

NEWSLETTER

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BUILDING RESILIENCE AND STRENGTHENING THE MOVEMENT

Editorial

Humanitarian crisis; whether caused by armed conflict or natural disaster always hurt women and girls the most. In times of upheaval, pregnancy related deaths and sexual violence soar. Reproductive health services including prenatal care, assisted delivery and emergency obstetric care often become unavailable. Young people become more vulnerable to HIV infection and sexual exploitation and many women lose access to family planning services, exposing them to unwanted pregnancy in perilous conditions.

The COVID -19 pandemic and its implication to Nepali people was no exception than others. However, being a country with high maternal mortality rate, never researched but it can be assumed high morbidity rate among women, ever increasing VAW along with women always getting treated as second class citizen of the country, has affected severely on women's sexual reproductive health and wellbeing the most.

The pandemic has caused a reduction in health service delivery, especially for

women's health conditions, resulting in an increase in challenges for an already vulnerable group. In Kathmandu Model Hospital, the obstetric and gynecology services had been reduced by 85-90% compared to previous years[1].

Tarangini with the support from OSF had conducted a study in all seven provinces of the country identifying the impacts of COVID-19 in the sexual and reproductive health services of women and girls.

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1. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33605252/>

The study depicted the lack of sanitary facilities, essential medicines, basic services even at health posts during the time of pandemic. Along with this the study clearly showed that more than 23 percent of women and girls had not enough information to understand their reproductive and sexual health needs. Similarly, the decrease in the availability of maternal vaccines by 17% along with the decrease in the availability of post-partum services and infant services by 12% and 17% respectively affected women the most. This is clear evidence to show that during crisis women's reproductive and sexual health gets compromised the most. This reflects the condition of SRHR services and its dreadful impacts during the humanitarian crisis.

According to a study, even during the normal time in Nepal, girls in the age group 15-19 (29%) who were already in formal marriage lacked access to critical information on SRHR and related services [2]. Likewise, unmet need for family planning for girls in the age group 15-19 is 42% and for 20-24 age group was 37% [3]. In the same way, 25% of women of reproductive age group in Nepal experienced unplanned pregnancies [4]. No need to say, already worsened situation got worsened during the pandemic.

This situation needs to be changed. Tarangini being a feminist organization believes that women affected with their experiences and knowledge to cope has the power to make the difference. For this, developing resilience and building movements becomes an important tool.

Tarangini Foundation believes in the process of change making process through continuous campaign, fact-based advocacy and mass conscientization. To do the same, she has been doing report disseminating on the need and proper facilitation of SRHR services in the near future so that the sexual and reproductive health rights of the women and girls is ensured. The crisis might be different but women and girls' SRHR rights are the first ones to be violated or neglected in any given circumstances or emergency situation in the country. At present, there is the occurrence of local level election in the country followed by huge crowds, unsystematic market and several ups and downs. To be able to secure the SRHR services in any given conditions and periphery of the national situation, although it is important to move beyond the health-oriented focus of SRHR, it should not be minimized as unimportant but should be supplemented further with socio-political analysis of power structures.

**-The Editorial Team
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2. Government of Nepal, Ministry Of Health And Population, Population Division, Nepal Demographic and Health Survey, 2011

3. Nepal Demographic and Health Survey, 2011

4. Ibid

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH RIGHTS IN TIME OF CRISIS

Sexual and reproductive health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being in all matters relating to the reproductive system. It implies that people are able to have a satisfying and safe sex life, the capability to reproduce and the freedom to decide if, when, and how often to do so. To maintain one's sexual and reproductive health, people need access to accurate information and the safe, effective, affordable and acceptable contraception method of their choice. In general, SRHR focuses on how an individual must be informed and empowered to protect themselves from sexually transmitted infections and that women must have access to skilled health care providers and services that can help them have a fit pregnancy, safe birth and healthy baby. All these aspects of SRHR are valid however, one needs to understand the feminist perspective on that regard and how during the time of crisis it is women's sexual and reproductive health affected the most, how SRHR is interconnected with feminism, how our patriarchal society stands as a wall and prevents women from receiving or utilizing all their sexual and reproductive health rights to their utmost level.

With an aim of building capacity and skills of the WHRDs who can further play a huge role in disseminating the related information in the grassroot level of the respective places, regarding SRHR through conceptual pathway along with the provision of advocacy skills with the feminist values, Tarangini Foundation did organize five days training of trainer's workshop to the participants in Sudurpaschim Province and Madhesh Province respectively.

training, we had around 250 beneficiaries. Tarangini with coordination of WOREC had conducted a Province level advocacy workshop in both the provinces highlighting the current situation of sexual and reproductive health among women and girls, the lack of health facilities at the time of the pandemic was also presented.



The research dissemination had become impactful in our fact-based advocacy where there was the presence of Ministers, representatives of National Human Council, representation of other organizations, rural municipalities and WHRDs. Tarangini had presented a demand letter in front



Through advocacy workshop and SRHR

of the authorities demanding the facilities and services that are now to be required in a provincial level in order to secure the sexual and reproductive health rights of women and girls. To add, Sudurpaschim province is about to have its own health policy which is in the draft phase in which the ministers have committed to inculcate the aspects of sexual and reproductive health rights as well.

REACHING THE UNREACHED- INITIATING 'SABAL'

Nepal has a high incidence of gender-based violence. Gender based violence (GBV) is a global challenge that violates basic human rights and human security. Apart from the individual suffering, it carries high cost for society and is a major obstacle to development.

Though the Constitution of Nepal (2015) protects women from physical, mental, sexual, psychological or other forms of violence or exploitation based on religion, social, cultural tradition, or on any other grounds and makes all acts of VAWG punishable by law; and empowers the victim with the right to obtain compensation,

Nepal, 22% of women aged 15-49 years report experiencing some form of physical, sexual, or emotional abuse, and half of all women face violence in the home . As per the fact sheet of UNFPA 2016, out of 900 women surveyed 61 percentage of women who had experienced violence had never told anyone about it, 48 percentage of women reported that they had experienced violence at some time in their lives, 15 percentage of women had experienced sexual violence some time in their lives.



On that regard, in collaboration with CARE Nepal, NAWHRD's secretariat Tarangini Foundation has launched a pilot project named 'SABAL' meaning independent or empowered in Kailali rural municipality's ward number five and seven of Sudurpaschim Province. The goal of this pilot project was to prevent women and girls from GBV along with proper response during normal and crisis situation. Those selected wards were the flood affected areas and most of the residence belonged from the marginalized groups like Tharu and Dalit followed by the area having high prevalence of gender-based violence.

Tarangini believes in becoming the voice of the voiceless and work in every aspect of bringing about equality in the society.

CELEBRATING INTERNATIONAL WORKING WOMEN'S DAY AND LAUNCH OF NATIONWIDE CAMPAIGN

March 8 is celebrated as International Working Women's Day with various programs reviewing the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women around the world. This day was started in 1908 with the theme that women's labor should be valued. After lengthy deliberations, it was recognized by the United Nations in 1975. Since then, March 8 has been celebrated in many countries around the world with different themes and slogans. This year was celebrated with "Gender equality today for a sustainable tomorrow".

Also, this year, the slogan was #Breakthebias. Both the thought and the slogan make it clear that the need for a gender-neutral world today is the need of the hour. We want a healthy, prosperous and successful future, a vision of sustainable development. With the combined slogan called “महिलाको श्रमको पहिचान, मान्यता, रोजाईको काम गर्न पाउने अधिकार, विभेद/

दुर्व्यवहार मुक्त कार्यस्थल एवं शरीर माथि आफ्नो अधिकार: लैङ्गिक समानताको दिगो आधार” nationwide, international working women's day was celebrated with several programs and participation in collaboration with different organizations.

The joint campaign on “महिलाको श्रमको पहिचान, मान्यता एवं रोजाईको काम गर्न पाउने अधिकारका लागि महिला दबाव अभियान” was also launched from that day onwards.

On the occasion, people gathered from different walks of life to express their solidarity towards women, social issues regarding women, and to raise their voices to stop violence against women. The march was filled with enthusiastic participants — holding



placards and shouting slogans — addressing various issues faced by women. Individuals, women activists, women networks, women with disabilities, women's band, women security personnel, students, men backing women issues, Nepali traditional bands, representatives from national and international organisations, among others walked together in solidarity.



"PRIORITIZING SELF CARE OF WHRDs

Self-care refers to the practice of taking action to preserve or improve one's health. It is a holistic arena that involves the practice of taking an active role in protecting one's well-being and happiness, in particular during periods of stress. One needs to manage his/ her mental, physical and emotional well-being in order to take care of themselves. Self-care at work means respecting yourself, your relationships and your work. People involved in any profession should take care of their mental health and overall, wellbeing so that they can effectively advance their work and other aspects of life. Only by prioritizing oneself can one effectively help one's family and others in need.

Women human rights defenders have been continuously working for the rights and interests of women from the local level. They are fulfilling their role in spite of the various difficulties created by the socialized people within the patriarchal structure. This type of difficulty naturally causes them to become distracted from time to time, causing feelings of frustration and loss of enthusiasm to work. Such can be the situation with any women working in a patriarchal structure like ours. Such a situation frustrates the right of the person doing such work to lead a quality life. Affects a person's physical and mental health and affects the work they do. Therefore, in order to manage the stress that comes with your work, it is necessary to be aware of the internal and external strengths and weaknesses and to know the ways to balance between them. This is an important aspect of holistic self-care.



Since its inception, the Tarangini Foundation has been working to strengthen the women's movement by providing skills training to women activists in various capacities from the community level to the center. Tarangini Foundation therefore did provide self-care holistic training to the WHRDs of Udaypur and Dang with an aim of facilitating the development of self-analyzing, caring and stress management skills along with enabling the continuously working WHRDs to be able to take care of themselves in the future. The training focused on issues such as how to take care of oneself, how to strengthen oneself from within, how to strengthen the women's movement, what integrated security is, assessing challenges and risks, solutions and how to move forward in the coming days.



In addition, meditation practices, skill development in analyzing the situation and stress management skill development was also be delivered in the training. Tarangini believes self-care allows one to take care of others as well.

PSYCHOSOCIAL COUNSELLORS READY

Psychosocial counselling refers to the service provided by a skilled professional counselor to an individual, family, or group for the purpose of improving well-being, alleviating distress and enhancing coping skills. Reports suggests that women are affected with different psych-social health issues such as anxiety, insomnia, headache, restlessness, body pain, feeling low, guilt, suicidal ideation, depression. In Patriarchal society like ours where women get surveillances at daily basis on what they do, how they talk, dress and with whom she is engaged or associated with increases the stress, anxiety and different other forms of challenges are at high risk.

Tarangini has produced psycho-social counselors at past and has observed how these counselors have been able to make an impact in the society; where they live or where they work. The counselors had contributed in a great manner in emergency situations like COVID-19 pandemic and the flood affected region; Sindhupalchowk at past. To be able to produce the counselors who not just can heal an individual but understand, initiate and applies the feminist core values in every practice is what these counselors are capable of.



The last few batches of counselling training from Tarangini were conducted through virtual medium and we are very happy to have the 8th batch of our trainees through in person medium. Within these months, the participants have already completed the two phases of the training along with the practical and are now moving forward towards the third phase after which they can officially become a psycho-social counsellor and serve for the human kind. We can't wait to look forward to welcome our fresh counselors ready to wok from feminist perspectives.



ACTION REFLECTION OF 'SAHAKARYA'

The COVID-19 pandemic had resulted heightened level of concern and massive public reaction as it hampered various aspects of peoples' lives. Moreover, lockdown followed by social distancing and quarantine had added more pain and challenges for women. Violence against women had increased by many folds, justice became difficult if not impossible. Women working in informal sector were facing challenges to sustain their livelihood. Women working in entertainment sector, sex workers and community women from marginalized groups were particularly affected by this. Thus, the purpose of 'SAHAKARYA' was to raise voices /issues of such women from the ground collectively to create better access to services, livelihood needs, justice and psychosocial needs and advocate to create sustainable support mechanism from the state along with to lay the foundation for transformatory building back better process.

Under the COVID Grant Support from OSF and in partnership among five organization (Jagrita Mahila Maha Sangh (JMMS), Women Forum for Women in Nepal (WOFOWON) Home Workers' Trade Union of Nepal (HUN), Nepal Mahila Ekata Samaj (NEMES), Shilpee Theatre Group and NAWHRD's secretariat organization Tarangini Foundation had been implementing Sahakarya project to support COVID affected group. Sahakarya had been launched with an aim of identifying the frontline women activists and women in need of support and to support them as per need along with the strengthening of the national campaign to live with dignity and for the right to women's work, body and identity.

With an objective of identifying the achievement, learning and challenges of each partner organizations after the implementation of sahakarya and to acknowledge the way forward for movement building, a two days reflective workshop was conducted in Dhulikhel. While discussing the



collective learnings and achievements, it was then known the huge impact sahakarya had kept forward after the completion of the project. Through Sahakarya, we were able to provide support during the pandemic along with the relief distribution and emergency support. Likewise, we were able to provide psycho social support to the needy. One of the highlights of Sahakarya is that our support was able to produce women entrepreneurs who are now self-empowered, they have become a skilled human resource and now can run their livelihood on their own. This is a matter of pride for us and our partners.

After having our reflective session with all our partners, we furthermore came to realize that how much power is held in togetherness and the volume of difference one can make through working with team spirit and like mindedness. Tarangini therefore always looks forward for the supportive hands that believes in positive change and is eager to work together with the same motto.



MAKING THE BASE FOR EVIDENCE BASED ADVOCACY; FPAR WITH WOMEN CONSTRUCTION WORKERS, ENTERTAINMENT SECTOR AND SEX WORKERS

Feminist Participatory Action Research is a research method that recognizes and validates women's experiences. FPAR approach can contribute to the knowledge of gendered experience. In Feminist Participatory Action Research (FPAR), women research the issues that affect their own lives in order to bring about needed change. As a community, they analyze their stories and talk about what actions they will take and what needs to be changed. As opposed to traditional research, women are active participants in the research process; they are not 'researched on'. This is sorely needed in Nepal to adequately raise and add to the knowledge on women's rights issues in Nepal where the tradition-bound research paradigms continue to hold sway and feminist issues are rarely and inadequately researched.

FPAR requires a certain attitude- one that believes women can steer change; one that embraces and values the complexity of women's lived experiences; and one that highlights the strength and resourcefulness of women in the face of disempowering and discriminatory circumstances.

FPAR is a method consistent with Tarangini's values and aims. FPAR uses methods that support Tarangini's aims to support and grow



women's rights movements and to advance women's human rights to work.

FPAR creates new forms of collaborative relationships essential to empower women and to amplify their voices, advocate for themselves and foster agency. With this in mind, Tarangini Foundation has begun research with 35 co-researchers from 3 different partner organizations namely Women Forum for Women Nepal (WOFOWON), Nepal Mahila Ekta Samaj (NMES) and Jagriti Mahila Maha Sangh (JMMS).

The FPAR includes capacity building workshops that is interlinked with the concept of women's work and identity with deep rooted patriarchy as a major factor for obstructing women's dignity by highlighting the critical role of women and their impact on gendered power relation and how are they being excluded in decision making processes. The co-researchers were able to engage in their issues and surface the solutions and things that needs to be done in order to formalize their work by themselves. Along with this the research included qualitative and quantitative methodologies as well. Tarangini believes with the result from this research, the workers will be able to advocate regarding their issues by themselves on a fact-based manner.



DEVELOPING THE NEW GENERATION FEMINISTS WITH MENTORSHIP AND GUIDANCE

Feminist mentoring is the exchange of energy and ideas between feminist mentors and their mentees which in turn rejuvenates and re-energizes the feminist movement through intergenerational dialogues and conversations. Feminist mentoring takes more than one time. It takes building and cultivating trust, sustaining connectedness, allowing the mentee to journey at their own pace, helping the mentee managing difficult spaces and facilitating learning and unlearning.

Tarangini Foundation firmly believes that young women are not just the leaders of futures but are what we need at present too. However, without the necessary resources, knowledge, networks, movement strengthening skills and mentor-ship,

they're unable to jumpstart their path with fresh and energetic ideas for transformative social change off the ground. More importantly, few opportunities exist for young women leaders to engage with the generation of women's right activists before them, often excluding their voices and collective power from established women's movements which has created the need for feminist mentoring.

Tarangini prioritizes on the fact that there should always be the new generation leading and moving forward the campaign. For that, Tarangini is always ready for the essential mentorship and guidance required. On that regard, Tarangini Foundation had conducted a Feminist Mentorship Training to the young women human right defenders in Pokhara with an aim of building capacity and potential, strengthening their support infrastructure and building strong, long lasting intergenerational relationships of coaching and exchange. The main focus of this initiative is a model of mentorship, coaching and peer learning that bridges current gaps between older and younger feminist activists and between younger feminists themselves in order to break isolation, indifferences, build solidarity, foster mutual learning and support and enhance the sustainability of movements.

Tarangini therefore aims to lead such initiatives that shall lead to sustainable movements of social change led by a new generation of young women.



OTHER EVENTS

REFRESHER TO TARANGINI'S TEAM AND WAY FORWARD



IN DEPTH DISCUSSION AND BUILDING CONNECTIONS



ABOUT US

Tarangini Mahila Adhikar Prashikshyen Kendra (Tarangini Foundation), established in 2017, is a non-profitable organization working on an initiative for integrated security and feminist documentation. The Sanskrit word 'tarangini' means tranquility in English. This term was chosen for the institute because it better represents the harmonious relationship among the women who have been engaging in the feminist movement of Nepal for a long. The reciprocity and exchange among the women activists and their organizations which has been continuing for more than 25 years are counted as an important asset to take the feminist movement to new heights.





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