



SUCCESS STORY

Engaging Youth through Radio



USAID/Nepal

Panelists address questions from the audience at a live event in Biratnagar, Morang district.



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Students listen to panelists respond to a caller at a dialogue on employment opportunities in the legal sector.

June 2009 – In the months following Nepal’s April 2008 Constituent Assembly election, citizen expectations were very high. However, the political transition has been plagued by setbacks, including the fall of the first coalition government, the rise of impunity, and a general lack of security around the country. And young people, who were especially active during the election campaign, have become increasingly disenchanted, as promises of jobs and security have not materialized.

Recognizing that Nepal’s youth need forums where they can be heard, as well as opportunities to be engaged in the peace process and in their communities, USAID’s Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) supported radio station B FM with an effort to produce a weekly, live call-in show that gave young people an outlet for their voices. B FM, an eastern Terai station, serves an audience that consists almost entirely of young people, and the show provided Terai youth with opportunities to debate national and local issues.

The show, “Yuva Aawaz” (Youth Voice), covered a range of topics, including the impact of *bandhs* (protests that provoke transportation disruptions and work stoppages) on the local economy, the national debate on federalism, the realities of migrating overseas for work, and employment opportunities for recent college graduates. Local government officials and business leaders were guests on the shows, giving callers an opportunity to talk directly with decision makers about their concerns. The programs were held at college campuses and youth clubs so young people could also address panelists from the audience.

According to the station manager, B FM received many responses from young listeners, especially after shows on highly debated topics like migrating for work and federalism. And in a number of cases, panelists were spurred to action following comments from listeners.

After one of the shows, a regional Local Development Officer (LDO) was moved to create a Youth Self-Employment Fund that will provide business skills training and small business-startup loans to 100 local youths. The LDO said he would not have known of the urgent need for this assistance had he not been on the show.