

Women and Children in the periphery of the Maoists' People's War

(Prepared on the basis of on the field study of Rukum, Rolpa and Jajarkot districts)

December 2001



Published by

Institute of Human Rights communication, Nepal (IHRICON)

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Summary: Women and Children in the Periphery of People's War

Foreword:

The people living in the remote villages in Rolpa, Rukum and Jajarkot districts are among the poorest and most disadvantaged groups in Nepal. They faced many problems in the past and continue to today, there is little hope of an immediate solution.

These are districts that were neglected and exploited during the previous regime. The people had expected democracy to change that, but it was not to be. The democratic government, in the name of getting rid of political opponents filed false charges against people of other parties—mainly communists—and those it believed to support the communist thereby spreading terror in the villages. Many males were forced to go into hiding or to India. The post-democracy government failed on two counts: first it was unable to assure people that their aspirations for better lives would be met under the new polity and second, it tried to use force to suppress the expression of even very basic demands.

Almost every political party has taken a shot at governing and almost every one of them failed even to give a sense of relief to the people, let alone meet their aspirations for major social and economic change. Instead government atrocities continued providing the Maoists much-needed political space to convince the people that the only way to end government atrocities and neglect was to get rid of the political system.

As the Maoists began to take their ideology promising justice and better lives to the villages, representatives of other political parties headed to the district headquarters or the centre because that was where they saw their political future and where the spoils of power were being flaunted. In the villages the government began increasing arrests of the Maoist workers and police atrocities increased. Many women were raped in custody and the people that were demanding justice and better lives found that the only way to avoid arrest was to go into hiding and the only way to avenge the police highhandedness was through violence.

The Maoists won the confidence of the people demanding justice and change and after mobilising those running away from atrocities; the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) declared the people's war in February 1996.

With the men gone to either join the Maoists or to elsewhere to avoid arrest, the women in the villages were suddenly with more responsibility to shoulder—that of the war, politics, and day-to-day survival in addition to the larger developmental needs. Even women that never had to worry about the aforesaid issues earlier suddenly found themselves responsible of raising their children and finding ways of survival. As members of their

families began to fall to police bullets or remained missing over long period, their anger began to be directed towards government and soon they were even taking up guns.

The Maoist cadre were local and fully aware of the problems faced in the villages. They thus began to find ways to ease the burdens of the villagers, when not hacking the number one enemy of the people—the policemen—to drive them out. In return for their help the locals provided them shelter and support. Because policemen in search of Maoists often harassed the women, they became more distrustful about the security forces and were drawn closer to the Maoists. The rebels used the resulting confusion to make the village women aware of their rights and helped them address the problems faced in day-to-day living. Many of the women were soon joining the Maoist ranks, as guerrillas, political leaders or simply supporters.

While some found support among the Maoists, those women and children not fully supportive of the rebels or the police, faced a new problem. They were forced to make contributions to the Maoist cause—often under force and because of fear of being singled out—while they continued to live unspoken fear every time police patrols passed through the villages.

Maoist influence grew with the lessening of that of government, especially after the police posts were withdrawn. The Maoists then began undertaking activities aimed at ensuring social justice, which was a relief to people had been victimised throughout their lives. Once they ensured that the elected bodies were defunct they took over local governance and began undertaking development activities by mobilising the masses. They have undertaken collective work in agriculture, health, education, trail repairing, bridge building, etc. Today police presence is minimum in most villages but there is a sense of uncertainty because anything could happen anytime

Most women in the villages are illiterate but they are very aware—they understand the language of oppression and injustice and talk about liberation. And because they are aware they expect a better deal from both the government and the Maoists. To ensure that all political parties would need to go back to the villages with commitment to ensure villagers justice and governance that can bring meaningful change.

This is not a novel but still every time I sat down to write about my experiences and observations, the reality in the villages from Rolpa, Rukum, Jajarkot and Gorkha come to my mind. I have tried to narrate the pain, oppression and terror and the plight and suffering of women, some of whom have taken up guns hoping to make the “new democracy” that the Maoists preach a reality. I have tried to understand the mind of the woman who is out there with a gun in one hand and an infant tucked on her back. I have tried to explain the mind of those that have picked up weapons after losing a dear one and those children, who today resemble deer left to fend themselves in a jungle full of tigers. I have tried to bring to you the sufferings of those orphans that have no one to turn to.

This is a report about pain, “successes”, and the violence against women and their quest for revenge. It is based on field visits and extensive interviews and discussions with the

people living in those Maoist-controlled villages. I hope whatever information I have put together will help better understand the situation of children and women in order to better focus programmes aimed at helping them. I would like to extend my sincere thanks to those who made their hard efforts to make publication of this book possible, including British Embassy for logistic support for the field visit and publication; Ms. Marina Adhikara for her continuous support and inspiration, Ms. Recta Manchanda of Women in Conflict in South Asia, Mr. Sushil Pyakurel of INSEC, Sancharika Samuha; my journalist colleagues Amrita Baskota, Tank Pant, Dhruba Basnet, Ramyata Limbu, Sangeeta Lama, Harikala Adhikari.

Gyanu Pande, Kabita Serchan, Harihar Singh Rathor, Rudra Khadka, Raju Shakya, Dinesh Shrestha-and INSEC representative for Rolpa Mr. Ghanshyam Acharya.-, local villagers, local level Maoist workers for providing information and letting us to attend their functions and local level government authorities. Similarly I would also like to thank Mr. Tirth Koirala for editing Nepali version and Mr. Sunil translating the book into English.

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Chapter:-1

1. Women who live in hunger and poverty are active in politics

Does your attention is attracted towards women wrapping a piece of clothes round their heads, and wearing lungi and shirt with green shoes? Probably not, but won't the same women, if they are carrying rifles in their hands and bag weighing about 60 kilos on their backs, pull you attention towards them. Moreover if they come with an olive green army dress how would you feel? There are many women in western Nepal today who roam around wearing such dresses.

Five years ago when the Maoists launched their People's War resulting in extensive counter-action from the government, these women called the government's act as repression, suppression and terror and stood up as rebels.

The People's War, which started five years ago from some parts of five districts - Rukum, Rolpa and Jajarkot of the Mid-western Development Region, Gorkha of Western Development Region and Sindhuli of Central Development has now spread throughout the country with the exception of Manang and Mustang districts. Before it completed five years, the Maoists have formed local government in eight districts -Rukum, Rolpa, Jajarkot, Salyan, Kalikot, Humla, Dolakha and Dailekh. There, now, are parallel governments in those districts with His Majesty's Government remaining confined to the district headquarters only while the Maoists' ruling the remaining part of the districts.

In the first three years of the Maoist war, the government carried out extensive police operations, suppressions, arrests and creating a situation of panic in the affected districts, which resulted in men going underground leaving the women to shoulder the responsibilities at their homes and the society. They even had to take up jobs, primarily considered as men's jobs, like roofing the houses and plough the fields. When there was no condition for men to enter their villages, it was the women who even gave candidacies in the local level elections. It was also seen that children instead of going to school got busy lending hands to their mothers. Poverty and illiteracy was rampant, but the police used to enter the villages looking for men and when they did not find any, would harass

women demanding to reveal the hideouts of their husbands, sons, fathers and father-in-laws, women were taken to the police posts and were sexually abused and physically tortured. Even girls going along with their works were also not spared from the sexual attack. The stopping, searching and even manhandling and misbehaving of women to or from their works began considered being normal. There were also reports of police raping daughters in front of the fathers, who were tied on a pole. One Devi Khadka, who was only a supporter of the Maoists, was taken into custody and was raped by seven or eight policemen. Women as young as 11 years and a mother of 14 days were also victims of these police atrocities. All these sparked deep hatred towards policemen and feeling of revenge on them.

In the Nepalese society, once a woman is physically assaulted or raped, those women are often shunned by the society and most often no one would marry her. In such a situation, the families and the society tend to hide incidents of rapes. Only a few cases of such sexual atrocities come to light.

Villagers and rural people tend to believe that the Maoists are waging war for the benefit of the poor and socially and economically backward people. They also regard with the war, the women have been able to exercise their rights. So, the Maoists target, women who have been subjected to abuse and exploitation by the state, for training and make aware initiate them to fight against the oppression of the state. Women who had not known 'p' of politics, are now found to be aware of their right and are make aware by the Maoists to take revenge against the tyranny of the state against them and their families. The result is many of those women, who had been repressed and physically assaulted by the police, are found to have joined the Maoists wholeheartedly to take revenge against the police. In the first three years of the Maoists war, there are numerous incidents of the police detaining and apprehending women in the police posts and of physically assaulting and even killing them. This has led to common people and also those belonging and supporting the other parties joining the Maoists against the government. Those women have not only joined the Maoists but also enrolled themselves in the Maoist army to take

revenge against the government and seize the state power. Thus women, who have remained in the villages, are assisting the Maoists directly and indirectly.

The Maoist have certainly increased the participation of women in their war and also raised their level of their awareness regarding their rights. To put it clearly, one has been in those villages is forced to argue whether protecting women's rights and empowering them is possible only through politics and still more through Marxist politics.

While studying the situation of women in those are several questions come up, such as:

- Can this movement end sexual discrimination?
- Is this the appropriate way to protect women's rights?
- Can this path be the right way for the progress of women, which have always lagged behind because of social discrimination?
- Is this useful to usher in religious freedom by abolishing religious fundamentalism?
- Is the end of economic disparity is a path towards social reform?
- If it is so, then why there still is discrimination of women still exists in socialist countries?
- Will making women aware of their rights make them indifferent towards their duties?
- Will redefining sexual liberalism create disorder and disarray in the society?
- After peace and stability is reestablished in the society, will this movement have any rationale?

Chapter :-2

Political situation of the Maoist-affected areas

a) The politics of the Nepali Congress

All the political parties claim that their political situation in the Maoist-affected areas are good, but the people have not been able to speak because of the fear of the Maoists. But on the site tours have proved that the most unpopular political party was the Nepali Congress and the government headed by Girija Prasad Koirala. The reason for this could be the Nepali Congress being in power and Koirala at the helm of power.

Secondly, it can be said with a certain degree of certainty that the present situation is the result of the oppressions unleashed by the Nepali Congress, after the restoration of democracy, against the communists thinking that it can wipe out its Leftist opponents in those areas.

People in those areas have never got a taste of the government care, facilities and any development efforts since the panchayat days. Furthermore, after the multi-party democracy was restored, the (NC) government's reign of terror and oppressions in the name of democracy forced the people to become Maoists.

The condition of the Nepali Congress is more evident with the fact that the youths belonging to the Nepali Congress suddenly becoming Maoist guerrillas and openly challenging the government. Earlier majority of the Nepali Congress workers being intoxicated with power started to accuse all those in the village of being Maoist and get them into detention under false accusations and also being killed. This led many Nepali Congress workers to flee their villages to district headquarters and to Kathmandu. Those Nepali Congress workers who remained in the villages are forced to live like a simple people keeping themselves totally away from politics. Several of the Nepali Congress workers have joined the Maoists because of the reckless and wild behaviour of the fellow congressmen and the wrong conduct of the police. Many local leaders of the Nepali Congress, other NC workers and village and ward members have been living in the

district headquarters as internal refugee by receiving stipends and subsidies from programmes like Ganesh Man Peace Movement and Bisheshwore with the Poor.

Box 1

Amrit Bahadur Gharti, Chairman of the District Development Committee, Rolpa. He was twice elected as Chairman of the District Panchayat during the panchayat days, and after the restoration of democracy he was also a member of the DDC before becoming the DDC chairman from the Nepali Congress party.

Q. What is the situation of the women after the start of the People's War?

Amrit: We are also trying to take up the issue for the improvement of the condition of women. They (the Maoists) have given guns to the women. We gave given them teaching and other jobs like digging the path.

Q. Do you have any specific programme?

Amrit: There are programmes like goat farming

Q. How many women are involved in the Maoists' activities

Amrit: It is about one fourth of the total women.

Q. Do you know them?

Amrit: I don't know all of them. There are also girls of 14 or 15.

Q. They say there are sexual exploitation of women and girls within the Maoist groups?

Amrit: There are a few women who have come back. I don't know whether they were brought back by the police or have come on their own will. But they have given the statement that they have come back on their own will. They also said that the Maoists behave with women as they wish.

Q. Is it so?

Amrit: I don't know but it is what they say.

Q. It is also said the Maoists have stopped polygamy?

Amrit: They marry if both man and woman want. If the woman wants and also the first wife accepts woman goes as the second wife.

Q. The Maoists have kidnapped your son. Is it true?

Amrit: the Maoists in Mangsir kidnapped my son, Bijaya Gharti, 26. They said my son was kidnapped because he was the son of district president. They also say it was in

revenge for a Maoist who was arrested along with a gun. But they have now said that they would release my son.

Q. Aren't you worried?

Amrit: Yes, but what can I do. I have appealed to the administration and also to the human rights activities.

Q. How is the budget being disseminated?

Amrit: It is not so difficult. We release the money in installments after the village approves the project.

Q. Does the government check and monitor the projects?

Amrit: I have not gone to the village since the last two years. But the regional member and other chairman say everything is all right.

Q. Has the Maoists' people's government affected the villages?

Amrit: Yes, why not. They have built a house in Merul. At some other places they have built gate and water taps. It is also said they work with the contractors on 10 per cent commission.

Q. But should the government budget be given to the Maoists?

Amrit: No, we don't give money to the Maoists. But those who receive the budget have built trails and bridges.

Q. Why has the Maoists increased in the villages?

Amrit: There are people who have failed in class five or in class 10, those who are involved in political issues, those who have killed people and those who could not pay the debt. The Maoists are attracting such people by giving cheap slogans like you don't have to pay the loans.

Q. What needs to be done to maintain peace?

Amrit: All the parties should help and cooperate with the government.

Q. How should the government do to stop this problem?

Amrit: I think the government should involve in talks also involve the army to provide security.

Q. If this continues, what will be the situation of Rolpa in 20 years?

Amrit: If this goes on for another 20 years forget about Rolpa, the country itself will not exist.

Q. Then what should be done?

Amrit: The government should talk with the Maoist leadership and carry on programmes like providing jobs to the jobless.

Q. But it is said the Maoists have increased because of rampant corruption by the government?

Amrit: Such corruption is not here. I don't know what those in power at the Centre do. It is also said there are cases like the passport scam and there are people who entered into the government services with fake certificates.

Q. Don't you think the Maoists movement has spoiled the future of the children?

Amrit: Certainly. The Maoists have sent their children to schools in Tulsipur, Kathmandu and also in India. But they say one cannot open boarding school here, but the future of our children has been ruined. This is the issue that should be discussed by all the parties.

Q. You belong to the Nepali Congress. But shouldn't you raise the voice when a Congress minister built such a big house here?

Amrit: What is there to say! He might have built the house with his own salary and perks. But his condition was not as good before. After he got involved in the party, we saved him in many places. Now, he has built a five-storied house, but we remained the same.

Secondly, it can be said with a certain degree of certainty that the present situation is the result of the oppressions unleashed by the Nepali Congress, after the restoration of democracy, against the communists thinking that it can wipe out its Leftist opponents in those areas.

People in those areas have never got a taste of the government care, facilities and any development efforts since the panchayat days. Furthermore, after the multi-party democracy was restored, the (NC) government's reign of terror and oppressions in the name of democracy forced the people to become Maoists.

Just the fact that the youths belonging to the Nepali Congress suddenly siding with the Maoist guerrillas and openly challenging the government makes clear the position of the Nepali Congress in those areas. Earlier, the majority of the Nepali Congress workers could be seen being intoxicated with power and starting to accuse all those in the village of being Maoist and putting them into detention under false accusations and also killed. This led many Nepali Congress workers to flee their villages to district headquarters and to Kathmandu. Those Nepali Congress workers who remained in the villages are forced to live like simple people keeping themselves totally away from politics. Several of the Nepali Congress workers have joined the Maoists because of the reckless and wild

behaviour of the fellow Congressmen and the wrong conduct of the police. Many local leaders of the Nepali Congress, other NC Workers and village and ward members have been living in the district headquarters as internal refugees by receiving stipends and subsidies from programmes like Genesh Man peace Movement and Bisheshwore with poor Campaign. .

Box 3

Thagendra Puri, District Vice Chairman, Rukum. Thagendra is the uncle of Sushila. Here are the excerpts with him about why he had to take his niece to the district headquarters for studies and how the Maoists deal with others who do not agree with their thinking and ideology.

One of his brothers, Birman Puri is the headmaster of Biren Secondary School, another brother, Hansa Rajapuri is also a teacher and his third brother is near to Jan Morcha (People's Front, a Left faction).

But when Thagendra won the local election as Vice Chairman of the District Development Committee, the Maoists began to put pressure on the eldest brother, Birman Puri. Birman was accused of misappropriating Rs. 120,000 meant for the construction of school, but he denies the accusation. Thagendra says the Maoists targeted his family because almost six of the family members including Birman's wife and her brother are into politics.

Thagendra says the Maoists use the children of those who they know and trust to carry messages. But they also force other children who do not agree to them to do such works. "But I don't think the Maoists make the small boys carry guns, but they are involved in carrying letters and messages and make them sit along with the Maoists army."

Q. But they say their every activity is people-oriented?

A. So long as giving judgments and other administrative decisions, it is true that they do it fast. But their justice is too expensive. They do it like in the Rana regime. They make those who they think as culprit to pay fine or deposits of Rs. 5,000, Rs.15,000 or any amount they want. But only putting a prefix of Jan (people's) does not mean that they do everything for the people. Although we do not comply with the Maoists' 'people's government' but we must accept that they have openly declared the people's committees. We must also agree that they have emerged as a force, but we feel that force is used more against the people.

Q. Don't you think this situation in the mid-west hills indicate that they are heading for some kind of autonomy?

A. Whatever the Maoists have achieved is only because of the weakness of the government. Still I don't think these places are heading for autonomy. The people are forced to accept the Maoists' rule because of fear only. But whenever the police arrive, the Maoists flee to the jungles. They had built a big gate at Baphikot at the cost of about Rs. 12,000 and also held a function collection about 10,000 people. But when police came they fled to the jungle, the police also demolished the gate and returned. The Maoists again returned to the place and made speeches.

Q. The CPN-UML was also underground party. Is it possible for the guerrillas to remain when the police come?

A. Guerrilla war is a hit-and-run tactics. But the base area is something, which the guerrillas should be able to hold on and resist the police.

Q. All major political parties have been using the police as a shield in the Maoist problem. Why do you think the political parties have failed to deal with the situation in a political way?

A. This is a reality and also the weakness of the political parties. But the UML is trying to do something. We have not thought that police should be made the shield or cannon fodder at least in Rukum. We, at the local level, are working to go to the people and serve them. But those at the Centre do not think that way. They, instead of taking the Maoist problem as a problem of the people and the country, are dealing it for their own benefits.

Q. What is the first priority for the development of Rukum district?

A. It is the roads. Only the development and expansion of transport facilities will give possibility for economic development of the district. This district is famous for river and jungles, as a fertile land for vegetables and other agriculture products. So only after the development of transportation, the economic development can take momentum.

Q. Will the Maoist problem be solved with the army getting involved in development works?

A. If the Maoist problem is to be solved, all the other political parties must improve their conduct and behaviour internally.

B) Nepal Communist Party (United Marxist-Leninist)

Supporters and the party workers of the CPN-UML, like those of the Nepali Congress, do not fail to say that the Maoists are getting people on their side with force, coercion and intimidation. But they make a more detailed analysis than the Nepali Congress people. They openly agree that the seed of the Maoists was shown after the first general election when the then government got into repression in the name of subjugating its political opponents. In the process, the oppression against the Maoist supporters led to the expansion and Maoists, they say. Presently, the Maoists have not allowed any other party to run their party activities and the UML is also a victim of that. Still, it is only the UML, which has been able to confront ideologically with the Maoists and put forth its views. Although the UML's local workers, DDC chairman and vice chairman and others stay in the district headquarters, they at times go to their villages and run political discussion and debates there. Many of the VDC chairmen and vice chairmen have remained in the villages and are running their programmes by making agreements or taking consents from the Maoists. Many UML workers have also started living in the villages after the party prohibited its workers to get benefits from the government as internal refugees.

Box 2

Sushila Puri, 13, of Thapa village of Duli VDC Ward No. 4, is now studying in class 7 at Yamuna Nandan Lower Secondary School in Khalanga, the district headquarters. But

why couldn't she study in her village? Was it her fault that she did not want to go along with the Maoists in their programmes?

Q. Why did you come to the district headquarters to study?

Sushila: The Maoists forced me to walk along with them. When I did not want to go with them they used to beat me with sticks. Then my father told me to study in Khalanga and I came.

Q. When did you come to Khalanga?

Sushila: One year ago.

Q. What did the Maoists do?

Sushila: They took me at a place called Pokhara, where they had built a small wooden bridge. There they made speeches.

Q. Were you the only one from your school who were taken there?

Sushila: No, all other children were with the Maoists. Only my father was with the UML. They used to say this is a daughter of UML, she is also a UML and that I must go.

Q. Did you used to oppose the Maoists?

Sushila: Yes, I was the only one in the school who used to oppose the Maoists. So, they used to force me to their programmes.

Q. What is that you don't like about the Maoists?

Sushila: There was no study in the school. They also scolded me. They used to take us to their organizations and meeting and force us to do their work.

Q. What kind of work?

Sushila: Like collecting money, dancing and singing and they used to tell us about their party. They also have their organization in the school and all the children belong to it.

Q. What does the organization do?

Sushila: It collects money from all children. The children have to give Rs. 5 every month. But I did not give them the money.

Q. Where does the children get the money from?

Sushila: I don't know.

Q. Who keeps the money?

Sushila: The Maoists.

Q. Didn't the teachers say anything?

Sushila: No.

Q. Who collects the money?

Sushila: There were people from outside.

Q. Do you like it here?

Sushila: Yes.

Q. Why?

Sushila: There is no study in the village. The Maoists used to force us to go with them. If we refuse, they used to beat us with sticks.

Q. How many times did you go with the Maoists?

Sushila: Twice - first to a place called Simli and then to Pokhara. We had to stay there overnight.

Q. How many children were there?

Sushila: Twenty-five. Fifteen of them were boys and 10 were girls.

Q. Were they carrying guns?

Sushila: Yes. Five children were carrying guns.

Q. Who gave the guns?

Sushila: The Maoists on the way.

Q. What type of guns?

Sushila: Something like musket.

Q. Did the children fire the guns?

Sushila: Yes.

Q. How did you get away from the meeting?

Sushila: I returned by myself.

Q. What did your parents say?

Sushila: I told them the Maoists had taken me

C) Rastriya Prajatantra Party

Even in the Maoists' base areas the RPP workers can live more freely than those of the Nepali Congress and the UML. This, the local people say, is because their political influence among the villagers is very little. There is practically no political activity of the

RPP in the villages as well as in the district headquarters. The RPP supporters and its cadres put the blame of the upsurge of the Maoists on the Nepali Congress government.

BOX 4

MP GOVINDA BIKRAM SHAH (RPP), JAJARKOT DISTRICT

Q. What topics have been discussed in the district council this year?

A. There will be a review of the fiscal year 2057/58 and new programmes for the coming fiscal year will be announced. The topics discussed also included the law and order situation. As Jajarkot district is also one of the most severely affected districts, there were discussions on how could all the other political parties go ahead with consensus among all the political parties. The other issues discussed as a priority area was the construction of road connecting the district and others including basket fund, joining the district to the central grid for electricity.

Q. You talked about basket fund. Isn't it a controversial issue in the district?

A. No, it is the basket fund, which is controversial, but it has become so because the government could not give proper attention and concern. The Maoists influence grows because of lack of development in districts like Jajarkot, and the government said that this programme was launched in districts, which are highly sensitive security-wise and also those, which are lagging behind in development. Initially the people mistook it as for fund for security and for controlling the Maoist activities, so they had opposed it. However, the budget of the villages needs to be managed more efficiently.

Q. You talked about forging a consensus among different parties for security, and law and order. How can this be done?

A. There is a general consensus that only using the police force cannot solve this problem. The ruling party is also willing to solve the problem and it must make a national consensus for talks. The talk between the government and the Maoist is possible if both sides come down to a minimum issue to be discussed.

Q. But many Village Development Committees have been converted into the people government of the Maoists. Can this be solved by talks?

A. The government should put everything it can do such as releasing the Maoists cadres from jails. If the whole problem is taken and dealt with as political issue as a political

issue it can be solved. I even say that the government should give assistance for rehabilitation of those displaced and affected by the Maoists war.

Q. You talked about the responsibility of the government, what should the other political parties do?

A. First the government should take the initiative. But here the situation is, the government does not know what to do and also does not go by the suggestions on what needs to be done.

Q. What is the situation of the district?

A. It is very serious. It seems everybody has surrendered before the Maoists. We cannot do anything because the government has failed to provide security.

Q. How has the Maoists war affected the women and children?

A. It has affected some programme. The Maoists have stopped several programmes like literacy and those meant for women saying they are capitalist programme. Instead they have also done some good things like punishing the teachers who fail in their duties. The Maoists have also stopped several social anomalies like oppression of women.

Q. How has the agriculture been affected?

A. When all the able-bodied men either enter into the jungle or have shifted to the Terai for employment, it is certainly affected. But the reality is agriculture has never been a strong point of these areas. The people were hungry before and they are hungry now.

Q. The Maoists say they can develop the villages by themselves and don't need foreign aid and assistance?

A. We also say the same thing, but we cannot survive without outside help. We also want to be self-reliant, however, one cannot become self-reliant in a day or two.

Q. It is said the Maoists have stopped corruption.

A. There is no corruption in the village, but in the district headquarters and at the higher level this has not stopped.

Q. How do you think the transportation problem of the district can be solved?

A. The Chhinchu-Jajarkot road has come about 107 kilometres nearer. But the work has stopped because the gelatin needed to blast the rocks is not available because there is fear that the Maoists may take it away.

D) Nepal Communist Party Marxist-Leninist (CPN-ML)

The CPN-ML has relatively more influence on the Maoists. The party itself thinks that it would be better if its supporters join the Maoists instead of the CPN-UML.

E) Nepal Communist Party (Maoist)

Any visitor to districts like Rukum, Rolpa and Jajarkot can hardly feel that His Majesty's Government rules these areas. One has to stay in the villages for more than one day to find out that there are also families who are not Maoists.

The Maoists have taken all the authorities in their hands and have imposed their own rules on local security to development programmes to other issues faced by the villages in their daily lives. They feel they have established themselves as the responsible authority in all sectors – from making decisions on development works to providing justice to the people. The government's influence is confined only in and around the district headquarters and outside it is the Maoists who have been wielding their power and authority. As those areas are under complete control of the Maoists, a prior permission is needed for any outsider to enter those areas or any other political party to any kind of programme. One can see notices and press releases at different places telling that one needs permission to enter those areas.

If any other political party wants to take their programme without prior permission of the Maoists, those programme are rejected outright and the Maoists return the persons. So, there is hardly any programme of other political parties in those areas. To put it in other words, all other parties are confined in the district headquarters and the Maoists have the sole authority in the villages. It can also be said that all the Village Development Committees are virtually defunct. Almost 75 per cent of the VDC offices are closed and the remaining are running with the consent and approval of the Maoists.

The NGOs and INGOs are organizations which gives you the chaff but take away the grains: Comrade Ajay, election commission, CPN-Maoist

Q. When do you think your movement will succeed?

A. It is war and it may take time. But we are certain about our victory.

Q. Do you think your war will succeed by killing people indiscriminately?

A. Killing is not our policy. We don't give anyone a death penalty for nothing. Our people's court has even released some, who are on death row, on bail. We have now stopped giving death penalty, but the people's court has taken a policy of sending to labour camp and imposing fine on the degree and severity of the case.

Q. In the past you killed many people calling them as informers. Now you say you have renounced killing people. But those whom you have killed will become alive?

A. If we had not killed those people, our movement would not have taken this form today. Now no one dare to become informer. Still, we will not spare persons like Bhim Kumari Pun, who helped to kill our people. They better start counting their days.

Q. How much terror is there in the villages nowadays?

A. There is peace after the police posts are removed. People are helping us in development works and we have given them social justice.

Q. But it is said there is a silent terror in the villages?

A. Didn't you talk to the villagers? Haven't they felt a sense of relief?

Q. But what do you say to the accusations that you collect donations forcefully?

A. We don't force them, but the people give voluntarily. But when we taken action against the people's enemies, we impose fine on them according to their crimes.

Q. It looks they have not been able to speak out because of fear of yours?

A. It is totally wrong. They are free to speak. They can even oppose us and complain if they are not satisfied with us. There are also people who keep opposing ideologies than ours. Now, we have even told those who were punished to return and live in the villages.

Q. What would you do if they return to the villages?

A. The people's court will determine and fixes the punishment as per their crimes. If they realize their crimes and pledge that they will not repeat them they can live in the villages.

But they cannot get involved in active politics. But they can remain even if they keep differing opinions.

Q. It is said you don't allow government programme and budget into the villages?

A. It is only the slogan and not the budget that comes. The government doesn't give budget to the villages and crease rumour that the Maoists have prevented the budget

Q. What would you do if some NGO wants to come and work in these villages?

A. Our aim is to make the people self-reliant through local means and resources. We don't accept foreign aid and assistance. But we have adopted a policy to allow foreign aid if they go for the benefit of the people such as in education, health.

Q. Why is that you don't accept programme from the NGOs?

A. Look! The NGOs and INGOs are organizations which gives you the chaff but take away the grains. We don't allow such thing to happen in our villages.

Q. How much conflict is there in the villages and where does the people go to settle such fighting?

A. In the last five years, those who were 10 or 12 years old have now grown up. They don't get into fighting knowingly. Till 2054 or 2055 there were widespread terror. Now, there are people's courts in every village and all conflicts in the villages are settled there. The justice there is free and quick so people do not go to the government's court. People are simple-minded but they are aware. They have lost a great deal to gain such consciousness.

Q. It is said there are sexual exploitations and perversions in the Maoists' militia?

A. Our job is to correct people from the people's level to the cadre level. There may be some incidents. We take action against anyone who tries to indulge and spread sexual exploitation and perversion.

Q. Women in the villages have suffered more after the people's war. Don't you think they have become the victims of the people's war?

A. Those women were the victims of the oppressions and atrocities of the police. Many women have become widow and many others have lost their honour. Still they have swallowed their grief, got into active politics and have resolved to take revenge.

The Situation of the Local Administration

A. The Condition of the Village Development Committee officials

The rise of the Maoists People's War and the popular support they have been getting in districts like Rukum, Rolpa, Salyan, Jajarkot, Kalikot, Dolpa and Pyuthan, the government's presence in to districts are gradually diminishing. Those districts, which had about 18/20 police posts in each district, have only about three or four in each district.

Majority of the VDC officials either run their budget from the district headquarters or under the security of police administration. A few of them who have remained in the villages work under the instruction of the Maoists. So, while those VDC officials are sometimes accused by the district administration of working under the Maoists' instructions, the people criticize those, who remain in the district headquarters. But such officials do not see any possibility of them working in the villages. Several of those who stay in the district headquarters sometime set their foot in the villages by helicopters under the protection of the police and the others have nothing to do except enjoy the perks and sign cheques for the development budgets. They are also enjoying and handling the budgets in the name of Ganeshman Peace Movement and the financial assistance for the families of those killed by the Maoists.

Several villages of Rolpa, Rukum and Jajarkot districts had failed to hold the local level elections. After the other parties such as Nepali Congress, CPN-UML and RPP failed to find any candidate in those villages, those parties have shared the seats amongst themselves from the district headquarters. Several of such officials have been living in

the headquarters with no link to the villages, while others are living in the district headquarters as internal refugee. There are also cases of those nominated by other parties have turned out to be Maoist supporters and even Maoist cadres. There even cases of the Maoists being nominated in the name of other parties and spending the budget according to the Maoists' programmes.

On the other hand, most of the documents of the VDCs in Ropla, Rukum, Dolpa, Jajarkot, Humla, Salyan, Dailekh and Kalikot have been either confiscated or burnt and destroyed by the Maoists. So, the VDC offices have not been opened or could be run. The Maoists have also many VDC offices as offices of their people's committee. In those villages, it looks like the Maoists have established their permanent base and working according to their plans. In their base areas, the Maoists have launched movements against domestic violence, for gender equality and prohibition against gambling and alcohol and other social anomalies like polygamy, oppression of the lower-caste people to win the hearts of the people. They are also trying to consolidate their position among the people by settling disputes, community farming. So, when there is virtually no government, the people cannot but look towards the Maoists.

Box 3:1

Lal Bahadur Mahara, secretary of UML's district committee and Chairman of Pajaru VDC

Q. How have the Maoists running their programme in your village?

A. Their main aim is to divide the supporters of NC, UML and RPP and rule over them all. This ploy was started mainly after the local elections of 2054. Before that they used to come down upon only the Nepali Congress only. That time we were also against the Nepali Congress and they also raised the same voice. But after the local election, the NC was strong at the Centre and we were strong at the local level, then they began to get after us. Now, they are raising their voice against us also.

Q. What is the situation of your village?

A. The people are scared and fear rules the mind of the people. It is not that the Maoists are getting popular support. They come to the villages – some are from the same village and other are from outside. They demand for food and lodging and the people are forced

to give what they demand. There are also cases of the young teenagers being attracted to them for their cultural programmes. They have also filled up the mind of the naïve villagers that police are their enemies. It was also the fault of the police. Before when they went to the village they used to act not as a servant of the people but their master. So, the people began to think that the Maoists are the people of the village and the police are outsiders and they could do anything. So, they gradually leaned towards the Maoists just for the sake of fraternity and not because of ideology.

Q. So, are the people living under a silent fear of the Maoists?

A. One cannot say for sure. The people are helpless. They don't know about politics. If someone comes to them and say you have to go for a programme they go because of fear. When the Maoists collect people for their programme they go to the houses with guns.

Q. Isn't it a silent terror?

A. You can call it whatever your like. But it is important for all the political parties to think about those people, and also the Maoists should realize whether the people take their activities positively or negatively.

Q. Does it mean they are confused about their politics?

A. It is their confusion both politically and ideologically.

Q. But what could the reason of the increase of the Maoists?

A. One of the reasons is the adamancy of the Nepali Congress after 2048. The people had a lot of expectation in the last 10 years but they were not fulfilled, that is another reason. Instead there were growing of anomalies and distortions. Then there were police atrocities. When the political parties began protecting their people and supporters against all their wrongdoing, this also angered the people. The Maoists cashed in on all these things and the frustrations of the people. They also told the people that they don't have to pay the loan of the moneylender and the banks if they follow them. This also attracted the people.

Q. How do the Maoists take action?

A. First they warn the people for doing anything against them or the people. If that is not stopped then those are finished off in the name of being informer.

Q. The villages look quiet?

A. Yes, because it is all one-sided. They are into everything from settling the disputes to registering the land. The people are forced to go in their programmes. Anyone who defies order is severely taken action against. One Mohan Bahadur Shahi and 6 others were tied and severely beaten for not going to their programme. So, the people are in a dilemma, if one does not act according to the order of the Maoists, they take action and if they do the police gets them. But in many places, the Maoists are repeating what the police used to do before.

Q. What should be done to improve the situation?

A. If the government and the police go to the people with an intention of serving them and not carrying weapons. If the government also starts controlling corruption and financial irregularities and works for the people, the People's War will gradually diminish.

Q. What needs to be done to establish peace and security in the villages?

A. The government should think about stationing police in the villages. The government must give belief to the people that police are meant for their protection and security and not otherwise it may create an atmosphere for the police going back to the villages. The people have not taken the presence of the army in the village in a negative way. The army has been doing to discipline the people. Now, there have been some positive changes in the police. Earlier, police used to see all villagers as Maoists, not this has changed.

Q. How to the people deal with the army and police?

A. With the army they present themselves with love and respect, but it is with enmity with the police.

Q. There are a lot of cases in the district of eloping or bringing in other's wives?

A. The Maoists themselves, who call them as the source of reform, are involved in this. There are cases of the Maoists themselves bringing in another man's wife. They have even done so during their People's War. Even those Maoists who carry guns are also involved in polygamy.

Q. How do you evaluate the activities of the Maoists?

A. Their actions and activities are not the same everywhere. They often indulge in provoking the party men, who party is not in power, against the one in power. They have also warned that if the VDC chairman writes letters in the official pad he would be killed. Their dealings are different in different villages of the same districts. They follow what suits them the most irrespective of what is good or bad. It only means they are following divide and rule policy.

Q. How do they collect money?

A. They raise money in the name of fines and as people's actions. But nobody knows how that money is spent. They also demand money saying it is their party's decision. secretary of UML's district committee and of pajaru VDC

B) Police administration their despondency

After the first general election of 2048, the ruling Nepali Congress party in a bid to wipe out its oppositions in the western part of the country started a campaign of physical assault, humiliation, put them in jails under false charges and also sexual and physical abuse of women, loot and other atrocities, including murder. This reign of terror by some with the support of police and administration in many parts led the people to take revenge on them. Then the Maoists also started taking revenge and killing the villagers who they thought were working as informer by taking them as the cause of death of their party workers. This wave of killing, which started in 2048, had taken the lives of hundreds of people in the last 8 years. In addition, when the administration's atrocities on the innocent ones prompted the villagers to rise against the police and administration and led them into the fold of the Maoists.

In the meantime, the Maoists began formed their own militant force and established their base areas. They then began attacking the police posts – killing the policemen and looting their weapons. The wave of attacks against the police post started mainly after the Maoists stormed the police post at Gharti village of Ropla on 2056 Falgun 6, killing all 15 policemen and looting the weapons. The repeated attacks against the police posts killing hundreds of them caused a dramatic slide of the morale and spirit of the police.

And also the killings of those who the Maoists thought as informer of the police at any time and anywhere made the people remain quiet. Then after the government began shifting the post posts from the outlying areas to and near the district headquarters. This caused the Maoists take a big jump in their influence and in creating their militant force, establishment of base areas and also forming their people's administration. The police administration was forced to confine within the district headquarters and even in some places they had to live under the protection of the army. By the end of the year 2057, those areas were virtually free from all other political parties and the government's administrative machinery with the Maoists wielding the sole and full authority

It is quite natural that the police, being an employed civil servant and without any political inclination, fear for their lives whereas the Maoists, being politically charged and with a mission to change the society, were willing to kill or being killed. This was the basic reason of the Maoists getting the better of the police force in almost all the place, where the police and the Maoists confronted. Again, the police are basically a security organ and are not meant to fight guerrilla warfare. So, the rank and file of the police feel if the government want to fight against the Maoists it should deploy the army, which are basically meant to fight, instead of poorly trained and poorly equipped police and with just the rifle.

There is also a widespread feeling that the political parties have been using the police both as a tool and as a shield against their political interests. During interactions with people and police at all levels, this investigation team found that they all opine that as this problem is a political one, it must be solved through political means rather than by using police or force.

Box 3:2

Amar Bahadur Shah, Deputy Inspector General of Police, Regional Police Headquarters, Nepalgunj

Q. Now the police posts have been shifted from the villages to the district headquarters, why?

Shah: Initially, there were police posts with 1:4 strength, meaning there used to be one official and four policemen and still they were able to maintain law and order by simply waving a baton. When the Maoists started their terrorist activities in 2052, the police posts began to be captured the government had reinforced them with more men and weapons. Even then the Maoists' intensified their activities and the police posts could not defend themselves. After in 2055/56 when the Maoists attacked and destroyed the police posts in places like Gharti goan, Taksera, Pachakatiya and Kalimate, it was impractical to keep the police posts in those places. So, the police posts were integrated at one place to make them safer and easier to defend.

Q. When was the first attack made in Jajarkot district?

Shah: There was a police post at Aathbiskot near the border of Rukum and Jajarkot. The Maoists had started their terrorist campaign by attacking that police post on Falgun 1, 2052.

Q. But was not the incident of Pachkatiya occurred after the police post was removed from that place?

Shah: After there were attacks at Bhigri of Pyuthan, Mahat of Rukum and Jagatipur Panchakate of Jajarkot and Dunai of Dolpa, the government thought that the police post at Panchkatiya was would be too sensitive and too vulnerable. But a base was kept there to mobilize the police force.

Q. Is the new police post at Ghartigoan more safe than the previous one?

Shah: The new post is also at a ravine like place and it may be possible for the Maoists to sneak in and attack. But the post at Mahat has been shifted to a much safer place. Previously it was by the road. If they want to attack there they would suffer a big loss. So, the location is very important.

Q. It is said the police have not been able to do anything except protecting their sentries?

Shah: It is for you to evaluate. Each post is given a definite area and they patrol along that area. Sometimes, the patrol teams of two police posts also meet with each other and carry out joint patrolling. Again, the police have definite bases for the night. Now, the situation has changed and the responsibility of the police has also increased. It is not only social anymore. But the police are still taking action against those who physically assault,

maim and beat up other people. Often the people cannot speak about the good works that the police have done.

Q. But it is clearly seen that there are dual governments. His Majesty's Government is confined to the district headquarters and the Maoists have their own rule in the villages?

Shah: You may have visited places the police have not been able to reach. When the number of police posts is reduced drastically there is bound to be big gaps that are beyond the control of the police. Police cannot remain there all the time. There are also places where people are helping the police.

Q. But the police are seen patrolling only in the district headquarters, but it is not only police but also the government staff fear to go beyond a few kilometers?

Shah: It is how you look at it. Police have also reached to places like Jagatipur, Matela and Dalle of Jajarkot. There are definite places where police do patrolling. If they want to go anywhere else they have to inform and take permission. Some of the places, where there are police patrolling, are five or six days walk from the district headquarters. In those areas, the police also helped and cooperated by the local people.

Q. Aren't the people angry with the police because of the bad behaviour?

Shah: Sometimes those accusations are exaggerated. Still the police should improve their conduct and behaviour. The Police IGP has issued three directives. They are to eradicate corruption in the police force, to improve the way police presents itself before the people and to increase the capability through training and monitoring to make police more people-friendly.

We have also achieved some successes. Even in some places of Rolpa police and the local people have formed committees that conduct awareness programmes on among others health, education and security. There are also people who are running awareness programmes. It is mainly the young people who are involved in the Maoist activities, and we are trying to involve those youth in our programmes.

Q. When the top brass of the police remain in strict discipline and integrity it has a trickle down effect. Now, many people do not say that the behaviour of police is not that bad or has actually improved. How does it happen?

Shah: When the leaders or the officers remain true to their duties and responsibilities, then the lower rungs are bound to follow that.

Q. It is said one of the main reasons of the increase of Maoists is the excess the police had done upon the people. Is it because of the recruitment of political activities into the police force?

Shah: I don't think so. It is the same person but it depends on how they are handled.

Q. How can the Maoist problem be solved?

Shah: It all depends on the policy of the government. First the government should decide whether it is a political or terrorist activity. Then it should formulate working plan with suggestions from different sectors and implement those programmes efficiently. The police are none other than those assigned for the security of the people.

(C) The morale of the joint people's government in the villages

With the increase of influence of the Maoists in Rolpa, Rukum and Jajarkot district, the morale of the Maoists' village and district joint people's committee is high and also their responsibilities have increased. They do not let the meeting of the village development committees and they also do not allow any other political party to run any kind of programme or project without their permission indicate they have formed some kind of dominion in those areas. They are also doing works like repairing the village path and trail, renovating school buildings and solving the cases within the villages. They have limited the presence of those, who have differing political ideology, to the level of a commoner only. So, the supporters and cadres of Nepali Congress and the other parties have left the villages. Those, who remain the villages but hold a different political view from the Maoists, do not reveal it. This has encouraged the Maoists further and demoralized the others. One example of it is, when the UML supporters tried to run a vasectomy camp in memory of Yadu Gautam, the UML workers who was slain by the Maoists, the Maoists disrupted the programme and forced the organizers return without finishing the programmes. When we asked the Maoists about it, they said they were not against the running of the health camp, but the UML tried to run the camp inside our base area without seeking permission from us. "This for us is against the norm of running our government."

In such a situation, no one neither police nor the workers of the other political parties dare return to the areas 'ruled' by the Maoists. For majority of the villagers, it seems there don't need other political parties and even if they do they keep it deep inside them. So much so that the people do not dare to say openly that the Maoists have done wrong or the Maoists party is not a good party.

Box 3:3

Hari Prasad Oli, Member district people's committee, Rukum

Q. The VDC is almost defunct. In this situation if the government sanctions the money for the basket fund for the VDC, will it be utilized?

Oli: We have not stopped any programme at the district level. But no money has been come yet. It is not possible for them to come to the village and launch the programme.

Q. Will the people's committee approve the budget to launch development works?

Oli: First of all they should discuss with us on how to spend the money. But they have not come to the village and it is also not possible for them to come here.

Q. What has been the effect of the people's war on women and children?

Oli: The women and children have suffered from the government. The government harasses women because they have fed the party workers who work for the people. They also scare the children for not telling the police about the activities of the Maoists.

Q. Will you say something about the children orphaned by the people's war?

Oli: There are children who have been orphaned because the police killed their parents. The party is helping those children, but they have no one to turn to.

Q. How can such children be brought up on a familial atmosphere?

Oli: This is a class struggle. The party looks after the interest of its class more than its relations. It also looks at the children in the same way.

Q. What is the objective of your movement?

Oli: The main objective is to completely destroy the reactionary and capitalist system and replace it with proletariat system.

Q. Why do you think the present system should be abolished?

Oli: We don't see any positive changes for the people through this system. There have been a change of the political system and a lot of governments came to power, but the

basic problem of the people remained as it is. Those, who said they had fought for the people, are now living in luxury.

Q. In which phase the people's war is at the moment?

Oli: It is at a defensive phase.

Q. You have confiscated and hold up lands in the villages? Why is it done?

Oli: Only the land belonging to the bourgeoisie class is confiscated and they are kept under the people's committees. Some of the people whose land has been confiscated are Purna Devi Shah, Dibya Bikram Shah, Similarly others are Chaurjahari, Bijeshwori Shah and Ganesh Shah. Then the land is given to the farmers for farming. One third of the income goes to the farmer and the remaining goes to the people's committee.

Q. What is the area of operation of the joint people's committee?

Oli: Its main aim is to make defunct the reactionary government and to establish an alternate government. We work for the people through people's mobilization in building bridges, schools and drinking-water project. This will ultimately help the people's war in the long-term

Q. What is the process of the people's court?

Oli: It is to give impartial justice to the people.

Q. What are your provisions of punishment?

Oli: The people's committee has categorized the cases into three – serious crime, that which could lead to serious crime and general. Serious crimes, including murder, are liable for life imprisonment, arson and robbery are of the second category and other are general crimes.

Q. What have you done for women and children?

Oli: The rights of the women cannot be established without drastic socio-cultural change. So, we are focusing on that. We are also ready for their political rights.

Q. What are you doing for cultural transformation?

Oli: We are trying to abolish oppression in the name of religion. We are also trying to stop child marriage and also polygamy and Jari (taking away another man's wife). We are also against gambling, prostitution and alcohol.

Q. And for the children?

Oli: We have formed children's organization, where children are given education. We have given emphasis on compulsory education to make them literate. We will then train them through people's education system.

4. Historical overview of Nepal

With the growth of dictatorship and autocracy in process of running the country, there were movements for the establishment of democracy in the country. The Makai Parba of 1922 A.D., establishment of Praja Parishad in 1936 and the movement its launched in 1941 all led to the movement for the establishment of democracy. In 1946, the Nepal National Congress was established to oust the Rana oligarchy. In 1949, communist party was established for the first time in Nepal. The main objective of the communist party was the abolition of the bourgeoisie system and to remain alien from the Indian capitalism and to establish a proletariat system in Nepal. The communist party remained united till 1962, then the communist party ultimate split into almost two-dozen small factions. In 1990, the seven communist parties formed a United Left Front. After 1990, the Nepalese communists separated into two main directions of reformist and new people's democracy. The other smaller parties, such as the United People Morcha also split. Then the Maoists put forth a 40-point demand to the government through its open front the United Left Front, led by Dr. Baburam Bhattarai.

Since then the Maoists have been waging an underground people's war with an objective of first establishing base areas in the rural front and then gradually capture for the central power – following the policy of the then Chinese communist party and its leader Mao.

The Maoists main area of influence is the mid-western region. The Thawa Village of Rolpa has long been a political active place of the communists. In the first general election of 1958 also, the communist had won from that place. Even during the panchayat days, there were communist movements going on in that area. When in the national referendum of 1979/80, the then panchayat system did not get even one vote from that place and later in 1980/81, there were military actions to virtually destroy the village. Since then the people there had asked permission to raise arms against the panchayat.

After the reestablishment of democracy 1990, the United People's Front had won both the seats of Rolpa and the party also had a majority in the District Development Committee. The United Left Front had taken part in the general election of 1991 with the policy of using the capitalist parliament rather than become a part of it. The party had even won 9 seats to become the third largest party in the parliament. But the then government resorted to force, intimidation and other repressive tactics against the workers and supporters of the United Left Front. The Front's DDC Chairman of Rolpa district Jhakku Prasad Subedi was even imprisoned under a false charge.

In 1996, the United Left Front, the open front of the Maoists party, put forth a 40-point demand with a one-month ultimatum. But the government and no other party took the demand seriously instead the government resorted to repressive measures leading the workers and supporters of the party to go underground.

A. Women's movement in Nepal and its development:

The history of Nepal is also full of women who are famous for their bravery. Queen Rajendra Laxmi is one of those brave women, who in 1779, took over the reins of power and carried on the expansion of the country. Women, who fought the British in Nalapani, are other examples of the bravery shown by Nepalese women.

Nepal's women's awareness campaign can be said to have started by a book on 'women's education' written in 1897. Later in 1918, the women's committee also contributed a lot for the women's awareness. In 1947, Nepal Women's Association was established under late Mangala Devi Singh, late Ganesh Man's spouse, and in 1948 there was another organization under Rewanta Devi Acharya. Later there were other women and other women's organizations such as All Nepal Women's Association, Women's Volunteer Services and even Nepal Women's Organization raised voices for women's rights. In 1980 the Left women's established 'All Nepal Women's Organization'. But as the Left parties began splitting on, the women's organization also divided. Subsequently, the women association affiliated to the United Left Front became Nepal Women's Association (Revolutionary), affiliated to the Nepal Communist Party (Maoist).

The major objective of women's movement is to make them aware and empower them politically, economically and socially. But till now all the party-affiliated women's organizations are only the extensions of the respective political parties instead of

fighting for women's cause. So, all these women's organizations have almost ignored the social development aspect of women.

There were also a lot of women's organizations and NGOs running under foreign assistance who say they are also working for women's cause.

After 1990, there were three main streams in women's movement:

a. women or women's organization who think class struggle is necessary for women's emancipation

b. those who want to promote women's role for the development of multi-party democracy and,

c. to involve women in economic development through trainings and other things.

Among the three, the Maoists are getting support from the first category, and the second category are nearer to the Nepali Congress, UML, RPP and other parties and in the third category are the NGOs and other such organizations.

One of the main voices of women of all the three categories is to establish women economic rights through equal right to parental properties. There are also voices for equality in other areas for empowering women. Women of all sectors have a unified voice on these issues.

The discrimination of women in Nepalese society is illustrated as: " Women are somebody's daughters before they become somebody's wives. They don't have an individual identity. The law favouring son has led to the preference of sons so that women are discriminated against from their mothers' wombs to the gate of Yamaraj (the god of death)". (Marxism and freedom of women – page 62).

B. Women's participation in People's War

The Maoist activities are increasing through the country. In 8 districts they have even established their people's governments and they are also working to capture the central government.

Women's participation is very high in political, social and other activities in the Maoists-affected districts. Women involved in Maoists activities are engaged mainly in four areas.

a. in people's militia

b. involvement in the party

- c. in party's sister organization
- d. as a common supporter

a. in people's militia:

Women's participation at the leadership of armed struggle is very little in any kind of revolution in the world. But the Maoists sources say in their people's war women's participation at the leadership is high in comparison to similar movements in other countries. Maoists say the biggest attraction of women is towards the people's militia. One Maoist leader even cited an example of a girl of 15, who came to join the people's militia. When they refused her and sent her home because of her age and education she committed suicide. Commissioner of people's militia in Jajarkot district, Comrade Ananta, said 40 per cent of the militia in the district consists of women. These women carry muskets, khukuri and grenades. But they don't wear uniforms. The source also claimed that in the guerrilla group there are 25 to 30 per cent women. They carry rifles, khukuris and grenades. They are provided with uniforms. They also have separate women's groups. At the platoon, there are three women. But at the company level there are only 9 women. The Maoists now have only battalions at the temporary level. They, however, are thinking of establishing regiments and brigades. The recruitment of women and their initial political training is done by the All Nepal Women's Organization (Revolutionary). But they get military training from the Maoist army. Ananta also said that since they have established platoons, no women have been martyred.

b. women's involvement in party organization: Women's involvement is more effective in the Maoist party than in other political parties. Women involved in the Maoists' party are basically engaged in social justice, reform and creating awareness among women, who are still bound by the patriarchal system of the society. Because of their works such as in fighting alcoholism, polygamy and other social anomalies, more and more women are attracted towards the Maoists. The Nepal Communist Party Maoist has clearly said that it wants its women's movement not as a feminist movement but as a class struggle. Women such as Pampha Bhusal and Hisila Yami lead the women's front in the party. They also include women in the regional, district and village level according to their ideological and intellectual capacity and activities. They are constantly monitored and trained and their activities are reported to the higher level. The Maoist still accept

that majority of the women are still not good enough to play a more active role in the party, so they are trying to increase their political activity through social awareness programmes. This is why more and more women especially from the poor, oppressed and underprivileged section of the society are attracted towards the Maoists, they say.

c. Women involved in sister organization

Bearing the reality that there are many more women who are from the underprivileged section, the All Nepal Women's Organization (Revolutionary), women's wing of the Nepal Communist Party (Maoist), is working towards expanding their party organization. But before they set foot on any area or sector, first of all they judge and evaluate the ethnic structure, lifestyle, social and cultural differences and the activities of women's organizations of other political parties. In the present situation the ANWO (Revolutionary) has found that there is a lot of attraction of women towards the people's war and its organization. But still the level of awareness of women in the Maoists affected areas are very low and, thus, the training and the opportunities they are getting are not enough. The Maoists, however, claim that as they have been giving maximum attention for women's participation in politics, the women's participation in the party politics has grown to an unprecedented level. But the ANWO (Revolutionary) still take the party's thinking and attitude towards women are stumbling bloc for women's role in the party's decision-making level. Women are still not included at all levels of the party organization. Apart from this, the Maoist men still hold the traditional thinking of men's superiority over women. One example of this is they refused an all-women's team of journalists to visit the Maoist-affected areas. Nonetheless, it is the women who fed them in the villages and hide them when necessary and collect and give them all the information. And women are the integral part of their programmes and processions.

d. Women as supporters of the Maoists:

It is the women and children who render the biggest help and cooperation to the Maoists in the villages. Villages like Dhawang, Mirul, Ghartigaon and Korchawang have the majority of Khas Magars. They along with others such as blacksmiths and tailors are treated as outcaste and are looked down upon by the society. The Maoists have reached to those people and have launched campaigns against these evils. So, these people are willing to do anything for the Maoists. Similarly, in areas like Jajarkot and Rukum, where

there are a lot of upper class people, but the Maoists have succeeded in gaining the women's sympathies by raising voices against oppression against women. They have gained women support because of their campaign against alcohol, prostitution, gambling, and child-marriage and polygamy.

C. Women caught between the Maoists and the government:

Until about one-and a-half-years ago, in districts most affected by the Maoists majority of the people who remained in the villages were children and old people. In 1997/98, after the police intensified their campaign against the Maoists, all able-bodied men could not live in the villages. The situation was so bad that in one Ward there were no male candidate and it was women only who had stood and won the election.

After the Maoists virtually took control over the district began running their own administration, men have returned to the villages. The Maoists army has been doing all sort of work. They also go to the families whose members have been killed by police and assist them. They also plant and harvest the crops giving half the product to such families. This way they have been able to gain the sympathy of those people and families. Meanwhile there also are other women are bearing the brunt of the Maoist actions. The male members often flee their houses to escape being killed by the Maoists. The Maoists go to those families with arms and demand meal without paying, force them to give donations and threaten them. They are leading desperate lives but they do not dare to utter a word against the Maoists for fear of reprisal.

There still other women who simply witness the Maoists roam the villages with guns and grenades. Their duty is to go to the Maoists programme whenever called. They don't refuse no matter how important job they may have at home. They act as if they are both dumb and blind.

There are no police in the villages, so there is no question of police oppression. But before the police left the villages, the people used to live in utmost fear and terror. The police used to take everything they want forcefully, create terror among the village for being Maoists, and their sexual exploitation was also at its height with women being taken to the posts manhandled and even raped.

On the other hand, the Maoists would come at any time even at night to hide. And it was the women's job to cook food at any time of the day or night and feed them. If they were

not given food then they would do anything they like. If anyone informs the police about their hiding those people were either killed or were maimed for life. This way they had terrorized the whole village. There were times first one group would come and they would eat up everything the villagers had and leave. Then another group, either of the Maoist or the police would come. And if they don't get anything they would beat, scold and harass those in the house. The villagers were thus bearing the brunt from both the Maoists and the police. While men if they remains in the village, are involved in politics, hide at anybody's home, eat wherever they are to escape the police, it is the women who have to bear the consequence of both Maoists and the police. The women could neither enter their field early in the morning nor remain there late in the afternoon. They fear whether they would be the target of the police or the Maoists. The villagers were even banned to light torch at night. The ban on torch is still there even after the establishment of the Maoists people's administration.

Many of the villagers now say, "At least there is no fighting between the police and the Maoists," For many villagers, especially women, it has given them some kind of relief. All they have to do is please one side. They think peace is to obey them to go to the Maoists programme and hear what they say and at other times engage in household jobs. However, the wives have also gotten respite from their drunken husbands' beatings. There are no men who loiter around the village and no more political gossips. So, everything looks quiet in the villages.

Box 4:1

Bhim Kumari Pun, Iriwang VDC Ward No. 1, Chairperson of Jagriti (Awareness) Programme,

Bhim Kumari Pun was accused by the Maoists for being an informer of the police's raid against Maoists at Sokedaha. After the Maoist put her on the death list she fled the village. She is presently living in a rented house near the District Police Office at Liwang, district headquarters. The government has now made her the Chairperson of Jagriti Programme.

She says her brother was beaten to death by the enemies. She also says she had won the village election twice and has done good work.

Q. Won't you go to the village?

Pun: Leave that thing out. Because I was beaten by the Maoists (for which she remained in hospital for three months) I made Surendra Hamal win the election from the No. 2 constituency of the district.

Q. But Hamal is a minister, why don't you go to him?

Pun: Hamal and I are like brother and sister. It was he who made me the chairperson of Jagriti Programme.

Q. What are you doing under this programme?

Pun: We have trained 17 women of 10 VDCs to become social mobilisers. Now there are 84 such women in 10 districts.

Q. You cannot go to the village then how do you select the persons?

Pun: They come from the villages. I know every nook and corner of the village.

Q. Who is using your house and land?

Pun: It is empty. Nobody lives there.

Q. Don't you have fear that they will kill you?

Pun: They would eat me up if they find me. I am the main threat for them in Rolpa. There was another, Amar Bahadur Budha. He was shot dead by the Maoists. I was with him when he was killed but I saved myself by hiding under the bed. But I don't fear the Maoists because everybody has to die one day. I don't want to live by giving them money. There are many leaders who are living by paying the Maoists. But I will not bow before them.

Q. How many women are involved in politics?

Pun: Very little because of lack of education.

Q. And in the Maoists' People's War?

Pun: Those women are illiterate so they are after the Maoists. They don't know Baburam's children study abroad. They are also sexually exploited.

Q. Will you take your Jagriti Programme to the Maoist affected areas?

Pun: The government has asked me to choose my area and I have chosen Thawang VDC of Constituency No. 1 and five VDCs of No. 2 constituency. Both these areas are Maoist areas and I have fulfilled my duties.

Box 4:2

Navaraj Khanal, 21, a former Maoist who surrendered to the government. He is the son of a priest in Jajarkot district, but now living in Nepalgunj by renting a room. After he surrendered to the police the Maoists kidnapped his old father and sent him to a labour camp, where he later died in the labour camp.

Q. When did you surrendered to the government?

Khanal: It was on Mangsir 8, 2057.

Q. When did you join the Maoist?

Khanal: It was in Ashad 2057 under influence. I tried to taste an untested fruit, but it was bitter. So, I left the Maoist after five months and surrendered myself at the Jajarkot district police office.

Q. How bitter was your experience with the Maoists?

Khanal: They also didn't recognize the persons. They used to abruptly take action against any one even those who have not conspired. Theirs is not a people's war but terrorist activities.

Q. What kind of actions do they take?

Khanal: It depends on what kind of person- whether it is an informer or others.

Q. Do they also beat the persons?

Khanal: Yes, they beat the persons. They also shoot. They do everything.

Q. After you joined the Maoists, how many were taken action against?

Khanal: I saw many people being taken action against.

Q. Do you know those persons?

Khanal: No, I don't know those persons.

Q. To which level did you reach in the Maoists?

Khanal: I had joined the people's militia. They have 10 levels in the militia. The squadron is also a part of the people's militia.

Q. Did you get the rifle?

Khanal: Yes, I had gotten one.

Q. It was heard that you were given to carry only a homemade gun and when everybody was sleeping you escaped with a rifle, bags and maps?

Khanal: This is nonsense. Which map did I bring? All these are fabricated. I had only brought that weapon. I was able to flee while on duty. Those papers belong to the leaders only, not the commander. So, what they have said is false.

Q. The Maoist kidnapped your father after you fled. How did you feel?

Khanal: I didn't feel anything.

Q. But they took your father?

Khanal: Will their revolution be successful by taking my father? Can my father do the job that I was doing? No. He is an old man.

Q. Didn't you feel sorry for your father?

Khanal: I did. But what can I do?

Q. All your family members are suffering because of you. Don't you feel anything?

Khanal: What I know is they did this to my father so that others won't do what I did.

Q. If you didn't like the job, you could have told them you are leaving?

Khanal: But they won't say you can go home and stay there? Again even if you leave the Maoists and come home, the police would come and arrest you. There are cases of persons who have already surrendered being arrested by police if anything happens in their villages.

Q. Do you know comrade Paras?

Khanal: Yes, I do.

Q. They say all this plan of you joining the Maoists and then deserting them because your father had a loan at the bank. So, if you surrender then you would get Rs. 30,000 for the rifle to pay the loan?

Khanal: This is also nonsense. It was Neelam Sharma of my village Risang who is behind the kidnapping of my father. He is also my relative.

Q. Your father had no role in your surrender and you surrender you didn't like the Maoists?

Khanal: My father had nothing to do with my surrender and it was solely my decision to surrender.

5. Study and Expressions: Explanations and Analyses

a) Conclusion of the study of up to 1997:

“If only the government could have reached the villages affected by the Maoists three years ago, stopped the police oppression and atrocities and have provided relief and development programme to the people, the Maoists’ People’s War would not have taken such a momentum.” This was the conclusion of all those who had visited districts like Rolpa, Rukum, Salyan and other hot-beds of the Maoists that time.

Even the then Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala who had flown to those areas to study the situation there had expressed the same feeling to others who had gone with him. He had even said that he had instructed the government machinery to focus the development efforts on those areas.

Until 1997, although police and some miscreants of the ruling party had created nuisance and even oppressions in those areas, the villagers till that time had wanted peace to prevail. But all those who has visited those areas, used to say with arrogance that they would wipe out the Maoists with the use of force and oppression. They had even looked at others who said the oppression was not the right way to deal with the problem. That time the government’s total focus was suppressing them. Even that time the police at the posts in those districts used to feel insecure.

Even that time the Maoists had started selling dreams that they would have their government in the villages after two years. The more the government resorted to force and oppression, the more the Maoists claimed that they were gaining success.

Many villagers say, the Maoists’ single policy was to create violence at one part of the district and the government would unleash repressive measure throughout the district – taken innocent people under custody, jail them on false charges and create terror among all the people. That was the time when people were terrified and men would flee to the jungle and women became the victims of police brutality and sexual exploitations. It was also the time the women had to do everything inside their houses and in the fields. The children had stopped going to school, and many women had even said that they would send their children only after the Maoist form their government.

These women had felt that if the government took back all false charges and cases and allowed their men to return to the villages, they would live peacefully.

This feeling was even conveyed to the officials of the local administration, police in-charge, health officials and others by a team of women journalists who had made a 15-day trip to the Maoist-affected villages of Rolpa and Rukum.

When the team had reached Libang and stayed in a hotel, then it had found that everybody is terrified of the police as well as of the Maoists. Everybody was suspicious of the other and they would not talk. In their eyes, any new person in the area could be the spy of the police or of the Maoists. They avoided any contact with outsiders.

That time there were 77 prisoners in the jail. Fifty-five of them were brought for political reasons, but they were accused of burglary, murder, robbery, arson etc. For example, one woman Bujimala Pun did not know why she was brought there and what charges were there against her and how long she has stay in jail. She was arrested for stealing from a shop. Later, when the team reached the villages, it was found those who the state wanted for robbery or murder would flee the villages. Those fugitives sometimes come to the villages and they were kept and fed by other villagers taking them as kith and kin. So, the police would arrest the villagers for feeding the fugitives. But as they don't have any law to arrest for feeding those fugitives, they were arrested on other charges such as robbery, stealing.

During its time in the villages the journalists had also faced severe hassles from the police. The journalists were stopped and interrogated by rifle-wielding policemen and they had even tried to scare the journalists.

The team had clearly experienced two things: both the police and the people are scared and terrorized. When the people are frightened they take the outsiders neither positively nor negatively, but they would reply to the questions in a straight way. But when the police are frightened they also try to scare you. Such as the Chief District Officer and the Deputy Superintendent of Police tried to discourage the journalists' team from going to the Maoist-affected villages. They even said the women's team would face severe difficulties on the way such as altitude sickness, leech and the difficult trails. However, the team reached several of the Maoists-affected villages.

After a trip of 12 days the team returned to Kathmandu and put in words what it had seen and heard. But the fact was indigestible to many. Many even branded us to be sympathetic or even undeclared supporters of the Maoists. The irony was that the other

side supposed that we belong to them. However, the then Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala called the team at his residence and tried to get the information. The team had told that it is development and not oppression what is needed to solve the Maoist problem. But unfortunately, on the third day of our meeting with the Prime Minister the government launched 'kilo-sera-two' operation against the Maoists, which led to a big loss of lives and properties.

Box 5:1

Nandaram Rana, Jagatipur VDC Ward No. 5 of Jajarkot district. Rana had fled from the clutches of the Maoists and has been taking refuge at the district headquarters

Q. Why do you come to the district headquarters?

Rana: They captured me on Falgun 20, 2057 from a jungle. Then they took me to Hurra VDC then to Kaligaon VDC at the house of one Ahirman Budha. They asked me about details about the Kuithara incident of Ashad 15, 2055. Then they called me as a police informer and said they would kill me. But I escaped the next night and came to the district headquarters.

Q. How could you escape?

Rana: At the night the Maoists had slept inside the house. Their commander was in front of me and there were four sentries. I even told them that I would join their party to escape from their beatings. But the commander called me traitor and said it is not only you, even Girija would come to our party and beat me.

Q. What did they do to you?

Rana: they tied my hands with a rope, saying the rope was their handcuff. Then I was taken to a dark room and was beaten. I was kept there for one day and one night.

Q. Why did they capture you?

Rana: It was just because I am an active member of the Nepali Congress.

Q. Were you an informer?

Rana: No, why should I become an informer of the police? First, they had set my house on fire. It was because I had led a procession of a person they had killed. The police had asked me who had set my house on fire and I had told his name to the police.

Q. What had happened at Kuithara?

Rana: Four Maoists were killed by police at Kuithara on Ashad 15, 2055. They accused me of bringing police to Kuithara.

Q. How much the Maoists suffered before they entered the jungles?

Rana: No, it was not them who had suffered. They had been looting and robbing the people. When they think that they would be arrested then they took to the jungles.

Q. Where are they now?

Rana: They live in the jungles. But they come to the villages to ask for food and take away the food forcefully.

Box 5:2

Chandra Bahadur Giri: Danda Gaon of Pajaru VDC Ward No. 7, Jajarkot. He fled the Maoists and now lives in Nepalgunj.

Q. How did you get displaced:

Giri: They burnt my house. Then the villagers told me to flee to Nepalgunj and I came.

Q. Why did they burn your house?

Giri: Because I had rented the house to the police.

Q. Are you with your family in Nepalgunj:

Giri: Yes, all nine of my family members are here.

Q. How do you make a living?

Giri: My wife sells firewood?

Q. But you don't look like the one who sells wood?

Giri: I had some properties, but the Maoists looted them.

Q. How do you think you can go back to your village?

Giri: I wish the government to make an environment for us to live in the village. I think they got into looting and robbing because they don't have anything to eat. I wish the government make arrangements also for those (who have gone to the jungle) to live the villages.

Q. Will you return to the village if there is police?

Giri: Rather than having police, there should be a situation where all the villagers, including the Maoists, could live together.

Q. Haven't you been called to the village (by the Maoists)?

Giri: No. It has been here since one year.

Q. How much land do you have?

Giri: I had 40-50 ropanies of land – enough to make a living for my family.

B) Development and evolution of Maoist movement

The Maoists had started their people's war thinking they can change the state power through war. But after about nine months of the Maoists insurgency, the government thought that Maoists are creating terror among the local people and launched a 'Romeo operation' under police SP Chuda Bahadur Shrestha. After three months SP Shrestha gave his report.

However within the next two years, the Maoists had expanded their people's war to 22 districts of the country. There were a lot of reports of the Maoists killing local people. So, the team decided to visit the districts, which were affected most by the Maoists war violence and evaluate the impact on the local people. Then the team visited Rolpa and Rukum and talked and interviewed to about 250 persons, who included police, students, local people, teachers, those whose family members were killed and/or tortured, eye witnesses and other.

C) Visit and evaluation of Maoist activities in Gurkha

After the impact of the Maoists' war was evaluated in those areas, the team thought it would be necessary to visit all the districts affected by the Maoist war. But because of the special police operation for four months in Jestha 2054 in which police killed about 800 people for being the Maoists. But when the operation was relaxed a bit, then Maoists unleashed their form of violence – killing those who they thought had worked as police informed during the operation and also those who they thought were their political enemies.

On Mangsir 15, 2055, the Maoist killed an active member of Nepal Students' Union, (the NC's student wing) in the bazaar of Gorkha in broad daylight causing tension in Gorkha. This also had a ripple effect in Kathmandu. Then there were news reports of NSU's

supporters vandalizing houses and resorting to beating people who they thought were Maoists as revenge to the killing.

The team visited Gorkha for about 10 days to find the actual situation. But the situation of Gorkha was not as tense as the media reported it. At that time there were 64 prisoners, including 11 women, in the district jail. Of the 11 women, three of them were accused of being involved in Maoist activities. One woman Kalpana Thapa was transferred to Birgunj jail. There were also six teachers of the Gurkha Campus on charge related of the NSU activist. All of those who were arrested for being Maoists were educated. But they said they were charged of involving in the murder just because they were only the supporters of the Maoists. One of those arrested was also a woman called Bimala Bhatta. She was working for the Maoists since Magh 2055. The police DSP that time said she had become a source for the police of the Maoists activities in the district.

Meanwhile, it was tragic that 18 commanders of the Maoists had already lost their lives because of the killing Shyam Sundar Shrestha. Of them seven were women commander of the Maoists. The police had created a panic situation by raiding the houses suspected of harbouring the Maoists, taking people into custody. That time the Maoists supporters had wanted to enter into other others even if in the name only to save them from police.

However, the situation of Gorkha was different from that of Rolpa or Rukum. In Gorkha there were about a dozen youths of each village who had joined the Maoists and were working from the underground. But they used to live with their families.

In Rolpa and Rukum most of the people, who had joined the Maoists were very poor and illiterate. But in Gorkha, those who were involved in the Maoists activities were literate and even educated but were unemployed. In Gorkha most of the people killed by the Maoists were not police informers but because of personal enmity and vendetta. But the police also had gotten heavily on those who were only the supporters of the Maoists rather than activists.

D) The establishment of Communist Party in Gorkha and Development

Although the Maoists had chosen the remote and far-flung districts of Rolpa and Rukum as launching pad for their People's War, Gorkha has a different meaning in the Maoists movement. Gorkha was the birthplace of Dr. Baburam Bhattarai and it was the first working area of Prachanda (Pushpa Kamal Dahal).

The history of communist movement in Gorkha had started almost four decade back in 2010-11 B.S. That time a big famine has struck the district. Old people even recall the severity of the famine saying, the goats had even chewed up the hairs of children because there was nothing green in the district. Then the starving peasants like Hemlal Bhatta, Baikuntha Kattel and Rana Bahadur Ale led a movement to rob the silos and store houses of the big farmers, making a positive impression of communist on the people. But the administration had taken severe action against the peasant leaders - Bhatta, Kattel and Ale and others.

Then communist leaders like Pushpa Lal, Mohan Bikram Singh, Mohan Bikram Singh and others even made Gorkha their working areas because the district was close to Kathmandu and the seed of communist movement was already sown there. Moreover, the level of awareness was also high in the district. People like Bachaspati Devkota from within the district had also continued carrying the torch of communism in Gorkha. But when Bachaspati Devkota was behind the bars from 2040 B.S. to 2046, persons like Mohan Bikram Singh and Prachanda had formed the basis of communist movement in Gorkha. They had employed a tactic of 'hit and run'.

Meanwhile, at the same time, Dr. Baburam Bhattarai was expelled from his party CPN (Masal) and again Mohan Bikram Singh was also expelled from the party for six month. That time Dr. Baburam along with his wife Hisila Yami (both of them are architects) had almost left politics. They had opened a consulting firm 'Bastu Consultancy' and had gotten into their professional career. But it was Bachaspati Devkota who made Baburam return to politics by forming 'United National People's Movement Committee' against the Left Front of seven parties including UML. That was when the popular movement of 1990 was about to start. After the movement of 1990, Baburam and Prachanda rejected the new tri-partite constitution made by NC, UML and the King and wanted to continue the communist movement. But Bachaspati disagreed and separated.

Then Baburam and Prachanda formed a United People's Front, to fight the election. Other communist parties, who could not get into the Left Front of the seven parties, also joined the UPF. Then the UPF took a two-pronged approach of fighting the election on one hand and also carry on with their underground activities. Dr. Baburam had led the party in the open, while Prachanda had remained underground.

In the first general election of 2048, the UPF had won 9 seats to become the third largest party in the parliament. In Gorkha the UPF had gotten 13,000 votes and NC had won the election with 15,000 votes. But in 2051, the UPF boycotted the second election and after about 15 months it announced its People's War.

Only after five days of the announcement of the People's War, the Maoists set fire to a paper factory owned by Chinkaji Shrestha. The Maoists then murdered a teacher, Nanadalal Koirala, when he was teaching in the classroom. Then it was police who raped a woman Kamala Bhattarai and threw her body at the bank of the river. Then the Maoists' People's War got momentum. The People's War took a new twist when the police launched its 'kilo-sera-Two' operation in the district. This police operation disrupted the Maoists communication channel, many of their responsible persons were killed and police claimed they had virtually quelled the Maoists' People's War.

E) Analysis of the study done in 2001

The same team of journalists when it visited Gorkha and studied the situation for 26 days found conditions completely changed in the last three years.

In its second tour, the journalists' team talked to about 550 persons from all sectors, including, police, students, teachers, common people, businessmen, political workers and their leaders, army, Maoists and families who had suffered from both the police and Maoists. It found that in the last three years, the police and the administrated looked completely demoralized and the Maoists leaders were delighted and even exuberant on finding an undeclared victory over the local administration. But their mentality was quite unstable and the local Maoists workers and leaders said more than the military victory it was awareness that they had generated among the people.

While talking to the villagers they did not dare to speak against the Maoists. They all said the Maoists had done right in public, but in private they complained that the Maoists had blocked their freedom of expression and they also said they were living under severe tension and difficult times. There were even some who said if one is involved in one's work only, living under the Maoists would not make much difference.

Conclusion of Questionnaires and Discussions

1.The question of women

Among the people we met, we asked everyone regarding the status of women in issues like education, development, health and agriculture among others.

In the work that was to be done by the male members of the village, the majority of villagers said the Maoists were involved in social development works and if need be, they expressed the view that they would not hesitate to raise weapons. In this way it seems the women folks who were not affiliated with the Maoists were exploited more.

When asked who does the work in the households where the men folks had been killed, the women replied that the militia came and helped. On the other hand, those who were bearing the brunt of the Maoists did not receive any such help. When asked how many incidents of infighting within a family took place in the village, they replied that after the Maoists took control, such incidents had virtually stopped.

When asked whether the Maoists had laid hands on young girls, they replied that no such incident had taken place.

When asked whether any one of them had been physically abused by the police or Maoists at any time, the reply was that while they themselves had not been violated in any way, the police physically abused womenfolk of the village when they met them on the road and thus they had trouble while travelling on the roads. "However after the police post had been removed, there is peace," they said.

When asked how many women in the village had been raped none admitted that any women in their village had been raped, however they did not hesitate to give examples of rape incidents in other villages of the district.

How much trouble have they faced after the Maoists Peoples' War, when this question was asked no one wanted to say that the small problems that they had faced in their household as any trouble. However the family of police personnel said that after their husbands had died the work load had increased.

Whether the agricultural products had increased or decreased after the Maoists Peoples' War, most said that when the police was here they could not give full

time to agriculture works and as the men folk had to run away from the village, agriculture had suffered. But now everything was alright.

When asked how they would like to see their villages and their family many women replied that there was peace now, so it was okay. But some women said that "They don't allow our family to come to the village and we cannot speak, what to do?". Those that raised this type of question included both pro-Maoists and anti- Maoists.

When queried whether this type of "War" would bring development, many of the women expressed the view that the development works being carried out by the Maoists was correct. However some said, "How can there be development when there is terror everywhere?".

When asked whether they were aware or not of the Peoples' War, most of the women said they were waging the war to take revenge against the injustice against them. They also expressed the belief that there would be peace if the government stopped its oppression of the people.

They also informed that they were not aware of any adult education programme being run by the government, but the Maoists were educating the women.

On the question of education they replied that most of the women were not educated and even those who said they got education, mostly had completed only class 4 or 5.

Describing the biggest hardship they had had to endure, the women said it was the hardship they suffered at the hands of the police. They again repeated that if there was no oppression in the village, there would be no trouble.

They expressed sadness that the Women's Development Section did not come back to the village after it was ousted by the Maoists and they could not recall the Section starting work in another village after it was removed. Instead, the Maoists themselves had started teaching them to knit or sew bags and improve their skills and income, they informed.

Regarding property rights, all the women in the village were about it and they felt this was necessary if women's empowerment was to succeed.

When asked where they could lodge a complaint if there was any injustice in the village, they replied that there was a united Peoples' Committee and it heard the grievances of the people. Almost 10 to 15 per cent of the women said they had thus received justice.

They hesitated on replying to the query on whether there were more women in the Maoists movement. But one or two women counter questioned on where could they go after the government raped, oppressed and mistreated them?

About the household expenses, most of the women replied that agriculture provided them with such expenses. Apart from that some women of Rukum district said that they earned by selling vegetable seeds. Yet they said the responsibilities of selling such seeds or products and handling of the money was done by the men folks.

Most of the women were also aware of the fact that they should not give birth to too many babies. It is seen in the records of the village development committee district statistics that on an average one couple has three to four children.

Moreover when the men and women who had joined the Maoists militia were asked such a question they replied that they were more concerned on making the Peoples' War successful rather than on bearing children. Some expressed the opinion that if they had even one child, it would come in the way of waging the revolution so they were not of the mind to bear children for some time to come. Some however said that they would not have any children because both of them had decided to be dedicated to the Peoples' War. Most of those who had joined the Maoists said that mutual discussion was held to decide on issues like family planning and whether to have children or not.

But apart from those who had joined the Maoists and also those who had independent views, most expressed the view that there was a compulsion on women to bear more children for the sake of a male child. They also informed that before the Maoists took over local governance, there were many incidents of polygamy. It was considered normal for a man to marry three or four wives in that area. It was found that to have more wives just meant adding three or four pairs of clothes per year for the men folk and even if one woman had three or four

children there was an inclination for one family to see an increase in its members. This was because of the desire of most women to give birth to a male child.

Every mother wants to see her family doing good work. But when those parents who were Maoists activists were asked what they would like their children to be, they replied that they wanted to see their children take revenge against the murder and oppression that had taken place against their father and family. Ordinary women replied that they would like to see their children being able to support them and their family. But it could be seen they were concerned on what actually their children would do. They were skeptical on whether they could make them tread on the path they wanted and provide them the education which they should get.

When asked who supported the families whose members had been killed either by the police or the Maoists, it was said informed that the family whose member had been killed by Maoists received Rs. 150,000 and the children received scholarship under the Ganeshman peace Campaign and those that had to leave their homes were provided shelter as internal refugees.

Similarly those whose family had been killed by the Maoists were found to be in a very poor state, but it was informed that they were given help to educate the children from the Maoists and also provided food. It was also informed that an objective was set to provide such families with political education and prepare them to be a tool for taking revenge. Similarly the person who was killed was declared a martyr and the family was honoured by calling them a martyr's family. Thus it was found that this helped in providing self-confidence and self dignity among the women and also in creating a desire to take revenge.

Questions were also put to the women regarding the development works in the village. When asked what they would do if the government or somebody else would open an industry in the village the women adamantly refused to make any comments. Some women replied that if an industry was opened they would work if given the opportunity and the women who were involved in politics said after the central administration is taken over and the Maoists sets up its government, then they would do according to the new government regulations. But till that aim

is fulfilled they would not allow any activities that would distract the women who were involved in Peoples' War.

When asked whether their children were in the Maoists militia, all of them informed that their children were not in the militia. But they clearly said that during holidays in the schools the children went to the villages to help the people.

While going around to find how many women and children had died during the Peoples' War, women in all the places where we went said that women and children had been killed only from the government side. But some women in the district headquarters said that the Maoists had also killed children in many households by indiscriminately opening fire or keeping explosives.

Regarding the training being provided by the government to women, most of the women said that the government had done nothing for them but, "we want to legally earn money and receive equal treatment in every work", that is what the Maoists had been telling them, they informed.

But some women who supported different political ideologies said that although the government had brought the Women's Development Section and an Awareness campaign and initiated works, nothing could be done for the sake of women because of the Maoists protests.

They also said that the Maoists had been saying that a woman had the right to marry to the person she like and at an age she wanted and she should get equal property rights.

Children

There have been regular reports about children, the future stars of the nation, that their rights had been violated in the Maoists affected areas, them being forced to join the militia from an early age, the school going children being denied the rights to get education, them being kept away from vaccination and other such medical facilities and them losing their lives by being victims of land mines among others.

But in fact, how is the Maoists Peoples' War affecting the mental state of the children there? How do they look at education and the state of affairs there? What do they think of themselves? Many questions were asked in this regard.

While studying the behaviour of the children, whether they were in the district headquarters or far flung villages, it was seen that they were familiar with guns and weapons. For them, it is normal to see a man going around carrying a gun. They have started to develop the feeling that "blood revenge should be taken against enemies". They have been taught from an early age to keep a watch on any new face, to work for the revolution, not to tease girls and not to speak dirty words.

Virtually every child in a village has seen his or her relative die in the revolution. They have heard who has killed whom in what way from family members. Some have seen their teachers or their classmates being dragged away from their classrooms. Sometimes they have seen someone falling down right in front of them after being hit by police firing.

The children there don't speak with new people who have come to the village and they don't show any expression that they understand. But when anything about supporting or going against the Maoists is asked, these school children give replies like pointing an "arrow".

To understand the overall situation of the children in the Maoists affected areas, the group had indirectly asked 33 questions and done the work of collecting the answers. These questions were put up to children who were going to school, those who had left studies and those who had never joined schools.

Those going to schools were asked what they wanted to be. Some of them replied they wanted to be "police" whom they had seen around their villages, but most said they did not know. When asked how much they wanted to study they replied they wanted to study much but who will educate them? There are no schools in the village. One couldn't eat unless you worked. How to study when one couldn't afford to go far away and stay in a rented room? These were the replies given by some who were studying in middle school.

When asked how the teachers taught them, they replied most teachers taught them well but some went to the district headquarters and stayed there. In two schools in Rukum and one school in Rolpa the headmaster and teachers themselves were in love with their girl students and because of this one teacher in a school was ousted by his fellow teachers and one headmaster had eloped with a girl student studying in class 7 and one teacher had gone to the district headquarters to stay there. Apart from that one or two teachers were found giving information about the Maoists so they were given a warning and after that they had fled to the district headquarters. Apart from these type of problems, most teachers were serious in imparting education and the students replied. The school going children informed that during school hours they studied in their schools and in the morning and evening they did house work or other work as ordered by their elders. And in the holidays they went to help around in the village.

These questions were also asked in families where the father, elder brother or some other family members had been killed. In this regard when asked what were other family members doing and where they were the children of those who had been killed by the Maoists rarely gave any reply. Apart from that when those children whose family members had been killed by the police were asked the same question, they replied that their father/ elder brother/ elder sister had been killed by the enemies and they would take revenge.

When asked whether the work load had increased because their guardian had been killed, the children even in the household where only one guardian was left, couldn't say that work had increased. But in the family where both parents had been killed, the it was impossible for the children to describe their problems and

they were not in a state to also describe about the added burden. The children now were found to be only watching the activities of the Maoists, to suffer the oppression on them and try and understand the series of works initiated by the Maoists.

Almost all the children understand that the Maoists were their own people and they were of the view that the Maoists were ready to sacrifice their lives in fighting against injustice. It was found that the children were being taught to fight such injustice. But some children, who had to hear the objections being raised by their parents against the Maoists at home and at the same time had to rub shoulders with Maoists children at school and also compulsorily attend their programmes were in a state of confusion and also mental tension. Almost all the children in the village are aware about the rights of the children and they are also aware about their right to get education, have good food and clothes and get health care. However, because of the corruption in the state, those facilities were not being given to the villagers and they were aware the Maoists were waging a war to provide such facilities to the children, they said. Many children also said because they had been denied such rights they were helping the Maoists in their war.

All the children don't go to school in the village and the majority of those who don't go to school are girls. The children didn't want to say anything about the Maoists coming and teaching such children, but some mothers gave information about this.

There were many incidents of child marriage in the village in the past and polygamy was taken as normal. But after the Maoists started running the administration all such activities have stopped the children said. They also informed that in some schools in some villages, if students were found being in love or eloping, they would be ousted from the schools. When asked if this did not violate their right to study, they replied that if they would not be allowed to study they would not marry. When asked about this with the teachers they said that if the children were of underage when they married, then they would be separated but if later they wanted to marry then they would be allowed to do so.

Such a system was made to facilitate the children who understood later that they were unaware about love and marriage in the inexperienced stage. It was found that in the majority of schools in the Maoists affected areas, they had formed a Childrens' Organisation. They also said how the children, if they happened to be absent from school for even one day, they were taken to the police posts on the suspicion of them helping the Maoists. Even a class one student was not spared from such treatment, they informed. They also recalled how the police used to scold and trouble the children who were coming to the villages. They said that these days there were no incidents of quarrelling. All the children had also been vaccinated. If someone got sick in the village there was a system to take the sick person to the nearest health post. But if there was a serious illness, then the villagers suffered a lot, it was reported.

The village children were also asked about the development needs of the villages. Regarding the development works in the village, most of the children expressed the view that no work had taken place because of the oppression of both the government and the Maoists. The direct effects of this had been on the students who wanted to do and say something, it was informed. Some students however said that the government had only indulged in corruption in the name of village development but now the Maoists were initiating many works for village development. They had given the examples of the roads and bridges being built at several places. Describing the working style of the government in the Maoist affected areas, they expressed the view that they didn't believe there was any possibility of an industry being opened. But some students said that infrastructure for the development of the village would come only after a Peoples' government was formed at the central level, but some among these said that if the government did such work, it would come as a relief to the villagers. When asked could the children leave the villages with someone else the majority of the students expressed doubts that they could leave the villages without the permission of the local Peoples' government and the party. When asked who had to do more work the boy or girl child, the children even in the Maoists administered villages replied that the girl child had to do more work. This could also be seen in practice.

They don't know at what time to get up to go to school. Sometimes when they wake up the sun is high above their heads. Cooking food at the school is late. After the police killed their parents they had to do everything – cooking food, looking after the cattle and going to school. When this investigation team reached their house, about six in the morning and they were preparing to roast some ad- They, did not have any idea of what time it was. Their father Bahadur B.K. and mother Duji B.K. of Garayama VDC of Rukum district ward No 3 were killed by the police three years ago when they were working in their field making their five children a total orphan. This is the interview taken with Dilli Bahadur B.K., 12, Devi Lal B.K., 10, and 8-year-old Sushila BK :

Q. Who killed your parents?

A. Police.

Q. Where?

A. When they were working in the field just a little far from house ?

Q. What did you do when you heard that your parents were killed ?

A. (They only sobbed.....)

Q. Did you go to see the bodies ?

A. No.

Q. Why ?

A. Our uncle did not let us.

Q. How did you know that your parents were killed?

A. Our uncle took us to his house and told us that police killed them.

Q. Didn't you stay to know that your parents were killed?

A. Our uncle took us to this house and told us that police killed them.

Q. Didn't you stay at your house?

A. We are afraid. They could be ghosts. But our uncle scolds us severely.

Q. Who looks after the cattle ?

A. Who else is there ? we, ourselves, used to take care of them.

Q. How do you feel?

A. We feel terribly bad?

Q. Dilly, how old was you when your parents were killed?

A. Nine.

Q. How much did you suffer?

A. Very much? we had no food and clothes.

Q. Did you also have to go hungry?

A. Yes, for several days. we had virtually no food for about a month.

Q. Did the Maoists help do they provide?

A. Yes, they do.

Q. What kind of help do they?

A. They give us food, clothes and books.

Q. Who gives them to you?

A. Muskan and Chhaya.

Q. Didn't they (the Maoists) come earlier when your parents were killed?

A. They had come after three days to take our photographs.

Q. Did the police still trouble you after your parents died?

A. No. But they came or twice searched the house and lifted.

Q. Who cooks the food?
A. The third eldest brother and we help him.
Q. Don't you remember your mother and father?
A. Yes, we do. But it is our sister who cries a lot for our mother.
Q. What do you feel you would want to do those who killed your parents?
A. We also want to kill them.
Q. Have you seen bomb?
A. Yes. The Maoist exploded them in simali.
Q. Do you know why?
A. To kill.
Q. How do you feel when you heard that?
A. We were scared.
Q. Do you feel thank your parents had done something wrong?
A. No.
Q. Have you received help from other?
A. The party gives us food when we don't have any.
Q. What do you used to do when your mother was alive?
A. She used to do everything. She never scolded us. She loved us very much. We remember very much.
Q. Do you go to School?
A. Yes.
Q. Do you want to study?
A. Yes.
Q. What do you want to become, Devi Lal?
A. I want to become like the Maoists.
Q. Have they done well?
A. Yes.
Q. How do You feel when you see the police?
A. I want to kill them.
Q. What do you want to become, Dilli?
A. I don't want to become anything?
Q. Don't you want to become a Maoist soldier?
A. No. What do I get by being a Maoist.

Discussions held with the Maoists

At the moment, the biggest concern facing the whole nation is the Peoples' War being waged by the Maoists. No matter what type of view the people had regarding the Maoists one could see a huge difference in the activities of the Maoists in regards to village development and construction works. For this, it was necessary to go and understand the Maoists activities by going to the actual working grounds and therefore an attempt was made to bring out a conclusion by holding discussions with local leaders about the party's local viewpoint and behaviour. In this regard, discussions were held with activists from the level of commissars to area, district, village and ward level leaders. 31 questions were asked with these leaders. But due to the policy they had to directly deny access to any individual that had come with the recommendations of any organisation it was not possible to directly question not only the leaders but any individual in the whole district. Therefore the answers were collected by putting the gist of the question at a community level. In this way the Maoists leaders and activists were asked questions regarding development, politics, social, religious and other aspects in a clear manner. For this, 26 days, except while staying at the district headquarters were spent in questioning them.

In the discussion though one answer was given to the question of what stage the Peoples' War had reached, the feelings were different at different levels. They expressed the view that they had taken the policy to capture the central administration and sooner or later they would succeed in this. But still, it was clear while talking to the upper level leaders and after minutely looking at all their activities that they were in a wavering mental state and they were not clear on what would happen tomorrow? Which direction the revolution would take, in which way the government would present itself towards this revolution and how to give continuity to the local level Peoples' Government that had been achieved now.

In the insurgent and Peoples' militia level activists, very little long term vision and also a sense of proud feeling being developed could be seen. They behave in a

polite and mannered way with outsiders but still one could sense a type of haughtiness. The person who was suffering from injustice and exploitation in the past was now carrying a gun and doing such things as taking revenge against the injustice and also handing out warnings. The person with whom he used to be afraid in the past is now afraid of him. That is why he considers himself the powerful side in the village.

The lower level cadres are also very confident that the revolution will be successful and the state powers will be within their hands very soon. But some higher level leaders were apprehensive that they may get a bad image nationally and internationally due to the mistakes committed while trying to take over the state powers. The Maoists could be seen laughing and living within such doubts and suspicions. To the question of the people suffering because of this revolution, the Maoists supporters and activists are clear in their belief that the people must be ready to suffer for some time in this effort to get hold of the state administration.

They were found to be highly alert about the diseases and famine that could hit the villages. They were very focussed about countering such eventualities in the villages. They informed that they are working according to their policy of "Modern and community agricultural method", "Community market system", "Making efforts to involve the villagers in the old traditional industries of the village and telling them the development of the village is only possible from the village" and "It is possible to eradicate the poverty and hunger from the villages by properly utilising natural resource". When observed, it could be clearly seen this policy was being implemented.

It was informed that because of the oppression of the government for the last four years, the people had to suffer a lot and this had also affected agricultural output, but now after the Peoples' government had been formed, an attempt was being made to plant crop and fruits suitable for different places and thus try and decrease the unavailability of food in the districts was seeing success. They also demonstrated examples of community farming and also alternate productivity.

When queried whether a war would not affect the future generation it was pointed out that due to the dictatorial government and feudal behaviour the future of the people was in darkness till now. But now they expressed the view that even children had understood that they had to fight against injustice and reactionary forces.

Explaining the reasons for initiating the present Peoples' War, the leaders explained that it was because of the difference in ideology and also the feeling that the country had to see the end of exploitation and to free the people from this system.

But at the activists level they explained that they had to join the Maoists because of the excesses perpetrated by the government against them, their family and the society. Also every member of the family of these type of people had helped in the peoples' war at one time or the other, they informed.

When discussing about the expenses needed to run households and the support that is received they explained that the Maoists always remained in the village. They also informed that even when an individual was sent on work to different places, the Maoists workers came and provided necessary support. We received information that the Maoists did not carry guns only, they came to aid people when necessary and also get involved in development work. The study team found Maoists being involved in building roads, constructing roofs and other such works.

When told that the reason the Maoists were taking to the path of violence and murder because of the lack of development in the villages, all of them straight away denied this. The government was trying to bring in line those who opposed it through murder, mayhem and violence and also freely loot the country and there was no development because of this, but the Maoists were not opposed to development, all expressed the view.

When asked what they would do if some individual or organisation came to the village with employment programmes all Maoists replied that if they came with money from foreigners to hoodwink the villagers then they would straight away chase them away. They emphasised that such individuals could be informers or

those opposing the Peoples' War, so till a peoples' government was formed, they would not allow any programme that was being run with foreign aid. Also they explained that as the local manpower and natural resources were enough to develop the villages so there was no need for help from outside.

When asked whether there was any difference in agricultural output before and after the starting of the Peoples' War, they were not ready to accept that the Peoples' War had affected agriculture. After a long discussion and after giving different examples and the question of how agriculture would not be affected when the men folk had to leave the villages and there was an environment of terror was raised, they still argued that men folk at other places in the country had also gone abroad but the decrease in agricultural output had not been raised. But after a long discussion, they admitted that agricultural output had been affected for some years after the start of the Peoples' War as the villagers had not been able to give full time to agriculture, but after the establishment of the Peoples' government, agricultural output had increased and the Maoists themselves had adopted modern agricultural methods.

The Maoists also did not agree to the fact that the health of the children had been affected negatively due to the war and the children were also suffering from mental disturbances.

They were of the opinion that war had instead made the thinking of the children more mature. But even on this subject, after a long discussion, the Maoists agreed that they had been affected after seeing their own family members and teachers being killed in front of their own eyes. But they also did not leave the argument that such incidents would increase the fervour for revolution and give strength to the movement.

Questions were also asked with the Maoists leaders regarding peace talks. When asked whether the cadres would lay down arms when leaders are holding talks at the centre, everyone of them gave the same reply that, "Talks will be held to give recognition to the revolution, not to halt it". Some of them also said that if the leaders made such understanding then the activists could turn on to the leaders themselves.

There was general consensus that the role of the women within the party was given much importance in the Maoists movement. But still, it could be felt that even in the Maoists movement it was not that women had gotten their rights, but they were being used for the revolution. On many occasions they have also agreed that women have not been able to come to the same sort of leadership that men had achieved. Still, they believed whether it was in military action or even while organising mass meets, there was a big participation of women.

When the issue of the sexual exploitation of women who were in the militia in the Maoists revolution was raised, all of them strongly denied this. Because the Maoists have a different view than others regarding sexual behaviour, as much as sexual rights is explained, discipline and regulations are also effectively implemented. In spite of that, as there was increasing decadence in society and as the Maoists also came from the same society, there could be some incidents of such decadent behaviour within the party, but those incidents were dealt with firmly they said and also gave some examples.

When asked about reports in newspapers that alleged that girls who had been taken into squads had been raped and sold in the brothels of Mumbai, all replied that this was "a defamation plan" of the enemies.

Similarly, when queried whether the Maoists had raped women belonging to other parties, again everyone gave the reply that it was an attempt to bring down the image of the party through baseless allegations.

When trying to take information about the resources and funds needed to run the revolution, they replied that this was done through the funds received from the local people, the amount earned from the community farming, the funds given as donation from the salaries of the employees and the amount taken as fine from those who had been found guilty in the Peoples' Court. They also informed that the funds raised from embezzlers and also the money confiscated from different places were used for the revolution.

When asked whether they had extended cooperation or non cooperation to those who came to the villages for social development, they replied that they would not allow any NGOs to come to the villages at the moment. But in the development of

health, agriculture, drinking water, irrigation, education and such sectors, they would not only completely cooperate but also extend a helping hand to the government authorities.

They also gave examples of how the Maoists had been involved in increasing agriculture and industries in the villages to be self reliant.

When asked what was the attitude of the government to the Maoists run programmes, it was informed that the maoists themselves were keeping a close watch over government programmes. During the course of the study, it was found that the contractors themselves went to the Maoists while constructing roads in the villages.

Regarding the question of whether the state administration could be taken over by the present programmes, the majority of the activists were doubtful or in two minds.

When asked about the allegations of the trouble being given to the villagers by asking for more donation than they could give, it was informed that such donations were voluntary and self-determined. But from the discussion with the villagers it was found that the Maoists supporters could decide themselves on how much donation to give, but a certain amount was fixed for others. Complaints were also heard about how those people and employees who spoke against the revolution were made to give maximum amounts and life was made very difficult for them to stay on in the village.

About whether they were ready to cooperate or not if someone wanted to develop local communication to give factual information to the people, they replied no policy had been made by the party regarding this at the moment.

Similarly, they could not give a clear reply to the question of whether they would extend cooperation to anyone who would like to help the children of those who were killed by the police by building an orphanage. However they expressed the belief that these orphaned children were the chief activists who would take forward the revolution in the future and these children would receive party cooperation not an orphanage.

They were also for the policy of not allowing under any circumstances any non-governmental activities that come from outside the Maoists organisation as these would blunt the very objectives of the revolution.

Government

In answer to the question as to what programmes have initiated in village by the government, they provided the informati all the necessary services that could be provided by any health was available in the village. It was learnt from the government o that on the question of health related matters, the women in N affected areas were more aware than those in other remote According to the district public health office chief, they showed interest in availing health services as regards family planning, vac.- and other ordinary diseases. Not only this, they also availed health - from the health workers of those in the Maoist army, accordinz local health workers.

In the course of talks related to what effects the Maoist movement has had on the women, a majority of the government officials because of the movement terror has been created among the - while most of the officials were of the opinion the women appreciate the Maoists but there are compulsions in the vil some officials said that most of the women supported the \ per their program. There were some officials who felt that the were inspired to become Maoists because of the goy suppression.

While discussing the responsibility of work in the rural most of the officials had not paid much attention to whether the had increased or not the work load on women. Yet, While discussing the responsibility of work in the rural most of the officials had not paid much attention to whether the had increased or not the work load on women. Yet, the judges said that as they had also been observing from the women's side, the suffering more from the present situation. On the question of children were literate in the village, they said that more boys as compared to girls and also presented the concerned statistics.

Discussions with Institutions/ Association and Community

Information was received about Maoist activities through discussions, in separate groups, with the VDC, political parties and pendent intellectuals. For this 28 questions were asked while information was also gathered through observation. The questions asked for most part concentrated on women, children and development.

When asked how the village development works were being conducted, some executives of the VDC, not being able to live in the village itself, were living in the district headquarters and despite this the Villagers contact come to them with. Recommendations for the types of works to be done in the village and the fund needed for such is given by giving them chouse. Some VDC executives at times visit the village and whatever the villagers suggest to spend on they do so. But some VDC chiefs stayed in the village itself and worked according to the suggestions of the villagers. In talks with the workers of the political parties and chairman and vice-chairman of the DDC, it was learnt that as the budgetary allocation for the village has been cut in a number of villages of the district, many good projects have been shelved. Similarly. as the salary of the teachers in the proposed lower secondary and secondary schools are met through the budget of the DDC, the teaching profession has suffered, they said.

On the question of village level projects, despite the DDC executives claiming that works are being carried out according to the budget allocated and the project, the political party workers and VDC executives said that since last two years no work has been done by the DDC in a planned way.

Now, after the declaration by the Maoists of the village and district joint people's committee, not only all the programmes been stopped but there has been no work at all, according to the information provided by them. First of all, the government had never activated itself of implement the village level programmes. Above all, the Maoists approved the programmes if work was carried out according to their desires otherwise no program was allowed to be taken to the village in spite of all political pressure. This was the complaint of the VDC executives and political party workers.

In the context of the fact that no one has said anything to the government about security and development in the village, most of the VDC, DDC and political party executives said that not only the government but even the political parties have not taken the matter seriously. In this the government and political leaders are entangled in their own health and this is the reason why the people involved in politics at the local are suffering.

When asked what has been the impact of the formation of the Maoist people's government in the name of the local government of the village, all the district and village level leaders and workers of the political parties accepted that their influence has increased but also alleged that has resulted by creating terror and fear and on the strength of the gun. They also said that the social justice the Maoists are doing is just a show for a few days. They also poured their anger at the fact that the impact that is seen in the village has led to a ban on the activities of the political parties. As to what they have been doing to increase agricultural production in the village. the VDC chairman said that when

there was budget with the VDC and DDC they had arranged for irrigation facilities and stressed on agricultural production and that had given positive results and he also provided a few examples. But there was no special programme for making the agricultural sector systematic, they said.

On the question of how much the villagers have availed health, education and other basic facilities, all the executives said that as the Maoists had not opposed such programmes they could be said to be successful. When asked what programmes would they formulate of the whole responsibility of the development of the village entrusted to them. C, no one could provide a concrete answer. All agreed that even if the Maoist system of governance came it would be difficult to change the condition of the village. On the question that the Maoists had let loose murder and terror in the village, majority of the VDC representatives and party workers, said that the root cause of terror is the government itself. Meanwhile, they were unanimous in their view that the Maoist activities have create: terror in the village to increase their influence on the villagers through. . force. According to the posts, the health workers are missing from man% places. But whoever has come to the village and providing satisfaction service. On the question that the teachers receive their salaries staying at the headquarters, they said that one or two teachers are facing challenges from the Maoists but the rest of the teachers are working in the village as the records of the district education officer showed. On-trying to gain information about the suppression process in the past an: at present, the political parties said the Maoists exert greater pressure than the police. When asked whether there will be further suppression or do they believed that talus was the Maoist administration, no one was willing to accept Maoist governance. The VDC representative described that though the police now look miserable the signs of suppression were there from long. On what is the difference between the working of people's government and His Majesty's Government, majority of the a) Who(VDC representatives said that in the administration there is a great tendency to take bribes, delay in administrative works and shifting of them said that both the administration and the Maoists do similar types of work quickly and Now without taking any money considering the problems and sufferings of the people and assist accordingly. But some of them said that both the administration and the Maoists take bribe and on the basis of the bribe govern they decide to take action or not. So if they take up the responsibility of sit legal SL the administration, they opined that corruption would increase. Whet le left the asked about the irregularities in the fund collected by the Maoists everyone in one voice answered "in fact, it is".

On the necessity of local communications in the village no one could answer as to what type of communication development could reduce or increase the influence of the Maoists. But some of them said that FM radio is the need of the village. But they expressed their hopeless situation by saying that nothing could happen without the consent of the Maoists.

All those present said that if there was development of local Communication then they would wholeheartedly support it.

An Introduction to Rolpa District

Till 1962 when there were only 34 districts in the country, Rolpa district was not a separate district. The district was incorporated in Pyuthan and Salyan districts. In 1962, Rolpa was emerged as a new district. Some parts of Salyan and Pyuthan were separated from them and those parts were used to form the new district. In the beginning, the district had 31 Gaon Panchayats. The number of Gaon Panchayats were increased to 51 in the year 1964. At present, the district has a total of 51 VDCs.

Lifestyle:

Situated in the mid-hilly region, topographically Rolpa district can be divided into two parts (northern and southern parts). Human diversities can also be evaluated on the basis of the topographical variations. The northern part has no sufficient fertile land and the climate is cold there. But as the southern part has fertile land with favorable climate, the economic condition of the people is better as compared to that of the northern part. The northern part is mainly inhabited by Magar community, whereas Brahmins, Kshetris, Thakuris, Kamis, Damais, Badis and some Magars are found in the southern part of the district. Thus, the two parts are different from both the points of view of ethnicity and income sources.

The residents of the district are the followers of Hinduism. Besides, there are some *Nirankaris*, a kind of ethnic group, at Jungar VDC of the district. The people from Magar community adopt Hinduism but they have distinct customs and rituals from other Hindus. There is the practice of love marriage as well as arrange marriage among the people. The Magar community people marry the daughters of maternal uncle. There is a tradition among the Magar community to offer some cash and properties to the in-laws after marriage. Divorce cases are found in great number in the district. Major festivals of the area include Dasain, Tihar, Maghe Sakranti and Holi Purnima. The Magars give more importance to Tihar than Dasain. There is also the tradition of dancing and singing at work places.

Many people go abroad for jobs. Till some years in the past, locals used to go to Kalapahad (they call various parts of India as Kalapahad for works). But now there is a growing tendency of going to the Gulf countries for employment. Some people also go to Kathmandu and other parts of the country to seek jobs.

Locals use foodstuffs produced in the district such as maize, wheat, paddy, millet, potato, etc. In the northern part, people live on *Dhido* and dried leafs of mustard. In some areas, people are bound to consume only potatoes since no other crops are produced there. Women wear *Gado* and men wear twisted *Gado*. Death rituals are common. Among the Magar community, there is a tradition of completing the death rituals in 13 days. They finish the death rituals by eating meat. While celebrating other religious ceremonies, they do not use Brahmins (priests); they use their daughters, sisters and friends.

Economic status

Agriculture is the main occupation of majority of the people living in the district. There is a great problem of migration as people move from one place to another for economic activities. Besides, going to the foreign countries for earning money has been a common trend in the district. As people are becoming aware of the new agriculture methods and technologies, improvements have been made in the traditional agriculture system. Major agro-products are paddy, wheat, millet, maize and potato. In the northern part of the district, only maize, millet, barley and wheat are produced, whereas the paddy, maize, wheat and mustard are planted in the southern part. Fruits like orange, apple and banana are produced. People weave Bhangros, knit threads and sell them. Various herbs are also collected and sold in the district.

Road:

As a remote hilly district, there is no significant transportation facility. However, a 63-km earthen road has been constructed linking Dang, Ghorahi, Bhalubang, Pyuthan to Liwang, the district headquarters of Rolpa. During fair weather, tractors, jeeps, trucks and buses ply the road. A concrete bridge has been constructed over the Madhikhola linking Chakachake with Rolpa. Moreover, the Liwang-Madhichaur, Haleri-Swargadwari, Ghorahi-Holeri and Kapurkot-Jinawang motor roads are under construction. Transportation facilities are available for people going from Ghorahi to Holeri. So, the people living in the southern part of the district are not deprived of transportation facilities.

Industries:

No large-scale industries have been established in the district. For the industrial development of the district, the Cottage and Rural Industrial development Branch was established in the district about 32 years ago. Main objectives of the branch was to register small-scale industries, provide training for skill development and promote the local industrial products. Different skill development training programmes have been carried out in the district. Such activities have become helpful in addressing the problem of unemployment, to some extent. Until the fiscal year 2056/57 B. S., a total of 18 industries have been registered in the district. They are related to woolen, cotton, Nepali paper, baskets, carpets and bamboo works.

Electricity:

Since 1997, electricity has been supplied to the district through 33 K. V. transmission line of the Jhimruk hydropower project at Pyuthan district. Now electricity services are available in Ward numbers five and six of Liwang, and some wards of Mijhang and Khungi VDCs of the district. Works are underway to expand the electricity services to some other VDCs and some additional wards of Liwang VDC.

Communication (Postal Services)

In the district, there are a total of 51 post offices. Out of them one is District Post Office, nine Area Post Offices and 41 additional post offices. Efforts are underway to make available postal services in all the 51 VDCs of the district.

Telephone Services

There is an office of telecommunication in the district. The office has offered telephone services to the residents of the district, offices, agencies and associations. They can directly contact with the other parts of the country and the world. Besides, some lines of telephones have been made available to some offices and VDCs of the district. A total of 26 lines of telephone have been distributed until recently. It has plans to distributed some additional telephone lines in future.

Health Services

With a view to making preventive and curative health services available to the people, a health branch was established in Liwang in 1976. In the fiscal year 2045/46 B. S., different health offices like family planning, extensive vaccination project and malaria control association were integrated into the district health office. There are a total of 38 health related offices. Out of them, there are 11 health posts, 24 sub-health posts, two Ayurvedic dispensaries and one district health centre in the district. Various health services for controlling leprosy, offering extensive vaccines, TB control and family planning have been provided through the health institutions.

Teacher-student proportion

As per the statistics of the academic year 2057/58 B. S., there are a total of 298 schools including private, semin-government, and 938 teachers in the district. Or the school-teacher proportion is 1:3. The teaching-learning activities take place in a total of 1329 primary classes. The teacher-class proportion stands at 1:1.42, whereas the teacher-student proportion is 1:40 in the district. But one teacher has to look after 1.4 classes. The teachers have not taken the multi-class teaching training. So, the teaching system is not so effective. It has been a challenging work to seek ways to improve the quality of primary

An Introduction to Jajarkot district

Historical Background

Lying in the remote hilly area of Bheri Zone in the Mid-Western Development Region, Jajarkot district was a separate district under the control of Nepal's monarch before the introduction of the Rajya Rajauta Act 2017 B. S. Malai Bam Malla from Samal family, who came from Jumla, had been able to bring under control many small principalities like Saru, Berekot, Khagena, Bhius, Satiya and unified them with Rukum Musikot, Darmakot, Jahari Wadagaon, Suikot and developed an extensive state of Jajarkot. Historical facts tell us that founder king of the state was Jagat Singh, who was one of the four sons of Malai Bam Malla. Jajarkot had a significant contribution to the campaign of Nepal's unification. The treaty made by the then King of Jajarkot Hari Shaha and Prithvi Narayan Shah the Great in 1743 indicates that Jajarkot was a powerful state. The treaty was signed in Benaras as Shari Shah had reached as part of his pilgrimage tour. In 1843 B. S., the Gorkhali army and the king of Jajarkot had made yet another treaty as they encountered on the banks of the Bheri River. Prime Minister Chandra Shumshere Rana had married Balkumari, daughter of the king of Jajarkot Hari Bikram Shah. Because of this relation, a drinking water project was started in Jajarkot in 1980 B. S. and a bridge of Matela was constructed in 1985 B. S. Formal education was started in the district in 2009 B. S. when the last King of Jajarkot Swayam Prakash Bikram Shah took initiative to establish a middle school in the district headquarters.

There are many opinions and arguments regarding the naming of Jajarkot. Some said that the weeds were found in sufficient quantity in the district and it was known as the area of weeds or Jharkot. With the passage of time, Jharkot might have turned into Jajarkot. Others say that as the Bheri river had made the district very fragile and it was known as Jarjarkot (fragile area). With the passage of time, people might have started to call it Jajarkot.

Now the district has been divided into 30 VDCs, 11 areas and two constituencies. Covering about 2230 square kilometers, the population of the district is about 1,32,351. In the district, there is a college where graduation in humanities and social sciences can be done. There is a higher secondary school where education is taught. There are also 20 each secondary and lower secondary schools and 198 primary schools in the district. About 32.73 per cent people are literate. Local people speak Nepali and Hindi and their main profession is agriculture. Maize and millet are the main crops planted in the district. The people are also involved in horticulture and animal husbandry. Despite this, economic and social situations of the district are not good.

Tourism

The district is attractive and potential from the point of tourism due to its topographical conditions. Main touristic attractions of the district include ancient temples of Lord Shiva constructed by the kings of Jajarkot near the confluence of the Sani Bheri and Thuli Bheri and the Holkhola and the Bheri river, Shankhamashta Devata, ancient Buddha stupa at Pajaru, remains of the palace constructed by the founder King of Jajarkot,

statues, Deurali Patan, Shankha Daha (lake), Chamere Odar (cave), hunting site of the king of Jajarkot, Shilpachaur valley and others. Besides, the mountain ranges lying in the north, dense forests, traditional rich cultures of the local people, their lifestyles and local festivals also lure the hearts and minds of visitors.

Social aspect

a. Main ethnic groups

Heavily dominated by the Thakuris, there has been the influence of many other ethnic communities in the district. Goodwill and social unity can be found among various ethnic communities. But due to lack of education and economic development, the people belonging to the Magar community and Dalits seem to have lagged behind as compared to the Brahmins and Kshetris (including Thakuris) in the district.

Description of ethnic groups

S. N.	Ethnic groups	Population	Per cent
1.	Brahmin	5736	5.03
2.	Kshetri	45,438	39.80
3.	Thakuri	20062	17.58
4.	Kami/Sunar	19,678	17.31
5.	Damai	5,772	5.03
6.	Sarki	2626	2.31
7.	Magar/Gurung	11,761	10.31
8.	Badi	785	0.69
9.	Newar	420	0.37
10.	Gaine	59	0.05
11.	Giri	1,693	1.48

Languages

Most of the people living in this district speak Nepali. The languages local people speak outside Khalanga bazaar (district headquarters) is very different from the standard Nepali language. The Nepali language spoken in the district seems to be highly dominated by local dialects. The Magar community people living in Paik, Dhime, Sakla Daha, Pajaru and other parts have their own district language. The people coming from different parts of the country for jobs and business speak Nepali, Maithali, Bhojpuri and other languages.

Religious structure

Hinduism is the main religion adopted by majority of the people of Jajarkot. Apart from Hinduism, Muslims follow Islam, Gurungs adopt Buddhism and some youths from the Dalit communities are found following Christianity in the district. Such youths have abandoned Hinduism. As there is religious tolerance among different religious groups, the Non-Hindus are also seen celebrating Hindu festivals due their the domination of the followers of Hinduism.

Achievement in education

Because of geographical condition, there is no transportation facility in the district and the local people's economic condition is also not good. So is their level of consciousness. Despite lack of educational development in the district, efforts seem to have been made for the development of education sector since long. As the first step for the development of education sector of the district, the then king Upendra Bikram Shaha had opened a language school during the time of 1980/81 B. S. at Khalanga bazaar. The king had started classes in Amarkosh, Chandi, Kaumadi, mathematics and others by bringing teachers Pandits from Pyuthan and Salyan. After the political change of 2007 B. S., the district has witnessed some education developments. In the year 2009 B. S., the then king Swayam Prakash Bikram Shah took initiative to open a middle school at Khalanga bazaar and nine primary level schools in other parts of the district. Following the implementation of the national Education Project in 2038 B. S. , a large number of primary, lower secondary and secondary schools have been opened in the district. In 2043 B. S., the educated youths of Jajarkot took initiative to establish a campus. Now the campus produces graduates in humanities and social sciences. The middle school opened in 2009 B. S. now runs 11 and 12 classes in education sciences. The pre-primary education started in the district from 2034 B. S. when a Bal Mandir (Children's Home) was established.

Description of primary level teachers

According to the data of 2055 B. S., the total number of working teachers at the primary level is 611. Out of them, the number of male teachers is 518 (83.97 per cent) and the number of female teachers stands at 99 (16.21 per cent). Of them, 44.92 per cent male teachers and 26.26 per cent female teachers are trained. This shows that only 41.89 per cent primary level teachers of the district are trained.

A short introduction to Rukum district

Political and social conditions:

Politically, the district has been divided into 43 VDCs, 11 areas and two constituencies. As per the population census-2048 B. S., there are a total of 155,554 people. Out of them, the number of women is 78,598. The population growth rate per family stands at 2.6 per cent. The district is inhabited by Kshetris, Brahmins, Magars, Thakuris, Thakalis, Gurungs, Damais, Kamis and Sarkis. In the western part of the district, the population of Kshetris and Thakuris is more than other communities, whereas Gurungs and Magars have domination in the eastern part of the district.

Historical background:

The areas like Rukumkot, Banphikot, Gotamkot, Musikot and Jaharikot were under the reign of Baisi states (small principalities). It is said that the then king of Jumla Medini Barma had handed over Rukum state to his younger brother Pitambar. So, the district headquarters used to be known as Jumli Khalanga in the past.

The headquarters of the district was in Rukumkot (now at Shobha VDC) from 2018 B. S. to 2030 B. S. The district is rich in its natural beauty. The district is equally important from the point of view of tourism development. As the district is abundant in scenic beauty, it seems as if the district were an integrated site of the world.

Utilization of land

Out of 2,93,183 hectares of land in the district, only 12.06 per cent or 35,359.68 hectares is arable. But crops have been planted only in 9.37 per cent of the total arable land in the district at present. The land covered by forests is 57.25 per cent. To do away with the economic disparity among the residents, the arable land has to be utilized properly. It is also necessary to think of developing the district as a touristic site.

Socio-economic status

By the year 2056 B. S., the number of population of the district is estimated to have reached 1,76,612. This figure is 21,058 more than the total population of the district as per the population census of 2048 B. S. This is an unprecedented growth rate. It is necessary to analyze the effects of the rapid population growth on the per capita income of the people.

Inhabited by different ethnic communities, gender equality has not been maintained in the district. The population of women is more by 1.6 per cent as per the population census 2048 B. S. besides, a large number of women are dependent on incomes of men. Due to lack of necessary industrial development in the district, people are found adopting traditional agriculture system. The society is also not free from the conservative thinking. Casteism is still prevalent in the district. The economic condition of the people has not been improved. As the sufficient infrastructures have yet to be developed in the district, it is still inaccessible. Due to lack of other avenues of economic development, the people are compelled to adopt agriculture as major means of livelihood.

A list of ethnic groups active in various economic activities is given below:

Number of population based on agriculture	93.69 per cent
Number of people dependent on others	5.31 per cent
Density of population	54.1 persons (per square kilometer)
Economically active Brahmins	2.83 per cent
Ecumenically active Kshetris	38.24 per cent
Economically active Magars	39.58 per cent
Economically active Thakuris	5 per cent
Economically active Damais	4.48 per cent
Economically active Kami (goldsmiths)	15.39 per cent
Economically active Sarkis	1.1 per cent
Economically active others	3.88 per cent

Demographic status

According to the population census 2048 B. S., the population growth rate is 2.6 per cent. The number of people migrating to other parts of the country is also increasing. The children's mortality rate has gone down due to the family planning programme and the extension of health services. However, the birth rate has not decreased. To bring all the aspects under positive framework, more awareness programmes have to be launched in the district. The description of population of the district is as follows:

Language

The Magar community people have majority in the eastern part of the district. Their language is known as 'Kham'. Their mother tongue is Kham. But other people speak Nepal. Religiously, people adopt Hinduism, Buddhism, Muslim and Christian in the district. There is good harmony among the people belong to different religions. The Thakalis have their own distinct mother tongue.

Industry/business

Cottage industries are the main industries in the district. Besides, there are industries such as Nepali paper, water turbine, blanket, saw mills, brick factories and bamboo works.

Transportation

Rukum district has no facility of road transportation. But other four districts of this zone are linked by roads. Farmers have not been able to get the fruits of agriculture as they cannot sell their products due to lack of road infrastructure. The government has been constructing the Dang-Salyan-Musikot road from the fiscal year 2055/056 B. S. By the end of Chaitra, 2057 B. S. the transportation facility (motor service) was expected to be brought to Musikot. The road has been constructed by the Royal Nepalese Army staff.

There are two airports in the district-- one in Chaurajahari in the west and Salle, the district headquarters of Rukum. The people of Rukum are lucky enough to have two

airstrips in their district. The main means of transportation of the people is air transport in the district. Moreover, horses, donkeys and porters carry goods.

Health

Despite the services being rendered by different health centers, the people have not been able to receive health facilities easily in the district because of its difficult topographical conditions and lack of transportation facilities. Following are the health centers and health posts offering health services to the people in the district:

Health centers and health posts	Total Number
District health center	1
Primary health center	2
Area health post	8
Sub-health posts	34

Communication facility

Although communication facilities are not easily available in the district, the existing facilities have to be taken positively. Till Bhadra 2057 B. S., there were a total of 25 post offices in the district. Out of them, one is district post office, six area post offices and 18 additional post offices in the district. There are 11 telephone lines in the district headquarters. Similarly, there are three telephone lines in Chaurjahari and one each in Peugha, Rukumkot, Banphikot and Aathbiskot. But these lines are not in operation. For communication facilities, additional services are necessary.

Electricity facility

In Rukum district, a total of 376 Kilo Watt of hydropower has been generated. The hydropower has been distributed to the head quarters of Jajarkot and Rukum and nine other VDCs of the latter.

Name of project	capacity	VDCs with electricity services
Syapu Daha	200 KW	Khalanga Banphikot, Chhiwang, Shobha and Pokhara
Jahari Khola	150 KW	Bijeshwari, Kotjahari, Jajarkot
Bhandari Kada Micro-hydro Project	10 KW	Sakh VDC
Sima Micro-hydro Project	16 KW	Morabang VDC

Education

There are various educational institutions in the district. They have been providing educational services to the local people. There are a total of 206 primary level, 22 lower secondary level and 17 secondary schools in the district. Out of them, the government has given permission to 7 secondary, 15 lower secondary and 39 primary schools in the district. For higher education, there is one campus, three higher secondary schools, four residential schools and four disabled resource centers. The academic institutions of the district have provided services to 176,619 population of the district. Apart from these, 18

different resource centers have been involved in generating awareness among the people about the importance of education by conducting seminars and workshops in the district. Various governmental and non-governmental organizations have been running literacy classes for the young and old people in the district.

CONCLUSIONS

Before attempting to understand and assess the impact of the Maoist people's war on children and women in Nepal, it is necessary to understand the broader societal issues—from geopolitics, the class and caste background, the development of ethnicities, the social environment, religious traditions and the ideologies backgrounding the formation of the nation state, and the inequalities that have resulted in the process. Such an analysis also requires objective assessment of the rights given to women in the different states of the development of the nation and in the conduct of the state.

Instead of trying to get to the bottom of the inequalities between men and women, generally, our assessments have focussed only the issues related to day to day living or those that can be easily seen and felt. Little attempt has been made to explore the environment that allows the discriminations that exist—for example change in the existing situation requires deconstructing the existing social structure and reconstructing, while removing elements that contribute to the creation of the inequitable social environment. We have long understood that patriarchy is the root cause of discrimination but have been unable to do away with it—instead it is still deeply entrenched.

The income disparities in Nepal is gaping—the better off have access to the best of amenities available anywhere in the world while life in the villages has not changed—or that of over 90 percent males and females has changed very little, compared to what it was say three or four decades ago. This has happened while very visible changes have taken place in the lives of the remaining 10 percent or so, which after the development of transport and communication is no longer unknown to the masses. This 10 percent controls or owns the largest companies and the tallest buildings and also has more access and control over resources. One reason why we cannot accept that even government and donor policies have not been pro-people is because the policies have benefited only this small minority. Even today this minority controls the resources meant for the development of the masses and have not been able to employ them to bring meaningful difference in the lives of the people. That explains why even though the mainstream political parties have always promised the liberation of women, elimination of class disparities and uplift of the ethnicities, it is the Maoists that have been able to walk away with the agenda.

Even though the Maoist insurgency is a political problem, it has grown over existing social and economic inequities and political contractions. Even today no serious attempt has been made to assess the impact of the people's war on the lives of the children and women. Whatever analysis is there, or even campaigns to, say, ban child-marriage, polygamy and alcoholism, are there not because they affect women and children but because they are supposed to be larger societal problems needing cure.

Similarly when we talk about the impact of war, the focus tends to be on the political aspects. The women have been raped which is a crime against humanity. But both the government and the Maoists don't hesitate to use rape to serve their interests—the government as weapon to crush the insurgency and the Maoists as tool to intensify the

opposition of the masses. Little attempt has been made to understand the pain of the women concerned, from their perspective.

The Maoists have killed political opponents and policemen and the policemen have killed rebels all in the name of the people's war or law and order. The Maoists are indoctrinating the orphans of the rebels to avenge the deaths of their parents because they can become tomorrow's soldiers. Government has been unable to reach out and support the orphans, or provide them the support that a state should to its peoples. In such a situation the children grow up and pick up the gun—just as the Maoists would want. The other children have lost their normal childhood because they have lost the breadwinners in the family, many of who have moved to new surroundings fearing the terror. The children of fallen policemen also face uncertain futures because a death in the family can change the socio-economic situation of households, especially those where the dead is the sole bread earner.

Even the existing social support systems lose meaning when relief is distributed based on partisan lines. We've heard stories of people that have received government support through a number of different programmes while others have not seen any help come their way, which, again, is misuse of public funds. The government support has reached many living in "shelters" in the district headquarters. Even then the support goes to families in general and is not for targeted programmes such as education of children orphaned by the insurgency. The best way to help the orphans of the insurgency would be to establish camps for children from both sides and provide them the education and other social support to help them grow as normal children.

The socio-economic inequities, ineffective government and the people's war have collectively created a situation where it becomes difficult to try to make a prediction on where the country may be headed. The problems faced by women are unique but there seems to be no realisation of that both in the government and Maoist camps. The Maoists have used the neglect of women to fuel the insurgency and even interpret efforts made by NGOs to make them aware to suit their own purposes. However, because of the efforts made by the Maoists, even though the women are still backward, illiterate and oppressed, today they are motivated take up the cause of liberation from their problems. They are aware of the neglect and injustice meted out by the state, are aware of their political rights and are ready to fight for them—if needed. They understand that the state's efforts to crush their demands is wrong are ready to oppose such actions.

Any visitor in the Maoist heartland can make an assessment of the simmering revolt among the women by observing their lifestyles and listening to their arguments. The villages referred to are those where women have had rarely had a chance to participate in political activities under the so-called mainstream parties. The Maoists already have almost 50 percent women in their fighting squads. Similarly the women who rarely spoke with outsiders before can today engage any development activist in a debate on women's rights, the responsibility of state and the assessment of if it has performed as it is expected to, or on any other topic of social concern. These are major achievements for

women. It is thus clear that one way to really empower women is to engage themselves in demanding and getting their political rights.

RECOMMENDATIONS

CENTRAL LEVEL

1. Governments need to make efforts to win the confidence of all political parties and thrash out a minimum agenda and take it up with the Maoists
2. The political parties need to support government in its effort to get the Maoists to agree on the agenda drawn up with their consensus
3. The Maoists, in the interest of the nation and peace, must come to dialogue and agree on the all-party agenda.

DISTRICT/VILLAGE LEVEL

1. Maoists and workers from all other parties have to establish a minimum understanding to allow each other to work in the villages
2. The political party workers need to go into the villages and try to convince villagers that violence can only lead to more violence. The demand for ending violence has to come from the grassroots.
3. Volunteers should be employed to spread the word of peace and peace-making
4. Establish community level communication mechanisms to spread word on the need for peace and peacemaking. Continue efforts at the national level by encouraging investigative reports that would compel the masses to pressure for peace and peacemaking.
5. Establish children's homes for orphans of the insurgency and provide them opportunities for education and overall development
6. Introduce educational and training programmes to help rural women improve their skills and introduce income-generating activities to help them improve family economics, and
7. Develop Information, Educational and Communication material on peace and disseminate it widely.