



# SUCCESS STORY

## Engaging Youth in the Peace Process



A peace poster calls for youth vigilance against returning to violence.



A mural promotes unity in diversity among Nepali youth.

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.

**October 2007** – Young people in Nepal have been both party to and victims of violence during the country's 11-year armed insurgency and during the April 2006 uprising that sparked the peace process and the restoration of democracy. And while Nepali youth have been marginalized from the current political discourse, they continue to expect an opportunity to participate significantly in the processes launched by the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) on November 21, 2006.

With USAID/OTI support, the Association of Youth Organizations Nepal (AYON) launched a campaign on March 28, 2007, to positively engage Nepali youth in the peace process. The grant provided training on peace building to 126 young people – including 46 young women and youth from marginalized groups. Once the youth completed the five-day workshops, they organized 25 district-level Youth Peace Dialogues. The dialogues attracted 1,355 participants, 508 of whom were female, and were attended by representatives from the government, political parties, civil society, and youth organizations. As part of the grant, 3,000 posters emphasizing the role of youth in the peace process were distributed; also, 157 unity-promoting murals were painted in public places following discussions among the participants. After the dialogues, AYON submitted a memorandum and a draft action plan on engaging youth in the peace process to the Ministry of Education and Sports and to other national and district-level stakeholders.

The activity has continued to produce tangible results, as project-trained youth recently presented budget recommendations to the District Development Committee (DDC) in Nuwakot District. Young people have also helped restart the operations of the DDC in Dhanusha District, which had ceased activities because of disagreements between government staff and constituents. AYON remains active, and the project has succeeded in creating a wide network of youth organizations that continue to work closely with each other.