**Summary**

The Institute for Multi-Track Diplomacy will send Dr. Rich Rubenstein, an expert in peacebuilding and conflict sensitive reporting, to Nepal to lead a five-day workshop with 25 Nepali journalists on conflict sensitive reporting. In this workshop, journalists will be taught about role of media in the midst of conflict, both how it can prolong and exacerbate a conflict and its role in promoting reasoned political dialogue. Additionally, they will be taught methods of conflict sensitive reporting. In order to analyze the effectiveness of the training, participants will be asked to prepare a sample report at the beginning and the end of the five days. These reports will be scored for conflict sensitivity, and the results will be given to the participants.

After the training is complete, Dr. Rubenstein will continue contact with the participants through six months of monthly videoconferencing. In these sessions, Dr. Rubenstein will reinforce the lessons learned during the training, as well as monitoring the effects of the training on the media environment of Nepal. Additionally, our local partner, the Institute for Conflict Management, Peace and Development, will monitor media coverage and the frequency of journalist intimidation from Kathmandu.

**Background**

Nepal is transitioning after a decade-long internal conflict that has claimed the lives of more than 19,000 people. The signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement on November 6, 2006 brought relief from the immediate violence, but the following political process has encountered many challenges. On May 27, 2012, the Constitutional Assembly (CA) collapsed after four years of impasse, consigning the establishment of a new constitution to an uncertain future date. In this uncertain environment, existing divisions along the lines of religion, ethnicity, caste, and gender have become more contentious; the public voices supporting these divisions are growing stronger.

Some political parties of Nepal are using these divisions to push their political agendas, further inflaming rifts in the Nepali population. For example, the United Communist Party of Nepal, a splinter of the main Maoist faction with ties to paramilitary groups, has threatened to disrupt the CA election if concessions for Nepal’s ethnic minorities aren’t agreed upon beforehand. Smaller ethnically based political parties are also threatening disruption. Covering these highly contentious stories places significant pressure on the Nepali news media, as politically tone-deaf or biased reporting can give the impression that a journalist favors a specific faction.

This issue is exacerbated by the fact that each party and group has affiliated media entities. In addition, most private media groups are perceived to be biased towards one group or party. As a result, journalists are increasingly targeted for political intimidation and violence. According to a Freedom House report on the situation, “journalists are also subject to frequent death threats as a result of their reporting. Many were threatened or had their equipment seized or torched as they attempted to cover street protests and other events, or as a consequence of their published work.” Freedom Forum recorded 147 separate incidents of journalist intimidation in 2012. Journalists in Kathmandu are sometimes targeted, but those working in the countryside often report intimidation. This pressure extends to private media companies.

This intimidation is further threatening the growth of Nepal’s newly free press—until the end of the monarchy in 1990, the press was severely censored. Shortly after 1990, when multiparty democracy was restored and new media flourished, the Nepali Civil War began. During that time, Nepali media faced high levels of intimidation and violence from the government and oppositional forces. Journalists who published work critical of either the government or the Maoists were detained; many reported being tortured.

Despite this environment, Nepal has developed a wide array of television, radio and print news services. With this increase in quantity comes a concurrent increase in influence. As previously mentioned, however, there are significant debates about the quality of Nepali media. Nepali journalists have continuously faced public scrutiny, which can result in anger and frustration at media outlets and their employees.

The partisan nature of much of Nepal’s media is one of the primary causes of cynicism towards journalism in the Nepali public. Therefore, this project aims to specifically address the partisan bias in Nepali news media that has helped foster a negative perception of journalists and media outlets.

It is vital in this politically charged environment that the Nepali news media acts as a moderating influence. By teaching the practices of conflict sensitive journalism, this program will help foster constructive political dialogue. This will help promote the voices of those who are vulnerable, including people from the Dalit caste, women and indigenous groups, to be represented in Nepali media. Promoting these voices will help the wider society to become aware of shared difficulties, build empathy between groups and help mend political and social divisions. The program will also target senior journalists, ensuring that the lessons taught will percolate through the Nepali media community. Long-term, healthy political dialogue will contribute to building a strong civil society with stable institutions.

**Project Objective**

* This project aims to minimize partisan reporting in Nepal by teaching conflict sensitive journalism.

**Project Activities**

The project consists of two parts. During the first, a five-day workshop in Kathmandu, Dr. Rubenstein will teach the participants about conflict sensitive journalism. This will be followed by five videoconferencing sessions with the participants, which will take place once per month. These sessions will reinforce the lessons of the seminar and monitor the effects the training has on reporting in Nepal.

The five-day workshop will take place in a hotel in Kathmandu. Participants will arrive at the hotel for breakfast before the 9 a.m. morning session. The morning session will last until lunch begins at 1 p.m. An afternoon session will follow, beginning at 2 p.m. and ending at 6 p.m. Dinner will be provided after the afternoon session. Accommodations will be provided for the participants who live outside of Kathmandu, but those that live inside the city will return home each night.

At the beginning of the first day, Dr. Rubenstein will have each journalist produce a sample report from an assigned prompt. The purpose of this exercise is to analyze the level of bias and conflict sensitiveness in the participants’ reporting. IMTD, along with Dr. Tatsushi Arai, will develop a scale to score the reports in terms of conflict sensitive reporting.

After the participants receive their scores, the workshop will begin covering its five major topics. First, the participants will receive basic training in conflict analysis. They will be taught the types of conflict and how to identify them, and also how to represent conflict—how it starts, how it is presented, and how to place it in a wider context. On the second day, participants will be presented with an overview of the major obstacles to presenting conflict in a fair-minded and nonpartisan manner, including security problems for those covering conflict. The third day will focus on conflict settlement, showing possible solutions and the processes required to reach an agreement. The role of journalists in this process will be covered on the fourth day; specific topics will include dealing with confidential sources, and covering politically charged events, including riots. On the final day, Dr. Rubenstein will present a toolkit of methods to ensure the practice of conflict sensitive journalism, and how to evaluate it.

The workshop will be conducted with a combination of lecture and roundtable discussions. Throughout the workshop, Dr. Rubenstein will utilize examples of the practices of the conflict sensitive journalism in different country contexts in order to provide a real-world context for the topics.

At the end of the program, participants will be given another prompt and will again be asked to prepare a report. Dr. Rubenstein will again evaluate their writing samples, using the same scale. The final score of the second writing samples will give both IMTD and the program participants an idea of how effective the program was in reducing bias. This will help to evaluate the effectiveness of the workshops. In addition, participating journalists will be encouraged to disseminate the new skills learned to other journalists in their respective media companies, raising awareness of conflict sensitivity in reporting throughout Nepal.

The second phase of this program involves long distance workshops on non-partisan reporting with journalists in Nepal using video-conferencing technology from George Mason University. Dr. Rubenstein will continue to mentor the journalists on conflict sensitivity during reporting. As mentioned, it will begin with providing the scores of the second writing sample to the former participants, and will also provide constructive feedback. The participants will then be asked about the effectiveness and potential challenges of implementing peace journalism. The second phase will provide IMTD with an opportunity to evaluate the program and see how the lessons learned in the workshops are being implemented in the field. This video conferencing will be held five times (once in each month) during the six months of the project.

Ambassador John W. McDonald, IMTD’s Executive Director, has over 40 years of experience working in both the public and NGO sector. He has extensive experience heading programs dealing with various dimensions of peacebuilding and conflict resolution. This prolonged experience with many peacebuilding endeavors has prepared Ambassador McDonald to take up this responsibility of leading IMTD’s program in Nepal. Ambassador McDonald, along with the other staff involved in the program, will not be salaried.

Dr. Richard Rubenstein, a former Rockefeller Fellow and Senior Professor of Peacebuilding at the George Mason University’s School of Conflict Analysis and Resolution (SCAR), will serve as the chief trainer of the program. Dr. Rubenstein has more than 15 years of experience in peacebuilding advocacy and has conducted many workshops in multiple dimensions of peacebuilding, including conflict sensitive journalism.

Dr. Tatsushi Arai, an associate professor of conflict transformation at SIT Graduate Institute, will develop the scale the project will use to score participants’ sample reports during the seminar. He has taught conflict resolution at George Mason University and international relations at the National University of Rwanda. Dr. Arai has also led a number of peacebuilding workshops for government personnel, members of international organizations, and civil society leaders from around the world, and serves as a dialogue facilitator of Strait Talk, a series of semi-annual conflict resolution dialogues aimed at fostering a new generation of peacebuilders from Taiwan, Mainland China, and the United States. Outside the SIT context, Dr. Arai is a research fellow of the Toda Institute for Global Peace and Policy Research in Hawaii; an advisor to Global Majority, a California-based international peacebuilding NGO; and a member of TRANSCEND, a global network for peace and development practitioners.

A training assistant will also accompany the team. This person will be a graduate in Media and Peacebuilding, will help coordinate the program and serve as trainer during the workshop. Similarly, the local consultant will be a graduate of social science from our partner organization, the Institute for Conflict Management, Peace and Development (ICPD), who has the extensive experience in conducting training. His/her role will be similar to that of the training assistant, coordinating our program activities and serving a training function.

Finally, a financial officer of IMTD will provide auditing and other financial services to the program and the organization.

The following is a preliminary list of participants compiled by ICPD. It demonstrates the wide variety of media outlets covered and role of participants in those outlets. Additionally, 11 of the 16 participants listed come from outside of Kathmandu, demonstrating that the training will affect a large geographic area.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Name of participants** | **Degree** | **From** | **Media** | | **Role of individual** | | |
| **Print** | **Broadcasting** | **Reporter** | **Columnist** | **Editor** |
| Ms Balkumari Paudel | MEd and Journalism training | Pokhara | - | Broadcasting | Reporter | - | - |
| Mr Narayan Aryal | MA and Journalism training | Kathmandu | - | TV | Reporter | - | - |
| Mr Amar Khadka | MEd and Lecturer in Journalism | Itahari | Print | - | - | Columnist | Editor |
| Mr Khim Ghale | MA in journalism | Kathmandu | Print | - | Reporter | Columnist | - |
| Mr Ram Bharosi Yadav | MA and Journalism training | Siraha | - | Broadcasting | Reporter | Columnist | Editor |
| Ms Prem Kumari Ghale | MA Sociology and Journalism Training | Lamjung | - | Broadcasting |  | - | Editor |
| Mr Bhupal Gurung | Bachelor in Law and journalism training | Pokhara | - | Broadcasting | Reporter | - | - |
| Ms Pratima Pariyar | BA Journalism and training | Surkhet | Print | - | - | - | - |
| Mr Padam Neupane | MA and journalism training | Palpa | - | Broadcasting | Reporter | - | - |
| Mr BB Ale | Bachelor in Law and journalism training | Kaski | Print | - | - |  | Editor |
| Mr Mahabir BK | MA and Journalism training | Kathmandu |  | Broadcasting | - | - | Editor |
| Ms Sarita Paudel | MA Sociology and Journalism training | Chitawan | - | Broadcasting | Reporter | - | - |
| Ms Arati Lamsal | BA in Mass Communication and Journalism | Kathmandu | - | Broadcasting | Reporter | - | - |
| Ms Mina Majakoti | BA in Journalism | Tanahu | Print | - | - | - | Editor |
| Ms Shriya Nepal | MA in Journalism | Kathmandu | - | Broadcasting | Reporter | - | - |
| Mr Poshanath Adhikari | MA Communication and Journalism training | Dhading | Print | TV | - | - | Editor |

**Evaluation Plan**

* The effectiveness of the training will first be demonstrated by the use of the scale developed by Dr. Arai. This scale will score news reports on their conflict sensitivity, and will be administered to sample reports at the beginning and at the end of the seminar. These scores will demonstrate the immediate effectiveness of the training.
* During the five monthly videoconferences, Dr. Rubenstein will interview the participants about how they’re putting the lessons of the conference into action in their daily reporting. While qualitative instead of quantitative, this will provide valuable information about the practice of conflict sensitive reporting in an unstable political context.
* Before the training begins, the scale will be used to score a random sample of articles produced by the media companies of the participants. This will be compared to the scores of another random sample from these companies one month after the final videoconference. The number of articles in these samples is yet to be determined. This data will demonstrate whether the lessons of the seminar have permeated the wider Nepali news media.

**Organizational Background**

The Institute for Multi-Track Diplomacy (IMTD) is a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit organization founded in 1992 by Ambassador John W. McDonald and Dr. Louise Diamond. The mission of IMTD is to promote a systems-based approach to peacebuilding and to facilitate the transformation of deep-rooted social conflict through education, conflict resolution training and communication.

More specifically, IMTD focuses its actions using its 9-track model. These tracks are: government, professional conflict resolution, business, private citizens, research, training and education, peace activism, religion, funding and media and public opinion. While certain projects concentrate more highly on aspects of these nine tracks, all are taken into account when planning programs. IMTD also follows a set of guiding principles that shape its activities and projects, as well as provide standards by which the Institute holds itself accountable. These include: development of interpersonal relationships, a long-term commitment to working in the country, working within the local culture, partnership with in-country organizations, utilizing a range of methods and technologies, facilitating dialogue between country actors, empowering country actors, actively reflecting and learning from the project, gaining invitations before action, long-term trust and engagement with the local population, and a belief in the goal of conflict transformation.

The Institute is based in Arlington, VA, and has more than 1300 members in 31 countries. IMTD is supported by a wide range of key personnel, associates and interns. 265 interns from 56 countries have worked at the Institute, which has done work on every habitable continent. Notable highlights include a 20 year relationship with the Tibetan exile community in India, a decade long involvement in Cyprus, which resulted in training over 2,500 Greek and Turkish Cypriots in conflict resolution, leadership and peacebuilding skills, and an NED-funded project working the Sudan Council of Churches (SCC) in 2004. This project funded a workshop that included culturally correct role plays and simulations and an intense conflict resolution workshop with 22 members of the SCC.

Within South Asia, it has worked extensively with India, Pakistan and Nepal. Since 2001, IMTD has maintained relationships with influential individuals on all sides of the civil conflict in Nepal, including members of the "untouchable" caste, women's groups, Maoist supporters and two former prime ministers. Additionally, IMTD conducted a series of conflict resolution trainings for 60 Nepalis; this group went on to found the Collective Campaign for Peace (COCAP), a Nepali peacebuilding NGO.

As mentioned previously, the proposed training will be overseen by Ambassador McDonald, who has 40 years of experience working in the US Department of State and over two decades of experience overseeing the peacebuilding programs of IMTD. The training will be carried out by Dr. Rich Rubenstein, who has extensive experience leading similar workshops. He has also published “Interpreting Violent Conflict: A Handbook for Journalists,” and led seminars on the subject. The scale used to score sample reports will be developed by Dr. Tatsushi Arai, who has done work facilitating dialogues, including in Nepal.

This proposal has also been submitted to the Journalists and Writers Foundation’s Peace Project Grant. Contact information for the organization is below:

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