



## SUCCESS STORY

### Strengthening Security and the Rule of Law



USAID/NEPAL

Panel responds to questions after USIP releases its report on security in Nepal.



Representatives from 21 districts provided input for the report.

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 political transition, and
2. Increase the effectiveness of key political transition institutions.

**November 2007** – As Nepal perseveres in its ongoing political transition, the country has experienced deteriorating security conditions and a weakening of the rule of law, particularly in the Terai’s southern plains. The Terai, a region of flat, fertile lands that borders India, has seen a proliferation of armed groups that claim to fight for the causes of ethnic populations. In the past year, violent clashes in the region have claimed many lives and caused extensive damage to property. In addition, an open and porous border with India allows for cross-border criminal activity. The violence has seriously undermined the Terai’s fragile communal harmony, and the government has recently deployed special task forces to control the situation in eight critical districts.

In order to enhance security, promote order, and increase cooperation between civil society and local government, USAID/OTI supported the United States Institute for Peace (USIP) from February to August 2007 as it held a series of dialogues in six critical Terai districts. The dialogues were attended by representatives from 21 districts, and discussions involved 125 police personnel, 144 civil society members, and 56 government and political officials from 10 political parties. After meeting separately for group discussions, the various civil society and local government practitioners met jointly to identify shared security concerns and to develop recommendations for strengthening the rule of law in Nepal.

During the dialogues, participants identified a number of challenges facing the country, including political interference in police operations, slow implementation of political commitments, a lack of resources and support for the police, outdated laws, a weak judiciary, public distrust of the police, poverty, and the marginalization of various groups.

Recommendations focused on the need for proper implementation of key political agreements, independence of the judiciary, institutional reform of police organizations, legal reform, and expanded engagement with civil society. USIP has published the findings and recommendations in its report: “Nepal in Transition: Strengthening Security and the Rule of Law.”