



EIGHT-PARTIES ASKED TO SOLVE EDUCATIONAL PROBLEMS AT EJG INTERACTION

- Summary by Pushpa Raj Poudel
Program Manager, EJG

Private and community schools have been closed for about a week which has directly hit the future of 7 million students. The government has shown its apathy to the demands put forth by the teachers of private schools. Since the state machinery is doing everything on the political conciliation among the 8 parties; there is no any crystal clear resolution to address the problems of education sector.

Education Journalists' Group organized an interaction program at its office hall inviting the representatives of the political parties to know their views and opinions on the present stalemate in education sector.

The program moderated by Prakash Silwal, the general secretary of EJG came to end with the common voice that there was an urgent need of other healthier way to resolve the problem rather than closing the schools. Supravat Bhandari, the chairman of the Guardians' Association said that the Ministry of Education should take the initiative to resolve the setback. Likewise Dr. Minendra Rijal, the representative of the Nepali Congress (Democratic) said that the right to education of the innocent children should not be grabbed. Speaking at the program, Gorkarna Bista of CPN (UML) expressed his opinions that present deadlock in education should be

resolved by the eight party meeting as it is connected with the political concern. Hasta Bahadur Malla, former state minister for Education and Sports highlighted on the fact that no one should deny others right while bringing out the protest programs for their professional security. Eight parties stated Ganesh Shah, the representative of Bam Morcha, should take the sole responsibility for the present impasse in education sector. Keshav Nepal, representing CPN (Maoist) said that the teachers are compelled to bring such a strong program since the government always became simply indifferent for their reasonable demands.

Though all leaders were representing their respective political parties, everyone came to the conclusion that the closure should be ended; studies resumed and more reasonable method should be adopted to resolve the impasse in education sector.

Himalayan News Service 24/05/07

Ganesh Shah said, "The government does not seem to be serious in resolving the problems facing the education sector."

Dr. Minendra Rijal said, "Nobody has the right to play with the future of students and fulfill their interest.

Gokarna Bista stated, "The government should try to address educational demands that are reasonable."

CK LAI , Journalist for " Himalayan Times"

Excerpts from a talk at the VSO Conference May 15, 2007

- Encampments are not good conditions for children in a civilized society.
- Maoists have not accepted that you do not keep mothers

- and babies in conditions like this in a civilized society.
- Every event builds on the previous and we have the same old struggles.
 - Violence cannot be completely avoided, but must be tolerated and minimalized as much as possible
 - We were born monkeys and are becoming humans, sometime in the future.

KRISHNA, Secretary of Nepal Teachers Union
Reports on the trip to Malawi at the VSO Conference

GOOD PRACTICES IN MALAWI

- Trying to reduce racism.
- Code of Conduct – teachers fired if not followed
- Teachers not affiliated with political parties.
- 50% of teachers are women.
- Government gave incentives such as money to purchase houses for teachers.
- Only one teachers union in Malawi, which is not

SUDARSHAN GRIMIRE'S REPORT

VSO CONVERENCE

BUDGET TRACKING IN MALAWI

- NGOs were collaborative and their voice is stronger to cause change.
- Advocacy is limited.
- Problems of communication have been solved.
- Civil society has worked together to make their voice more relative.
- Main learning is civil society is not working together in Nepal, there is a lack of organization to lobby, and donors

- work alone.
- Donors tend to work alone with research.
- There is budget tracking in 16 districts.

TEACHERS' STRIKES

When the teachers' unions in Nepal went onto an indefinite strike last Thursday, they forced the nation to shut down thousands of schools. They demanded permanent status for teachers and equal pay as well in both government and private schools. They also put forth other political demands.

The strike caused the closure of more than 35,800 government and private schools which affected approximately 7.6 million students between the grades of one and 12. The unions want the drafting of a new Nepali constitution which will not only determine the fate of the monarchy but determine whether Nepal is a republic.

Teacher's strikes are not new and have been used in countries such as the United States, Great Britain, Argentina, Germany, Ireland, Mexico, and on and on, Teachers use strikes as a leverage to get what they want from the administration or in Nepal's case, the government. Usually, what teachers want is better pay and better working conditions. This "weapon" though is a two-edged sword. On one hand, parents are usually ready to side with teachers and support their cause, but parents get testy when their schedules are disturbed for any length of time. Parents found to be in a situation of finding care givers for children who are now at home during school hours are not as patient and supportive. Parents are not always able to take off work to be with children and finding babysitters for lengthy periods of time.

In two districts where I was a teacher and strikes were held, the teachers held their strikes during "off hours", before school, after school, and during the evening hours. It was effective to have teachers marching around the busy streets as parents were driving home. It was an embarrassment and parents were soon telephoning the School Board (the governing body who made the policies) to tell them to get the problems solved.

Minister of Education Nepal is using the strategy that we will talk when you stop striking and get back to work. Who do you think will win? Is there a way that both sides will compromise so that students will soon be back in the classroom where they belong?

BEST WISHES FOR A SPEEDY RECOVERY TO BHUPARAJ
Our president Bhuparaj Khandka has been to the hospital but is home now and recovering well. We send him our best wishes. Best wishes for a speedy recovery, El Presidente!

DID YOU KNOW?

We get 3 daily **newspapers** written in English and 7 daily papers in Nepali. Why don't you stop in to read and chat about the news? A good debate is what EJG is all about...!

EJG has a library full of **research materials** waiting to be used and an Office Assistant anxious to help you find what you need in the latest materials.

VSO has provided an **Education Advisor** who is willing to assist you with any research on educational issues, questions, or problems, in Nepal or internationally, just ask.

At the Interaction on politics this week, there were 6 female journalists and 2 female photo-journalists that took part. This is a new record of women taking part. Go women!

WHAT ARE YOU DOING IN YOUR JOB or FOR OTHERS?

Let us know what interesting projects you are involved in at the moment.

- **Sudarshan Sigdel** has received a grant for radio from Aasaman.
- **Hari Thapa** is planning to work on filming hill people for a documentary.
- **MD Kulung and Sudarshan Ghirmire** have agreed to teach photography skills to grade 9 girls in a VSO/EJG project.
- **Nirjala Kakshapati** will be teaching interviewing and writing skills to the Grade 9 project.

VSO/EJG PROJECT

This project by **Nancy Baker and Geraldine Clarke** of VSO will have girls trace the history of education from their grandmothers and mothers to the present:

- Record a history of women's education using photographs and written work.
- Girls are the recorders.
- Girls will learn journalism and photography skills.
- Interviewing their mothers and grandmothers, girls will trace the history of education of women in their families.

The girls will name the project at the first meeting on June 18. The project includes three workshops:

1. Confidence Building
2. Writing Skills
3. Photography Skills

The project is funded through grant money at VSO to the volunteers to be used at their partnerships. Geraldine is a volunteer working with the District Office of Education Braktapur. The project is with 9th Grade girls at **Shree Krishna Higher Secondary School** near Nagarkot. All of the girls would be classified as coming from "marginal families", but must be winners of an essay contest in English to be selected as one of 15 participants. We are very excited about working with the girls, their Resource Person, and the English teachers from this District who have been very supportive.

CONVERSATIONAL ENGLISH CLASS TO START

Nancy has been asked to have a "Conversational English Class" for EJG Members to be held at the EJG Conference Center. It will be very informal and include some vocabulary and grammar. If you are interested, please call the office. The group will be kept small.

Missed Newsletter: Due to technological problems last week, we did not have a newsletter. We hope you missed it.

A CHAT WITH PUSHPA POUDEL, PROGRAM MANAGER

– By Nancy Baker

What did you do professionally before coming to EJG?

I was an English Teacher and also critiqued fiction written in both Nepali and English.

What made you decide to come to EJG?

My interests in education were one. I also wanted to learn about media and how the media can play an important role in education.

What would you like to accomplish at EJG?

I would like to see them become strong financially. I would

like to be a part of them being more resource oriented.

How would you see this being done and you being a part of it?

I would use my expertise and work as a team.

What skills do you feel you bring to EJG to make this happen?

I am good at writing proposals and translating. I also write reports. I haven't found anything to be too challenging.

What are you presently working on here?

I am working on a proposal that will assist children who are deprived of schooling because of poverty. It targets getting children into school.

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GETTING TO KNOW PUSHPA BETTER



Born: April 7 (age unknown)

Birth place: Parbat District

School: BA and MA from Central University of Nepal

Favorite Food: Chinese

Favorite Book: "Beloved" by Toni Morrison

Favorite Music: Classical

Would like to spend an evening **with:** Vive Kand

Favorite Place: Pokhara

Would like to go on a World Tour

Family: Mother, Father, 2 brothers, 2 sisters **No girlfriend!**

Send comments, suggestions for us:

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