

## **National workshop on Sustainable Peace, Democracy and Development of Nepal: Opportunities and Challenges of Nepali Youth-Students**

**30<sup>th</sup> January 2008, Hotel Dwarika's, Kathmandu**

### **Workshop highlights and objectives**

Nepal is now passing through both the transformational and transitional political and social phase. The April 2006 uprising throughout the country showed Nepali peoples want a complete transformation of their country in terms of local to central level governance system in whole; they want to establish democratic values with justice and peace in every aspects of nation building. Today's workshop is on the same objectives and it will try to search some important ideas for 1) involving Nepali youth-students in the nation building process specially in maintaining sustainable peace, democracy and development, and on 2) how their current needs can be fulfilled to this regards. We will discuss each other as in agenda and as the Facilitator suggests.

### **Students and Youths: A General Understanding**

Students combine two essential and revolutionary qualities: youth and education. Revolution is by nature a youthful spirit; the spirit of revolution is the spirit of rebellion. It is the spring of the soul, the warm hope that moves man to aspire to perfection, and all this is expressed by youth. Education is the greatest weapon in the hand of the revolution for it transforms the revolution and transforms the revolutionary hopes and objectives from sentiments and vague wishes into a high degree of clear consciousness, and planned and organized consciousness. A youth should not be judged by his age, but his spirit and hope. The United Nation has recognized the youth aged between 15 to 29 while National Planning Commission of Nepal 15 to 35.

Man when young has the highest degree and the most potent of living virtues. If he is incapable of expressing them in words and with completeness, wisdom and serenity, it is because they are living and burning virtues, the vitality of which does not allow them to be put into words, wise speech and serene ideas. They do not give them the chance of looking backward, supervising and witnessing instead of propelling and acting, instead of deciding and creating.

### **A Minute of Nepali Youth-Students**

Nepali youth-students have played vital roles in different political changes on Nepal. The contribution of Nepali youth in the democratization process is immense. In fact all the yesteryear political movements – anti-Rana movement of 2007 B.S., student movement of 2036 B.S. against the Panchayat regime which ultimately pushed for a referendum in the country, the people's movements of 2046 B.S. and the April uprising Of 2063 - are classic examples in this regards. In contrast, successive generations of Nepali youngsters have been used and abused by the politicians and ruling elite to fulfill their own mundane objectives right from the time of its unification some 240 years ago. As a result to our dismay, all the past political movements remained only in “movement “to be recalled in political history as they have failed to bring about necessary changes in political culture of the nation. Till the

date in Nepal all the national policies and programmes are influenced by politics not by national demand. And the state and society both have only understood the language of nepotism, favouritism rather than civility. This practice has instilled a feeling of being more fantastic that pragmatist in nature among Nepali youth.

Since the political party activities increased in large, they formulate their own students and wings for their political interests to disseminate to youths and students. The party leadership has created ranks and files in the student wings deliberately to consolidate their political future. This practice, in contrast, has vertically divided the Nepali youth and has produced twin repercussions in term, first the “politicisation of youths” and the second the “political youth” – who bred on party patrimony – have failed to assimilate non-political youths (secular youths) in the mainstream. Hence the simple analysis of the situation is that as long as this vertical division remains in place, the youth organizations can neither claim their writ on governance nor can they make vibrant organizations of their own which can bail this country out from the intermittent political instability.

The state has yet to cater youth’s need and potentiality for positive transformation of Nepali society. Due to fragmentation and frustration huge number of these politically aware -Nepali youths is in confused and has no ways and ideas to confronting social injustice and rebuilding the nation. This condition has led to loose the youth power and the youth declination to various gulf countries to earn money. Provide the state is serious about this he should have noticed that contributing being in own country is far more than earning money in foreign country.

This situation has led to student-politics violent and destructive manners. Politics of violent activities have been day by day glorified in the country. We need to concern on utilisation of the youth potentiality for establishing a sustainable peace, institutionalisation of democracy and development of their own and the country.

### **APSS Initiative**

In the same regards Association of Political Science Students (APSS) is studying about the potentiality of Nepali youth-students and possible activities to cater them in democratic transformation of the country and about how they can contribute to the country’s politics constructively. Enabling State Programme/DFID has financially supported this initiative.

The youth-student role in national decision making is very important. 28 percent Nepali people are between the ages 15-29 and 60 percent are below 30. They should be not only the future of the country but also current partner of development. The State should not limit their roles only for future.

According to the study which is not yet completed, primarily shows that Nepali youth-student have basically two perceptions towards their responsibilities:

**This workshop is not meant to get feedbacks to this study, but to help participants to get facilitated in discussion.**

**Societal roles:** Students have realized their individual role as an agent for social transformation through their active participation in social and political activities. 65.5% of respondents agreed that they were members of any organization in their school life whereas 29.4% of them disagreed. This shows that students majority of respondents were from the students who were once a member in any kind of organization during their school student life. Table 2 shows that 23.5% of the respondents were members in students' union, 20.6% were members in students clubs, 9.8% were members in sports club. This shows that most of the students were members in students' union.

Majority of students (79.4%) agreed that students should take part in politics whereas only 14.7% of them responded that they should not. Most of the respondents (27.5%) agreed that students should take part in politics for societal change where as 24.0% stated that students should take part in politics due to global political environment. Only 2.0% opined that students should do politics to contribute to the political parties.

**Political roles:** Form the data analysis, students was found to be conscious towards their societal roles as well. Table 8 shows that when respondents were asked that whether they had potential to be a political leader, 61.8% accepted that they had such potential. Table 9 shows that 63.7% of the respondents stated that their first priority would be education if they were given opportunity to lead the nation. 30.0% respondents had expectation that students union should be able to address the common issues of all youths and again with the same percentage of respondents stated that students' union should work for social justice, equity and inclusiveness in the national affairs.

The study shows that the following findings:

**Students' roles at presen.:** From the analysis of data about students current roles and responsibilities, following specific role and responsibilities were reported by them:

<u>Activities</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
Dev. Activities :	88
Social Service :	81
Human Rights :	69
Political activities :	60
Environmental protecn. :	46
Community awareness:	42
Conflict Management:	37
Cultural Activities :	37
Educating Disadvantaged People:	33
Income generation :	25
Vocational Training :	25
Agriculture :	23
Recreational Activities:	19
Local Governance :	16
Security Volunteering :	15

The above frequency distribution shows that most of the students were found to engaged in developmental activities and next highest number in social services. This shows that today's youth people want to do some constructive works through developmental activities and social services. The third highest number was in human rights activities and the politics came into the fourth position out of fifteen different activities. This shows current interest of Nepali Youths towards development activities and then social services.

### ***Priorities of University Students Regarding Their Roles and Responsibilities***

University students were asked to select their priority areas as their roles and responsibilities as a Nepali Youth. The priorities areas with their preferences are given in the following frequency distribution:

<u>Activities</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
Political activities :	59
Community awareness:	27
Income generation :	17
Recreational Activities:	5
Dev. Activities :	40
Security Volunteering:	3
Human Rights :	36
Educating Disadvantaged People:	13
Conflict Management:	10
Agriculture :	11
Vocational Training :	12
Cultural Activities :	32
Environmental prot. :	23
Local Governance :	5
Social Service :	90

The frequency distribution of the various activities that reflect the priorities of Nepali Youths shows that social service was the activity with the highest frequency, and next highest was political activities. This shows that Nepali youths have given high priority to the social services for their involvement followed by political activities. Nepali youths have kept political activities in higher priority among 15 different activities except social services. This signifies that they want Nepali Youths to participate actively in politics.

***Students' involvement in different activities:*** Students were asked to state in what sorts of activities they are engaged as an active member of an organization or as an individual. They were found to be engaged in:

- Social services
- Forest protection
- Community awareness
- Human rights activities
- Politics
- Literature
- Street drama for public awareness in health, population and environment

- Sports and other arts
- Construction and maintenance of taps, roads
- Education for out of school children and adults
- Cultural programs (Music, songs and dance)
- Protection and preservation of public places like parks, temples, playgrounds
- Volunteering in local fairs and celebrations
- Donation collections to support flood victims
- Health camp and blood donations
- Human rights education
- Hospital volunteering
- Support to street children for their rehabilitation and education
- Fighting for fundamental human rights
- Fight for educational rights of all

This is the list of activities that Nepali Youths have been engaged at present. This is a summary list of various activities that Nepali Youths have been actively participated through students' union, clubs and other social organizations and even individual too. This was derived from the open ended question in item 14 and so frequency distribution table was not developed. The above list also shows that Nepali Youths have been engaged in various creative and constructive activities individually or in groups.

***Expectation from youths:*** This list of expectations of respondents from Nepali Youths has been derived from the responses of respondents in the open ended question of item 15. Their responses had been summarized in the following listed form:

- Politics for social transformation
- Political awareness in the remote areas
- Eradication of corruption
- Protection of natural and cultural environment
- Social services program for disadvantaged people
- Education for those who can not go to schools
- Positive thinking towards change
- Positive support to political parties but not blind support
- Unity of youths in national issues
- Literary campaigning for social transformation
- Active leadership for national development
- Maintaining peace, human rights and development through their leadership
- Avoid drug abuse, excessive alcohol and smoking
- Pay full attention to national political affairs
- Support anti-corruption campaigning
- Promotion of cultural activities
- Positive support to educational development
- Protection of historical monuments and artefacts
- Development projects in remote areas
- Economic developmental activities through cooperatives and micro-finance
- Vocational education for self employment

- Training of youths for volunteer services in education, health and environment
- Conflict management through active participation in mediation, dialogue and consensus.
- Setup and practice democratic values, norms and ethics
- Self discipline, self responsibility and self empowerment through education
- Training youths for establishing small scale domestic industries for self employment
- International experiences in politics and development
- Fight for democracy, social justice and peace in the country
- Participation in local governance through membership in clubs, associations and local bodies
- Create healthy political environment in nation through creating a pressure group
- Development of educational sector by creating good environment in educational institutions

Though a few students (3 or 4) out of 204 students had severely criticized active engagement of students in politics where as majority of students opined that students have to participate in politics in order to develop their leadership skill, make people aware of the various national and international issues and fight for democracy, social justice and equity. They also opined that students/youths are the major agents of social transformation and so they have to show interest in the politics and even be ready to take responsibility to lead the nation.

For detail contact:

**Association of Political Science Students**

GPO Box 5639, Gyaneshwore, Kathmandu, NEPAL

Tel: 0977 1 4434 715, Fax: 0977 1 4436 040

Email: [info@apssnepal.org](mailto:info@apssnepal.org), [www.apssnepal.org](http://www.apssnepal.org)

Contact person: Ms. Bindu Ban, General Secretary

Contact: 98510 10959