International Labour Organization

Project to Promote the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
(PRO 169)

Achieving the Millennium Development Goals among the Indigenous Surels of Nepal

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Dambar Chemjong

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Acknowledgements

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<tr>
<td>AIDS</td>
<td>Acquired Immune deficiency Syndrome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARI</td>
<td>Acute Respiratory Infection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BPFA</td>
<td>Beijing Platform of Actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBS</td>
<td>Central Bureau of Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CF</td>
<td>Community Forest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEDAW</td>
<td>Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CFUG</td>
<td>Community Forest User Groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DDC</td>
<td>District Development Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EFA</td>
<td>Education for All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD</td>
<td>Focus Group Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCAP-N</td>
<td>Global Call to Action against Poverty Nepal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GO</td>
<td>Governmental Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HH</td>
<td>Household</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIV</td>
<td>Human Immuno Deficiency Virus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HMG-N</td>
<td>His Majesty’s Government of Nepal (now Nepal Government)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IASG</td>
<td>Inter-Agency Support Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IIDS</td>
<td>Institute for Integrated Development Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILO</td>
<td>International Labour Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(I)NGOs</td>
<td>(International)Non-Governmental Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMCI</td>
<td>Integrated Management of Childhood Illness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LDC</td>
<td>Least Developed Country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MDG</td>
<td>Millennium Development Goal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOES</td>
<td>Ministry of Education and Sports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPFS</td>
<td>Master Plan for Forestry Sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Not Available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEFIN</td>
<td>Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NFDIN</td>
<td>National Foundation for Development of Indigenous Nationalities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHS-IP</td>
<td>Nepal Health Sector Reform Strategy and Implementation Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NPC</td>
<td>National Planning Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PFII</td>
<td>Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRO 169</td>
<td>Project to Promote the Rights of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRS</td>
<td>Poverty Reduction Strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRSP</td>
<td>Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rs.</td>
<td>Rupees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLC</td>
<td>School Leaving Certificate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSWUG</td>
<td>Sunakhari Surel Women Upliftment Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUS</td>
<td>Surel Upliftment Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TB</td>
<td>Tuberculosis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Education and Social Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNIATG</td>
<td>United Nations Inter-Agency Thematic Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USD</td>
<td>US Dollar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VDC</td>
<td>Village development Committee</td>
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Map 1: MAP OF NEPAL AND STUDY SITE
Executive Summary

Introduction

Priorities relating to MDGs are increasingly fine tuned in national context. ILO has consistently stressed the need of contextualizing the MDGs to national contexts with focus on indigenous peoples. Without faster progress, the MDGs will be “seriously jeopardized.”

The main objective of this case study is to focus on one indigenous community-Surel, and analyze the main steps it would take to achieve the MDGs at the community level. This case study is primarily based on fieldwork in the Surel community in Dolakha district in central Hills of Nepal. The fieldwork was carried out in February and July, 2006.

Background and context

After People’s Movement Part-II in April 2006, the government and the Maoist are in peace process but the national situation at this time is characterized by “no war and no peace.” Achievements of MDGs in Nepal have been in serious problems in Nepal from the very beginning due to the internal armed conflict between the Maoist insurgents and the government’s security forces since 1996. Achievement of MDGs in Nepal is very challenging.

Continuing steps of MDGs in Nepal are developing its framework, contextualized indicators and capacity to claim rights, advocacy, capacity building, workshops for sensitization of MDGs at all levels, internalization into government’s planning process, incorporation in the Tenth Plan/PRSP and upcoming Eleventh Plan and need assessments. Policy, implementation and its monitoring are future plans.

Surels: Location and livelihood

Surels are the focus community of this study. Surels are one of the 59 indigenous nationalities recognized and identified by the Government of Nepal. NEFIN has categorized Surels as one of the ten endangered community. Their traditional homeland is Suri in Dolakha district. Suri settlement is in ward number 7 of Suri VDC. The total population of Surels in 29 HHs is 157 (52.9% male and 47.1% female). Of the total 108 adult work force population 50 percent reported agriculture farming as their primary occupation. During the survey period, 27 percent (males 36% and females 16%) of the total population were out of village doing some other jobs elsewhere in India and within the country. Internal migration, specially of the Surel women, among the Surels was triggered by growth in carpet and sweater knitting factories that began to grow in the Kathmandu Valley in 1980s. Temporary migration in search of job was found to be a major option by which Surels are earning the cash income.

None of the Surels had their Surel family name their citizenship certificates; they indeed use Sunuwar family names.

The Surel Community and the MDGs

The possibility of achievement of MDGs and its target as assessed by the NPC, HMG-N and UNDP and this case study are shown in the following matrix:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MDGs and the Targets</th>
<th>Possibility of achievement</th>
<th>NPC</th>
<th>HMG-N and UNDP</th>
<th>Study Conclusion</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>MDG 1: Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Target 1: Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than $1 a day</td>
<td>likely</td>
<td>likely</td>
<td>impossible</td>
<td>(&quot;likely&quot; only if programs are targeted to indigenous peoples)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target 2: Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger</td>
<td>possible</td>
<td>potentially</td>
<td>impossible</td>
<td>(&quot;likely&quot; only if programs are targeted to indigenous peoples)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MDG 2: Achieve Universal Primary Education</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Target 3: Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling.</td>
<td>unlikely</td>
<td>unlikely</td>
<td>highly unlikely</td>
<td>(due to the lack of mother tongue and indigenous peoples sensitive education policies, plans and programs in Nepal; however, some improvement is possible among school going boys and girls, if NEFIN and NFDIN could continue their targeted financial help to Surel children)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MDG 3: Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Target 4: Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and at all levels of education not later than 2015.</td>
<td>possible</td>
<td>potentially</td>
<td>likely due to efforts made by indigenous peoples' organizations-NEFIN and NFDIN</td>
<td>(Would be &quot;highly unlikely&quot; if NEFIN and NFDIN would stop support and Nepal Government and donors’ policies, plans and programs are not sensitive to indigenous peoples, including Surels)</td>
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<td><strong>MDG 4: Reduce Child Mortality</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Target 5: Reduce the child under 5 mortality rate by two thirds between 1990 and 2015</td>
<td>likely</td>
<td>potentially</td>
<td>likely</td>
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<td><strong>MDG 5: Improve Maternal Health</strong></td>
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<td>Target 6: Reduce by three-quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio</td>
<td>possible</td>
<td>potentially</td>
<td>possible</td>
<td></td>
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<td><strong>MDG 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and Other Diseases</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Target 7: Halve halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS</td>
<td>unlikely</td>
<td>potentially</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Target 8: To halve halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases</td>
<td>potentially</td>
<td>unlikely</td>
<td>unlikely</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td><strong>MDG 7: Ensure Environmental Sustainability</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Target 9: Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programs and reverse the loss of environmental resources</td>
<td>possible</td>
<td>potentially</td>
<td>unlikely</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Target 10: Halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation</td>
<td>likely</td>
<td>potentially</td>
<td>unlikely</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Target 11: Have achieved by 2020 a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>No mentioned</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td></td>
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<td><strong>MDG 8: Develop a Global Partnership for Development</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target not mentioned</td>
<td>Not mentioned</td>
<td>No mentioned</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td></td>
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None of the Surel in the community has ever heard about the MDGs and Nepal Government's programs to meet the goals and targets.

**MDG 1: Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger**: Dispossession of land and insufficient food supply are the main reasons indicating the economic poverty among Surels. It has forced Surels to migrate to different parts of India and elsewhere in Nepal in search of employment. About 80 percent Surel families owned less than half a hectare of unproductive dry land. Flat and fertile lands owned by dominant “high caste” Chhetris. A majority of Surel households (52%) produce food enough for 6-9 months, one third (35%) for 3-6 months and one tenth (10%) for only 1-3 months. Given the fact that the majority of the Nepal’s population comprise of indigenous peoples; that they have been dispossessed from their rights to land, forest and other natural resources; that the decision making, implementation and monitoring is fully dominated by Hill, Hindu, male Bahun-Chhetris; and that indigenous peoples are not duly consulted and allowed to participate, achievement of MDG 1 and its targets 1 & 2 is impossible. This Surel case study clearly indicates it. Surel perceptions of poverty indicators include land dispossession and cultural domination.

**MDG 2: Achieve Universal Primary Education**: Surels are lagging far behind other caste groups and indigenous nationalities in their educational attainment, including literacy. Only 33 percent of the total Surel populations are found to be literate compared to the 53.7 percent of the national average. Surel women (24.2%) are even far behind their male (41.1%) counterparts. The average literacy among the indigenous peoples is 53.6 percent. Of the total 46 Surel population who have received education by formal schooling, only one of them had completed his 12th grade high school. Unless “Ensuring the Right of Indigenous Peoples and Linguistic Minorities to Basic and Primary Education through Mother Tongue” in “Education for All, National Plan of Action (2001-2015)” prepared by MOE and UNESCO is sincerely implemented Surels would not achieve universal primary education as targeted by MDGs.

**MDG 3: Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women**: School going Surel boys and girls are getting financial support from indigenous peoples’ organizations-NEFIN and NFDIN. If their financial support should continue the target could be achieved among the Surels. Surel women equally participate in the decision making process at the household level but they are dominated by men and women belonging to dominant castes.

**MDG 4: Reduce Child Mortality**: The availability of different vaccination shots and oral rehydration solution has helped to reduce the child mortality rate in their community as diarrhoea and acute respiratory infection related diseases (such as pneumonia) were the main causes of children's death in the past.

**MDG 5: Improve Maternal Health**: There are not any health facility related to “safe motherhood and neo-natal health care” nor was there any other medical facility made available to the Surel women to ensure the safer motherhood.

**MDG 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and Other Diseases**: HIV/AIDS is not a problem in the community. So far Surels have no malaria cases. Surels explain that those who work in the plastic slipper factories in Calcutta have higher chances to get TB because of the unhealthy environment in the factory, and poor and cheap quality liquor which the workers drink.

**MDG 7: Ensure Environmental Sustainability**: Surel women, who are executive committee members of Forest User’s Groups (FUG) in the village, are dominated by “high” caste
(Chhetris and Bahuns), indigenous nationalities (Newars), and Dalits (Kami) in decision making processes. The key positions, (Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, Joint secretary and Treasurer) are occupied by other caste and ethnic groups. There is enough supply of drinking water during the monsoon season but becomes scarce in the winter and dry season when the water source gradually dries.

**MDG 8: Develop a Global Partnership for Development:** As Nepal sees a “tremendous potential” for partnership, there is a long way to go to reach out to the Surel community.

**Development Needs and Priorities Expressed by Surels**

**MDG 1:** Nepal Government should allocate budget for irrigation, financial and technical support, and provide land and skill training.

**MDG 2:** Indigenous peoples’ organizations should continue financial support. Nepal Government should provide education and news in Surel mother tongue also.

**MDG 3:** Surel women expect financial and technical help and support, employment and inclusion in decision making positions in local groups.

**MDG 4:** Surels need adequate immunization, health facility and improvement in food production.

**MDG 5 & 6:** Surels need training to produce female health worker form their own community for health counselling and check-up.

**MDG 7:** Nepal Government should ensure Surels’ participation in decision making positions in forest user’s groups.

**Additional priority needs:** Electricity, road, employment, targeted programmes and awareness raising among the Government administrators and political leaders at the local bodies are needed.

**Consultation with and Participation of Indigenous Peoples in MDGs**

Nepal Government and donors have no meaningful policy and programmes on consultation and participation of indigenous peoples. Dominant castes, i.e. Bahun-Chhetris continue to dominate at all levels. Indigenous peoples’ participation in prioritisation of problems, analysis of potentials, planning, access to resources, resource mobilization, implementation and sharing of benefits and evaluation are nominal not only among endangered indigenous nationalities, including Surels, but also among advanced and other categories of indigenous peoples. There has been token consultation and participation of indigenous peoples in the process of preparation of the three MDGs progress reports by NPC-HMGN, UNDP and GCAP Nepal.

**Issues and Challenges in Achieving of MDGs for Indigenous and Tribal Peoples**

Make existing plans, policies and programs sensitive on indigenous peoples’ concerns and implement them sincerely.

Structural and institutional challenges are great due to fluid political situation during democratic transition and weak government structure due to a decade long insurgency.

It is estimated that about 16 billion rupees (1 US $ = 70 Rupees) is needed to achieve the set targets and additional resources are needed for target group programs for women, Dalits (“untouchables”) and indigenous peoples.

Sensitivity to cultural diversity is lacking.

**Surel specific challenges**

Undoing the incidences of poverty, land dispossesion, low educational attainment and continuing exploitation and domination by the “high caste” people and the state is the main challenge.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Recommendations concerning the main actions needed in order to achieve the MDGs at the local level, with focus on Surel community**

- NFDIN, NEFIN, ILO and other international, governmental and non-governmental organizations should organize awareness raising programs on indigenous peoples to the government employees in the district, VDCs, wards, local political leaders and development workers.

- DDC and VDCs should allocate budget to address the needs expressed by the Surels.

- NEFIN and NFDIN’s district offices should be decisively involved in the district/local development planning process.

- Considering the endangered status of Surels, the GOs and NGOs working from central to local level should take sincere consideration of development and right based issues raised by Surels. So as to materialize this provision there should special desk/programs in the DDC to take care of the issues of endangered indigenous peoples like Surels and highly marginalized groups like Thami indigenous people in Dolakha district.

- Representation of Surels in DDC, VDC, ward and user’s groups must be ensured by adopting a policy of special rights of Surels.

- Government should come up with policy, plan and a package program to give due complementation to Surels for their loss of land and control over natural resources.

- Employment opportunities must be created to stop migration to India.

- The government should develop and implement tri-lingual (mother tongue, any other national language and any international language of their choice) policy in education and
provide necessary physical, technical and financial support to give education in Surel mother tongue.

- National and local governments and other NGOs must go through an adequate and meaningful consultation process before they formulate and implement any programs that concerns Surel community.

- The Dolakha DDC should document and publish the profiles of all indigenous nationalities groups of the district.

- Legal provisions should be made to ensure the meaningful and decisive participation of Surel men and women in the overall development process of the district.

- There should be legal provisions that Surels and other indigenous nationalities should be consulted before the GOs and NGOs implement any development projects (e.g. hydroelectric, irrigation, road construction, logging etc.) using the natural resources belonged to the indigenous nationalities.

**Recommendations on steps that need to be taken in order to ensure the achievement of the MDGs for indigenous peoples in Nepal in general**

- Nepal Government and donors should ensure full and meaningful consultation with and participation of indigenous peoples in MDGs process from contextualization to implementation and monitoring of MDGs in Nepal.

- The Government of Nepal and donors working in Nepal should contextualize MDGs in the local context full sensitivity to indigenous peoples and other marginalized groups.

- The Government of Nepal and donors should ensure necessary financial and technical resources, including resources needed to reach out to indigenous peoples.

- International Standards, particularly ILO Convention No. 169 should be respected by all at all times from designing to monitoring of all MDGs activities. It should be recalled here that the Parliament has recently passed a resolution and directed the Nepal Government for its ratification.

- Indigenous peoples’ rights to land, forest and other natural resources should be recognized and practiced sincerely to help to achieve the MDGs 1 & 7.

- In sector programs, such as education, health and environment, both the Nepal Government and international donors may follow recommendations made in a Tool Kit on Best Practices for Including Indigenous Peoples in Sector Programme Support developed by DANIDA in 2004 to help to achieve all the goals of MDGs (DANIDA 2004).

- Both the Nepal Government and international donors should sincerely implement “Ensuring the Right of Indigenous Peoples and Linguistic Minorities to Basic and Primary Education through Mother Tongue” in “Education for All, National Plan of

- Mainstreaming gender programmes and implementation of CEDAW and BPFA should recognize diversity among women by being sensitive to indigenous women and girl child in particular and indigenous peoples in general to help to achieve MDG goal 3.

- Indigenous peoples’ intellectual property rights to customary knowledge must be recognized and focus should be on capacity building of indigenous peoples’ institutions and health workers to help to achieve the MDGs 4, 5 & 6.

- Participatory mapping of existing customary rights and management system should be in place to help to achieve the MDG 7.

- Nepal’s central and local government bodies and donors who have initiated partnership with indigenous peoples need to expand and focus on local levels, and those who have no partnership should develop and expand as soon as possible.
INTRODUCTION

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were drawn from the Millennium Declaration done by the Millennium Summit of September 2000. MDGs set “revolutionary agenda” and outlines development priorities to be achieved by the year 2015. The eight goals comprise 18 targets and 48 indicators for poverty reduction and improvements in education, health, gender equality, and environment. Priorities relating to MDGs are increasingly fine tuned in national poverty reduction strategies (PRSs), sector policies/programmes and national budgets. The International Labour Organization (ILO) has consistently stressed not only the importance of country ownership but also the need of contextualizing the MDGs to national contexts with focus on indigenous peoples.

Stock takings of progress made towards the achievement of the MDGs in the last five years at global and national levels indicate that without faster progress, the MDGs will be, following the World Bank’s Global Monitoring Report, 2005, “seriously jeopardized”; but significant progress is possible if developing countries take steps to improve their policies and get necessary financial resources from the developed countries (Devarajan and Swanson 2002). Also, the UN system, through the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (PFII) and the Inter-Agency Support Group (IASG), has made efforts to critically analyse the MDGs and the strategies for achieving those MDGs, with specific reference to indigenous and tribal peoples. In its Technical Position Paper, the IASG expressed a number of concerns: that the MDGs do not focus on issues that are of critical importance to indigenous and tribal peoples, such as land rights, natural resource management, and culture; that there is a general lack of indigenous participation in the definition and implementation of national strategies to achieve the MDGs; and that there is a need for adequate and appropriate data collection and disaggregation at the national level in order to adequately assess the situation of the peoples in question (UN 2005). IASP has aptly noted that “Efforts are needed at the national, regional and international levels to achieve the Millennium Development Goals with the full participation of indigenous communities — women and men — without interfering with their development paths and their holistic understanding of their needs” and “Such efforts must take into account the multiple levels and sources of the discrimination and exclusion faced by indigenous peoples” (UN 2005:11-12).

At its Fourth Session in May 2005, the PFII looked specifically at how MDGs 1 and 2 are of specific relevance for indigenous peoples. As a contribution to this, the ILO also undertook research on poverty reduction strategies and their relevance for indigenous and tribal peoples in Nepal, Cambodia and Cameroon. Some common conclusions and challenges identified by these studies included that indigenous peoples were not involved in a meaningful manner in the process of developing the Poverty Reduction strategy Paper (PRSP) in all countries studied and that at the local level, indigenous representatives were not aware of the existence of such a process. This, in turn, has had implications for the relevance of the priorities for poverty reduction expressed at the national level and in the PRSP paper. The PFII, at its Fifth Session in May 2006 focused on all eight MDGs and their achievement for indigenous peoples.

The present study, therefore, constitutes part of the follow-up to the recommendations made in the research already undertaken by the ILO, in collaboration with its national partners. The study provides recommendations for follow-up on how to achieve the MDGs in indigenous communities, and therefore, will be of direct interest to a range of concerned actors.
The main objective of this case study is to focus on one indigenous community and analyse the main steps it would take to achieve the MDGs at the community level. Therefore, the study analyzes efforts and steps taken by the concerned actors to achieve the MDGs in Nepal and assess its relevance and challenges. The status of adequate consultation and full participation of indigenous and tribal peoples in national to local processes and strategies to achieve the MDGs in Nepal is analyzed by focusing on the Surels, who belong to one of the 59 indigenous nationalities of Nepal. The study contributes to the discussion at the national level concerning the implementation of the MDGs, with specific inputs to guide the process, taking into account the felt needs, priorities, consultation, and participation of indigenous and tribal peoples.

This case study is primarily based on fieldwork in the Surel community in Dolakha district in central Hills of Nepal. The fieldwork was completed in two phases: (a) First fieldwork was carried out in February 2006. In this phase, information was collected by using household (HH) survey, key informant interviews, and focus group discussions (FGD). A total of 29 Surel HHs were surveyed in Suri settlement in ward number 7 of Suri Village Development Committee (VDC). Some gaps remained during the first phase as it was conducted in the winter (off-farm season), as many youths and adult men had gone to India and elsewhere in Nepal seeking wage works. (b) Second fieldwork was carried out in mid-July 2006 to take the opportunity of rice and millet planting, as the youths and adults were back to the village to cultivate their farms. Additional information was collected from FGDs and interviews with the representatives of the Surel Upliftment Society (SUS) and the Sunakhari Surel Women Upliftment Group (SSWUG). Similarly, employees and other available social workers and the political leaders were consulted in the district headquarters of Dolakha district. In Kathmandu, social scientists, indigenous leaders/scholars involved in research and advocacy on the rights of indigenous nationalities, and representatives of several organisations, including Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN) and National Foundation for Development of Indigenous Nationalities (NFDIN), were consulted to collect their views. Different authorities associated with organizations such as the National Planning Commission (NPC), UNDP and Global Call to Action against Poverty (GCAP) Nepal, NGO Federation, who were involved in the process and steps to achieve MDGs and its targets, and preparing the national MDGs reports of Nepal, were also consulted. The main MDGs progress reports reviewed are: (a) “Nepal - Millennium Development Goals Progress Report 2002”; (b) “Nepal - Millennium Development Goals”; and (c) “Progress Report 2005 Whose Goals? Civil Society Perspectives on MGDs.”

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

This section focuses on country context and provides an overview of the MDG process in Nepal, and indigenous peoples and the focus community-Surel.

Country context

Nepal Communist Party (Maoist) launched people’s war on February 13, 1996. Since then Nepal has been going through a violent internal war between the Maoist insurgents and the government’s security forces. By now about 13,000 lives have already been lost in this war. After the royal massacre of June 2001, King Gyanendra succeeded King Birendra and his journey to absolute rule started after dissolution of the House of Representatives in 2002; and finally he took all the executive powers in his hand in 2004. The tri-polar conflict among the King, parliamentary political parties and the Maoist insurgents transformed into bi-polar...
conflict between democratic Seven-Party Alliance (SPA) and the NCP Maoist with declaration of their 12 point agreement to end absolute rule of the King by reinstating the parliament, in case of SPA, and holding a political conference, in the case of the Maoist, ultimately leading to the making of new constitution with inclusive restructuring of the state through constituent assembly leading to the establishment of sustainable peace in Nepal. The four-day Nepal wide strike in early April of 2006 called by SPA and supported by the civil society expanded to 19 days and millions of peoples belonging to all strata of the Nepalese society marched in the streets, which has become one of the unique historical events in the world. The King was forced to yield to popular demand to give up his executive powers and reinstated the House of Representatives to move in the road map of 12 point agreement between SPA and the Maoist insurgents. Nepal is going through the third democratic transition since then. The Nepal Government and international powers, specially the U.S., wants the Maoist to disarm first before they could join SPA to form the interim government. However, the Maoists have made it clear that they would accept to monitor arms of both sides, their people’s army and the Nepal army, by the UN but they would not lay down the arms until the constituent assembly elections are held. The Government is dilly dallying in holding election for constituent assembly and the Maoist insurgents are poised to launch part three of the People’s Movement if the reconciliatory process should fail. The country situation at this time, in brief, is “no war and no peace.” MDGs indeed have been in doldrums in Nepal from the very beginning and one may be optimistic to see improvement in the situation but the violent conflict may resume if peace talks should fail.

Overview of the MDG process in Nepal

The Government of Nepal signed the Millennium Declaration and MDGs but these have not been backed up by political commitments and policies, appropriate strategies, and adequate resources. Whatever policies and plans are in place, these are not so sensitive to indigenous peoples’ development needs and priorities. The continuing and future steps of MDGs process in Nepal are as follows:

I. Continuing steps
- Develop a framework
- Advocacy
- Capacity building
  - Develop contextualized indicators
  - National, regional and district level workshops for sensitization of MDGs
  - Develop capacity to claim rights
- Internalization into government’s planning process
  - Incorporation in the Tenth Plan/PRSP
  - Inclusive process
  - The Eleventh Plan to be based on MDGs
- Need assessments

II. Future steps
- Form policy
- Identify additional target programs
  - District poverty monitoring analysis system
  - Ground reality of existing monitoring system in 6 districts
  - Need assessment of district MDGs
  - Decentralized information management system
Indigenous peoples and the focus community

We have selected the Surel community as a case for this study. In 2004, NEFIN classified 59 indigenous nationalities into five categories based on indicators relating to literacy rate, housing type, land ownership, occupation, language, population and higher education. Surel has been categorized in the endangered indigenous nationalities group. The five categories are:

I. Endangered

II. Highly Marginalized

III. Marginalized

IV. Disadvantaged

V. Advanced
   1. Newar; 2. Thakali.
   * Not enumerated by the Census, 2001

Surels are one of the ten endangered indigenous nationalities of Nepal. They are still waiting to be enumerated by the national census. The category “endangered” not only indicates the near extinction of the number of population but also points out to the lowest level of human development. Compared to other indigenous peoples, including endangered groups, of Nepal, there are no published materials or formal written documents about them. Their social, cultural realities, relations of their livelihood to their natural resources or the livelihood strategies, issues of their land, language, customary practices and problems and challenges in relation to their overall development are not yet known to the wider public.
Indigenous peoples, including the Surels, have been discriminated by the state with its ideology, policies and practices of Bahunbad (“Brahmansim”). Bahunbad has been manifested in terms of domination by one-caste (Bahun-Chhetris), one language (Khas Nepali), one religion (Hindu), one culture (Hindu), one sex (male) and one region (Hill) against others, including indigenous peoples and mother tongue speakers, such as Surels (for detail see Bhattachan 2001; Bhattachan and Bhattachan 2003; Lawoti 2005; and Subba et al. 2002). Indigenous peoples, including Surels, have become “refugees” in their own traditional homeland.

SURELS: LOCATION AND LIVELIHOOD

This section focuses on Surels as indigenous peoples of Suri and their population composition, occupation, income, migration and identity crisis.

Surels, the indigenous peoples of Suri

Suri, one of the 51 VDCs of Dolakha district, lies in north east from Charikot town, the district headquarter, located about 100 km. east of Kathmandu. Singati bazaar, a local town, is 36 km. away from Charikot. It takes about 4.5 hours uphill walk from Singati to reach Suri village. Suri VDC and its Suri village cluster in ward number 7 are named after the Suri river that flows from the lower end of the VDC to join the Khare river. Suri settlement was exclusively inhabited by Surels in the past, but now it is inhabited by different castes (Chhetri, Bahun, and Dalits), and indigenous peoples (Surels, and Newars). The upper part of the ward number 7 is predominantly inhabited by the Dalits, the middle part by Newars, Surels, and Chhetris, and lower end by Chhetris and Newars.

Surels were the first inhabitants of Suri village. It is evident from the fact that all the names of different places, streams, water spring, forest, farms etc. in Suri are in Surel language. For example, there is a small river called Gorangfi (gorang is one of the clan groups of Surel, fi means “to wander”) in the lower end of Suri village. The elderly Surels said that the river was given the name because the ancestors of the gorang clan used to wander around the Goranfi river area for hunting and fishing in the past. Similarly, a forest nearby Suri is called Messel (mes means “water buffalo,” and sel means “to take bath”). A natural water source in the village is called nebanku (ne means “nose,” banku means “leach”).

Names of the larger and fertile irrigated lands in the village are in Surel language while the owners are the “high caste” Chhetris. Biru (bi means “cow,” ru means “graze”) and Ladung's Bhasme (ladung means “name”, bhasme means “slash and burn”) are the rice farm lands now owned by the “high caste” Chhetris, whose mother tongue is Khas Nepali. Both the names of
those irrigated lands are in Surel language. These examples clearly indicate that those lands now owned by Chhetris and other communities belonged to Surels in the past. But they were neither able to compete with others in grabbing of land nor were they able to resist the state's imposition of land and cultural policy against their traditional practices.

Surels’ concentration is in Suri settlement in ward number 7. There are total 108 HHs, of which 29 Surel HHs, 32 Kami HHs, 22 Chhetri HHs, 23 Newars HHs, and 2 Bahun HHs. According to a key informant, 25 years ago there were 50 Surel and less than 6 Kami HHs in Suri. Now the number of Kami HHs has gone up more than five times while the Surel HHs have decreased by half. Gradual process of land dispossession among the Surels and subsequent displacement could be, among others, a reason behind it. A key informant said that Surels were the only inhabitants of Suri until not long ago. Because of the availability of plenty of land, flat topography, plenty of water and forest resources, other groups of people, particularly the “high caste” Chhetris, began to encroach on Surels’ land. It became very easy for these Chhetris to expropriate the Surels’ land by (mis)using the political power they enjoyed by their involvement in the state machinery dominated by Bahun-Chhetris. Some respondents mentioned that a Karna officer, belonging to Chhetri caste was appointed by the government to serve its interest (e.g., tax collection from Surels and others). He was called with honorific term Kaji by all. A key informant fumed, “Kaji destroyed our [Surels’] political, socio-cultural, and economic systems (particularly land ownership).”

Population composition

The total population of Surels in 29 HHs is 157. Male comprise 52.9 percent and female 47.1 percent (Figure 1). The population of the age group 15-59 comprise 59.2 percent, higher than the average among other hill indigenous nationalities (54.4) (Figure 2). Among the Surels, both the proportion of work force population (age group 15-59), i.e. 54.1%, and the dependent population (aged 60+), i.e. 6.5%, are higher than those of others. It could be because of the misreporting about age as the Surels did not seem to have a clear idea of the date of birth of their kin.

![Figure 1: Surel population by sex](source: Field Survey 2006)

![Figure 2: Surel population by age and sex](source: Field Survey 2006)

Occupation

Of the total 108 adult work force population (above 15 years of age) 50 percent reported agriculture farming as their primary occupation (Figure 3). Non-agro based wage labour and
indigenous traditional skills, fishing, mason, carpentry helpers and indigenous skill based occupation (making of bamboo baskets, mats, winnowing tray, strainer etc, honey hunting, bee keeping) are primary occupation of some Surels. Surels doing farm wage labour is minimal (1.9%). Because of the intervention of the modern market system, the development and modernization the indigenous skills such as honey hunting, bee keeping, fishing, bamboo basket making were reported to be gradually disappearing from the village. Those who were making their living by their indigenous skills are heading to crisis in their livelihood.

Concerning secondary occupation, 26 percent were involved in agri-wage labour in the surrounding villages (Figure 4). None of the Surels were found to be in the economic position to hire agri-wage labour in their farms rather they went to do the wage labour to other high caste Chhetri's farms. Similarly, agriculture was the secondary occupation of 17 percent people. This category people included those had very little land to engage themselves, who were doing wage labour, watchmen, or other jobs in India and elsewhere, and even those who had fishing, bamboo mat, basket making as their primary occupation.

![Picture 3: Surel man ploughing field for rice plantation](image)
Picture 3: Surel man ploughing field for rice plantation

![Picture 4: Surel women planting paddy sapling](image)
Picture 4: Surel women planting paddy sapling

Pictures by Dambar Chemjong

Figure 3:
Percentage of Surel population by primary occupation and sex

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>56.5</td>
<td>67.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-agro wage labour</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>36.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous Skill (Self-employed)</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>21.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fishing</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agro-wage labour</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other skills</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>22.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey 2006.
History of migration among Surels

Migration of Surels to India and elsewhere started in 1950s when an old Surel woman migrated to Darjeeling and a Surel man migrated to Calcutta. A high caste Chhetri family tricked the old Surel woman to give up her land to his ownership. Having no other means of survival left in her possession, she left for Darjeeling in search of ways to make her family's living. Since then some Surels followed her and began to go to Darjeeling. Some of them never returned to Suri. There are eight Surel families permanently living in Darjeeling calling themselves Mukhiya. This is how even the seasonal migration to Darjeeling from Surel community began and it still continues. Similarly, Purna Bahadur Surel left for Calcutta about the same time the old woman left for Darjeeling. Purna Bahadur's job was a watchman at a slipper factory in Calcutta. Upon his occasional returns to his village and joining back to his job, he also began to take some Surel youths with him to Calcutta. Hence, the seasonal migration to Calcutta began and the Surels have been doing back and forth between Suri and Calcutta for the last 50 years.

Internal migration, specially of the Surel women, among the Surels was triggered by growth in carpet and sweater knitting factories that began to grow in the Kathmandu Valley in 1980s Surels.

Seasonal/temporary migration among Surels

Temporary migration has been the most viable option for Surels to support their household economy. During the survey period, 27 percent (males 36% and females 16%) of the total population were out of village doing some other jobs elsewhere in India and within the country. Calcutta, Darjeeling, and Sikkim in India are the main destinations (45%) for temporary migration among the Surels (Figure 5). They work as watchmen and workers at the plastic slipper factories in Calcutta; portering and wage labour in Darjeeling; and agri-wage labour in the farms in Sikkim.
Kathmandu and Bhaktapur are the main destination for internal migration. Female migrants outnumbered the males in this respect. Work opportunities available for women in different carpet weaving, sweater knitting factories and brick factories attracts larger number of women’s migration in Kathmandu and Bhaktapur. Singati Bazaar and Charikot are the main destination for intra-district migration, where Surels find seasonal works such as portering, wage labour, mason worker and helper in the construction sites.

**Income from the temporary migration**

Temporary migration in search of job was found to be a major option by which Surels are earning the cash income. Their income includes the amount of cash brought along by the migrants themselves or the amount sent through their friends and relatives. Only 18 HHs (out of 29) responded about the cash income from the periodic migration (Figure 6). But there was not a single family among Surels from which at least one member has not been to India for job opportunity.

Temporary migration to Calcutta not only brought the cash income back home but also fatal diseases for the Surels in Surel village. Since, they worked in health hazardous environment in the plastic factories in Calcutta frequently/occasionally drinking locally distilled low quality liquor in the evenings, many of them suffered from the lungs damaging diseases and some of them even caught tuberculosis transmitting the same back home too. A key informant said, “Tuberculosis has become a common disease among us [Surels].”
Surels’ identity crisis

None of the Surels had their Surel family name their citizenship certificates; they indeed use Sunuwar family names. Sunuwars are different indigenous nationalities who inhabit other parts of Dolakha. Many respondents said that both the Sunuwars and Surels spoke different languages, observed different customs and cultural practices. Local informants reported that the district administration office of Dolakha distributed the citizenship certificates for the first time to the Surels with Sunuwar family name in the late 1980s. Different documents and official letters that were issued to them prior to that had used their family names as Surels (e.g. land tenancy certificate, local mortgage bonds).

THE SUREL COMMUNITY AND THE MDGs

This section deals with the MDGs and the respective targets in relation to targets and indicators set by the Government of Nepal for achieving the MDGs by 2015. It also describes and discusses to explain the prominence of 8 MDGs and the respective targets to the Surel community.

None of the Surels in the community has ever heard about the MDGs and Nepal Government's programs to meet the goals and targets. Such an information gap is obvious given exclusion of indigenous peoples, including Surels, from consultation and participation in planning, implementation and monitoring of MDGs, PRSP and other development plans and programs.

MDG 1: Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger

Poverty and Hunger Situation in the Surel Community

Dispossession of land and insufficient food supply are the main reasons indicating the economic poverty among Surels. The high incidence of poverty among the Surels forced them to migrate to different parts of India and elsewhere in Nepal in search of employment.

Land ownership

Land is the most valued asset for any farming community in Nepal and it is one of the determining indicators for being rich and poor among all communities, including the Surels. None of the Surel household is counted as well off, compared to the high caste Chhetris and others, in terms of land ownership.

Figures, 7, 8 and 9 show more than 48 percent Surel families own less than 0.25 ha. (5 ropanis) of dry land and 31 percent households owned 0.25-5 hectare of land meaning that about 80 percent Surel families owned less than half a hectare of dry land. Remaining 20 percent owned 0.5-1.0 hectare. None of them owned more than one hectare of dry land. The
lands owned by Surels were unproductive compared to the level, flat and fertile lands owned by the high caste Chhetris inhabiting the same area.

Only about one fifth (7) of the total HHs owned small patches of lands, i.e. less than 0.3 hectare, with irrigation facility. Five households responded to have rented in un-irrigated land on share cropping basis from the “high caste” Chhetris. Similarly, 7 HHs rented in irrigated land from the same “high caste” Chhetris. Surels are not in a position to rent more than they could cultivate by themselves.

The focus group discussions revealed that landownership is lowest among Surles and highest among Chhetris, Bahuns and Newars. Dalits, particularly Kami, also owned more than those of the Surels. It is indeed ironic that Surels are like strangers in their own homeland.

**Food sufficiency**

Most of the Surel households do not produce enough cereals to feed themselves (Figure 10). Only one Surel HH produces cereals enough to last for 12 months for the family. A majority of Surel HHs (52%) produce food enough for 6-9 months and one third (35%) for 3-6
months. The least benefited from their farm are those 10 percent of Surel HHs who produce food enough for only 1-3 months.

Surels use social capital to meet their food deficiency. Kinship network is a major organizational feature of Surel community as they are well connected with each other. Borrowing and lending of cash and kind (cereals, vegetables, beer, and liquor) during the scarce time is well practiced among them. For example, if they do not have anything to eat in the family they can borrow from their relatives and payback later. They may have to survive on only half a meal or they may have to spend the night only on the granule of millet flour occasionally. But Surels do not have to spend their day or night without a meal because of such a kinship and exchange network. Nobody in the community could recall the serious cases of food crisis with people dying of starvation in the village.

Arjun Surel's (40) family is the most marginalized HH in terms of food supply in Surel community. He owns only the homestead land and he is like a landless person in terms of cereal cultivation. He has to support his family (four children, wife and himself) by working as a wage labourer for the whole year and also by weaving the bamboo products. His family is the most vulnerable to the food crisis. If the opportunities to sell the bamboo products and wage labour should not be available, Arjun would be in serious crisis to feed his family.

Other sources of food supply

Cereal production partially supports in making the living of Surels. Hence, they have to find other options for their survival. About 29 percent of HHs...
responded non-agriculture wage labour (wage worker at construction sites, and portering both in India and Nepal) and 32 percent HHs were self employed (making baskets, winnowing tray, and other products from bamboo, Fishing, etc) to earn additional income to support the family (Figure 11). Similarly, 39 percent HHs were involved in other options (migrating to India or elsewhere to look for jobs for earning additional income to support the household economy.

*Other sources of cash income among Surels*

**Temporary migration**: During the survey period, 27 percent of the total Surel population were out of village doing some other jobs elsewhere in India and within the country. The number of out-migrant Surels was higher among males (36%) compared to the females (16%). Focus group discussion revealed that there could be about 10-15 persons (all males) in the village who would bring home not less than Rs. 25,000 from India.

**Livestock raising**: It is important among the Surels to support their farming as well as cash income. Goat raising, poultry and cattle contribute to the cash income of Surels. It was reported that Surels earned about Rs. 4,706. (USD 1= Rs 70) on an average annually by selling their livestock and livestock based products.

**Making and selling of bamboo products**: It is the main source of cash income for 9 families. Karna Bahadur Surel, who was among the main producers of bamboo products reported that he alone sold about 500 winnowing trays last year. One tray costs about Rs 50. The sum of cash income by selling out the winnowing tray alone was not less than Rs 25,000 for him. He also reported that there were at least 6 persons in the village making and selling the bamboo products the same amount he was doing.

**Spices and vegetable gardening**: Surels have recently started spices and vegetable gardening (chilly, onion, garlic and other green vegetables). Sakuntala Surel make some money by selling green chilly and onion she produces in the garden. Surels reported that they did not grow many varieties of green vegetables until recently. They bought onion, garlic, cabbage, cauliflower and even potato from a local market before. Now most of the houses grow these verities of spices and vegetables in their own garden and some of them also sell part of the produce to the market so as to buy cooking oil, kerosene, and other spices as well.

**National Targets and Strategies**

Nepal’s targets, achievements so far and its possibility relating to Millennium Development Goal 1 for the country in line with the UN Declaration as the Target 1 and Target 2 are as follows:

**Target 1: Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than $1 a day**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INDICATOR</th>
<th>1990</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2015 (TARGET)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of population below $1 per day (PPP value)</td>
<td>33.5</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of population below national poverty line</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty Gap</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>11.75</td>
<td>7.55</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nepal’s achievement possibility is, according to the NPC and HMG-N and UNDP, “likely” (NPC 2006: 10; HMG-N and UNDP 2005: 7).

**Target 2: Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INDICATOR</th>
<th>1990</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2015 (TARGET)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of population below minimum level of dietary energy consumption</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of underweight children aged 6-59 (≤ -2 S.D.)</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of stunted children aged 6-59 months (≤ -2 S.D.)</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from HMG-N and UNDP 2005: 15.

Nepal’s achievement possibility is, according to the NPC, “possible” and according to HMG-N and UNDP, “potentially” (NPC 2006: 10; HMG-N and UNDP 2005: 7).

The Government of Nepal identifies its Tenth Plan (2002-2007) as synonymous with poverty reduction strategy paper (PRSP). This PRSP outlines four-pillar strategy: (1) high, sustainable and broad-based economic growth; (2) social sector and rural infrastructure development; (3) social inclusion and targeted programmes for the ultra poor, vulnerable and deprived groups; and (4) good governance. Both the Government of Nepal and UNDP have conceded thus: “The weak implementation of policies and programmes is a great challenge. In many cases, the implementation phase often overlooks the concerns and needs of intended beneficiaries, partly due to low involvement and the participation of different stakeholders in the process of planning” (HMG-N and UNDP 2005: 12). Civil society controlled by dominant castes observed, “However, given the situation of heightened conflict, restriction on political rights, absence of people’s representatives at all levels of governance and non-existence of the state’s administrative structure in rural areas, the government’s capacity to implement programmes in rural areas is highly restricted. Besides, the implementation of the government programmes is also likely to be hampered by the suspension of aid by some prominent development partners of Nepal” (GCAP Nepal 2005: 6).

An ILO study provides indigenous peoples’ perspective thus: “...many of the strategies and programmes laid out in the PRSP perpetuate the same problems characterized past efforts. These shortcomings can be attributed to a combination of factors for which both the government and donors are responsible, including: insufficient awareness of indigenous issues and their specific experience of discrimination; lack of development and under funding of appropriate institutional structures; lack of participation and consultation of indigenous peoples in the design and implementation of poverty reduction and development initiatives; the centralised nature of the Nepali state and general lack of political will.” (Bhattachan and Webster 2005: 7). Given the fact that the majority of the Nepal’s population comprise of indigenous peoples and that they have been dispossessed from their rights to land, forest and other natural resources, and that the decision making, implementation and monitoring is fully dominated by Hill, Hindu, male Bahun-Chhetris and that indigenous peoples are not duly consulted and allowed to participate achievement of MDG 1 and its targets 1 & 2 is next to impossible; and this Surel case study clearly indicates it.
Relevance of MDG 1

Surels are deprived from opportunity to participate in any of the community development (e.g. community forest user groups) and political organizations (e.g. local political bodies). Nepal Government so far has not implemented any program to reduce poverty among the Surels. Surels survive by making cash income from different sources (e.g. self-employed indigenous skills, migrant workers in India and Nepal) in which the government has no role.

The Target 1 (‘halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than one dollar a day’) of the MDG 1 is nominally relevant to the Surel economy as none of them completely depend on money economy. However, out of 157 Surel population of Suri, about 8% of them earn and save more than Rs. 75 ($1)/day while working as watchmen or wage labourers in India. About 4% of Surels who sell bamboo products in the community fetch about the same amount of income. With these exceptions, Surel economy cannot be measured in terms of cash income alone. Rather their economy largely depends on intensive subsistence farming supported by livestock which they keep for multiple purposes (such as milk, manure, meat and cash income.) Therefore, it would be a difficult task to measure actually the number of Surels making their living on less than a dollar a day. Furthermore, this concept and counting method as such is indeed incomprehensible for Surel community.

There is a partial relevance of the first target because there are prospects to increase cash income for Surels from their own farms. SWUG members said that growing vegetables, cash crops and raising goats for both the purposes of market and household consumption are such prospects.

The Target 2 is also relevant to, some extent, for the Surel community as insufficient cereal production has been the main reason for food crisis in the community. Only one HH in the entire Surel community can produce enough cereals to feed the family for whole year; others rely on other options for food supply (Figure 10). Almost all Surels participating the meetings and discussions for this study insisted that the irrigation facility for their farms is the most desired, among others, development need in the village. They firmly believed that the amount of cereal production in the village could be highly increased if the government helped them bring the water canal to their village.

The indicators of food sufficiency with the level of dietary consumption (calorie measurement) and measurement of weight and height for the Target 2 also are not comprehensible for Surels. Surel community is a cluster village where different children were found to be visiting different houses and eating meals wherever they were given foods.

Surel Perceptions of Poverty Indicators

The former chairperson of the SUS said, "Poor may be defined as poor indigenous peoples who are looked down and also trapped by the ‘high caste’ Chhetris." "Talking about who are poor and what is poverty, it makes sense only when we begin to know how we became poor and what made us poor," said Bikram Surel, "We were not poor before as we owned all the land, jungle and water in this surroundings but we were made poor because the Kaji houses ate our land," said Narabir Surel. "Poor is that person who has no land and enough food for living," said the chairperson of the SUS. "Poors are those who have to work as wage labourer for two meals," said a member of the SWUG. "Be a poor in terms of wealth but never be poor in your heart," said the Chairperson of the SWUG.
According to Surels, not having enough eating and clothing for the whole year for a family was the defining characteristics to categorize a family as economically poor. The degree of economic poorness of a family depended on how many months a year that family could feed itself from the products from its own farm. Families, self-sufficient in cereal production are considered well off and obtain a higher social status in the community. Surels economically divide the households of their community into two types namely, a) khana pugne ghar (“household having enough to eat”) and b) khana napugne ghar (“household not having enough to eat”), meaning that the type 'b' families were not self-sufficient in producing cereals from their own farm. Hence, they were economically poor.

**Land and resource dispossession**

Surels opined that ownership and control over land, water and forest resources are the main indicators to categorize the people as well off or poor. Surels, the first settlers in the area, who owned and controlled all the resources (land, forest, water springs, river, rivulets etc.) in the past, were gradually dispossessed by the “high caste” group. Hence, Surel's definition of being poor is not owning enough land and not having control over the water and forest resources. Despite having lost the control and ownership of land, water and forest resources, many Surels still continue their indigenous skills (making of bamboo products, fishing etc.) to make their living. The traditional occupations adopted by Surels are solely based on the natural resources i.e., forest and river, but those resources are no longer under the traditional ownership of Surels and that prevent them from having access to those resources.

**Social poorness**

Despite having their own mother tongue, Surels, like any other mother tongue speakers in Nepal, are forced to use Khas Nepali language, the only official language of Nepal and medium of instruction in education, imposed by the dominant and ruling castes. The use of their own language has been rapidly declining, particularly among the youths, and the government has not taken any initiative to promote and protect their language. Surels mention that they feel poorer than other groups of people in socio-cultural and lingual aspects. They express that it is their right to demand for the protection and promotion of their mother tongue by the state and to be educated in their own mother tongue as well.

Surels feel socially poorer than the “high caste” Chhetris in the area also because the “high caste” group held the decisive political positions in Suri village. Surels reported that the Chhetris always became dominant in various decisions about development activities. Surels have been the listeners to the “high caste” people of their own village. Many Surels said, “the Chhetris' high-handedness have made us socially poorer than others.”

Surels mentioned other factors of social poorness among them: “having low level of educational attainment,” and “not being employed in different sectors such as, teaching, civil service, police, army etc.” Except one serving in the Nepal police, none of the Surels is found to be employed in those services whereas the “high” caste people and Newars are more educated and employed in different sectors of government jobs. Shanti Maya Surel said, “Surels are often looked down and ridiculed by the ‘high’ caste Chhetris in the locality.”
The third form of poverty reported by Surels is the poorness felt among them for having lost their cultural and ritual uniqueness because of the state's domination and exploitation in the past. The elderly Surels reported that they were systematically made poorer by the state in the context of rituals and cultural features by issuing orders for Surels to quit their traditional ritual practices and to begin the Hinduized rituals by using Hindu priests in the 1940s. Before those changes they were observing their own traditional rituals by using their own shamans.

Incidence of poverty among the Surels has been a consequence of continuing historical process of subjugation and exploitation of Surels by the “high castes”, who came to Surel homeland as the employees of the state. Without historicizing the poverty and marginalized status of Surels and even without juxtaposing the Surel poverty with state land policies, cultural, and religious assimilative policies, it would not be possible to locate the root causes of poverty among the Surels. The MDG 1 expresses to eradicate extreme hunger and poverty but it does not show any interest in locating the underlying causes of poverty of indigenous peoples such as Surel.

It is indeed clear that as long as indigenous peoples, including Surels, continue to be exploited and subjugated by the dominant castes; hunger and poverty is going to stay with them.

Conclusion

Nepal’s achievement possibility of MDG 1 and associated targets 1 and 2, according to the Government of Nepal, is “likely”. Our field information suggests that it is impossible with regards to Surels. Nepal Government and donors have made no effort to date to provide targeted programmes to Surels to improve their living conditions. However, a few Surels have taken their own initiative to supplement income by remittance.

MDG 2: Achieve Universal Primary Education

Situation of Schools and Education among Surels

There is a primary school (grade 1-5) in the village that was established two and a half decades ago. The school has five teachers, of which three are permanent and two are temporary. Four teachers working at this school are from the same Suri village and one from a neighbouring village. All five teachers are Chhetris. As the school is located in the village, none of the Surel children in Suri village have to walk for more than 10 minutes to reach their school. A Secondary school is also located in ward number 4 in Suri VDC. Students walk for more than an hour and a half to reach the secondary school. Some Surel students drop off the school after they complete the primary schooling from their village because of the distant location of the secondary school.

Surels are lagging far behind other caste groups and indigenous nationalities in their educational attainment, including literacy. Only 33 percent of the total Surel populations are found to be literate compared to the 53.7 percent of the national average (CBS: 2001). Surel women (24.2%) are even far behind their male (41.1%) counterparts. The average literacy among the indigenous peoples is 53.6 percent, which indicates that Surels are far behind other indigenous peoples.
Being literate means to be able to read and write. In many cases, people even respond to be literate when they can only write their names on the official paper instead of thumbprint on it. Majority of the Surel respondents who reported to be literate were only able to read and write the names and addresses, which became the must for them while working as wage labourers and watchmen in India.

Of the total 46 Surel population who have received education by formal schooling, only one of them had completed his 12th grade high school (Figure 12). There were two other students who had passed School Leaving Certificate (SLC) Examination. Female students' participation at the secondary level is encouraging and the girl students outnumber the boys at this level. Bikram Surel explained the reason behind it thus: “More boys join their fathers to seasonally migrate to India for wage labor. Boys, in their 12, 13 years of age begin to join their fathers and older relatives to go to India and elsewhere for jobs.”

National Targets and Strategies

Nepal’s target, achievement so far and its possibility relating to Millennium Development Goal 2 for the country in line with the UN Declaration are as follows:

**Target 3: Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INDICATOR</th>
<th>1990</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2015 (TARGET)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Net enrolment rate in primary education (%)</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of pupils that start Grade 1 and reach Grade 5</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy rate of 15-24-year-olds</td>
<td>49.6</td>
<td>70.1</td>
<td>73.0</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from HMG-N and UNDP 2005: 21.

Nepal’s achievement possibility is, according to the NPC, and HMG-N and UNDP, “unlikely” (NPC 2006: 10; HMG-N and UNDP 2005: 7).

According to “Ensuring the Right of Indigenous Peoples and Linguistic Minorities to Basic and Primary Education through Mother Tongue” in the “Education for All, National Plan of
Action (2001-2015)” elaborated by MOES in collaboration with UNESCO, overall strategy of the government is to use the local language of the ethnic and linguistic minorities, as the medium of instruction and thereby incorporate the local culture in education with double objectives: “first to make education learner friendly and easily available to the people of linguistic and ethnic minorities in a meaningful and effective way and secondly, to help enhance the social and cultural status of the groups including enrichment of their languages”. Four main strategies are envisaged in order to achieve these objectives: (a) use of mother tongue as the subject and the medium of instruction, (ii) bilingual education, (iii) teachers’ recruitment and deployment, and (iv) special programmes for endangered languages and cultures. These objectives and strategies are in line with the recommendations given by the thematic subgroup on Indigenous Peoples and Linguistic Minorities and reflect the priorities expressed by indigenous peoples’ organizations in Nepal. On the contrary, the Core Document (2004-2009) of EFA a Joint Government-Donor Technical Review Meeting did not have “a separate section on mother tongue education and the indigenous organisations consulted were not aware of the existence of this document” (Birgitte et al. 2003: 8). NEFIN and its affiliated indigenous peoples’ organizations believe that unless the government comes up with a policy of equal language rights and 3-language policy (mother tongue, one other language of Nepal, and international language) achievement of MDGs’ Goal 2 is impossible as indigenous peoples comprise majority of the population of Nepal; without achieving EFA among indigenous peoples.

Nepal has targeted to reach the net enrolment rate in the primary education to cent percent level by 2015 and the 'proportion of pupils that start Grade 1 and reach Grade 5' will be reached to the cent percent. Similarly, it has also an indicator that the literacy rate of 15-24 year old group is targeted to reach to cent percent (HMG-N 2005:21).

The EFA (Education For All) National Plan of Action (HMG Nepal 2003:4-5) aims to "eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education by 2005 and to achieve gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girl’s full and equal access to and achievement in, basic education of good quality. Similarly, the Plan of Action's other goal reads: "ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality. The Plan of Action also aims to “ensure the rights of indigenous people and linguistic minorities to basic and primary education through mother tongue” (HMG-N 2003:12, 53-54).

Relevance of MDG 2

The relevance of MDG 2 lies among the Surels as formal education and literacy are among the basic indicators of development. Educational attainment is considered the must for the people as individuals acquire knowledge and skills through education which lead them to the better life. Surels are lagging far behind other “high” caste Chhetris from the same village. Karma Surel (44), when inquired about the relevance of the MDG 2: Achieve Universal Education, responded, “It became possible for the ‘high’ caste Chhetris to capture the Surel land and other resources because Surels were illiterate and could not read and write in the past.” He further said, “Chhetris deceitfully captured the Surel land because the Chhetris were more educated than the Surels and they also controlled the local politics.”
Conclusion

Although, Nepal’s achievement possibility of MDG 2 and associated target 3, according to the Government of Nepal, is “unlikely,” our field information suggests that it is highly unlikely among Surels due the lack of mother tongue and indigenous people sensitive education policies, plans and programs in Nepal. Some improvement is possible among school going boys and girls, if NEFIN and NFDIN could continue their targeted financial help to Surel children (see sub-section on MDGs 4).

MDG 3: Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women

Situation of Surel Women

It is already described that Surels’ subsistence strategy is unique compared to others as the men usually migrate to different places in India and elsewhere in Nepal. Women are left in the community to perform triple roles in both public and private spheres and also in community. Although, Surel women equally participate in the decision making process at the HH level, majority of Surel women said that they have been dominated by men. Women are far ahead of men in certain fields, such as institutional capacity building and group mobilization. For example, Surel women are members of the executive committees of two community forest user groups, which are managed by the women. They are also the members of the executive committees for other two community forest user groups, which were jointly managed by both the men and women. Women are also organized in group, such as the SWUG’s Chair is also a member of the executive committees of three community forest user groups. Surel women said that men are not participating in the forest user groups as they are not in the village regularly. Tanka Maya Surel said, “Men are not interested in joining such committees even if they should remain in the village for the whole year.” In this respect, Surel women are more responsible than the men in the forest resource management.

Women, in the wage labour, were paid lower than the men. It was informed that men were paid Rs. 50 for the whole day work while women were paid Rs 35 only for the same duration of work.

National Targets and Strategies

Nepal’s target, achievements so far and its possibility relating to Millennium Development Goal 3 for the country in line with the UN Declaration are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INDICATOR</th>
<th>1990</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2015 (TARGET)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ratio of girls to boys at primary level</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratio of girls to boys at secondary level</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratio of women to men at tertiary level</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratio of illiterate women to men from 15-24 years old</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of seats held by women in the House of Representatives</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from HMG-N and UNDP 2005: 29.
Nepal’s achievement possibility is, according to the NPC, “possible” and according to HMG-N and UNDP, “potentially” (NPC 2006: 10; HMG-N and UNDP 2005: 7).

Mainstreaming gender equity is the main strategy adopted by the government, international aid agencies and (I)NGOs. Focus of the programs are in empowerment of women, elimination of gender discriminatory laws, reduction of violence against women, including trafficking of women, reserve 33% seats for representation of women in decision making bodies, expansion of awareness raising and income generating activities, and implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and Beijing Platform of Actions (BPFA). Women in Nepal comprise diverse groups in terms of caste/ethnicity, language, religion, culture and region. Different groups of women are victimized on multiple grounds. National and international efforts have helped to raise the status of Bahun-Chhetri women even higher than those of indigenous men but indigenous women’s status remains low.¹

Relevance of MDG 3

There is a low level of literacy and educational attainment among Surels compared to other caste and ethnic groups in the neighbouring villages. However, Surels have already begun to send both the sons and daughters to school without discrimination. For example, all the Surel boys and girls in the primary school going age group (6-11) are now regular students of the local primary school. They occasionally miss the school days as they also have to work in the family field during the peak-farming season. But all of them are enrolled to the school. The relevance of this goal 3 lies in this respect as well.

The encouraging factor for sending both the boys and girls to school was the financial help provided by the NFDIN and NEFIN. NFDIN provided a total of Rs 47,700 for the school going children in 2004, of which Rs. 700 was given to the children who were in Grade 1. Similarly Rs. 800 was given to students in Grades 2 and 3. Children going to Grade 4 and 5 were given Rs 900 each and Rs 1,200 for the students in Grades 6-10. The NFDIN also provided school uniform for the Surel children. For this year, NEFIN has decided to provide Rs. 56,000 for Surel students going to different Grades. It is planned to provide Rs. 800 to the students in Grades 1-5, Rs. 2,000 to the students in Grades 6-10, and Rs. 8,000 for the students going to college. The financial help from these organizations has played a crucial role in the Surel community to send their children to school. If such financial help should continue until 2015, there is no challenge ahead to achieve the target 4 of MDG 3, i.e. to “eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and at all levels of education no later than 2015.”

Conclusion

Although, Nepal’s achievement possibility of MDG 3 and associated target 4, according to the Government of Nepal, is “possible,” our field information suggests that it is possible among Surels only if targeted programs by indigenous people’s organizations such as NEFIN and NFDIN continue their financial support to Surel children. The achievement would be “highly unlikely” among Surels, if such support would not exist, and if lack of sensitivity towards diversity of women/girls, including indigenous

¹ Personal communication with Lynn Bennett of the World Bank, Nepal Office.
women/girls, in women only or gender policies, plans and programs of the government and the donors should continue.

**MDG 4: Reduce Child Mortality**

**Health Situation among Surels**

There was a village level sub-health post in Suri VDC where people get treatment for minor wounds caused by accidents, water born diseases and other minor health problems. The health post itself is not well equipped and even the senior staff (assistant health worker) remains much of the time absent. “The helper (peon) is the most reliable health service provider in our health post because the senior staff are absent most of the time,” Bikram Surel, a local youth, said. However, during the occasions of feeding Vitamin A drops and immunization shots to the children the senior staff are available in the health post.

**National Targets and Strategies**

Nepal’s target, indicators, achievements so far and its possibility relating to Millennium Development Goal 4 for the country in line with the UN Declaration are as follows:

**Target 5: Reduce the child under –5 mortality rate by two thirds between 1990 and 2015**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INDICATOR</th>
<th>1990</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2015 (TARGET)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IMR</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U5MR</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of one-year-olds immunised against measles</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>&gt;90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from HMG-N and UNDP 2005: 37.

Nepal’s achievement possibility is, according to the NPC, “likely” and according to HMG-N and UNDP, “potentially” (NPC 2006: 10; HMG-N and UNDP 2005: 7).

The main national strategy in reducing child mortality include a community-based Integrated Management of Childhood Illness (IMCI) package that has four child survival programs: (a) control of diarrhoeal diseases; (b) control of acute respiratory infection (ARI); (c) immunization and nutrition, including micro-nutrients; and (d) a community component. The government also has the Nepal Health Sector Reform Strategy and Implementation Plan (NHS-IP) to achieve health sector MDG in Nepal. According to NEFIN, these national strategies are not sensitive to indigenous peoples and mother tongue speakers.

**Relevance of MDG 4**

The MDG 4 is relevant among Surels because they acknowledge that the availability of different vaccination shots and oral re-hydration solution has helped to reduce the child mortality rate in their community as diarrhoea and acute respiratory infection (ARI) related diseases (such as pneumonia) were the main causes of children's death in the past. None of the Surels did remember the case while inquired if there were any cases of deaths of children below 5 years of age during the past five years. Puspa Surel, mother of a two years old daughter said, “Diarrhoea and pneumonia were the main causes of children's deaths in the past, which have been reduced now effectively after the different immunization shots were
given to children and increasing use and importance of 'jivan jal' (“oral re-hydrating solution”) in the Surel community.”

Conclusion

Although, Nepal’s achievement possibility of MDG 4 and associated target 5, according to the Government of Nepal, is “likely,” our field information suggests that it is applicable to Surels because of their population size.

MDG 5: Improve Maternal Health

National Targets and Strategies

Nepal’s target, indicators, achievements so far and its possibility relating to Millennium Development Goal 5 for the country in line with the UN Declaration are as follows:

Target 6: Reduce by three-quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INDICATOR</th>
<th>1990</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2015 (TARGET)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR)</td>
<td>850</td>
<td>415</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>213 or 134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of deliveries attended by health providers (doctors, nurses, and auxiliary nurse midwives)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contraceptive prevalence rate (%)</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from HMG-N and UNDP 2005: 43.

Nepal’s achievement possibility is, according to the NPC, “possible” and according to HMG-N and UNDP, “potentially” (NPC 2006: 10; HMG-N and UNDP 2005: 7).

Nepal Government’s main strategies to achieve this target include the national Maternity Care Guidelines of 1996, the Second Long Term Health Plan (1997-2-17), the National Reproductive Health Strategy of 1996, the National Adolescent Health and Development Strategy of 2000, the Health Sector Strategy 2002, the NHS-IP, and the Vulnerable Community Development Plan of 2004. Safe motherhood and neonatal health care comprise core of the health package. NEFIN leaders said that indigenous peoples were not consulted in these plans and that these all plans are not sensitive to indigenous peoples and their needs.

Surel women reported that cent percent deliveries among them takee place at home, neither were there any facilities for health check-ups during their pregnancy ensuring the safer motherhood as the MDG Progress Report on Nepal also mentions that “in Nepal, over 80% of deliveries take place at home. Most of the birth are assisted by family members and neighbours, with only one-fifth of deliveries attended by health workers (CBS quoted by ibid:44).”
Relevance of MDG 5

There are not any health facility related to “safe motherhood and neo-natal health care” nor was there any other medical facility made available to the Surel women to ensure the safer motherhood. Hence, there is indeed a relevance of the goal 5 among Surels.

Conclusion

Although, Nepal’s achievement possibility of MDG 5 and associated target 6, according to the Government of Nepal, is “possible,” our field information suggests that it is indeed “possible” among Surels because of their population size.

MDG 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and Other Diseases

National Targets and Strategies

Nepal’s targets, indicators, achievements so far and its possibility relating to Millennium Development Goal 6 for the country in line with the UN Declaration are as follows:

Target 7: Halve halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INDICATOR</th>
<th>1990</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2015 (TARGET)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HIV prevalence among 15-49 years of age (%)</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contraceptive prevalence rate including condom use (%)</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from HMG-N and UNDP 2005: 51.

Nepal’s achievement possibility is, according to the NPC, “unlikely” and according to HMG-N and UNDP, “potentially” (NPC 2006: 10; HMG-N and UNDP 2005: 7).

Target 8: To halve halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INDICATOR</th>
<th>1990</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2015 (TARGET)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prevalence rate associated with malaria (number of cases per 100,000 people at risk)</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of population in malaria risk areas using effective malaria prevention measures</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>9.75</td>
<td>6.94</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slide positivity rate (SPR)</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevalence associated with tuberculosis</td>
<td>460</td>
<td>420</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death rates</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of tuberculosis cases detected</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of tuberculosis cases cured under Directly Treatment Short Courses (DOTS)</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from HMG-N and UNDP 2005: 57.

Nepal’s achievement possibility is, according to the HMG-N and UNDP, “potentially” in the case of malaria and other diseases and “likely” in the case of tuberculosis (HMG-N and UNDP 2005: 7).

The Nepal Government’s main national strategies include NHSP-IP and the National strategy on HIV/AIDS 2002-2006. Indigenous peoples were not consulted while preparing these plans.
Relevance of MDG 6

HIV/AIDS is not a problem in the community. Both men and women did know what this disease meant. However, considering the pattern and destination of migration of Surels at present the issue can not be left aside. With regards to the HIV/AIDS infection, a report elsewhere mentions that “among high risk groups, seasonal labour migrants make up 40% of the nation's HIV-infected population as both the Surel men and women seasonally migrate to India and even Kathmandu valley for wage works (NPC/UN, 2005:92). Surels need to protect themselves from such health hazard.

There was one old case of malaria contracted and successfully treated in Calcutta in India. Another one (now 48 years old) was not sure whether he had contracted malaria when he was about 12 years old. The climate of Suri is mild as it lies in the temperate climatic zone. Mosquitoes rarely appear even in the summer season in this village. As Surels frequently visit Calcutta and other parts of India, they have chances of being infected by malaria. So far Surels have no malaria cases.

There were 5 patients suffering from tuberculosis (TB) during the field work period. They also reported that the same number of people already died due to this disease. Surels explain that those who work in the plastic slipper factories in Calcutta have higher chances to get TB because of the unhealthy environment in the factory, and poor and cheap quality liquor which the workers drink. Any disease the Surels are worried about is the spreading of TB in their community. Surels are not aware about DOTS programs.

Conclusion

Although, Nepal's achievement possibility of MDG 6 and associated targets 7 and 8, according to the Government of Nepal, is “unlikely,” our field information suggests that it is “almost irrelevant” to Surels at present as there are no case of HIV/AIDS and malaria. Concerning target 8 relating to TB it is highly “unlikely” unless DOTS are introduced in the Surel community.

MDG 7: Ensure Environmental Sustainability

Situation of Environmental Sustainability in Suri

There are four community forests adjoined to Suri village. Two of them namely, Messel Community Forest (CF) and Okhreni CF are managed by women representing different caste and ethnic groups including Surels. Khurung CF and Jogum CF are managed by both the men and women representing the user villages.

Messel CF is a small forest to the east of Surel village cluster. There are four Surel women as the members in the executive committee of this CF, which comprised altogether 11 members including the key positions (chair, vice chair, secretary, joint secretary and treasurer.) The management committee remained defunct for the last two years because of the pressure from the Maoist. Some respondents mentioned that the Maoist cadres did not allow them to run the community forest user committee for no specific reasons.
Okhreni CF is located to the west of Suri village. The name is given so because of walnut (Okhar in Nepali) trees available in this forest. Four Surel women are members of the executive committee of this CF. The user women have planted cardamom in their CF to generate cash income. They began to sell the cardamom harvested from this CF for the last four years. But the Surel women who were the members of this CF executive committee did not have any idea about the decisions taken by others with regards to the selling of forest products and how the cash income was utilized. Jogum CF and Khurung CF are managed by both the men and women. In this way Surels have access to four community forests legally by being the user members. Though there are plenty of forests surrounding the village, both the Surel men and women have begun to feel the scarcity of fodder and grazing land for livestock in recent years.

Managing the forest: Practicing unequal power relation

Surel women, who are executive committee members of Forest User’s Groups (FUG) in the village, are dominated by “high” caste (Chhetris), indigenous nationalities (Newars), and Dalits (Kami) in decision making processes. The key positions, (Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, Joint secretary and Treasurer) are occupied by other caste and ethic groups. For example, Messel Women's CFUG was chaired by a Bahun woman (the only Bahun family in the entire village), and the Vice-Chair, Secretary, and Joint-Secretary, all three positions were occupied by all Chhetri women, while the Treasurer was a Dalit woman. In this Suri community where the majority of the houses are Surels and the forest's name is also given by Surels in their language, the CF executive committee is headed by the Bahun house in the entire village. Surel women are not given any key position.

Similarly, the executive committee of Okhreni Women CF comprises 9 members, including four members and five key positions (chair, vice-chair, secretary, joint-secretary, and treasurer.) The committee’s chair and vice chair positions are held by the Chhetris. A Bahun is the secretary and Dalits (Kami) are the treasurer and joint-secretary. Surel women are members only, which exemplifies the practice of disparity against Surels in the village. People holding key positions always play key roles in decision making process as they are responsible for writing minutes of the meetings, maintain accounts and all other official documents of the CF. One of the executive members of Messel CF said, "They [those who held key positions] do not give us time to express our views; they do not even allow us to speak; they keep talking among themselves, and even if we say something they do not listen to us; they decide whatever they want to."

Others two jointly managed community forests, namely Jogum CF and Khurung CF are headed my men. In this case, all five key positions in the executive committee are occupied by men and only the general members positions are given to women including Surels. But no Surel men are given any position or members’ seat in these jointly managed CFs.

These cases make clear that Surel women are excluded by other women and also by men in the case of forest management. Surel women's situation is equal to their male counterparts within their community but their situation is worse when compared with women from other castes.
Drinking water supply for the community

Drinking water for the village is supplied through polythene pipe from the water spring in Messel forest which is adjoined to the village. There is enough supply of drinking water during the monsoon season but becomes scarce in the winter and dry season when the water source gradually dries. One of the main needs assessed by the Surel themselves was the enough supply of drinking water for the village.

Toilets: a new trend in the village

Majority of the houses have constructed private toilets in Surel community. Surels now need more water than before even for cleaning up toilets. Some Surels even responded that there was no use of toilets because of scarcity of drinking water in the village. Sundar Bahadur Surel said, "We do not even have enough water to put it in our mouth how can we put it in the toilet." But many others also admitted that there used to be human feces on the edges of field terraces and the trails in the community when there were no toilets before. For them, the community now looks much cleaner and hygienic because they have the toilet facility.

National Targets and Strategies

Nepal’s targets, indicators, achievements so far and its possibility relating to Millennium Development Goal 5 for the country in line with the UN Declaration are as follows:

**Target 9: Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programs and reverse the loss of environmental resources**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INDICATOR</th>
<th>1990</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2015 (TARGET)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Area under forests (%)</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area protected to maintain biological diversity (sq. kms)</td>
<td>10.948</td>
<td>20.077</td>
<td>20.077</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energy use per unit of GDP (TOE/mRs)</td>
<td>34.8</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td>28.4</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of people using wood as their main fuel (%)</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>67.74</td>
<td>67.74</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial Energy/GDP (TOE/mRs)</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from HMG-N and UNDP 2005: 61.

Nepal’s achievement possibility is, according to the NPC, “possible” and according to HMG-N and UNDP, “potentially” (NPC 2006: 10; HMG-N and UNDP 2005: 7).

**Target 10: Halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INDICATOR</th>
<th>1990</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2015 (TARGET)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of population with sustainable access to an improved water source</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of population with sustainable access to improved sanitation</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from HMG-N and UNDP 2005: 70.

Nepal’s achievement possibility is, according to the NPC, “likely” and according to HMG-N and UNDP, “potentially” (NPC 2006: 10; HMG-N and UNDP 2005: 7).
Target 11: Have achieved by 2020 a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers

Nepal’s achievement possibility has not been mentioned by the NPC, and HMG-N and UNDP.

Nepal Government’s main strategies to achieve these targets include the Master Plan for Forestry Sector (MPFS), the Nepal Biodiversity Strategy of 2002, Sustainable Development Agenda of Nepal of 2003, the National Ecotourism Strategy of 2004, the Buffer Zone Regulations and Guidelines of 2004, the National Wetland Policy of 2003 and the Herbs and Non-Timber Forest Product Development Policy of 2004. According to NEFIN, indigenous peoples were not consulted while preparing these plans and policies.

Relevance of MDG 7

The MDG 7-Ensure Environmental Sustainability is obviously relevant to the Surel community as they are also the members, users and managers of the CFUG in their community which is relevant to the Target 9 of the goal 7 is to "integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programs and reverse the loss of environmental resources". For Surels it is relevant not only in terms of Surels being the user members of the CFUG but also to eliminate unequal access, and low level of participation by the Surels in decision making process. Surels are loosing the control over their resources as they were found to be excluded in the CFUG executive committees and also in the decision making processes.

The Target 10-"halve by 2015 the population without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation" is also relevant to the development issue among Surels as they give first priority to supply enough drinking water to their community.

Conclusion

Although, Nepal’s achievement possibility of MDG 7 and associated targets 9, 10 and 11, according to the Government of Nepal, is “possible,” our field information suggests that it is “unlikely” because of continuing practices of discrimination against indigenous peoples such as Surels.

MDG 8: Develop a Global Partnership for Development

The Millennium Development Goals Report, 2005 states, “the United Nations Millennium Declaration embodies an agreement that developing countries will work to maintain sound economies, to ensure their own development and to address human and social needs. Developed countries, in turn, agree to support poorer countries through aid, trade and debt relief (United Nations 2005:36). The report highlights the meaningful partnership between rich and poor by properly addressing the developing countries' need for technology, medicines and jobs for their populations, particularly for the growing ranks of young people. The report further mentions, “Progress in each of these areas has already begun to yield results. But developed countries have fallen short of targets they have set for themselves. To achieve the Millennium Development Goals, increased aid and debt relief must be accompanied by further opening of trade, accelerated transfer of technology and improved
employment opportunities for the growing ranks of young people in the developing world” (United Nations 2005:36).

The Progress Report on The Millennium Development Goals, Nepal (2002) is silent on the status of MDG 8 (UN Country Team of Nepal 2002). However, the second progress report (HMG-N and UNDP 2005) states that Nepal has undertaken various measures to achieve the MDGs. However, the country is not being able to meet them on its own, particularly because it is an LDC (Least Developed Country) with undeveloped infrastructure, a weak industrial base, and is highly dependent on foreign assistance for investing in development challenges with limited possibilities for economic diversification and vulnerability to environmental risks... Therefore, Nepal sees a tremendous potential in Goal 8 and urges the international community to further mobilize their part of the commitment under Goal 8 and make more efforts to help the country meet the first seven MDGs.

Conclusion
As Nepal sees a “tremendous potential” for partnership, there is a long way to go to reach out to the Surel community.

DEVELOPMENT NEEDS AND PRIORITIES EXPRESSED BY SURELS

Development needs and priorities expressed by the Surel community are as follows:

Priority needs associated with MDG 1

- Surels demanded that the government should allocate enough budgets to construct irrigation canal to supply water to their farms so that they can use their farms more intensively to increase production, which would help them to solve the problem of hunger and poverty to some extent. Ganga Surel said, “If we get irrigation facility for our dry farms, we will have opportunity to increase cash income by growing off-season vegetables and selling them to the market or we will have multiple options to use our land if the irrigation water would be available in our village.”

- Surels also expressed that they need financial and technical help and assistance from the government and NGOs/INGOs to improve their socio-economic status.

- Madan Surerl narrated their plights thus:
  “Our grandfathers’ lands were captured by the kaji [the tax collector for the government who belonged to “high caste” Chhetri in this case]. For example, if a Surel failed to pay the tiro (land tax) of a land he owned to the kaji for a specific year, kaji would seize Surel’s land because he could not pay tiro for one year. Later, the kaji would register the seized land on his name. This was one of the ways we lost our land to the Chhetris. So, our opinion is that the government should be aware of what happened to us in the past and how we were exploited by the Chhetris. Our fathers and grandfathers had to work in the fields of kaji families for free. The kajis made our forefathers do whatever they needed because our fathers/grandfathers were so naïve. There are even examples that a Surel had to lose his land to the kaji just for one pathi (about four kg.) of corn flour. Having known all these, don’t you think that we were forced to become landless and economically poor by these Chhetris? Don’t you think that the
government should give us something to pay us back for what it did to our forefathers in the past? We say government did these to us because kajis were the government’s men in our village. Kajis were the one who compelled us to go to India for drudging jobs.”

- Those Surels who make their living primarily by making bamboo products expressed that their skills needs to be recognised and the government should help to promote and extend the market of their bamboo products.

Priority needs associated with MDG 2

- Surels appreciated the financial support they were receiving from the NEFIN and NFDIN to send their children to school. They also wanted that such supports should continue. If these organization would not have reached there, most of the Surel children would have left illiterate.

- Surels expressed outspokenly the need to educate their children in their mother tongue also. Madan Surel said, “Educating our children in the Nepali language alone does not fulfil our educational need but the government should support us to educate our children in our language also.” Manoj Surel asserted, “Surel Children have right to get education in their mother tongue and the [Khas] Nepali language. The government must allocate necessary budget to do so.” Chandra Maya Surel added, "I have heard that the radio broadcasts news in Tamang and other languages; that books are available in Tamang, Newar, and Limbu mother tongues. I want to listen radio news and programs in my mother tongue. I want to see our children reading books in our mother tongue. Why is the government discriminating us? I cannot understand!” Therefore, protection and promotion of their language is one of the prioritised development agenda among Surels.

- Surels also expressed that if there were the Surel teachers from the Surel community in the school, their children would get the better learning environment than what they have now with the teachers who belonged to the “high caste”.

Priority needs associated with MDG 3

- Women participants of FGDs insisted that they needed financial and technical help for institutionalising their organisation-SWUG, which was established in 2004.

- The participants demanded that they should be given job opportunity at different institutions available in the village. For example, there was only one girl who had passed SLC from the entire Surel community. She, as they demanded, should be appointed as a female teacher at the primary school in Surel village. It is justifiable because “the government has made a provision for recruiting at least one female teacher in each primary school” (HMG/UNDP 2005:31). Although, there was already a Chhetri female teacher in that school the Surel women’s insisted that Surels should be given special quota for they were exploited by the government in the past and now a disadvantaged group.

- Surel women also demanded that there should be their inclusion in the local primary school management committee. The school is located right in their own backyard but the
school management committee has not had included any Surel men or women in its management committee thus far.

- The women participants expressed that there should be a system by which a meaningful participation of Surel women in different organisations, such as CFUG, would be ensured as they have been excluded from the major decisions regarding the management of their forest.

**Priority needs associated with MDG 4**

- The respondents demanded that they needed a well managed and effective health care system for ensuring safe birth and healthy growing up of children.

- Surels also expressed the need of adequate quantity of immunization shots to be given to the children, and enough Vitamin A nutrients for the children.

- They also added that a child's health status depends on the economic and educational status of the family. Hence, the main concern was about making the Surels self sufficient in food production as well as improving the educational status among them.

**Priority needs associated with MDG 5**

- Surel women expressed the need of a female health worker from their own community so that the women would get counselling and general health check ups during the pregnancy and the local health post should be adequately staffed with manpower needed for this purpose. For this purpose, Surels demanded that the government should provide health worker training opportunity for the Surel females who hold the education required for the same.

**Priority needs associated with MDG 6**

- The respondents expressed the need for a well equipped and adequately staffed health centre at their village where they could efficiently diagnose and treat the TB which has been considered the most serious health problem in the village.

- They also added that they needed to have the health workers from their own community as well. In this regard demanded that the Surel youths should be given the health worker training opportunity by the government.

**Priority needs associated with MDG 7**

- Surels expressed that the government should introduce a new system of representation in the CFUGs in which even the most marginalized groups, such as Surels, could meaningfully participate the forest management process.

**Additional priority needs of development expressed by Surels**

- Electrification and road transportation is one of their highly prioritized needs.
• Surels gave high priority to jobs for Surel youths who have passed SLC.

• Both Surel men and women have been excluded in representation in the local bodies, namely the VDC. They expressed that their marginalization (economic, social and cultural) is the result of the political exclusion. Now, they realize that control over the local politics would enable them to get many benefits for their community. Similarly, Surel women, who are excluded from the decision making processes of CFUG executive committees, opined that there should be either mandatory proportional representation or at least a quota system to hold the key positions of the committee.

• The concerned government employees in Charikot had no idea about the list of 59 indigenous peoples identified and recognized by the government. Surels expected that NEFIN and NFDIN should organize programmes and activities to raise awareness of the government employees, political leaders, and local level planners at the DDC and VDC about the indigenous peoples.

• Surels also expressed that both the DDC and VDC so far have not planned and implemented any programmes and activities focussing on Surel community. The only help and support Surels have received so far from the VDC is polythene pipe for drinking water supply in their community. They opined that both DDC and VDC should allocate some budget for their socio-economic and cultural empowerment.

CONSULTATION WITH AND PARTICIPATION OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN MDGs

Consultation with Indigenous Peoples

Consultation with indigenous peoples by the government, according to Yasso Kanti Bhattachan, is lacking in Nepal. She writes, “...HMG-N and international donors working in Nepal have yet to institutionalize the “ask first” principle in their dealings with indigenous peoples in Nepal” (Bhattachan 2005: 87). She has mentioned that large scale face-to-face and small group consultations, discussion paper with written input, informing, researching, involving are lacking. She has identified some reasons for such non-consultation, which include dominance of Bahun-Chhteris in decision making positions and lack of awareness on indigenous peoples’ issues. One of the consequences of non-consultation mentioned by Bhattachan is: “As long as indigenous peoples’ poverty (and that of the marginalized groups) is not reduced, Nepal’s or donor’s performance in poverty reduction will not be meaningful” (Bhattachan 2005: 90).

Consultation and participation of indigenous peoples in the process of preparation of MDGs progress reports

So far MDGs activities are confined in producing three progress reports only. These are:


Indigenous peoples’ representatives were included as participants in the workshops but reports were prepared by the dominant groups, namely Bahun-Chhetris and Newars. For example, Nepal - Millennium Development Goals Progress Report 2002 was prepared by the HMG/UN Task Force comprised of 12 members: 5 Bahun (all males), 1 Chhetri (male), 1 Madhesi (male), 2 Newars (1 male and 1 female), and 3 international staff (all females). The UNITAG members comprised 13 members: 7 Nepalese (6 Bahun-Chhetris and 1 Newar; all males) and 6 foreigners (6 females and 2 males).

Nepal - Millennium Development Goals Progress Report 2005 was prepared by 6 members: 4 Bahuns (2 females and 2 males) and 2 Newars (1 female and 1 male). Technical advice analytical inputs were provided by 20 members: 12 Nepalese (9 Bahun-Chhetris [2 females and 7 males] and 2 indigenous [1 Newar and 1 Gurung]), and 8 foreigners.

Whose Goals? Civil Society Perspectives on MGDs was prepared by 3 Bahun males. NEFIN has been one of the 32 organizations involved in GCAP national coalition but NEFIN’s involvement was as a participant in the workshop only. Although the report claims, contrasting with HMG/UN report, “it highlights poor and excluded people’s perspectives on development” and that “this report has been produced after proper and adequate consultations with major Nepalese civil society”, the authors conceded during consultative meeting for this study that indigenous peoples were consulted as a token only (GCAP Nepal 2005: 2). There were several thematic papers presented and discussed in the consultative meetings but there was none on indigenous peoples’ issues. They had off hand discussion on indigenous peoples’ issues but the issues raised by indigenous peoples were not incorporated. Instead their presence was used to justify that they were inclusive.

The Need Assessment Team formed by UNDP and NPC comprised eight members: 3 Bahun-Chhetris (1 female & 2 males), 3 Newars (males) and 1 foreigner.

Participation of Indigenous Peoples

There are no MDGs specific plans and programs in Nepal. The current Tenth Plan/PRSP and sectoral programs try to relate with MDGs. Participation of indigenous peoples in all these plans and programs is mostly none and minimal in some sectors. Also, their participation in decision making positions is negligible in few and none in many sectors (Bhattachan 2005: 91-102). Our field data discussed earlier corroborate this situation at the local level. Indigenous peoples’ participation in prioritisation of problems, analysis of potentials, planning, access to resources, resource mobilization, implementation and sharing of benefits and evaluation are nominal not only among endangered indigenous nationalities, including Surels, but also among advanced and other categories of indigenous peoples.

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES IN ACHIEVING MDGs FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Plans, policies and programs

Existing plans, policies and programs are not sensitive to MDGs and indigenous peoples. There are no MDGs specific plans in Nepal. Whatever policies, plans and programs are there, most of these are hardly implemented sincerely. The eleventh plan (2007-2012) is an
opportunity to focus on MDGs but given the fluid political situation there is no possibility of
the eleventh plan until the new constitution is prepared by the constituent assembly and
promulgated. Whatever targets are set and indicators are identified at the national level, these
need to be contextualized at the local levels, specially at the district level. Also, given the
caste, ethnic, linguistic, religious, cultural and regional diversities, MDG targets need to be
contextualized to achieve set targets of MDGs. Aggressive indigenous peoples sensitive
policies are conspicuously lagging.

Legal

There are many discriminatory constitutional and legal provisions against indigenous
peoples, mother tongue speakers, minority religious groups, regional groups and women.
Laws in contradiction with international instruments of human rights need to be amended.
Some existing laws need to be implemented sincerely. New laws need to be legislated and
some international instruments such as ILO Convention 169 need to be ratified by the Nepal
Government as directed by the Parliament in August 2006.

Structural and institutional

The main structural challenge facing the MDGs in Nepal is fluid political situation due to
Maoist insurgency that began since 1996. Nepal is undergoing through democratic transition
after the People’s Movement Part 2 of April 2006 that ended autocratic rule of the King.
Currently ceasefire continues; the government-Maoist dialogue is in progress; the United
Nations has started a process of monitoring of arms of the government and the Maoist; no
war no peace situation prevails; and election for constituent assembly and making of new
constitution are the core agenda. International aid agencies are still in wait and see and
political situation is very fragile as it may lead to peaceful transition or back to violence and
counter-violence. Also, both governmental and non-governmental institutions have been very
weak due to intensified violence and counter-violence between the government’s unified
security forces and the Maoist insurgents.

Economic strategies

The Need Assessment Team of the Nepal Government and UNDP estimated that about 16
billion rupees (1 US $ = 70 Rupees) to achieve the set targets. Additional resources are
needed for target group programs for women, Dalits (“untouchables”) and indigenous
peoples.

Cultural issues

Cultural diversity in Nepal poses challenges as targets, indicators, policies, plans, strategies,
programs relating to MDGs are designed and implemented by the government, international
aid agencies and (I) NGOs with no or little sensitivity to cultural diversity.

Human rights issues

MDGs expert of UNDP, Nepal said that MDGs are rights-based. NEFIN, NFDIN and
indigenous experts said that indigenous peoples’ rights are ignored in Nepal by both the
government and the human rights organizations and its activists in general.
Surel specific challenges

The land and other resources belonging to the Surels in the past are grabbed by other caste people; their language is in the verge of extinction; they already lost many of their customary practices and religious rituals because of the Hindu domination. All those problems and issues meet together aggravate poverty among Surels. The problem is how the local as well as national governments formulate strategies to uplift Surels' socio-economic status at the same time promoting their culture, language, and customary practices.

The MDGs could play the roles as directives for formulating the development strategies targeting the indigenous peoples like Surel but the poverty issues raised by Surels are associated with politics, history, economy, social and cultural rights cross cutting each other. The problem of poverty among Surels is a multidisciplinary one. Only a democratic government that respect the language, culture, religion, customs of indigenous nationalities like Surels could play a positive role in reducing poverty among Surel.

The findings of this case study show that the MDGs are, in many respects, relevant to the needs and development priorities expressed by Surel indigenous peoples:

- Quantitative targets and indicators are not comprehensible to the Surels;
- Irrigation facility in their farms is necessary to intensify and increase the agri-products;
- Undoing the incidences of poverty, land dispossession, low educational attainment and continuing exploitation and domination by the “high caste” people and the state;
- Ensure rights to get education in Surel mother tongue and its promotion by broadcasting the radio news and programs;
- Stop marginalized of Surel women by the “high caste” women in decision making processes in community development activities in general and the management of CFUGs in particular;
- Surels’ present concern is to control spreading of TB in their community; and
- Supply of safe drinking water in Surel community.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations concerning the main actions needed in order to achieve MDGs at the local level, with focus on Surel community

- NFDIN, NEFIN, ILO and other international, governmental and non-governmental organizations should organize awareness raising programs on indigenous peoples to the government employees in the district, VDCs, wards, local political leaders and development workers.
- DDC and VDCs should allocate budget to address the needs expressed by the Surels.
- NEFIN and NFDIN’s district offices should be decisively involved in the district/local development planning process
• Considering the endangered status of Surels, the GOs and NGOs working from central to local level should take sincere consideration of development and right based issues raised by Surels. So as to materialize this provision there should special desk/programs in the DDC to take care of the issues of endangered indigenous peoples like Surels and highly marginalized groups like Thami indigenous people in Dolakha district.

• Representation of Surels in DDC, VDC, ward and user’s groups must be ensured by adopting a policy of special rights of Surels.

• Government should come up with policy, plan and a package program to give due complementation to Surels for their loss of land and control over natural resources.

• Employment opportunities must be created to stop migration to India.

• The government should develop and implement tri-lingual (mother tongue, any other national language and any international language of their choice) policy in education and provide necessary physical, technical and financial support to give education in Surel mother tongue.

• National and local governments and other NGOs must go through an adequate and meaningful consultation process before they formulate and implement any programs that concerns Surel community.

• The Dolakha DDC should document and publish the profiles of all indigenous nationalities groups of the district

• Legal provisions should be made to ensure the meaningful and decisive participation of Surel men and women in the overall development process of the district

• There should be legal provisions that Surels and other indigenous nationalities should be consulted before the GOs and NGOs implement any development projects (e.g. hydro electric, irrigation, road construction, logging etc.) using the natural resources belonged to the indigenous nationalities.

Recommendations on steps that need to be taken in order to ensure the achievement of MDGs for indigenous peoples in Nepal

• Nepal Government and donors should ensure full and meaningful consultation with and participation of indigenous peoples in MDGs process from contextualization to implementation and monitoring of MDGs in Nepal.

• The Government of Nepal and donors working in Nepal should contextualize MDGs in the local context with full sensitivity to indigenous peoples and other marginalized groups.

• The Government of Nepal and donors should ensure necessary financial and technical resources, including resources needed to reach out to indigenous peoples.
• International Standards, particularly ILO Convention No. 169 should be respected by all at all times from designing to monitoring of all MDGs activities. It should be recalled here that the Parliament has recently passed a resolution and directed the Nepal Government for its ratification.

• Indigenous peoples’ rights to land, forest and other natural resources should be recognized and practiced sincerely to help to achieve the MDGs 1 & 7.

• In sector programs, such as education, health and environment, both the Nepal Government and international donors may follow recommendations made in a Tool Kit on Best Practices for Including Indigenous Peoples in Sector Programme Support developed by DANIDA in 2004 to help to achieve all the goals of MDGs (DANIDA 2004).

• Both the Nepal Government and international donors should sincerely implement “Ensuring the Right of Indigenous Peoples and Linguistic Minorities to Basic and Primary Education through Mother Tongue” in Education for All, National Plan of Action (2001-2015) elaborated by MOES in collaboration with UNESCO to help achieve the MDG 2 (HMG-N 2003).

• Mainstreaming gender programmes and implementation of CEDAW and BPfA should recognize diversity among women by being sensitive to indigenous women and girl child in particular and indigenous peoples in general to help to achieve MDG goal 3.

• Indigenous peoples’ intellectual property rights to customary knowledge must be recognized and focus should be on capacity building of indigenous peoples’ institutions and health workers to help to achieve the MDGs 4, 5 & 6.

• Participatory mapping of existing customary rights and management system should be in place to help to achieve the MDG 7.

• Nepal’s central and local government bodies and donors who have initiated partnership with indigenous peoples need to expand and focus on local levels, and those who have no partnership should develop and expand as soon as possible.
References


