

REPORT

One-Day Interaction

On

Role Of Women In State Building

August 31-2014, Dailekh

————— Organized by —————



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Content

TITLE	Page No
Introduction & Project Rationale	2
Objectives	2
Methodology & Participant Segregation	4
Program Proceedings/Presentations	4-6
Interaction excerpts	7-10
Recommendations	10
Media Clips	11

Introduction & Project Rationale:

State building is an indispensable facet of the development process constituting participation of every level of citizen residing within its boundary, irrespective of their social and geographical identity. A state should be able to guarantee the rights, integrity and solidarity of its people ensuring their equal participation in administrative and developmental affairs, which can only justify the proper formulation of state building. It comes with institutionalization of every citizen's right, identity, protection and access in public facilities and institution.

State building and women's role has always remained as a debated facet. Women's role in struggling for liberation and democratic development cannot be repudiated but in the context of our country, despite having 50.40% of population (CBS Report 2011), women are limited in the social boundary of family and marital responsibilities. Despite of the legal provision of the interim constitution for 33%, the 2nd constitution election witnessed only 30% of women representation in the CA. The assurance of the equal women rights and representation has only limited to parties' speech and documentation and observed with more of political recruitment of family members.

Nepal at present is molding for promulgating constitution, which had remained in perplexity due to the power play and political chaos. The exciting participation of people in the 2nd CA election directed people's verdict for peace and establishing constitution in the country, which the political parties reluctantly or consciously agreed to move ahead with. In this initial yet very crucial phase the issue of equal gender participation and empowerment has been raised with much hype and minimum chances of institutionalization.

Media Advocacy Group (MAG), an organization working particularly on the field of Right To Information and Gender as the main cross cutting issue implements its programs through advocacy, capacity building and awareness campaigns extending itself to all the 75 districts. With partnership of Friedrich Ebert Stiftung(FES), a German organization effortlessly working majorly in good governance and gender equity since 1994 in Nepal, MAG has been conducting orientation program on the topic " Role of Women In State Building" each year as the part of FES small grantee. With this program, the organizers aims to bring timely and clear consensus about the role of women in state building by promoting capacity building, women empowerment and legislative definition of women and her rights.

Objectives:

- Sensitizing the importance of women participation in every level of state mechanisms and societal affairs.
- Promoting gender equality and women empowerment.
- Mainstreaming women participation in every level of state's policy and decision making mechanisms.

Methodologies:

- Thematic power point presentation
- Extensive Interaction
- Visual clips on team work and importance of women's role were shown from time to time

Participant's Segregation:

Total 88 participants (including the team of organizers) participated in the interaction program. The ratio of Male & Female was 53:35. 14 journalists/media, 15 representatives from local political parties, 11 members of Civil Society Organization and 3 representatives from the government official were presented in the program (*Total 43*). 45 of the other remaining participants comprised freelancers, activist, academicians, members of women groups & aspiring youth members of the society.

Program Proceedings:

Followed by registration and tea the program started at 9:00 am at Hotel Park Inn, Dailekh and participants from different walks of life – media, politics, activist, woman leaders, academician, security personnel etc. The resource persons had presented thematic power point presentations on the topic. FNJ (Federation of Nepali Journalists) as the coordinating partner extended their valuable assistance at times required in facilitating the program between resource person and participants. Mr. Amar Sunar, Journalist and Reporter RSS (Rastriya Samachar Samiti) emceed the interaction program.

State building & Role of Women – Presentation by Babita Basnet, President – MAG

Starting her presentation with the importance of women's role in state building, Ms. Basnet stressed on the fact that women if provided with the opportunity to come ahead can make remarkable contribution to the society and country. Below are the few excerpts of her presentation:

State Building & Nation Building is two different affairs contributing in building of any province. State is a territory comprising of languages, religion, nationality, culture and democratic sovereignty with its own practiced administrative & judiciary system. State building is indicated by certain aspects as; degrading of public administration functioning & judiciary law, destruction of basic structure & value of any religion, language & ethnicity and other as such. State building sustains and strengthens territory, power, government, history, tradition, issues of peace making as some of its important aspects.

Nation Building termed after the World War II is generally termed for newborn state, long time colonial state or a freed state. Such state is defined with new term/indicators for almost every national identity required for establishing any nation. Ms. Basnet reviewed the unification history of King Prithvi Narayan Shah, which was an exemplary for identifying different ethnicity

and group as a one single identity of being a Nepali. Similarly, she briefly outlined the insurgency phase of Maoist revolution and without proper governmental addressing it has still left many wounds unhealed.

State building & Women Participation was highly prioritized during the people's movement of 2062/63 and as a result interim constitution established the ordinance to assure 33% of women participation in the state's policy & decision-making. The 1stCA election was able to assure this data but the women members could not make remarkable contribution due to the power & political division that led state into 4 long years of instability & chaos. International declaration of human and women rights have lobbied about the rights and integrity of every woman globally, Beijing Conference of 1995 suggests women's equal participation and inter-linkage with every form of social/political development and reformation.

After a long stalemate, Nepal finally signed the Comprehensive Peace Accord on 2006. However, it has raised political perplexity in state restructuring, federalism, self-autonomous state, issues of ethnicity etc. overshadowing the women issues. At present the state is in phase of constitution drafting and the issue of woman participation hugely promoted by national and international agent. However, the assurance of the political party has remained just within their manifestos. Due to the gap between leadership and good governance, women are not provided with the exposure they are capable of. Women participation is important and various studies also support the fact that it can sustain lesser infidelity in the functioning of the state. Economic inclusion of women in the earliest stages of state reconstruction activities can support and enhance stability and developed outcome.

Illustrating briefly some of the legislative ordinance for women's participation and rights, she stated that importance of women's participation in the state building and mechanisms cannot foster without equal male participation. Structured by our social values, women are not able to realize their potentiality and even if they are able to achieve position then majority of women focus more on lamenting and frustrating over the governmental system and political scenario. Women should thrive more in working and achieving in restoring a well-defined dimension of womanhood.

She further stated that change is progressive and essential for every state to move into development. She also applauded the participants for having such acute observation and keen interests towards woman and her issues and requested them to direct it into identifying better exposure and opportunities for other local women.

Ms. Kalpana Acharya, Journalist – Avenues TV & Lecturer

State building requires the participation of all regardless of their race, ethnicity and gender. The appreciation of the need for gender equality has led to the enshrining of affirmative principles in Interim Constitution to ensure the participation of women at all levels of national decision-making. This important milestone provided the opportunity to reflect on the role of women in state building but due to various political reasons and women policy makers given opportunity to work with soft departments restrained them for marking their effective presence.

In a participatory democracy and development citizens participate in public life, there is presence of improved governance steering; coordination and collective action in the delivery of public goods and services; civic renewal and citizenship building, judicious role of non-state actors and justice-promoting development measures & media's autonomy from the government, commerce and geostrategic interests is fundamental to increase public access, participation, ownership and influence and contribute to viable state building. Gender disparity can impede state in achieving progress and fostering development.

Gender Equality & Role of Women needs to be addressed seriously to ensure the full participation of women in the political and economic lives. Also women having access to positions of decision-making must now contribute to the task of state building. Millennium Development Goal Number 3 and 5 promote gender equality and the empowerment of women. Besides, women are expected to play a key role in contributing towards meeting most of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), on poverty reductions, mortality and morbidity reduction, environment and resources conservation among other goals.

Woman plays a crucial role in the determining societal value as the task of educating children. Woman is thus called to contribute to society's values by inculcating in her physical children these values. Woman's role in educating in values transcends the family or home and extends to society as a whole. Nepalese women must thus not lose sight of this role, which they can exercise in whatever position they occupy in society. Without a clear appreciation of femininity, women's identity is lost in the search for equality. As more Nepalese women make enter the public sphere, they must be careful not to fall into the trap of imitating men, but rather that maintain a true sense of equality that appreciates that a woman's feminine way of being is legitimate and valuable.

Role of media, In any democratic country the media plays a vital role in creating, moulding and reflecting public opinion. Over the years the media became so powerful that it soon acquired the status of "Fourth Estate". It also became so indispensable for the democratic functioning that Thomas Jefferson who was also the third US president (1801-1809) said, "*Were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate for a moment to prefer the latter*". In fact, the media touches almost every aspect of our public life.

Media plays a very important and crucial role in enlightening and educating the people. It can aid public involvement through advocating issue and transferring knowledge, skills and technologies to the people. Using the media could spread awareness about various rural development programs, propagation of family planning. Media exposes a number of corrupt practices, hidden deals, thus putting a check on the cancer in the form of corruption in the society.

Media serves as a bridge between the government and the people. The government's policies and actions are conveyed to the people, and the latter's views are forcefully expressed to make the authorities aware of the public feelings. It makes the policy makers aware of the wrongs that may otherwise escape attention. The stereotype depiction of women as glamorous props

compels them to work with softer issues of society and country whereas they could do more than that.

Ms. Samira Paudel, Gender Coordinator Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES)

Giving a brief introduction of FES as founded by Germany's first democratically elected President Friedrich Ebert, she informed that FES international network has been extended to 100 countries globally and working in Nepal formally from 1995 and working majorly in state building and civic education as a part of promoting good governance. Participation in state building, she stated is the most strengthened and institutionalized form of women empowerment in any state. The periphery of women is broadening and women are coming ahead to take social responsibilities. There are several challenges for women to come out of the boundary limited by family and the society. She stated that perhaps the one-day orientation might not reinforce the importance of women's role but it does provide the platform for different level of stakeholders and women themselves to comprehend the role of women and make initiations to execute it within their own places and then after taking it in more extended level. She urged all the participants to come forward and join hands in laying a dignified, well defined and strengthened foundation for women empowerment.

Remarks from Chief Guest and Representatives of Local Political Parties:

Hari Kala Acharya (Asst CDO) Currently Acting CDO, Dailekh

Highlighted the fact that women participation is relatively less. A progressive state building process involves the participation of every single citizen and a country should be able to ensure this. Women today are also capable of coming up in picture and leaving their mark in developmental and democratic activities of the state. They should build their confidence and capacitate themselves with information of politics and state rather than moving away and just laying their frustration in both. State has institutionalized the rights of women it is just that they are not aware of it and the state has not brought in some strong mechanisms to increase the information and access of women. Everyone should now know that women development can only foster the state development. During her speech, she also shared her experiences on how a woman despite of having a potential platform cannot come against the social structure and people still not realizing that a woman can also take leadership whenever required.

Naman Shahi, President, FNJ Dailekh

Expressed his gratitude to the organizers for bringing program on such important issue in Dailekh which according to him was probably the first program on the topic. Giving a brief historical background of Dailekh as the place for first Nepali calligraphy he also stated that it was the place where the local women group failed the Maoist attempt of revolution during the insurgency time. So, he requested the women participants that they should not term themselves as weak and take in the responsibility of society and state building.

Khadga B. Sijapati, VDC Chief

Pointed out that men and women both have their equal importance in state affairs and they should be given equal opportunity to participate in the administrative and public related affairs. State should set up strategic plans to bring women and the marginalized groups forward and make them participate in the process of development and empowerment. The conservative social structure should be challenged now. State should set different policies and strategies for women empowerment. He also requested the women to enhance their leadership skills and come in forefront to make way for self.

Tek Pandey, Former VDC Chief

Thanked the organizers and appreciated the active involvement of all the participants present. He said that it is the time we all should work more and talk less. Although it might be difficult to change the social perception restore in us from 200 years back, we can still hope for the restructuring of our understanding about women and their rights with the democratic progress the state is moving on with. Targeting the participants he said it is now their duty to implement the objectives of the program in themselves and their networks over the issue of women empowerment and state building.

Ram B. Thapa, Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RAPRAPA)

Men and women are equal and two sides of a coin. Even the religious doctrine confirms the fact that both of them are the nurturer of nature and incomplete without one another. The only reason for women lacking behind is the social and cultural values that made women to be inferior then the men. On the statement of some women participants who were reflecting more of the negative aspects of being women then positive attributes, he requested them to come out of such perception of portraying self as a mediocre character and said if they are not able to challenge the social definition about themselves then nobody is going to do it for them.

Laxmi Kumar BK, Nepal Majdoor Kisan Party (NEMAKIPA)

Generally women are categorized by social and economic status. He requested women and all the stakeholders to bring women issue in the policy making during this important time of constitution making. Women and the marginalized groups are still in high risks of vulnerability and exploitation and the state mechanisms should be realize the fact that protecting their rights and dignity can only make the environment for women to come ahead in the process of state building.

Harka Bahadur Shahi, CPN-Maoist

Political parties play crucial role in determining the dignified role of women in state building. He stated that women have been part of state's revolution and movements and thus their contribution cannot be ignored. Parties just develop sympathetic perception for women not realizing what they have done and what they can do more. So, he urged all the party members, stakeholders and women themselves to come out of just being beneficiaries and take their

position as the agent of change. He requested the organizers to take such programs to every level of women of the country.

Umesh Rawat, UCPN Maoist

Questioned the organizers and participants on how much of them agree on the subject of the program. He further stated that women participation just does not fulfill the process of state building, unless they are empowered to raise their voice against the odds. If they are not capacitated then they will silently nod over the decisions of the other policy makers as without profound knowledge and capacity they can be easily manipulated.

Prabha Sijapati, Nepali Congress

Women cannot be made to stay away from state and public affairs. They should be given equal opportunity to come forward. Women's contribution and capacity have been recorded and recognized in the past. If a state denies the participation of half of the population then no any way they can talk about development, progress and stability in the country. She also reminded the party members about the thought of the great NC leader BP Koirala who had stated that without woman a society/community can never progress.

Prem Buda, CPN-UML

Women's participation is mandatory in politics and state's affairs. State should be able to ensure women presence in every level of government mechanisms and create environment for them to move ahead. Politics is regarded as dirty game and people raise their frustration for it but instead of that they should realize that it is an important facet of state and they should be involved in it. It has been observed in international scenario that if state has the major of population participating in politics and state affairs then it can witness major amount of development and progress. The state is in very important period of constitution making, so women and the other stakeholders have the chance to raise the women and their issues and out of all media can play a vital role in marking a new venture for women in upcoming constitution.

Interaction Excerpts Of Participants

Rama Shrestha, Nepal Red Cross Society

Pointed out that decade long insurgency has brought some serious issues of VAW in picture. Women in and off the war are facing psychological trauma of the war period and without proper reconciliation and reintegration the scenario is even worse. State should also observe this facet as a part of state building.

Junu Thapa, Activist

Majority of women have been involved with causing violence for women themselves. This is probably due to the social practice of overlooking women with less priority & respect.

Parbati Bisunke Feminist Dalit Organization (FEDO), Dailekh

It is mandatory that state opts for participatory module in state building acknowledging presence of every single citizen. Marginalized groups and their crucial issues should be brought forward and addressed so that no any people are discriminated in terms of their caste and religions. She stated that in Dailekh itself, the perception of women and their rights by women themselves varies according to the social group they belong. The privileged they are, the more constricted and less concerned they are about woman and her rights.

Krishna Adhikari, NGO Federation

Highlighted the fact that such program cannot be meaningful unless people are able to relate with women and their issues. Women majorly in rural areas consider the injustice over them as the result of being born as daughter not knowing about their rights. This can make the state realize what they in real look upon as women role in state is making.

Dipa Bohara, Nepali Congress

The social status of women in Dailekh is pathetic as the society still defines women with conservative term. In this context, the issue of state building and women's role seems really satiric because in the situation where women are not respected place in their family, letting them be a part of state building is somewhat they cannot imagine then how they are going to come ahead and realize that they too are the agents of state building. It is necessary to build capacity in women which is possible only with series such activities and programs. Similarly, not only women but also everyone in the society should change their perception about women as just being the household worker.

She stated that due to the social norms and practice many women are not able to boost their confidence to utilize the platform they get.

Balkrishna Pyakurel, Chair - Municipal Development Committee, Dailekh

With country gearing up for constitution making, everyone from his or her level should come up and stand for incorporating women's issue in it. A state and its people should always be able to maintain progressive vision which will be incomplete without involving and participating every citizen despite of their cultural, social, geographical, economical and gender identity.

Mina Singh Dhakal, Chair - Squatter's Problem Dealing Commission, Dailekh

Stressed on fact that women are not given chance to come ahead and then the family, society & community states they are not capable of anything or achieve things on their own terms. This dual standard of behavior limits women's movement in their house and the society. Such perception is not going to change until the members of the family and society realize the importance of women and how well they can contribute in forming a society. Women do not need to prove their capacity now the men and the society needs to change their perception regarding women.

Recommendations & Findings

- It was suggested that more focus should be given on capacity building and orientation programs on women empowerment.
- Women participation should be equally promoted and sensitized by the male members of the society as well.
- Participants also strongly stressed on establishment of TRC to address the issues brought in women by the decade long insurgency.
- In the eve of constitution drafting finalizing, participants requested to take such programs in every district possible to sensitize people about the role of women.
- Every participant urged the state for seriously addressing the issue of conflict- affected women as a part of the state building and peace process.
- Local political parties and media can be the leading agents in sensitizing the importance of women empowerment with their extended networks.
- Gender Inclusion should be followed in every profession and women should not be limited to soft issues and responsibilities.
- Education is the greatest tool foster women empowerment so the upcoming constitution should ensure the free education access of every girl child and promote it with massive mobilization.

Media Clips Of The Interaction Program

