

**National consultation with Women Human Rights Defenders Network -
29 Nov - 1 December, 2007**

Introduction:

After the People's Movement II in April 2006, there has been a rapid political change within the country. The Maoists have joined the government whereas the aspiration of the people to be treated as free citizen of the country and their basic rights fulfilled has demanded commitment from all stakeholders towards creation of a New Nepal. The new Nepal cannot be created without proper representation of people from all the strata and structure of society and also transformation of the existing feudal/ patriarchal, sociopolitical and economical structure of family, community, society and state. This is a complex task and the structural change requires sensitivity and commitment from all stake holders

The volatile transitional phase has invited absence of law and order, emergence of different splinter groups, increasing fundamentalism and communal violence that has posed high threats to the peace process. These factors also create risks and vulnerabilities on the groups such as Women, Dalits, Disabled, Sexual minorities, Landless, Indigenous, Madhesi, Muslim, Badi, People living with HIV and other vulnerable and excluded groups. These groups have been ignored and discriminated in the society for centuries and still continue to be. Such discriminatory practices have fuelled unrest in country and the continuation of such system has only benefited the emergence of splinter groups along with other groups who are not in favor of the total transformation of the country. The political parties and the government should understand such strong and clear message and the underlying reasons. It is very necessary to recognize that the role and struggle of all marginalized groups during the mainstream people's movement was very critical and decisive. Nepal is a country of minorities and rights of minorities need to be realized with creation of an enabling environment where everyone feels Respected, Understood and their Rights guaranteed. As women constitute 50 percent of total population of the country, it is very necessary to take them as equal rights holder of New Nepal. Women have to face challenges and bear the brunt of various forms of violence inflicted on them by state and non state (family and community actors. Violence against Women (VAW) has been a common

phenomenon within all societies however it has further escalated during the transitional phase. Consequently different groups have used women as a tool of revenge with examples that can be taken from the community level. This crucial situation demands a strategic thinking by all groups demanding their rights and to carefully review whether their movement is doing justice to women. The government must rethink their agenda and decision as well.

However it is also very painful to see that neither the government nor the so called progressive political movements of the country have raised or even concentrated on the needs and demands of the marginalized women. Therefore in this context it becomes imperative to all women groups to come together and plan activities collectively. Without proper strategy and collective action, environment to ensure rights of women will be impossible.

The government has already set the date of the Constituent Assembly (CA) election however it has already been postponed twice. This is unacceptable to all those who has been actively engaged in different activities for formation of New Nepal. In this context it becomes unavoidable for people of Nepal to come together and pressurize the state to declare the dates of the constituent assembly election and hold elections on the fixed date. Nepal requires total transformation of all structures that cannot be done without a proper and well represented constitution. CA is a tool for this transformation. Those groups represented in constituent assembly, their understanding on the issue and commitment for change is crucial for new constitution as aspired by majority of Nepali people. It will be indeed a historical moment for all the Nepalese however the challenge lays on what issues will be incorporated into the new constitution. The current movement and struggle of the marginalized groups have already set their demands however their struggle has yet to be recognized and institutionalized.

Amongst the movement, the women's movement has taken a strong turn in addressing their demands and issues to the current government who had committed to recognize women's human rights on paper. However these issues have not been prioritized by the government yet. Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs) who protect and promote women's rights have been victims due to the structural violence perpetrated by the state and non state actors. Violence Against WHRDs have been documented to show the trend of patterns that has revealed that the 'controversial' work of WHRDs of defending

women's human rights have led them to be threatened, intimidated, pressurized, killed, raped, beaten, tortured etc. As for the protection mechanisms, there have been regular lobby and advocacy from the WHRDs through various activities but that has not been addressed so far. It is also important to integrate the protection mechanisms for WHRDs in the new constitution.

Therefore in the light of this current political situation, the National Alliance of Women Human Rights Defenders (NAWHRD) has decided to organize a national WHRD consultation from 29 November - 1 December in Katmandu. The specific dates have been chosen as it falls under 16 days of Activism on End Violence against Women Day followed by Nov 29 which is the International Women Human Rights Defenders Day. The consultations will be attended by 300 WHRDs from various groups such as dalits, badis, sexual minorities, muslim, indigenous, disabled, women living with HIV Aids, landless, marginalized geographical location, survivors of trafficking, Single Women and come together to share their work, challenges and form strategies to address these challenges and strengthened the women's movement. This consultation will also observe World AIDS Day (December 1) together with women throughout the country. Likewise these consultations will culminate into a mass gathering of 7000 WHRDs and Human Rights Defenders, civil society movement and from various movements on 2 December.

The overall objective of the national consultation is:

- To identify issues and concerns of marginalized women that should be incorporated into the draft constitution;
- To review and strengthen the women's movement in Nepal

The objectives of the national consultation are:

- To review the issues and challenges that arose from the three national WHRD consultations in 2006 and to map the phase of WHRD movement;
- To develop a common understanding of WHRD movement nationwide;
- To identify and strengthen existing strategies to formulate protection mechanisms for WHRDs;
- To form the new committee of National Alliance of WHRDs;

Methodology:

A three day national consultation will be organized in Kathmandu that will bring together WHRDs from 75 districts. There will be sharing sessions, skills workshop, strategy building, formation of national committee of National Alliance of WHRDs followed by a mass gathering on the last day.

The first day consultation will be on (29 November, 2007)

- Plenary session and presentation of review paper on background of movement of WHRDs;
- To commemorate the community WHRDs who have struggled to protect and promote their rights and rights of other women and strengthened the women's movement;
- Sharing of experiences by WHRD network members functioning at different districts;

The second day consultation will be on (30 November, 2007)

- Conceptual clarity on women's movement and activism;
- Skills workshop on various women's movement such as: Women's Health Rights, Women's Land Rights, Sexual Minorities, Women's access to natural resources, Violence Against Women, Rights of Madhesi Women, Women living with HIV AIDs, Women in Politics, Women with Disabilities, Women in Informal Sectors of work, and Dalit Women, minority group women (Muslims, Raji, satar and others).

The agenda for the workshop will focus on

- What issues should be covered by the movement;
- What issues should be incorporated by the draft constitution?
- What are the challenges and concrete solutions for this movement?
- How to take these strategies forward by women's movement of Nepal in future.
- There are plans to also organize workshop on concept of federalism and election observation.

The third day consultation will be on (1 December, 2007)

- Discussion on the main points arising from the skills workshop;

The third day session will be a closed session limited only to WHRD network members to discuss the institutional matters.

The WHRD national consultation will culminate with a large mass gathering on 2 December.

Participants of the consultation

There will be total of 300 participants in the consultation. The participants will be key WHRDs from all over Nepal. At least 75 percent of total participants will be out of Katmandu Valley and remaining 25 percent will be from Katmandu, Bhaktapur and Lalitpur. There will be proportional participation of self representative WHRD's who are from the marginalized groups and works at community level on issues of Disability, Dalit, Badi, Indigenous, Madhesi, Sexual minorities, Survivors of trafficking, HIV AIDs, Raji, Informal sector workers, Single Women, Landless, Squatter community, Youth, and Women from geographically marginalized areas.

Expected Outcome Indicator:

- At least 300 WHRDs from 75 districts will be conceptually clear regarding the women's movement and their role in it;
- It will be a historical moment for the WHRDs movement to witness the strength and solidarity of 7000 people;
- At least 8 political party members will be aware about the women's rights and show their commitment to incorporate these issues into the draft constitution;
- At least 350 WHRDs will understand the various protection mechanisms and share it within their communities;

Expected Outcome:

- Plans and Activities of the districts will be shared and developed;
- WHRD logo will be announced and shared;
- The WHRDs movement will be strengthened;
- There will be Democratically elected national committee of women Human Rights Defenders representing various community, caste class and geographical location
- Women's rights and the issues will be visible and recognized;
- Advocacy skills of WHRDs on various issues will be strengthened;
- WHRDs will be able to use the tools for their protection and due process of redressal through support of the various networks;

Launch of Resource Materials:

- WHRD Logo;

WHO CAN PARTICIPATE IN THE CONSULTATION:

Women/Third gender working on various issues related to Women's Rights and rights of sexual minorities.

HOW CAN YOU PARTICIPATE:

The participants need to get registered in the Secretariat.

- For participants working in **international** agencies, networks, individuals, the registration fees is 1000 Rupees;
- For participants working in **national** agencies, non government organizations, networks, individuals is 500 Rupees.

Few Scholarships are available.

DEADLINE:

The registration is open now. The deadline for registration is **27 November, 2007.**

NOTE:

The session of third day will be limited only to WHRD network members to discuss the institutional matters and closed to the others.

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