

Rehabilitation Update

Feb 2013



Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.



UN Interagency Rehabilitation Programme (UNIRP)

1. INTRODUCTION

Voices of beneficiaries

"Since I joined the Maoist army in my childhood and spent more than six years there, I had no skill for survival. Thanks to UNIRP for the skills training" – a VMLR, who now runs a cosmetic shop

"UNIRP training is very good for the people who have lost their path" – Father of a VMLR

"If I didn't have UNIRP counselling and training, I would have been a Khate (street boy)" – a VMLR, who now runs a retail shop and hotel

"UNIRP helped me to get tailoring training, which I wished for." – a VMLR, who now runs a tailoring shop

"Towards real rehabilitation"



UNIRP offered four sectoral rehabilitation options and various services such as individual career counselling, psychosocial support, business mentoring, health support, family counselling, gender-specific support, socio-economic support and peacebuilding activities. The support has been constantly adapted and improved to cater for the needs of participants.

The rehabilitation programme, though voluntary in nature, faced a series of challenges especially during the initial one and a half years. Many of the VMLRs came with unrealistically high expectations and psychosocial distress due to their war-time experience, and showed frustration and anger towards UNIRP staff. However, as the participants began to see positive changes in their lives through UNIRP interventions, their attitudes and aptitudes significantly improved. The changes of political dynamics and an emerging conducive environment through peacebuilding activities also upheld their rehabilitation.

This update provides an overview of how the United Nations Interagency Rehabilitation Programme (UNIRP) has been supporting the Verified Minors and Late Recruits (VMLRs) of the Maoist ex-combatants in their return to civilian life with sustainable livelihoods. In accordance with the Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA), 4,008 VMLRs were discharged in 2010. Of the VMLRs, 74% were children, and 30% of them were women and girls. As this already vulnerable population lacked the necessary skills for civilian life, UNIRP was launched to support and facilitate their rehabilitation upon the request of the Government of Nepal.



Four sectoral rehabilitation options:
1) Vocational Skills Training 2) Micro-enterprise
3) Education 4) Health-related Training

2. WHERE THINGS STAND

- Of the 4,008 VMLRs discharged, it was found that 3,040 VMLRs remained in country by an individual tracing initiative in 2010 and 2011.

Virtually all participants in vocational skills training, micro-enterprise development, and health-related training completed their courses by the end of January 2013. **Among them, 69% are employed or self-employed.** The fact that **40% of those who are self/employed are women** reflects UNIRP's gender-responsiveness.

The programme has been a major success in the sensitive socio-political context of Nepal and stands in various ways as a best practice for similar rehabilitation programmes around the world. UNIRP's effectiveness has been enhanced by post-training follow-up, business mentoring, career counselling, and linkages with micro-credit or employment opportunities. Implementation of these components through frequent field visits have played a key role in enabling VMLRs to sustain their newly established



livelihoods.

UNIRP, in consensus with the Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction, has been extended to provide follow-up support for those who graduated around January 2013 and to maintain continuous support to the nearly 90% of the education participants who are still continuing their studies, thanks to the Norwegian funding through the UN Peace Fund for Nepal. This extension will enable UNIRP to maximize emerging rehabilitation opportunities for participants, such as linkages to affordable loans and employment opportunities. Based on a memorandum of understanding between UNIRP and the Youth and Small Entrepreneur Self Employment Fund (YSESEF) under the Ministry of Finance, three orientation workshops have been conducted to link participants with YSESEF and local cooperatives. UNIRP places a high priority on these activities to ensure that the livelihood of VMLRs is supported through the early stage of business development.

2.1. Key Statistics of the Rehabilitation Programme (as of the end of February 2013)

The tables below present key data about UNIRP through various stages of the rehabilitation process. Each table contains gender disaggregated data to reflect women's participation.

Table 1 shows how many VMLRs contacted the programme, how many were referred to education or training, and how many enrolled in each option. Table 1 presents data in three groups: the total VMLR population, VMLRs discharged through the cantonments, and VMLRs who are in Nepal - 3,040 VMLRs of the UNIRP target group.

Table 2 provides an overview of the 2,231 VMLRs who enrolled in training or education options.

Table 3 shows how many of the graduated VMLRs are employed or have started their own business.

Table 1: Key Numbers

Steps in Rehabilitation Process	Of the total 4,008 VMLRs		Of the 2,394 VMLRs discharged through cantonment ceremonies		UNIRP Target Population: Of the 3,040 VMLRs who are not working abroad
		Female		Female	
VMLRs who contacted UNIRP through the toll-free phone number	2,743 (68%)	34%	2,131 (89%)	34%	2,743 (90%)
VMLRs referred for Training / Education	2,477 (62%)	36%	1,954 (82%)	36%	2,477 (81%)
VMLRs enrolled for Training / Education	2,231 (56%)	38%	1,761 (74%)	37%	2,231 (73%)

Table 2: Breakdown of 2,231 VMLRs who enrolled for Training or Education

Steps in Rehabilitation Process	Of the total 2,231 VMLRs who enrolled Training / Education	
		Female %
Those still in Training or Education with set graduation date	385 (17%)	42%
Those who dropped-out	60 (3%)	7%
Those who graduated from Education	28 (1%)	57%
Those who have graduated from Training	1,758 (79%)	37%

Table 3: Breakdown of 1,758 VMLRs who have graduated to date from Training

Steps in Rehabilitation Process	Of the total 1,758 VMLRs who graduated from Training	
		Female %
Those who are employed or running a business	1,218 (69%)	40%

3. WHERE THINGS ARE GOING



With UNIRP starting to phase-out and with a reduced staff, UNDP will provide crucial follow-up support such as business mentoring, counselling, facilitation of micro-credit linkages, and links to job opportunities for participants for an additional six months, and will cease operation by the end of July 2013. UNICEF will continue to support education participants until August 2015 when they graduate from schools. (Activities of ILO and UNFPA completed by January 2013.)

The phase-out strategy of UNIRP places emphasis on linking participants with ongoing services to help them sustain their jobs and businesses. The programme will also work with relevant Government staff in the Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction to build the capacity required to take over the database and the responsibility once UNIRP phases-out. In addition to collating and compiling key findings, results and lessons learned from the rehabilitation process, UNIRP will gradually close the remaining two regional offices and the central office by July 2013.

4. Success Stories

“Experiences have shown, time and again, that we need to make a decisive effort to reintegrate ex-combatants into society – an effort that recognizes the fundamental human need for dignity and self-respect. This must involve immediate support as soon as ex-combatants give up their arms, and concrete measures to guarantee them secure livelihood as well as better future,” [United Nations Secretary General’s statement, April 2005](#)

"Now, they call me 'Sahuji' (shop owner) with respect"



Nayalal (24) spent a very difficult childhood era. He was born in a poor and marginalized community where most of the houses were made of mud, straw, and bamboo. “When I was small, my home was burnt down two times and my family lost everything. To escape from the difficult reality, my father often drank too much Raksi (local alcohol). My four brothers and sisters and I didn’t know what to do. We were looked down on because of the poverty. It was miserable”, he recalls. In his community, many times he witnessed poor villagers who didn’t have their own land being exploited. He felt helpless when he imagined his future would be the same. Given these circumstances, he decided to join the People’s Liberation Army (PLA). “I thought things might change if I joined the PLA.” However, his days in the army camp were still hard because he had to move from place to place with heavy packs. Then, in early 2010, he was discharged as a minor because he was under 18 years old when the ceasefire agreement was signed in November 2006. After he left the camp, he went to India as a daily wage labourer to earn some money but he wasn’t properly paid. With low spirits, he returned back to his own community and visited a regional office of UNIRP in early 2011. He received individual career counselling and selected retail shop training under the micro-enterprise development option. Using his acquired skills and start-up support by UNIRP, he opened a shop in his own village in late 2011. Since he knows the needs of the villagers and the shop is the only retail shop around the area, his business has been thriving. Nayalal’s income is up to 15,000 Nepali rupees a month. Now, the space in front of his shop becomes a meeting place for the villagers - people gather, chat with each other, buy things, and sometimes hold social events. **“Now, they call me ‘Sahuji’ (shop owner) with respect”,** he says. His father helps Nayalal’s business and doesn’t get drunk anymore. He is married and now has a baby. **“I have a dream. I would like to buy a land, so that I can expand my business. UNIRP staff gave me advice and business ideas and how I can get an affordable loan. I appreciate it a lot”.**



"I am confident about the success of my business"



It took time for Raj (26) to complete his skills training after he visited a UNIRP regional office in early 2011. Raj wasn’t sure about the details of his business plan. Each time he changed his mind or wondered about his future, UNIRP staff discussed his business idea and possible support, and then encouraged him in starting a new business. Consequently, he started his own bakery shop in late 2012. His new business is going very well so far, making daily average sales of 8,000 Nepal rupees with a 30% profit. Since Raj started his business, he has become an entrepreneur with great determination. He hired staff who runs a mobile stand to sell his bread, cookies and cakes in nearby markets. **“The staff is now earning 15,000 to 20,000 rupees a month based on their sales”,** Raj says proudly. However, there are some risks in his business.

For example, Raj invested 600,000 Nepali rupees to buy baking machines by receiving loan which has relatively high interest. To reduce the risk of this interest bears on his business cash flow, UNIRP staff introduced him a loan with low interest by the Youth and Small Entrepreneur Self Employment Fund (YSESEF). Representative of YSESEF also visited him with UNIRP staff and briefed him that the objective of the fund, which is to provide loans to small entrepreneurs like Raj so that they can expand their businesses. Raj says, **“I am happy to know this opportunity. Now I am confident about the success of my business.”** Although the support to the graduates of micro-enterprise by UNIRP will end in few months, UNIRP aims to enhance their livelihood sustainability by linking them with ongoing programmes.



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