



महिला मानवअधिकार रक्षकहरूको राष्ट्रिय सञ्जाल
"National Alliance of Women Human Rights Defenders"
(NAWHRD)

Press Release: International Day of Action for Women's Health

28 May, 2020

Kathmandu, Nepal

Nepal is celebrating its 13th Republic Day on May 28 and 2nd National Women's Rights Day on May 29. The commemoration of these days illustrates the government's commitment to ensure women's rights; however, the ground reality suggests that there is still a long way to create an environment for women to feel like equal citizens. The Constitution of Nepal guarantees equality to all of its citizens before the law. Constitutionally, health has also been declared as a fundamental right for every citizen (Article 35). Every woman shall have the right to safe motherhood and reproductive health, according to Article 38(2). No woman shall be subjected to physical, mental, sexual, psychological, or other forms of violence or exploitation on grounds of religion, social, cultural tradition, practice, or on any other grounds, according to Article 38(3). The constitution is quite progressive on paper but the reality presents a different picture. To date, Nepali women need to struggle hard to provide citizenship for their children from their name. Different forms of violence against women are rampant in the country. Women can't exercise rights to their bodies, sexuality, and sexual rights freely. Women in our country don't have the right to love or marry a person she loves. If she does so, then she has to undergo several forms of abuse, ostracism and is forced to bear stigma forever in her life. A recent example of this denial of rights can be witnessed from the Chaurjahari, West Rukum incident where three Dalit young men were killed on 22nd March just because they loved a young woman from a higher caste. The situation of sexual and gender minorities is even worse. Although gender minorities have been recognized constitutionally, in reality, they are forced to live in silence. Women's bodies are considered merely a means for biological reproduction. Almost all reproductive health services revolve around motherhood. Access to information on women's sexuality and sexual health based on the life cycle approach is almost non-existent, if not absent. This absence of information has a cascading effect on women's body, choices, dignity, family, and future.

The patriarchal structure and unequal relations between men and women hinder women's rights and access to sexual and reproductive health services. This is especially a burning issue in the current

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फोन नं.: ०१ ४४८२७६९

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context of the COVID-19 pandemic worldwide as women have been facing domestic violence, sexual violence, unwanted pregnancies due to lack of contraceptive services, unsafe abortion, etc. Even the quarantines constructed in different parts of the country are not women-friendly. There are a number of cases where women couldn't get timely access to a hospital for delivery and have faced different forms of abuses in the quarantine sites.

We are concerned about these continued disparities and injustices against women in various forms and demand a time-sensitive response from all concerned stakeholders to mitigate the problem. Achievement in women's sexual and reproductive health rights is impossible without mainstreaming and prioritizing gender equality in government's plans, programs, and policies. Now that Nepal has transitioned into a federal republic country, local governments have an even bigger role in ensuring women's sexual and reproductive health rights. Nepal must strive for equality to make its political and social achievements stronger and more representative.

“Let no one woman be deprived of her rights to sexual and reproductive health”

Dr. Renu Adhikari

Chairperson, National Alliance of Women Human Rights Defenders (NAWHRD)



About us: National Alliance of Women Human Rights Defenders (NAWHRD) is a collective platform that promotes rights of women human rights defenders all over Nepal. It is a loose forum of Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs) and associated organizations that was officially established in 2007 in order to address the contemporary challenges being faced by WHRDs. This network is currently functional in all 77 districts of the country, represented by different self-representative women right groups and movements.

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