

## Peacebuilding for Social Harmony

As part of UN Interagency Rehabilitation Programme (UNIRP), UNICEF, working with the Children Associated with Arms Forces and Armed Groups (CAAFAG) Working Group has developed peacebuilding activities as another innovative area of support to assist Verified Minors and Late Recruits (VMLRs) reintegrate into the community. Peacebuilding events are promoted to enhance trust and establish strong community links. The initiative provides a platform to VMLRs and community youth to engage in positive ways to support the rehabilitation process and ensure the smooth transition to civilian life.

An emphasis on life skills and reconciliation activities facilitate the process with many community-based integration and thought-provoking activities designed to stir up debate and discussion amongst the participants and wider community.



*A VMLR participating in Education option performing his talent in a street drama*

### Community Support

For the community to support and facilitate the reintegration of returning of VMLRs, it is important that they are fully aware of their role in supporting the process. The community's perception of the VMLRs living together in cantonments outside the bounds of traditional society is a barrier to their smooth reintegration. As a result, young girls are more likely to face stigmatisation on their return to the village and young male VMLRs with relatively inadequate literacy levels as are often overwhelmed and find it hard adjust to their new situation.

### Local Youth Clubs

The initiative is designed to build on the skills of VMLRs and local youth in order to engage in active debate and dialogue to promote cooperation and understanding. Together they gain knowledge of applied experiential learning skills and how to facilitate outdoor leadership camps for team building and trust-building activities. They engage in dialogue with each other on issues of common concern to build supportive peer relationships. The peacebuilding activities are expected to facilitate interaction and joint initiatives between participants and local community youth as a way to restore social cohesiveness. It also establishes the VMLRs' participation in the peace process as agents of change, enhances their self-confidence

by recognizing their leadership skills, and provides them with a meaningful role in the community.

VMLRs are fundamental in promoting a non-violent approach and building a common agenda in coordination with the needs of community members. Topics such as non-discrimination, human rights, gender equality, health issues, drugs and alcohol, inter-caste marriage, traditional and cultural beliefs, the role of women, HIV/AIDS and the peace process are approached in a community spirited and educational way. Peacebuilding activities take place in the community as well as training centres and youth clubs and take the form of sports competitions and art and song competitions. Rallies are organised for mass awareness, street dramas conducted as education forums, and through this platform of learning and enjoyment the community is brought together, striving towards one goal of positive understanding and social cohesiveness. Throughout the trainings VMLRs are consistently supported, monitored, mentored and counselled through sensitive and difficult issues leading to greater understanding of themselves and their peers. Peacebuilding activities carried out in areas where communities are doubtful of the reliability of VMLRs are essential to reverse and minimize negative feelings and create an environment of trust. In some parts of Nepal, VMLRs are welcomed and communities actively insist on positively supporting the reintegration programme.

With the VMLRs playing active roles as civilians by engaging in a multitude of community development activities, the way ahead is promising and optimistic.



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