

**Social Exclusion and Nation Building –  
assessment of prospects for enhancing the role of  
research and research institutions in Nepal**

*A study commissioned by the Norwegian Embassy, Kathmandu*

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*This report and its recommendations are entirely the responsibility of the Team*

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## Abbreviation

*Acronyms for research institutions is found in annex II*

|         |   |  |
|---------|---|--|
| CCO     | - | Canadian Co-operation Officer                            |
| CEDA    | - | Centre for Economic Development and Administration       |
| DEPROSC |   | Development Project Service Centre                       |
| DFID    | - | Department for International Development                 |
| FES     | - | Friedrich Ebert Stiftung                                 |
| HUGOU   | - | Human Rights & Good Governance Unit                      |
| ICIMOD  | - | International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development |
| ILO     | - | International Labour Organisation                        |
| INSEC   | - | Informal Service Sector                                  |
| MSI     | - | Media Services International                             |
| NEFEN   | - | Nepal Federation of Nationalities                        |
| NPC     | - | National Planning Committee                              |
| SAPAP   | - | South Asia Poverty Alleviation Programme/UNDP            |
| SAPROS  | - | Support Activities for Poor Producers                    |
| SCN     | - | Save the Children Norway                                 |
| SNV     | - | The Netherlands Organisation                             |
| SURF    | - | South & West Asia Sub-Regional Resource Facility         |
| TU      | - | Tribhuvan University                                     |
| UNDP    | - | United Nation Development Programme                      |
| WACN    | - | Women Awareness Centre Nepal                             |

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 *The point of departure*

This Study<sup>1</sup> was commissioned as a follow-up to an assessment of Norwegian support to NGOs in Nepal, where it was argued that, in general, there is a lack of understanding of *the role of the civil society in poverty alleviation*. The purpose of the Study is to recommend modalities, if considered feasible, for supporting research that may address this problem.

While the Team<sup>2</sup> clearly recognises the need for more and better quality research within this broad thematic area, it acknowledges that the nature of the problem is complex. Certain issues relate to the research process itself, other to the means to support it. And yet more broadly, another set of issues concern the role and the organisation of social science research in Nepal. The following questions illustrate the wide-ranging scope of the Team's mandate:

- What is meant by 'civil society' in the context of Nepal?
- How to reconcile the difference between research *on* civil society and research *by* civil society actors?
- What is meant by 'poverty' alleviation and 'fight against' poverty? How is poverty defined and how can policies be aimed at reducing poverty?
- What is the relationship between research and public policy-making?
- What is the relationship between research and development activism – in advocacy terms as well as service delivery and social mobilisation?
- Who are currently carrying out research in these broad areas?
- What factors dictate what kind of research is currently undertaken?
- How to define what kind of research is needed? What are the most critical issues on which to focus?
- What are the quality criteria that matter most?
- What are the key factors constraining researchers and research institutions in this respect?
- How to promote this kind of quality research?

Within the time and resource frame allocated to this assignment it was not possible to address these questions in much depth, and some we had to leave unanswered. Hence, we have chosen to be realistic, acknowledging the complexity of the matters concerned and rely on the confidence given to the Team by an open ended Terms of Reference. For instance, we limit our discussion of conceptual issues and current research on 'civil society' and 'poverty' in Nepal. We have decided to go directly to a presentation of an area of research that most of our informants argued in favour of, namely a focus on social exclusion and processes of nation building. Although these

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<sup>1</sup> *Terms of Reference for a Project Identification Team. Research on the Role of Civil Society in the Fight Against Poverty in Nepal*, Royal Norwegian Embassy, Kathmandu, 27 February 2003 (cf. Annex 3).

<sup>2</sup> The team consisted of Ms. Lill-Ann Medina (NORAD) as team leader, Mr. Alf Morten Jerve (Chr. Michelsen Institute, Norway), Mr. Mohan Das Manandhar (Organisation Development Centre, Nepal, and Dr. Michael Thompson (Rokkan Centre, University of Bergen, Norway).

terms were not used in our Terms of Reference, this framework for research clearly address issues of poverty as well as the role of civil society.

There are three basic choices to be made with regard to any decision on how to support research in development assistance: what kind of research (the research agenda) should NORAD support, by whom should it be done and for whom should the research be relevant? Guiding these choices, the Team agreed that the overall aim should be to identify a viable modality to support research that pushes the research agenda in Nepal from conventional social engineering in development terms – i.e. prescribing solutions for policy-maker, towards what is sometimes referred to as deliberative democracy – i.e. promoting an informed and inclusive political debate.

The Team's approach was mainly based on qualitative open-ended interviews and some group discussions. It visited Kathmandu from 3 to 15 March, 2003 and met with individual researchers and representatives of research institutions, Government agencies, donor agencies and civil society groups (with a total of 43 interviews and two group discussions the team met with 71 individuals; see Annex 1). The Team is confident that the range of actors met, adequately represents different views of suppliers and clients of research in Nepal and segments of the civil society for whom this kind of knowledge matters.

All interviewees were asked to share their opinions on what research is needed, as well as contributing with background information on current research efforts. Otherwise, the interview was open-ended. While this methodology created an intensive learning process for the Team, from which it developed the arguments presented below, it does not represent a systematic assessment of the state or the art of social science research in Nepal. The latter would require an extensive review of publications, research and dissemination by different research providers, for which there was no time and in-depth knowledge of the research system and policies in Nepal.

We are basing this report on statements of our interviewees, a few selected publications on social sciences in Nepal<sup>3</sup> and our own intellectual baggage from relevant research experiences and lessons from means and mechanisms to support research and research capacity in other contexts. Some facts and listings are included, in particular in chapter 3, and mostly confined in boxes and annexes. We thank those who shared important information and insights with us. While we hope that their views are reflected in the way we have formulated our arguments and recommendations, some will no doubt take issue with some of the conclusions, for which the Team alone is responsible.

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<sup>3</sup> Hachhethu, Krishna, "Social Sciences in Nepal", in *Contributions to Nepalese Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 1, Kathmandu: Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies, January 2002.

Bhattachan, Krishna B., "Sociological and Anthropological Research and teaching in Nepal: Western Adaptation versus Indigenization", in Khatry, P.K. (ed.), *Social Sciences in Nepal: Some Thoughts and Search for Direction*, Kathmandu: Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies, 1997.

Bhattachan, Krishna B. and James F. Fisher, "Contemporary Sociology in Nepal", in Mohan, R.P. and A.S. Wilke (eds.), *International Handbook in Sociology and Anthropology*, Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1994.

## **1.2 Conclusion and recommendations**

It is in the Teams view that there is a need for a new initiative that contributes to a reorientation of the current research agenda towards an agenda that is more responsive to the contemporary challenges of Nepal: This may be encouraged on the following terms:

- That the focus of research falls within the topic of ‘social exclusion’. This will address issues of poverty, broadly defined in terms of ‘freedoms’ and empowerment, but is not congruent with the conventional poverty research agenda focusing on quality of life deprivations.
- That a research programme is set up that focuses on structural inequalities and their implications for building a more inclusive Nepal nation state, which is the kind of research most urgently needed.
- That representatives of excluded groups and advocacy civil society organisations that articulate their interests are allowed to influence parts of the research agenda.
- That activities are supported which attempt to overcome barriers of communication and dissemination of research that typically prevails in the Nepalese setting – between researchers and objects of research, between researchers and policy-makers and within the research community.

It is the Team’s view that the Norwegian Embassy ought to continue working on its research initiative, on the following conditions:

- That the Embassy is prepared to promote researcher-identified projects within this selected thematic area.
- That it is prepared to support longer-term, empirical research.
- That it will put in place proper quality assurance mechanisms; including preparedness to develop systems of output-based funding.
- That it is sensitive to the need for involving researchers with a minority background.
- That it will support an open space for the dissemination of and critical discourse related to the outcome of the research programme, as well as allowing for advocacy groups to "take back" and use the research results for their own purpose.

With these assumptions in mind the Team outlines a framework for establishing a Programme for Research on Social Exclusion and Nation Building in Nepal – called ExNB (tentative title and acronym). In Chapter 4 we argue for a model for a research programme that stands on two legs – an independently managed research fund combined with and supported by cooperation between a few selected Nepalese and Norwegian researchers and research institutions.

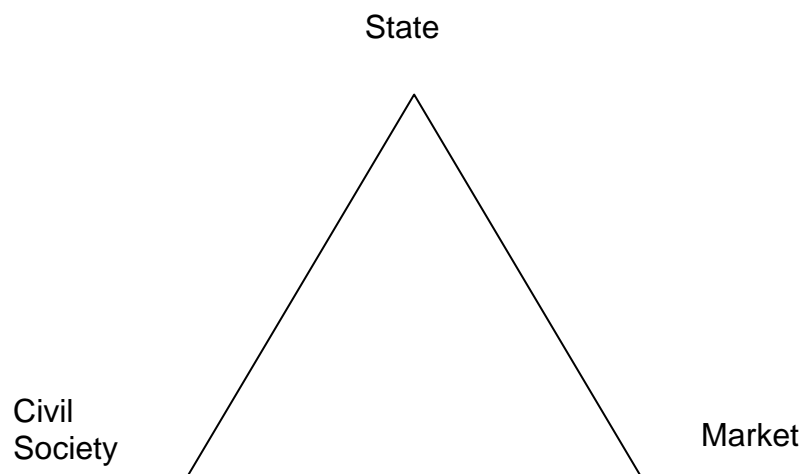
The rest of the report is outlined as follows; first we shall elaborate on the kind of research that needs to be stimulated and supported (Chapter 2). A case is made for Norway promoting critical and reflexive approaches - within the broad thematic area outlined above - rather than reinforcing existing biases in terms research topics and findings. In Chapter 3 we provide a brief overview of social science research in Nepal, with a main focus on the institutional set-up and its strengths and weaknesses. The most striking characteristic is that the research sector in Nepal is overly

dependent on international donors, thus, being instrumental to donors' agendas and their specific need for commissioned work. This serves to explain why we see the need for an innovative set-up for the research programme that breaks with the current fragmentation and client orientation of policy related research in Nepal.

## 2 Social exclusion and nation building: why is this an important research agenda for Nepal?

### 2.1 Civil society, poverty and exclusion: framing a research agenda

*Civil society* can be framed by what neither governments nor markets can do, separately or in combination. Each part of this triangle – state, market, civil society – represents an arena for social interaction within which we bind ourselves to one another in forms of ‘social solidarity’ (using a concept that goes back to the masters of social thought – Durkheim, Maine, Tönnies, etc). Commonly, we understand civil society as consisting of non-governmental, non-market, voluntary people’s organisations, forums and movements. They represent institutions formed “from below” with a wide range of purposes and visions – articulation of views and identity, mobilisation of resources, and management of common interests. The extent of formal organisation varies – from traditional-informal to modern-bureaucratic, and the borderlines with the other corners in the triangle are never clear cut, in that governmental functions and market-based transactions may enter the gambit of civil society institutions.<sup>4</sup>



From a normative perspective, a vibrant civil society is seen as a condition for democratic change. A critical discourse free from state-sanctioned politics is central to the shaping of social ordering, public service and self-governance of society<sup>5</sup>. An active and participating civil society, thus, is what representative democracy “feeds on”.

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<sup>4</sup> See Shrestha, Ananda (ed), *The Role of Civil Society and Democratization in Nepal*, Kathmandu:Nepal Foundation for Advanced Studies and Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 1998, for discussions on the lack of and emergence of civil society in Nepal.

<sup>5</sup> See Dev Ray Dahal discussion of Habermas’ notion of civil society in *Civil Society in Nepal* ; Center for Development & Governance, 2001

The triangle perspective on civil society helps us address the “double burden” on Nepal’s poor: little in the way of resources compounded by *social exclusion*. Clearly, there is something here that needs doing that neither the government nor the market can do. Both state-led development policies of the past and the current donor-led policy of pro-poor economic growth obviously have not been able to lift the double burden. The Maoist insurgency is only one – and the most visible – testimony to this. In very many of our discussions in Kathmandu we were presented with the view that the research agenda had to be recast in favor of the civil society-social exclusion nexus. How are the social barriers of Nepalese society preserved, posing major obstacles to the social mobility of a vast majority of the Nepalese people? How to understand the structural inequalities of Nepal society? What are the processes that take nation building in Nepal from social engineering towards deliberative democracy?

This not only challenges the research focus from a theoretical perspective, it also questions the role of research and the researcher. Nepal is a society where academic pursuit has been the privilege mostly of the Brahmin elite, and where in recent years the bulk of social science research has served the interests of clients committed to a social engineering agenda – in the form of commissioned studies mostly determined by donor-driven policies, or the ‘action’ type (as it is referred to in Nepal) mostly used to promote popular participation in service delivery programmes. This is not to say that social change should never be “engineered” from above or outside – obviously not. It is a reminder, however, that research defined from “inside” in a highly divided society, like Nepal, is likely to come up with different agendas and rather be shaped in different forms. This relates to the formulation of research questions and the potential use of the research, as well as to who does it and what is the preferred methodology. Hence, a research program on issues of social exclusion in Nepal will face two types of challenges: how to study inequality and how to deal with inequality in the research practice itself.

## **2.2 Unpacking the “double burden”: poverty and exclusion**

On the one hand there is a need to move towards a *more critical*<sup>6</sup> *research agenda* that departs from the prevailing “objectivist” approaches to the study of poverty, using various standardized measures of social deprivation (low consumption, poor health, low formal education etc.). We need to recognize that the problems that are being grappled with are inherently political, and that measures aimed at improving the lot of the poorest of the poor, without at the same time addressing the social and cultural mechanisms that are causing and perpetuating their condition, will be less than satisfactory. We need research that helps bring knowledge about such mechanisms into the public debate, but one that is cognizant of the plurality of views

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<sup>6</sup> *Critical*, contra the way it is often used in social science, involves more than just speaking up in support of excluded “voices”. It also requires us to be reflexive about what we are doing: respecting *all* the voices, that is, rather than just speaking up for those that, for the moment, happen to be excluded. Championing the excluded Dalits, for instance, and criticising the Brahmin elite, whilst it indicates certain desirable directions of change, does not address the question of how both social categories will co-exist in, and contribute to, a truly democratic Nepal.

and perceived needs of those who are excluded. As a story from Nordberg-Hodge tells us, cultural notions of deprivation, or poverty, may have little resonance with what mainstream providers of development claim constitute “the attack on poverty”.<sup>7</sup>

According to the Nepal Federation of Nationalities (NEFEN), the Gurungs (along with other ethnic groupings) feel excluded by the infringement of their cultural rights (they would like their own language within the school curriculum, for instance) and by the sometimes high-handed behavior of their government (the appropriation of land for dam projects, for instance, and unsatisfactory compensation arrangements). However, as Harka Gurung (Nepal’s most distinguished geographer and many-times government minister) pointed out to us, the Gurungs, in general are not poor. So there are four permutations: excluded and poor (the double burden), excluded but not poor (many Gurungs), poor but not excluded (a largely un-noticed and un-researched category) and neither poor nor excluded (the elusive goal of projects aimed at both poverty alleviation and social inclusion). As Harka Gurung further observed, there are a few ways of getting rich in Nepal: through the government (the Brahmin preference: they make up something like 80 percent of the civil service), through trade and tourism (the Sherpa and Manangbhoti preference) and through going out and serving in foreign armies (the Gurung, Mogar and Pun preference). These pathways (which are unevenly distributed across Nepal) in varying degree depend on the three corners of the triangle – state, market and civil society – for their success. Of particular interest is the role of local level and traditional civil institutions in promoting a public career, entrepreneurship or migration, and in redistribution of the proceeds to an extended group. That civil society, in this sense matters, is evident to anyone who has seen all the porter-loads of goods – radios, jewellery, clothing, etc – brought back by a Gurkha soldier on home-leave disappear, just like that, into his extended kin group. Nor is it just soldiers; this strategy is shared by most who constitute the Nepali Diaspora. Something like one in ten Nepali families now has one member working outside Nepal, and remittances from abroad now constitute somewhere between 25 and 40 percent of GDP: comparable, that is, to all the aid Nepal receives.

The dynamics of poverty, exclusion and nation building, in consequence, are inherently *political* and *complex*. These dynamics are therefore beyond the reach of approaches that assume that the problems are merely technical, and that the underlying system is *simple*: just two states – poverty and its absence, for instance – with a measurable line between them and certain quantities of this-and-that that, if somehow increased, will inevitably shift a person across it.

Nor is it safe to assume that all those who are currently not included wish to be included on the terms and conditions spelled out by the powers at play. As well as involuntary exclusion there is *voluntary exclusion*, and a truly democratic polity

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<sup>7</sup> Helena Norberg-Hodge recounts how when she first arrived in “her” village in Ladakh (in the far North of India), she asked who the poor people were. Her question caused consternation, and she was unable to obtain an answer. Next day, however, the villagers came to her, apologised for not giving her an answer and explained that now that they had thought about it, they could. “There are no poor people here”, they told her, “we are all fantastically rich”, and they launched into an inventory of those riches, among which was their wonderful cuisine (which, in fact, consists of about six ways of cooking *tsampa*: parched barley). Sitting there in their rags, a hundred miles from the nearest internal combustion engine, and subsisting on a rather meagre intake of calories, they would all be classified as poor by any of the current objectivist measures. But, in their own social construction, it was the exact opposite!

would grant the liberty of choices and somehow ensure that it does not prevent those who wish not to be included from carrying out their plans. This is a rather different perspective from the one professed by some development practitioners claiming that many poor people are socially unprepared for receiving assistance, and hence “awareness building” is an essential element of the aid package. “Attacking poverty is an attack on mind-sets”, as one interviewee commented.

This plurality of pathways helps remind us that the targets of policy do not just sit there having their lives made richer and more included; they are *responsive*. Nor do they all respond in the same way; a policy that is successful in tipping into the desired goal those who are responsive in one way will, therefore, very likely fail with those who are responsive in other ways. Or, worse still, it will tip them, against their chosen strategies into one or other of the undesired states: an extraordinarily wasteful and anti-democratic form of intervention.

Put another way, and as Amartya Sen and others have been pointing out for some time now, development is not really about economics; it is about democratization. Many of our interviewees in Nepal have told us that we don't have the need merely to understand economic dynamics of poverty. Another crucial issue in Nepalese society is the structures that reinforce inequalities. This issue is closely linked to the social divide arising from values associated with ethnicity, cast, class and gender. Social mobility is the counter-current to social exclusion. Thus, we need a research agenda that contributes to understanding the conditions by which the Nepalese nation and democracy can transcend social and cultural categories, and thereby allow for social mobility to take the place of social exclusion. Strengthening those strands within Nepali social science that are already working in that direction is therefore what is needed, with the focus (for the moment at least) on the complex and inherently political dynamics of poverty and exclusion.

### **2.3 Counteracting the double bias: elitist and developmental**

The second challenge is to move towards a *more inclusive research practice*. Several observers argued that Nepali social science should become more embedded, more indigenized, rather than mirroring development agendas imposed by outsiders. Some are active in changing this situation. Human right groups undertake surveys, and collect their own material to document unjust and inhuman practices in Nepal society. While various development NGOs carry out “action research” along side their primary functions, claiming that this method makes their “service delivery” more responsive to the needs of the people living in the regions and in the margins of Nepal society. Other, like the Nepal Federation of Nationalities that see the need to educate their “own people” in separate colleges and research institutions. The different strategies applied by civil society groups notwithstanding, a main condition for achieving a more inclusive practice in academic research is to broaden the participation in and access to research among Nepal’s many social and cultural groups. “There is a need to break the Brahmin monopoly on research”.

Hachchethu in his article on social science in Nepal observes that Hill Brahmins and Newars dominate among social scientists employed at the Tribhuvan University with 49 and 26 percent respectively, while they constitute only 12 and 5 percent

respectively of the national population. Only 11 percent of the social scientists are Buddhist, the rest being Hindu. Similarly, there are very few from hill or low land (Tarai) ethnic groups (5 percent) and none from *dalit* castes (“untouchables”).<sup>8</sup>

Successions of Nepal governments have opposed affirmative action policies, but there is scope for less formal ways of counteracting the elitist bias in research. This can be done at program level by allowing representatives of ‘excluded’ groups and the civil society that represents them, to influence the research agenda, and by providing opportunities for young educated people with a minority background to enroll as research assistants under the supervision of senior researchers – of the critical and reflexive bent. In Chapter 4 we outline a model with this in mind.

Social science in Nepal is extremely dependent on foreign funding. There is no social science research council, or the equivalent, and ministries and universities command only meager funds for basic research. Not all foreign funding comes in the form of commissions supporting a development agenda, but by and large, the potential sponsors of the kind of critical and reflexive social science outlined above are far and few between. Bhattachan in a review of social science in Nepal concludes that “almost all of the applied research done in and on Nepal has so far been dominated by Western development concerns, which now should be indigenous and focused on inequality”.<sup>9</sup>

While there is an oversupply of donor funding to various commissioned studies, often leading to low quality, predictive and prescriptive research lacking critical distance. Even if some observes accused the commissioned research of suffering from a copy-cat syndrome and being based on cook-up data, there are also Nepali scholars who have been able to pursue long-term, self-defined research projects resulting in internationally recognized publications. One example is studies of water resources management in Nepal, which, as a byproduct, have underpinned a critical stand against several donor-supported hydro power and water management projects (the most conspicuous being the Arun III project).<sup>10</sup> We argue for a research financing mechanism that provides the right incentives for researchers to leave the lucrative consultancy market, at least for the major part of their time, and commit themselves to longer term, meticulous empirical research in an environment of peer review, public dissemination and dialogue with the people who become the subject of the research.

Another dimension of aid dependency is that it also represents a most relevant, and critical, research agenda in today’s Nepal. In our interviews we were time and again reminded about the unintended consequences of development aid. These are obviously manifold, but from the civil society-exclusion perspective mentioned above, it is of particular interest to understand better how various development approaches, not least by different NGOs, have been received at the grassroots, so to

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<sup>8</sup> Hachchethu, op.cit., pp. 65-66.

<sup>9</sup> Bhattachan, op.cit., p. 23.

<sup>10</sup> See Gyawali D, 2000, “Re-orienting water research in Nepal”. *Occasional Papers of the Royal Nepal Academy of Science and Technology*, No. 8. P.O. Box 3323, New Baneshwar, Nepal, and Dixit, A, 2002, *Basic Water Science*, Nepal Water Conservation Foundation: Kathmandu. Another, more easily read, example is Thompson, M and Gyawali, D 2001, “Transboundary risk management in the South: A Nepalese perspective on Himalayan water resources”, in Linnerooth-Bayer, J, Löfstedt, R and Sjöstedt, G (eds) *Transboundary Risk Management*, London: Earthscan.

speaking. One hypothesis is that the Maoists movement provides us with a sort of litmus test for distinguishing between those aid projects that are reaching the poorest of the poor – the ones that the Maoists have left alone or even supported – and those that do not – the ones the Maoists have attacked and, in many instances, destroyed or stopped. The assumption is that local people, through their own civil institutions, protected those projects that clearly had been to their benefit. The cease-fire means that such experiences can be gathered together and collated. This, then, is one specific project that we have identified. One, moreover, that needs to be done now; the opportunity will soon fade, like the tints on the litmus paper!

### **3 Strengths and weaknesses of social science research in Nepal: what to build on – what to avoid?**

#### **3.1 Institutional overview: who does what kind of research**

Prior to 1951 when Nepal ended its years of isolation, the Kingdom had only one institution of higher learning (Tri Chandra College, established in 1918). This institution enrolled a few students in two separate faculties, arts and basic science. The introduction of social sciences in Nepal coincided with opening of its border to the outside world. Social scientist came from abroad, mainly British anthropologist searching for "their village" among the myriad of Nepal's ethnic groups. Eventually, some nationals took up research in the same areas, mainly in disciplines like geography, anthropology and history of religion. There was no social science education in Nepal prior to 1959, when Tribuvhan University (TU) was established.

Currently, analytical work based in some ways on social science theories and data collection methodologies is carried out in a variety of institutions, mostly Kathmandu based. The sheer number of institutions claiming to do some form of applied research is staggering for a small country and economy like Nepal. No single institution stands out as a centre of excellence or a leading intellectual force in this institutional mosaic. There are outstanding individual researchers. They tend to divide their time, however, between several institutions, and between the public and private sector. Several have set up their own institution in the private sector, some operating as consultancy firms others as non-profit NGOs. Each institution depending largely on one strong individual, the conditions for capacity building and long-term research are not favourable. As one of the interviewees stated: "In Nepal individuals matters, not institutions".

Nevertheless, it is possible to categorise social science research institutions as public and private. Among *public* institutions doing research, the most prominent are the centres for applied research formed under the Tribhuvan University. In the *private* sector there is a wide range of organisations representing everything from genuine research centres to consultancy firms. There is a range of organisations, both commercial and non-profit, doing different mixes of applied research, action research, advocacy work, service delivery and training (see Appendix II for a listing). Looking at the individual professionals, there are extensive links across the public-private divide, and between commercial and development or advocacy oriented NGOs, often representing personal adaptations to the market for donor funding. Below is a summary presentation of the main institutional actors.

##### **3.1.1 Government supported research institutions**

**Government sector:** During the late 1960s and the 1970s government made serious attempts at setting up government research and training centres to cater for the need of mainly government (also private) agencies. Notable among these were the Panchayat Training Centre, Nepal Administrative Staff College (NASC), Agricultural Projects Service Centre (APROSC), Industrial Service Sector (ISS), Trade Promotion Centre (TPC) and Water and Energy Commission Sector (WECS). The National Planning

Commission (NPC), Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB), and Royal Nepal Academy (RNA) were encouraged to carry out more research projects. In addition to these institutions mentioned above, some major ministries were also encouraged to establish their own research units often to deal with policy planning issues. The research activities carried out by these government institutions were primarily directed towards providing policy inputs for development planning and not consciously motivated for the promotion of social science in Nepal. The decline in public funding has made these agencies less important in terms of research.

**The University:** (*see BOX on higher education policy in Nepal*) Although the major focus of the education policy of Tribhuvan University (TU) was on teaching; special centres were established to promote research. The initial (four) research centres were Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies (CNAS), Centre for Economic and Development Administration (CEDA), Research Centre for Educational Innovation and Development (CERID) and Research Centre for Applied Science and Technology (RECAST). The first three are based within the social science disciplines. CEDA was initially set up as an independent centre with funding from the government and international donors, but was later integrated in the university (1973).

The establishment of these centres at TU marked a significant contribution to the enhancement of social sciences in Nepal. The Centres were strengthened by the return of some Nepali postgraduate students who were sponsored under the Colombo Plan in the mid-1970s after obtaining their PhD and MA degrees from different universities of India and elsewhere.

All the good intentions of the TU to promote social science research were soon constrained by limited public funding, student overload, and institutional stagnation. Some of the centres still benefit from donor support, although there has been a decline as more assignments and funds have shifted to the private sector. It is often said that most of the best qualified and motivated researchers have left the centres, and if not, tend to spend much of their time doing commissioned work in the private sector. Bureaucratisation (professional staff/supporting staff ratio is close to 1:3 at some of the centres) and poor management (directors are politically appointed) are cited as the main reasons for staff seeking opportunities elsewhere. Hatchchethu comments on the decline of university based research: “(The) role of TU Research Division, which once undertook multiple responsibilities i.e., publication, research grant, affiliation etc., has recently been reduced to the single assignment - publication of the university's annual TU Journal.”

Not only declining funds effect the output of social science research in Nepal. The quality of the higher education system is an even bigger problem. De-motivated teaching staff, outdated curriculum, lack of transparency, and political and not professional assignment of staff weakens TU as the, should be, major research training ground in Nepal. Further, teaching and research are most often detached. This affects the education of research graduates and recruitment of qualified researcher into the public as well as private sector. And even more fundamentally, the legacy of an elite oriented education system and the structural inequalities running through the entire sector from basic to higher education, are not conducive to the inclusion of students and research graduates with a minority background.

## HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY IN NEPAL

Prior to 1951 when Nepal ended its years of isolation, the Kingdom had only one institution of higher learning (Tri Chandra College, established in 1918). In 1953 the National Education Commission recommended the setting up a university in Nepal. The Tribhuvan University (TU) was established in May 29, 1959 to provide knowledge to Nepali nationals through teaching. The objectives of higher education was re-emphasised by the All-Round Education Committee of 1961, formed after the change in the political system, as "*to make maximum production of such ideal men and women and to provide them with the highest or supreme knowledge in every subject*". On the onset therefore the prime focus of TU education was teaching rather than research.

In the 1980s TU could not cope with the increased demands for higher and technical education. The university therefore permitted the establishments of several private campuses under TU, most of them in Humanities and Social Sciences all over the country. However, the TU was the sole University to operate in Nepal until 1989 when the government permitted the establishment of other universities.

Presently there are five universities in Nepal:

- *Tribhuvan University* (61 constituent colleges and 196 affiliated colleges);
- *Mahendra Sanskrit University* - MSU (12 constituent colleges and 4 affiliated colleges), established in December 1986;
- *Kathmandu University* - KU (1 constituent college and 11 affiliated colleges), is an independent, not-for-profit, non-government public institution, was established by an Act of Parliament on November 1991
- *Purbanchal University* - PuU (2 constituent colleges and 67 affiliated colleges) was established in 1995
- *Pokhara University* - PoU (2 constituent colleges and 27 affiliated colleges) was established in 1996 as a fifth University in the country under the government's policy of adopting a multi-university system in the country with aims to expand the access to higher education.

In 2002, the students' enrolments in five universities are more than 210,000. TU alone has about 200,000 students at three levels proficiency certificate, bachelors and Masters; MSU enrolled about 3,500 students; KU enrolled about 2,000; PuU enrolled about 5,000 and PU about 3,000. All the higher education institutes are focused on teaching (TU has more than 5,000 teaching staff). They carry out research only as part of students' short-term projects or when an institution provides funding for specific small research to be carried out for the funding agency.

The limited university funding provided by the government is hardly enough to cover research activities. In addition, the budget provided by the state for higher education has decreased significantly over the years. This has also affected TU research programmes and capabilities. Any modest research programmes that were carried out previously had ceased due to lack of funding and other support.

In 1975/76 higher education accounted for as much as 41 percent of the national education budget while primary education stood at 21 percent. This has been a deliberate policy in favour of primary education. The High Level National Education Commission of 1998 gave its stamp of approval to this shift in policy by suggesting that 55 percent of the education budget be allocated to basic and primary education. By 1999/2000 the share allocated to higher education had been more than halved (to 18 percent of the education budget).

### 3.1.2 Private sector involvement in social science research

An examination of the state of social science research (economics, political science, sociology, anthropology, history, culture and others) in Nepal indicates that private institutions carry out the bulk of research mostly funded by international donor agencies. These private institutions, either commercial (business enterprises) or non-profit, provide commissions research to donors. In some (very) few cases these institutions also undertake self-initiated research. Some private institutions contract TU teaching and research staff to carry out research studies on their behalf, and some are in fact affiliated with the university.

The institutions can be divided into five categories according to their main purpose and the type of research/ assignments they undertake:

- i. institutions for applied policy research and “action research”
- ii. institutions mainly focusing on social science research
- iii. institutions both doing research and training/education
- iv. institutions that are primarily advocacy oriented
- v. institutions operating as commercial entities

**(i) Applied policy research:** New Era (NE), Institute for Integrated Development Studies (IIDS) and South Asia Partnership/ Nepal (SAP-N) are said to be the most prominent institutions in this category. NE and IIDS are pioneer private research institutions. These two institutions were established in the 1970s and are run by former members of NPC. NE and IIDS carry out consultancy, baseline-studies and applied research. However, they differ with regard to organisational model, the former being a private (business) company, the latter being a non-profit NGO. IIDS has an endowment fund, being one of few institutions with some lasting source of finance. SAP-N was established, as a Canadian INGO in 1985, but became a national NGO in 1994. All these institutions were established and grew with the active support from various foreign donor agencies. SAP-N and IIDS are said to have recently entered into a more long-term policy- oriented research as well.

Several other institutions are registered and operating as development NGOs that are carrying out research in their areas of specialisation. The Center for Environmental and Agricultural Policy Research Extension and Development (CEAPRED), Centre for Research on Environment Health and Population Activities (CREHPA), Centre for Policy Research and Analysis (CPRA) conduct research in specific thematic areas. As the names imply some conduct research in agriculture, health & population and poverty.

**(ii) Social science research:** Among the private academic research institutions, the Centre for Social Research and Development (CSRSD) is unique as it was set up by independent persons of different disciplines to conduct research, disseminate information and conduct discussions on current socio-political issues. They conduct weekly seminars on a variety of subjects, aiming at encouraging young scholars to take part in debate and discourse on contemporary issues.

Other private academic research centres are mostly run under the auspices of TU and research activities are carried out by lecturers from TU. Two examples are Nepal Foundation for Advance Studies (NEFAS) and Nepal Centre for Contemporary

Studies (NCCS). Their main output is compilations of seminar papers. For instance, NEFAS has published more books than any other private research centre. National Democratic Institutes for International Affairs (NDI) has conducted some research studies and has also held workshops on contemporary issues, especially on gender, corruption, parliament, political parties and governance. South Asia Forum for Human Rights (SAFHR) and Coalition for Action for South Asian Co-operation (CASAC) have also run several research and training projects on peace, conflict resolution and regional co-operation.

**(iii) Research/ training institutions:** Some research institutions or groups of scholars has responded to the structural problems of the higher education sector by setting up schools of higher education, courses or training facilities. These constitute "micro-universities"; teaching within a limited range of disciplines.

The Social Science Baha is another initiative to provide an arena for dialogue between social scientists and access to social science research especially of Nepal. It has initiated an Immersion Course on contemporary social issues (a training programme) for young graduates with a potential interest in research. It also has the intention of setting up a fully fledged social science library. Nepal Centre for Contemporary Studies (NCCS) does policy research, commissioned research, but also trains a few graduate students in political science, using university teachers to give classes. Kathmandu School of Law, set up along side Centre for Legal Research (CLR) is a higher education institution giving BA and MA degrees in law.

**(iv) Advocacy:** Several NGOs are in the human rights and advocacy category, such as Human Rights Organisation of Nepal (HURON), Informal Sector Service Centre (INSEC), International Institute of Human Rights and Democracy (INHURED), National Human Rights Academy (HURFON) and South Asia Forum for Human Rights (SAFHR). These organisations conduct studies in their area of competence, some engage in action research. INSEC has its own paid researchers and practitioners in all 75 districts of the country. It has carried out several research studies in several district and have published about 100 reports (by 2000), working papers and periodicals. The research by INSEC is primarily to support its human rights campaigns, including the issues of Kamaiya (bonded labour), child labour, exploitation of women, and the practice of untouchability.

**(v) Business:** Of the institutions registered as private business ventures, East Consult, Human Resource Development Centre (HURDEC), Nepal Consult and Organisation Development Centre (ODC) are some of those known to carry out research, besides regular consultancy services. The research is mostly commissioned by donors and INGOs, but ODC is undertaking self-sponsored research (started in 1998) on management and organisation of development sector organisations in Nepal and the SAARC region. ORG-MARG, a profit making India-based organisation, set up its branch office in Kathmandu in 1993 conducting opinion surveys on different issues.

## 3.2 Strengths and weaknesses

### 3.2.1 Strengths

Although it may be a long time before Nepal can boast of high calibre research institutions replacing or supplementing the few competent private institutions already operating, there are encouraging signs.

**A lot of entrepreneurship in the private sector.** There has been a considerable increase in the numbers of private research institutions over the last 10 years. In the young and expanding 'research sector' there is not only rent-seeking in response to business opportunities created by development aid. Although the private sector cannot fill the vacuum left by universities in providing social science research, institutions building their research work on scientific methods, methodologies are increasing. Some private higher learning institutions offer courses in social sciences, management and other disciplines. The private institutions create better opportunities for the crossing of conventional boundaries between disciplines and academic and applied research. Action research performed by advocacy and service delivery institutions, with all its methodological pitfalls, fills a gap in collecting empirical data and introducing research topics related to groups and regions that for different reasons are "understudied". In particular we will point to the following:

- New training and learning centre initiatives like the Immersion Course and the Social Science Baha.
- Research that is closer and more responsive to the voices of the "people", and improvement of 'action research' and 'participatory research' methodologies.
- Expansion in field based research, baseline studies and quantitative and empirical studies.
- Diversifying the areas of research to include gender, environment, *dalits*, tribal communities, human rights and a number of other issues ignored by the government and university.
- The presence of vocal individuals - researchers active in the public debate and cutting across institutions in the private and public domain.
- Expansion of collaboration between private research interests with international research institutions.

**More publishing.** The quality of research and other publications has improved as institutions employ bright young graduate and train them on research methodologies, processes and report write-up. There are a couple of national journals on social science related work, which offers opportunities for dissemination more widely than the "grey literature" most often to be the product of commissioned studies. Of course, there are a few individual social scientists with a good reputation at the global level, publishing widely in international journals. Some publications, such as Water Nepal publish on water rights, policy on energy and power etc. have gained international acceptance.

### 3.2.2 Weaknesses

**Client dependency.** Most of the institutions mentioned above were established in response to specific needs of clients, especially international donor agencies. Typically, their commissions include baseline studies, prescriptive policy research, the Nepalese brand of action research, socio-economic studies of specific areas, feasibility studies, and impact studies and evaluations. The lack of specialisation is a problem that comes with the particular organisations of commissioned work; most research institutions accept whatever assignment they can avail. Donor sponsored contracts are seen as lucrative due to the relatively high consultancy fees paid to those who carry out such studies. Institutions bidding for contracts that they are not fully qualified for are not uncommon, in which case some may sub-contract specialists. However, some donors among the interviewees questioned the competence of firms crossing different sectors asserting to be specialists in any. On the other hand, the research institutions doing commissioned/consultancy work had complaints about restraints from clients on their work, some even with regard to demands on conclusions. Very few organisations have been able to carry out self-initiated research. Thus, it is no surprise that very few research institutions have been able to specialise in specific policy areas. This problem is further compounded by the lack of public funding for research, and in our impression, lack of procedures at the individual institutional to set aside funds for in-house competence building and self-initiated research.

**Mostly short term.** The bulk of client sponsored research is on a short-term (between 2-6 months) basis, although there are some noticeable exceptions such as the research carried out by the UNDP/SAPAP programme, and a recent contract to New Era to study poverty in two districts. World Bank has sponsored SAPPROS to do a study of best practices of development in Hill and Terai areas, and DFID has commissioned long-term research on conflict in Nepal. The limit time allowed for conducting and publishing research obviously has an impact on quality.

**Lack of dissemination.** Often the findings from commissioned studies are only used to support the formulation of the client's strategies, policies and programmes. They are not public or end up as grey literature at the institution's shelves. This partly relates to the intellectual property rights of commissioned work, but also reflects the disclosure policies of donors and their lack attention to dissemination and public information. This problem becomes more fundamental than lack of access, as one of our interviewees put it; "we have a serious problem if most of the new findings on socio-political and economic conditions in Nepal to day is locked up in donors' offices".

**Small and vulnerable.** While some of the private research institutions are relatively large and well organised, most of them are young (established in the 1990s) small and have to rely on outside consultants and researchers to carry out research for which they have been contracted. Many are also implementing partners of international development agencies, and may have little staying power once their main sponsor pulls out.

**Sapping the university sector.** As already stated private research institutions and NGOs rely on the services of university professional staff to carry out research and consultancies as they do not have their own research staff. To university teachers and

researcher this is a most welcome source of income, supplementing their relatively low salaries. For the university this is mostly a net loss, not least in official time of their most qualified researchers and lecturers.

**Problems of quality and dependency on foreign researchers.** The lack of a conducive environment for long-term research at higher education institutions and the institutional divide between research /research training and teaching at the university mean that national researchers tend to be poorly equipped compared to foreign researchers. Many donors contract foreign researchers to carry out long-term research they deem highly sensitive and important to them. Most donors express dissatisfaction with the quality of the research carried out by local researchers. They often complain that reports are based on rudimentary data collection, poor evidence base, lack of analytical rigour and often having no view; avoiding controversies in fear of the next assignment as one conspicuous donor stated. Work often tends to be desk based, and many national researchers are not serious about systematic field-based data collection.

**Reluctance to work for government.** Most of these private institutions are ill equipped to carry out substantial policy and other key research for policy makers, especially at the policy decision-making level of government. The few recognised competent private research institutions are very busy working for international organisations and are therefore reluctant to take on government research assignment unless international donors directly fund them. It is assumed, thus, that most of the important decisions made by government agencies are based on unreliable data and research results.

### ***3.3 The state of social science research in Nepal***

Is social science research in Nepal in a poor state? We are reluctant to answer this question for reasons stated in the introduction. However, based on our impressions we assert that social science research and policy research, in particular, is overly donor dependent. Research agendas tend to reflect donors' perspectives and priorities. Researchers tend to prefer short-term lucrative consultancy contracts to longer-term basic research. The client-dependency also gives rise to a fragmented system of research organisation, limited distribution of reports, and a competition for contracts that is not a conducive environment for an open sharing of research results and exchange of information.

This kind of organisation runs counter to the ideals of scientific production of being cumulative and methodologically explicit. Although, commissioned research cannot always subscribe to the "ideals" of science, it should be reflexive on its own terms, and, preferably embedded in an environment of independent research and specialised knowledge in particular fields. Today, independent and critical social science research in Nepal faces difficulties.

We may sum up by indicating what kind of research support we consider needed:

- More support to longer-term research projects not being instrumental in relation to aid agendas.
- Creating an environment for common research interests and competence building through active participation and co-operation in quality research.

- Promotion of the role of research linked to the work of civil society organisations. Better feedback to organisations/people advocating the need for the research.
- Create arenas for exchange of research proposals and research work, which includes an open space for critical debate on research and research agendas.
- Promotion of younger scholars with minority background.

## 4 A framework for a research programme: What can NORAD do to help?

### 4.1 Challenges and vision

The Team finds that there is a broad range of financial resources available for research, but the bulk of these resources are fairly instrumentally linked to the planning and implementation of development projects and programmes through works commissioned by donor agencies and international NGOs. There are several international sources of research grants available to Nepalese, but mainly promoting younger scholars through Masters and Ph.D.s.<sup>11</sup>

Still, in our interviews, a number of weaknesses in the structure of financing and organisation of social science research in Nepal were identified:

- Funding for longer-term researcher-initiated projects open and attractive to already established researchers is scarce.
- Organisations that do not have the international links – such as many local NGOs working for the interests of particular localities or ethnic groups - face difficulties in promoting research and influencing research agendas.
- The funding pattern reinforces existing social inequalities in terms of access to higher education. Conventional research grants awarded on the basis of screening of applications tend to favour students with an elite background.
- Institutions currently carrying out research lack funds, facilities and programmes for the mentoring of younger professionals.

The interviewees also expressed major concerns about the output, as well as the dissemination structure and usefulness, of research results for the development of Nepal towards a more democratic and inclusive society:

- There is a widely shared concern about the quality of much of the work that is being labelled social science research – i.e. work that is more or less based upon social science concepts, theories and methods.
- The quality of teaching at TU has been deteriorating. There is an alarming brain drain from the university sector to private sector organisations.
- The research agenda is not responsive to agendas of the different cultural and socio-economic groups of Nepal, as well as to the ethnic and geographical diversity of the country.

Obviously, it will not be possible for a single research programme to address all these weaknesses and corresponding challenges. Expectations have to be realistic and a pragmatic approach is warranted keeping the focus on a few primary objectives. It is the Team's recommendation that these *objectives* should be:

- To enhance the understanding of processes of social exclusion, social mobility and nation building in Nepal through longer-term empirical social science research.

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<sup>11</sup>E.g. Ford Foundation, Windrock International, and US Education Foundation (handles Fulbright scholarships).

- To promote the involvement of disadvantaged and marginalised groups in this research.
- To ensure high quality of research outputs through proper mechanisms of quality control and incentives.
- To link the research actors to agendas set by interest and advocacy groups in the area of social, economic and political exclusion and poverty.
- To stimulate linkages, exchange, cooperation and mentoring between established research institutions/researchers and students/"research activists".
- To facilitate public dissemination of research outputs, while "giving back" the research results to interest and advocacy groups working for the rights of disadvantaged and marginalised groups.

#### **Vision for a Nepali-Norwegian research programme**

- Production of high quality and critical research on causes of social exclusion in Nepal and ways to manage diversity
- Make social science research more relevant to excluded groups and their agendas
- Ensure that research more effectively contributes to policy debate and a deliberative democratic process

## **4.2 Modalities of a Research Programme on Social Exclusion and Nation Building – ExNB**

### **4.2.1 A two-legged approach**

The Team wishes to emphasise the need for pragmatism in dealing with two usual trade-offs – i.e. the trade-off between what serves the interests of individuals versus the institutions, and the trade-off between long-term goals and short-term achievements.

Chapters 2 and 3 amply explain why it is difficult to pinpoint one or two research institutions as partners in an institutional cooperation agreement. In the current context more quality research in Nepal is by individual effort than institutional support. It is important, therefore, that the Programme is flexible and open to individual applications and to teams of researchers with a diversity of institutional affiliations. We clearly recommend *making the research projects the essence of the Programme*, rather than more elusive and longer-term goals of institutional capacity building. One needs to be pragmatic about how individual researchers or teams decide to organise their work, provided they are able to deliver what the Programme wants to support.

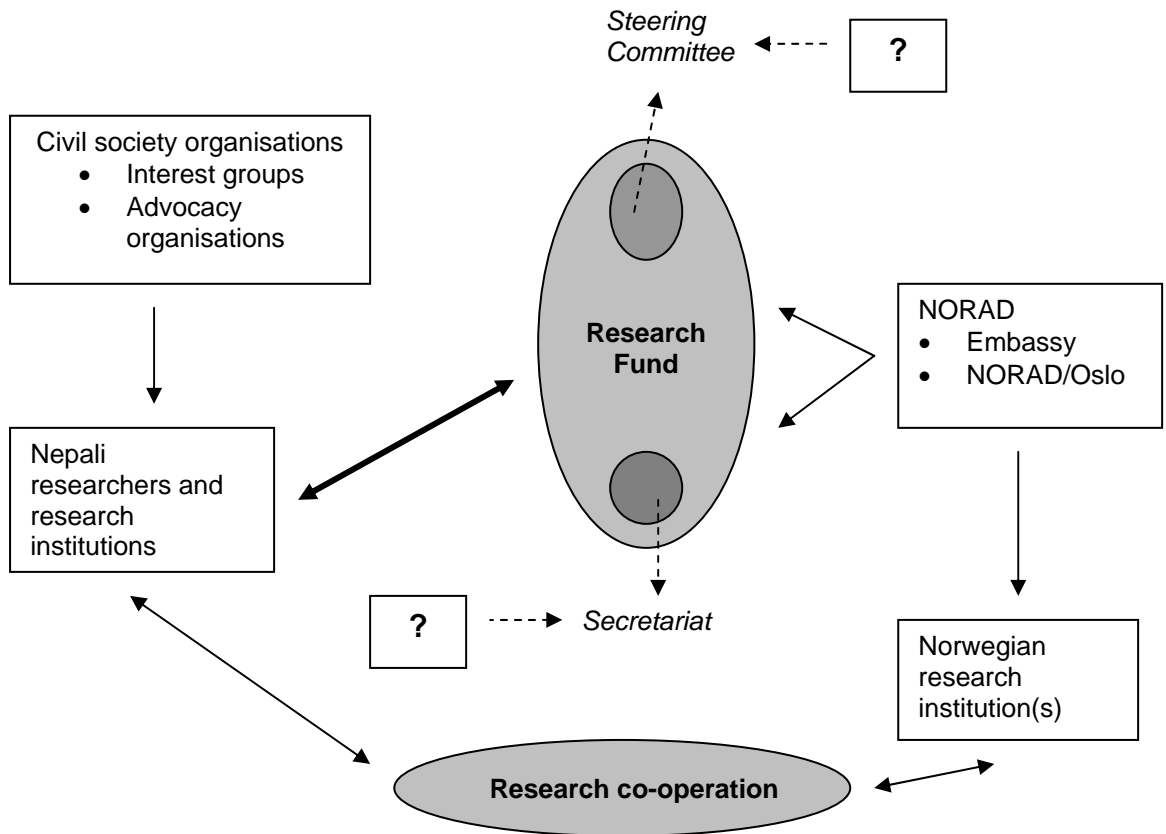
The Team recommends that the Norwegian Embassy and NORAD develop an approach based on two separately organised initiatives:

- I. Establishment of a Research Fund in Nepal.
- II. Funding of one or several joint research projects of research links between Norwegian and Nepal research institutions.

While the two initiatives may be separate in terms of financing and reporting arrangements, there should be ways of linking the two in practical terms. In particular we foresee the Norwegian-Nepal research cooperation as a facilitator in developing the Programme. We wish to underscore the importance of “getting something going” fast, building upon the momentum created by the Identification Mission. In addition, we suggest:

- that it is advisable to start this initiative on a bilateral basis and find an organisational model that can quickly be mobilised. It is important that Norwegian researchers are encouraged to cooperate with Nepal researchers in developing the Programme. This can be in the form of participating in concrete projects based on existing involvement in Nepali studies, or in the form of bringing in relevant Norwegian (and international) experience in studies of social exclusion as advisors.
- that a representative from a participating Norwegian institution has, at least in the initial period, a formal role in the steering committee of the Research Fund. This link may also enhance the status of the Fund in Nepal, and neutralise some of the criticism bound to be raised against Nepali members of the committee for serving their own interests.
- that the Research Fund, for a start has an open ended model of organisation. The *short-term* objective is to test the ideas and principles underlying the Programme's vision, before any decision is made on scaling-up and seeking a more permanent organisational structure. In the *long term*, if this initiative proves successful in stimulating quality research and capacity development, the objective should be to help fostering a permanent social science research fund, which also may mobilise grant support from other international donors.
- that there is a *gradual approach* – learning-by-doing – in building up the Programme. While this initiative has to be backed by a long-term commitment in principle for funding by Norway – *not less than a ten years commitment*, it must be recognised it is experimental in nature and not without a fair amount of risk. Much will depend on the extent to which it is possible to form a core group of eminent academics, with different backgrounds, taking ownership of the vision of the Programme and steering it forward.

## The Programme setup



## 4.2.2 Operating principles of the Research Fund

It is recommended that the Research Fund will:

- Be catalytic and proactive in supporting research on issues of social exclusion.
- Include support to the whole research process – problem formulation and research design, training, data collection/analysis/supervision, and dissemination, and may be open to divide the funding accordingly.
- Invite proposals based on research initiatives formulated by civil society organisations on the issue of social exclusion, and linking these with relevant competence in existing research institutions that can provide supervision, training and peer review.
- Promote cooperation and networking between researchers and research institutions in the research process.
- Select proposals both on the basis of open competition and selective invitations to a shortlist of candidate researchers/institutions.
- Support dissemination projects, seminars and initiatives that can make the results of the research available and useful for civil society advocacy groups.

The Team strongly recommends starting modest and building up gradually, based on the support mechanisms that work best judging from the *success criteria* implicit in the goals for the Programme:

- critical and reflexive research of relevance for the public debate on Nepal nation building;
- independent research of high quality resulting in international publications;
- inclusion of research agendas and researchers with background from disadvantaged and marginalised groups; and
- creating an open arena for disseminating, sharing research results and critical debate on research findings.

We recommend starting with NORAD as the only donor, without ruling out or setting up a structure discouraging other donors participating if the initial 2 to 3 years turn out to be a success. It is important to avoid a drawn-out planning process, and therefore, initially to select an organisational model for the Fund which is as simple as possible. The Team was not in the position to look into the organisational models available under Nepalese law, but it should probably be avoided initially registering the Fund as a formal legal body. If this is agreed, there seems to be three other alternatives to setting up a new organisation for the Fund:

- i. Linking it to an existing research institution in Nepal
- ii. Linking it to a Norwegian research institution involved in research cooperation in Nepal
- iii. Out-source the secretariat function to a management organisation in Nepal

In our interviews we heard arguments for all three options, and the Team is not definite in its own view. This is an issue that needs further consideration in the planning process. However, in the highly competitive institutional environment in Nepal there are good reasons for carefully considering the out-sourcing option. The main functions of the secretariat will be servicing of the Steering Committee (call of meetings, taking of minutes etc.), receipt and accounting of funds from NORAD and

transfer of funds for individual projects. The latter will involve the implementation of a progress monitoring system and forms of result-based financing.

The Achilles heel of the Fund, however, is likely to be the Steering Committee. Much will depend on the ability of the Embassy and Government to enlist the active commitment of a few selected eminent Nepali researchers to guide the programme.

Another challenge is how to organise the role of and input from civil society advocacy groups. In the current setting of a multitude of civil society organisations in Nepal, defining the criteria of selection and organising a selection process, obviously, adds to the complexity of the modality. The Team refrain from making any recommendations in this regard, leaving these deliberations to the Steering Committee.

### **4.2.3 Norway-Nepal institutional research cooperation**

While the Fund should not favour applicants with an established Norwegian links, as already stated, we do envisage a role for Norwegian researchers and research institutions in backing-up the Programme. It is important, therefore, to identify Norwegian partners with the required commitment and research interest to be involved with Nepal for a longer period. Framed within the current NORAD procedures there are three options on how to select the partners and organise the Norwegian-Nepali connection:

- (a) an institutional cooperation<sup>12</sup> where the agreement is with the Nepali institution that also has a say in the selection of a Norwegian institutional partner;
- (b) to set up a team of individual Norwegian researchers (by an open call for tender), selected on the individual capacity and not primarily representing their institutions; and
- (c) select, a project in research and institutional co-operation between Norwegian Nepal by way of an open call for proposals<sup>13</sup>.

With reference to the arguments presented in chapter 3 with respect to the current institutional set-up of social science research in Nepali, the Team *cannot* recommend the first option (a); institutional co-operation in its traditional form. Both options (b) and (c) should be carefully considered. However, we would recommend to NORAD to try out a combination that takes the advantages of both. With option (b) one can best secure the involvement of competent individual researchers with capacity in different disciplines and research on issues of relevance to the Programme. Option (c) has the advantages of defining possible research topics in the outset, based on the regular method of selection in academia. NORAD/Oslo already has procedures for handling this type of decision making process. However, there should be some adjustments, since the Nepali partner has yet to be identified and the call has to be for

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<sup>12</sup> NORAD's brochure on Guidelines on Institutional Cooperation.

<sup>13</sup> Guidelines for the allocation of funds for research and institutional co-operation with developing countries.

pilot studies defined by Norwegian researcher and not fully developed project proposals.

Thus, we recommend the following three-stage process for the selection of a Norwegian partner (team of researchers) handled by NORAD/Oslo in consultation with the Embassy in Kathmandu:

- 1) An open call for proposals for pilot projects related to issues of social exclusion in Nepal, addressing Norwegian researchers with potential partnership with Nepalese researchers.
- 2) A shortlist of 3 pilot proposals to be granted funds to cover preparation costs for drafting a full project proposal developed jointly with a Nepalese partner of their choice.
- 3) A final selection of one project that forms the core activity of Norwegian-Nepalese research cooperation under the programme. The project may have participants from more than one institution on both the Norwegian and Nepalese side, but needs to have one Norwegian institution as contract partner to NORAD.

More specifically, the project and agreement between the Norwegian and Nepalese institution must:

- be developed with the vision of the Programme in mind - e.g. research on issues of social exclusion;
- build on already established contacts as much as possible;
- foster longer-term research cooperation between identified researchers on both sides;
- aim at high quality research based on the collection of new data;
- include some institution building components for the Nepali partner;
- include competence development components for both partners – e.g. creating an opportunity for young researchers to develop; and
- open up for both partners to perform a facilitating role in linking other researchers in Norway and Nepal to the Programme.

### **4.3 Next steps**

This Project Identification Team recommends to the Embassy/NORAD to move forward in the planning process, which entails a number of steps, some of which depends on the outcome of further consultations with the research community in Nepal, as well as the Government.

We suggest taking this road forward by the following first steps:

- 1) Circulate this report for comments among a selection of those met by the Team for written comments.

- 2) Identify 2-3 people who will be specially invited to give their comments to the report and further suggestions, with special emphasis on the proposed modality. In particular, they should be asked to give their views on how to resolve the issue of the Steering Committee – its composition, mandate and mode of operation, and the issue of the Secretariat – its institutional home and managerial tasks.<sup>14</sup>
- 3) Based on these inputs, the Embassy in co-operation with the Technical Department in NORAD/Oslo should commission a Project Preparation Mission in September/October with the assignment to draft a complete proposal for the Research Fund (the Embassy).
- 4) Parallel to the above, The Technical Department may launch a Call for Proposals for Pilot Projects on social exclusion to be developed within a Norwegian-Nepalese research co-operation

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<sup>14</sup> The selection of reviewers should reflect criteria similar to the ones one would like to apply in setting up a Steering Committee for the Fund. In the table below we outline the main criteria to be considered in this selection.

| Name of person | Main institutional affiliation at present |          | Seniority |        | Sex    |      | Social background |                 |
|----------------|---|----------|-----------|--------|--------|------|-------------------|-----------------|
|                | Research                                  | Advocacy | Senior    | Junior | Female | Male | High caste        | Ethnic minority |
|                |   |          |           |        |        |      |                   |                 |

## Annex I

### List of institutions and persons met

| Organisation  | Name                      | Designation  |
|---|---------------------------|--|
| Acharya Foundation  | Dr. Mina Acharya          | Secretary  |
| Asian Development Bank  | Ms. Kathie M. Julian      | Deputy Country Director                                      |
| Asian Development Bank  | Ms. Kavita Sherchan       | External Relations & Civil Society Liaison Officer           |
| Canadian Embassy<br>Canadian Cooperation Officer (CCO)        | Mr. Prabin Manadhar       | Director, Program and projects                               |
| Canadian Embassy<br>Canadian Cooperation Officer (CCO)        | Ms. Carla Hogan           | First Secretary (Development) and Consul CIDA Representative |
| Canadian Embassy<br>Canadian Cooperation Officer (CCO)        | Mr. Robin Needham         | Country Director   |
| Central Department of Economics, TU                           | Dr. Madan K. Dahal        | Professor & Head   |
| Central Department of Sociology and Anthropology, TU          | Dr. Krishna B. Bhattachan | Sociologist  |
| Centre for economic Development and Administration (CEDA), TU | Mr. Abullaish             | Executive Director   |
| Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies (CNAS), TU                 | Mr. Nirmal Man Tuladhar   | Deputy Executive Director                                    |
| Danida HUGOU  | Mr. Knud Olander          | Programme Co-ordinator                                       |
| Danida/HUGOU  | Dr. Jit Bahadur Gurung    | Advisor  |
| Danida/HUGOU  | Mr. Murari Shavikoti      | Senior Programme Consultant                                  |
| DEVA Pvt. Ltd.  | Dr. Durga P. Ojha         | Director   |
| DEVA Pvt. Ltd.  | Dr. Suresh P. Sharma      | Director   |
| DFID  | Mr. Stephen Sharpels      | Governance Advisor   |
| East Consult  | Ishowr Onta               |  |

| Organisation  | Name                          | Designation   |
|---|-------------------------------|---|
| Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES)  | Dr. Dev Raj Dahal             | Consultant  |
| Himal Association   | Mr. Kanak Mani Dixit          | Chairperson   |
| ILO   | Ms. Leyla Techmo-Reddy        | Director  |
| ILO   | Ms. Nita Neupane              | National Project Coordinator                                    |
| INHURED International   | Ms. Anjana Shakya             | Chairperson   |
| Institute for Integrated Development Studies (IIDS)                                 | Dr. Dwarika Nath Dhungel      | Executive Director  |
| Institute of Governance & Development (IGD) DEVA Pvt. Ltd.                          | Prof. Sant Bahadur Gurung     | Chairperson<br>Managing Director                                |
| Institute of Governance & Development (IGD)   | Mr. Mukti Rijal               | Secretary   |
| Institute of Governance and Decentralisation  | Prof. Shanta Gurung           | Director  |
| Kathmandu School of Law Centre for Legal Research and Resource Development (CeLRRd) | Mr. Yubaraj Sangroula         | Director  |
| LUMANTI   | Dr. Sumitra Manadhar          | Chairperson   |
| Martin Chaudari   | Ms. Siera Tamang              | Editor / Member   |
| Media Services International (MSI)  | Mr. Hem Bahadur Bista         | Director  |
| Media Services International (MSI)  | Mr. Bharat D. Koirala         | Chairman, Board of Directors                                    |
| Media Services International (MSI)  | Mr. Vinaya Kumar Kasjoo       | Managing Director   |
| Ministry of Water Resources, Physical Planning and Public Works                     | Honorable Deepak Gyawali      | Minister of Water Resources, Physical Planning and Public Works |
| Nari Chetna Kendra Nepal (WACN)   | Ms. Prativa Subedi            | President   |
| Nepal Centre for Contemporary Studies (NCCS)  | Dr. Lok Raj Baral             | Professor & Executive Chairman                                  |
| Nepal Federation of Nationalities   | Mr. Yam Bahadur Jhedi Magar   | Secretary   |
| Nepal Federation of Nationalities (NEFEN)   | Mr. Balkrishna Mabuhnag Limbu | Secretary General   |

| Organisation  | Name                       | Designation                             |
|---|----------------------------|---|
| Nepal Foundation for Advanced Studies (NEFAS)                         | Mr. Ananda P. Shrestha     | Executive Director                      |
| Nepal Water Conservation Foundation                                   | Mr. Ajaya Dixit            | Director                                |
| New Era   | Dr. Harka Gurung           | Board Member                            |
| NPC   | Dr. Shankar Sharma         | Vice-chairman                           |
| Panos South Asia  | Ms. Saneeya Hussain        | Director                                |
| Pro Public  | Mr. Kedar Khadka           | Director (Good Governance Project)      |
| Research Centre for Educational Innovation and Development (CERID) TU | Dr. Bijaya Kumar Thapa     | Coordinator, Formative Research Project |
| Research Centre for Educational Innovation and Development, TU        | Dr. Bijaya K. Thapa        |   |
| Research Centre for Educational Innovation and Development, TU        | Dr. Hridaya R. Bajracharya | Executive Director                      |
| Research Centre for Educational Innovation and Development, TU        | Dr. Kishor Shrestha        |   |
| Research Centre for Educational Innovation and Development, TU        | Mr. Gaja Sundar Pradhan    |   |
| Research Centre for Educational Innovation and Development, TU        | Mr. Oj Man Singh Shrestha  |   |
| Research Centre for Educational Innovation and Development, TU        | Mr. Surya B. Mulmi         |   |
| Royal Danish Embassy  | Mr. Gert Meinicke          | Charge d’Affaire                        |
| Rural Reconstruction Nepal  | Dr. Arjun Kumar Karki      | President                               |
| SAPAP/UNDP  | Dr. P Subrahmanyam         | Programme Co-ordinator,                 |
| SAPROS  | Mr. Narendra Bdr. K.C.     | Executive Director                      |
| SCN   | Mr. Valter Tinderholt      | Resident Representative                 |
| SNV/Nepal   | Jan De Witte               | Director                                |

| Organisation           | Name                          | Designation  |
|------------------------|-------------------------------|--|
| SNV/Nepal              | Mr. Arun Dhoj Adhikari,       | Governance Advisor                                       |
| Social Welfare Council | Mr. Ganesh Gurung             | Vice-Chairperson   |
| Social Welfare Council | Ms. Prabha Thakar             | Member Secretary   |
| SURF /UNDP             | Mr. Henrik Fredborg<br>Larsen | Policy Advisor<br>Decentralisation & Local<br>Governance |
| World Bank             | Dr. Lynn Bennett              | Lead Social Scientist                                    |

### Roundtable with NGOs:

| Organisation                                      | Name                 | Designation        |
|---|----------------------|--------------------|
| Centre for Human Rights<br>and Democratic Studies | Pradeep Ghimiere     | Secretary          |
| DEPROSC   | Dr. Pitambar Acharya |                    |
| INHURED   | Anjana Shakya        | Programme Director |
| INSEC   | Subodh Pyakurel      | Director           |
| Nepal South Asia Centre                           | Anil Bhattarai       |                    |
| Panos South Asia                                  | Saneeya Hussain      | Director           |
| Pro-public  | Mr. Kedar Khadka     | Director           |
| Rural Reconstruction Nepal                        | Dr. Ajun K. Karki    | Director           |

### Roundtable with researchers:

| Name                      | Designation        |
|---------------------------|--------------------|
| Dr. Dev Raj Dahal         | Consultant         |
| Dr. Krishna B. Bhattachan | Sociologist        |
| Dr. Sumitra Manadhar      | Chairperson        |
| Mr. Ananda P. Shrestha    | Executive Director |

| Name                   | Designation     |
|------------------------|-----------------|
| Dr. Siera Tamang       | Editor / Member |
| Dr. Jit Bahadur Gurung | Advisor         |

## **Annex II**

### **List of Institutions and organisations engaged in research**

#### *Public:*

#### **RESEARCH CENTRES AT THE TRIBUHVAN UNIVERSITY : Semi-autonomous research centres at the university**

- Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies (CNAS)
- Centre for Economic and Development Administration (CEDA),
- Research Centre for Educational Innovation and Development (CERID)
- Research Centre for Applied Science and Technology (RECAST)

#### **RESEACH INSITUTES AND GOVERNMENT AGENCIES:**

#### **Government research and training centres and government agencies doing research,**

- Panchayat Training Centre,
- Nepal Administrative Staff College (NASC),
- Agricultural Projects Service Centre (APROSC),
- Industrial Service Sector (ISS),
- Trade Promotion Centre (TPC)
- Water and Energy Commission Sector (WECS).
- The National Planning Commission (NPC),
- Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS),
- Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB),
- Royal Nepal Academy (RNA) were encouraged to carry out more research projects.

#### *Private – non-profit*

#### **IMPLEMENTIG NGOs**

#### **NGOs with strong base in action research**

- Center for Environmental and Agricultural Policy Research Extension and Development (CEAPRED)
- Center for Research on Environment Health and Population Activities (CREHPA)
- Center for Integrated Economic Development
- Centre for Legal Research and Resource Development (CeLRRd)
- Centre for Policy Research and Analysis (CPRA)
- Centre for Social Research and Development (CSRd)
- Development Project Service Centre (DEPROSC)
- Rural Reconstruction Nepal (RRN)
- Support Activities for Poor Producers (SAPROS)

## **NGO RESEARCH INSTITUTES**

**NGOs carrying out commissioned research including base line survey, impact studies and policy research**

- Institute for Integrated Development Studies (IIDS)
- Industrial Enterprise Development Institute (IEDI)
- Nepal Centre for Contemporary Studies (NCCS)
- National Democratic Institutes for International Affairs (NDI)
- Nepal Environmental and Scientific Services
- Nepal Foundation for Advance Studies (NEFAS)
- Nepal Water Conservation Foundation
- Policy Analysis Council
- Socio-Economic and Environmental Research Centre
- Social Science Baha
- Transparency International Nepal
- Institute of Governance and Development (IGD)
- Nepal Institute of Development Studies

## **HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATION**

**Advocacy oriented institutes and also conduct various survey and studies on human right violation both independently and commissioned studies**

- Coalition for Action for South Asian Cooperation (CASAC)
- Human Rights Organization of Nepal (HURON)
- Informal Sector Service Centre (INSEC)
- INHURED International
- Institute of Human Rights and Democracy (IHRD)
- National Human Rights Academy (HURFON)
- South Asia Forum for Human Rights (SAFHR)

*Private – commercial:*

## **CONSULTANCY AND RESEARCH FIRMS**

**that provides consultancy services including carrying out base line survey, impact studies, socio-economic surveys and commissioned research.**

- Human Resource Development Centre (HURDEC)
- Media Services International (MSI)
- Nepal Consult
- New Era
- Organisation Development Centre (ODC)

## **Annex III**

Terms of reference