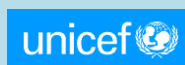


# Rehabilitation Update

June 2012



Empowered lives.  
Resilient nations.



## UN Interagency Rehabilitation Programme (UNIRP)

### 1. INTRODUCTION

- About 74% of the VMLRs were under 18 when the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed in 2006
- In the discharge ceremonies, it was found that 40% of the VMLRs had already left the cantonments
- An individual tracing programme in May 2011 revealed that only 3,040 VMLRs were in country



VMLRs returning to their village

#### *“Skills and jobs instead of guns”*

This update describes how discharged ex-combatants, 30% of whom are women, are supported in their return to civilian life by the United Nations Interagency Rehabilitation Programme (UNIRP).

These ex-combatants, known as Verified Minors and Late Recruits (VMLRs), were deeply affected by their experiences in armed conflict as well as the on-going stigma associated with being tagged as ‘disqualified’ from being regular members of the Maoist army. These VMLRs were kept in the cantonments for over three years, unaware of their status being VMLRs and the fact that they were soon to leave the Maoist cantonments. The UN coordinated the discharge

process of 4,008 VMLRs from the Maoist army cantonments in early 2010.

At the request of the Government of Nepal, UNIRP was established in 2010 to provide support through counselling, training and education to facilitate their return to civilian life with improved sustainable livelihood options. UNIRP, through its five regional offices and a broad network of implementing partners, offered innovative support, responsive to the emerging needs of the VMLRs.

### 2. WHERE THINGS STAND

- Of those enrolled, 64% have graduated and 29% are still undergoing training / education
- 56% of graduates are either employed or have established own businesses
- 40% of the VMLRs are provided with psychosocial counselling including family and community interventions

The discharge and rehabilitation of VMLRs is a landmark achievement in the peace process of Nepal. UNIRP had to operate in a politically sensitive and challenging environment dealing with an extremely difficult target group. The programme was quick off the mark to actively face and rise to these challenges.

Consistent efforts were made to reach out to as many of the VMLRs as possible and as a result, over 88% of those in Nepal contacted the programme before the enrolment deadline of July 2011. Subsequently, 78% of them visited UNIRP regional offices and received counselling of which 71% enrolled for training and education for rehabilitation (See Table 1).

UNIRP offers four training and education rehabilitation options: i) vocational skills training; ii) micro-enterprise; iii) health-related training; and iv) education. These options are complemented by various cross-cutting services as key components of rehabilitation support. Individual career counselling is provided to all participants, whereas psychosocial counselling, including family and community counselling was provided to over 40% of them. Comprehensive gender-specific support, tailored to the Nepali context, has ensured maximum participation, particularly of women (38% of those enrolled). Community-based peace building initiatives provide a platform for VMLRs and community youth to engage in positive ways to support the rehabilitation process and facilitate a smooth return to civilian life. UNIRP has been working closely with the private sector and employment associations to link programme graduates with potential job and micro-credit opportunities. 56% of graduates from training and education are now either in employment or have established their own businesses (See Table 3).

Given the political context and background realities of the VMLRs, the UN sees this as a major success and these numbers are impressive by any standard. This was realized by continuous improvement and adjustments through an innovative and dynamic monitoring approach.

## 2.1. Key Statistics of the Rehabilitation Programme (As of 30<sup>th</sup> June 2012)



The three tables below present the key data about UNIRP through each stage of the process. Each of the tables includes the percentage of female VMLRs who participated in each respective activity.

**Table 1** shows how many VMLRs contacted the programme, how many were referred to education/training, and how many enrolled in each of the options. Although Table 1 presents this data for three groupings (i.e. the total VMLR population, VMLRs discharged through the cantonment, and VMLRs not working abroad), it is important to highlight that UNIRP targeted the third of these groupings – the 3,040 VMLRs who were present in Nepal and not already working abroad. This target group is presented in Column 3 of Table 1.

**Table 2** provides an overview of the 2149 VMLRs who enrolled in training or education options, detailing which stage of the process they are at.

**Table 3** shows how many VMLRs who have graduated from the programme are employed or have started own businesses.

**Table 1: Key Numbers**

Steps in Rehabilitation Process	Of the total 4,008 VMLRs		Of the 2,394 VMLRs discharged through cantonment ceremonies		UNIRP Target Population: Of the 3,040 VMLRs who are not working abroad
		Female (% of 4,008 VMLRs)		Female (% of 2,394 VMLRs)	
VMLRs who contacted UNIRP through the toll-free phone number	2,689 (67%)	34%	2,103 (88%)	34%	2,689 (88%)
VMLRs referred for Training / Education	2,384 (59%)	36%	1,903 (79%)	36%	2,384 (78%)
VMLRs enrolled for Training / Education	2,149 (54%)	38%	1,700 (71%)	37%	2,149 (71%)

**Table 2: Breakdown of 2,149 VMLRs who enrolled for Training or Education**

Steps in Rehabilitation Process	Of the total 2149 VMLRs who enrolled Training / Education	
		Female
Those still in Training / Education with set graduation date	629 (29%)	41%
Those who dropped out	73 (4%)	11%
Those who registered for enrolment but never visited the service provider	69 (3%)	33%
Those who have graduated to date from Training / Education	1,378 (64%)	38%

**Table 3: Breakdown of 1,378 VMLRs who have graduated to date from Training / Education**

Steps in Rehabilitation Process	Of the total 1,378 VMLRs who graduated from Training / Education	
		Female
Those who are employed or running a business	772 (56%)	45%

## 3. WHERE THINGS ARE GOING



UNIRP is scheduled to phase-out its operations in January 2013. To ensure the successful and sustainable social and economic rehabilitation of VMLRs, it is necessary to exercise a gradual and coordinated withdrawal of support. Towards this goal, a comprehensive phase-out strategy has been developed in close consultation with the interagency partners and the Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction. Some key elements include an operational wind-down, a merger of field offices, a phasing-out of programme staff and the appropriate management of key assets. UNIRP anticipates the merger of two of its regional offices and reduction in staff beginning August 2012. As the planned phase-out progresses, there are policy level issues that warrant consideration, particularly from Government of Nepal (GoN). These are:

- Possible support to VMLRs after the programme phases-out in January 2013. This will include taking over responsibility for the provision of follow-up support. It is extremely important to have a combination of on-going services so that successful graduates sustain their jobs and businesses, while other graduates receive support in the form of employment or credit linkages.
- Possible linkages of VMLRs who have already graduated from UNIRP to existing government programmes that could provide additional training and services.
- Handover of the UNIRP database including the list of VMLRs who did not approach UNIRP after the enrolment deadline.

## 4. Success Stories

*"Experiences have shown, time and again, that we need to make a decisive effort to reintegrate ex-combatants into society – an effort that recognizes the fundamental human need for dignity and self-respect. This must involve immediate support as soon as ex-combatants give up their arms, and concrete measures to guarantee them secure livelihood as well as better future," Secretary General's statement, April 2005*

**Contract Address:**  
UNIRP Office, KSK  
Building, Block-A  
(Opposite UN House),  
Pulchowk, Lalitpur,  
Nepal.  
Phone No.: +977 (1)  
5010319 / 015010135

### "The training provided under the rehabilitation package has turned my life around"



Bikas (24) joined the Maoist army when he was in Grade 10. Until a few years ago, he was living a difficult underground life as a 'People's War' combatant. When he was discharged from a cantonment, he struggled to make a living after his long involvement in the Maoist army. He needed new skills to return to civilian life. **"At this difficult time, UNIRP helped me like an angel. It offered Micro-enterprise Training in the Cooking and Hotel Business and also provided me with initial start-up support, which enabled me to earn enough bread to survive,"** Bikas said after going through the rehabilitation process. The result of his hard work is the ownership of a lodge and restaurant in Dhankuta which he runs jointly with his wife. He started his business with an investment of NRs. 100,000, of which 60% was provided by UNIRP as start-up support. The lodge and restaurant is proving to be a successful business venture. Bikas said, looking over his two-story hotel, purchased in April 2010 from the profits of his restaurant, **"Now we are self-sufficient and we can invest in the business. If I didn't have the rehabilitation package from the UN, we would be compelled to go back into the field."**

### "I have been able to live a new life and gain confidence in myself"



Bimala (24) married Bishnu (25) inside the cantonment. As it was an inter-caste marriage, she was afraid of going to her husband's village and of being rejected by her in-laws. Her fear was so extreme during her pregnancy that she tried to commit suicide. Bimala and Bishnu contacted UNIRP, and through a series of careful face-to-face counselling sessions, the regional team were able to encourage them to enrol in micro-enterprise training, after having gained an in depth understanding of their needs and background. Bimala was also put in touch with an NGO named Women's Rehabilitation Centre which provided her with food and accommodation. In the meantime, the counselling team visited her husband's home to pave the way for a smooth integration into the village. Now, the family welcomes Bimala, saying **"If our son has accepted her, why would we deny her?"** In this sympathetic environment, Bimala gave birth to a healthy baby. **"I am very happy to be in this family. With the support provided by UNIRP, I have been able to live a new life and gain confidence in myself."** After completing salesmanship and book-keeping training, she has opened her own retail shop with start-up support worth NRs. 40,000.

### "Our new life as entrepreneurs has just started"



Chandra (25), Ram (25), and Nirmal (25) are new graduates from the Community Medical Assistant Course offered by UNIRP. Putting into practice their newly acquired knowledge, they jointly established a community health centre named 'Pokhara Healthy Home' which is now registered in the Municipality. **"If we can succeed in this venture, we can invite others to be employed – we are making employment opportunities as well as preventing people from having diseases,"** says Nirmal, who is very optimistic about their future. They plan to hold workshops for the community to share the benefits of good nutrition and herbal treatments leading to good preventative health care. **"Our new life as entrepreneurs has just started."** The three entrepreneurs

share their dreams: **"We would like to expand our Healthy Home, have our own polyclinic, reduce diseases, and make people more health conscious."**