



CECI's NEWSLETTER

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Message from Country Representative

Dear Friends,

Over the past 25 years, CECI has grown to be the most active Canadian international development organization working on economic and social development in Nepal. We have made significant progress in the areas of agriculture, community health, microfinance, and humanitarian assistance. Our Uniterra cooperation program, which mobilizes Canadians and Nepali professionals to enhance the capacity of Nepali organizations, has also contributed to many of our accomplishments.

One reason our development project and volunteers have been so successful is because promoting equity, inclusion and women's economic empowerment is always top our priority. Starting from our internal policies in the office, to the way we approach our projects in the field, a gender equity and social inclusion (GESI) perspective is an integral part of what we do.

This newsletter is a chance for us to share some recent GESI achievements and to update you on our programs and projects.

We invite you to read about

the impact of Uniterra volunteers at Fair Trade Nepal, whose synergy has improved the overall workings of the organization and as a result, the trading conditions and rights of marginalized producers. Similarly, at a dairy farm in Makawanpur District, the efforts of Uniterra volunteers have helped to launch the first Dalit women-owned dairy cooperative. Uniterra has also supported professional training and internships for Dalit youth, creating long-term employment opportunities.

CECI is also among one of the leaders contributing to the dialogue on women in Nepal. We organized a forum to discuss women and youth empowerment, we've conducted gender training for all of our staff and hosted a workshop on climate change and gender perspectives.

Our 30-month project, Sahaastitwa/Coexistence, has taken this discussion to the field, providing income generation opportunities for cultural producers, especially women, from disadvantaged ethnic groups across the country.

GESI is also being addressed through the Pro-

gram for Accountability in Nepal (PRAN). For the past three years, CECI has been managing grants which develop the capacity of civil society and government actors to promote social accountability. The grants giving to 50% women led organizations and traditionally excluded groups at the district and village levels a voice and improved access to services.

Among other updates, is our continuing management of Australian volunteers, the newly acquired Multi-Sector Forestry Program and the successful microfinance summit, organized by the Centre for Microfinance, an NGO we initiated.

We hope you enjoy our newsletter and join with us in supporting and advocating for GESI in Nepal. Enabling women and minority and marginalized ethnic groups to participate in their own development, we believe, is crucial to breaking the cycle of poverty and exclusion.

Thank you for your continued support,

Keshava Koirala
Country Representative
CECI Nepal

Connecting the Dots: CECI's Volunteers Work Together for Ethical Business Development

Over the past year, seven Canadian volunteers have devoted their time and expertise to Fair Trade Group (FTG) Nepal through the Uniterra volunteer cooperation program. FTG, a member-based Nepali NGO engaged in the promotion of fair trade products, is among one of 19 of CECI-Nepal's Uniterra partner organizations in which volunteers are placed to enhance their capacity.

The volunteers, coming from professional backgrounds or as part of university internships, have significantly contributed to FTG's mission of promoting fair trade and providing support to its members. Working together, the volunteers have enhanced the overall effectiveness of FTG, contributing to uplifting the socio-economic status of underprivileged and marginalized Nepali producers.

Through the support and diligence of these volunteers, FTG has advanced in the areas of business, database management, documentation, product-lines and marketing. Increased development of FTG members means more fair work and economic development for youth, women, and the disabled. CECI's volunteers have taken the necessary steps to improve gender equality and poverty reduction through economic development, improving the quality of life for families across the country.

Meet the volunteers working for FTG and learn about the role they are playing for the long-term development of Nepal.

UNITERRA FACTS

- 104 volunteers have completed their mandate or are working in country.
- 23 more volunteers are expected this year.



Fatima Naveed
Documentation Intern
8-months
Waterloo University

Naveed created a database of information on existing FTG members. Her role has enhanced FTG's ability to identify, monitor and assess members. With a more effective documentation method, FTG can provide relevant business development and capacity building to its members.



Lindsay Miles-Pickup
Business Development Advisor
12-months

Miles-Pickup has been actively researching and discussing with FTG and their members how to improve the organic and agro-food value chain, while developing communication materials and proposals.



Marie-Pier Pernice
Networking Intern
3-months
University of Ottawa

Pernice was responsible for reviving the social solidarity enterprise (SSE) network, a group of like-minded Nepali organizations working to combat poverty through social economic development models. She compiled the history of the network and conducting a workshop to share knowledge, experience and opportunities among the members.



Greg Leshchuk
Policy & Advocacy Advisor
10-months

Leshchuk helped develop advocacy tools for member organizations and ensured their involvement in local festivals, increasing awareness of fair trade products and practices

locals and foreigners. He assisted potential members through the application process, as well as worked to increase the awareness of social enterprises through the development of the SSE network.



Ayesha Amin
Communications Advisor
12-months

Amin is developing a joint catalogue of all FTG members' products, while promoting events. Through the promotion of member products, sales for FTG members are increasing.



Catherine Beach
Marketing Advisor
12-months

Beach has empowered and advised FTG Nepal member organizations on marketing, communications and business development strategies. She has developed and implemented a range of communication tools and has conducted research on market trends. She has also worked closely with FTG Nepal in developing a business development strategy to increase the capacity of their member organizations.



Tara Scanlan
Product Development Advisor
12-months

Tara Scanlan has used Beach's data to understand the national market, while building her own research on the apparel market and design industry. Through her research she has developed new product lines and strategies for FTG member organizations. [Watch a video](#) of her explaining her volunteer role and a ethical fashion company she is starting.

Innovative Internship Program Opening Doors for Dalit Youth

“I missed so many opportunities because of being a Dalit woman,” says 23 year old Anita Bhusal, who struggled to find a job because of her caste. That all changed when she was accepted in the Innovative Internship Program financed by the CECI/ Unitererra Program, and delivered by the Professional Development and Research Center (PDRC). The initiative, which provided training in professional skills and a placement at a local NGO to gain practical work experience, is helping to break the cycle of discrimination against Dalits by enhancing their eligibility for employment.

The six month pilot program, designed specifically for newly graduates of the Dalit community, was divided into two phases. The first two months were intensive trainings in English language, computer essentials and administration skills. This was an essential part of the training as the selected seven interns spoke little English and lacked confidence to express themselves clearly. During the final four months, interns were placed with CECI’s partners working in the sustainable forest management sector. Here they had the opportunity to work alongside Canadian interns from Students Without Borders, fostering exchange of ideas and transfer of skills among the youth from different cultural backgrounds.

“I am very proud of myself,” says Bhusal, who travelled to Dolakha to intern with the Federation of Community Forest Users of Nepal (FECOFUN), an organization dedicated to natural resource management. Hesitant at first to travel far from home, she found the new experience exciting, especially working with her Canadian counterpart. “I have changed. Before I didn’t know

office work or administration tasks and I didn’t speak much English. Now I can talk to foreigners and talk in front of large groups of people.” As the only woman at her new job as a computer operator at a prison in Parsa, she attributes her improved public speaking skills and boosted self-confidence as reasons she stood out among the other applicants. Two other graduates have also secured employment after completing the program as a result of acquiring new skills and competencies. Others are preparing to write the test for government candidacy. Sagun Bista, Senior Program Manager for Unitererra/CECI is very pleased with the outcome of the program and would like it to continue. “The internship program is an effective way to break the cycle of discrimination towards Dalits”, she says. “The connection with the Canadian volunteers also helped the Dalit interns learn about career development. Both the Nepali and Canadians benefitted from learning more about each other’s approaches to work and society.”



“I have changed. Before I didn’t know office work or administration tasks and I didn’t speak much English. Now I can talk to foreigners and talk in front of large groups of people.”

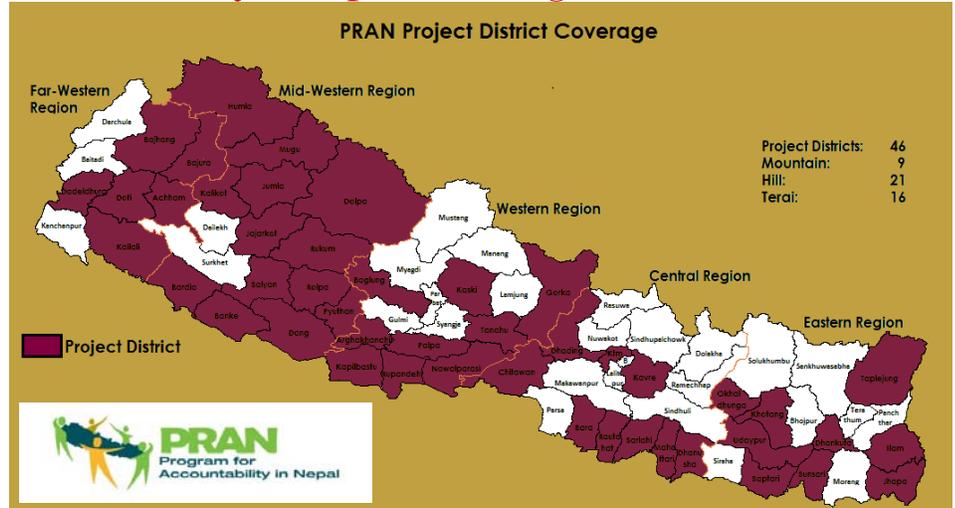


Above: Anita Bhusal, Dalit intern, interviewing a project beneficiary in Dholoka with FECOFUN. Below: Canadian volunteers and Nepali volunteers and interns at CECI’s Annual General Meeting.

Program for Accountability in Nepal Awarding Grant

CECI manages the grants for the Program for Accountability in Nepal (PRAN), a program to promote the demand for good governance in Nepal. The program improves governance and institutional performance in Nepal by promoting more accountable, honest, transparent and responsive government agencies to deliver quality services. Using social accountability approaches and tools, the PRAN aims to strengthen the capacity of civil society organizations for constructive engagement with the government. The program is financed by two Trust Funds at the World Bank: the State and Peace-building Fund (SPBF) and the Multi-Donor Trust Fund for Public Financial Management Reform in Nepal (MDTF-PFM). PRAN is being implemented in agreement with the Government of Nepal until 2014.

CECI is responsible for executing an independent 'Grant Making for Action Learning' to strengthen civil society organizations' (CSOs) use of social accountability approaches and tools. CECI makes grants through two grant windows: a) large grants of up to \$50,000 for piloting social accountability (SA) initiatives and, b) small grants of up to \$15,000 for undertaking action research development and testing of SA tools.



In 2011, CECI awarded 29 sub-grants (10 large grants and 19 small grants) to CSOs from 25 districts representing all the development regions and geographic belts of Nepal, and implemented grant-funded activities on SA in as many as 32 districts. Of the 29 CSOs, as many as 26 CSOs come from outside the Kathmandu Valley. The Sub-grantee CSOs initiated 14 different SA tools including, among others, citizen charter, citizen report card, public expenditure tracking survey, community score card, participatory budgeting/planning, and citizen jury. This has resulted in behavioral changes in service providers, empowered community members and institutionalization of SA tools.

In 2013, CECI was awarded an additional grant to expand the program to reach a larger number of beneficiaries. It has awarded a total of 64 grants and is in the process of awarding about 10 additional sub-grants. The majority of the sub-grantees come from outside the Kathmandu valley, working across Terai, Hills and Mountain regions of Nepal. The new sub-grantees will practice tools such as right to information, gender and pro-poor budgeting, and public procurement monitoring.

SUCCESS STORY

Social Accountability in Action

Women's association holds municipality accountable

When the Community Communication Center (CCC) from Leknath, Kaski, informed a local women's association about government funding they were legally entitled to, but didn't receive, they were shocked. They had no idea that 10% of their municipality's 2012 annual budget was allocated to women's organizations, nor consulted about what the money should be spent on.

What they learned from CCC, who had been trained through PRAN in social accountability, particularly in

public expenditure tracking, was the Leknath's municipal government allocated Npr. 150,000 to pay for a simple device for pounding rice called dhilki in each of the community's 15 wards. CCC had obtained a copy of the Leknath municipal budget, analyzed it, and found that there were fake bills from 10 wards of dhilki's that were never constructed.

After CCC told the women associations about this illegal behaviour, the women complained to the municipal authority and forced the people who

received the money for fake bills to build the dhilki's. They also formed the Ward Level Women's Mechanism for Public Expenditure Tracking to ensure this would not happen again.

Now that the women understand how the government works, they are going to be taking an active part in contributing their ideas and monitoring the municipality's behaviour. "We will always get involved in ward level meetings in the future," said one of the members. "We will make sure that we are involved in decisions about funds meant for women".

Uniterra helps to establish First Dalit Womens' Dairy

Cooperative in Nepal

Benefits of establishing a women's cooperative and being part of the DMPCU:

- Access to training and capacity building activities
- Improved market access
- Increased access to and control over financial resources and decision making in the household and community
- Increased confidence and leadership skills
- Enhanced technical skills (ie. cooperative management, accounting, animal health, sales and marketing)



Nepalese women contribute enormously to the running of dairy farms across Nepal. They produce the dairy products, raise the animals, and gather forage on a daily basis. However, their vital role in this sector, which accounts for 78% of the total agricultural GDP and 6.1% of the total GDP of the country, goes largely unrewarded.

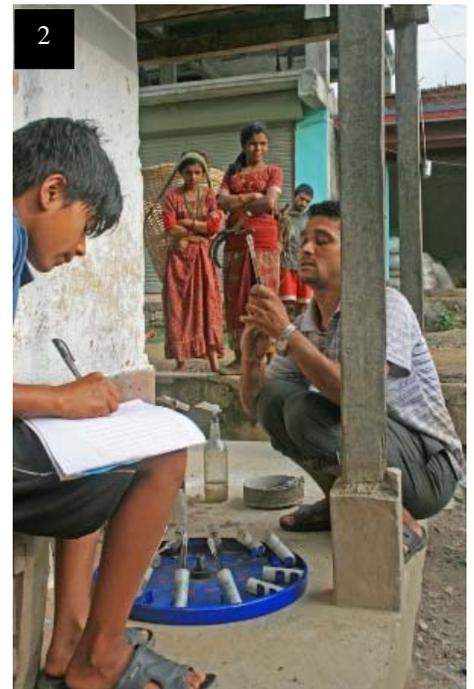
They face barriers in accessing financial resources, land or power to make decisions. As a Dalit, a group of people traditionally known as the untouchables, the difficulties are compounded. People of higher castes and many dairy cooperatives refuse to buy milk produced by this group. Although the new interim constitution has made it illegal for cooperatives to deny products made by Dalits, their participation in the dairy sector is minimal. This is also due to other challenges such as lack of access to land and dairy livestock.

To combat this exclusion and discrimination, Uniterra volunteers and Gender Specialists Astrid Dier and Surya Laxmi Bajracharya are working with the District Milk Producers' Cooperation Union (DMPCU) in Makwanpur district to improve women's and Dalits' participation in the dairy sector. As the one of the main producers of milk in Nepal, Makwanpur district has the potential to serve as a model for others in the country. Astrid and Surya have been working closely with the Makwanpur District Milk Producers' Cooperation Union (MDMPCU) to develop and implement a GESI Action Plan and integrate gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) practices into all activities. Through capacity building initiatives and providing ongoing technical support in the areas of production, marketing, cooperative education and animal health, MDMPCU has experienced transformative change within a short period including increased representation and meaningful participation of women and marginalised groups such as Dalits.

Uniterra also approached the Dalit Welfare Organization (DWO) who helped identify a community of approximately 100 Dalit families in Harnamadi, Makwanpur who

had been working to form a dairy cooperative. Due to their lack of knowledge about cooperatives, the process of registering their cooperative had come to a standstill. But with the support of the MDMPCU and the Makwanpur district chapter of DWO, the first Dalit Women's Dairy Cooperative in Nepal has been registered with forty-two members. The partnership developed between DWO and the MDMPCU has helped bridge the gap between the MDMPCU, who was seeking the participation of Dalits, and the Dalit community in Harnamadi who needed an organization to guide them. Uniterra volunteers are determined to support this new Dalit women's cooperative and have started to plan relevant and appropriate activities. Uniterra's goal is to focus on building the long-term capacity of the cooperative and its members. For the coming years activities have been planned focusing on topics such as: women's economic empowerment, gender and leadership, cooperative management for home-makers, and animal health. The DMPCU, DWO and Uniterra are continuing to work together to support various marginalized groups access opportunities and resources available in the dairy sector.

Twenty-four hours in a village: A lens into the gender roles in rural communities



For a first-hand view into the life in a rural community, CECI organized a field trip for staff and Canadian, Australian and Nepali volunteers to travel to Gotikhel and Sankhu, small farming villages in Lalitpur. With overnight bags and a sense of curiosity, the participants were dropped off at the homes of locals to experience life on a dairy farm and see what it was like to be part of a milk cooperative. The main goal was to observe gender roles and relations, division of labour and key issues affecting social and economic empowerment. The insight has contributed to planning more meaningful and effective projects and programs with the Lalitpur Dairy and Milk Producers' Cooperative Union, a Uniterria partner.



(1) Nepali farmer with child bringing fodder to the six buffalo her family owns. (2) Milk fat testing to measure how much the milk is worth. (3) Home stay (4) Helping women to cut grass and maize to feed their buffalos. (5) Welcoming ceremony for volunteers and staff.

Nepal is a fascinating mosaic of cultures, with 124 identified ethnic groups, each with their unique traditions and beliefs. While Nepalese are immensely proud of their culture, much of the traditional and indigenous knowledge and skills are on the verge of disappearance due to the dominance of regional and global cultures.

The Sahaastitwa/Coexistence pro-

SUCCESS STORY

Connecting Producers with Buyers: The key to long-term success of enterprise creation

A well-known journalist from a Tharu village in the Banke district, Sumitra Chaudhary thought she was going to spend her whole life in media. “But everything changed when I learned about Sahaastitwa,” she says. After attending a stakeholder meeting almost three years ago, she felt inspired to do more to preserve her culture. She left her career of eight years at the local paper, and with the help of the Sahaastitwa Project and her connections in the media, is directing all her energy promoting Tharu basket weavers.

“I want to help women to become financially independent,” she says, explaining her plan to open a small shop in Nepalgunj to sell the newly developed Tharu cultural products.

Through the Sahaastitwa training, she has met many other women who are just as enthusiastic and have picked up the new skills quickly. “They already have the instinct,” says trainer and buyer Shyam Badam Shrestha who was involved with Sahaastitwa project and operates fiber-based handicraft store and organization Nepal Knot Craft (NKC) in Kathmandu. “They just need a few ideas and the opportunity to ignite them.”

Among the group of 11 women Chaudhary has mobilized to work with, she has the key role linking

ject was a 34-month project implemented in partnership with Worldview Nepal, with funding from the European Union. The project re-awakened interest in maintaining, celebrating and protecting Nepal’s ethnic makeup.

CECI’s role was to harness traditional skills of cultural producers from disadvantaged backgrounds and minority and marginalized groups for

them to the market.

Typically, this is the toughest part – and the reason many products fail to progress. But with NKC facilitating the training, she has a rare opportunity to interact directly with a market buyer who will be purchasing samples of her products at the end of the training. “Slowly these orders will help them start a business,” says Shrestha. “We can only buy a small amount, but this keeps them motivated to continue producing. The minute they stop weaving, they look for other work to feed their families and therefore have less time to dedicate to practicing.”

Each week Chaudhary searches for more weavers to join her group, for more opportunities to sell her products, and for funding to establish the store. Sahaastitwa has also given her group the opportunity to exhibit in three culture fairs, building her self-confidence as she perfects the art of persuasion, a skill she picked up in her old job in advertising for the paper. She’s also engaged her media contacts to write stories about her group’s achievements and plans. These days she’s become so well known, even rickshaw pullers are asking for work for their wives.

Chaudhary is in regular contact with KNC, who give her sound advice and encouragement. They arrange meet-

enterprise creation. The skill upgrading training, entrepreneurship counseling and market connections have given the producers the knowledge and confidence to earn an income from their traditions. After project intervention, they are earning four times more and spending the income on food, clothes and education for their family.

[Read more about the project here.](#)



Sumitra Chaudhary (left) and other cultural producers from the Sahaastitwa skill upgrading training with trainer and buyer Shyam Badam Shrestha (third from left).

ings to purchase more items and check the quality and sizing of the new products they’ve made. After detailed feedback on how to make improvements, they place more orders. “We learned a lot from the order,” she says, on behalf of the whole producers group. “We learned to keep accounts of time and amount of material, to calculate the exact price – it was a lesson.”

While Sahaastitwa was the catalyst for bringing producer and buyer together, it is up to Sumitra to maintain the relationship over the long term. “I got involved in cultural promotion because I thought it would help my culture to survive for a long time,” Sumitra says proudly. “And if my culture is alive, I am alive.” If her passion and motivation endure, she is well on her way to opening her own shop.

International Women's Day: Women and Youth A Force for Change

To commemorate this year's 103rd International Women's Day, CECI/Uniterra hosted an event to celebrate the achievements of Nepali women, but also acknowledge the many challenges they face today.

Focusing on the theme of sustainable economic growth among disadvantaged women and youth, the event drew Uniterra partners, volunteers, international and national non-governmental organizations, and private sector and government rep-

resentatives to the Shankar Hotel in Kathmandu on March 11, 2013.

Through networking, discussion and idea sharing, the forum demonstrated how skills training and small businesses are leading development approaches to build self-reliant, prosperous communities.

Guest speakers included:

- Hem Tembe, Senior Program Officer, Sahaastitwa Project
- Bharat Pokharel, the Deputy Country Director of Helvetas
- Dr. Bijaya Bajracharya, Policy and Programme Development Specialist, from Micro-Enterprise Development (MEDEP)
- Shaligram Sharma, Under Secretary of Ministry of Youth and Sports
- Biju Kandal, Program Officer, Prerana Support Group for Participatory Development

Climate Change and Gender Perspectives

CECI/Uniterra recently collaborated with our partner Integrated Development Society (IDS) Nepal to organize a workshop on Climate Change and Gender Perspectives for Uniterra partner organisations on June 4-5.

The workshop engaged representatives from Uniterra partners working in agro-food, forestry, advocacy and fair trade on the subject of climate change concepts

from a gender perspective and gave them tools to integrate the concepts in their organisations' projects and programs.

Guest speakers and facilitators included academics, researchers and practitioners who presented on climate change adaptation and mitigation, the policy context of climate change, climate change finance, agriculture and climate change, the dif-

ferentiated impact of climate change and gender mainstreaming.

Throughout the two day event a number of interesting issues were raised and discussed including the gendered impact of climate change as well as how women have a key role to play as agents of change in adaptation and mitigation efforts.

Microfinance Summit in Kathmandu

On February 14- 16, the third National Microfinance Summit Nepal was held in Kathmandu. The three day summit was organized by the Center for Microfinance Nepal (CMF), an organization created by CECI in 1996 as a response to the growing demand in Nepal for a national focal point dedicated to the rapidly expanding microfinance sector. Uniterra volunteers played a vital role to make a summit success.

The objective of the summit was to unite microfinance stakeholders in Nepal in order to express their col-

lective commitment to build a socially responsible and sustainable microfinance sector in Nepal.

During the summit, over 30 resource papers were presented discussing the progress and problems of microfinance. The presenters were joined by over 800 participants, including policy makers, regulators, public institutions, microfinance practitioners, commercial banks and interested financial sector institutions, technical support providers, training institutes and international donors.

Stakeholders voiced their strong concerns over latest trend of microfinance institutions drifting away from their objective of financially empowering the poor and resorting to unfair competition. The summit concluded with a declaration for commitment to formulate and implement a code of conduct to minimize anomalies and unfair competition in the sector. It also demanded a separate policy to guide the microfinance sector. The summit also committed to engaging three million additional poor clients to the microfinance sector by 2015.

CECI Wins Forestry Project



CECI, along with a consortium of local partners led by Integrated Development Society (IDS) Nepal have recently won the bid to implement the Multi-Sector Forestry Programme (MSFP) in the Far-West and Mid-West regions of Nepal.

This \$2.5 million, 2 year project (with the possibility of extending to 2023) will build on CECI-Nepal's vast experience of working to create employment through sustainable forest management and accrediting green entrepreneurs.

Through a public-private partnership between the government of Nepal and civil society organizations, with funds from the Government of Finland, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, and UK

(1) A scene of forest in Dailekh. (2) Nepal-MSFP staff educate Community Forestry User Group members about climate change in Dailekh. (3) Members of Community Forestry User Group at the training session in Dailekh.

(Photo Credit: Kibae Park / CECI Uniterra)



CECI Welcomes 15 New Australian Volunteers



The Australian Volunteers for International Development (AVID) is a Program of the Government of Australia funded by AusAID. The youth stream, Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development (AYAD), places passionate young Australians (18-30) on short-term assignments of up to one year in developing countries whereas the skilled stream called AVID mobilizes skilled volunteers on long-term assignments.

Since the beginning of the Program in Nepal in 1999, 164 Australian Volunteers have volunteered in Nepal.

The Nepal country plan of AVID is aligned with AusAID country priorities for Nepal in order to strengthen the effectiveness of the Australian aid program to Nepal. of Nepal and Australia for AusAID support to Nepal-Economic development, WASH, Health, Education, Governance and Disaster Risk Reduction .

Australian volunteers work in the sectors agreed between the Government . The Program works with organizations (government Ministries, Departments and local NGOs) working in these sectors.

There are currently 15 Australian volunteers in Nepal. Six are working in the Health sector, three in Economic development, three in WASH, one in DRR and two in Governance.



Centre for International Studies and Cooperation
(CECI) Nepal

135 Naya Basti Marg

G. P.O. Box 2959

Baluwatar, Kathmandu, Nepal

Tel: +977 1 4414430/4426791

Fax:++911 1 4413256

E-mail:ceci@ceci.org.np,

www.ceci.ca/nepal