

## Nepal: Business and Security

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The 2006 Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA) brought an end to a decade of civil war in Nepal, but the implementation of law and order still remains weak. Local businesses in particular suffer from interference by members of the political system. They are often subject to intimidation, forced donations and manipulated tender bidding, imposed by political parties and their associated organisations. Youth organisations have joined in some of these practices, frequently asking shop owners for payments and, in case these are not granted, damaging or destroying their premises. Merchants are also affected by commercial disruptions due to frequent strikes, labour unrest, and traffic accidents. In absence of effective police control, some business owners resort to employing private security agents that use excessive violence, which in turn causes fears among the wider public.

The impact of instability and insecurity on businesses and their potential to contribute to this situation in Nepal makes them an important stakeholder for efforts to increase public security. For this reason International Alert, an organisation that helps people find peaceful solutions to conflict, partnered with National Business Initiative (NBI), an NGO formed by 14 Nepali business associations and individual companies working to strengthen the role and capacity of the Nepali private sector, to contribute to peace. Their joint project was part of a larger initiative called “Enabling Civil Society to Contribute to More Effective, Inclusive and Accountable Public Security Policies and Programming.” The aim was to engage with district and national level police forces, related government agencies and local business owners in six districts in the country’s Terai region – a hub for manufacturing businesses – to find ways to improve public security.

### Setting Up Working Groups for Joint Security Initiatives at the District-Level

In each of the target districts, International Alert first trained members of the local chamber of commerce on conflict-sensitive communication, human rights and conflict transformation and then supported them to set up a working group with senior representatives of the local police and local government representatives. The groups met regularly to discuss current security challenges and come up with practical solutions. International Alert then provided seed funding to implement the solutions. For example, in one of the districts the group was able to hire night watchmen and install CCTV monitors to better monitor activities in the market in the largest town. In other districts, they were able to provide fuel for police vehicles or other equipment such as metal detectors to police staff so that they could increase patrols and perform more effective searches of suspects.

#### The challenge

Malpractices such as forced donations and gang violence affect the security of local businesses and the community as a whole.

#### Theory of change:

Enabling business owners and the police to jointly plan local public security initiatives broadens local ownership and enables more legitimate and effective security strategies.

### Advocacy at the District and National level

International Alert supported the working groups in the six districts to come together on the sub-regional level and define common security priorities. A national workshop was also organised during which business representatives could discuss their security needs with police and government representatives, and a series of public slogans promoting improved public security were agreed for later dissemination. Business representatives also met high-level

political decision-makers one to one, prepared press releases and appeared in TV and radio broadcasted interviews. As a result of these efforts, members of several major political parties made public commitments to address security issues affecting businesses. For example, they pledged to clamp down on party cadres demanding donations.

This project highlights the interconnectedness of private and public security needs and the need for the “whole of society” to participate in peacebuilding initiatives aimed at improving human security. Businesses and communities realised that malpractices such as forced donations or gang violence constituted a threat to everybody and needed to be addressed in collaboration with police and other government actors in order to establish a safe operating and living environment for the entire community.

