

NEWSLETTER

Volume VI

Aug-Oct 2021

TARANGINI MAHILA ADHIKAR PRASHIKSHEN KENDRA

MAKING THE INVISIBLES VISIBLE

Editorial

There are many different ways to define advocacy. It can include attempts to change policy and practice, change decision-making processes and to empower people to participate. It can be directed at governments, other public bodies, communities, influential individuals and businesses. What's different about women's rights advocacy is that we know that to be successful, it must be done in a way that recognizes unequal power relations and structures that perpetuate inequality and oppress women and girls. It must also recognize that women face intersecting discriminations based on multiple layers of identity, such as race, class, caste, sexuality, disability, age, gender identity and other forms of inequality that shape each woman's individual experiences.

The women's rights advocacy approach isn't just advocacy about women's rights but a different way of planning and implementing advocacy generally. The expressed priorities of women themselves are at the heart of all actions but, consistent power analysis across any planning process ensures that the

methods and process are political and inclusive. Advocates that adopt a rights based approach need to understand the universal effects of power and better plan for longer term structural change to benefit all people who experience inequality, rather than a select constituency. This type of advocacy also needs to implement strategies that build the transformative power of movements and alliances of people with the agency to drive social change

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together through collective action to shift the power balance.

In this context, Tarangini Foundation has been continuously working on advocating for the rights of women employed in various sectors of the informal economy in order to promote their rights as well as strengthen their own capacity in close coordination with different feminist organizations and networks. Tarangini Foundation is committed to advocacy work to ensure that women's jobs in the informal sector, whether it be domestic sector, entertainment sector or the sex work sector, are legally recognized and respected. Tarangini Foundation also believes that since advocacy is a process, rather than just an event, the key to achieving effective advocacy is by empowering feminist activists and community leaders with the skills required to lead the charge for equal rights.

The informal sector is overwhelmingly central to the economy of Nepal, and according to a 2018 analytical report published by the Central Bureau of Statistics, out of the 3.22 million people employed in the country, 25.8 percent (832,187) of the population is involved in the informal employment, mostly through agriculture and trade. Furthermore, informal employment is a greater source of employment for women than men in Nepal. A 2017-18 Nepal's Labor Force survey estimates that 90.5 percent of Nepali women are in informal sectors. From street vendors, domestic workers, and home-based workers to farmers, bar dancers, and singers in the entertainment sectors, as well as female sex workers, women make up a significant percentage of workers in the informal sector.

Despite their contribution to the national economy, women in informal employment continue to face obstacles and constraints since their works are yet to be recognized and are devalued by the government. Consequently, women working in the informal sector are deprived of protection from labor laws, social benefits like pension, health insurance, or paid sick leave. It also means women are forced to work for lower wages and are prone to different types of labor exploitation. As a result, this whole situation has made them vulnerable and has kept them in poverty.

Thus, women in informal employment face many challenges associated with their multiple identities—as women, as workers in an informal framework, and members of poor households and disadvantaged communities. The overall notion of not recognizing women's work comes from the patriarchal values and beliefs that attempts to exert control over women's production, sexuality and mobility. Tarangini Foundation believes that unless there is change in the behavior level in individuals and society, and women's work is recognized and respected, women all over will be deprived on a dignified work, which not only puts them at a financial difficulty but also affects their physical health and more so their psychosocial health and wellbeing.

**-The Editorial Team
Tarangini Foundation**

ADVOCACY CAPACITY BUILDING TRAININGS

With the belief that advocacy is a process, rather than just an event, the key to achieving effective advocacy is by empowering feminist activists and community leaders with the skills required to lead the charge for equal rights. In this regard, with the aim to strengthen the advocacy skills of feminist activists working for the rights of women in informal employment, Tarangini Foundation organized multiple two to three-day residential advocacy training workshops to partner organizations such as Women Forum for Women (WOFOWON), Nepal Mahila Ekata Samaj and WOREC at Dhulikhel, as well as to returnee women migrant workers at Sarlahi.

The trainings focused on empowering participants with knowledge on the elements of Advocacy, the importance of Advocacy, and the basics of advocacy strategy planning and development. The first step in any advocacy process is to gain a deeper understanding of the issue. The more one understands the context surrounding the issue, the better equipped she will be to take action. Generally, when we talk about work or what work is to a person, the common answers regarding 'WORK' include that it is related to a person's identity and passion, is a means of earning one's livelihood or is a productive activity for which a person spends her time and effort. In our Nepali society, women's works are still neither recognized nor respected and if we take a deeper look into the root cause, patriarchy is the main reason women are still struggling for their identity as workers. Patriarchy is still the prime obstacle to women's advancement and development. Even in the current world where women go-ahead by their merit, patriarchy takes a modified form and controls women's production, body, and mobility.

“Advocacy is a continuous process that seeks to ensure that all people in society are able to have their voice heard on issues that are important to them; protect and promote their rights as well as have their views and wishes genuinely considered when decisions are being made about their lives.”



Since patriarchal ideology governs Nepali society, the sexist notion of male and female duties and responsibilities still prevails. This means care is naturalized as women's work. Despite being undervalued and getting underpaid, domestic workers are at least being viewed in the community as "good and hard-working women". However, society's attitude has always been hostile towards the women workers in the professions that defy patriarchal gender roles and attempt to surpass the control of patriarchy over their mobility, their sexuality or their production. This is one of the major reasons why

women working in the entertainment sector and female sex workers are viewed as “bad women” or “women who bring shame to the family”.

The government needs to recognize women’s work as formal work and make it mandatory for the employers to issue written contracts for all the women working in informal economy.

uncertain wage rates and low income, irregular employment, long and uncertain working hours, labor exploitation, poor legal protection as well as lack of social security like pension, health insurance, or paid sick leave. All of these issues are directly and indirectly related to the recognition and respect to women’s work. Hence, in order to improve the working condition of women workers, the government needs to recognize their work as “formal” work and make it mandatory for the employers to issue written contracts for all the women working in the informal economy.

While working on Advocacy, especially related to women and gender issues, it is important to note that Advocacy works to bring policy change, especially in 2 areas, i.e., on the condition and the position of related groups. If we take a look at the major issues faced by women working in the “informal” economy, most common issues are no written contract,



Testimonials

"I did not realize that Advocacy was such an important part of working for the rights of women (and in general everyone) until now. This training helped me realize why Advocacy is a major part of the work we do."

– **Lumanti Siddhi Bajracharya, Program Officer, Tarangini Foundation**

"Since I was already working in communication, this training helped me identify how advocacy communication can be done and what we need to focus on when formulating advocacy messages"

– **Elisha Shrestha, Communication Officer, WOREC**

"Before I attended this training, I didn't know much about advocacy strategy and planning. I have learned the basic concept of Advocacy, the process of advocacy planning and power mapping."

- **Yasoda KC, Chairperson, WOFOWON**

"My organization has been continuously working for the rights of women. This training further polished my existing skills and provided me a new feminist perspective when advocating for women's rights. The session on developing communication materials taught me how to write the press release and attention letters."

– **Bhagawati Adhikari, Executive Director, NMES**



BRINGING OUT THE ISSUES OF WOMEN THROUGH THEIR OWN VOICES

“Further defining and contributing concrete human rights pathways for a new social contract” or the “Surge Initiative” is a research project between OHCHR (represented by UNDP Nepal) and Tarangini Foundation. This project is unique and the first ever project that OHCHR’s Surge Initiative will be supporting which focuses on a social movement of marginalized women who are organized in self-represented community based organizations. The subjects of the project as well as the implementers of the project are represented by the women themselves whose right to health in this case constitutes the subject of the project.

This project focuses on the right to health (focusing on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights) of women groups, mainly entertainment workers, female sex workers, domestic workers and conflict affected women, and following the human rights principle of no one is left behind. The project will seek to make available a costing of the necessary elements for the provision of the minimum essential levels of the right to health to women in selected communities in Nepal who are at greatest risk of being left behind in the enjoyment of their fundamental human rights. This initiative marries macroeconomic analysis with human rights with the aim of highlighting the concerns with the identified marginalized women through research and evidence gathering by self-represented groups.

A project conducted by the right holders themselves who are the center and the subjects of the project has not been done under the Surge Initiative of the OHCHR thus far. The self-represented organizations of the identified women’s groups will be strategic in generating an evidence-based, context-specific and cost analyzed data that can be used by women’s rights/civil society organizations in their advocacy with government on planning processes and policy-making to respect, protect and fulfil Nepal’s obligations as set out in the Constitution and its commitments under international human rights mechanisms.

Right to health (focusing on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights) following the human rights principle of no one is left behind.

Evidence based advocacy is one of the key areas of right based advocacy approach. Tarangini Foundation, in relation to collecting data for Surge Initiative, has been in contact with and conversing with numerous women representing entertainment workers, female sex workers, domestic workers and conflict affected women. What this does is enables the right holders themselves to bring out their own issues in light and advocate for new policies that are based of respect and recognition towards their work.

So far, we have encountered that the issues of women’s sexual and reproductive health and rights are intertwined with their work and the recognition and respect perceived

by the larger society towards their work. This is not a new discovery. The stigma and discrimination faced by women groups, mainly entertainment workers, female sex workers, domestic workers and conflict affected women is linked to the patriarchal thought process and values that is ingrained in the minds of people. Even the access to health services as well as the quality of care received by these right holders groups are linked to the work they are engaged in and the patriarchal lens of that labels their work as “undignified” work. Unless the work of women is recognized for their right to health, especially pertaining to Sexual and Reproductive Health, cannot be fulfilled.

INTERNATIONAL PEACE DAY: “WHERE IS MY DIGNITY?”

The International Day of Peace, also known as World Peace Day is observed every year on 21 September. This day is celebrated around the world to strengthen the ideals of peace, through observing 24 hours of non-violence and cease-fire. This day promotes global solidarity for building a peaceful and sustainable world. In line with this, on the occasion of 40th International Peace Day, with an objective of raising voice on the matters of women's dignity and to address the matter of women worker specially sex workers, domestic workers and women working on the entertainment sector, Tarangini foundation jointly with National Alliance of Women Human Rights Defenders (NAWHRD), Women Forum for Women in Nepal (WOFOWON), Nepal Mahila Ekata Samaj (NMES) and Jagriti Mahila Mahasang organized a program titled “Where is my dignity?” to address the matter concerning dignity and respect especially towards the sex workers, workers of entertainment sector and the domestic workers.



Peace without justice is not possible. Although Article 34 of Constitution of Nepal addresses that every worker shall have the right to a fair wage, social security and liberty but the reality does not align with the written words. Female workers in Nepal have not been able to enjoy the rights, secure identity, and gain respect and freedom. Due to orthodox and patriarchal mindset and the perspective of people especially towards the worker

of informal sector like domestic worker, sex workers and the workers of entertainment sector, their contribution in economic sector has been taken for granted.

The informal sector is overwhelmingly central to the economy of Nepal. According to a 2018 analytical report published by the Central Bureau of Statistics [1] out of the 3.22 million people employed in the country, 25.8 percent (832,187) of the population is involved in the informal employment. Despite the contribution, people involved in informal sector, especially women have not been able to get the full benefit and social security. In the global context, a curious pattern arises when informal sector participation is viewed through the lens of gender. Whereas developing nations tend to have more men involved in informal work, the opposite is true in developing countries, wherein women are found to be comparatively more active in informal work.

In Nepal, around 90.5 percent of total women citizen engaged in some kind of employment are involved in informal sectors [2]. Especially in household work, women share a disproportionate burden of unpaid labor. Much of their activities in domestic chores and their role as homemakers and caretakers are considered 'invisible'. They are not accounted as work but are rather as 'expected' work by the prevailing patriarchal gender norms and age-old social work-division structures that are still present to this day.

Despite their contribution to the national economy, women in informal employment continue to face obstacles and constraints since their works are yet to be recognized and are devalued by the government. Consequently, women working in the informal sector are deprived of protection from labor laws, social benefits like pension, health insurance, or paid sick leave. It also means women are forced to work for lower wages and are prone to different types of labor exploitation. As a result, this whole situation has made them vulnerable and has kept them in poverty. Thus, women in informal employment face many challenges associated with their multiple identities —as women, as workers in an informal framework, and members of poor households and disadvantaged communities.



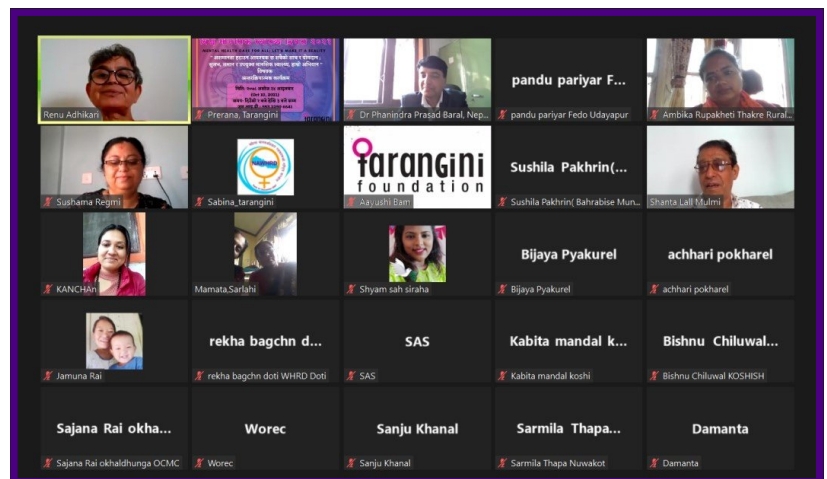
1. Report on the Nepal Labour Force Survey, 2017/18/ Central Bureau of Statistics published by Central Bureau of Statistics, < https://nepalindata.com/media/resources/items/20/bNLFS-III_Final-Report.pdf>

2. National Economic Census 2017-2018, Analytical Report < <https://cbs.gov.np/wpcontent/uploads/2021/06/Analytical-Report-Informal-Sector.pdf>>

Three bridges in Helambu and one in Melamchi were swept away by the flood and many roads have been destroyed, leaving many parts of the district disconnected.. According to news reports, floods and landslides in the Sindhupalchowk district have caused panic among the residents.

Tarangini Foundation comprehends the mental health impacts that the flood at Melamchi and Helambu possess further aggravating the impact posed by COVID-19 uncertainties. To light on this, Tarangini Foundation conducted a survey on psychosocial impacts of flood among the community people of Melamchi and Helambu. The survey clearly depicted that out of total (i.e. 126) participants; more than 80 % of the participants had depression, anxiety and stress after the flood. This study showed that women were disproportionately impacted by the flood due to existing gender roles and social structures consequently burgeoning stress, anxiety and depression on them. Women participants were more cynical about their special needs during menstruation increasing their stress and anxiety. Through this study, Tarangini Foundation presented the scenario of mental health and shared the recommendations based on the study.

Mental is an essential and a core part of our overall wellbeing. Physical health and wellbeing is not possible without mental health. Keeping this in mind, Tarangini believes that we should work to build a wider solidarity and campaign against causes of mental health problems and its impact in life of women. It is particularly crucial to promote preventive aspect of mental health rather than the curative aspect prioritizing the prevailing inequality among the women that instigates the mental health problems. Further adequate and proper budget allocation in the sector of mental health is imperative.



Mental health needs to be at the core of all the work we do. For this different trainings, capacity building programs incorporating mental health in the curriculum for medical personnel needs to be developed. Continuous advocacy and follow up program at local, provincial and central level is required. There also needs to be recognition of counselor through certified programs and recruitment of certified counselor at each health institution, mental health approach and campaigns need to be integrated prioritizing and focusing mental health issues and women focused mental health programs.

FEMINIST PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH

Reinharz (1992) [3] comments on feminist methodology that “Feminism is a perspective not a method”. Feminism is a perspective that requires that we re-think the validity of research as process and knowledge-creator, all the while challenging the facade of neutrality implicit in traditional scientific research methods has been one way of “troubling the boundaries”, in order to examine and address gender blindness. Many feminist researchers have long believed that research should empower the women involved, that the researcher cannot possibly be neutral, and that research itself is also a political process. According to Reinhartz, “the purpose of feminist research must be to create new relationships, better laws, and improved institutions”. Change happens both by empowering women in the research and by distributing information which changes the actions of others.

Participatory research allows collaboration with stakeholders, community, constituents, and end-users in the research process, instead of there being “researchers” and “subjects”, like that of traditional research. Doing participatory research inevitably changes the researcher, sometimes painfully, sometimes in exciting, sustaining ways. The self-reflexivity such changes engender is a feature of all feminist learning in some way. Reinhartz (1992) points out that feminist research aims to represent the diversity of people.



FPAR (Feminist Participatory Action Research) builds on research methods developed as Participatory Action Research (PAR) but integrates feminist perspectives and processes. With this in mind, Tarangini Foundation conducted a 5 - day

3. Reinhartz, Shulamit. (1992). Feminist methods in social research. New York: Oxford University Press.

residential FPAR workshop with 17 participants from 3 different partner organizations namely Women Fund for Women Nepal (WOFOWON), Nepal Mahila Ekata Samaj (NMES) and Jagriti Mahila Maha Sangh (JMMS).

The 5-day training interlinked 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 program mainly focused on encouraging women's participation to demand their rights and bring about structural change in Nepalese Society to ensure Women's Work and Identity.

OTHER EVENTS:

SAFETY KITS DISTRIBUTION TO THE WOMEN AFFECTED BY FLOOD IN MELAMCHI, SINDHUPALCHOWK



FESTIVALS CELEBRATION AND STRENGTHENING SISTERHOOD AND SOLIDARITY AT TARANGINI OFFICE



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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