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## Policy Discussion Series-XI

### Kabaad System in the Kathmandu Valley: A Preliminary Survey

By

Tirtha Bista

**Venue:** Martin Chautari Seminar Hall, Thapathali

**Date:** Sunday, 23 June 2013 [9 Asar 2070]

**Time:** 3:00 pm

Till a few years ago, the kabaad (scraps) system of the Kathmandu valley was mostly running in an informal manner. Today, large numbers of kabaad shops are registered with the municipality/VDC in their area and the Internal Revenue Office of the Nepal Government. The government has also given recognition to various actors in the system including powerful intermediaries known as 'Party'. The Kabaad owners and entrepreneurs pay business tax and income tax like other business persons. However, the relations within the kabaad system, such as those between the kabaad shop owners and the pheriyas (cyclewala), Rickshawwala, and the waste pickers, are still informal and work either with the system of advance pay or pay upon delivery. The Kabaad system, its key actors and the nature of their interrelationships are not well known. No governmental organizations or non-governmental organizations have credible qualitative or quantitative data about relatively more enduring structures of the kabaad shops. They do not have adequate data of even registered ones because the kabaad business has not been recognized as such in the record books. I will present a preliminary report on the findings of my research on a survey of the kabaad shops in Kathmandu.

I will claim that the kabaad system is economically significant with about 700 kabaad shops doing Rs. 2 billion worth of trade annually. There are 100–120 Parties, 5000 pheriyas and nearly the same number of other scrap/waste pickers involved in this business. I will argue that we should take the political economy of urban waste way beyond the existing environmental conservation discourse and view it as integral to the overall economic organization of the city.

*Tirtha Bista is a researcher at Martin Chautari. His articles have been published in Media Adhyayan and he is one of the authors of the Tarai-Madhes Bibliography (2009). Currently he is doing research on the kabaad system in the Kathmandu valley.*

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#### About the Series

The Policy Discussion Series is an initiative of Martin Chautari and the Southasia Institute of Advanced Studies (SIAS) under the aegis of Nepal Policy Research Network (NPRN). It aims to nurture a “community of practice” around public policy in Nepal, by bringing together experienced and emerging public policy scholars and practitioners to share their research insights and experiences with a larger audience.

With this Series, we seek to stimulate debates on contemporary public policy issues, policy research methodologies, and institutions that create policy knowledge.

The Series is also a forum for the sharing of findings of policy-related research.