

**New actors in new business:
Private sector engagement for peace building in Nepalⁱ**

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1. The Context

The discourse of peace process is changing over time by examining the role of new actors and approaches. The classical perspective of peace building responsibilities rest with political actors has been gradually shifting and the role and stake of new actors have been started to observe (Lawton, 2009; Kanagaretnam and Brown, 2005). In this context, this paper attempts to examine the role of business actors, their motives and approaches in peace building in Nepal.

As Nepal underwent through experiences of a decade long (1996-2006) bloody armed conflict waged by Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)^{iv}, the conflict has affected every sectors and actors. Private sector is one of them. Previous researches (Upreti and Upadhaya, 2009; Sharma, 2007 and 2010) shows that private sector is one of the most affected as well as direct stakeholders of Nepal's armed conflict. Private sector, more specifically the business houses irrespective of their sectoral engagement, suffered from the rebels in the name of financing the war (Upreti et al., 2009).

If we count economic gear, Nepal is in snail's pace in comparison to other growing economies of Asia. The average per capita income as per 2009 is US \$ 1597 (UNDP, 2009) with the same one digit economic growth since long years. Though not true for some city pockets, most of the hinterlands are underserved in terms of development benefits. The economic disparity is alarming, so is the social divide (GEFONT, 2006). Investment security is adverse (Joras, 2008). Business environment is upsetting. But amongst them all, what give hope are the emerging initiatives by the private sector that try to make things better. In deed, the new activities by private sector here are appearing as a harbinger of peaceful future.

Private sector in Nepal is engaged not only in the production and supply of goods and services, but also in contributing to engineer a better society to live in. That is of course through social involvement and contribution to peace

building, the common aspiration of Nepalis. Though new for Nepal, this practice is frequent in several other war-torn countries (Amarasuriya et al., 2009 and Mariano, 2005). The global history also depicts that corporate associations are engaged in conflict transformation and peace promotion in the aftermath and even amidst of conflict (Wassenhove et al., 2008).

In this context, the main objective of this paper is to contribute to the ongoing debate of new actors in peace process by analyzing the engagement of private sector in peace promotion. Assuming the private sector, for the purpose of this study, as an abstract cohort of the organizations operating under the law of Government of Nepal with profit-making motive, the following research questions are set for this paper:

- Who are the key business actors engaged in peace process and why are they engaged?
- What are the key activities implemented by business actors?
- What are the advantages, disadvantages and determinants of private sector in peace building?

2. Methodology

Research methodology entails the course framework of research. This section briefly describes choice of the research methods used to answer the research questions. A methodology has been devised here to facilitate the analysis of patterns, interrelations and interactions among the actors and their activities to achieve particular objectives. Hence, interpretive methodological approach is applied here that connects context and practice of business actors in peace promotion.

Whenever one analyzes corporate actions into the frame of social contribution, it is very important to document practices of business actors and their strategies, maneuvers, discourses and connections. Therefore, in order to explore the dynamics of private sector in peace process, methods and techniques of qualitative research are used to collect the required information.

Nepal Research Group of National Centre of Competence in Research (NCCR) North-South is jointly implementing a global research project entitled "The role of private sector in peace promotion: An assessment of the benefits, limitations

and determinants of corporate engagement in peace" with swisspeace Foundation in America, Asia and Africa. This paper is a part of initial findings of this research. In it, while assessing the role of private sector in peace building process, a simple matrix is developed (see Table 1) to collect country-specific business actors, their peace related activities, their experiences in terms of advantages and disadvantages), impacts of conflict in their businesses and source of information. Both primary (interview, discussions, observations, etc.) and secondary (reports, researches, surveys and analytical studies, etc.) sources were used for the collection of data. Then the collected data are analyzed through descriptive and interpretative ways.

Table 1: A matrix to collect the information

Country	Who? Association/ Company	What? Activity/ Results	Advantages positive experiences	Disadvantages/ negative experiences	Entanglement of business in conflict roots/Impact of conflict on business	Source

3. Analytical Framework

An analytical framework helps to think about phenomena, order data and reveal patterns (Cresswell, 2003). Therefore, this is a heuristic device designed to identify and analyze the relevant characteristics. This section presents different components of engagement of private sector in peace building. They are arranged according to their vertical progression.

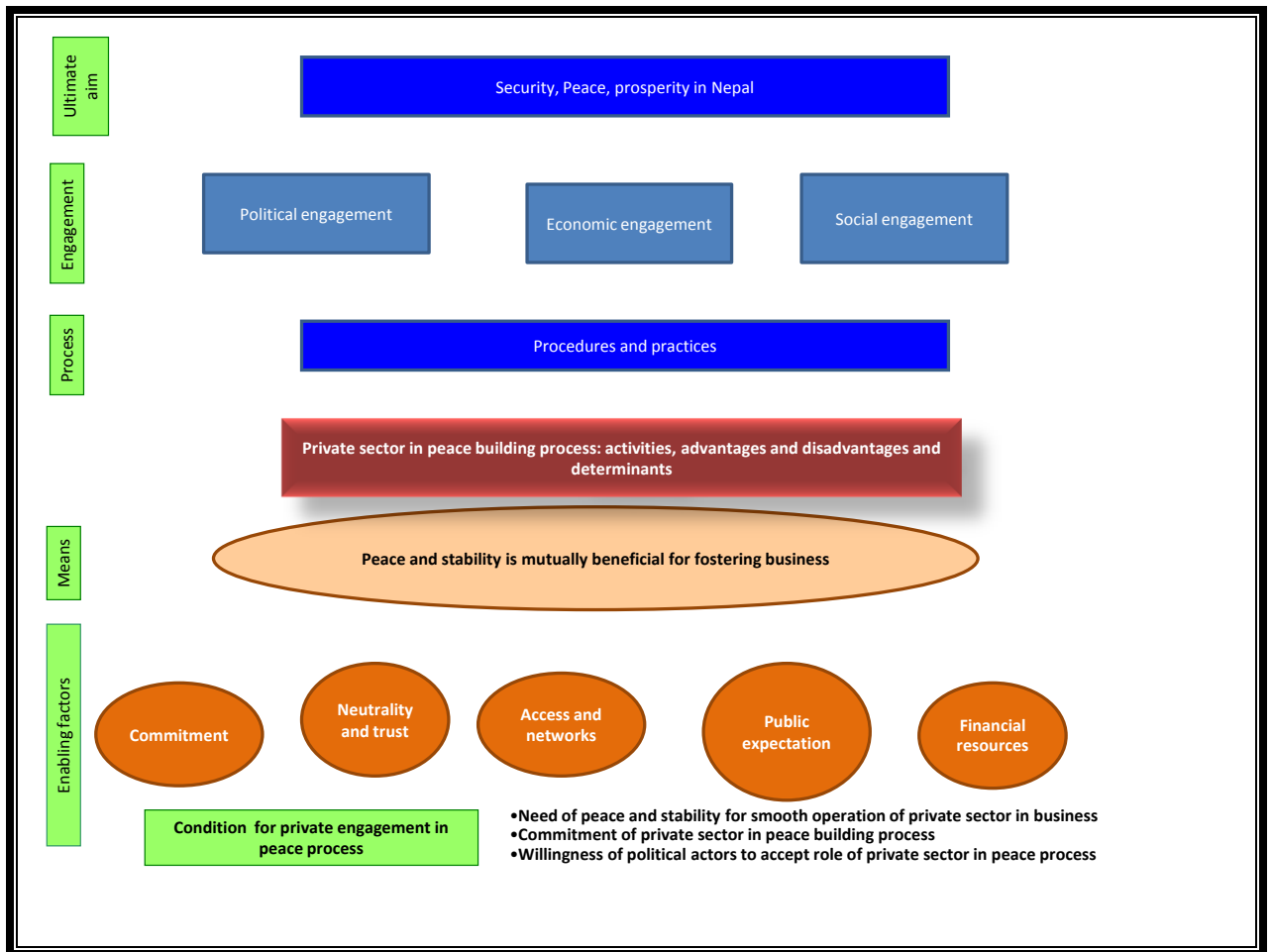


Figure 1: Analytical framework for examining private sector engagement in peace building
 Source: Designed by the authors, 2011.

Figure 1 depicts the interplay between different variables in this research. This sets a frame by which the private sector's participation can be enhanced in peace building. When we set forth the ultimate goal of establishing security, peace and prosperity with economic intervention of private sector, there are some conditions for their engagement, some enabling factors that backs up their motivation, some means to move into process and some specific sorts of engagement in activities. This whole paper has tried to establish a situational interrelationship among these variables.

4. Engagement of private sector in peace building

This study reveals that private sector actors were less interested to engage in resolving the ongoing armed conflict until 2000. The main reasons of their less

interest and engagement were: first, the armed conflict was much targeting to the government offices and less to the business sector. Consequently, private sector felt that dealing with the armed conflict is a business of the government and they have nothing to do with it. They did not directly suffer from the malevolence of the war. Second, this sector had undermined the potential impacts (in terms of degree, intensity, expansion) of the armed conflict. Therefore, the actors of private sector were emphasizing on the control of the armed conflict by restoring law and order. By implication, this sector was much relying on the use of force to maintain law and order that was hoped to provide an environment conducive with business. Hence, the analysis of private sector was weak in terms of understanding the armed conflict. As a consequence, private sector was not able to devise suitable response strategy and remained passive expecting improvement in the situation and hoping that UCPN (M) activities will be ceased or ineffective.

However, the situation changed after the UCPN (M) broke the peace talk, declared the end of the ceasefire and attacked the Nepal Army barrack in Dang in November 2001^v. The private sector was against the armed conflict because the rebels started targeting them. At that time, the profit-making organizations were presented as exploiters or a part of the feudal system by UCPN (M). Similarly, this sector was very much aligned with the establishment (the government and the ruling political parties). It also provided basis for rebels to target this very sector. They started creating problem to private sector (either directly attacking them, or asking for huge donation, mobilizing their trade unions for agitation, obstructing regular functions of enterprises, etc. Destruction of basic infrastructures such as Village Development Center (VDC) buildings, bridges, roads, schools, electricity, drinking water, telephone, and bank offices became widespread that caused adverse impacts on private sector and overall economy (see periodic reports from INSEC and ICG of 2004, 2005 and 2006).

This sector not only suffered from rebels, but also the state armies that obstructed them in various activities in the name of security sensitivity. The private sector workers in health sector in cities and towns suffered from a) damage of ambulances and health related infrastructures; and b) restriction of supply of medicines and movement of medical professionals, and c) frequent disruption and blockade of services; and d) donation drive. Similarly, private

actors working in education sector (especially private education) were also the target of the rebels for donation, abduction, strike and closures of schools.

Private investors in transport sector were suffered from restriction/obstruction in physical mobility, travel and transportation of goods and services, landmines in major roads, damage of transport infrastructures such as aviation and telecommunication towers, roads, suspension bridges, etc. Physical damage of public vehicles was also noticeable such as in burning or blasting of buses, lorries, motorbikes and even ambulances. Extortion on huge scale from transport entrepreneurs by the insurgents, disturbing and humiliating security checking on the highways and district roads, compulsion imposed by the government side to run vehicles even amidst threats of *bands* called by the rebels, obstruction of supply and delivery of food items and other goods, severe disruption of market systems such as rising prices, shortage of supply of basic foods, increasing black marketing, smugglings and carteling, etc. were also rampant. Similarly, big construction projects (e.g., Melamchi Drinking Water Project, Kali Gandaki 'A' Hydro Power Project, different road construction projects, etc.) always came under political controversy (Thapa, 2010). These all circumstances faced by transport sector caused economic activities to gear down.

The armed conflict also severely affected market and employment opportunities as private multi-national companies were under direct target. According to their 'sabotage strategy', the UCPN (M) directed attacks on infrastructures of large companies such as Uniliver Nepal, Surya Tobacco Company, Coca-Cola Company, distilleries and even public infrastructures that did support business environment (e.g., police post, government office buildings, etc.)^{vi}. The strategy of 'sabotaging infrastructures' of UCPN (M) had not only affected private business companies but also caused great negative economic impacts by market disruption, black marketing, shortage of goods and services, physical damages of goods and food stuff, reduced market opportunities and trade imbalance. Small entrepreneurs were even forced to spill milk, throw vegetables and other agricultural products on the road because the frequent transport *bands* obstructed their sale.^{vii}

Once the armed conflict escalated, employment opportunities within the country was severely constrained because of scaling down or closure of existing

industries. Furthermore, there was no favorable environment for investing on or establishing new enterprises. Even, people engaged in self-employment, agriculture and small-scale cottage industries left their villages/occupations due to insecurity. It led to mass migration to India and Gulf countries for menial works resulting huge loss of human resources (NCCR North-South and NIDS 2009 and 2010). Because of the market disruption, uncertainty and insecurity (looting, robbery, etc.), banking sector was severely constrained and many banks from the rural areas withdrew their offices.

Private entrepreneurs active in tourism sector were also severely affected by the armed conflict. Frequent labour strikes in hotel and related industries demotivated tourism entrepreneurs. Consequently, they were forced to close hotels (even some big hotels such as Blue Star). They were also suffered from the demand of huge donation, reduction in the number of tourists (Upreti and Upadhaya, 2009). Tourists were also exorted and levied by the rebels. It gave negative image in the tourist-originating countries and consequently decreased the number of tourists visiting Nepal (NTB, 2010). They were primarily citing the reasons like uncertain strikes, *bands* and blockades.

The private sector emerged active once the degree, intensity and impact of armed conflict fell high on their business. As Miall (2004) states that economy and business strongly influence conflict dynamics and conflict creates economic disorder, ruin of business infrastructure and affects business environment, Lederach (1997) puts forth that they have equally important role in peace-building. In this context, it is important to explore the reasons why the private sector wants active role in peace building. Hence, in this paper, the engagement of private sector in the three major areas, i.e., political, social and economic areas is examined.

4.1 Types of engagement

4.1.1 At political level

In Nepal, the private sector's engagement at political level is mainly in forms of formal and informal meeting with the political party leaders. Such meetings were held also during the time of active conflict. The businesspersons did meet with local rebel leaders, security officials and government administrators to negotiate on the business environment. They also used to meet Prime Ministers, ministers, opposition leaders and members of parliament.

Some current post-conflict instances are also glaring. The private sector and professional associations had once took lead of a huge peace rally on May 7th 2010 throughout the country. Prior to the Maoist strike that started in the second week of May 2010, Federation of Nepal Chamber of Commerce and Industries (FNCCI) led a historic program in Kathmandu named Nirnayak Bahas, the Decisive Debate, to forge consensus and understanding among political actors.^{viii} These all show that now private sector also can not be apart from the ongoing peace process.

In these various processes, they put forth corporate demands (mainly related to keeping their business unaffected), provided options for possible solution, exerted pressure for negotiation. Sometimes, they even said that they would be compelled to close their business if condition deteriorate further. Some of the businesspersons also threatened the government that they will not pay tax in such a situation. Sometimes, they resorted to calling on general strikes and closure of their business to pressurize the government on their benevolence. Similarly, they facilitated high level meetings coordinating between the leaders offering venues and logistics for talks. Amongst the all, creation of National Business Initiatives (NBI) was one of the good deed they did. Through it, they are now engaged in public policy dialogue for peace promotion. The NBI has now established partnership with international community, government and civil society in pushing peace agenda.

The first and foremost reason for these political engagement was to improve the deteriorated situation of private sector. It was indeed one of the major reasons that led to decreased productivity and profit. Therefore, it was imperative for them to continue their business activities and sustain profit. Moreover, peace was a commonly aspired condition for all Nepali people to proceed prosperously.

4.1.2 At social level

One of the major reasons for Nepal's years long conflict was socio-economic inequality and disparity (Upreti et al., 2009; Mishra, 2004 and Pfaff-Czarnecka, 2004). And, of course, the very conflict was the very reason because of which the national economy lagged behind. This is why it is deemed necessary for private sector in Nepal to be engaged at social level to mitigate the effects of conflict.

At the social level engagement, private sector entrepreneurs were working together with civil society activists, networks and movements either directly or through their organizations (such as Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industries: FNCCI, Confederation of Nepalese Industries, or other networks) to exert pressure for political negotiation for restoring peace, security and law and order, promoting social entrepreneurship, supporting youth, engaging in philanthropic and charity work, promoting reconciliation and creating positive social environment for peace.

The insurgency in Nepal has created up to 270,000 (Jha, 2008) internally displaced people who now eke out their living in urban slums and shanties. Most of them are bereft of any physical property, even not with a roof to be housed into. While the state is not taking proper care in reconstruction of infrastructures and reintegration of the previously conflicting actors, there is an ample space and areas for private sectors. It may also help them gain trust from the people in a situation where most of the ultra-forces sees profit-making as a crime.

In Nepal, private sector contribution to the society is mostly featured by philanthropic activities. But it is quite different from social responsibility. Philanthropy looks commonly at enriching public relations but social responsibility does so to build a society with multiple founding stones. It addresses those social problems that are keeping overall human development lag behind. Some voluntary provisions like FNCCI Business Code of Conduct (FNCCI, 2005) and the UN Global Compact (MMD, 2006 and Adecco Austria, 2007) are seeking room to play in the regard of corporate social responsibility. Yet, the performance is not realized to their fullest extent. Complimentary jobs like the formation of NBI to seek the role of private sector in conflict transformation have been started. To transform the conflict, seeking a milestone to start from is a must. The private sector should now think out of the box apart from the activities like voluntary donations. Donations can enrich public relations, but cannot empower development correlation. When the corporate sector is responsible socially, perhaps, this can be the best part of their philanthropy (Ghimire, 2010). So, the Nepalese business sector is yet to learn lesson in this regard.

4.1.3 At economic level

Though engagement of private sector in peace building is realized, the scope, degree and intensity are still limited, selective or sporadic. Sometimes, private sector's responses becomes very reactive, almost alike the reactions from politicians. It is very hard to differentiate between politicians, businesspersons, academics, journalists and bureaucrats in Nepal because all of them speak the same or similar language, often forgetting their limits, competencies, specialisations and responsibility. Therefore, the quality of their words or actions is superficial, generalized and misguided that is virtually leading to discredibility. Private sector is not an exception. Sometimes, they sarcastically call strikes that further exacerbate economy. Irresponsibly, they oppose to pay tax or exert pressure to release their members involved in criminal activities like black marketing or tax evasion or similar crimes. These all activities are further eroding people's trust on private sector as an active economic actor.

Pondering on Nepal's conflict causes, of course, the generation of employment with industrial investment is the major remedy. Gender and social inclusion is the other. But investments are yet to be decentralized to the rural hinterlands. Numerous resource-bases are yet to be explored and exploited. The Nepali business society is yet to explore and work on such issues that can really transform conflict. Contrary to it, there is an alarming increase of 42 per cent in unemployment rate over the decade (CBS, 2009). Throughout the country, development has become a far-cry not because there is scarcity of resources, but because they are misplaced. The state ought to act in creating investment-friendly situation to accelerate private investment in newer sectors.

More active engagement of private sector in peace building can be realized through economic activities, especially by addressing one of the main root causes of the conflict. Creation of jobs for the conflict affected people, applying ethical principles and working in the principles, providing services to conflict affected areas, creating incentive structures (e.g., training centres and opportunities) can help accelerate this process. The Nepalese private sector has even collectively shown willingness to provide jobs to ex-combatants, minors and disqualified rebels if the government and political parties fully support to create business friendly environment (NBI Newsletters, 2010). The corporate community is arguing that the investment security and obstruction-, extortion- and pressure-free business are the preconditions for economic success in post-conflict Nepal.

Another important contribution of private sector in the economic front could be the reconstruction of damaged infrastructures and construction of new infrastructures (e.g., hydro-power, telecommunication towers), health and social service infrastructures (hospital, educational institutions), etc.

Private sector is also supporting women and young entrepreneurs in creating sustainable business. It has tried to address labor-related conflicts which efforts largely minimized the strikes by trade unions in the recent past. This sector has also trained and employed (though at lesser degree) socially disadvantaged women addressing both gender and socio-economic issues pertinent to conflict. The Three Sisters Trekking Company is a glaring instance to this (Dhakal and Subedi, 2006). In this way, private sector is offering peace dividends to direct conflict victim and people affected from the conflict in general.

Private sector took different approaches while pursuing the peace agenda. It adapted direct, visible engagement. Publishing through media was the another approach but sometimes it used a silent (quite) approach (going and meeting the conflicting groups confidentially). It also adapted the combination of these two approaches depending upon the situation. Media mobilization was one of their strategies which became instrumental for exerting positive pressure on the negotiating conflicting parties.

4.2 Private sector actors in peace promotion

While talking about the specific actors within the private sector, often officials such as chair, vice-chair, secretary, members of business networks and federations come into mind. But it includes the all actors engaged voluntarily or with the specific mandate of their organizations in political and social sector. It also includes the local level business activities from private sector such as microfinance and credit cooperatives, forest users' groups and mothers' clubs. They are found primarily important in promoting peace and reconciliation in Nepal. Fuelling this view, this study also shows that networks, councils of business houses, umbrella organizations of thematic business sector and specially created associative structures such as NBI are more effective in exerting pressure for peace compared to the efforts of individual business houses.

Though it was very difficult to separate what is the contribution of private sector in promoting peace, as there are so many actors (political parties, civil society, business sector, international community, civil society organisations collectively and separately working for the same cause, the contribution of private sector is more on economic recovery, addressing poverty-related root causes of the conflict and generating mass-employment at specific cases.

Sometimes, their role also comes under controversy. For instance, the role of international financial institutions (IFIs) such as International Monetary Fund, World Bank and Asian Development Bank are found ambiguous and controversial (Perkins, 2006) despite their claim of adaptation of conflict sensitive approach in their work. Role of diplomatic missions and international organizations in relation to private sector engagement in peace process in Nepal is not visible, except that of International Alert and German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) who are very actively partnering with NBI to strengthen and researching on the peace building capacity of the private sector (NBI Newsletters, 2010). Though the engagement of international actors with private sector is not significant, they are contributing to address root causes of conflict (poverty, inequality and injustice) through their development aid programme. However, lack of coordination among the donors, duplication, patronizing themes/sectors/geographical areas, lack of transparency, creation of parallel structures and weakening government institutions are some of the frequently reported criticisms for donors and international community.

4.3 Determinants of engagements of private sector

4.3.1 *Enabling conditions*

Though Friedman (1990) and Harris (1991) emphasized on the making profit is the responsibility of business sector, it is difficult for business sector to only focus on profit if the context in which they are operating is affected by conflict and instability. If the conflict and instability severely affected the environment, it is hard for business sector to stick on profit motive aim despite their will, which may be concentrated to increase its profits. Rule of game in business (Harris, 1991) is also affected by the conflict context. Hence, it is naive to expect business is enabled only when it makes profit.

Further, in the context of conflict, private sector actors engage in peace promotion activities to minimize the negative effects and create environment

conducive with business (Alexander et al., 2009). Our study has identified some enabling factors for engagement of private sector in peace promotion. They are:

Commitment: It is found that continuity of engagement is a powerful indicator of commitment of actors of private sector in peace promotion. Study in Nepal's case shows that there are three types of private sector engagement, i.e., opportunistic engagement, passive engagement and determined engagement. Some of the business actors demonstrate their opportunistic engagement (based on calculated scope of opportunities: developing special linkages and networks with power centers guided by vested interests, establishing public image and recognition and grasping immediate opportunities. Such private sector actors, if they do not see any personal opportunities, do not participate or engage in peace building activities. Passive engagement is a character of private sector actors where they do not take any initiative. They do not give priority but they follow their leaders or attend the solidarity meetings, events and activities. The level of commitment in such actors also is low. They do not want to take risk (actual or perceived) but are not that much opportunist in nature. Determination was a special character of some actors of private sector engaged in peace promotion. Businesspersons of determined characters engaged in peace promotion are proactive. They are willing to take risk, constantly promoting their agenda of peace and are guided by vision and ambition. NBI leadership can be taken as an example of this character.

Neutrality and trust: From the study of actors of private sector engaged in peace process, neutrality and public trust is found as a crucial factor. Business leaders are generally considered as neutral, at least not advocating interests of particular political party. They basically wish to maintain relations with all power centers. Often public perceptions towards the business actors is shaped as opportunistic, money-oriented, socially less responsive and frequently swinging to power centers. Such characterization is eroding trust on many business leaders. So, merely few leaders are widely trusted in public arena.

Access and networks: Access to political leaders, party power centers, government power centers and international power centres is determined by the quality, degree and strength of networks which are often shaped by power relations and resource concentration. Business leaders have often strong network and good access with power centers and therefore are able to make impacts on peace promotion.

Public expectation: In the conflict situation in Nepal, general public were desperately looking at the termination of war and restoration of peace. Hence, they were very supportive to any persons or institutions who work for ending war and restoring peace. There was a very high public expectation over business community. This public expectation provided strong basis for business community to engage in peace promotion.

Financial resources: One of the effective means for private sector engagement in peace is the sector's financial capacity. It provides leverage for instant implementation of political, social and economic activities. Financial resource is a powerful means in any society and its influence was quite visible on Nepal's peace building actors and their effectiveness too.

4.4 Lessons learnt and possible replications

Specific cases have given specific lessons for the future engagement of private sector in the noble job of peace building. Basically, this section discusses on the positive and negative experiences of the private sector engagement in peace building in Nepal. The coming paragraphs discusses what were the major achievements and what were the losses, physical and moral both, for the private sector as an actor in peace building.

Positive experiences

A specific instance is in Sri Lanka, where a campaign called Sri Lanka First is contributing to stability through investment and campaigning strategies (Sharma, 2010). Similarly, in Uganda, private sector is engaged in facilitating peaceful return of the internally displaced people and mitigating land conflicts (Banfield and Naujoks, 2009). The case of private sector engagement in Afghanistan (Ciarli et al., 2009) is benefitting single women and their socio-economic empowerment. Such is the case of Israel-Palestine where business communities became able to develop sense of working together and reconnection with joint efforts (Lawton, 2009).

Hence, networks and access to the conflicting parties, be them the state or the political parties banned by the state, is found to be one of the rewarding feature to proceed peace building jobs. Businesspeople, as the influencing members of society, are found to have connection with warlords too (Bomann-Larsen,

2003). But it is sometimes paving easy way to negotiate with conflicting parties on economic matters. The private sectors have also initiated dialogue with rebel groups sometimes (Dhakal and Subedi, 2006). Some of these time were even then when the government was not yet able to hold talk with the rebels. That time the private sector actors became successful to connect and negotiate with the rebel leaders on creating free economic environment. Recently, the private sector actors in Nepal are working as the bridges to peace with the pro-peace pressure campaigns and peace-promoting mass programs.

Negative experiences

As every engagement has their shades and shines, the private sector engagement for peace building has also shown some gloomy sides. As corporate actors became increasingly engaged in peace promotion, some sorts of hostility towards business sector were seen from bureaucracy (Bomann-Larsen, 2003). It was because the business sector was supposedly interfering in the jobs of bureaucracy.

Alike this shade, somewhere there are some actors working as private sector representatives but they are very few in numbers or underrepresented to be called as business representatives. They may not fully stand for what all the business actors have to say. Similarly, the participation of private sector in military affairs, even in peacekeeping forces, is contested. The case of Timor Leste (Lilly, 2000) is an instance in this regard where the government, corporations and humanitarian agencies hired private sector companies for different purposes. Such companies provided a range of security and military services. Yet, the involvement of private sector as the peacemaking soldiers is debated on the ground of UN Security Council rules. In the case of Indonesia (Mariano, 2005), private sector's some engagement is performed exclusively with one religious group. This had slightly divided the people on the basis of benefited and under-benefited.

5. Conclusions

Conflict can be transformed, if not resolved, not only through the initiatives like direct talks and negotiations, but also by addressing the root causes of it. Ubiquitously quoted, massive unemployment, social exclusion, gender discrimination and regional disparity of development were some of the root causes of the decade long insurgency in Nepal. Handful of people harvested the

fruits of 'democracy' that frequent movement, once a decade on an average, offered to Nepal. Many people were left off the map of mainstream of development. This resulted into the under-representation, or to be more correct, misrepresentation of the needy people in political process. There arose a question that where, then, can private sector find space to stand as an agent of conflict transformer? It was a vibrant question also because private sector was too considered one of the promoters of social inequality and this sector is now equally perceived as being with a panacea for economic solution of this country.

But the engagement of private sector in social sector is not much conflict sensitive, which had to be so. Their social engagement has been more philanthropic than need-specific. The instances can be of some of the leading corporations' social contribution: the Khetan Group's scholarship schemes, Golchha's free-service eye hospital in Biratnagar, Chaudhary's involvement in founding educational institutions and charity hospitals, Kedia's service trusts and girls schools, Vaidya Organization's environment protection programs and the Marwari Community's religious activities (GEFONT, 2006) in Nepal. Sadly, only few of them have been directly contributing to conflict transformation. Now, the efforts of the private sector should be directed towards addressing the root causes of the conflict so that we do not have to witness such a devastating fate of this nation again.

The history of Nepalese conflict and domestic private sector here as well as the discussion above shows that private sector can be both the boon or the bane for a country in conflicting setting. In this context, Nepal, a country in transition, has a Herculean job to finalize the ongoing peace process and draft a commonly agreed constitution. Initiatives from private sector can craft a better and livable nation at this point of time.

One must admit that any corporation can not be an island of excellence. The society around it has also to be developed along with the development of business. It actually makes a good business sense while one works with the society in mind (Pant, 2007). Otherwise, the country is prone to be in conflicts due to development disparity and recurring of the previously conceived conflict causes.

Of course, business thrives in peace for peace is unanimously considered the very goose that lay golden eggs for the investors. Contrary to it, donations, extortions, shooting at businesspersons and vandalizing of the corporate houses have irked the private sector in Nepal. In this gloomy political scene, there can be a win-win situation when private sector is active in peace promotion. Of course, there are still many things to do and many that are doable. But initiations have not been started, or if started, have not yet taken an aspired momentum. This politically transitional phase of Nepal can be a good milestone to start from for private sector to be engaged in furthering peace. Last but not the least, it is worth quoting Alexander et al. (2009: 40) who timely and rightly puts forth that "... conflict-sensitive business is [the only] bottom-line for peaceful [economic] recovery".

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^{iv} In January 2009, CPN (M) and Unity Centre (another communist party) united together and the name of the CPN (M) was changed to the Unified Communist Party of Nepal (UCPN) (Maoist). Hence, UCPN (M) is used in the entire paper.

^v Visit http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/nepal_insurgency-2001.htm for more details. Data retrieved on 10 March 2011.

^{vi} For further information, see *Nepali Times*, 28 November 2008.

^{vii} For more information, see *The Kathmandu Post*, 22 December 2009.

^{viii} For more details, see *The Kathmandu Post* and *Republica Daily*, 29 April, 2010.