



# Perceptions of public security and crime in the Kathmandu Valley

February 2012

## 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Following on from the decade-long violent conflict between the state and the Maoist People's Liberation Army which ended with the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2006, the post-conflict era in Nepal has been witness to a period of unabated political instability, slow progress in the implementation of the peace agreement and a noticeable shift in the nature of violence and insecurity. In particular, previous research<sup>2</sup> and recent media reports suggest a growing trend of criminal violence, especially in urban areas in the Terai and the Kathmandu Valley (comprising Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur districts) – the largest urban area in Nepal. This is illustrated through the patchwork of criminal gangs that have formed in and around these particular geographic areas in the post-conflict era. Although the actions of these criminal gangs are sometimes connected with political aims, unlike during the conflict era where violence was predominantly politically motivated, their actions equally appear to be detached from political objectives and thus motivated by other non-political factors which often include economic inequalities, boredom as a result of unemployment, greed, and/or that crime offers a quicker and easier way to access money than through employment.

Although some research has been undertaken over recent years to better understand criminal group activity and violence in the Terai<sup>3</sup>, little has been undertaken which seeks to explicitly understand crime, violence and insecurity in the Kathmandu Valley. Understanding these patterns in the Kathmandu Valley is critical for understanding the broader security situation in Nepal, as some forms of crime carried out in the Kathmandu Valley may connect with criminal activity taking place elsewhere in the country particularly organised crime and criminal gang activities.

This research seeks to take the first step in filling this information gap, and provide an initial analysis of different stakeholders' perceptions of crime, violence and insecurity at the community level in the Kathmandu Valley in the post-conflict era. It aims primarily to inform policy and programming of key stakeholders involved in public security, crime and conflict prevention in Kathmandu Valley, and to stimulate a discussion that might lead to more in-depth research and analysis being carried out. Findings are largely drawn from the perceptions and attitudes of communities, security agencies, civil society, government and the private sector gathered through focus group discussions and interviews, but also secondary data, such as media reports and police crime statistics where relevant.

The key findings outlined in this briefing, based on the perceptions of research participants, include 1) the continued role that political youth wings play in undermining security in the post-conflict era, 2) a growth in the prevalence of organised crime, 3)

<sup>1</sup> This research was one component of a Saferworld project to support community-based approaches on small arms control and armed violence reduction, funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

<sup>2</sup> See Interdisciplinary Analysts, Nepal Madhesh Foundation, Saferworld & Small Arms Survey, *Armed Violence in the Terai* (August 2011), & Housden, O, 'Nepal's Elusive Peace', Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies Journal, Vol 155(2), April/May 2010, pp70–77

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

threats to personal safety posed by an increase in randomly targeted violent crime, 4) emergence of newly formed criminal groups and 5) tensions between 'original' inhabitants of the Kathmandu Valley and 'rural-urban migrants which are undermining people's perceptions of public security.

### **Political 'youth wings', 'criminal gangs' and 'armed groups'**

Throughout this report, reference is made to political 'youth wings' and 'criminal gangs' as two separate groups. The distinction between these groups is sometimes difficult to make as politics has become increasingly criminalised and the actions of political youth wings and criminal gangs are often blurred where criminal gangs sometimes take on a political identity, and youth wings sometimes act as criminals through actions that are seemingly detached from political aims. In addition, confusion is reinforced by the fact that both groups are comprised largely of youth, predominantly men (see Section 3.4 below).

However, as suggested in research findings and for the purpose of this briefing, these two groups are distinct from each other in terms of motivation and membership. Criminal gangs and their members are thought to be motivated predominantly by economic gain, and usually only take on a political identity or make links with political actors when they are paid to do so, or are offered protection from prosecution in the state security and justice system in return (see Section 3.5 below for more details). Some of those gangs operate throughout the country or are even affiliated with organised crime in other countries such as India, China, Thailand or Pakistan. Political youth wings and their members on the other hand are thought to be motivated primarily by particular political beliefs and aligned to one particular political party, but are also perceived to be involved in obstructing tender-bids of government and non-government businesses, beating individuals who oppose their ideologies or plans and gang fights with other political youth wings.

The use of the term 'armed group' is not used in this briefing to avoid confusion. However, it is recognised that both youth wings and criminal groups often use and have access to small arms and light weapons (SALW, see footnote 20).

## **2. Methodology**

The information contained in this report is based on research undertaken between February and May 2011 in the three districts of the Kathmandu Valley (Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur) and in three of the districts which neighbour the Kathmandu Valley (Sindhupalchok, Kabhreplanchowk and Makwanpur). The latter three districts were selected because, as reported by security agency personnel interviewed during previous research<sup>4</sup> and various media reports, the criminal activities that occur in these districts appear to be interconnected with those taking place in the Kathmandu Valley. In particular, all three districts are believed to be strategic in terms of trafficking of goods and people from the Kathmandu Valley to China and India, where the highways from Kathmandu to China run through Sindhupalchok and Kabhreplanchowk, and the highway connecting Kathmandu to India runs through Makwanpur.

Research activities consisted of:

- a. Key informant and semi-structured interviews with representatives from security agencies, civil society, relevant political groups and wings, private sector, local authorities, members of different groups/gangs/associations responsible for

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<sup>4</sup> See Interdisciplinary Analysts, Nepal Madhesh Foundation, Saferworld & Small Arms Survey, *Armed Violence in the Terai* (August 2011), & Saferworld, *Common Ground? Gendered Assessment of the Needs and Concerns of Maoist Army Combatants for Rehabilitation and Integration*, (November 2010)

committing crime, community leaders, and relevant community members and family members. A total of 42 key informant and semi-structured interviews were undertaken (7 interviews per district).

- b. Focus group discussions (FGDs) with community members affected by crime and insecurity. In addition to mixed FGDs, separate FGDs were held with groups whose voices are often not heard, including youth and women from excluded ethnic and caste groups. A total of 14 focus group discussions were undertaken (4 in Lalitpur district and 2 in each of the other 5 districts). In total, eight FGDs were held with mixed participants, two separately with youth, two separately with women and two separately with men.

### 3. Key findings

#### 3.1 Perception that public security is undermined by political youth wings

A significant level of blame was placed on the youth wings of the main political parties<sup>5</sup> for the perceived deteriorating security situation and increased levels of crime in the Kathmandu Valley – principally on the Young Communist League (YCL) attached to the United Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (UCPN-M), and the Youth Force (YF) attached to the Community Party of Nepal – United Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML) – by many informants from communities, civil society and the private sector interviewed during the research, in addition to criminal gangs (see 3.4 below). Although these youth groups are active across Nepal, their impact has been significantly felt in the Kathmandu Valley as the centre of all political activity in the country.

Communities' perceptions of the youth wings today are largely reminiscent of the pressures that UCPN-M cadres subjected them to when entering Kathmandu in 2006. While lobbying for the CPA, the UCPN-M cadres demanded food 'donations' and shelter from the communities. However, communities reported that youth wings are now less prevalent in the Kathmandu Valley than during the peak years between 2006 and 2009 when recruitment was most intensive and successful. The reason for this is unclear from the research and deserves further attention, although some community and civil society informants felt that this is because civil society in the Kathmandu Valley has become increasingly vocal in criticising YCL and YF activities. However, respondents from the surrounding districts of Sindhupalchok, Makwanpur and Kabhreplanchowk stated that youth groups are as active as ever before, and continue to affect the everyday lives of communities as they did previously. Community members from the districts also pointed out that political youth wings operate on the basis of command received from central level leaders, and that leaders based in Kathmandu are responsible for activities conducted by their political cadres and youths at the local level.

Communities and private sector respondents stated that in the post-conflict context, youth wings are having a particular and ever more detrimental impact on the operations and security of the private sector in all districts, but more so in the districts surrounding the Kathmandu Valley where security provision is perceived to be less effective and/or forceful. Youth wings reportedly obstruct private sector activities through kidnapping and extorting businessmen for both political and economic gain (see section 3.2 below for more information), using intimidation to influence government tendering processes and get a cut of the profits if their patron is successful, and by organising *bandahs*<sup>6</sup> and shutdowns which, according to private sector respondents, reduce productivity on a regular basis and increase the cost of production and the price of goods. Private sector informants reported that youth wings demand 'donations' from business entrepreneurs,

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<sup>5</sup> Youth groups were formed during the conflict era as a mechanism for achieving political objectives and maintaining territorial control by political parties.

<sup>6</sup> *Bandah*, a Nepali word meaning 'closed', is a form of protest which often involves the closing down of markets and motor vehicle transport of a city for a day or number of days.

schools, colleges, industries and any other establishment in the Kathmandu Valley and surrounding districts, and use their influence over trade unions to enforce factories, industries, educational and health establishments to shut down if their demands are not fulfilled. A business entrepreneur from Sindhupalchok explained that, "*We have identified more than 102 goondas [hooligans] who disrupt our district's law and order and almost all of them are politically affiliated. They disrupt our business through bandahs, target business people for abduction and kidnapping, incite trade unions and communities to protest unnecessarily and demand large sums of money in the name of 'donations'. The most affected are those who are in the construction business like us*".<sup>7</sup> In turn, these disruptions are having a detrimental impact on the wider economy of the country – the stability and growth of which is critical for creating employment and fostering peace in the post-conflict era.

### **3.2 Growth in the perceived prevalence of organised crime**

Interviews with convicted criminals and security personnel during the research as well as focus groups in communities suggest that organised crime in the Kathmandu Valley has both intensified and diversified rapidly over recent years. 'Traditional' illegal activities such as drug trafficking, gold and artefact smuggling allegedly continue to take place. However, organised crime is reportedly a much more complex and diverse activity today. Some of the new and predominant areas of organised crime identified during the research are outlined below:

- **Human trafficking**

The trafficking of young girls into sex work is reportedly a significant aspect of organised crime particularly affecting mostly the Tamang community in Sindhupalchok, Makwanpur, Rasuwa and Dhading districts. Communities from these affected districts stated that young girls are lured into the trade by 'procurers' and trafficked through Kathmandu and the Terai to India, China and other countries over the Indo-Nepal border. They also reported a recent change whereby girls are now being trafficked under false pretences as 'labourers' to the Gulf and Middle-East and then sold to the sex industry on arrival. Trafficking of organs was also highlighted as a recently developing trend in organised crime.<sup>8</sup>

- **Smuggling red sandalwood**

Interviews and focus group discussions with community members and security personnel suggested that smuggling of red sandalwood<sup>9</sup> has become a lucrative activity for criminal gangs operating from the Kathmandu Valley. Interviews with convicted prisoners and communities together with media reports suggest that the wood is smuggled to China on a route running from Birgunj or Sunauli through the Kathmandu Valley and Sindhupalchok by a network of criminal gangs in India and Nepal, the latter being largely based in the Kathmandu Valley. More research is, however, required in order to better understand these networks and how they link up. The secret transport of such a bulky material across borders and along major transport routes is a difficult task and frequent allegations were made during research of political collusion in the trade. Political involvement is also alleged in the media<sup>10</sup> yet no politician has been arrested or officially implicated (see section 3.4 below for more details on political connections to crime). Earlier this year there has been news coverage of cases whereby political party members have been involved in criminal activities such as abduction, kidnapping and extortion and even homicide.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> KII with male business community member, Sindhupalchok, 22 March 2011

<sup>8</sup> KIIs with male criminals inside prison, Kathmandu, 14 February 2011

<sup>9</sup> Red sandalwood (*pterocarpus santalinus*) is a rare tree found only in India and highly valued in China and Japan as a luxury material in furniture, ornaments and coffins. Illegal logging has meant that red sandalwood is now listed on the IUCN redlist of endangered species. <http://www.iucnredlist.org/apps/redlist/details/32104/0> Accessed on 01 September 2011

<sup>10</sup> As sourced from [http://www.tew.org/archived/safe\\_passage\\_wltraffic.html](http://www.tew.org/archived/safe_passage_wltraffic.html)

<sup>11</sup> As sourced from <http://www.ekantipur.com/the-kathmandu-post/2012/01/17/editorial/political-baggage/230528.html>

- **Kidnapping and extortion**

All communities, security agency personnel and private sector representatives interviewed during the research stated that kidnapping and extortion targeting businessmen only emerged as a form of organised crime in the Kathmandu Valley from 2006. A senior security expert explained, "*Suddenly after the peace process criminally-minded people started taking advantage of the weakened rule of law and began kidnapping and extorting money from big businesses through kidnapping well connected businessmen. This resulted in fear amongst people living in the Valley that was never seen before.*"<sup>12</sup> Before 2006 and during the conflict era, kidnapping and extortion was primarily a politically motivated act undertaken by the YCL and Maoist cadres both to intimidate rival groups and to extract 'donations' from the public. In the post-conflict era however, kidnapping and extortion is used more widely by youth wings attached to other political parties and newly formed criminal groups in the Kathmandu Valley for political and financial gain (hence the new focus on businessmen). Since 2010 kidnapping cases have, according to security personnel and private sector representatives, gone down in the Kathmandu Valley. Some community members felt that this decline in kidnapping cases is reflective of more effective and/or assertive policing and prosecution of criminals in the Kathmandu Valley since 2010, but to clarify the reasons behind this decline deserves further attention.

- **Money laundering**

Convicted criminals interviewed during the research stated that since the early 2000s, when the real estate industry boomed in the Kathmandu Valley, members of organised criminal gangs have been increasingly investing in real estate as a trend developed by organised crime operators in India. It was reported that the profits attained as a result of real estate have been so great that two separate criminal gangs have divided activities amongst themselves to ensure that both profit equally and there is less rivalry between them. A male criminal inside a Kathmandu prison explained, "*There is a division of crimes amongst organised criminal gangs like 'Chakre Milan' and 'Raju Gorkhali' – one now deals with real estate and the other in lending money to businessmen with extortionist interest rates.*"<sup>13</sup>

Informants also described the involvement of organised crime in bank robbery; financial fraud; organ trafficking; and, cybercrime, although further research is required to ascertain the prevalence and impact of these activities.

### **3.3 Perception that personal safety is undermined by the increase in randomly targeted violent crimes that threaten all citizens**

- **Perceived threat of kidnappings and abductions on ordinary citizens**

Even though most kidnappings and abductions are targeted at wealthy and well-connected business people as described in Section 3.2, the on-going occurrence of abductions, some of which have targeted ordinary citizens in the post-conflict era, has shocked residents of the Kathmandu Valley and had a negative impact on public perceptions of security in and around the Kathmandu Valley. A woman from Makwanpur explained, "*Although we hear of high-profile kidnapping cases of rich people in the news there are also cases of kidnappings of ordinary citizens, like that college student 'Khyati Shrestha'*<sup>14</sup> *who was kidnapped, mutilated and murdered by people she knew, and this makes us worry about our own children until they return home in the evening.*"<sup>15</sup>

- **Perceived threat of other types of violent crimes on ordinary citizens**

As well as kidnappings and extortion, there is a general perception that the Kathmandu Valley has witnessed a rise in randomly targeted theft, muggings and

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<sup>12</sup> KII with male security expert, Lalitpur, 17/02/2011

<sup>13</sup> KII with male criminal inside prison, Kathmandu, 14 February 2011

<sup>14</sup> See <http://www.nepalnews.com/home/index.php/news/2/487-khyati-murder-accused-remanded-to-judicial-custody.html>

<sup>15</sup> FGD with female community members, Makwanpur, 03 March 2011

domestic burglary involving violence and occasionally leading to murder. These are seen as not always politically connected as they have been in the past, but motivated by other factors such as poverty and unemployment, and thus threaten all citizens, particularly the wealthy. A woman from Dallu in Kathmandu stated that, *"We have stopped wearing jewellery these days. There have been so many cases of youths on motorbikes snatching jewellery and purses from passer-bys and if you look like you have money people may follow you and kidnap you. I never allow my children to go anywhere at night these days and their tutor comes to our home to save them having to leave."*<sup>16</sup> There is an accompanying perception that crime has become more brutal over recent years, with informants referring to various cases of brutal violence reported in the media.<sup>17</sup>

- **Fear over personal safety, particularly at night**

Communities felt that load shedding<sup>18</sup> in the Kathmandu Valley, which leaves many streets and houses unlit during night time hours, is a key factor fuelling an increase in randomly targeted violent crime. A woman from Kathmandu explained, *"There is so much load shedding this season and during the evenings, it is pointless even trying to operate shops or go outside. The streets are dark and with no electricity in the neighbourhood thieves have increased their activities based on load-shedding timings."*<sup>19</sup>

- **Sexual and gender based violence (SGBV)**

Research did not identify a rise in non-domestic sexual and gender-based violence and this is reflected in police data. Given the rise in other forms of violent crime the lack of a corresponding increase in SGBV is surprising but may also be reflective of the fact that people did not feel comfortable discussing this sensitive issue openly during the research or reporting it to the police.

- **Small arms and light weapons (SALW)<sup>20</sup>:**

Communities and security personnel linked the perceived rise in violent crimes and subsequent demise in community security in the Kathmandu Valley over recent years to the apparent increase in SALW availability. A man from Lalitpur explained, *"Nowadays people can buy guns so easily, guns have become like a fashion accessory for kids and if you buy one chances are you want to use it. This trend has led to more and unlikely people getting into criminal activity, and makes me feel less confident going out alone at night."*<sup>21</sup> According to convicted criminals interviewed in prison, it is possible to purchase a Chinese pistol for 4000 to 7000 Nepali Rupees (approximately US\$50-90<sup>22</sup>) in Thamel, Gongabu and Gaushala in the capital. A pistol can reportedly be purchased from criminal gangs and from individual criminals who sell them through the black market that is active in different areas of Kathmandu district. A convicted criminal stated, *"All you need to do is to approach any of the numerous*

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<sup>16</sup> FGD with male and female community members, Kathmandu, 16 February 2011

<sup>17</sup> As sourced from <http://www.ekantipur.com/the-kathmandu-post/2011/05/07/top-story/crime-of-passion-na-soldier-confesses-to-doing-wife-to-death/221430.html>

<sup>18</sup> Load shedding refers to electrical power cuts which can go up to 18 hours in a day during winter and 12 hours during summers. Due to lack of hydropower harnessing capacities Nepal has been unable to provide adequate electrical power supply for its citizens.

<sup>19</sup> FGD with male and female community members, Kathmandu, 15 February 2011

<sup>20</sup> There is no internationally agreed definition on SALW, but the closest the UN has come up with the definition is: "[SALW] mean any man-portable lethal weapon that expels or launches, is designed to expel or launch, or may be readily converted to expel or launch a shot, bullet or projectile by the action of an explosive.

"Small arms" are, broadly speaking, weapons designed for individual use. They include, inter alia, revolvers and self-loading pistols, rifles and carbines, sub-machine guns, assault rifles and light machine guns.

"Light weapons" are, broadly speaking, weapons designed for use by two or three persons serving as a crew, although some may be carried and used by a single person. They include, inter alia, heavy machine guns, hand-held under-barrel and mounted grenade launchers, portable anti-aircraft guns, portable anti-tank guns, recoilless rifles, portable launchers of anti-tank missile and rocket systems, portable launchers of anti-aircraft missile systems, and mortars of a calibre of less than 100 millimetres."

<sup>21</sup> FGD with male and female community members, Bhaktapur, 23 February 2011

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.xe.com/ucc/convert/?Amount=7000&From=NPR&To=USD>

*criminal gang members on the street and they will refer you to someone else selling guns and pistols.”<sup>23</sup>*

### **3.4 Perception that newly formed criminal gangs play a predominant role in crime**

Research found that newly formed criminal gangs are seen as largely responsible for committing organised and violent crimes in the Kathmandu Valley and surrounding districts, although the political youth wings described above do also play a role, particularly with regards to the kidnapping and extorting of businessmen. These criminal gangs allegedly vary in their levels of professionalism and organisation. At the lower level they are allegedly more likely to commit crimes such as theft and robbery targeted at individuals from the general public. More sophisticated gangs are thought to engage in the types of organised crime outlined above that target businesses and financial institutions.

- **Membership of criminal gangs**

Research findings indicate that criminal gangs active in the Kathmandu Valley are largely comprised of young men from marginalised communities in Kathmandu’s surrounding districts. This finding is derived from a survey of names in police databases and interviews with community members. Janajati groups, especially Tamang, Magar and Lama, and lower castes figure particularly strongly in police databases as do members of the lower castes. Although the reason for why this is requires further research, and caution should always be exercised in reading too much into statistics, communities from districts outside of the Valley such as Kabhreplanchowk, Sindhupalchok, Dhading, Rasuwa and Nuwakot supported this perception that gang members originate from these districts. Community members from the Kathmandu Valley and surrounding districts also stated that members of these criminal gangs are predominantly men and, reflecting cultural expectations in Nepal of men as the ‘bread winners’, men might feel compelled to bring in income through criminal means if they can’t find legal sources of income. They also suggest that this reflects new aspirations for a more masculine and powerful status for men, through becoming a prominent member of a criminal gang and acquiring associated material status symbols synonymous with ‘gangster’ culture – such as expensive sport utility vehicles (SUVs), high-tech lethal weapons, mobile phones and other electronic items and Western-brands for clothing attire.

- **Motivations for joining criminal gangs**

According to interviews with prisoners and community members, the motivations for joining organised criminal gangs are a combination of both push and pull factors. Poverty, lack of education and employment opportunities combine with idea of sharing the rich and glamorous lives of criminal leaders and the pull of easy money. A convicted criminal stated, *“people like us are poor, we don’t have parental property or family businesses and we can’t afford to send our children to schools either as we are very poor. Furthermore, for jobs like yours [NGO worker], we don’t have educational criteria and cities are competitive where we lose out and can’t survive. Then, if someone comes and offers us a well-paid job in crime, we are easily lured.”<sup>24</sup>* Research found that rural to urban migration also plays a key role in motivating young men to join criminal gangs. Communities and convicted criminals stated that for poor young men from rural communities who are hit by an unexpectedly high cost of living and lack of employment options in Kathmandu, joining criminal groups becomes a way of survival. Communities from districts outside of the Valley reported that low-level gang members are made responsible for running operations in their home districts under instruction from gang members in higher positions. They allegedly receive a percentage of any profits and look upon gang leaders as their ‘older brothers’ and role models for having risen from origins in poor, rural communities to

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<sup>23</sup> KII with male criminals inside prison, Kathmandu (14 February 2011) and FGD with male and female community members, Lalitpur (22 February 2011)

<sup>24</sup> KII with male criminal inside prison, Kathmandu, 14 February 2011

positions of wealth and power within the criminal world. Convicted criminals reported that once they have become successful within one gang, some lower-level members also break off to start their own groups.

- **Links to India and elsewhere**

Security personnel and imprisoned criminals stated that many of the more sophisticated criminal gangs are connected to Indian crime networks operating in India, Pakistan, Dubai and other South Asian countries through fake currency rackets.<sup>25</sup> According to the Nepal Police, a number of high-profile Nepali criminals have been assassinated both in Nepal and abroad as a result of their involvement in these fake currency rackets, for example Nepali media baron Jamim Shah was allegedly assassinated for his connections to Indian criminal networks dealing in false currency.<sup>26</sup> More research is however required in order to draw clear conclusions about the connections between criminal gangs in the Kathmandu Valley and Indian crime networks.

### **3.5 Perception that crime has become increasingly politicised undermines people's trust in the government and security provision**

Communities interviewed raised concern about strong connections between criminal gangs and politicians, which they feel has lowered their trust in the government's capacity to provide them with security. Convicted criminals corroborated this concern, stating that the more organised gangs often have connections with politicians and state officials. They also reported that politicians often invest in organised crime for profit, particularly smuggling and real estate embezzlement, and pay organised gangs to protect them during elections and to execute political campaigns through use of force, often to the detriment of the public. In return, communities and convicted criminals interviewed perceive that these gang members are protected by politicians from prosecution by the state security and justice system, meaning that suspected criminals are often not apprehended. A male criminal inside Bhadra Jail, Kathmandu, stated, *"during elections, these criminal gangs protect politicians and help them with political hooliganism by terrorising opponents. At times like this [when there are no elections], criminals continue to be protected by politicians – even if they commit crimes they are not apprehended. Even when criminal leaders are inside jail, they continue to lead a lavish life and run their businesses through use of technology."*<sup>27</sup>

### **3.6 Tensions between 'original' inhabitants of the Kathmandu Valley and 'outsiders' is undermining people's perceptions of public security**

The rapid process of urbanisation witnessed in the Kathmandu Valley in the conflict and post-conflict era has largely transformed a previously homogenous society in the Kathmandu valley into a much more transitory and diverse one. Research found that this transition has to a certain extent undermined social cohesion and had an unsettling effect on residents' perceptions of their security at the community level.

Many of the people originally from the Kathmandu Valley interviewed for this research saw themselves as being distinct from 'outsiders,' recent migrants from other parts of the country. Rightly or wrongly, they often perceive these 'outsiders' to be the cause of crime in their areas. A woman from Harisiddhi in Lalitpur explained, *"Kathmandu was safe 15 years ago where people could go work in the fields leaving their houses unlocked, with no threat of theft from neighbours. Now there are migrants who live in our homes as tenants and we have no idea where they have come from and, when things start disappearing*

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<sup>25</sup> KII with male criminal inside prison, Kathmandu, 14 February 2011 & KII with male security expert, Kathmandu, 17 February 2011

<sup>26</sup> KII with male security expert, Kathmandu, 17 February 2011 and as corroborated from media reports sourced from <http://www.newkerala.com/news/fullnews-51512.html>

<sup>27</sup> KII with male criminal inside prison, Kathmandu, 14 February 2011



*they are the first ones to be suspected by us*".<sup>28</sup> This sentiment was echoed by community members in Bhaktapur, Chyasal and Dhalku of Kathmandu Valley. They expressed absolute trust and faith in their 'own people' as they described them, whom they have known since childhood and share cultural and ethnic similarities with, and the opposite sentiments towards other community members who have settled within their locality recently or have moved in for work purposes.

The negative feelings that the 'original' inhabitants of the Kathmandu Valley feel towards migrants are not unique to Nepal and are a common outcome of social and urban change. Although these tensions are not violent at present, they have intensified over recent years, and should be acknowledged and monitored as a potential risk of violence and threat to security in the Kathmandu Valley in the future. This risk is particularly pertinent given that communities are already frustrated with the perceived inefficient security and justice provision and weakened governance and political systems.<sup>29</sup> This coupled with the tensions that currently exist on the basis of identity, particularly ethnicity and caste, in the Kathmandu Valley and elsewhere in Nepal give rise to a potentially fragile context where tensions could quickly transform into violence in the Kathmandu Valley as a result of political changes, a symbolic event taking place or conflict emerging elsewhere in the country along the lines of differing ethnic and cultural identities.

## 4. Recommendations

Based on the outcomes of this research, a number of preliminary recommendations targeted at stakeholders involved in public security provision and crime prevention are outlined below. Recommendations are based upon research findings and, thus, on the perceptions of key stakeholders.

- **Undertake more research on the trends of crime and insecurity in the Kathmandu Valley**

Although this research provides initial findings and begins to fill a gap in research that explicitly focuses on insecurity and criminal activity in the Kathmandu Valley, it relies heavily on community perceptions and qualitative data. More detailed research which combines qualitative and quantitative approaches (including perception surveys, victim surveys and police crime data) should be undertaken at regular intervals to track changes in trends over time and to inform security provision and crime prevention. Linked to this, stronger mechanisms for recording data on crime should be developed by the Nepal Police. In January 2012, the newly restructured Research and Development (R&D) Directorate has announced plans to conduct periodic research on crime, insecurity and policing provisions throughout Nepal. It is anticipated that their efforts would co-ordinate information on crime and insecurity and be able to produce short- and long-term goals and plans for policing under specific security contexts.

- **Undertake more research on the links between trends of insecurity, crime and conflict in Kathmandu Valley and elsewhere in Nepal**

More research should also be undertaken to understand links between trends of insecurity, crime and conflict in the Kathmandu Valley and those that are emerging elsewhere in Nepal. Crime and insecurity in the Valley is linked to the movement of people, goods and weapons from other parts of the country and vice versa. Connected to this, similar analyses and mapping of other insecurity and conflict 'hotspots' in Nepal should be undertaken, including Eastern Hills, Far West and border areas such as Biratnagar, Birgunj and Dhangadhi.<sup>30</sup> This will help in developing a more comprehensive picture of the situation across Nepal and feed more systematically into policy and operational responses at the national level and amongst international

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<sup>28</sup> FGD with male and female community members, Lalitpur, 22 February 2011

<sup>29</sup> Saferworld (2010), *Treading Water? Security and Justice in Nepal in 2009*, Saferworld <http://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/view-resource/441>

<sup>30</sup> Findings from Saferworld research on armed violence reduction, 2012

donors towards crime and conflict prevention.

- **Support current efforts to strengthen community-police relations in the Kathmandu Valley**

The Government of Nepal, international community and civil society should support the Nepal Police in their efforts to build and strengthen community-police relations through the implementation of the Metropolitan Police initiative, which was established within the Nepal Police to address the capital and its surrounds. In addition, the Nepal Police should be supported in their current efforts to develop community policing as a strategy and philosophy that underpins all policing activity and responds to public security needs. In operational terms this requires the Nepal Police to actively increase positive co-operation and interaction with the public through such activities as regular public fora; joint development of neighbourhood safety plans; responding to minor crimes that have a major impact on the public (i.e. petty theft) and police station open days. To assist in the building of community-police relations, staffing within the Metropolitan Police should reflect the gender and ethnic diversity of Kathmandu's population.

- **Support the Nepal Police to strengthen the capacity of the newly established specialist Criminal Investigations Bureau (CIB) unit, through:**

- a.* Supporting specialist trainings across all departments within the Police Academy for new trends in insecurity and crime identified through this research. Modules on criminal investigation, using new technologies, combatting organised crime, combatting violent crime, public accountability and transparency, gender sensitivity, should be included in these revised trainings. Specialist more in-depth trainings on these issues should be provided for the CIB and Metropolitan Police departments, as it is these departments that are responsible for criminal investigation in the Kathmandu Valley.
- b.* Strengthen capacities for criminological analysis and use of crime data within the Nepal Police. This is necessary for better understanding and analysis of crime patterns, and developing appropriate responses to them. Capacities in the Nepal Police could be strengthened by establishing a unit of analysts and providing them with specialist trainings on this issue which draw upon international best practice, and supporting members of this task force to study criminology overseas.
- c.* Strengthen the effectiveness of criminal investigations through improving procedures for handling evidence and increasing capacity to conduct forensic analysis.
- d.* Establish a division specifically dedicated to investigating and prosecuting organised criminals. Given suspected political collusion in much organised crime, it is vital that the Nepal Police have full operational responsibility for the activities of this division.

- **Strengthen outreach to youth at risk of involvement in criminal activities**

In order to address the factors underpinning the recruitment of youth into criminal gangs – particularly poverty, boredom resulting from unemployment, greed and/or aspirations for greater social status – security agencies, the government, international community, private sector and civil society should be co-ordinated in their efforts to reach out to youth in the Kathmandu Valley and surrounding districts and create attractive alternative opportunities for them. In particular, the private sector should discuss ways that it could create employment opportunities for disadvantaged youth through apprenticeship and skill-development schemes which offer potential for developing in the longer-term on the basis of outcomes from local and national labour market analyses. Security agencies should establish specialised units with dedicated personnel allocated to engaging with youth that are at greatest risk of becoming involved in crime through constructively supporting them to participate in community policing and community enhancement activities. Civil society and the international

community should strengthen current efforts to support programmes which seek to improve education and employment opportunities for youth, non-violence awareness raising activities and the establishment of community youth groups which support participation in constructive activities such as sporting events. The government should strengthen efforts to establish a social welfare structure in Nepal which creates a system of social workers tasked with the responsibility of supporting disadvantaged youth in the community.

- **Strengthen private sector resilience to political and criminal influence**

The police and private sector should work together to provide a more secure business environment. Action against extortion, intimidation and political interference in tendering processes should be prioritised both by the police but also by political parties who are involved in these acts. The recent pressure on political parties to end the use of *bandahs* as a political tool must be continued by civil society, politicians and international actors. As part of current efforts to strengthen police-community relations, the Nepal Police and local businesses should establish and participate in regular fora to find solutions joint to local security needs. Nepal Police have already started initiatives towards this end with the establishment of the Criminal Investigation Bureau, which specialises in investigating financial crimes such as money laundering, embezzlement, usage of hi-technology for criminal purposes, extortion and kidnapping for ransom. For their part, businesses should contribute to reducing the economic motivation for crime through investigating apprenticeship schemes and public works initiatives to provide employment to under-employed young people.

## **Saferworld**

Saferworld is an international non-governmental organisation that works to prevent and reduce violent conflict and to promote co-operative approaches to security. We aim to bring a conflict prevention and security building focus to development and peacebuilding efforts, and to ensure that conflict prevention and security building activities enable other forms of social, political and economic development to take hold. Saferworld has 20 years of experience working in the field of international conflict prevention, undertaking perception surveys on peace, security and reconciliation, conflict analysis and disseminating results amongst decision makers and others.

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