

ADVOCACY UPDATE

January-March, 2009

WOREC NEPAL

WOREC Nepal would like to welcome you to its first quarterly advocacy update which will highlight the events that took place from January - March 2009. In this advocacy update, we will be sharing updates on the various campaigns comprising of collective actions of the women's movement. Also the updates on the activities, national and international advocacy.

WOREC advocacy highlights

One day workshop in Central Development Region, Dhanusha District for the shadow report preparation

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (the CEDAW Convention) is a powerful instrument for articulating, advocating, and monitoring women's human rights. NGOs have a very important role in making the Convention an instrument of women's empowerment, through advocacy and monitoring their government's implementation of the treaty. The Shadow Report preparation committee Nepal has planned to organize one day workshop in 5 development regions of Nepal for the shadow report preparation. In this context, WOREC Nepal in coordination with the Shadow report preparation committee organized a one day workshop in the central development region, Dhanusha District on February 26th, 2009 for the shadow report preparation

The workshop saw the active presence of 58 participants from 14 districts of central development region and it gave a platform for women representing various movements to express their concerns in various issues like women and health, economic cultural and social rights of women, rural women, culture and women, sexuality and women, peace, security and women, foreign employment and women, disability and women, girl child.

Media Interaction on Violence Against Women , 20th February 2009

Media interaction on violence against women aimed at presenting the scenario of Nepal on violence against women during the period September 2008-December 2008. During this four month, WOREC Nepal has documented 379 cases on Violence against women from the various sources like national daily newspapers, from different non government

organizations, government organizations and well as from the documentation unit of WOREC Nepal .

Findings of analytical study on VAW from the period September - December 2008:

- The study explored that out of 379 documented cases, 31% cases were of domestic violence, 18% cases reported were rape cases, 16% were of physical violence cases, 13% were of trafficking , 8% were of murder,7% were of accusation of witch craft, 6% case were of psychological violence and 1 % was others .
- The study explored that the 29% of the survivors of violence were of 16- 25 years age, 18% of the survivors of violence were of 26-35 years age and 20 % of the survivor's age group was not identified.
- 57% of the survivors were married women and 25 % survivors were unmarried where as 13% cases marital status were not identified.
- In 74% cases the perpetrators were men, in 15% cases the perpetrators were women and in 11% the sex of perpetrators was not identified.
- The study explored that 33% of the survivors had psychological impact , 30% had physical as well as psychological impact, 11% had health problems, 8% had social impact of violence, 7% had physical impact and 11 % effect of violence was death consequences.

The next media interaction will be held on May 2009.

National Women's Social Forum 2009:

The First National Women's Social Forum was held from 6th-9th March in Kathmandu on the special occasion of International Women Worker's Day 2009. The Forum was convened with the main slogan- " A Federal Democratic Nepal based on Equality and Social Justice is possible- We can bring this Change." Collective actions for Social Justice, Speaking out for Equality are some of the ingrained values of this Social Forum .More than 100 organizations came together and collectively organized this First National Women's Social Forum 2009.

The struggle and contribution of Women against autocracy and oppression has been historic and heroic. Women took decisive and active role in various fronts of struggle. At present the process of institutionalizations of the achievements of People's Movement -2 has been begun through constitution drafting process. Power structures, values and system of Governance has not been changed which makes the delivery part even more difficult. Geo-political situation of the country is also creating additional complication to achieve the expected Goal.

In this sociopolitical context, this Social Forum gave a platform for thousands of women who are the part of various movements in Nepal to discuss on the issues that has to be addressed by the new constitution.

There were 16 parallel workshops based on various heterogeneous issues of women's movement, 17 informative stalls related to various issues and concerns of women like abortion rights, food rights, violence against women, health rights, and security concerns and so on. The food stalls was arranged by the women working in the entertainment sector as apart of their recognition and also supporting women's movement rally,



Rally to mark the 99th International Working Women's Day



Photo Exhibition

documentary shows with the theme women's movement for Federal Republic Nepal. Documentaries like Sari Solder, Rhododendron revolution were the highlights of the documentary show. The documentary Sari Solder is a documentary on the story of 6 women in Nepal from various sectors like Maoist party, human right field, student union, victim of armed conflict in Nepal, story of a army women and a monarchist woman for the political transformation of the country. Photo exhibition on women's movement for the Federal Republic Nepal was a part of this forum so as to commemorate women's contribution for the transformation of the nation. And it was to show the role of women as peace builders for a new Nepal. Submission of two hundred thousands signatures to the Honorable President of the Country, presentation on the history of International Worker Women's Day and the history of International Worker Women's Day in Nepal, history of Women Human Rights Defenders in Nepal were the high lights of the Forum.

The first National Women's Social Forum came out with the declaration which includes the issue and concern of various marginalized communities which has been historically marginalized like landless women, women living with HIV/AIDS, women living with disability, indigenous groups, dalit women, survivors of violence against women, madhesi women, sexual minorities, women working in entertainment sector and so on. This declaration was passed by thousands of women and was handed over to the Constituent Assembly members present in the last day of the Forum. Similarly the Forum came out with 16 thematic issues and concerns which was discussed in 16 different parallel workshops. All the 16 workshops were designed to bring out the concerns which has to be addressed by the New Constitution. And this too was handed over to the

Constituent Assembly members as well as to the chairpersons of 11 constitution drafting committees who are responsible to draft the new constitution of Nepal.

Similarly, the members of the First National Women's Social Forum went delegation to the Honorable President of Nepal handed over the two hundred thousands signatures and a letter of memorandum with the demand

- a) For the *Formation of High Level Task Force to End all Forms of Violence Against Women,*
- b) *To ensure safe shelter to the survivors of the violence, to develop the legal mechanism and ensure security to the women human right defenders ,*
- c) *To ensure peace in the nation.*



Launch of Women's Campaign for Social Cultural Transformation, Kritika and its music album Waig

Despite the strikes outside Kathmandu Nepal, First National Women's Social Forum saw an overwhelming participation of more than five thousands of people. The combination of art, music, discussions, debates made the event memorable one. A unique and inclusive cultural groups has brought Women's Campaign for Social Cultural Transformation (Kritika Campaign) which rocked the Rastriya Sabha Griha on 8th March and their journey to for the social cultural transformation has begun. Believing that only political transformation will not bring about justice and equality, we have to bring about social transformation, Kritika Campaign came out with the musical Album

"speed" to bring about social change. Kritika Campaign along with Singer Madhu Gurung is ready to vibrate the nation for the social cultural transformation.

Round Table Discussion with German Parliamentary Delegation:

WOREC Nepal along with the various organizations like INSEC, Advocacy Forum, Jagaran Media, Protection Desk Nepal, Peace Brigades International (PBI) had a round table discussion with German Parliamentary Delegation led by Dr. Wolfgang Thierse (Vice-President of the German Parliament) on 5th February, 2009 in Kathmandu. This round table discussion was to discuss on the human rights situation in Nepal.

During this round table discussion, Ms. Jyotsna Maskey, Executive Director of WOREC Nepal stressed on the challenging situation of women human rights defenders fighting for injustice towards women and creating support mechanisms for women to access justice also faces threats of all forms such as murder, attacks against personhood and reputation, threats (death threats, warnings, psychological harassment, attacks and intimidation of office staff and family members).

Ms Kokila Dhakal, a women human right defender in Eastern Development Region of Nepal and Ms Manika Jha, a woman human right defender from Central Development Region shared about the life threats they are receiving which made the German delegation aware on the challenges and vulnerable situation of women human right defenders in Nepal.

Protest program denouncing the brutal murder of Uma Singh, a journalist and a woman human right defender in Dhanusha District, Nepal

A brutal murder of Ms. Uma Singh, journalist of Radio Today FM and a member of women human right defenders network, Dhanusha on 11th January 2009 shocked the whole nation. She was severely mutilated by a group of armed men and later died on the way to a hospital to Kathmandu. She was a journalist and a woman human right defender who used to raise the voice against violence against women through her radio program.

Denouncing such a brutal murder, WOREC Nepal and National alliance for women human right defenders came into streets, organized press conference, issued press statement and urgent appeals and organized a protest rally and submitted the memorandum to the Chief District Officer , Kathmandu on 13th January 2009 with the following demands:

1. Formation of an unbiased investigation committee for the investigation of the incident and to take the steps to penalize the perpetrator.
2. To end impunity in Nepal.
3. To stop intimidation and harassment of other women human right defenders who are fighting for Justice.

4. Immediate assurance that the women human right defenders do not face violence and threats.



Protesting for Uma Singh's brutal murder



Submitting memorandum to Chief District Officer, Kathmandu

WOREC at the 3rd Regional Human Rights Defenders Forum held on 18 to 20 January 2009 in Bangkok

The 3rd Regional Human Rights Defenders Forum was aimed towards promoting a strong partnership between human rights defenders in Asia and the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Mrs. Margaret Sekagya.

Dr. Renu Rajbhandari, chairperson of WOREC Nepal and National Alliance for Women Human Right Defenders in this forum raised the challenges, threats and vulnerable situation of women human right defenders in Nepal. Ms Monika Jha, a journalist and a woman human right defender in Dhanusha District in Nepal who received life threats also shared her concerns about her security and about her friend Uma Singh's brutal murder, state of impunity in Nepal in this forum held in Bangkok.

WOREC Nepal's participation in this meeting holds a significant role in the women human rights movement in Nepal as it gave a platform to make the international arena and UN Special Rapporteur on Human Right Defender aware on the human right situation of Nepal, proliferation of various armed groups in different parts of Nepal and security concerns and brutal killings of woman human right defenders in Nepal.

Coordination with National and International organizations for the protection of woman human right defenders in Nepal

When Manica Jha and Kokila Dhakal, journalists and woman human right defenders received the life threats, WOREC and National alliance for women human right defenders immediately issued the press statements, urgent appeals and coordinated with

National human right commission, Protection Desk Nepal(PDN), Office of the high commissioner of human rights (OHCHR), Peace Brigades International (PBI) and European Union Working Group in Nepal for the security concern of the women human right defenders. In this way WOREC Nepal has been working from grass root level to national level as well as international level to raise the issues of woman human right defenders in Nepal.

WOREC Nepal at the UN High Commissioner Navi Pillay – Interaction with Civil Society on 19 March 2009, UN House, Kathmandu

WOREC Nepal submitted a memorandum "A Way towards Ending Violence Against Women Human Rights Defenders in the current context of democratic transition and peace building" to **UN High Commissioner on Human Rights, Navi Pillay**. The memorandum specially focused on how the absence of Rule of Law has aggravated the situation of security. There are no support mechanisms for women whose human rights are being violated on a daily basis. The memorandum letter was also vocal on how the identity politics has been undermining and pulling back the issues related with the life of a woman. WOREC Nepal submitted its memorandum along with the recommendations from ANBESHI – Violence Against Women Year Book 2008 and from Women Human Right Defenders in Nepal: Constraints and Strategy Mechanisms (A Research Report 2008) WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WOMEN TAKE ACTIONS.

WOREC Nepal coordinated the DAWN South and South East Asian Regional Consultation on Feminist Engagement with Conflict Impunity and Peace

The two day consultation workshop was organized by Development Alternatives With Women for a new era (DAWN) between March 27-28, 2009 at Hotel Himalaya, Kathmandu, Nepal. There were altogether 25 participants in the workshop. The participants were from Nepal, India, Sri Lanka, Malaysia and Indonesia. And WOREC Nepal hosted this regional consultation. WOREC Nepal presented 3 case studies concerned with Violence against Women and Women Human Right Defender. During the interaction program held as a part of this workshop, CA members Ms. Sapana Pradhan Malla and Ms. Binda Pandey briefed the activities taking place in the constitution making process on women's issues in Nepal. Ms. Pandey elaborated that the new constitution making process is taking place and the discussion on the issues like citizenship, affirmative action, basic fundamental rights etc .(health (including reproductive health)education) of women has been taking place .

And we would like to thank you for your support and solidarity to strengthen the women's movement in Nepal.

We will soon get back with the Advocacy update of April- June 2009.