total financial amount of about €6,750,000.

The eight projects that were assisted by the European Union were— (1) Working with the Vulnerable Communities to Improve Reproductive Health (ADRA), (2) Providing Basic Services to Conflict Affected Vulnerable Groups in Mid and far Western Regions of Nepal (NEWAH), (3) Improvement of Living Conditions of Internal Conflict Affected Communities and Vulnerable Groups Through Holistic Approach and Integrated Actions (DISVI), (4) SABAL- Sustainable Agriculture with Bazaar for Advancing Livelihood of Conflict Affected Poor People, (5) Enabling Vulnerable Communities in Mountainous Areas of Post-conflict Nepal to Realize Their Rights to Quality Sexual and Reproductive Health Services and Information (Sunaulo Pariwar), (6) Integrated Community Based Programme for Conflict Affected people through Livelihood Support and Capacity Development in west Nepal (Naulo Ghumti Nepal), (7) Including the Excluded Vulnerable Communities Build Secure Livelihoods (Helvetas), (8) Fostering Health and Livelihood of Conflict Affected People (Britain Nepal Medical Trust)

All the projects will end by October 2010. The representatives of the eight projects participated in a final sharing workshop in the capital on 6 August 2010 and presented their best practices that were instrumental in making the projects successful.

The Delegation of the European Union to Nepal asked the projects to select their best practices on the basis of sustainability, replicability, innovation and ownership.

The participants at the workshop voted for the top three best practices. The project run by Nepal Water for Health (NEWAH) came at the top on the basis of the votes for its best practices. The project devised ways to enhance the livelihood of the beneficiaries through the multiple use of water and also formed Credit and Saving Groups by identifying microenterprises where the locals could invest.

Similarly, the projects run by Naulo Ghumti and Environment, Health and Development Advisory Group (EHDAG) were judged second and third on the basis of their best practices. The participants were also given opportunity to comment on each other’s best practices.

Prabin Shaky of Sunaulo Parivar Nepal commented upon the best practices of ADRA and said those running the project have established a successful example of how goals can be better achieved through Public, Private Partnership (PPP).
“I felt happy to note that ADRA was able to launch its projects in the remote villages of Nepal,” Shakya said. The mobile health camps run by ADRA through the mobilization of local women, is also equally praiseworthy, Shakya commented.

Bidya Mahat, Program Director of ADRA said that she had learnt a lot about programme designing after looking at the socially inclusive VDC planning done by HELVETAS.

The project partners were also impressed by the BNMT’s approach of making women self reliant and widening their prospects of livelihood through the formation of a microenterprise focusing on the manufacturing of duna and tapari leaf plates used in religious and social functions.

Sharing some of the positive outcomes of the project, Dinesh Upreti of NEWAH, said, “After we intervened and constructed toilets and repaired the roofs of school buildings, students have started attending their schools more regularly.”

He said in the beginning they were found to be staying away from school over complaints that they did not have a toilet at their school and in some cases they preferred to stay away for the fact that their classrooms were always flooded because of the leakage on the roof.

The sharing of ideas on the best practices of the projects was followed by panel discussions where the project managers and coordinators shared their views on how they perceived vulnerabilities and what could be the possible interventions to overcome them.

To sum up, the EU project partners were glad to have been able to run their projects well which they said had contributed significantly to reduce the vulnerabilities of conflict affected communities and help them lead better lives.

Delegation of the European Union Marks the “World’s Indigenous People’s Day”

The World’s Indigenous People’s Day is marked all over the world every year on the 7th of August. The Delegation of the European Union to Nepal organized a half day workshop on 4 August to initiate a discussion on the issues and priorities of the indigenous people in Nepal.

The irony is such that although Nepal too is a signatory to the ILO Convention 169, which clearly calls on nations to uphold the stipulations on the protection and promotion of rights of indigenous communities, the overall picture is not quite rosy, participants at the workshop said.

‘Whenever the issue of rights of the indigenous communities is raised, there seems to be some sort of apprehension among the non-indigenous communities that they will take away more than what they are entitled to,’ Mohan Singh Lama told the workshop.
Lama is the president of the Association of Nepal Indigenous Nationalities Journalists. Addressing the workshop participated in by representatives of Indigenous Women Federation, Tharu NGO Federation and other NGOs and INGOs working on IP issues, Lama said the nation must educate its citizens that the rights entitled to the indigenous communities are the same everywhere in the world.

Nanda Kandangwa of Action Aid said despite some positive outcomes in raising awareness among the indigenous communities about their rights, social and political transformation is not an easy task.

Appreciating the active involvement of the European Union to address the issues linked with the indigenous people, Kandangwa dwelt on the achievements of the Action Aid Project on the indigenous people that was completed in 2009

“We worked in Banke and Bardiya. It was a 36 months project and out of the NPR 50 million, eighty percent of the budget was funded by the European Union,” said Kandangwa elaborating the achievements of the project which was completed in 2009.

“We succeeded to bring about awareness in the indigenous communities regarding their rights. A total of 1237 ex-Kamaiyas (freed bonded labours) and Rajis received training while 3,000 ex-Kamaiya received land ownership certificates.”

He informed that 32 community forestry groups were formed through which 4,636 have been benefited and raised 4 million rupees. 2340 have got jobs without exploitation. Thirty three have been recruited in jobs as technicians. Nearly two thousand people got anti-rabid training.

More than 32 members representing the indigenous communities have managed to rise to the post of decision makers and a large number of them have been able to find entry into the political parties, Kandangwa shared some of the achievements of the EU funded project.

Representatives of other projects—Padam Devkota of World View Nepal which has received EU funding and launched projects in 20 districts, Hari Bhakta Khiju of Rural Community Development Society, that launched a project on advocacy for the rights of the indigenous people and Mukta Rajal from the Institute of Governance and Development working in eight districts presented the activities of their projects and dwelt on the achievements made so far.

Both the World View Nepal and the Institute of Governance and Development have received EU assistance to enhance cultural diversity for the dignity and development of the indigenous communities.

The discussants at the workshop raised pertinently the issue of the rights of the indigenous people and suggested that the state needs to adopt a clear-cut policy to build awareness on the rights with the view to avoid any possible confrontation between indigenous and non-indigenous communities.

The issues that came up in the workshop included: need to raise mass awareness on the IP issues through the media, initiatives for making the state accountable to its commitments to international treaties, working towards increasing the participation of the IPs at each level of governance.

Similarly the other issues voiced were related to enhancing the capacities of the IPs and their institutions, localizing the interventions of the donors and promoting a bottom-up approach and making the provisions flexible so that the participation of community based groups could be ensured in the project process.

The workshop was focused on considering further the IP issues and priorities in Nepal and enhancing effectiveness in addressing the IP issues. The workshop started with the sharing of some of the experiences of the ongoing and completed projects that the EU has funded in Nepal focusing on IP issues.

The interventions being made in tune with the EU policy to promote the rights of marginalized and indigenous communities under the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights and one other thematic instrument entitled ‘Investing in People’ and Non-State Actors (NSA) in Development has been showing positive outcomes with the awarding of financial assistance for interventions at the local levels.

In keeping with the same spirit of initiating dialogue with both the government and the civil societies on the rights of the indigenous populations many projects on the said theme are ongoing and some have already been completed under EU support.

The project partners at the workshop revealed the changes that had come about at the community level after reaching out to the indigenous people with the modesty to make them aware about their rights as has been provisioned both nationally and internationally thereby encouraging them to play bigger roles in their societies to set their own development priorities.

Dr. Giap Dang, Acting Head of Operations, Delegation of the European Union to Nepal in his concluding remarks to the workshop said the EU is among the first institutions in the world to have raised the need to integrate the issue and rights of the indigenous people in the development programmes of countries around the world.

Shiva Bhandari, Project Manager, looking after the human rights projects said that the workshop had been instrumental to make inferences that would be integrated into the upcoming EIDHR strategies and also the EU strategy on development cooperation.
ECHO assistance to Bhutanese refugees reaches 9 million Euros

With the latest decision of the Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Office of the European Commission (ECHO) to provide up to €1.5 million (NPR 144 million approx) to the World Food Programme (WFP) to implement the project “Food Assistance to Bhutanese Refugees”, the total disbursements to the refugees by ECHO alone has reached 9 million Euros.

The EC assistance to Bhutanese refugees started in the year 2006. The Delegation of the European Union to Nepal also supports them through the UNHCR.

The EC funding covers a period of six months starting 1/07/2010 and ending 31/12/2010. The principal objective of the humanitarian intervention is to save lives by providing secure access to food and safeguard the nutritional status of the refugee beneficiaries.

The specific objective of this Action is to work towards safeguarding lives and maintaining nutritional status of dependent refugee populations residing in seven different camps in eastern Nepal and meet the basic food consumption need of the refugee population living in the camps.

The intervention aims at improving and stabilizing the nutritional status of refugee population, particularly among vulnerable groups, including children under five, pregnant and lactating women as well as those who are chronically ill.

ECHO Background

The European Union’s mandate to ECHO is to provide emergency assistance and relief to the victims of natural disasters or armed conflict outside the European Union. The aid is intended to go directly to those in distress, irrespective of race, religion or political convictions.

The Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Office of the European Commission (ECHO) has been actively involved in humanitarian works in disaster hit areas around the world through its 44 country offices and 200 national as well as 100 expatriate technical experts. It has been in the forefront in undertaking the task of preventing and minimising disasters.

The European Commission is one of the biggest sources of humanitarian aid in the world. In 2009, it provided over 887 million Euros in humanitarian assistance through ECHO alone in the 5 continents.

In addition, ECHO currently has two financing decisions being implemented in Nepal through international NGOs, UN organisations and the ICRC.

- Global Plan 2009 (€ 6 million) focusing on Food assistance, Water, Sanitation & Hygiene (WASH), Health, Response to natural disasters.
- DIPECHO 5th Action plan (€ 2.8 million) focusing on Disaster Preparedness and Disaster Risk Reduction.

Four Member European Parliament Delegation to visit Nepal from 1 to 5 November

A four-member delegation of the Committee of Development under the European Parliament is scheduled to visit Nepal from 1 to 5 November. The Delegation members will hold dialogue with the members of the parliament in Nepal to learn about Nepal’s ongoing development efforts and the planning ahead.

They look forward to meeting the Speaker of the Constituent Assembly and members of the Development Committee of the parliament. They will also hold consultations with the top officials at the Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Environment.

The parliamentarians will also interact with the Heads of Missions of the European Union Member States in Nepal, donor agencies, representatives of the NGOs and civil society.

The Committee is responsible for the promotion, implementation and monitoring of the development cooperation policy of the European Union. It holds political dialogue with developing countries, bilaterally and in the relevant international organizations and interparliamentary to enhance cooperation.

The visit is the first of its kind and holds paramount importance to chart out the course of EU-Nepal bilateral cooperation.

The Committee co-decides or participates in the co-decision on the aid to, and cooperation agreements with developing countries and engages in dialogue for the promotion of democratic values, good governance and human rights in developing countries.

The Committee also has role in the European Parliament’s involvement in election observation missions in cooperation with other relevant committees and delegations.

The Committee co-ordinates the work of the interparliamentary delegations and ad hoc delegations falling within its remit.
European Union extends support to NGOs to promote and protect indigenous cultures in Nepal

Twenty-five members of the indigenous communities participated in a training of trainers on cultural rights from 26 to 30 July at Dhulikhel. Several organisations working with the European Union in the areas of promoting and preserving the rights of the indigenous people joined hands to make the training a success.


These institutions have received funding from the European Union under the project “Investing in People” to launch programmes focussing on the promotion and preservation of the cultures of indigenous groups in Nepal.

The trainees were from Kavre, Dhading, Rasuwa, Gurkha, Kaski, Lamjung, Chitwan and Makwanpur districts.

“The trainers’ training was very insightful as we got to learn that there are 7,000 spoken languages in the world and 4,000 of them belong to the indigenous people,” Chamar Singh Lama from the Tamang community said in the course of sharing his experiences related with the training.

Lama revealed that they got the opportunity to learn about different international provisions for the protection of rights in the ILO Convention 169. “It is a matter of pity that although Nepal too has ratified the convention, the government has not been able to uphold the different provisions aimed at ensuring and protecting the rights of the indigenous people.”

He was of the view that the European Union’s intervention must have come in line with the widely felt need to go about raising widespread awareness regarding the rights of the indigenous people.

Besides the informative sessions on international treaties on the rights of the indigenous people, it would have been intriguing to learn about the individual cultures of the indigenous communities, Lama opined.

Durga Gurung, a representative of the Gurung community shared that the efforts made by the European Union to bring to the forefront the cultures of the indigenous communities was praiseworthy.

“I will go to the district and devote myself in raising awareness in my community regarding the need and importance to preserve indigenous cultures,” she said.

World Vision Advocacy Forum President, Dr. Tika Pokhrel said the Forum was working steadily ahead to instil confidence among the individual members of the ethnic communities and sharing with them how their skills and entrepreneurship could be integrated with economic affluence and development.

Addressing the certificate distribution ceremony of the five day training Dr. Giap Dang Officer-in-Charge of the Delegation of the European Union to Nepal appreciated the fact that fifty percent of the trainees were women.

He said that the funding that EU was providing to the four different organizations for promoting cultural diversity was just a small portion of nearly 120 million Euros which it was gradually disbursing for different development sectors such as Education, Peace and stability, renewable energy, protection of human rights and environment, food security including trade facilitation.

The support for the promotion of indigenous culture is part of EU’s larger policy to ensure social inclusion in the development activities that nations have been pursuing around the world.
European Union supported BNMT project steps up efforts to rehabilitate children affected by armed conflict

Local partners of the European Union working in the districts to address the myriad problems that emanated after the decade long conflict were more than elated to receive a three-day training on microfinance and two-day orientation on legal and paralegal issues.

“We often face complications while working with the communities at the grassroots level and the training has given us ideas on how we can tackle such situations,” said Puspa Khaki on the concluding day of the training.

Khaki represents the Women Welfare Society based in Ilam which has been co-partnering with the Britain Nepal Medical Trust (BNMT) to implement the EU funded project “Rehabilitating Children and Supporting Families and Communities affected by armed conflict in Nepal (RCP).”

The RCP project has received funds to the tune of 575,602 Euros from the European Union under the thematic budget line. The project is being run under a broader framework of “Investing in People” and aims at assisting people affected by armed conflict and nations bracing ahead to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDG)

The project with a duration of 48 months that began in May 2009, is being implemented in Siraha,Morang, Ilam,Argakhanchi,Kapilvastu,Kailali and Achham districts with the aim of rehabilitating and re integrating children and supporting their families and communities. It has an overarching goal of increasing access to social services and livelihood options for conflict affected children and their families; enhancing capacity of the civil society organisations for advocating and networking on Children’s rights.

Khaki said the training was a big opportunity for the project partners to learn how they can mobilise funds at the local level through the formation of microenterprises. She said that the training on para -legal issues was equally enlightening to help the participants learn about the possible legal interventions that they can make at the local level whenever there are disputes.

Khaki said that she would do her utmost to bring about positive changes in the society and achieve the goals set by the RCP project.

Another participant of the training, Bhaj Bahadur Gandarva, who represents the NGO – Oppressed and Tribal Caste Development Centre (OTCDC) said the training on para-legal issues had given the participants ample ideas on the legal interventions that they could make during instances of rape, polygamy and other anomalies in the communities. Giving the highlights of the microfinance training, he said it had helped them to learn the techniques of book keeping and ensure the transparency of their project spending.

Twenty five participants representing the NGOs — Child Society Nepal (Morang), Women Welfare Society (Ilam), Shiva Shakti Rural Development Centre (SRDC) (Surkhet), Siddhartha Social Development Centre (Kapilbastu), Oppressed and Tribal Castes Development Centre (Argakhachi), Village Development and Save the Environment Forum (Kalikot) and Village Development and Women Development Centre (Achham) participated in the training that was conducted from 16-20 August in Dhulikhel.

The BNMT also got the accounts of the project partners audited through an auditing firm and pointed at the lapses that had occurred in the spending of some of them.

Addressing the concluding session of the workshop, Shiva Bhandari, Project Manager at the Delegation of the European Union to Nepal looking after the EIDHR projects asked the partners to replicate the good practices and learn from each other while carrying out activities with focus on the objective of the project.

Ambar Mainali, Press and Information Officer at the Delegation requested the project partners to give due attention to the visibility requirements and do justice to the European taxpayers who had been contributing selflessly to assist the development endeavours in Nepal.

Country Director of BNMT, Bhanu Niraula, said after assessing the lessons learnt from the training and listening to the commitments of the project partners, the BNMT was more hopeful that it would be able to fulfill all the promises that it made to the European Union while seeking funding for the project.
The seventh session of the Nepal-EU Joint Commission Meeting is scheduled to take place on 13 December in Kathmandu. The Joint Commission is the highest body that decides on the modalities of bilateral cooperation between the European Union and Nepal.

It meets every two years and assesses the entire gamut of EU-Nepal cooperation apart from looking into possible development interventions in the years ahead.

The Cooperation Agreement was signed with the European Commission in Brussels on 20 November, 1996. The agreement covers the areas like trade and commercial cooperation, economic cooperation, development cooperation, joint investment, energy, science and technology, agriculture, environment and human resource development.

The agreement on trade and economic cooperation has enabled both the sides to identify potential areas of export promotions for Nepal. Nepal has been receiving special treatment under the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) on certain textile products.

A new Generalized Systems of Preferences (GSP) was introduced by the European Commission in 2006. The EU will charge zero tariff for nearly 2100 products out of 11,000 except arms and ammunitions.

As the provisions of Everything But Arms (EBA) Scheme for LDCs are incorporated into the new GSP, Nepal can greatly benefit from it. Under the EBA Scheme for LDCs, Nepal has been exporting sugar duty-free to the EU countries since 2003. Annual sugar export from Nepal is nearly 9,000 metric tones.

The second session of the Joint Commission meeting was held in Brussels on 7 and 8 October, 1999. During the meeting both the sides noted that the issue of human rights must be taken as an integral and important component on the basis of which the bilateral cooperation has been built.

Similarly, the fourth session of the Joint Commission held in Brussels on 21 September, 2004 discussed about the Bhutanese refugee problem. Accordingly the European Commission’s assistance to the refugees started in 2006.

The bilateral cooperation between EU and Nepal is being implemented on the basis of a Country Strategy Paper (CSP) worked out for the period of 2007-2013. The annual assistance of the European Union to Nepal stands at Euros 40 million per year covering sectors such as education, peace and stability, trade facilitation, human rights, renewable energy, food security and environment.

The forthcoming Joint Commission meeting will discuss the key areas of cooperation since the last meeting held on 15 January, 2009 in relation to both the cooperation situation in Nepal and to the EU External Policy in particular compared to South Asia.

The meeting will make an overall assessment of the EU resources in various sectors of cooperation. The meeting is also expected to sign the Memorandum of Understanding for the second Multi Annual Indicative Programme (MIP) for the period 2011-2013.

Published by Dr. Alexander Spachis, Ambassador, Head of Delegation
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