

Rehabilitation Update

December 2013



Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.



UN Interagency Rehabilitation Programme (UNIRP)

1. INTRODUCTION

- 74% of the VMLR were under 18 when the Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA) was signed in 2006
- 90% of the VMLR contacted UNIRP through the toll-free number or by visiting one of the offices
- Of all 4,008 VMLR, 30% were female

United Nations Interagency Rehabilitation Programme (UNIRP) was established in June 2010 following the signing of the Action plan between the Unified Communist Party of Nepal – Maoist (UCPN-M), the United Nations and the Government of Nepal (GoN) on December 16, 2009. The Maoists ex-combatants including the Verified Minors and Late Recruits (VMLR) remained in cantonments since the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA) on November 21, 2006 and the Agreement on Monitoring of the Management of Arms and Armies (AMMAA) on December 8, 2006.

Building on the successful UN inter-agency collaboration during the discharge of VMLR from cantonments, UNIRP was established to support the rehabilitation process of VMLR. UNIRP's main objective was to support the transition of the discharged VMLR from military to civilian life by providing them with training and education to access employment and livelihood opportunities. Together with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the International Labour Organization (ILO), UNIRP provided four sectoral rehabilitation options including, Vocational Skills Training (VST), Micro-Enterprise (ME), educational support, and health-related training and education. The effectiveness of the programmes were enhanced with additional services, such as gender-specific support, career counselling, business mentoring, and linkages to micro-credit or employment opportunities and post-training monitoring and follow-up.

2. WHERE THINGS STAND

- Of those enrolled in one of the four options, 80% have graduated
- 71.5% of graduates are either employed or have established own businesses
- 45% of the VMLRs were provided with psychosocial counselling including family and community interventions



At the early stages of the programme, UNIRP counsellors within the regional offices had to counsel unmotivated, frustrated and at times violent group of young people while facing threats and intimidation. The VMLR came with high expectations, however, with continued assistance and professional services through UNIRP, and seeing the success of other programme participants, their attitudes, behaviours and aptitude for learning gradually improved. As well, a positive transformation was seen in the VMLR as the agreement for the support of the 19,000 ex-combatants was reached.

Despite the challenges, the implementation of the rehabilitation programme for VMLR was considered a success. Throughout the programme 2,234 (38% female) VMLR enrolled in one of the UNIRP support packages and received career counselling and training. To date 71.5% of the graduates have secured employment or established their own businesses. Over the course of the programme, 45% of the VMLR required and received psychosocial services to assist their reintegration back into their societies. UNIRP also provided 2,221 different forms of gender specific support to 1,024 VMLR and their families. Gender specific support included childcare support, a nutritional diet, as well as maternity/paternity allowances.

The education component remains ongoing until August 2015 to provide the 380 participants still enrolled in education the opportunity to complete the provision of four years. Below are some stories of reintegration reflecting the transformation of programme participants to civilian life.

3. STORIES FROM THE FIELD

“Mr. Bishnu Bahadur – Empowered Hands, Healthy Communities”

27 years old Bishnu Bahadur Rai is a discharged ex-combatant who joined the Maoist Army at the age of 16 while he was studying in class 9. In 2002 he was arrested and put in custody by the Royal Nepal Army, charged with supporting the Maoist party. He was released after a few days but, since his community now associated him as a Maoist, he decided to participate. He became an active member in the Maoist student union in his school. After a couple of years, he then joined the People’s Liberation Army and worked as a record keeper and Quarter Master. He wanted to change the system within his community and nation through his participation.



Bishnu was discharged in 2010 and returned home to help his family with their agricultural work, though he faced problems adjusting to his community. Many used to talk about him in slanderous ways behind his back and humiliated him in front of large groups of people, but he carried on. After some time a VMLR friend, Mr. Ash Bahadur Rai, informed him about the UN rehabilitation programme and encouraged him to join. He wanted to work as a health worker as there was no health treatment facility easily available in his locality. He opted for the Community Medical Assistant (CMA) under the health package and received 18 months training from Ilam Technical Institute. He also obtained a childcare grant support for his two children and a nutritional diet for his wife during the training period. This support helped Bishnu care for his family while continuing his training.

He won over the respect of his community through his hard work and is now able to serve the people of his community with his skills. He says, "Previously I was fighting for the fundamental rights of the people, now I am preventing people from getting diseases and providing them treatment. So, I am quite happy with my job." He started to offer health services in his own village through a small clinic and medicine shop. He invested NRs. 30,000 to open the clinic and obtain medicine and supplies. He participated in a Public Service Commission (PSC) exam for a government job. If he fails the PSC exam, he plans to expand his shop and invest up to NRs. 2,00,000. Currently, he earns around NRs. 5-7 thousand per month and participates in social activities in the community. He is an important and active member of the community, glad that he can support himself and his family.

“Entrepreneurship skills changed Dikchhya Dhakal’s life”



Dikchhya Dhakal carries various identities– some know her as the mother of Khushi KC, or the wife of Dinesh KC, and others as an ex-combatant of the Maoist Army. These are just a few, but the one she cherishes the most is as a female entrepreneur of Phidim, Panchthar.

She still remembers the day when she joined the Maoist party. She was studying in class 5 and one of her brothers, who had already joined the movement, had requested her repeatedly to join. Eventually, she couldn’t refuse and she made the decision to join without consulting her family. She went to Dhankuta and actively participated in party work. Three months later, the party declared a ceasefire and started negotiations with the Government of Nepal. She returned home and stayed almost three months until the Maoists broke the ceasefire and

the war broke out again. Her brother came back and again asked her to serve the party. She went to Kathmandu and actively participated in the revolution.

She was discharged and joined other VMLR friends in a house supported by the party. Her commander informed her about UNIRP and encouraged her to participate, so she went for career counselling and decided to open a retail shop. The business induction training changed her attitude because she was not serious about starting her own business. She explains, “I joined UNIRP because I wanted to take whatever I was given, but the training changed my mind and made me think seriously about opening a business. As I had only completed my primary education, I did not think I could run a business. But after receiving the training and most importantly learning to make a business plan, it became a possibility. The training actually changed me and I returned with a positive mindset towards life.”

She prepared her business plan in Phidim, Panchthar and received 40,000 rupees of in-kind support to initiate her retail shop. With the assistance of her husband, they were earning 5,000 to 6,000 rupees per month. She then expanded her

business to include a fresh house, and received a second round of support worth NRs. 20,000. This helped her to enhance her business and as a result she started earning between 10,000 to 15,000 rupees per month.

After seeing her success, her landlord evicted her as he wanted to start his own business in that location. Dikchhya shifted her business nearby and started to sell petrol in bottles. Earning good profit, she moved all the money from the retail shop into the petrol business. Now, she runs the fresh house and sells petrol to motorbikes earning around 2,000 rupees per day. She is currently saving 700 rupees in three local cooperatives daily. She has also saved two hundred thousand rupees in Machapuchre Bank, Phidim and invested around five hundred thousand rupees in both of her businesses.

She is now a mother of a beautiful daughter, Khushi, who was born in June, 2013. The literal meaning of “Khushi” is “happiness” in Nepali. Is she really happy? Yes, she is confident about the bright future ahead for her family. She hopes that her daughter will have a better life and can study to become a doctor.

“Karna Gyawali – From uncertainty to a resilient future”

Mr. Karna Bahadur Gyawali, a 26-years old former combatant was born into a poor family in Surkhet district. He joined the Maoist army at the age of 15. During the insurgency period, Maoist cadres (in a group) used to come to his village and force his family to cook food and provide them shelter. After their departure, the Royal Nepal Army would come and give troubles to the family for feeding and supporting the Maoists.

Initially, he worked as a musician but was not happy and ran away, but the party brought him back to the camp because they had not yet released him. Then, he was placed in the communications department working as a carrier delivering items to commanders, and in his free time he was even able to study. He felt life as a combatant was very scary during the insurgency; there was no certainty whether he would survive or not.



Memories of the insurgency period were still fresh in his village and the situation was not favourable for ex-combatants to return. There was an ongoing rivalry between the local youth groups, he recalls, "two of our colleagues committed suicide due to these problems and one of my friends was killed by an opposition group in his region." Though he was counselled by UNIRP Nepalgunj regional office, he was transferred to the Biratnagar regional office for the Indian Cook skills training for safety reasons.

Initially, he, like many of his colleagues, was not serious about rehabilitation. He went to the training to take advantage of the stipend. With UNIRP counselling and the life skills he learned during the training, his attitude and behaviour began to change. Learning business skills and becoming an Indian cook provided Karna a space to dream about his future potential as a businessperson or chef in a hotel. He said, "We enjoyed the training very much and learned sufficient skills for our employment."

After completion of the training in September 2010, Mr. Gyawali was selected as a chef in Hotel Ratna where he completed his On-the-Job Training. His spouse was very pleased with his new job and income. Over the past three years he has sharpened his skills as a chef working in 4 hotels and is currently working at the Tourism Hotel as the head chef. He is earning NRs. 12,000 per month with food and accommodation. He is also rearing two pigs nearby the hotel using the leftover food to feed them. To date, he has a total of NRs. 40,000 savings in Rastriya Banijya Bank Nepal from his income. He took out life insurance from Asian Life Insurance and paid a premium of NRs. 56,000 in instalments. He has also been able to send his son to gain quality education at an English medium boarding school in Surkhet.

He has made many friends in Hile Bazaar, Dhankuta and has a good relationship with the local community. He feels honoured to be able to serve them a variety of tasty food. Having earned the trust from the hotel business community and locals, Karna plans to open his own hotel in Surkhet with his savings.

“Khagendra Shahi is passing on the message of Peace”



Khagendra Shahi resident of Chamunda, Dailekh, has a past filled with agony and suffering. After completing class nine, he joined the People’s War and put off his studies. Khagendra’s 12 member family was very upset and frustrated by this as they had high hopes for his education and future.

He stayed with the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) for nearly four years. He said, “I associated myself in the People’s War because a huge number of people from my village joined.” He expressed that he was disappointed because he felt he wasted his time that could have been better spent studying.

He returned home after being discharged in 2010 and resumed his studies. He took the educational support package offered by UNIRP through Sundar Nepal Sanstha. He was provided with a school uniform, stationery, admission fees and a monthly stipend. He soon realized that he was disconnected from his community, feeling anxious, sad and alienated by the

atmosphere, UNIRP intervened and provided him frequent psychosocial counselling. Khagendra did not lose hope, but rather said, “I have to pass S.L.C. this year at any cost.” The teachers at the school were happy with his determination and were confident that his positive attitude would enable him to persevere and be successful in his future.

In addition, he participated in peacebuilding training - 'Youth Leadership Training for Peace' conducted by Sundar Nepal Santha. This workshop gave him the energy to continue his studies and promote peace in his community so others would not feel excluded and disconnected as he originally felt.

His persistence paid off, and with continuous support from UNIRP he is now studying in class ten in Shree Dharmadev Secondary School, Airpata, Dailekh. The local community members are also happy with Khagendra’s positive transformation. He spends his time disseminating information about the Role of Youth for Peacebuilding to local youth. He is a general member of the Phoolbari Youth Club in Chamunda. He is involved in facilitating programmes in the community for local peacebuilding activities, which did not previously exist, teaching youth about harmony and understanding. This has made him popular amongst the local youth. The community people try to assist his efforts because of his continual contribution towards encouraging youth participation in the path towards peace. Khagendra states, "The leadership development training helped me to gain self-confidence and I am enthusiastic about the future." Khagendra no longer feels alienated and intends to complete his schooling and continue inspiring other youth.

“Ram’s story – From a wayward boy to a mechanic”

When Ram Bahadur Chaudhary joined the Maoist party, he was in his early teens, studying in grade 8. He had heard very little about the Maoist party, but one of his classmates persuaded him to join and that Friday he ran away from school. He returned a week later, and his parents were very concerned. They tried their best to convince him not to return to the Maoists saying he was too young and that he should complete his schooling first. However, while his parent’s rationale was compelling, he already felt emotionally attached to the Maoists and left home early the next morning.

Since he was young, for the first few months, he was not given any major responsibilities. Eventually, he was assigned to assist in the mess hall, construction of temporary shelters, and a lookout/ guard for the shelters. He whispered, “Thank god! I was fortunate enough that I was not taken to any of the places to fight. They left me at the shelters saying you are still a child and too young to carry loaded guns.” He felt mixed emotions hearing about the ceasefire- happy it was over, yet sad about the loss of his friends who did not survive.



He participated in the discharge ceremony in early 2010. He had plenty of dreams but was afraid that his family would not accept him. He returned back home and luckily was warmly welcomed by his family. They said, “After all you went through

you have come back home safe and sound.” However, as the time passed, his family became disappointed because he was not working and did not have any employable skills.

He contacted UNIRP and selected the motorcycle service mechanics option, and successfully completed the skills training. Ram was provided with basic tools, equipment and On-the-Job Training (OJT) in his home town. Though he completed the full training course, he felt that he needed more practice to build up his confidence and remained at the training centre another four months.

Since his brother had gone abroad for foreign employment and his mother had recently passed away, he decided to stay close to home. He opened a motorcycle repair and maintenance workshop near his house partnering with a neighbour’s cycle repairing shop by investing around 25,000 rupees. Ram’s hardworking nature made him popular among other workshop mechanics and his customers. UNIRP provided him with enhanced livelihood support worth 20,000 rupees in-kind in order to assist him expand and sustain his business.

His business partner went abroad and he became the sole proprietor of the business. Since then, he has been running both the cycle repairing and motorcycle workshop with regular earnings of approximately 300 rupees per day. He saves NRs. 100/day in a local cooperative for his child’s education.

He is now very happy with his new life, being around his family and able to contribute to his family expenditures. Ram’s sustainable livelihood has helped him reintegrate back into society.

“Dreams become a reality for Dil Bahadur Sunar”



When Dil Bahadur Sunar joined the Maoist party, he was 14, and had dropped out of school in grade 7 due to the poor economic condition of his family. His parents had been living in India doing manual labour work while Dil, along with his younger sister who was partially disabled, remained in Samakot. The Maoist cadres used to visit his home often and tried to persuade him to join them. As a result, Dil joined the Maoist Army hoping to change the economic and political landscape of Nepal. He hoped that once the Maoists were successful he would be able to join the Royal Nepal Army.

After being discharged he went to India to meet his parents and worked in a hotel as a cleaner. Dil was very impressed with the amount of respect for the chef in the hotel. He started dreaming, “If only I would have been a chef...”

When he returned to Nepal, UNICEF CAAFAG informed him about the rehabilitation programme. During career counselling he enrolled in the cook and hotel training – inspired by the chef in India. Dil participated in a six-month Indian cook training course at the Kantipur Hotel Training Institute, Pokhara. After completing the training, he joined the famous Raniban Resort in Pokhara. During the training, UNIRP provided him with three meals a day, a monthly stipend for accommodation and paid for the training fee. After the training he was employed as a cook with a salary of NRs. 8,000 along with lodging and food. His family was very glad to hear that he was working in a reputable hotel. While his sister was still in India studying, Dil’s employment made it possible for her to return back to Nepal and study in a boarding school in Pokhara.

Dil worked for two years but realized that enhancing his skills would get him a better job. During a UNIRP monitoring visit he requested for a diploma course for a master cook, to allow for better opportunities. UNIRP was happy to help and offered the required training to become a chef.

He passed the level I and level II exams conducted by the Skill Testing Board of Nepal. With his new skills, knowledge and hard work he obtained a job as the head chef in the same resort. His salary was increased to NRs. 15,000 per month with lodging and food. He currently supervises 19 other cooks. The increased salary enabled his parents to move back to Nepal. Dil is happily married and has enough money to support his and his family expenses. He also learned how to use the internet and is now looking for better job opportunities abroad.