The EU was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in October 2012 in recognition of its work on reconciliation, democracy and the promotion of human rights, which helped extend the area of peace and stability across the continent. The presentation of this prestigious prize came on the day of the celebration of human rights. The European Union received the 2012 Nobel Peace Prize at a ceremony in Oslo, honoured by the Norwegian committee for bringing decades of peace and democracy to Europe after the horrors and division of two world wars.

“The stabilizing part played by the EU has helped to transform most of Europe from a continent of war to a continent of peace,” the Nobel committee said on October 12 when it announced the EU had won. "The division between East and West has to a large extent been brought to an end; democracy has been strengthened; many ethnically based national conflicts have been settled.”

The award has been received by the heads of the EU’s three main institutions; Herman Van Rompuy, president of the European Council of leaders of member countries, Jose Manuel Barroso, president of the EU’s executive European Commission, and Martin Schulz, president of the elected European Parliament.

The European Union’s Nobel Peace prize money will fund four projects under the EU Children of Peace initiative. Today, 90% of the victims of conflicts are civilians. Half of them are children. Seven million children are refugees and 12.4 million are displaced within their own country due to conflict. Of the approximately 75 million children who are out of school worldwide, more than half live in conflict areas. Giving them the opportunity to learn again and get education is the best way to turn a vicious cycle into a virtuous one.

President Barroso said: “It was obvious for us that the Nobel Peace Prize money should be allocated to the most vulnerable who are often the hardest hit by wars: the children of this world. We want all children to enjoy the constant protection of their rights. Each and every girl and boy in the world should have the opportunity to develop their talents. Promoting education is also giving peace a chance to be a lasting peace. We want “children of war” to become “children of peace”.

Together the projects will benefit from €2 million (which includes additional EU funding). They will reach out to over 23,000 conflict-affected children worldwide. Organisations among the best renowned humanitarian partners of the European Commission will carry out the projects benefiting children in different parts of the world. UNICEF will implement a project in Pakistan helping 3,000 children in the conflicted-affected north of the country. Save the Children and the Norwegian Refugee Council will work with 11,000 Congolese children displaced in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo and refugees in Ethiopia. UNHCR will deliver assistance to more than 5,000 Colombian children, most of them refugees in Ecuador and ACTED from France is going to work in the Domiz Refugee camp in Northern Iraq with around 4,000 Syrian refugee children.
European Union supports preparations for elections, strengthening and reform of the election commission

The European Union (EU) has extended a grant assistance of 8.5 million Euro (approximately NPR 971.5 million) to the Government of Nepal to hold elections and carry out institutional reforms. The new phase of the project entitled “Electoral Support Project Phase II” will assist the Election Commission of Nepal (ECN) in carrying out its mandate of holding fair and credible elections, enhancing its institutional capacity both at central and local levels as well as increasing the reach of the newly established Electoral Education and Information Center.

Commenting on the EU support to the ECN, Dr. Alexandre Spachis, Head of the European Union Delegation to Nepal said, “EU is committed to democracy around the world. This new support to ECN reflects EU commitment to consolidate democracy and peace in Nepal. Democracy is not limited to elections but periodic free and fair elections are the cornerstones of any democracy. EU wants to see national and local elections taking place in Nepal. The EU also hopes that this support will provide an opportunity to take action to further widen the voter base by a substantial number of people who, according to sources, are eligible but not yet registered.”

Statistics from recent elections in Nepal show a voter turnout of 63.2% in 2008 compared to just 42.19% in 1959. How different would Nepal be if everyone participated in the electoral process? Voting is a right given to every Nepali citizen; the EU is working hard to get this point across. Nepal’s high literacy rate, variety of local languages, and difficult access to remote regions, makes voter education both challenging and essential. With the date of the next elections rapidly approaching, informing and educating the public has never been so important.

The Electoral Education and Information Center (EEIC), has been recently established with the support of EU, UNDP, and Australian Aid, to enhance awareness and participation of voters in the electoral system, processes and procedures. The Center has been modelled in line with the Australian Electoral Commission in Canberra, Australia. The main function of the Center is to make electoral education interactive and accessible to voters regardless of age, sex or social background.

“The EEIC prepares children to be future voters. Students are taught about democracy and the importance of actively participating in the electoral process. Following this field visit, we will carry out different elections-related activities in our school,” Raj Jhanak, secondary school teacher said.

The Information and Education unit is the heart of the EEIC. In addition to an exhibition of electoral artefacts, the unit contains a mini theatre, an interactive zone and a facility to experience democracy in action by participating in a polling exercise.

“Voting permits us to choose a good leader to represent our country. I will spread the word on the importance of voting and make sure at least my family and friends are aware of it,” Kobita, a 13-year-old said while preparing for mock elections.

With a view to holding elections in a better and efficient manner, the Election Commission has recently completed preparations to have in place the Geographic Information System (GIS) for the Constituent Assembly polls being planned sometime this year. The system, to be adopted in the country for the first time, allows both central and district offices of the Commission to see online the exact location of polling stations across the country. The plan to bring all the polling stations under the new system was made possible with financial support from the EU and other donors.

The EU has been working with the government and different Non-State Actors to ensure effective voter education campaigns. The “Electoral education at grassroots and district level for democratic governance (EEDG)” project financed by the EU is operating in 134 VDCs of five remote districts of Karnali - namely Humla, Jumla, Kalikot, Dolpa and Mugu. The NGO Jagaran Nepal in collaboration with the EU is working hard to bring electoral education to Nepal’s rural areas. Many of the audiences in the targeted remote villages had rarely been exposed to electoral norms and principles before the Jagaran team was able to engage with the population.

Electoral education has the power to restore or increase the confidence of people who will then have a greater sense of their ability to impact the world around them. An information vacuum is easily filled by uncertainty. The EU advocates that now more than ever, we need an informed electorate and a culture of debate.
EU cares for the refugees from Bhutan
Donates fire fighting truck to Damak Municipality

The European Union has been showing due concern for the refugees from Bhutan living in different camps in eastern Nepal for more than a decade. The EU support is being mobilized to meet the ongoing protection and material needs of the refugees.

The support channelled through the UNHCR and WFP is being used for ensuring sound health and nutrition, education, sanitation, shelter and water for the refugees. The refugees are also receiving legal assistance during times of need.

The overall EU funding to the UN refugee agency is of Euro 2,590,000 for the period 2011 to 2014. Meanwhile, the Humanitarian and Civil Protection Office of the European Commission (ECHO) has been extending food support to the refugees through the WFP.

The main objective of ECHO’s humanitarian assistance is to save lives by providing secure access to food and safeguard the nutritional status of the refugee beneficiaries. For 2013, the total contribution is 1 million Euros, representing around 25% of the cost of covering annual food needs of the total refugee population.

A major resettlement programme is underway for refugees from Bhutan. Some 40,582 remain in the camps, with over 31,300 persons having already declared an interest in resettlement. As of November 2012, some 74,143 refugees have already resettled to third countries including EU countries.

Those living in the camps face the risk of fire breakthroughs during the dry season. Fire victims are left with little or nothing as documents including those for third country settlement are often destroyed by the flames. A devastating fire broke out in Goldhap camp in the morning of 22nd March 2011.

Another fire broke out at the Sanischare camp in the afternoon of the same day. The fire gutted 714 huts as well as infrastructures such as health centre, disability centre in the camps. The fire affected 714 households with 5281 refugees who were compelled to live in schools and neighbouring huts. ECHO stepped in to provide relief to the refugees with an immediate humanitarian assistance of EUR 200,000 to build the huts of the refugees. This rapid intervention provided safe shelter to the refugees from the seasonal monsoon.

Very recently a fire engulfed a Bhutanese refugee camp in Beldangi, Jhapa, destroying more than 80 huts. About 600 refugees were rendered homeless because of the fire.

In keeping with its policy to better the lives of the refugees, the European Union donated a fire fighting truck to the Damak Municipality in Jhapa district in November 2012. The truck is expected to provide immediate and efficient response during the frequent fires in refugee camps and host communities.

“We are extremely grateful for this humanitarian gesture by the EU which would certainly help in ensuring that both the host communities and refugees receive timely support to control the fires, thereby reducing the risk of damage of lives and property,” said Stephane Jaquemet, UNHCR Representative in Nepal.

The EU and UNHCR have been further supporting Bhutanese refugees by distributing school uniforms to some 9,800 children between the age group of 6 and 16 in the Beldangi and Sanischare camps in eastern Nepal.

Fourteen-year-old Ashmita Subba, student at the Panchawati School in the Beldangi camp said, “I am very happy today to get my new uniforms. We do not have the money to buy new ones, and I have been wearing these old uniforms for the last two years.” It was in 2009 that students last received their uniforms.

During the Eighth EU-Nepal Joint Commission meeting in Brussels, Nepal expressed that third country resettlement of Bhutanese refugees is not a durable solution, and that those not resettled should be able to return to Bhutan.
EU project supports protection & wellbeing of migrants

EU-CARE documentary on migrant workers bags award

Migration, particularly to India, remains a predominant livelihood strategy for millions of people across Nepal. Of the many challenges to the health of Nepali migrants, HIV/AIDS is probably the most threatening. Supported by the EU, the Safe Passage project of CARE Nepal aims to reduce the vulnerability and impact of HIV and AIDS on mobility-affected individuals and their families in Kailali, Doti, and DADeldhura Districts of far western Nepal.

Using a UNAIDS/WHO methodology, data from the National Centre for AIDS and STD Control show that seasonal labour migrants make up more than twice as many HIV cases as any other group. A study conducted in Nepal in 2006 found that 17.2 per cent of sampled returnee migrants in Western districts, and 26.9 per cent in the Far-and Mid-Western districts, had sex with a sex worker while in India. Locations hosting the highest number of migrants are also likely to present the highest percentage of people affected by HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.

The Safe Passage project is currently reaching 24,000 mobile population (men and male youth), 120,000 family members (including spouses, unmarried women, adolescent girls, youth, widows), and 300 PLHWA.

Kadamandu, a documentary depicting the life of migrant workers from the Far Western Region of Nepal won the best documentary award during the 10th annual Kathmandu International Mountain Film Festival (KIMFF), held from 17th to the 12th of December 2012.

The film, made with the support of the EU and CARE Nepal, sheds light on migration and its consequences for the families residing in a small village called Kadamandu where migrating to India has become almost a tradition for decades. The CBS statistics 2011 reveal that almost 75% of the men from this small farming community leave for India in search of better livelihood and a majority of them return with HIV/AIDS and the stigma associated with the disease. HIV/AIDS has taken many lives in Kadamandu and many such similar neighboring villages in the Far Western Region of Nepal. Though the men leave hopeful and with the intention of creating a brighter future for their families, the reality is that many wind up paying the price with their lives and further burden the living by infecting their families with the dreaded disease. For many in these parts of Nepal, HIV and the associated stigma is deemed to be the result of their fate and the cycle repeats itself.

The name Kadamandu rhymes with the country’s capital Kathmandu but the plight of the people living in these two places is miles apart in every possible way. The documentary “Kadamandu” brings focus to the very serious issue of migration and HIV which is still foreign to many Kathmanduties and was made with the intention of bringing the subject matter to a larger audience. Made as part of the advocacy effort of CARE Nepal’s Safe Passage project, funded by the EU, the documentary is intended to create awareness on the plight of these remote farming communities and the issues surrounding migration and HIV. It was for the same reason that the documentary was screened in KIMFF. “Kadamandu” was well received during the festival and one member even thanked the filmmaker for bringing to light the issue of migration and HIV that was still very much unknown by many. “Kadamandu” was directed by veteran Nepali documentary maker Ramesh Khadka.
EU teams up with Nepal Government and International Organisation for Migration to work for better management of labour migration

With a growing number of people heading for foreign destinations in search of work, international labour migration has emerged as an issue demanding immediate attention.

Foreign labour migration is now a major contributor to GDP in many developing countries. In the case of Nepal, its share in the GDP is 21.5 percent while the latest figures suggest that 56% of the Nepali households are receiving remittances from abroad.

Although the contribution of migrant workers to the national economy is 23%, the sector is rife with problems related to the security, wages, insurance and health of the migrant workers. Women migrant workers face additional difficulties as a result of their greater vulnerability in transit and due to working primarily in the domestic sphere out of public view. A total of 2802 women migrant workers were rescued from abroad in 2010/2011, according to sources working in the sector. Of them 111 were found in jail, 80 were pregnant when they returned home and 32 came home with newborn babies.

A high-level consultation among the major stakeholders dealing with migration held in November 2012 could not have come at a better time to discuss the issues at length and come up with recommendations to address the problems affecting the sector.

Addressing the opening session of the discussions, Dr. Alexander Spachis, Ambassador, Head of the European Union Delegation to Nepal said that “given the increasing recognition of the centrality of labour migration to Nepal’s economy and to the livelihoods of millions of its citizens, I anticipate that our joint interest in this area will deepen in coming years. It is a particular wish of the European Union Delegation to Nepal to work directly with the Government of Nepal on this issue. Coordinated work between the Government, donors and stakeholders will achieve the best results, so let us begin today by sharing our knowledge and expertise”.

Mr. Thomas Sinkovits, Chief of Mission of IOM affirmed that “IOM believes in the benefits of migration and the strong contribution of migrants as potent agents of development.”

Speaking at the beginning of the consultation, Mr. Posta Bahadur Bogati, Minister for Labour and Employment noted “we believe that, when well-managed, migration becomes a choice and not a necessity. It benefits not only the workers, but also the country. Our migrants are now recognized as an integral and a contributing sector of our economy and with improved coordination they will enhance our overall development.”

Secretary for Labour and Employment, Mr. Som Lal Subedi closed the chairing of the conference saying "with your combined active interest and support this consultation will initiate wider discussions, cooperation and the development of an action-oriented programme amongst key stakeholders to enhance and better coordinate labour migration management into development assistance programs in Nepal”.

During the proceedings Ms. Rabab Fatima, Regional Coordinator and Advisor for South Asia of IOM, made a presentation on the challenges and best practices with respect to labour migration management and then facilitated subsequent sessions. She focused on the need to find links between migration and development and reflected on the trends of labour migration in the region with most labour migrants from South Asia travelling to the Middle East.

Labour trafficking has been taking place in an unabated manner in South Asia due to weak legal framework, she said. She also emphasized the need to diversify the work destinations for migrants since there was too much dependence on some countries like Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Malaysia.

The consultation aimed at identifying policy measures to improve the institutional framework for migration management in Nepal and to explore how enhanced migration could contribute to Nepal’s development.
EU supported project provides peace dividend in Central & Mid-Western Nepal

Nepal is at a crucial point in history where, after years of unrest, it is now possible to build a peaceful and democratic society. Sustainable peace is only possible when those at the grassroots and more importantly, the vulnerable lot are given due priority in the development programmes. Failure to do so could result in strong inequalities which if deeply entrenched could eventually lead to conflict.

Peace must come from the bottom up and, include especially those that are generally most affected by conflict; the poor, vulnerable and socially excluded women and youth. In particular women’s participation in peace-building has long been neglected despite its recognised importance not only for greater gender sensitivity and equality but also for political stability, social cohesion and economic growth. Women are knowingly more likely than men to spend their time and income in ways that benefit their own families and their community. In short; where there is no women participation, there will be no peace and where there is no peace there is no possibility for development.

The project ‘Women and Youth as Pillars for Sustainable Peace’ (WYPSP) recognises these needs. The project was funded by the European Union since 1 January 2008 and falls under the category of support provided to Non State Actors (NSA). It is primarily focused on capacitating the community-level mechanisms in the areas of peace-building and operates on four levels - the personal, relational, structural and cultural.

The project has managed to activate and engage communities by providing training for individuals to become mediators, peace ambassadors or citizen journalists and established peace centres at district level and community peace groups at the local level. The members are now working enthusiastically with a sense of ownership for the transformation of their communities.

The innovative approach of involving in particular vulnerable women and youth in the peace-building process has not only enabled them to understand and engage with the local peace process and institutions, but strengthen the ability of civil society to advocate for the rights and needs of these women and youth.

The training has also provided the opportunity for many to break out of the traditional roles society prescribed for them and enabled them to now serve their community as mediators and journalists. The beauty of the project is that it has enhanced the personal capacities of vulnerable women and youth while at the same time raised their standing in the society as they have become important actors in their communities. Implemented by CARE Nepal in four districts – Gorkha, Dhading, Kapilvastu, Rupandehi - by six partnering NGOs, the project reached a staggering 65000 poor, vulnerable and socially excluded women and youth.

The WYPSP project has now ended. A final workshop was organized to share the lessons learnt. Addressing the workshop, Dr. Alexander Spachis, Ambassador, Head of the European Union Delegation to Nepal, said that the EU Delegation had supported the project in keeping with its objectives of helping to promote peace.

The notion of peace is at the core of everything the EU stands for and working together towards a peaceful and equal Nepal is therefore at the very centre of the EU co-operation with Nepal, he said.

Dr. Spachis applauded all the staff involved in the project, especially those at the district and local level, who worked tirelessly to make the project successful.

EU marks International Human Rights Day

The Delegation of the European Union to Nepal organised a half day workshop on Monday 10th December 2012 in Kathmandu to mark the International Human Rights Day. The objective of the workshop was to review the EU contribution to Human Rights in Nepal and also identify areas and gaps that the future initiatives could address.

The occasion also coincided with the EU Delegation Nepal’s celebration of the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to the European Union.

The theme for International Human Rights Day 2012 was ‘inclusion and the right to participate in public life’. Under the slogan ‘My Voice Counts’, Ambassadors from the EU Member State embassies and/or their representatives; representatives of national human rights institutions in Nepal; members of the EU working group on Human Rights Defenders; representatives of different human rights organisations in Nepal; project partners working on different human rights issues and journalists attended the programme.

The first session- opening session of the workshop started with the opening remarks by the Chargé d’Affaires of the EU Delegation in Nepal Mr. Gerard Van Driessche. Mr Van Driessche spoke about Human Rights Day and the Nobel Peace Prize ceremony and the deep relationship between human rights and peace that makes it so fitting for these two occasions to fall on the same day. He talked about the historical context in which both the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the European Union were conceived and first created, and how the European Union
is committed to furthering peace, human rights and democracy in an integrated manner both within the European region and across the world through partnerships with other states.

The session continued with remarks from the Ambassadors of UK, Denmark, France, Finland and the Chargé d’Affaires of the German Embassy. John Tucknott, Ambassador, British Embassy spoke of his vision for a society without discrimination or violence. Mr Tucknott reminded participants of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, which began on 25th November, and of the awards that he recently presented to 15 journalists for their work on human rights and the issue of violence against women. He spoke about the initiative that has been launched by the UK’s Foreign Minister, William Hague, to tackle sexual violence in conflict, which will be the centerpiece of the UK’s forthcoming G8 leadership. The UK will focus on strengthening international coordination, building state capacity, and securing both national and international prosecutions to break cultures of impunity. The UK is committing funding of £1 million and is bringing together a team of experts who can be deployed to areas of the world where sexual violence in conflict is a significant problem. An additional element of the programme will be to explore ways of empowering the survivors of conflict-related violence and of increasing their role in peace-building, which is something that has obvious current relevance to Nepal, Mr. Tucknott said.

Morten Jespersen, Ambassador, Danish Embassy focused on the problem of persistent caste-based discrimination, which is contrary to human rights and to international law, which results in exclusion from public amenities, employment, education, public life, political decision-making, and resources. One positive development is that recognition of this problem has grown over the last decade. As Nepal is a new democracy, its institutions are still under development, and it is a priority for the Danish mission and for other EU partners to promote inclusive decision-making at all levels. Progress has been made, but there is a long way to go. One immediate focus should be the implementation of Acts that have already been passed, Mr. Jespersen said.

Jean-Charles Demarquis, Ambassador, French Embassy spoke about the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Once called ‘the world’s best-kept secret’, the Declaration is still a secret to large parts of the world, he said. It was never intended only for the West, and it was not the product solely of the West. From its inception, the Declaration was truly universal, with drafters from all six continents. One principle to be taken from the Universal Declaration is that governments do not confer rights, but they must protect them. Slavery and apartheid and many of the worst abuses of human rights have almost been consigned to the past, and today more and more tyrannical regimes are crumbling, but the struggle goes on. Even within democracies in which political rights are honoured, there is much to be done to protect social, economic and cultural rights, particularly for women and children, Mr. Demarquis said.

On this note, Mr Demarquis paid tribute to the energy, strength and courage of Human Rights Defenders both worldwide and within Nepal. He reminded participants that earlier this year the French Ambassador for Human Rights presented the French Human Rights Award to Nepali Human Rights Defender Shyam Kumari Sah, who put herself in danger fighting for human rights and justice at the grassroots level in the Terai. It is such people, often victims themselves, who must be given the place of honour on Human Rights Day, he said.

Asko Luukkainen, Ambassador, Finnish Embassy echoed the words of his diplomatic colleagues and reaffirmed Finland’s commitment to supporting human rights. He spoke of the 60 or more Nepali NGOs that receive Finnish funding for their projects.

Mr Henning Hansen, Chargé d’Affaires, German Embassy discussed two projects that illustrate the German Embassy’s engagement with Human Rights Defenders in Nepal. The primary activity of the first project was training journalists at the district-level, focusing on four districts in the Terai. The selection of trainees was based on the principle of inclusivity. Following this training, media reporting on prison improvement increased. The second project was a Women Leadership Programme that aimed to facilitate the creation of effective networks of Women Human Rights Defenders who can focus on reproductive rights, domestic violence, and other pertinent issues. This project encountered a lot of resistance, including boycotts, from local leaders, Mr. Hansen said.

He spoke about Germany’s work, often in conjunction with the Philippines, to combat human trafficking at both the national and the international levels.

The Second Session of the workshop gave opportunity to different local partners to sketch-out the current human rights situation in Nepal and to evaluate EU’s initiatives in this field. Presentations were followed by animated Q&A discussions covering different topics, which aimed to deliver recommendations and suggestions on how to integrate human rights in the country. Child Workers in Nepal (CWN) shed light upon the condition of child labours- often abused and exploited. “When we advocated for child rights in 1987, people laughed at us but now it is part of the national agenda. Children are not only the future, they are our present as well,” CWN said.
Eramus Mundus Call For Proposals

2013 Call for proposals: EACEA/38/12

Eramus Mundus is a cooperation and mobility programme in the field of higher education that aims to enhance the quality of European higher education and to promote dialogue and understanding between people and cultures through cooperation with third countries. In addition, it contributes to the development of human resources and the international cooperation capacity of higher education institutions in third countries by increasing mobility between the European Union and these countries.

This Call for Proposals aims to support projects under Action 2 and Action 3 of the programme:

Action 2: Eramus Mundus Partnerships

- Action 2 – STRAND 1: Partnerships with countries covered by the ENPI, DCI, EDF and IPA and ICI (ICI+) instruments (Former External Cooperation Window)
- Action 2 – STRAND 2: Partnerships with countries and territories covered by the Industrialised Countries Instrument (ICI)

Action 3: Promotion of European higher education

- Projects to enhance the Attractiveness of European higher education

This Call for Proposals will not select Action 1 Joint Programmes.

Specific documents for applicants under Action 2 and 3 can be accessed in the links:

Or

Deadline
Deadline for submission of applications under both Action 2 and Action 3: 15 April 2013

Published by Dr. Alexander Spachis, Ambassador, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to Nepal

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