

# STUDY OF THE LOCAL PEACE COMMITTEES (LPCs)

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Local Peace Committee (LPC) is a committee formed at the district and municipality level with the primary goal to facilitate inclusivity in peacemaking and peacebuilding operations. In Nepal, LPC is implemented as part of a national peace process and is an integral part of Government of Nepal's (GoN) Three Year Plan Approach. Originally, the LPC was envisaged to assist with the implementation of the 2006 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) and provide local councils a platform in which war grievances can be addressed and compensation given accordingly. Moreover, it was thought that social representation would increase in the absence of locally elected bodies. 75 districts have established LPCs as of June, 2013.

Although many discussions were held before the finalization of LPC's Terms of Reference between 2007 and 2009, the following key components made up the blueprint of LPC's ToR:

1. There would be a maximum of 23 members comprising representatives of political parties, civil society organizations, conflict victims and the private sector
2. LPC will be dissolved when the new constitution takes place
3. Coordinators of the district LPCs are selected on a six month rotational basis
4. An explicit provision to maintain one third female representation in the committee
5. All districts have also expanded LPCs to the Village Development Committee (VDC) level as suggested within the LPC ToR.

Despite its positive vision to locally implement national peace agreements and to build local capacity for peacebuilding operations, Nepal's LPC was largely considered a 'failure' and 'lost opportunity' according to several reports from Asian Foundation and United Nations, amongst many other. The aim of this research and fellowship was to recognize these policy gaps as identified through reports, field research and interviews. Due to the terse duration of the fellowship, the actual problem-solving and policy implementation aspect of the work was unable to be carried out; however, it was immensely beneficial to recognize the core issues that retarded the growth and effectiveness of LPCs and to categorize them into the type of challenge it was: technical or adaptive.

According to Ronald Heifetz and Marty Linsky, technical challenges are differentiated from adaptive challenges vis-à-vis these specific criterions:

"Problems that we can solve through the knowledge of experts are technical challenges. Problems that the experts cannot solve are called adaptive challenges. Solutions to technical problems lie in the head and solving them requires intellect and logic. Solutions to adaptive problems lie in the stomach and the heart and rely on changing people's beliefs, habits, ways of working or ways of life."- Heifetz, R. & Linsky, M. (2004, April). When leadership spells danger. *Educational Leadership*, 37-38

Adaptive challenges, on the other hand, require:

"...experiments, discoveries and adjustments from many places in the organization or community. To make the adaptive leap to survive in the new environment requires people to learn new ways of behaving and adopt new values and attitudes. Sustaining change requires the people with the problem to internalize the change itself." Heifetz, R. & Linsky, M. (2002). *Leadership on the line*.

In familiarizing myself with the differentiations within these two challenges, I was able to move forward in my research and recognize where LPC's challenges fit within the two.

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# 1. CURRENT POLICY AND PRACTICES

Currently, the focus of the Local Peace Committee centers on third party mediation and conflict resolution training. During the duration of the fellowship, the Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction conducted conflict resolution training to the Chitwan, Surkhet and Pokhara's LPC. Each of these trainings hired a third party mediator, often a non-Nepali citizen, to train members of LPC on effective resolution dialogue and mechanisms of conflict resolution. These trainings, on average, lasted for one week.

Moreover, the MoPR, which provides each district with an annual budget of 700,000 NPR for LPCs to conduct 'software' and computer trainings, became a focus in the media for allegations of corruption. On July 22, 2013, MyRepublic reported that LPC members of Kapilvastu have "secretly spent" the budget earmarked for conflict victims to organize computer training. No further comment on the case was provided by staff of the MoPR; however, the general public perception of the functionalities and productivity of the LPCs was further diminished by this report on corruption.

Despite these reports, however, the interviews conducted during the duration of the fellowship indicated a rather positive public perception on the Local Peace Committee. Especially in efforts of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants, district members of the LPCs expressed a need for a platform in which former combatants and conflict victims alike can engage in dialogue. In addition, during a transitional political period in Nepal, great need of platform to address war grievances and provide transitional justice had been expressed by the participants interviewed. Particularly on the grounds of achieving accountability for human rights abuses and receiving compensation for wartime grievances, LPC has been able to increase civic trust and strengthen the democratic rule of law in its participating districts.

## 2. MOVING FORWARD

Tremendous potential lies within the Local Peace Committee to create a formidable ground in which locally oriented peacebuilding operations can be uprooted and capacity can be built from within local districts. However, a few policy gaps were recognized during the duration of the fellowship that requires further evaluation.

For one, based on the interviews conducted by district members of Jhapa's LPC, there appeared to be a gap of communication and lack of thorough understanding of the role that the district members played. One member expressed his role as a 'middle man' between district level peacebuilding operations and national peace initiatives; yet, admitted that very little of this position actually consisted of serving as a liaison. He reported his role as a 'report-keeper' and expressed that his position consisted of allocating appropriate funds towards conflict victims. An important next step to strengthen each districts' LPC is to create a more thorough Terms of Reference for the members of the district and to allocate specific goals that need to be met at the end of each month. In doing so, district members are able to play a more active role in recognizing that their district's needs are met. Furthermore, accountability is increased if a deadline and a report back to MoPR is set and it is less likely for funds to be misused.

Moreover, there appears to be a need for MoPR to assume a greater degree of participation in particular districts. Whilst some LPCs appear to be thriving and meeting their ToR goals; others are almost nonexistent. In order to create a greater consistency within LPCs effectiveness in all districts, MoPR must recognize districts where funding is not being allocated in an appropriate manner and the LPC is no longer functioning for conflict victims.

Both of these assessments fall under the 'technical' challenge, categorized as challenges that are easy to identify, can often be solved by an authority or expert, and its solutions can be implemented rather quickly. In recognizing that some LPCs are significantly more active than others, MoPR must decipher ways in which a sense of uniformity and consistency can exist, increasing the productivity of the LPCs and transparency of district members.

