The Asian Development Bank, the Department for International Development and the World Bank probe the people’s priorities across Nepal.
As they were updating their assistance plans for Nepal in late 2008, the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the Department for International Development of the U.K. (DFID) and the World Bank held joint consultations with stakeholders to seek views on what people thought Nepal’s priorities were and how they would like Nepal’s development partners help address them. In early 2010, following the approval of their new plans, the three agencies undertook another round of joint consultations to brief stakeholders on how their suggestions were incorporated and to seek further views on how those plans could be implemented in a manner that effectively supports Nepal.

The consultations in Nepalgunj, Pokhara, Biratnagar and Kathmandu brought together over 350 stakeholders from the political parties, Constituent Assembly members, community groups, the private sector, non-government organizations, youth, women and excluded groups, donors and Government agencies – representing 48 of Nepal’s 75 districts.

The key consultation question was: how can the ADB, DFID and World Bank effectively support the Government of Nepal through the implementation of their plans, given the many challenges that Nepal faces? The question was answered in myriad ways by different stakeholders. Yet, everyone agreed on one central issue: peace must go hand in hand with development.

The process concluded in April 2010, with a meeting of Secretaries of the Government of Nepal, hosted and chaired by the Chief Secretary.
REPoRTING BACK

The joint consultations in 2010 gave the development partners a chance to report back to communities about how their voices had been taken into account. Opening the new round of meetings, the three development partners said they updated their assistance programs following what they heard at the 2008 consultations. In 2008, people were concerned primarily about the peace process, writing the Constitution, and security. They also demanded programs related to employment, agricultural productivity, corruption control, good governance, and improvements in health and education. In addition, donor transparency and coordination were key issues.

The aim of the 2010 consultations was to get feedback on how to implement the updated strategies. How could people be more involved in implementing these strategies, the development partners asked.

The three development partners, who provide assistance predominantly through the Government, were interested to hear feedback from grassroots communities about the efficacy and challenges of Government-run programs. Noting that they collectively provide a significant proportion of the external assistance that Nepal receives, the three development partners said they were eager to avoid duplication. Rather, they stressed the need for better coordination to improve services and development outcomes.
The key consultation question was: how can the ADB, DFID and World Bank effectively support the Government of Nepal through the implementation of their plans, given the many challenges that Nepal faces? The question was answered in myriad ways by different stakeholders. Yet, everyone agreed on one central issue—peace must go hand in hand with development.
The same group of participants attended both consultations in 2008 and 2010. Many individuals travelled long distances—some up to three days—to share their thoughts.

The participants were asked to respond to the basic questions: how can the development partners implement their plans effectively. The participants worked in breakout groups and provided their collective recommendations.

This woman, at the Nepalgunj consultations, is reading out a set of recommendations relating to gender and inclusion.
Participants noted that the Government and community must work together to ensure that services are delivered effectively and equitably to the citizens of Nepal. They stressed the need to systematically share information about Government programs and priorities with local communities. Beneficiaries can participate only when they know what’s going on. That can happen only by closing the current information gap, they said.

Feedback provided by different groups looked at gaps in service delivery, and how these might be bridged. Many grass-roots actors continued to see development goals as being unmet. Other issues raised related to security and poor law and order, opportunities for the neediest, transparency in procurement, delays in the release of development funds, and uneven standards of quality. Another key concern was how to ensure that government officials are accountable to their public duties. There was also a big call for monitoring and observation by the media.
WHAT PEOPLE SAID

In Nepalgunj, participants voiced concern that aid was not reaching the intended beneficiaries—some health posts remained unattended, medicines often arrived expired, water projects were sometimes never completed. The projects that did get to the people, including roads, suffered from bad design and shoddy construction. Agriculture productivity and market access were primary concerns. Food security and nutrition remain major challenges. Among the priorities, irrigation came first, followed by seeds. Climate change, natural resources management, and forestry development were also central issues to many discussions within the consultations. Violence against women needs to be addressed with more innovative efforts.

In Pokhara, the issue of community was central. Examples were cited of “happy marriages” between the State and communities in some areas of service delivery such as education, health, rural roads and micro-hydro-electricity. In others, it was evident that a better working relationship was required. Some participants claimed there was too much focus on “community” without examining or supporting their capacity to deliver quality outcomes. Other questions considered included: How can local capacity be built and sustained? How can accountabilities be better defined? How can access to services be made equitable?
In Biratnagar, the discussion centered primarily on problems faced in public procurement, particularly in the implementation of infrastructure projects. Participants cited impunity and weak law and order as the primary reasons behind the growing abuse of public procurement and called on the Government to institute strong and effective sanctions. They also called on the political parties to restrain their cadre from abusing powers; procurement agencies to explore technology solutions such as e-bidding; contractors to self-regulate; anti-corruption bodies to increase vigilance; and beneficiary groups to organize and equip themselves with tools to effectively monitor implementation.

In Kathmandu, the discussion dwelt on aligning aid with Government priorities; expanding partnerships with the private sector, youth groups, and civil society organizations; and strengthening political and social consensus around development goals. For example, the private sector representatives believe they have a role in the design and implementation of development projects, particularly in the areas of job creation and enterprise development. Youth groups saw themselves as potential partners in the areas of dissemination and outreach. Non-government organizations representing excluded groups felt the need to underpin development activities with a deeper understanding of local context. Constituent Assembly members believed greater transparency would lead to deeper social consensus and ownership of development efforts. Secretaries of the Government of Nepal believed better coordination between development partners and alignment with Government priorities would lead to improvements in development outcomes.

Watch the video at: www.worldbank.org/nepaljointconsultations.