



## SUCCESS STORY

### Bringing the Constitutional Debate to Far-West Nepal



A member of the CA interacts with Bardiya district residents during a live radio program.

OTI/Nepal



Shuklaphanta FM is bringing the constitutional debate to remote areas of Nepal.

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**July 2009** – An essential next step in Nepal’s political transition is the production and ratification of a new Constitution. However, many rural areas do not have strong communication links to the Constituent Assembly (CA) in Kathmandu, where the bulk of the constitution-writing work is happening.

Lacking these links, many people in rural areas are poorly informed about the constitution-writing effort and feel that they do not have a voice in the process. And some groups, doubting that their concerns will be addressed in the Constitution, have instituted protest programs.

To help overcome the impediments to communication, Shuklaphanta FM, a prominent community radio station in the far-west region of Nepal, conducted 36 live radio discussion programs that allowed citizens in rural areas to address feedback on constitutional topics to CA members. The station, which received support from OTI, provided residents with important personal contact with their CA representatives and also gave CA members a forum they could use to keep their constituents informed about the progress in Kathmandu.

More than 40 CA members participated in the 36 programs, reflecting the pressing need for outlets to connect people from the far-west communities of Nepal with their CA representatives for constitutional discussions.

With OTI’s technical support, Shuklaphanta FM’s broadcast footprint has grown, and the expanded listener base has enabled it to institute several programs to better inform people of the ongoing political transition and peace process. In addition, last spring, when CA members visited 54 communities in the region as part of a campaign to collect public comments on the constitution, the station was able to cover all the events and air the feedback the CA members received.

And as the live programs were fostering dialogues between residents and the CA, the station was also producing a recorded show to connect the public with local government. “Sewa ra Sarokar,” or Services and Concerns, brought public concerns about government-provided services to officials, giving residents insight into the system and laying the groundwork for holding local officials accountable.