



SUCCESS STORY

Youth Observe Second Anniversary of Democracy



The crowd cheers during a concert promoting youth engagement in Nepal's ongoing political transition.



Young and old celebrated the vision of a "new" Nepal at the USAID/OTI-supported event.

USAID/NEPAL

In August 2006, the U.S. Agency for International Development's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) began a 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.

May 2008 – In April 2006, mass demonstrations during Jana Andolan II (People's Movement) led to the restoration of democracy in Nepal. Two years later, Nepal has taken another significant step in its political transition by holding Constituent Assembly (CA) elections on April 10, 2008, that were, for the most part, peaceful. Young people, who were instrumental in reinstating democracy during Jana Andolan II, have been playing both positive and negative roles in the ongoing transition. Accordingly, one of the important challenges of the post-election period will be to educate youth on democratic practices, political tolerance, and nonviolent means of political expression.

On April 23, 2008, with assistance from USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI), the Social Organization for Liberal Volunteer Engagement Nepal (SOLVEN) held a day-long cultural and awareness-raising event on the second anniversary of Jana Andolan II. The event was organized not only to mark the anniversary and celebrate the success of the recent CA elections but also to inform youth about the importance of democracy and the peace process. Through songs, poems, and other cultural activities, the event emphasized the role of youth in the "new" Nepal. By actively engaging youth in the transition process, the sponsors hope to reduce the likelihood that they will engage in disruptive activities.

A fast response from USAID/OTI, which approved support within three days, allowed SOLVEN to quickly organize the anniversary event. Activities included an exhibit of photographs taken during the Jana Andolan II demonstrations, speeches, poetry recitations, street dramas, and a concert – all focusing on the positive role that youth can play in promoting democracy.

The event was deemed a success, as more than 8,000 people attended the concert and other performances. And although the event's message targeted youth, people of all ages enjoyed the celebration. Elderly Nepalese danced alongside young people, and neighbors stood on nearby rooftops to watch the festivities. All in all, the event provided an excellent platform to reinforce the messages of peace and democracy that originated with Jana Andolan II.