

## STOP Violence Against Women



CARE Nepal recognizes violence against women and girls as the result of unequal power relations between women and men, hence it seeks to address systemic, structural and policy related cause of social injustice through its programs and policies.

Over the last few years, in partnership with various organizations, CARE Nepal has been commemorating 16 Days of activism to end gender based violence by organizing multifaceted campaigns involving women rights activist, political parties, legislators, journalists and governments from the grass root to national level. This newsletter attempts to highlight the various activities undertaken on the occasion of 18th International 16 days Violence Against Women (VAW) from November 25 –December 10 by CARE Nepal.

### Public Hearing on Accused Witchcraft

With support from CARE Nepal, FEDO (Feminist Dalit Organization) and Sancharika Samuha (Forum of Women Communicators) organized a public hearing program in Kathmandu, Nepal on December 15, 2009. The selection of the venue in Kathmandu was done purposefully to take the issue to the national level for further discourse and lobbying. High-level government officials including minister for women, children and social welfare Sarwadev Prasad Ojha, president of National Women Commission, Naina Kala Thapa were present along with human rights activists and media representatives.

There were six women from different parts of Nepal, mostly Tarai flat land, who described their heart wrenching experiences of torture by their own community in the name of 'purifying the witches'. All of these women were from poor underprivileged groups and were of age from 26 to 40.

The public hearing received massive coverage, in almost every national dailies in Nepal. The television stations too covered the program extensively with



interview of experts. The public hearing also provided an opportunity to express solidarity and form a pressure group to work in the issue in the days to come. Through media the program hoped to garner support and build opinion on one of the worst forms of VAW.

**Jabarun Khatun** of Sunsari is just 26 years old, but she has been through hell. After being accused on being a witch, popularly known as bokshi in Nepali, she was beaten nearly to death. When she collapsed out of pain, the locals took her to a public place where a man stood on her chest and poured a mixture of urine and stool on her mouth. In tears, she asked for mercy but there was no one to help her. Her husband too was in India and the family was in deep loan. So she had to agree what they ordered her to do.

**Bharatpur Cluster** of CARE Nepal, that is also a center for excellence on Women Empowerment projects, carried out numerous activities to mark the



18<sup>th</sup> 16 day campaign against violence against women. The Cluster conducted street dramas and interaction programs at the premises of a local campus.

About hundred students, teachers and college staff gathered on the ground of the Campus to observe street drama presented by "Sashakta Madi Natya Samuha", one of



the group trained and supported by SAKCHAM Program. The drama succeeded to move the crowd into tears at one time and burst out laughter at the other. The drama reflected the reality of VAW in Nepalese society and how engagement of both men and women was crucial to eradicate it effectively.

CARE Nepal Bharatpur Cluster also assisted Department of Sociology/Anthropology of Birendra Campus Bharatpur to conducted an interaction program that was actively participated by approximately 67 people, of them 27 were men. The interaction focused on issues and legal outlets related to VAW. The activities were collectively carried out by projects such as SHAKTI, SAKCHAM, SAMANATA and WYPSP.

**Nepalgunj Office and Doti and Cluster** also carried numerous activities marking 16 day campaign



to end VAW in Nepal. The SAGHABHAGITA project, in partnership with women's rights forums, NGOs, and Women Development Offices,



coordinated various activities in the far and mid western regions of Nepal. The activities included interactions on women' rights, orientation programs on UNSCR 1325, mass rallies and local folk song competitions. The objective of all the activities was to raise awareness and speak out against domestic violence.

One of the largest project of CARE Nepal, ASHA, also conducted interaction programs among local people, coordination meetings with duty bearers. Local media was also used extensively to capture the status of VAW in the area, the work CARE was doing in the issue and the success achieved so far.

**Janakpur Cluster** comparatively new to VAW programs saw some of the most interesting activities in its project areas. It carried out wall painting on VAW in relation to addressing child marriage



through behavioral change communication and social mobilization through its CHUNAUTI Program. The school education program was also overwhelmingly participated by local people, administrators, students and was massively covered by media including BBC World Service. The participation is estimated to be little over twenty thousand.





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