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Report On

Promotion of right to social and political participation

1. **Program introduction:** Nepal South Asia Centre (NESAC), Rural Self-Reliance Development Centre (RSDC) and FOHRID Human Rights and Democratic Forum have been jointly conducting intensive rights-based programs for the promotion of sustainable livelihood and social and political participation of the vulnerable groups and marginalized communities in Nepal. RSDC in Rupandehi and Banke districts and FOHRID in Morang district have started Community Protection Network (CPN) since last September 2004. CPN is also part of national level network under National Protection Working Group (NPWG). The present report is about the one day Training Programs on "promotion of right to social and political participation" held at Morang, Banke and Rupandehi districts in May 2005.

2. Objectives

Long term:

1. To encourage the marginalized communities to contribute towards pro-poor governance and enable them to live with dignity being at the centre of development activities by promoting their right to social and political participation from the rights based approach.

Short term:

1. To empower the target audience to claim and express their rights by making them aware of their social and political rights.
2. To empower target audience for preparation and implementation of their action plan with the claim to their social and political rights.
3. To create awareness in the target audience about agenda for sustainable livelihood, policies of the State, SAARC Social Charter, Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and Civil and Political Rights.
4. To transfer knowledge on rights based approach through civic action and to create intensive national network to make this effective.
5. To empower target audience to claim their rights from the grass root level by promoting right to development at the highest level.
6. To raise the issue of people's right to food sovereignty at the national level by creating awareness of the target audience on the vulnerability created by WTO and its impact in the agriculture sector.

3. Issue relevant to the training:

- 1) Number of campaigns on people's rights have been conducted in Nepal but they have not adequately addressed the issue of social and political rights of the marginalized

community and vulnerable groups from the right based approach. Besides, the presence of the target audience of this program is nil in the State mechanism. Under these circumstances, they must be able to understand and express their social and political rights to ensure their social and political inclusion. Intensive civic campaign is necessary in this regard.

- 2) Right to self determination is the center of all rights but it is yet to be defined and understood correctly in Nepal. Some people still stick to the wrong conception that this right may divide the multi ethnic, multi cultural and multi lingual Nepal. In this backdrop, first step is to establish that the right to self determination does not challenge national integration. The target audience have not been able to select the political party of their choice and determine their own political status resulting in a partial representation in the political arena. It is possible to improve this situation only through ensuring the right to self determination. Therefore, all Nepalese should be entitled to utilize and enjoy right to self determination. In the absence of this right, Nepalese people have been deprived of their right to select ruling system for themselves. Under these circumstances, it is necessary to raise this issue at the highest level. This might enable us to establish linkage between the people and ruling system based on the popular will.
- 3) Nepalese people are denied their right to prepare and implement political action plan for themselves. They are deprived of their right to enjoy the fruit of development. Traditional top-down concept of democracy has provided very limited rights to the people at the mercy of the rulers. We have to work to change this concept and to establish the fact that the people are in fact entitled to claim democracy from their level.
- 4) The Knowledge about rights enshrined in the national and international human rights laws, SAARC Social Charter, Agenda of sustainable livelihood, major government policies and WTO and its impact have not been transferred to the local people showing their interconnection. Hence, it is felt necessary to initiate civic action by integrating all the above topics to make the people aware of these issues from the rights based approach.
- 5) Nepal has opened door to opportunities through her membership to the WTO. But the benefit of this new environment is being enjoyed by limited circles such as profit makers, capitalists, exploiters, political leaders rather than the large majority of common people. As is the present scenario, Nepalese farmers cannot get any advantage from the WTO. Likewise, the common people, small scale farmers, workers and low income class will face additional problems. It is time to initiate wide discussion with the stakeholders on WTO and its impact to the farmers' rights. It is also necessary to create pressure from the people's level against government to demand provision of adequate market to the farmers by promoting agriculture trade. People must be empowered from their level to accomplish this challenge. Empowerment of the needy people and promotion of their social and political rights is the way to make this possible.

4. Training Methodology:

Participatory approach was adopted for the one day training program. The participants were encouraged to involve in discussion after the resource persons presented the subject matter and the issues briefly. The subject matter was divided into six sessions. The third session was a

workshop among the participants. Practical exercise for the determination of political status and search for political role was discussed by the participants after the resource persons presented the background information on the subject matter.

4. Major stakeholders of the training:

Members of CPN and NPWG that included representatives from teachers, women, marginalized community, vulnerable groups, students, workers, Dalits, ethnic community, farmers were involved in the training.

5. Summary of the training proceedings:

Summary of the training proceedings is divided into two parts according to the subject matter of the training, campaign structure and the selection of the stakeholders. The first part incorporates the summary of the one day training programme for the promotion of social and political participation to the stakeholders including members of the CPN. The second part is about the training conducted with the CPN members and other stakeholders regarding the mechanism for intensive national Networking being formed by FOHRID, RSDC and NESAC.

Part One

Training for the CPN

A. **Summary of the training material:** Issues such as 'What is the social and political participation?' and 'What are the basic elements of the social and political participation?' were discussed in the first session. Similarly, a comprehensive discussion of rights to sustainable livelihood was held among the stakeholders. Issues of economic, social and cultural rights from right to social and political participation and the basic elements of social and political rights, viz, fundamental rights, right to participate in the government, right to determine political status and self-determination, right to political participation, equality before law and non-discrimination were discussed. The first part of the training was concluded with a workshop in the third session. The trainees who participated each day's training program were divided into three groups. Two groups, among them, practiced about formation of political parties, preparation of program, candidature, election, monitoring and evaluation of the election program of the candidate. Another independent group practiced right to self-determination in the periphery of the formation of political party, their election campaign and selection of their candidate by other groups. A discussion on government policies was carried out from participatory approach in the fourth session. The resource persons briefly discussed on the international, regional and national obligations of the State in the Fifth Session. The WTO and its impact in the agricultural sector was discussed in the Sixth Session.

Subject matter: Subject matter for the training program was selected from the sources mentioned below:

1. SAARC Social Charter
2. International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966)
3. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966)
4. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979)
5. Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)
6. International Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1965)
7. Nepal's Agenda for Sustainable Development
8. Government policies for development of various sectors
9. Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal (1990)

10. General Assembly resolution 1803 (XVII) of 14 December 1962, "Permanent sovereignty over natural resources"
11. Declaration on Social Progress and Development (1969)
12. Declaration on the Right to Development (1986)

B. Training Venue, Date and number of participants:

District: Banke

Training duration: 3-6 May 2005

Venue: Belahari VDC, Manikapur VDC, Bageshori VDC

District: Rupandehi

Training duration: 10-13 May 2005

Venue: Thumhawa Piparhawa VDC, Betkuiya VDC, Bairghat VDC, Majhgawa VDC

Total Participants: 292

District: Morang

Training duration: 30 November – 03 December 2005

Venue: Sijuwa VDC and Govindapur VDC

Total Participants: 239

Number of participants in the CPN training programs held in the above three districts can be represented in the table below:

District	No. of Participants		Total
	Male	Female	
Morang	130	109	239
Banke	74	77	151
Rupandehi	113	28	141
Total			531

C. Training Proceedings: Ms. Rukmani Sanjel, Banke, Mr. Shesh Narayan Bhandari, Rupandehi and Mr. Nanda Kumar Siwakoti, Morang facilitated each of the training programs as local CPN Facilitators. Mr. Chhote Lal Tharu, Mr. Kul Prasad Poudel, Mr. Narayan Pangeni, Ms. Manju Pande, Badri Prasad Bhattarai and Dev Narayan Tajpuria, Nunlal Majhi played their due role in the local level to arrange the programs. Mr. Jyoti Ram Mishra, Program Coordinator of RSDC, Banke district introduced the participants about the program at the beginning of the training sessions. Mr. Birendra Prasad Thapaliya, Chairperson and Mr. Raj Kumar Siwakoti, General Secretary of FOHRID worked as the resource persons in the training programs. Mr. Ramesh Koirala, Advocate assisted as resource person in Morang district. Joint team of RSDC and FOHRID conducted the program.

D. Experience of the implementation team and the participants of the training: The training was highly appreciated at the community level. The selection of the issue of social and political participation was important for the participating target audience. Knowledge of the right to determine political status and the right to self-determination can of course contribute to ensure access of most of the Nepalese people who are in vulnerable condition and are marginalized from the state process to dignified livelihood. It was found that the target audience is encouraged in favour of determining their social and political action plan for sustainable livelihood. The participants strongly raised the issue that the NGOs have been

raising only the non-political issues failing to unearth the political socialization for the people. The participants showed their self-confidence that the people are able to determine their political action plan based on their knowledge, information and organization of right to social and political participation. The participants discussed and pondered seriously and practiced the determination of the political status and their role.

Likewise the participants were encouraged to keep on receiving information and knowledge on the WTO and its impact on agriculture. They opined that an intensive campaign is necessary in this regard. They also suggested to continue the campaign for establishing the right to food sovereignty.

Besides designated subject matters, the participants also raised local issues. They had identified the local issues such as basic infrastructure, education, health, irrigation, social taboos, discrimination, conflict vulnerability, lack of protection of indigenous skills, impact of globalization, lack of local market, lack of access of the target group in the economic activities of the State, access to natural resources, unemployment, poverty, landless and squatters, early marriage, women trafficking, domestic violence against women and so on. They also realized that they have failed to utilize their conscience in the past due to lack of basic knowledge on their political rights. The participants claimed that the misconception of development as the mercy of the rulers is widely rooted in the minds of the local people. To uproot this conception, the participants suggested, a campaign is necessary to convince the people that the development is their right and it should go from down to top.

Part Two

Discussion among representatives from CPN and DPWG:

One day discussion programs were held in Banke, Rupandehi and Morang districts among the representatives from the CPN, District Level Protection Working Group (DLPWG) and the target audience for the formation of a Network of NPWG. Altogether 23 stakeholders from Banke, 14 stakeholders from Rupandehi and 36 stakeholders in Morang were present on the discussion. A separate discussion was held at Chitwan district also in connection to the expansion of NPWG. Participants stressed the need to initiate a national level discussion on the subject matters and necessity of the NPWG. The size of participation in the DLPWG discussion programs was as follows:

District	No. of Participants		Total
	Male	Female	
Morang	20	16	36
Banke	16	7	23
Rupandehi	25	11	36
	Total		95

DLPWG formation process and discussion on promotion of the right to sustainable livelihood

1. Introduction: A discussion program for the DLPWG formation process and for the promotion of right to sustainable livelihood was held in Biratnagar of Morang district on 7 December 2005. Representatives from all the 7 CPNs in Morang district and other stakeholders took part on that program. Objectives of the discussion program were as follows:

- a. To discuss about NPWG process, campaign and its issues,
- b. General discussion on the right to sustainable livelihood,
- c. Identification of the national issue for the NPWG for its campaign.

2. Proceedings of discussion: The discussion program was chaired by Ms. Laxmi Kumar Chaudhari, representative of ABC Nepal. Mr. Birendra Prasad Thapaliya, Chairman of FOHRID illuminated about the importance of the program to the gathering. Mr. Raj Kumar Siwakoti, General Secretary, FOHRID explained about NPWG process, campaign and its issues. Advocate Mr. Ramesh Koirala explained the issues under the framework of right to sustainable livelihood. All the participants, turn by turn, placed their queries and suggestions for the identification of the national issue regarding the issues that the NPWG campaign should carry for the people.

3. Issues raised in the discussion: Nepal has already ratified 18 international human rights instruments including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. But the implementation aspect of all these rights is very critical in the country. Right to life, among them, is in the most vulnerable situation. The ongoing internal armed conflict and political stalemate are the root causes for this. Eventually, democratic process has been obstructed. Under these circumstances, the first responsibility of the civil society is to preserve democracy and right to life.

State has failed to guarantee right to sustainable livelihood to the people. Documentation of the right to sustainable is necessary at the highest level. One small discussion like this is not enough for this goal. There are some rights which come under the right to sustainable livelihood which should be studied by comparing its attainment and use. For example, if we talk about the basic need of food, clothing and housing, about 20% of the total population is deprived of access to these rights. Therefore, the pragmatic aspect should be compared with the theoretical one to prepare to create pressure against the government.

Political participation is the means to ensure the attainment of all the rights of the people. Political participation also requires self-governance process and this enables pro-poor governance. Democracy is the suitable political system to ensure this. The Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal-1990 has been obstructed at present. Therefore, the campaigns initiated from the people's level should contribute to the democracy strengthening process.

Conclusion of DLPWG meetings: The participants in all the three districts pointed out, among other things, following issues to make the Networking of NPWG effective:

- a. Other networks working in the community level and the institutions / organizations agreeing to the norms and objectives of NPWG should be invited to involve in the Network on priority basis.
- b. Peace and democracy strengthening program should be prioritized at present context.
- c. Coalition with the organized groups and campaign in the community should be prioritized to work in the common issues.
- d. Infrastructure and manpower should be developed to establish a permanent Secretariat of the NPWG to make the Networking effective.
- e. Regular discussion is necessary regarding working relationship of the Network members for the implementation of the issues identified by the NPWG.
- f. The campaign should be taken further with the revision and amendment of the concept of the NPWG and the issues relevant to it.