

COVID-19 INITIATIVES BY GENDER IN HUMANITARIAN TASK TEAM (GIHA TT) MEMBERS

GENDER EQUALITY UPDATE - 24

NOVEMBER 05, 2020

OVERVIEW

During the COVID-19 pandemic, civil society organizations (CSOs) in Nepal are closely monitoring and responding to the emerging health and socio-economic needs of communities on the ground. The Gender in Humanitarian Action Task Team (GiHA TT) chaired by UN Women, is a multi-stakeholder dialogue platform comprised of government, civil society and development partners. It has served as a constructive virtual dialogue forum, honoring diversity of voices, demonstrating thought leadership and enabling greater coherence for coordination of efforts around GESI, particularly in the context of COVID-19. As a result of GiHA TT collective advocacy efforts, the Supreme Court issued a landmark directive order prioritizing women's rights. The order emphasizes the representation of women in the planning, management and monitoring processes of the government's efforts on COVID-19.

This Gender Equality Update highlights the COVID-19 response of four CSOs and women's networks that are part of the GiHA TT.



A Thought Workshop on the Feminist Position Paper for Nepali women was held from 27 to 29 March 2019. Photo: IGFF

Women's Movement in Nepal: Upholding principles of equality and non-discrimination

As part of the COVID-19 response, the women's network drafted a Charter of Demands (CoD) with the support of UN Women. The Charter calls upon Nepal's government to follow human rights standards in their COVID-19 response and emphasizes the need to uphold the principles of equality and non-discrimination. It captures the voices and demands of feminist leaders and is focused on creating awareness about the needs and interests of the most marginalized. These groups include women, children, elderly citizens, persons with disabilities, rural women, LGBTIQ+ groups, sex workers, those working in the informal economy, refugees, migrants, indigenous peoples, and people without identity documents. The CoD was submitted to chief executives of seven municipalities, four provinces, and eight national government entities.

The Inter-Generational Feminist Forum (IGFF) is a network of diverse, inter-generational feminist leaders who have been actively participating in a series of "Thought Workshops" facilitated by UN Women Nepal since 2017. The IGFF aims to build the capacity of inter-generational feminist leaders who are committed to promoting transformative leadership and sustaining gains in gender equality and empowerment to advance a feminist agenda.

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In times of COVID-19, women are largely holding the safety net at community levels. It is mostly women who suffer additionally and differently. After discussions on the Charter with women activists/leaders, network members, federal and local governments, and the United Nations, IGFF is learning that all the gains we have made so far might be regressing - with the rising number of child marriages, increased domestic violence, and disproportionate domestic and care burden on women.





- Rita Thapa, Co-Coordinator, IGFF

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Inclusion of Elderly Citizens in COVID-19 Response

Elderly citizens have been designated as a high-risk population during emergencies and humanitarian crises. In a public health emergency like the COVID-19 pandemic, the impacts go beyond health and often deepen existing stigma and discrimination. As a result, those who are the most vulnerable such as elderly citizens have been left behind during response efforts, particularly in terms of receiving relief packages.

Ageing Nepal has been leading advocacy with a focus on the needs and challenges of elderly citizens. One of their efforts is to bring attention to the specific issues and challenges faced by elderly citizens. They have also launched social media campaigns to help generate awareness on the needs of elderly citizens, such as:

-  **HEALTHCARE:** Availability of COVID-19 tests in old age and care homes
-  **EMERGENCY TRANSPORTATION:** Access to safe and accessible ambulance services
-  **PROTECTION AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE:** Addressing gender-based violence and sexual abuse and exploitation of elderly women
-  **RELIEF RESPONSE:** Provision of timely and tailored relief packages

Ageing Nepal promotes the quality of life and rights of the elderly citizens since 2011. Its mission is to empower older people, generate research-based information to help policymakers and planners, take proactive measures against elderly abuse and exploitation, and work as a watchdog to safeguard the interests of Nepal's aging population. Current donors include HelpAge International, World Health Organizations, Ageing Nepal Switzerland, and Global Alliance for the Rights of Older Persons.



Marking World Elder Abuse Awareness Day on 15th June, 2020. Photos: Sarbodaya Sewashram

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Intersecting forms of discrimination based on age, gender, and lack of formal education make elderly women a highly vulnerable group. Many of them experience sexual abuse and exploitation and there have been several cases of rape reported in the past.

- Krishna Murari Gautam, Chairperson of Ageing Nepal

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Promoting the Rights of Muslim Women

In addition to facing the socio-economic impacts of the COVID-19 – such as unemployment, poverty, stress, and reduced access to health emergency services – the Muslim community has experienced discrimination and stigma, often created through the spread of fake news and rumors.

Some of the major needs of this community are psycho-social counseling, employment opportunities, and access to healthcare. Nepal Muslim Women Welfare Society (NMWWS) has supported the community by distributing relief packages and organizing awareness activities. They also distributed food and sanitary kits to Muslim women, including lactating mothers, single women, widows, and women who lost their source of income during the COVID-19 crisis.

Nepal Muslim Women Welfare Society is a non-partisan, non-profitable and non-discriminatory organization. It works for marginalized and poor communities, particularly Muslim women in Nepal. It is the only national organization working for marginalized Muslim women in Nepal. It works to build leadership and has conducted several activities to promote human rights and social justice. Current donors include World Muslim Community Council, Women's Fund Asia and Global Fund for Women.

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The source of income for Muslim daily wage workers, especially women has been lost. These women cannot meet their family's daily needs. They cannot borrow money or go out to work, and thus, are helpless during this pandemic.

- Seema Khan, Chairperson, NMWWS

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With the support of UN Women, NMWWS distributed relief packages to Muslim women in July 2020. Photo: NMWWS

Webinar on Women in Politics in the times of Covid-19 - Challenges and Opportunities
2 - 4pm, 5 June 2020 (Jestha, 23 2077)

We are pleased to invite you to a webinar which aims to explore the lived experiences of women political leaders in Nepal in the times of Covid-19. We have seven confirmed speakers who will share their experiences, including their challenges and opportunities in the current context.

Speakers



Hon. Salma Khatoon, Deputy Mayor, Pokhariya Municipality



Hon. Anju Kumari, Provincial Assembly member, Parsa



Hon. Mamta Mahato, Vice Chairperson, Paterwa Sugauli RM



Hon. Sadhana Jha, Deputy Mayor, Rajbiraj Municipality



Hon. Kiran Thakur, Deputy Mayor, Gaur Municipality



Hon. Manju Yadav, Provincial Assembly Member, Mahottari



Hon. Manish Surman, Provincial Assembly member, Saptari

Chair



Ms. Pallavi Payal

Moderator



Dr. Punam Yadav

When: Jun 5, 2020 02:00 pm Nepal time (9.15am UK time)
Language: Nepali
Please click the link below to join the webinar:
<https://ucl.zoom.us/j/94663589350>
Or iPhone one-tap :
United Kingdom: +442034815240,94663589350# or +442080806591,94663589350#
Or Telephone: United Kingdom: +44 203 481 5240 or +44 208 080 6591 or +44 208 080 6592 or +44 330 088 5830 or +44 131 460 1196 or +44 203 481 5237, Webinar ID: 946 6358 9350, International numbers available: <https://ucl.zoom.us/j/ae1i4dfkin>

Co-organisers

Ms. Pallavi Payal and Dr. Punam Yadav, IRDR Centre for Gender and Disaster, UCL

Invites developed for webinar series by NEMAF.

COVID-19 and the Madhesi Community

The COVID-19 pandemic has pushed marginalized communities, including the Madhesi community, further behind by preventing them from accessing basic services (including health services) and food supplies. It has also resulted in a loss in livelihoods. There is limited information among this community on how to cope with the pandemic.

In order to promote women's leadership in times of crisis, Nepal Madhesh Foundation (NEMAF) held webinars with women leaders in politics and the health sector who shared their experiences, challenges, and opportunities. These webinars were held in collaboration with the University College London to update policymakers in Kathmandu about the COVID-19 situation on the ground. These leaders included deputy mayors, provincial assembly members, vice-chairpersons, members of the federal parliament, and the Director of the Maternity and Women's Hospital in Kathmandu.

Another webinar series titled "Experience sharing of warriors working at the grass-roots level during COVID-19" was organized by NEMAF in collaboration with Martin Chautari.

The Nepal Madhesh Foundation was established in 2007 to promote peace and harmony for sustainable socio-economic development in Terai/Madhesh. It aims to build a socially harmonized and economically developed Madhesh by producing knowledge, improving public education, and empowering marginalized people. In the last 13 years, NEMAF's donors were German Agency for Technical, Danida HUGOU, Saferworld, International Alert, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Governance Facility Nepal, and the International Water Management Institute. Recently, NEMAF has been working with the University of Sussex (UK) on a research project called "Learning Social Movement."



IRDR CENTRE FOR GENDER AND DISASTER



2nd webinar on Women Leaders in various fields in the times of Covid-19 - Challenges and Opportunities
2 - 4pm, 15 June 2020

We are pleased to invite you to our second webinar, which aims to explore the lived experiences of women leaders in Nepal in the time of Covid-19. We have six confirmed speakers who will share their experiences, including their challenges and opportunities in the current context.

Speakers



Hon. Indu Sharma, Member of Federal Parliament



Ms. Durga Sob, Central Secretary of Socialist Party, Nepal and Founding member & Former President of FEDO



Ms. Sushila Shrestha, Central Committee Member, Socialist Party -Nepal



Hon. Chanda Chaudhari, Member of Federal Parliament



Hon. Asha BK, Member of Federal Parliament



Dr. Sangeeta Mishra, Director of Prasuti Griha Maternity and Women's Hospital, Kathmandu

Chair



Ms. Rita Shah

Moderator



Dr. Punam Yadav

When: 15 June, 2020 02:00 pm Nepal time (9.15am UK time)
Language: Nepali
Please click the link below to join the webinar:
<https://ucl.zoom.us/j/94943756050>
Or iPhone one-tap :
UK: +13122667799,94943756050# or +13462487799,94943756050#
Or Telephone:
Dial for higher quality, dial a number based on your current location:
US: +1 312 266 6799 or +1 346 248 7799 or +1 649 900 8833 or +1 929 205 6099 or +1 253 215 8782 or +1 301 715 8592
Webinar ID: 949 4375 6050
International numbers available: <https://ucl.zoom.us/j/ae1i4dfkin>

Co-organisers

Ms. Rita Kumari Shah, NEMAF and Dr. Punam Yadav, IRDR Centre for Gender and Disaster, UCL

Contact details for above-mentioned organisations:

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Masks prepared by Parbati Oad, a project participant of UN Women and SABAH Nepal during COVID-19, Kailali district, June 2020. Photo: Dal Bahadur Oli



A quarantine assessment being conducted by women from marginalized groups in Kailali, Province 7 in June 2020. Photo: WOREC