

Number 23, September 2007



Taming the waters through



Conflict Transformation





# Just a Little Yeast

After so much violence, hurt, anger, death and destruction in Nepal can we in UMN make any real difference? That's the question, if not asked directly of me, that is usually in peoples' minds when I say what I am doing here in Nepal.

My answer is always yes we can make a difference and here are 5 reasons why.

- 1 All conflicts are started by people and people will end them when their needs and interests are served more by talks and agreements than by fighting.
- 2 People change, and that is why in the past UMN has invested heavily in education. Our faith informs us that God

is in the 'change' business and even the most determined of people are never out of His reach.

- 3 With last year's peace agreement, Nepal has made an important start on the peace journey, but much remains to be done in the coming years. Like traditional development work for which UMN is well known, a just and lasting peace will take several generations.
- 4 Our trained Nepali conflict transformation officers who are now working in five clusters, and next year in seven, will encourage and enable peace building and reconciliation efforts at the

grass roots through training our partners and supporting their work at village and district level, slowly but resolutely spreading a culture of peace.

- 5 We will also support national peace building efforts with technical support to the interim government in the establishment of 75 district peace committees.

Jesus spoke of just a little yeast well mixed into the dough making all the difference. At this time in the history of Nepal we, in UMN, offer our little yeast for change, but added to that of others and with God's blessing we can make a difference.

joe campbell

The author is a Technical Advisor for Conflict Transformation

## Sushila

It's a sunny morning as a group of us head to Ruga village in Mugu district. We are going to this village to check their progress in forming peace committees and the activities that they are currently involved in. As we approach the village a woman shouts at us from a distance, and tells us not to come into their village. She says she is tired and fed up of development workers coming into their village and making promises to them that are never kept.

I immediately respond to her outburst and tell her that we are here to work with them to promote peace and reconciliation in their village. I try to convince her that we are different and have not come to make any promises but to see how we can help bridge and restore bad relationships within the community. Though not totally convinced, she calms down and we make our way to the village.

3 weeks later I return to the same village to attend a workshop organised by one of our local partners. As I again enter the village I see the same woman collecting mud to plaster her house. I call out to her and we exchange greetings. She is still bitter and furiously asks me why I have returned to their village. I explain that I am there to attend a peace workshop.

"Don't you have any productive work to do other than this, she asks?" I choose not to respond to her question but ask her instead if she has heard about this workshop.

"Who would remember to invite me," she says bitterly.

I try to explain to her what the workshop is about and I invite her to attend. Cautiously but obviously happy that she has been invited, she accepts the invitation to come to the workshop. Minutes later she walks into the meeting room with a baby clutched to her side.

During the workshop we talk about the social ills in the community; including domestic violence against women and children, alcoholism, gambling and caste



based discrimination. We discuss their effects and possible ways of ending these practices and how to promote peace and harmony within families and the community.

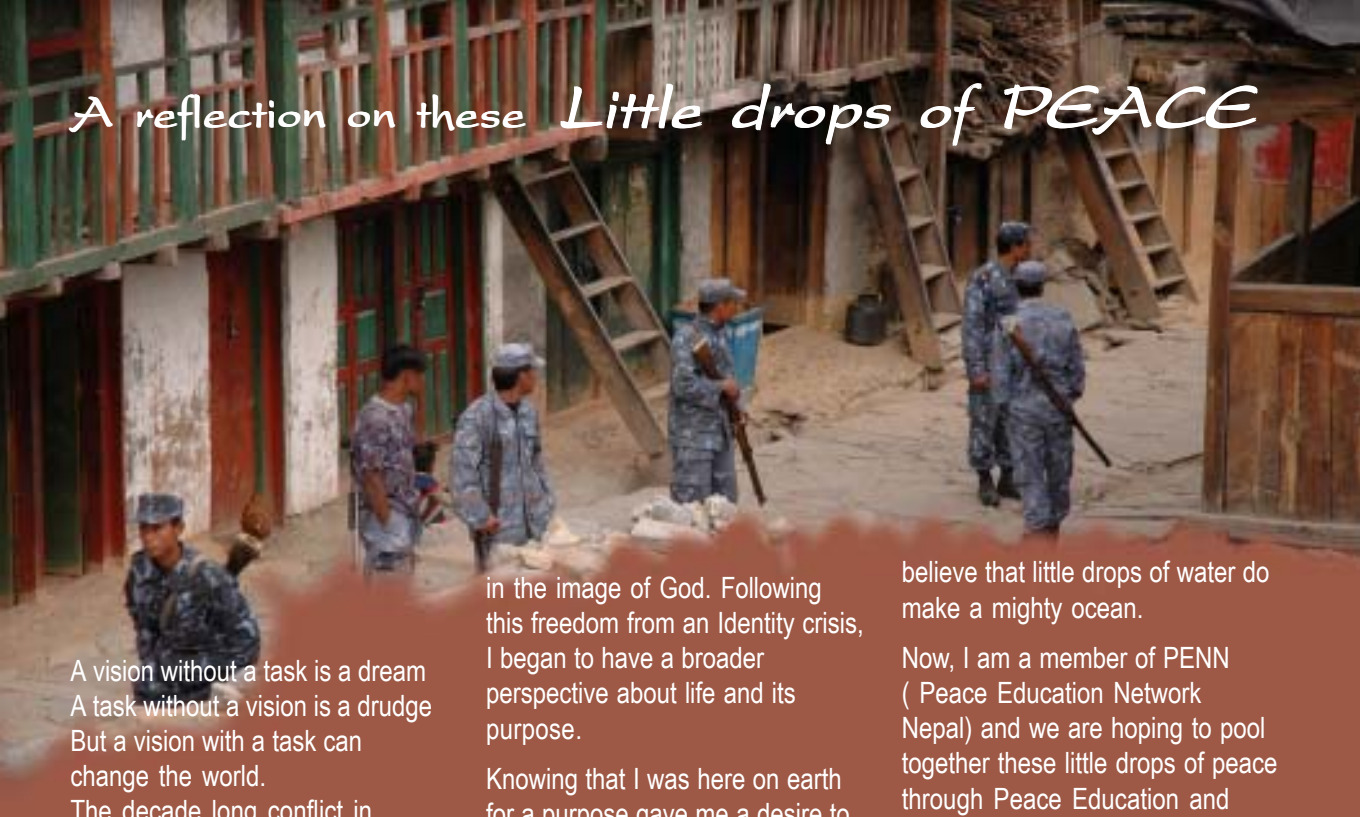
The woman whom I have now come to know as Sushila suggests that many more dalits (low caste people) like herself need to be invited to participate in similar workshops.

Before I leave Ruga, Sushila approaches me and asks me to forgive her for her ignorance for her previous behaviour. She expresses interest in becoming a member of the peace committee that has been formed and will work towards ending the social ills earlier discussed. I am delighted to hear this. Peace building in Ruga village has begun.

hem lamsal

The author is a Technical Officer for Conflict Transformation in Mugu

# A reflection on these *Little drops of PEACE*



A vision without a task is a dream  
A task without a vision is a drudge  
But a vision with a task can  
change the world.

The decade long conflict in  
Nepal, has popularized one word  
'PEACE' or in Nepali 'SHANTI'

Is this Peace a vision or a mere  
dream?

What is Peace?

There are lots of definitions for  
'peace' but in my opinion, peace  
stems from an inner peace  
resulting from cultivating love,  
compassion, wisdom and justice.  
From these emerge balanced  
relationships with oneself, with  
others and with the environment.  
This kind of peace is a state of  
mind freed from agitation,  
intolerance and aggression. It is  
the very foundation for harmony  
within oneself, family, community,  
nation and international  
relationships.

My own journey in the peace  
process began after my discovery  
of who I was – someone created

in the image of God. Following  
this freedom from an Identity crisis,  
I began to have a broader  
perspective about life and its  
purpose.

Knowing that I was here on earth  
for a purpose gave me a desire to  
go beyond living for self and play  
my part in any way to contribute to  
building harmonious relationships  
with others as originally designed  
by the Creator.

The idea that I, as a simple  
ordinary person, could do  
something to help contribute to the  
peace process amidst the ruins of  
a conflict torn society was ignited  
during training that I received at a  
Peace Building Programme in the  
Philippines last year. In my own  
way, I wanted to implement the  
things I learned at the training by  
forming a Peace Club at my  
school. I wanted the students to  
learn how to handle conflict and  
cultivate the value of love,  
acceptance, tolerance and  
justice.

Although my efforts might have  
seemed a drop in a vast ocean, I

believe that little drops of water do  
make a mighty ocean.

Now, I am a member of PENN  
( Peace Education Network  
Nepal) and we are hoping to pool  
together these little drops of peace  
through Peace Education and  
bring change to a vast 'conflict  
ridden' ocean.

We all know that peace is not only  
an absence of war, it goes beyond  
that. People searching for genuine  
peace and advocating  
non-violence regard no one as an  
enemy, wage no wars and  
sanction no destructive acts  
against the environment. The  
mere presence of a person of  
peace can be an inspiration to  
others and even affect their  
surroundings. Individuals who  
hunger for peace form a noble  
alliance and together they nurture  
personal peace and extend it to  
others.

As we stand at the dawn of a  
changing Nepal, let us all hope  
and pray that this vision of a  
Peaceful Nepal becomes a reality  
and not just a dream.

rita kabo

The author is an Advisor for Intregal Mission

# Peace Building... *What we are doing!*

I have always wondered...“How can UMN make a contribution at the national level?” Are we doing something? Looking back, I think that we have in the past and continue to play our part in peace building throughout Nepal.

We are:

## **Supporting the shaping of the first peace institution, “Nepal School of Shanti”.**

More than 13,000 people have been killed in violence in Nepal since the political insurgency began 10 years ago, many of them civilians caught in cross-fire with security forces. In order to address the effects of armed conflict and work towards sustainable peace, it is important to develop peace builders in every society. The Nepal School of Shanti (Peace) is one response to train and support local people as they work for peace in their communities. Due to begin in late 2007, UMN has been part of the committee seeking to shape the mission and strategic objectives of what will be the first peace training institute in Nepal.

## **Advocating towards “Children as Zones of Peace”**

This is a coalition of national and international NGOs that declare children and services related to them, including schools, as zones of peace. UMN is an active member of this action group and has played a significant part in local and national events. UMN connects all its local partners to the district level networks of Children as Zones of Peace supporting their involvement in programmes of peace education for children and their participation in district level activities.

## **Working with the Association of International NGOs Network**

As a result of the conflict situation in Nepal, a ‘Peace Working Group’ was set up to establish how members of the Association of International NGOs in Nepal might play a part in building and sustaining peace. UMN, a member of this association has been actively involved in the preparation of a paper on “learning for INGOs in conflict countries”. Members of this group play a crucial part in building and sustaining peace by tackling relevant issues as they emerge in the Nepal Peace Process.

## **Supporting the Government of Nepal in facilitating the “Regional Peace Committees”**

As part of the 2006 peace agreement, a new ministry was established by the interim Government of Nepal known as Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction. This ministry will lead and co-ordinate all national peace efforts in the country. Also planned is the establishment of a “Peace Committee” in all 75 Districts of Nepal. These committees will be made up of political representatives and civil society to support and direct local peace programmes and efforts towards reconciliation. UMN staff will be involved in the facilitation and development of support structures for these committees.

## **Educating UMN staff and partner organisations about conflict transformation.**

Conflict for people in Nepal means mainly the political armed conflict and thus other kinds of social conflict have been neglected and forgotten. Many INGOs have also fallen prey to this way of thinking. UMN’s peace building efforts are aimed at enhancing social harmony, relationships and hope at the community level by addressing the root causes of conflict. UMN believes that working on the effects of conflict may bring peace for a limited time but working on the root causes will help to bring about sustainable peace. UMN is putting emphasis on educating and training its staff members and the partner organisations in understanding and dealing with conflicts.

## **Raising awareness through the Peace publications**

UMN in coordination with the leading national level NGO ‘Forum for Women, Law and Development’ developed and released a peace poster. The two key messages, the appropriate participation of women in the Constituent Assembly and involvement of women in the Peace Process according to the UN resolution 1325.



bal kumari gurung

The author is a Technical Advisor for Conflict Transformation

*"How can the church in Nepal play a role in Conflict Transformation?"*

This was the question posed to a few Christian leaders in Nepal - Dr. Mahendra Bhattarai, a Pastor, UMN Board Member and Development Consultant, Tej Jirel Executive Director of the Nepal Bible Society, Dr. K. B Rokaya General Secretary of the National Council of Churches of Nepal and Loknath Manaen a Christian Writer and Publisher.




Almost all conflicts are born out of gross injustice and inequalities in society. So in order to transform the conflicts, the Church has to do what God demands of us, "Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless; maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed. Rescue the weak and needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked". The National Council of Churches of Nepal (NCCN) has been doing this since 2003 by challenging Christians to become involved in peace building, mediating between the Maoists and other actors in the civil conflict, creating awareness about Nepal's conflict situation at the international level, joining hands with other faith groups to work together for peace, and by praying.

**Dr. K. B. Rokaya**

"If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves, and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land." (2 Chronicles 7:14) In the New Testament, God's people are described as the Body of Christ, Bride of Christ, Temple of God etc. Ephesians 5:23 states, "...Christ is the head of the church, His body, and is Himself its saviour." On the basis of these two references, the Church or God's people can help to establish peace in the country through prayer, acts of love and by living an exemplary life.

**Tej Jirel**



# The Church in Nepal taming the waters

More than any other institution in society, the Church, not only has the competence but also the obligation to talk about transformation. The weekly gathering of believers is one prime opportunity to do this. But also deliberate creation of occasions like seminars, discussion forums, publication of pamphlets will give people a chance to know the position of the Bible on this subject. The Bible's basic abhorrence of crime and violence against fellow humans and the Lord's very clear advocacy of love and harmony could be studied and brought to light meaningfully for today's Nepal. But I must confess that a great deal will depend on our Church leaders' inclination, availability of time and awareness of the urgency to speak about conflict and its transformation.

Loknath Manaen

The church in times of conflict is to change grievances and opposing views into a productive force for the good of all the people involved in the conflict. It should take a proactive approach and offer its services to societies or governments.

Dr. Mahendra Bhattarai

# News

## The Christian Community, Ambassadors of Peace

A pastor stands before a gathering of about 20 other pastors and weeps.

“My brother, please forgive me. For centuries my ancestors have oppressed you, looked down upon you and treated you without respect. My forefathers forcefully took your land and evicted you from it. Today I ask for your forgiveness.” He cries.

“I forgive you my brother and may God forgive you” the Pastor standing next to him says and embraces him.

A woman, stands up and addresses the same gathering. Her voice shaking and occasionally wiping tears that are rolling down her face, tearfully asks her brothers and sisters (of a low caste) to forgive the wrongs done to them by her high caste family.

In May 2007 UMN, in coordination with the Association of Theological Education in Nepal, held a workshop on ‘Forgiveness and Reconciliation’ targeting Church Leaders from various parts of Nepal. They met for a week to discuss and commit to becoming Jesus Christ’s agents of peace and reconciliation in their families, churches and communities.

## Two New Clusters

UMN will soon begin work in two new clusters (geographical locations). In May, following exploration visits to 5 districts in far western Nepal and after much prayer, the Leadership Team selected Doti/Achham as a multi-district cluster. The set-up will be initially in Doti with a proposed extension into Achham in June/July 2008.

Bajhang was selected as the second cluster and the set-up timing will be by the middle of 2008. As part of the next stage of cluster development, it was decided to develop a centre in Nepalganj to service Mugu, Doti/ Achham, Bajhang and Rukum clusters. This will be established by the end of 2007.

## Two New Cluster Leaders

With the selection of two new clusters in the far western region of Nepal, two new cluster leaders were recruited in June to head up the work there. The new cluster leaders are Ms. Shashi Ghalan and Mr. Prayas Jung Pun.

## Betty Young (12 September 1931 – 16 July 2007)

UMN’s Archivist

Most of you will have read the article in the previous UMNews in June in which we celebrated Betty’s 50 years of service with UMN. For so many years Betty was the one we automatically turned to for that missing piece of information. She had UMN’s history at her fingertips. Little did we know that within a few weeks Betty would succumb to the cancer that was affecting her body. In the goodness of God – and in amazing timing – she successfully completed all the packing up of the archives work at the end of June. On 16<sup>th</sup> July she went to be with her Lord and Saviour whom she had served so faithfully all her life. Please reread the article in the last UMNews – and thank God again for Betty.

## Hospital News

UMN signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Patan Hospital on 15th June 07. This describes UMN’s involvement in the hospital in terms of secondment of expatriate personnel, capacity building hospital staff, channelling of financial support and being on the hospital Board. This commitment will continue until July 2008, the previously agreed date.

In March, the cabinet agreed to the HDCS proposed agreements for the running of Tansen and Okhaldhunga hospitals but there have been unprecedented delays in having this decision implemented by the Ministry of Health. HDCS staff have been in regular touch with ministry officials and others to try to get this put into action.

# John Finlay

( 3 October 1938 – 3 September 2007)

## A man of detail and a man of commitment

John first arrived in Nepal from Northern Ireland in 1973 as a single man and after language study in Kathmandu, soon got involved in sharing his engineering skills with the students at the Butwal Technical Institute. Another single UMNer, a teacher from Scotland called Sheila Anderson was working in the northern Gorkha village of Jaubari and in God's good timing, he brought them together. They were married in 1975 in the UK and returned to work in Butwal where they also were hostel parents to some of the BTI students. It was during this time that John got very involved in the development of bio-gas as an alternative fuel and helped in the production of the very first commercial unit built in Nepal. It was in recognition of John's significant input in this technology that the

Nepal Biogas Promotion Group recently honoured John with a special plaque of appreciation at their 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> September. Sadly this was just two days after John had died in Scotland, but Jennie Collins was honoured to be able to receive it on his behalf. This is being sent on to John's family.

In 1975 John was asked to take the job of UMN Project Director in Jumla, so he set up the family home on the road leading to Karnali Technical School with Sheila and their three children, Alison, Colin and Jenny. John gave leadership to the team there until they returned to Ireland in 1990 mainly for their children's education.

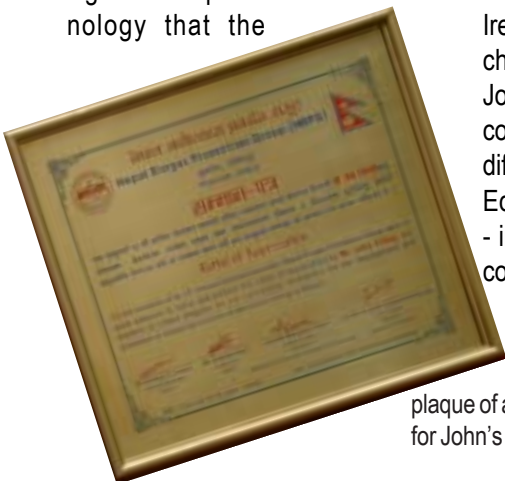
Sadly Sheila died of cancer in Ireland in 1994, but when the three children became independent, John returned to UMN in 2000 and committed himself to a variety of different roles – in Engineering, Education, Transition and Security - in which his attention to detail and concern for others was really used.



John was excited to take part in one of the Cluster exploration visits to Rasuwa District last May, but it was there that he took ill with acute back pain and was evacuated to Kathmandu by helicopter. From there to Singapore for further treatment where the cancer was diagnosed and then back to his daughter's home in Glasgow, Scotland. John was so grateful to God that he was well enough to take full part in his son Colin's wedding in July and also was able to see his second grand-daughter, Hannah born at the end of August.

The UMN family in Nepal will miss John so much. He was a gentleman. A man who loved God and who cared for those worse off than he was – including those he visited regularly in the Kathmandu prison.

With his family in the UK, we give thanks to God for John's life and service as we pray for them in their time of sadness.



plaque of appreciation for John's work in Biogas promotion

# Be Involved

## join us

When the children were old enough the parents left home. That could be said of us. With three young adult children, the last completing university, with their support we offered ourselves to our church for service overseas. For Joe after many years working on peace efforts in Northern Ireland and Janet's skills in counselling, nursing and trauma healing, coming to Nepal last year on a four-year assignment seemed like a good fit. And so it's turning out to be. But why, at your age, and what would your parents say? Well neither of us have parents still alive, but yes they would be shocked. We could have continued with our very fulfilling



Janet and Joe Campbell

jobs, spent time in the garden and sailed our dinghy a lot more. However, we feel that during our lives we have been given so much. This is an opportunity to give back to a part of God's world turmoil and uncertainly.

Yes we miss family and friends, a lot. Yes at times we feel we are a bit like fish out of water. Yet what a privilege, what an adventure! We hold on to our heavenly Father's promise in Deuteronomy. 33: 25b. As your days so shall your strength be.

## give

Donations towards UMN's work can be made by bank transfer or by posting a cheque (payable to United Mission to Nepal) to one of our banks (detail below) or directly to Finance Team, UMN, P.O. Box 126, Kathmandu, Nepal. If you remit funds directly to our banks, please notify us by letter or email: [fin@umn.org](mailto:fin@umn.org)

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### Giving On-Line by Debit or Credit Card

The Charities Aid Foundation has sponsored a web page at [www.givenow.org](http://www.givenow.org) where you can give using Debit and Credit cards. In the UK this will also ensure that your gift is tax efficient.



This edition of UMNews' topic, Conflict Transformation is certainly a challenging one. Not just for us as we work with Nepali organisations and the Christian Community, but for UMN as a Christian organisation and for each of us as individuals.

Although officially the Peace Treaty has been signed and there is no longer a war in Nepal we are all very aware that an absence of war does not necessarily equate with peace.

It is very exciting the opportunities we have to work with Nepali organisations as they seek to help people to understand and work for positive change in the national, local, community and personal conflicts we all face. Working with churches and other parts of the Nepali Christian Community is a very special opportunity because as Christians we have a source of hope that is unchanging, trustworthy, ever present and who we can share with others.

In this work we as UMN, the organisation and as individual staff, Nepali and expatriate, are challenged and have to face issues in our daily personal and family lives. We need to work for peace and allow the Prince of Peace to lead, guide and challenge us to increasingly be promoters of and advocates for peace.

Please pray for us that we may be worthy of this high calling

*Jennie Collins*

Jennie Collins  
Executive Director  
UMN

## pray

- For the Advisors and Conflict Transformation officers who are often traveling and away from family for many days. During the months of Oct.-Dec many families will be gathering for celebrations. Pray for safety and protection of staff, and blessing in their personal lives, and good relationships within their families.
- Pray that the constitution assembly elections on 22 November will take place and in a calm and open atmosphere. Pray for the many UMN partner organisations working to educate grass roots people on the importance of the elections and their participation in them.
- The Conflict Transformation Advisors are supporting the Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction in the setting up of "Peace Committees" in many Districts. Pray these committees will be able to resolve local conflicts peacefully before they become bigger national issues.
- In November we are co-ordinating and co-delivering training for several national partners on development issues in conflict sensitive ways. Called "Do No Harm" this type of training programme is very critical in Nepal at present.



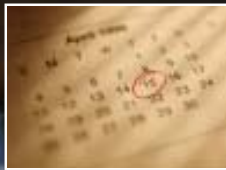
“Our faith informs us that God is in the ‘change’ business and even the most determined of people are never out of His reach.”

joe campbell



2008  
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*The Earth  
is the  
Lord's...*



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