

REPORT OF SIXTEEN DAYS OF ACTIVISM AGAINST GENDER VIOLENCE

25 NOVEMBER – 10 NOVEMBER 2010



WOREC NEPAL

2010

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1. Declaration of Human Rights Defenders 2010

a. What is 16 days Activism

The 16 days of Activism is a series of events¹ that Celebrates, Commemorates, Recognizes the reality that “Women’s Rights are Human Rights” and Violence against Women is a gross violation of Human Rights. This series of activism is a space being used by women rights activists from around the world to advocate for women's right to life and to live in equality without any forms of discrimination and is a continuum of the campaign for "No to Gender Violence" that emerged from Latin America and the Carribean at the feminist Encuentro² held in Bogota, Colombia in July 18-21, 1981. November 25 was chosen to commemorate the violent assassination of the Mirabel sisters³, in 1960 by the Dictatorship of Rafel Trujillo in the Dominican republic for their resistance to dictatorship. Later on in 1999 UN officially recognized November 25 as day against Gender Based violence and a Day of Elimination of all Forms of Violence Against Women.

b. Objectives

1. raising awareness about gender-based violence as a human rights issue at the local, national, regional and international levels
2. strengthening local work around violence against women
3. establishing a clear link between local and international work to end violence against women
4. providing a forum in which organizers can develop and share new and effective strategies
5. demonstrating the solidarity of women around the world organizing against violence against women
6. creating tools to pressure governments to implement promises made to eliminate violence against women

¹This 16-day activism also highlights other significant dates including 29 November International Women Human Rights Defenders Day, 1 December World AIDS Day, 3 December, International Day of Disability, December 6 marks the Anniversary of the Montreal Massacre and 10 December is Human Rights Day.

² Encuentro women systematically denounced Gender based violence from domestic battering to rape and sexual harassment to state violence including torture and abuse of female political prisoners.

³Mirabel sisters: (Patria, Minerwa and Maria Teresa, commonly known as butterflies)

c. Activities

The following programs and events were undertaken as part of the 16 Days Activism against Gender Violence to fulfill the above-mentioned objectives.

A. Press Conference

Press conferences were organized in the districts of Morang, Sunsari, Dang, Panchthar, Udaypur, and Siraha on 24 November 2010 to disseminate information about the 16 days of activism against gender violence, its importance the world over, with special focus on the context of Nepal, as well as shedding light on the intended activities and events that would be conducted within this span of 16 days from November 25 to December 10.

B. Elimination of all Forms of Violence Against Women 25-26 November 2010

Launch of Anbeshi, Violence Against Women Year book 2010:

Violence Against Women Year Book 2009-2010, was launched by Excellency Morten Jespersen, Embassy of Denmark, Hon. Kedar Nath Upadhaya, Chairperson, National Human Rights Commission and Ms Margaret Sakkagya, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders, was launched at the consultation. Anbeshi is a testimony of the great importance and significance of systemic documentation. In fact Anbeshi is not only about documentation about Violence Against Women but it is a recognition to all those Women Human Rights Defenders who struggle to break the status quo to surface the complex realities of violence. Human Rights Defenders, Women representing different movements, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Civil Society Members were part of this gala event highlighting the situation of WHRDs in Nepal organized to discuss on the protection and security of WHRDs.

National Consultation with the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders 25 - 26 Nov 2010:

On 25-26 November, 2010, 300 Human Rights Defenders such as Women Human Rights Defenders, LGBTI Defenders and Marginalized Defenders from all over the country gathered in Kathmandu to discuss their issues on security and protection in the context of rampant impunity and political impasse. 25th November also marked the Day of International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women – the commencement of 16 days activism.

Highlights of the national consultation of Women Human Rights Defenders:

- There is a need for regional security and protection mechanism for HRDs in South Asia;
- Rampant impunity and lack of accountability corners HRDs to risks and vulnerability;
- Patriarchal mind-set impedes WHRDs and LGBTIs from defender rights;
- There is Weak state machinery and Dysfunctional justice system;
- Politicization of cases leads to mediation at times where the victim/survivors are excluded from accessing justice;

- There is lack of access to formal justice system especially because of the pressure from family, community and even the Police
- Progressive laws yet implementation of laws and policies is weak and not encouraging;
- Identity politics that is weakening the overall human rights movement;
- Lack of capacity in the regions (very little understanding of human rights, lack of resources, very little collaboration);
- Discrimination, in all its forms, as the root cause of the challenges faced by the defenders;

At the end of the consultation, a Declaration was drafted and endorsed by the Human Rights Defenders(Please find annex 1).

C. International Women Human Rights Defenders Day 29 November, 2010

| National Event on "End Violence Against Women, We can make a difference" 29 Nov 2010:

Nepali government has received millions for security and military support from the most developed countries in the decade where “war against terror” was the slogan around the world. That time marked labeling the Maoists of Nepal as the ‘terrorists’. While talking about militarism, it is important in the context of Nepal to mention about the funds and weapons that have entered Nepal which escalated the killing and violence in the country. The Royal Nepal Military had the backing of the palace and some powerful countries with numerous empowering measures. However, ironically, it was often stated that there cannot be a “military solution” to the ongoing situation and under the rhetoric, “non-lethal weapons” for “security reasons”, the Government kept getting funding and support.

The State started getting further militarized and various forms of violence were generated leading to human casualties. The ideology of militarism perpetuated the belief that social order could only be maintained through force and violence. Women and men suffered mental, psychological, physical, and economic traumas. Women were raped, tortured, and killed by the military, rebels and the police during the crisis, and many still remain unaccounted for. Many were trafficked and displaced in the process of migration. It is important to underscore that, women’s participation in Maoist group is not without contradictions and complexities. Both the security forces and the Maoists are equally accountable for the militarization in the country. The Nepal Army enjoyed unlimited power during the time; although the risk they faced due to their status cannot be undermined. There were grave violations of human rights and civil liberties and women suffered sexual violence, displacements and killings.

The event was observed to mark International Women Human Rights Defenders Day and commemorate the contribution of the unsung heroes on the frontline of Human Rights. It was also a space to merge with different stakeholders to orient them about issues of Violence Against Women and uniting them to end the gross human rights violence.

“Culture of fear”⁴ has pervaded women as well as men’s lives with constant fear and mistrust, feelings that has affected all section of society. The psychology has given grave consequences for the

⁴ Environment has been created where people feel and internalize violence as the only means to take control over people, resources and decisions. This in conflation with patriarchy has created mindset to rationalize, normalize violence against women and

true safety and security of women and of society as a whole. It is a form of militarism which has contributed to a distinctive way of looking at the world; influencing how we see our neighbors/friends, our families, our public life, and other people in the world and to believe that everyone has enemies and violence is only an effective way to solve problems.

Not questioning militaristic ways of thinking is to leave certain forms of masculinity privileged, to leave hierarchies of power unchallenged and to grant impunity to perpetrators of violence against women. As stated in the preceding section we need to untangle every aspect of militarism that puts women at risk to demand genuine security, to bring more women into public life, to create a world built not on the competitive scale of weapons, but on genuine relations of trust.

In view of these concerns **16 days of Activism against Gender Violence** has been used to discuss the different and complex forms of human rights violations and violence faced by women in Nepal today and which remain unaddressed despite the commitments made in the CPA and other documents related to the peace process in Nepal. **The 2010 global theme is Structures of Violence: Defining the Intersections of Militarism and Violence Against Women however the national theme is on Democratization of the country is not possible without ending Militarization, Militarization will not end without adopting a democratic constitution.**

- To organize an IEC fair to create awareness on Violence Against Women as a crime;
- To engage with different institutions to end Violence Against Women;
- To use music as a tool to bring about social cultural campaign for transformation;
- To celebrate and commemorate those who fought for the protection and promotion of human rights

Information Education and Communication (IEC) Fair

A chain rally was organized to mark the international Women Human Rights Defenders. The rally started at 11 am from Rangashala to Tundikhel where the participating crowd joined the IEC Fair. Similarly, solidarity rally was organized in all the districts of Nepal with the participation of government officials, Activists, Youth, Human Rights Defenders, Media, student, youth, women representing different movements, Schools, Colleges, Various other associations.

Along with a group of organizations working on their own individual and collective capacities to end violence against women, their contested efforts were made by these organizations by IEC Fair was organized in Khula Manch, Tundikhel, Kathmandu. This national event on "**End Violence Against Women, We can make a difference**" witnessed the participation of 18 organizations working in the field of human rights and especially women's human rights. Different stalls displaying IEC materials of individual participating organizations were put at the event. The event was organized by more than 1000 persons who were able to gain first hand information on Violence Against Women and the necessity of their role to change the structures that perpetuate violence.

take this as a tool to maintain power. This has seriously impacted women's life body and rights.

Kritika Campaign⁵

Using music as a medium to garner support and solidarity to end violence against women, a cultural program as part of the Kritika Campaign was organized in different parts of the country. Women from various diverse groups like LGBTIs, Dalits and differently abled individuals are members of the Kritika Campaign. The campaign covered Nepal's five development regions (Saptari, Udaypur, Mahottari, Sindhuli, Rautahat, Kapilvastu, Rolpa, Dadeldhura, Kanchanpur, Surkhet, Dang in collaboration with district WHRD network, district trainers on GBV and other district level civil society groups and was supported by UNFPA) where cultural programs like songs and dances were presented. The songs depicted different issues of violence, solidarity, caste based discrimination, harmful practices against women, rape. Domestic violence, battering, women's rights to housing, escr, right to food, right to education, wave of changes and women's vision of change. The songs were in Maithali, Bhojpuri, Avadi and Nepali and the songs and dances represented cultural significances such as himali Sherpa, tamang selo, gurung, deuda, terai areas, maruni etc.

D. Candle vigil on 6 December 2010

Candle Vigil

On 6 December 2010, women rights activists, human rights defenders, human rights organizations and network members came together to celebrate the Montreal Massacre Day to commemorate international women rights defenders and national WHRDs who have dedicated their lives to the promotion and protection of the rights of others.

Candles were lit in memory of the WHRDs and victims of violence who lost their precious lives just because they were born as women and advocated for others' lives. The candle vigil is planned to be organized to pay homage and respect towards those wonderful women who jeopardized their lives in the fight against the prevalent injustices in the society so that others can live a just and dignified life.

The vigil is our gesture to pay due respect to personalities like Uma Singh, Laxmi Bohara, Januka Pariyar, Shanti Devi Koiri, Nirmala Thapa and to express our heartfelt gratitude to individuals such as Rika Biswakarma, Thakani Mehta, Rita Mahato, Monika Jha, Dev Kumari Mahara, Kokila Dhakal, Basu Devi Sunar, Sarita Mainali, Tika Bista and many more defenders and vanguards of peace. together with this the vigil was organised to commamorate The **Montreal Massacre** which occurred on December 6, 1989 at the [École Polytechnique](#) in [Montreal, Quebec](#), Canada, galvanized the Canadian women's movement, which sees it as a symbol of violence against women. Fourteen women students from the institution were systematically killed and 13 other wounded by a lone gunman in Canada's worst single-day massacre.

E. World AIDS Day – 1 December 2010

WOREC Nepal participated in the national awareness rally against the pandemic, HIV/AIDS.

⁵ Kritika Campaign is a campaign of women's movement representing different issues such as disability, sexual orientation, entertainment sector etc. They use music as a tool to bring about social cultural transformation.

G. International Day of the Disabled – 3 December 2010

A number of events were organized on the International Day of the Disabled in coordination with Nepal Disabled Women's Association and National Alliance of Women Human Rights Defenders. An interaction program with Constituent Assembly members and a street drama were organized in Siraha to celebrate women's resistance and diversity as well as to commemorate the contribution of women for the promotion of human rights.

H. National Event on "Women Participation in Peace Building process now and then" 8 December 2010

On 8 December, the National Event on "Women Participation in Peace Building process now and then" was organized by WOREC to discuss on the importance of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, its relevance and the activities carried out pursuant to the resolution in Nepal. The event was held with the participation of human rights defenders, government officials and media representatives. The following recommendations were adopted.

Recommendations:

- Issue based federation or networks should be established
- Issues of identity and participation and rights of women should be addressed within the human rights movement.
- Issues of survivors of sexual violence should be incorporated in the national plan of action on 1325.
- Documentation of cases should be done with gender sensitivity
- Victim and witness protection mechanism should be addressed by national plan of action.
- Put due pressure on government to include proper representation of women in Army Integration Committee.

I. Fistula Campaign

One more challenge for women's health, Obstetric Fistula. Millions of girls and young women in resource-poor countries are living in shame and isolation, often abandoned by their husbands and excluded by their families and communities. They usually live in abject poverty, shunned or blamed by society and, this makes them unable to work and earn money, this makes them fall deeper into poverty and further despair. The reason for this suffering is that these young girls or women are living with an obstetric fistula (OF) due to complications which arose during childbirth. Their babies are also probably dead, which adds to their depression, pain and suffering.

"Women deliver for their families, communities, nations and for the continuation of human life in the world, and now it is time to deliver for women. No woman should die giving life. But this happens due to the prevailing harmful social and cultural norms and values leading to harmful traditional practices and lack of access to maternal and obstetric care.

This is due to GBV. It is due to the cause and consequences of VAW. Women are not lead to involve in decision making process, their health problems are not seen as a problem, has not access to money and access to health services, lack of skilled birth attendants, poverty, work load, malnutrition and early marriage are the main causes of Fistula. Rarer causes of fistula are from sexual abuse and rape,

the complications of unsafe abortions and surgical trauma (most commonly, injury to the bladder at caesarean section). Gynecological cancers and/or related radiotherapy treatment can also cause this condition.

Thus to reduce this burden and let women live their life with dignity, WOREC Nepal in collaboration with FHD and support from UNFPA and in coordination with BPKIHS, Dharan and Patan Hospital, Lalitpur launched a Campaign to End Fistula in Nepal. The campaign has initiated and is taking place in all over the country by focusing on three key areas: **Prevention, Treatment and Rehabilitation.**

Objective: The overall objective of the campaign is to prevent fistula, treat and Rehabilitate the patients living with fistula.

Specific Objective of the Campaign:

- To aware the community about the cause and consequences of Fistula.
- To reduce the prevalence of Fistula
- To reduce the incidence of Fistula.
- To build the capacity of the central level doctors and the rural doctors through training on clinical management of Obstetric Fistula.

End fistula in Nepal Campaign started as a pilot program from October to December 2010 by providing free surgery treatment to about 25 patients suffering from Obstetric Fistula, who were from 17 districts of Nepal.

Outcome from Campaign:

- 25 patients of Fistula from 17 districts of the country were operated.
- 20 doctors from the different parts of the country were trained on Clinical Management of Obstetric Fistula and on Counseling.
- The pre and Post operating counseling to the patients', family members and in their community helped the affected women live in their family and in societ with dignity
- The awareness raising campaign on Prevention of fistula help for initiating eliminate of fistula.
- The campaign helped to make sensitize the stakeholders and make the state accountable for to launch the policy for the elimination of Fistula.

There was live video transmission from the OT to let the doctors know on the procedure of the surgery. There were two way communications from the OT and from the auditorium where the doctors were learning by seeing the video and ask the surgeons if any queries. The procedures were explained by Dr. Elizabeth from OT. There was theory class on 24th November.

d. Media Coverage

Articles in Newspapers

Issues of protection and security mechanism of WHRDs and the gender biased high-level committee decision on citizenship were highlighted as part of media advocacy campaign during the 16 days activism. Newspaper articles entitled Violence Against Women by Dr, Renu Rajbhandari on 28 November, 2010 in Kantipur Daily, "Vanguards of Peace" and "Gender Biased Citizenship Decision"

were published in the national English dailies, The Kathmandu Post on 2 December 2010⁶ and Republica on 5 December 2010⁷.

Television

Various interviews were taken with Dr. Renu Rajbhandari by different media channels such as Kantipur, Nepal, ABC and News 24 on diverse issues of Violence Against Women, Militarization, Women Human Rights Defenders etc.

Radio

Dr. Renu Rajbhandari participated in various talk programmes and interviews during the 16 days activism such as Nepal FM, Metro FM, Radio Upathayka, Radio Nepal and 100 FM.

In addition to the activities mentioned above, WOREC also participated in different events such as speaker during the International Disability Day, 10 December – rally on the International Human Rights Day.

e. Conclusion

Militarism prospers on the acceptance that violence is the only way to solve problems, and with the use of violence, aggression and through the terrifying consequences of military acts, it becomes the norm for settling social economic and political conflicts. Based on this notion, the 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence 2010 focused on the issue of the inter-sectionality of militarization and violence against women.

Members of the civil society, government, human rights defenders especially women human rights defenders, activists and concerned individuals and institutions expressed their solidarity to fight against militarization to end all forms of discrimination and violence against women.

The 16 Days helped to identify a number of issues which need to be mainstreamed. The issue of recognition and protection of WHRDs surfaced prominently during the celebration of the 16 days. Similarly, it was also brought to the fore that victim and witness protection provisions should be included in the national plan of action on 1325. The 16 Days of activism also highlighted the issue of putting pressure on the government to ensure proper representation of women in the army integration committee. On the whole, the span of 16 Days urged the citizenry to address militarized attitude prevalent in the society as a means to end violence against women.

The 16 Days of Activism was indeed a great opportunity to us to pay tribute to the heroes who sacrificed their lives so that others can live a dignified life; to salute the thousands of WHRDs who are still on their mission for peace and solidarity; and to appeal to the state to fulfill its commitment to these unsung heroes.

⁶ <http://www.ekantipur.com/the-kathmandu-post/2010/12/01/oped/vanguards-of-peace/215528/>

⁷ http://www.myrepublica.com/portal/index.php?action=news_details&news_id=25852