



## SUCCESS STORY

### Supporting Students for Peaceful Protests



SOLVEN's president briefs Speaker of the House Subash Nembang on the conclusions of the protest workshops.



Students respond to Aarohan's street play.

USAID/NEPAL

*In August 2006, the U.S. Agency for International Development's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) began a 2-year, \$15,000,000 program in Nepal to bolster the current peace process, strengthen governance mechanisms, and support positive, nonviolent community engagement in the country's political, social, and economic future. The objectives of the program are to:*

- 1. Increase access to information and diversify public debate on issues critical to the peace process and democratic norms, and*
- 2. Increase engagement between government, civil society, and communities to support government responsiveness to its diverse constituents.*

April 2007 - In April 2006, mass demonstrations led to the restoration of democracy in Nepal. A year after this historic uprising, Nepal has seen an end to the 11 years of armed insurgency with the inclusion of the Maoists in the parliament and government and the promulgation of an interim constitution. Despite this positive momentum toward peace, Nepal's transition has been crippled by countless demonstrations organized by a wide, and continuously expanding, variety of groups. Unfortunately, demonstrations have often been violent, resulting in loss of life and extensive property damage. Kathmandu, the capital of Nepal, has been the epicenter of such protests, and students have been the most active participants.

Starting on March 13, 2007, with USAID/OTI assistance, Social Organization for Liberal Volunteer Engagement Nepal (SOLVEN) conducted a 2-day workshop on demonstrating more peacefully and reducing damage during protests. The participants included leaders of student unions and representatives of minority communities. These leaders discussed creative ideas on how to protest peacefully and developed a set of minimum standards for demonstrations. The student leaders felt that their behavior in the past during demonstrations had not been appropriate and expressed their commitment to demonstrate peacefully in the future. The workshop resulted in a list of recommendations for the government, the media, and agitating groups. These recommendations and code of conduct were submitted to the Speaker of the House, Mr. Subash Nembang, on April 16, 2007, who promised to raise the recommendations in the parliament.

As part of this activity, a street play by Nepal's leading theatrical troupe, Aarohan, was staged on 9 college campuses in the Kathmandu Valley, and trainings and discussions were held on 14 campuses. The play, which received extensive media coverage, focused on the political developments in Nepal, the incessant demonstrations, and issues of inclusion, and, with its good use of humor and political messaging, proved to be extremely popular with students.