

Indira Manandhar: An interfaith journey of solidarity, peace and social harmony at *Religions for Peace* Nepal

Indira Manandhar has been a part of *Religion for Peace* for over three decades already. She has served as the secretary general in all those years. Currently, even at her advanced age, she continues to serve *Religions for Peace* Nepal as the President. She has nourished and strengthened this organization with her amazing leadership.



“My work at Religions for Peace Nepal was inspired during joint and active collaboration activities with Bihars and Ven. Sumangal Bhante, who introduced me to Dharma Shanti Nepal. Multi-religious engagement inspired me to dedicate my life to pursuing peace and religious harmony.” ~ Indrina during the interview.

With a double Master’s degree in Statistics and Agriculture, and in Ancient History and Culture in Social Anthropology, Ms. Indira has championed intercultural and interreligious dialogue as an approach to building social harmony and peace. Nepal is a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-religious, and multi-cultural state, *Religions for Peace* has contributed to building unity amidst this harmony through multi-religious collaboration.



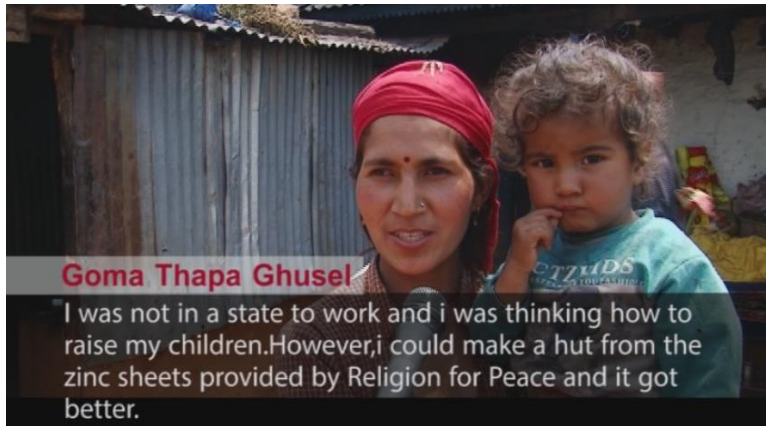
‘I have been working with *Religions for Peace* for over four decades now (from 1990). I have always been a promoter of peace and religious harmony. I believe in humanitarian work and helping people in need. I feel proud to be associated with a reputed organization like [Religions for Peace International](#) as well as [Religion for Peace Asia](#). I wish all the success to all the ventures undertaken by Religions for Peace regional as well as international. God bless all.’

Religions for Peace Nepal under the leadership of Indira is known for its humanitarian work. In April 2015, Nepal was struck by a 7.8-magnitude earthquake taking thousands of lives and millions of damages to properties. Kathmandu, Nepal's Capital, and its surrounding provinces were hit hardest. With the assistance of *Religions for Peace* International and *Religions for Peace* Asia, *Religions for Peace* Nepal coordinated quick humanitarian response and mobilized members and partners to support the delivery much-needed relief foods and materials to the victims of the earthquake.



“ A year after the devastating earthquake and being an agriculturist who believes that the humanitarian work should be sustained by supporting the victims to stand on their faith and build their own future, we jointly coordinated within the Religions for Peace family and continued supporting the earthquake victims. For example, in March 2016, we distributed saplings of a variety of fruits and nuts as well as many sacks of seeds of different vegetables to Ghusel village in the southern part of Kathmandu. Zinc iron sheets were distributed to build shelters for the earthquake victims. Relief material such as Blankets and woolen caps were distributed in Nuwakot, Sankhu, Gol- Dhunga and Godamchaur, Godavari.”



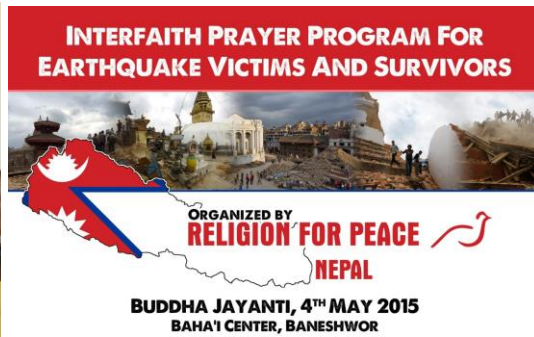


Nepal has been hit by one natural disaster after another. It was Earthquake in 2015 and in 2017, it was the flood. The Terai region of Nepal was most affected by the floods. There was a continuous rise in the water level in various major rivers in the Terai districts caused by nonstop rainfall for many days. Many people have died and thousands were left homeless and displaced. As the focus of relief efforts has been centered on responding to the earthquake, survivors of flooding and landslides outside of Kathmandu Valley did not receive essential support. *Religions for Peace* Nepal identified Saptari as a place in dire need of support. Working in this area will also provide an opportunity to expand its reach outside the Valley and build multi-religious collaboration and District-level Interreligious Committees outside of the capital area.



The unique feature of all these humanitarian work and relief operations is the collaboration of local interfaith leaders. It is the standard approach of *Religions for Peace* Nepal to engage religious leaders in local communities in the planning, implementation, and assessment of the programs. In fact, all the humanitarian work services are opportunities for the various faith communities, including their leaders, to help one another and work together, thus providing an avenue of deepening mutual appreciation and mutual respect for one another.

As an interfaith organization, Indira would always emphasize the religious dimension of all its programs and activities. She would gather the Interreligious Council and various faith leaders for prayer during national emergencies and crises. *Religions for Peace* Nepal would also conduct interfaith prayers to commemorate those who perished in the earthquake and to show solidarity with all those that had been affected by the disaster.



An integral aspect of *Religions for Peace* Nepal activities is the regular conduct of forums and conferences. Indra believed that it is also important for religious leaders to come together to discuss common issues such as child marriages, child labor, environmental issues, and others.

“Religious leaders can play an important role in eliminating the practice of child marriages, child labor, and other practices that are harmful to children and society. Thus, the many forums and conferences organized by Religions for Peace Nepal and partners like UNICEF have strengthened the unity of the various religious communities to engage the local communities and advocate in the government all these important issues to promote a peaceful and harmonious society.”



Indira’s network of friends and faith-based organizations continue to work together. She continues to inspire religious leaders and peace advocates to continue the tradition of doing

humanitarian work, advocacy campaigns, and most of all, organizing interfaith prayers to seek the intervention of the Divine for the betterment of Nepal society.

Link to the YouTube video:

<https://youtu.be/bCw8J8bVn84>



Religions for Peace is the world's oldest, largest and most representative multi-religious leadership platform, advancing common action among the world's faith communities. Unlike any other interfaith organisation, *Religions for Peace* works through legally registered, representative, multi-religious platforms ([Interreligious Councils](#)) in over 95 countries and 6 regions. We convene to catalyse and promote multi-religious collaboration for the common good. In Asia, [Religions for Peace Asia](#) is our regional affiliate founded in 1976. *Religions for Peace Asia* is part of the global *Religions for Peace* movement with a mission to advance common action among religious communities in Asia and the Pacific for peace.

By Pooja Manandhar, SG, RfP Nepal