

# Rebuilding Educational System in Countries Affected by War or National Disaster

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## **Background**

A full decade has already passed since the revolt was incited by the Communist Party of Nepal(Maoist) against the traditionally rooted monarchy and the system institutionalized by the constitution of Nepal - 1990 as a bipillar power system naming multiparty democracy with the constitutional monarchy. In the beginning it was started as a politically motivated movement against the causes of the state regarding socioeconomic discrimination, but the armed rebellions uprising reached at its extremity following an ultra communist nightmare of establishing a Maoist utopia.

Following years gradually turned worse for the rural people as the insurgency started bringing most of the remote and rural areas in its grip and the police that was the only state force to protect the people failed to control over them since the Maoists had then become stronger with sophisticated arms and ammunition through various sources.

The armed conflict between the insurgents and the state got a new dimension after the Narayanhiti Royal Palace massacre when King Birendra and his entire family members were killed alongwith some other close royal members. The Maoists stated the massacre as a conspiracy and took it as a coup d'etat as for them the rebels were said to have set understanding on some issues with the late King and the massacre changed the entire vision of the Maoists in vain. Upto then only the police were the singly fighting force against the rebels and instating an armed police force though felt a need was not set to deploy at the instance.

Deployment of the Royal Nepal Army had also some said problems regarding the security council which had some constitutional constraints barring the army to mobilize on the front against the insurgents. But later the RNA comprised along of the newly formed Armed Police and the civil police were formed to make a Unified Security Force, as a task command force to combat the rebels.

The decade long insurgency has been going on as civil war causing a perpetual disaster with heavy death toll on one hand and increasing disabled population on the other.

## **Present Scenario**

The ten year long armed conflict has cost more than 15 thousand lives. Number of casualties and injuries has reached more than 25 thousands. 700 children (below 16 years) have lost their lives whereas many children have so far been either seriously injured or lost their parts of body being disabled forever or suffered a hapless life.

A case study of Rukum district, one of the most war affected regions show the glimpse of violence. According to “Bal Kalyan Samitee”, an NGO working for the welfare of children and CWIN, out of 8000 children who have lost their parents due to the armed conflict in Nepal, 1327 are in Rukum only. 511 parents have been killed only in Rukum throughout the insurgency. The state side has killed fathers of 352 children whereas 111 children have lost their fathers due to the violence committed by the rebels. 170 children have lost their both parents in the district. Out of the 43 villages in the district, Pipal Village Development Committee has suffered the most where there are 69 children, who do not have parents. 12 villages do have more than three dozen such children who are now orphans. Fathers of 894 children and mothers of 119 children have been killed during the armed conflict. Among these children 38.5 percent are of 11 to 14 age group and 36.5 percent of these children come under 6-10 age group. 178 children hurt during the armed conflict have been even deprived of necessary medical treatment. Remaining many of them were found sick. Many other children had been seen having serious problems of lacking food, clothes, shelters and medicines. Educational institutions are the most war affected sector since the Maoists incited their revolt. During this period children have been made victims to suffer from killing (losing lives), amputation, displacement, losing parents, abduction, mental harassment, etc. The state is also not behind in torturing children as the number of arrested children has reached more than 264 according to CWIN, a non governmental organization working for child workers in Nepal. An estimated number of more than 30 thousand students including their teachers have been abducted for the political brainwashing of them. A remarkable size of the Maoists’ people’s Liberation Army has been manned with such abductees who do not even know the meaning of revolution or why they are fighting for!

Due to the ongoing conflict, the literacy rate has not gone progressive. Because of lacking schools, children have become disadvantaged of getting education.

## **Issues / Problems**

There are many issues worthy of consideration with regards to armed conflict and disability.

- \* The rehabilitation of conflict victims and Persons with Disabilities(PWDs) is sadly and awoefully underfunded endeavor.
- \* Schools are being used by both government and Maosist rebels as barracks destroying educational environment.

- \* No NGOs are found established to work in the area of conflict victims.
- \* No data so far has been reflected on disability.

### **How to Rebuild Educational System Affected by War and National Disaster**

Consequences of a war or national disasters seem very critical as physical infrastructure setup for the development would have been demolished. The more critical condition ought to be apparent for rebuilding the system again. Once something already planned, implemented or planted, if gets damaged it takes a longer time span to rebuild the same than the period when it was first initiated. It implies in all developmental system in general and educational system in particular.

Rebuilding educational system in countries affected by war or national disasters is not any exception than the aforesaid situation. Country like Nepal, an underdeveloped and landlocked has always various constraints for its development.

The educational system of Nepal that needed still a long journey to travel for a satisfactory achievement has been trapped in the war between the state and the insurgents. Situation has gone so far worse that the impact of the conflict may fall to affect the entire educational system of Nepal a half century a back. Up to the nation's Tenth Five Years Plan, the literacy rate reached at 56 percent will surely have lagged behind to achieve with the same place for many years. The worst of all, out of thousands of war affected victims are such children who have now turned to be disabled, their rights of getting education has gone in vain due to the conflict. State run as well as donor supported programmes of providing education and rehabilitation to disadvantaged including CWDs have been threatened due to the same insurgency.

However, the conflict or disaster stricken countries including Nepal should have some ways to resolve the problems before situation goes totally hapless. Here are some recommendations for rebuilding educational system affected by war and national disaster as follows.

### **Recommendations**

- \* Civil society and Organizations working in CBR approaches and who have trained manpower in providing services such as therapy, assistive devices and do home support should be involved in rehabilitation of conflict victims.
- \* Strong voice should be raised against using schools as barracks to bring peaceful environment in the periphery of schools.
- \* INGOs / Development partners should encourage Civic societies and national organizations to play their roles in serving the conflict victims in general and children in particular with appropriate training.

- \* INGOs / Development partners should support and cooperate for the reconstruction of infrastructures and proper rehabilitation programmes in the affected areas or nearby affected areas.
- \* Troubling children(all types including disabled)should be taken in rehabilitation centers for counseling and other necessary services and be enrolled in nearby schools with proper support.
- \* A counseling unit should be established in all rehabilitation centers before placing the children in the concerned schools.

## **Conclusion**

Saddest of all is that schools have been made battles for war between the state and the Maoist rebels. They have either used schools as shelters or taken refugee there. Hampering classes, shutting down schools, changing the school calendar, abducting students and teachers for compelling them to have “Janabadi education” or the so called people’s education, a copycat pattern of the 60’s cultural revolution of Mao’s China. Billions of loss has straightly marred the education sector due to the damaged infrastructures all caused by the ongoing conflict.

Displaced children from the education are very high though the data is not available. The government has not paid any attention towards rehabilitating such children to schools. Due to security reason those children show no heed to get back. No strategy for war affected children has so far been drafted or enacted. Most conflict victim PWDs in Nepal are of active working age. Now not only are they deprived of education but likely to fall into the trap of chronic poverty. They are prone to more violence and experience psychological trauma throughout their lives.

**“We request international communities to support Nepal in creating conducive educational environment for conflict victim children.”**

## **Note:**

This paper has been based on various case studies and surveys conducted by the Non Governmental Organizations, International agencies concerning to internal war in Nepal issues, human rights, child labor, women and education. Newspapers an various journals have also been used for data and information source. All information may not necessarily comply with the official source concerned to the government of Nepal.