

Concept Note

Supporting the Transition to a Federal Structure: Social Cohesion and Democratic Participation (SCDP)

Objective:

Support the GoN, new provincial governments, local authorities, and key stakeholders to strengthen social cohesion, democratic participation and good governance during the initial roll-out of a new federal system and broader implementation of a new constitution

Key Stakeholders:

MoPR, MoFALD, MoGA, MoHA, NRA, NASC; sub-national governments, community based organizations, political parties, civil society groups and media.

Locations:

Kathmandu and provinces facing social cohesion and good governance challenges

Timeframe:

September 2015- Dec 2018

Total Budget:

Pending

The promulgation of the new federal constitution represents a historic step towards finalizing the commitments of the peace process and has created an important new framework for shifting political power from Kathmandu to provincial and local structures. It is crucial to recognize that the shift from a unitary state to a federal model stands as the most challenging aspect of the Nepal's post-conflict transition. It is a change that has created multiple administrative, logistical and financial challenges. These challenges have been accompanied by a complex set of political and social dynamics that will play out at the central, provincial and local levels.

As with any political transition, the change from a unitary to a federal system has inevitably been perceived as favorable to some groups and unfavorable to others. New ethnic and religious minorities and majorities have apparently been created in different provinces, with corresponding shifts in cultural influence and political power. The selection of provincial capitals, as well as access to natural resources and derived benefits (e. g. income from hydropower, use of water and forest resources) has been contested, and played into political, identity and geographic tensions. Regional and identity-based political parties will further challenge the dominance of national political parties. Nascent local and provincial government structures will struggle to provide adequate services, provoking public frustration and providing fertile terrain for assertions of political and identity biases. All of these changes will be further complicated by widespread lack of understanding among the population about the legal realities of federalism, and the

existence of multiple myths and misperceptions about its functioning that fuel mistrust among diverse groups, putting the inter-community harmony at high risk.

The initial twenty-four months of rolling out the new federal system has been particularly critical for establishing its viability and credibility. The actual implementation of the new system has been staggered for months. The public reaction to planned changes has been felt immediately, and this has been demonstrated by the recent strong reactions of many sectors to the proposed delineation of the new provinces and continuation of a secular state. Those who disagree with the new federal arrangements could potentially use this initial transitional period to highlight its difficulties, and in doing so undermine public confidence in the new system. This could destabilize the political situation, opening the way renewed political frictions and social tensions – and hinder Nepal’s efforts to achieve Sustainable Development Goals.

During such a complex and difficult period, it will be important for UNDP to support government officials at every level, as well as other key stakeholders, to strengthen the social contract that “glues” a functional state together. At the most essential level it will be important for government officials, political party leaders and civil society figures to be highly aware of and sensitized to the political, cultural and other dynamics in their respective geographic areas of work. This will be particularly true in which the new federal boundaries have sparked friction between identity groups.

To date, there has been little public attention paid to managing the socio-political dimensions of the transition to federalism or creating mechanisms to address the kinds of political, resource and identity based tensions that will likely emerge with this change. Much of the discussion among political leaders has been at the central level, with little consultation with or exchange among local actors. The government’s preparations have largely centered on administrative arrangements and preparing to shift the existing bureaucratic structures to a federal system.

UNDP is uniquely well-placed to support the Government, as well as social and political actors at the community, in addressing socio-political tensions emerging from the transition to federalism. It can draw upon multiple areas of existing work including conflict prevention (CPP), support to central government administration (PREPARE), local governance structures (LGCDP), constitution-drafting (SPCBN), parliamentary support (PSP), rule-of-law (ROLHR), micro-enterprise (MEDEP) and livelihood (LRP) to mount a sophisticated and effective approach to identifying and addressing these tensions. In particular, UNDP can build upon its work in supporting cross sectorial mechanisms to continue risk mitigation initiatives to identify emerging sources of tension and work towards joint solutions for managing them. Similarly, in absence of elected local body, it can work with the Local Peace Committees, which have functioned as a VDC and District level mechanism for resolving localized conflict as well as the Ward Citizens Forum, which were created under the social mobilization and community development component of the LGCDP. In addition, UNDP can strengthen its efforts to promote conflict sensitive approaches within Government institutions.

UNDP, through its Conflict Prevention Programme, has field offices in all five regions of the country. These teams are specialized in monitoring and analysis of socio-political tensions, and supporting local actors to use early warning, early response, collaborative leadership and conflict sensitive tools to prevent their escalation. These offices, which are equipped with vehicles and VHF radios, as well as already well established relationships with local actors, can function as a ready-made platform for UNDP to work in an in-depth and sustained manner across all of the new federal provinces, contributing to build a cohesive society.

This new effort comes together in a new project; **Supporting the Transition to a Federal Structure: Social Cohesion and Democratic Participation (SCDP)**. The project's main partner will be the Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction (MoPR), but also work in close coordination with the Ministry of Home Affairs, as well as the Ministry of General Administration (MoGA), the Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development (MoFALD), and the Ministry of Industry (MoI).

UNDP envisions that SCDP's work will be divided into two distinct pillars; one focused on **Risk Identification** and the other on **Risk Mitigation**. The Risk Identification pillar would consist of an Early Warning initiative with Near-term and Medium/Long-term components. The Risk Mitigation pillar would encompass three distinct initiatives that, taken together, form a comprehensive approach to addressing localized tensions and keep the social fabric intact. Both pillars would be shaped by a cross-cutting *Gender and Social Inclusion (GESI)* and *Conflict Sensitivity* approaches that ensure that processes are socially inclusive and equipped to navigate the socio-political complexities of local environments.

I. Risk Identification

- ***Early Warning Initiative***
Strengthening Local Authorities and Networks - This component would strengthen the capacity of local authorities including Chief District Officers (CDOs, and Superintendents of Police (SPs) as well as local networks (e.g. Local Peace Committees and Ward Citizens Forums) to identify signs of emerging tensions, and transmit timely warnings through the networks and to relevant government entities. This would focus on three core activities, 1) capacity-building on conflict dynamics and early warning indicators of escalating tensions, 2) support for inclusive spaces for interaction that help identify emerging tensions, involving actors from across a broad spectrum of identities and ideologies, and 3) systematic data collection and analysis to generate concrete early warning data. MOPR, which coordinates the Local Peace Committees, would serve as a hub for data collection from the field networks. The Conflict Analysis Unit (CAU), which is situated in the Conflict Management Division of MOPR, would be equipped to carry out qualitative and quantitative analysis of patterns and trends. A pilot version of this data collection and analysis system will be installed in the CAU. MOPR would transmit the CAU analysis to relevant ministries through its Peace Focal Points

mechanism, which includes the participation of all ministries, and thus promote a “whole of government” approach to addressing emerging situations of tension.

Innovative technology – SCDP would apply many cutting-edge technologies to bolster the early warning effectiveness. This would build upon an ongoing UNDP-supported pilot with MoPR to connect Local Peace Committees through a SMS-texting perception survey system, and thus provide rapid relay of information in rural areas. The project would also apply lessons and tools from its Conflict Prevention Programme’s innovative online database system for tracking the evolution of socio-political tension. It would also draw upon UNDP’s experience in using an MGT system to create a virtual platform for systematic information management of debris removal in earthquake affected zones.

Earthquake Affected Areas – SCDP would place a special focus on geographic areas in which early recovery and reconstruction work are underway. These areas are particularly vulnerable to socio-political tensions because the large-scale injection of resources can feed into existing political and identity-related frictions, and create real and perceived inequities. SCDP would provide technical support to the Government’s reconstruction planning and efforts, assisting to promote conflict sensitive approaches to its work, partner with National Reconstruction Authority (NRA) to identify local tensions and monitor the emergence of focal points of tension in specific areas or issues. Where relevant, the project will provide specialized support on conflict resolution initiatives to overcome local frictions and promote social cohesion.

Strategic Analysis and Scenario-building Platform - This is a medium/long-term component that would support MOPR’s analysis of field data by establishing a “think tank” that would serve as a platform for distinguished and politically independent economic, social and political analysts. The core function would be to undertake an in-depth quantitative and qualitative analysis that combines field data with information from the experts’ respective areas of specialization, identify medium and long-term risks. This platform would look beyond national political dynamics and seek to incorporate analysis of environmental (e. g. climate change), social factors (e.g. migration) and economic factors (remittances), and regional relationships. The platform’s analysis, together with policy options, would be shared with government officials, parliamentarians and other decision-makers. The tools and approach of the platform would draw on the extensive UNDP experience with political analysis and scenario building (“PAPEP”) initiatives in Latin America.

II. Risk Mitigation

- ***Early Response Initiative*** - One of the internationally recognized “best practices” is to unify warning and response capacities, and the programme would apply this lesson by supporting local networks (e. g. Ward Citizens Forums, Local Peace Committees) to mount constructive and timely responses to situations of emerging tensions. The focus would be to impart basic context analysis and mediation skills to local networks, and equip them to be a first line of response to challenging situations. A pilot version of this response capacity is currently being rolled out through MoPR and Local Peace Committees in four districts. For situations that surpass local capacities, the network

would be designed to systematically tap into sub-national, regional and, ultimately, national-level capacities as needed. Effective early stage responses can be an effective approach for avoiding escalation and the need for “hard” security responses from the government.

- ***Quick Impact Support to Inter-Community Cohesion*** - The programme would seek to rapidly address situations of emerging tensions through an agile small-grant (e. g. up to USD \$5,000) mechanism. These grants would fund a wide range of activities, tailored to the specific dynamics of situation, that encourage communities or groups to identify issues of common concern and work together to address them. These grants would generally be channeled through local NGOs/CBOs and support economic, cultural or other activities that foster collaboration and overcome mistrust, encouraging the locals to focus on common good to build and maintain a cohesive society. This grant would be targeted to developing livelihood activities and income generation training in communities with specific focus to youth and women. The grant will also support small infrastructure building such as micro irrigation initiatives that would bring people with diverse identities together for a mutually enticing cause. The grant will promote communities’ engagement with media to promote social cohesion. It is important to develop capacities of the CBOs who have potential to receive SCDP grants. The programme would seek to augment grantees’ capacity to undertake project activities effectively. The capacity building activities would range from community mobilization training to use of social media for community engagement to promote social cohesion. This would give priority to geographic zones identified by the Early Response networks, MOPR and NRA as to give precedence to the immediate needs of the community, including the earthquake affected areas, to maintain social cohesion. This would draw on the COBERM experience in Georgia and similar initiatives.

- ***Livelihood Support*** - SCDP recognizes that the lack of economic opportunities, combined with historic structural marginalization, can be an important driver of socio-political tensions. The project would incorporate Livelihood Support with a special focus on quick impact on areas at risk of escalating tensions, and target individuals or families that are particularly vulnerable to localized and inter-communal tensions. This support would consist of micro-enterprise initiatives, and be carried out in partnership with UNDP’s long-standing Micro-enterprise Development Programme (MEDEP) and Livelihoods Recovery for Peace (LRP) programme. The goal would be to provide incentives for these actors to avoid confrontation and violence, and dedicate their energies to economically productive undertakings. The livelihood support component would pay particular attention to the needs of youth, women and marginalized segments of the population, recognizing that they have historically been excluded from many development initiatives and be vulnerable to social and political tensions.

- ***Local Participation and Accountability Initiative*** - The programme considers one of the most effective medium-term risk mitigation approaches to be the strengthening of local participation and accountability. Many localized tensions, including inter-communal differences, are driven by disputes related to development resources and those related governance issues. By applying an “upstream” approach and supporting more

inclusive and transparent development and governance processes, many of these differences can be addressed before they coalesce into more serious tensions. The programme will promote greater participation and accountability through two inter-linked approaches.

First, it will provide capacity-building support to sub-national-level leaders, particularly from women's, youth, Janajati, Dalit and other vulnerable social groups. The goal is to strengthen their advocacy skills so that they can better understand the relevant processes and articulate their needs.

Second, the programme will provide technical support, training and accompaniment to the local cross sectorial mechanisms to address local frictions. This support would focus on helping community leaders to understand concepts of impartiality and legitimacy, and fostering a conducive atmosphere in which diverse points of view can be aired and constructively discussed. The goal is to create a greater understanding of issues and accountability between duty-bearers and communities, and in doing so, preempt the escalation of localized tensions.

Media Engagement- SCDP would include a dedicated media engagement component. This would seek to engage journalists on the challenges related to the implementation of federalism and related challenges to social cohesion and democratic participation. The project would promote informed discussion among media leaders on diverse topics, and promote more nuanced and less antagonistic modalities of reporting on situations.

Cross-cutting Approaches:

Conflict Sensitivity

During the initial implementation phase of federalism, it will be vital for government authorities at every level to be highly aware of and sensitized to new dynamics taking shape – particularly with regard to how political and social tensions are shaping the local “landscape”. By the same measure, authorities should be conscious of how their policies, programmes will impact on this landscape, and how they will be perceived by different communities and actors. In a highly polarized context, even seemingly routine actions can, fairly or unfairly, be understood as favoring one group or another, and prompting negative reactions.

The programme understands that this process of understanding the context, and the relationship between the context and one's activities to be the essence of Conflict Sensitivity. The programme would place a special emphasis on supporting that the whole of government, and particularly those ministries or entities involved in sensitive state restructuring processes, act in a conflict sensitive manner.

The programme would work on conflict sensitivity issues on two levels – policy change and capacity-building. Policy change would involve orientation and engagement with the senior leadership of key ministries. It would seek promote understanding of conflict

sensitivity as a concept, and heightened awareness of the risks associated with the each ministry's work. From there, the programme would provide technical support to process of reviewing relevant policies and identifying potential areas for incorporating conflict sensitive approaches.

The programme would also provide capacity-building to civil servants who are on the frontlines of development and governance process. This will include creating a conflict sensitivity consortium that would be hosted by the Nepal Administrative Staff College (NASC) and include involvement of other key training institutions such as the Local Development Training Academy (LDTA) and National Reconstruction Authority (NRA).

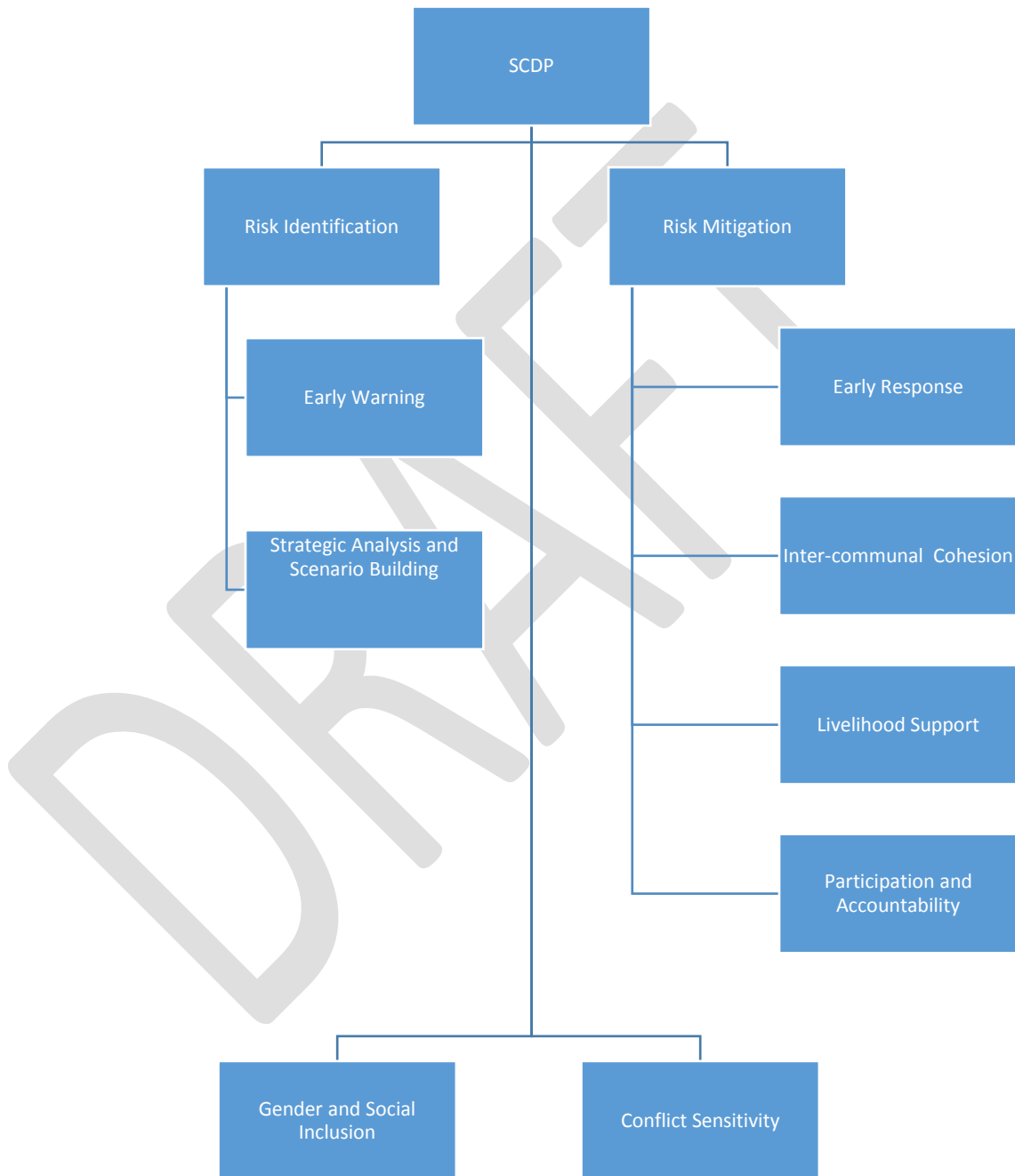
Gender and Social Inclusion - GESI

SCDP views that one of the keys to promoting social cohesion and democratic participation is supporting women, youth and leaders from traditionally vulnerable groups (eg. Janajatis, Dalits, religious minorities). By providing them with technical guidance on relevant administrative and political processes and tools for strengthened advocacy, they will be better equipped to voice their concerns, articulate their needs, and substantively engage with other political and social actors. This give and take is an essential part of meaningful democratic participation, and lays a critical foundation for social cohesion. SCDP would provide dedicated skills-building and orientation trainings for women and vulnerable group leaders. The work with women builds upon UNDP's ongoing work with women leaders including the regional N-Peace initiative and the two UNPFN-supported gender promotion projects, all of which focus on supporting the development of emerging women leaders and creating spaces for them to discuss issues with government officials, political leaders and other traditional leaders. UNDP is also in a unique position to use its convening power to bring together leaders from across a broad spectrum of political and social currents, and thus create spaces for traditional and non-traditional leaders to engage.

SCDP would also see that listening to the voices of women, youth and leaders from vulnerable groups is vital element in understanding local socio-political dynamics. An analysis that is based on the views of traditional elites will often provide only a partial picture of the situation, and fail to grasp the type and intensity of issues of concern to other communities. In this regard the project will seek to ensure that women and leaders from vulnerable communities are involved in all the facets of the risk identification and risk mitigation pillars of the programme. This, for example, would include that women, youth, Dalits, Janajatis and religious minorities in local networks participating in SMS-texting perception surveys.

Theory of Change

Logframe	Change process	Assumption
Input	<p><i>If....</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) An early warning system is set up (2) Cross sectorial mechanisms involving government officials, political parties and civil society leaders are established (3) Local governance and development officials are trained to be conflict sensitive (4) Civil society is strengthened to participate in provincial and local governance processes (5) Media is supported to promote improved public understanding of federalism and role provincial and local governments 	<p>Local elections will be held and a locally elected body set up, thus the forums are transitional. The MoPR will be part of the new government.</p>
Output	<p><i>Then...</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Government officials, political party leaders and civil society actors will have timely notice of emerging tensions 2) Government officials, political party leaders and civil society actors will have a forum and tools to address local tensions 3) Governance and Development officials will take decisions that promote social cohesion and avoid exacerbating existing political and identity tensions 4) Public will be satisfied that development and governance decisions reflect their needs and interests. Increased involvement of the population in planning and governance decisions that relate to them and their region 5) Population will have more realistic expectations from federal arrangements and be less vulnerable to political and social manipulation 	
Outcome	<p><i>Leading to....</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower level of social and political tensions related to the implementation of federal arrangements • Strengthened social cohesion • Enhanced democratic participation in provincial and local governance and development processes 	
Impact	<i>Eventually...</i> Stable transition to a federal structure	



Annex I

SCDP Indicative Activities

Strengthening social cohesion requires a long-term approach. This includes the capacity building of community; cooperative actions among communities; and support government and civil society organizations to develop and adjust policies for promoting social cohesion. From 2016, SCDP is implementing community based social cohesion programme within the framework of risk identification and risk mitigation.

The risk identification pillar facilitates process to identify the potential risks whereas risk mitigation would encompass the quick response mechanism through small grants. The risk identification process will inform and guide the risk mitigation activities.

Engaging local communities and local stakeholders are the keys to implement social cohesion activities. The local community groups and stakeholders will be the main sources to communicate social cohesion messages and they are the key actors to identify risks and recommend mitigation measures. The programme seeks to rapidly address situations of emerging tensions and promote social cohesion through an agile small-grant mechanism. These grants would fund a wide range of activities, tailored to the specific dynamics of situation, that encourage communities or groups to identify issues of common concern and work together to address them. These grants would generally be channeled through local NGOs/CBOs and support economic, cultural or other activities that foster collaboration and overcome mistrust, encouraging the locals to focus on common good to build and maintain a cohesive society.

Project area:

SCDP works in Panchthar, Sunsari, Bara, Parsa, Chitawan, Banke, Bardiya, Kailali and Kanchanpur. It will identify clusters in each district for further programming. These districts were selected based on existing presence of project and potential risks in coming days. Likewise, clusters in the districts will selected in consultation with stakeholders based on the history of social tensions.

Target group

Communities living in conflict prone areas, youth, women and vulnerable groups.

Indicative Activities

Specific activities under risk identification and risk mitigation for 2016 are:

1. Risk Identification

- Risk identification: Social cohesion assessment that would inform risk mitigation activities
- CSO/CBOs assessment: mapping entry points for social cohesion work

- Capacity building: This includes enhancing capacity of the local community groups and local stakeholders on risk identification
- Developing guiding document for risk identification at community level
- Explore innovative ways of early warning monitoring system

2. Risk Mitigation

- Explore entry points to implement social cohesion plan
- Developing community based social cohesion plan
- Capacity building of local community groups and stakeholders including teachers, school management, youth clubs etc. social cohesion
- Provide support to community security plans of Community Security Committees
- Work with VDC secretaries, development officers, women officers to plan and implement social cohesion activities
- Support VDCs to plan and implement social cohesion initiatives
- Organize festivals/event to promote cultural diversity
- Identify and recognize the social cohesion champions
- Use of local media (community radios, local newspapers, interactions with journalists) to promote social cohesion
- Enhance capacity of the community groups and stakeholders to take part in risk mitigation process. The capacity building component also includes training on proposal writing, use of social media etc.

Apart from the specific activities, SCDP will sustain its institutional relationship with MOPR, NASC and LDTA through event based programs and work with NRA and district based government officials to promote conflict sensitivity works.

Micro Grants at the community level is the main vehicle for promoting social cohesion. Micro grants will be based on the needs of communities and might differ from one to the other clusters and/or districts. Points to ponder:

- SCDP work has communities at its core.
- Criteria need to be in place to select grantees at the community.
- Grants need to be flexible, based on the need of communities or community driven and innovative.
- Maximum resource should be allocated in small grants.
- Engage informal groups, youth, VDC officials, teachers to communicate social cohesion messages.
- Capacity building support such as training on proposal writing, use social media, could be some of the activities

Annex II

Visibility Strategy

1. **Define key audience(s) and target groups-** Underline the target audience and effective ways to reach them. Outreach to a broader group of stakeholders reaching out to non-official constituencies which can be effective in listening and using feedback from external sources to improve the program.
2. **Determine news-** Prepare an inventory to determine what news the project has to share and distribute news stories about how social cohesion has been strengthened at the community level with detailed emphasis on both the process and the outcome.
3. **Revamp the project website-** Update and redesign the external project website to include a clear and reader friendly portal to disseminate direct information about UNDP's work on social cohesion.
4. **Use of social media-** Regularly use social media including Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, YouTube and project blog designed to reach out to the target audience. The massive use of social media has exponentially expanded people's access to information and allowed the target group to quickly give feedback. This way, the target group will not only get information through social media but will get a platform to communicate amongst each other regarding their topic of interests concerning social cohesion.
5. **Transparency about the grants on community projects-** Layout community needs and the investments that the project is making at the community level transparent on the URL and all social media. Be precise and detailed about the activities and the stakeholders that the project is engaging with.
6. **Proactive engagement with SPDEU -** To ensure design and monitoring of project priorities to support UNDAF outcomes.
7. **Prepare and distribute various forms of publications-** Use publications such as leaflets, brochures and newsletters which can be useful in communicating the progress and results of an action to specific audiences. All material produced in paper form should also be made available in electronic form, so that it can be sent by e-mail and posted on the website. For material in paper form, distribution capacity (mailing lists) should be considered.
8. **Improved engagement with the communities-** Through field visits by country team including the CD and DCD as well as RFOs in each region.
9. **Boost media coverage-** Engage with local leaders and journalists to encourage positive media coverage on issues of social cohesion.
10. **Improve photo documentation-** Photos can be important tool to showcase our work. Hence the project aims at taking pictures and managing it in a systematic way to

use for promotional materials, social

media and for future reference.

Annex III

Overview of SCDP linkages with Existing UNDP Projects (Alphabetical)

Conflict Prevention Programme (CPP)
Local Governance and Community Development (LCGDP)
Livelihoods Recovery for Peace (LRP)
Micro-enterprise Development (MEDEP)
Parliamentary Support Project (PSP)
Prepare the Public Administration for State Reform (PREPARE)
Rule of Law and Human Rights (ROLHR)
Social Cohesion and Democratic Participation (SCDP)

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