

# In The Know

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News of the month

## Discrimination and neglect are threatening women's survival in Asia Pacific.....

"Discrimination and neglect are threatening women's survival in the Asia-Pacific region where women suffer from some of the world's lowest rates of political representation, employment and property ownership. Their lack of participation in productive sector is depressing economic growth," says the new Asia Pacific Human Development Report on Gender. Hon'ble Binda Pandey, Chairperson of the Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles Committee of the Constituent Assembly (CA) said, "Nepal has already made its way towards passing the bill on domestic violence in the legislative parliament which is a big leap in the right direction. Also the 33 per cent representation of women in the Constituent Assembly is noteworthy progress. However the big challenge of turning the Laws, Acts and Policies into implementation and practice requires a change in attitude of all women and men in the country".

Speaking at the launch event, UNDP Resident Representative Mr. Robert Piper stated, "Gender equality is



Launching the Report: Hon'ble Binda Pandey, Chairperson of the Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles Committee of the CA with UNDP Resident Representative Mr. Robert Piper and UNDP Senior Gender Advisor Ms. Kasumi Nishigaya

good economics. Keeping women off the labour market simply costs money. Increasing their participation in the labour market will boost a country's income, more so in countries with low current participation."

In the context of Nepal, the gap in women and men's average daily earnings is alarmingly wide with women earning only 60% of what men earn while doing similar kinds of job in both the agricultural and non-agricultural sector. The political voice of women has improved in Nepal with the recent secured 1/3 quota in

the Constituent Assembly. In comparison, only about 1/3 of countries in Asia and the Pacific have quota systems to enhance women's participation in politics.

The report argues that the public policy decisions that the Governments make have fundamental implications on gender equality outcomes. With regards to rights, Gender-based violence is pervasive with more than one-tenth of women in the Asia-Pacific region reporting assaults by their partners. Nearly half of the South Asian countries lack laws on Domestic Violence.

## Gender Issues likely to get prominence in the Constitution

***With one-third women in the Constituent Assembly (CA), the gender issues are likely to get prominence not only in the Constitution, but also in the state mechanism. However, women leaders still believe that their participation in the CA is only a foundation to build a gender equal society and that continuous efforts are required to keep this on the right track.***

One hundred ninety-seven women in the CA have unanimous voice when it comes to gender related issues. CA member Binda Pandey, also a chairperson of Fundamental Rights and Directives Principle Committee (FRDP)—one of the thematic committees of the CA, has the responsibility to prepare a draft fundamental rights of Nepali citizens that is well identified and enshrined in the new Constitution. "It is very important that gender equality and nationality get equal footings in the citizenship rights."

With women at decision making levels, a series of women's rights policies including the Domestic Violence Bill, the Amendment of Election Act and the Public Service Commission Act have been promulgated.

But women leaders have come through a long journey of struggle within and outside their respective political parties to secure the current position in the CA. The Communist Party of Nepal-United Marxist Leninist's (CPN-UML) adoption of an

eight point agenda on gender equality forced other political parties including Jana Morcha, CPN-Marxist Leninists, Nepali Congress (Democratic), and Nepali Congress to adopt the same.

After the House of Representatives (HoR) was reinstated in 2006, CPN-UML leader Bidya Bhandari presented a resolution in the re-instated HoR to ensure 33 per cent women's representation in all the state mechanisms. Nepali Congress and CA member Kamala Pant submitted a letter supporting the resolution in the HoR on behalf of her party.

This progress made on the political front on gender equality is a huge leap forward. Women representatives occupied only 3.4 per cent of seats in the HoR in 1991 and 1994 elections and their representation reached 5.8 percent in the 1999 elections.

Binda Pandey says, "we have so far been successful in advocacy but when it comes to policy making, we still need to build up skills in presenting our points logically."

The **UN Millennium Campaign** in partnership with *Jagaran Nepal*, a civil society organisation working exclusively for the rights of women, has held a series of interaction programmes for women CA members in a bid to address this gap. The interaction programmes have mostly



**Women associated with various political groups rallying in the streets of Kathmandu**

focused on economic, cultural and social rights and its link to the MDGs. Discussions on linking policy issues and MDGs to the Constitution have helped the CA members to lobby for their fundamental rights in the new Constitution. Ninety women CA members took part in the five workshops held over a period of six months.

Five young CA women members have formed a caucus with five male counterparts to advocate and campaign for the MDGs and the various Economic, Social, Cultural Rights (ESCR) issues in the CA. Besides the CA, they will set the topic of MDGs and ESCR in motion in the Parliament, with the Government, the line Ministries, various stakeholders and also in their constituencies to promote positive policy and practice changes. The CA members aim to collect best practices and success stories on MDGs in their constituencies and compile those in a booklet before the high level event on MDGs takes place in September 2010 in New York.

*(For more information on the UN Millennium Campaign, pls. contact [seema.rajouria@undp.org](mailto:seema.rajouria@undp.org), National MDG Advocacy and Campaign Specialist)*

## Partnership

## Partnership for Development– cost-sharing agreement between UNDP, DFID

The Department for International Development (DFID) and UNDP have signed a £200,000 cost-sharing agreement to support the **Strengthening Planning and Monitoring Capacity of National Planning Commission (NPC)** project (2009-2012).

This additional resource from DFID will be utilized to strengthen the capacity of the NPC and the selected

Ministries for results oriented and 'gender and social inclusion responsive' planning and monitoring.

The 'resource' will also be used to provide technical support to the NPC for the preparation of the next National Development Plan (2010-2013).

The project will support the National Planning Commission in making the national plans and current planning

and monitoring processes, tools and system more inclusive and in line with the Millennium Development Goals.

The project also aims at developing the institutional capacity of the NPC, the Central Bureau of Statistics and key Ministries with a focus on strengthening the planning and monitoring systems, institutionalization of inclusive processes and formats and training of relevant personnel.

## Recovery in Koshi flood affected area

## News from the field

35 years old Poko Devi Majhi, a mother of 6 children, who belongs to a marginalized ethnic community of Shripur village in Sunsari district, has become an entrepreneur with the support of **Koshi Early Recovery Project (KERP)**, supported by UNDP.

She has 50 chickens and is expanding the space for her poultry to keep the space hygienic. Poko was able to earn Rs. 11,000 in her first venture with the small support of **KERP** in the form of feed for poultry, vaccines, lamps, utensils and other electrical items. She contributed her labour and invested Rs. 1000 for the bamboos required to build a small hut with thatched roof to protect the chickens.

A landless worker, she previously worked on a daily wage basis in agricultural fields but the Koshi flood of August 2008 completely wiped away the fertile land along with her small house. There was no other means of income for her. She stayed



**Poko Devi with her chickens, a new found enterprise !**

in the camp for 3 months and later returned back with her family after receiving a Government package.

The **KERP** designed to bridge the gap between relief and recovery efforts, works closely with the directly and

indirectly affected communities, especially the most vulnerable and poor women and youth, addressing their urgent livelihood needs, especially those that are not or the insufficiently covered by other stakeholders in the recovery process.

## From a dumping site into a green nursery

The Bhadrakali nursery below the China Bridge in Pokhara Municipality is a place to stop by for all the pedestrians. From a smelly dumping site, the place has been converted into a green area.

When the Pokhara Municipality gave this public dumping site on lease to Gopal Lama and his sister, little did they expect that there would be such a huge change in the outlook of the place. It proved to be a beautiful and an enterprising venture for the Lamas. The nursery has now 16 staff and houses above 500 varieties of plants.

Gopal and his sister are paying Rs. 30,000 with a 10 per cent increase as rent every year for the place.

Gopal says, "I think every person should have the civic sense of throwing their garbage in proper places. This is the second year and finally we have developed this place into a healthy green area. We still face the challenge of people coming and throwing in garbage from the bridge at night and early mornings inside the nursery."

The duo's earning allows them to both give a salary to the staff and pay the rent. In addition to the business of selling plants, the nursery is approached by hotels and private



Gopal and his sister run this Bhadrakali nursery under the China Bridge

residences for designing garden and green areas. Gopal hires designers and architects on a short term basis and provides an excellent service to various organisations in Pokhara.

"Pokhara is a tourist destination and it is essential that it remains clean. This place under the bridge was becoming unbearable and people literally had to cover their nose when they passed by this area but now people stop for few seconds and admire the garden", adds Gopal.

"We have 'Visit Nepal Year 2011' coming up and we need people like Gopal to set an example of public private partnership", says Mr. Ananta Koirala, Programme Officer and the focal point in the Municipality for Public Private Partnership.

Pokhara is a remarkable place for

natural beauty at an altitude of 827 meter from the sea level and 200 kms west of Kathmandu. It was designated as the headquarters of the Western Development Region of Nepal in 1972. With lakes and close view of mountains, Pokhara is filled by tourists every year. With an estimated population of 2, 93,696 people, the city faces challenges of solid waste management.

Gopal says, "When I started this work, the UNDP **Public Private Partnership for Urban Environment (PPPUE)** programme took me to other Municipalities like Tansen and Hetauda to see how the PPP could work. I learnt the techniques for PPP even though gardening was my old profession. The municipality provides electricity and water for this place and facilitation of PPPUE has proved very useful."