



SAYAPATRI KURAKANI

Voices from Women



The Unseen Burden: The Gap Between Policy Progress and Women's Lived Realities in Nepal

Established in 1991, WOREC is a national, movement-based organization committed to advancing women's human rights and social justice through a feminist lens. With a vision of a society where feminist aspirations are realized, WOREC works to dismantle structural discrimination by centering bodily integrity, decent work, and identity. Through its initiative *Sayingatri Kurakani*, WOREC has created a vital safe space for psychosocial support and open conversation on sexual and reproductive health, grounding its work in the lived realities of women, it serves as a community-based platform for interactive discussions on health, rights, social issues, and empowerment.

Sayingatri reflects WOREC's ongoing commitment to challenging harmful traditional practices, promoting gender equality, and improving women's overall health and well-being through community-centered awareness.

In practice, *Sayingatri Kurakani* involves:



Group discussions among women at the community level



Sharing experiences related to health, gender-based violence, and social issues



Raising awareness about rights, health practices, and harmful traditions



Encouraging collective thinking and local solutions

Overall, *Sayingatri Kurakani* represents a participatory and empowering process that strengthens women's voices, builds solidarity, and supports social transformation from the grassroots level.

Between 2023 and 2025, the initiative reached 1,182 women across eight districts (Udayapur, Kavre, Kailali, Dang, Morang, Sarlahi, Mahottari, and Siraha) of Nepal. What emerges is not simply a "data set," but a collective testimony of systemic neglect, gender based violence, and everyday resistance.

The Illusion of Progress: When Policy Does Not Translate to Power

Nepal's improvements in maternal health indicators are often celebrated. But this narrative collapses under scrutiny.

The data exposes a harsh contradiction: policy success without lived justice.

- While national statistics claim 79% institutional births, WOREC's findings show 52% of women still give birth at home.
- This is not a "gap"-it is a failure of the state to confront patriarchal control, caste-based exclusion, geographic marginalization, and economic deprivation.

Healthcare exists but not for everyone. Rights are written but not realized.

This is not about access alone. It is about who is allowed to access, who decides, and who is denied agency

Control Over Women's Bodies: A System, Not an Accident

The findings reveal that women's reproductive lives are not shaped by choice, but by coercion embedded in social norms:

60.3%

of women experience pregnancy between ages 15–20

→ Early motherhood is not a “cultural pattern”; it is social conditioning into reproductive labor.

53.1%

Family planning burden falls on women, with only 8% male involvement

→ Contraception becomes a site where women absorb physical pain while men retain control over decision-making.

36%

report miscarriage or child loss

→ These are not isolated health events—they are outcomes of neglect, overwork, and systemic disregard for women's health.

This is reproductive injustice: women's bodies are used, regulated, and burdened-without autonomy, rest, or recognition.

Health is Political: The Body as a Site of Power

Women's health in Nepal cannot be reduced to biology or service delivery. It is governed by:

- Patriarchal authority over decision-making
- Economic dependency on male-controlled resources
- Social expectations of sacrifice, endurance, and silence



When a woman cannot decide if, when, or how to have children, her body is no longer her own-it becomes a site of control.

The normalization of suffering-pain, bleeding, exhaustion-is not incidental. It is political. It reflects a system where women's discomfort is expected and their well-being is negotiable.

Education and Economic Dependency: Tools of Control

Education as Disempowerment by Design



This is not just an education gap-it is a denial of critical consciousness.

Without education, women are systematically excluded from:

- Knowledge of their rights
- Access to health information
- The ability to question authority

Unpaid Labor as Structural Exploitation

- 86.7% of women are engaged in unpaid labor

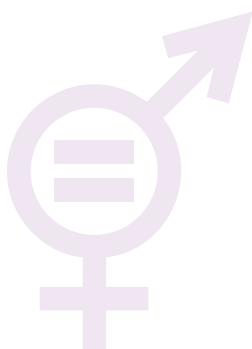


Women sustain households, agriculture, and communities-without wages, recognition, or autonomy.

This economic structure is not neutral. It ensures that:

- Women remain financially dependent
- Decision-making power stays with men
- Reproductive choices are constrained by survival needs

Unpaid labor is not just inequality-it is exploitation normalized as duty.



The Hidden Violence: What Remains Unspoken

Son Preference as Psychological Violence

“Society makes me feel incomplete.”

This is not preference it is gendered devaluation, where women's worth is tied to producing male heirs.

Invisible Suffering as Structural Neglect

“I could not rest because household work never stops.”

This reflects a brutal reality:

Women are denied rest even in illness, their bodies treated as endlessly extractable resources. This is violence not always physical, but deeply embedded in everyday life.

A Feminist Reframing: From Service Delivery to Structural Justice

WOREC’s findings demand a shift: This is not a health sector issue alone. This is a crisis of power, justice, and rights.



RECOMMENDATIONS (Strengthened Feminist Lens)



Transform Community Norms

Move beyond awareness campaigns to actively dismantle patriarchal beliefs.

Engage men and boys not as “supporters,” but as accountable actors in systems of inequality.

Democratize the Health System

Healthcare must shift from access to agency:



Ensure women can make independent decisions



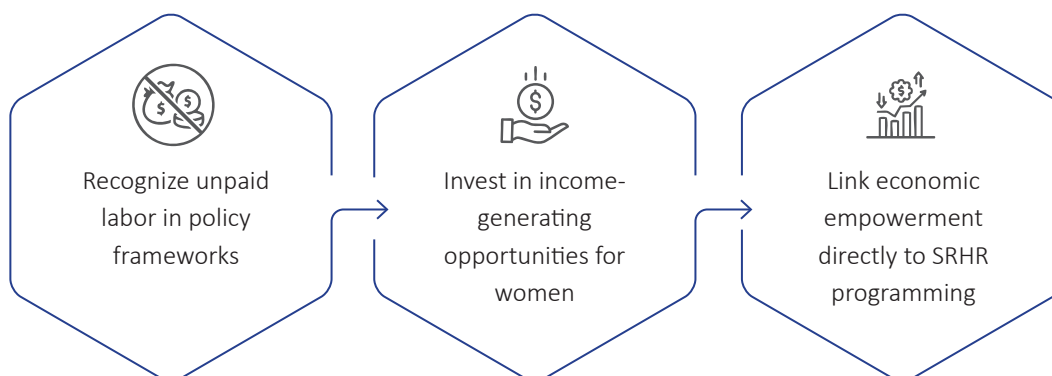
Provide continuous, trauma-informed, counseling



Build accountability mechanisms where systems fail women

Economic Justice and Bodily Autonomy

Without financial independence, reproductive rights remain theoretical.



Reclaim Policy as a Tool for Justice

Policies must move from symbolic commitments to enforceable rights:

- Center marginalized women (Dalit, Madhesi, rural, poor)
- Integrate intersectional feminist analysis into national frameworks
- Establish accountability for implementation gaps



Support:

- Grassroots feminist organizing
- Community-led safe spaces like *Sayapatri Kurakani*
- Intersectional, sustained approaches linking health, labor, and rights



Invest in Long-Term Feminist Movements

Short-term interventions cannot dismantle long-standing oppression.

Conclusion: Beyond Progress Toward Liberation

The reality is clear:

Women in Nepal are not simply underserved, they are systematically constrained.

UNTIL WOMEN GAIN



01

Control over their bodies



02

Freedom from economic dependency



03

Power in decision-making spaces



Progress will remain cosmetic.

The struggle for SRHR is not about improving services alone. It is about dismantling patriarchy, redistributing power, and restoring dignity.



Limitations of the Study

This study is based on data from eight districts of Nepal collected between 2023-2025, which may not fully represent all women in Nepal, especially those outside service reach. As the data is self-reported, it may include recall or underreporting biases and does not capture long-term changes.

References:

1. Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP) [Nepal], New ERA, & ICF. (2023). *Nepal Demographic and Health Survey 2022*. Kathmandu, Nepal.
2. WOREC, Sayapatri Kurakani 2009
3. Census 2021



Women's Rehabilitation Centre (WOREC)

Balkumari, Lalitpur
Phone: 977-1-5186374, 5186073
PO. Box : 13233

www.worecnepal.org
ics@worecnepal.org