

**Women in Constitution and Reconciliation**  
**Progress Report (Dec- June)**  
**July 2009**

**Submitted by:**

Himalayan Human Rights Monitors (HimRights)

Inar, Pulchowk G.P.O. Box 4690, Lalitpur

Phone: 977 1 5555 111; Fax: 977 1 555 4880

Email: [himrights@wlink.com.np](mailto:himrights@wlink.com.np)

## **Theme: Legislative Process**

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## Overview

In the Nepalese context, the empowerment and development of women is inextricably bound to the dominant Hindu social structure, which influences all aspects of social, cultural, and economic life. This structure assigns women restricted roles, which most often involve household and family responsibilities. Having internalized this system, Nepalese women have difficulty in envisioning themselves in roles outside the home.

After the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing 1995, the civil society and government have undertaken various new initiatives. New trends have emerged in both socio-political and economic sectors, and these trends are beginning to affect Nepalese women in a large scale. The affirmative action has been instrumental in 33.22% women in the Constituent Assembly (CA). This is a critical mass women's rights activists have been fighting for, although, the target is fifty percent. However, majority are basically physically present but entirely voiceless and directed by party. This is biggest opportunity in the country's history for women. Women's rights activist although fought for the equal rights in decision-making never dreamt this would be achieved with a jump from 5% - 7% in 2005 to 33.22% in 2008<sup>1</sup>.

The number has changed but the male patriarchal attitude has not. Majority of women have no meaningful role in the Constituent Assembly so far. Few hand-picked women are in drafting of Constitution but it lacks the inclusion of diversity perspective which is a very important aspect of this Constituent Assembly. Another important aspect is women are not a homogenous category.

Women's participation in decision making historically has been very low. Only 7 women were in Parliament in 1991 out of 205 and similarly in 1994 (Parliament Secretariat, Nepal, 08). In past 7.4% of them had representation in the ministries and 5.1% of them were in the civil service in 2005<sup>2</sup>. However, there is significant number of women elected; 33.22%, in recent CA election, April 10, 08 but many of them have come from marginalized background with very little experience at decision making level or parliamentary/constituent assembly process. Women comprise less than 10% at all levels of the political party leadership.

Recently an indigenous woman CAM from Mugu (far north- west) said, "I have come to represent not only a political party but my group too but we can't speak unless my party permits me too, this is been a very difficult process. We don't have any idea on where and how to intervene." Another Dalit woman from south-east said "I am not here as a political candidate only, I am accountable to the Dalit movement from my community if I am not seen raising the issues on Dalit I will not be able to go back to my community". So far there is no space for minority and small parties to have any voice. Most of the negotiations and dialogues are occurring between **leaders** from three major political parties only. From a various sections of society Hon. Sahana Pradhan's name has been forwarded as possible nominee for President but her own party does not want to endorse it. As they do not believe a **woman** would be able to handle security and difficult situations. On the other hand not being in the decision-making has negative impact women's issues on upcoming constitution and the laws that will be enacted accordingly. Thus, it is very crucial for women's dynamic participation in this Constituent Assembly and Constitution.

## **Goal**

The overall goal of the project is to ensure women's meaningful participation in Constituent Assembly process.

## **Objective**

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<sup>1</sup> House of Parliament 2005 and Constituent Assembly Secretariat, 2008

<sup>2</sup> Government Gazette 2008, no. 43

- Strengthening capacity of women CA members and others on constitution making and democratic reforms
- Increase women's participation in decision making and lead roles
- Increase gender equity in the overall contents of the new Constitution
- Highlight the importance and integration of women's issues in Constitution
- Increase negotiation and lobbying skills

**Target groups:** Constitutional Assembly Member (CAMs) women especially from marginalized, minority, disadvantaged, dalits, indigenous and differently able groups

# Women's Mock Constituent Assembly 2065

Ensuring women's rights in the future constitution through women's meaningful participation  
March 26- 30, 2009

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The five-day Women Mock Constitution Assembly was organized on March 26-30, 2009 in Naxal, Kathmandu. It was an exercise in using the actual CA process as a tool to strengthen the participants' knowledge and leadership skills around effectively representing and lobbying for the inclusion of women's issues in the new constitution. It was designed with the input of constitutional legal experts and joint secretaries from the CA secretariat. During the event, women from different walks of civil society, representing a varied group of communities, actively participated in learning the rules and regulations of the CA, forming constitutional and other committees, electing and undertaking various CA positions like Chairperson, submitting issues to the CA for discussion, lobbying and negotiating for inclusion of various issues and demands, voting on these issues, and finally producing a list of suggestions to ensure the inclusion of women's rights in the new constitution.

### Participant's Information:

A total 98 women from 30 districts participated in the program. Women from all diverse groups, ethnic minorities, disadvantaged groups, disabled, different sex orientation and religion participated in the program. Conflict affected woman also took part. Some of them included women human rights activists, representatives from civil society, journalists, lawyer, and teachers. Participants from most remote districts of Nepal also participated in the program.

### Geographical Coverage:

The participants were selected from 31 districts of five development region across Nepal. These districts were selected based on the geographical coverage both ethnically and existing issues of woman in the region.

S. No.	Development Region				
	Eastern Region	Central Region	Western Region	Mid Western Region	Far Western Region
1	Morang	Makwanpur	Kaski	Banke	Achham
2	Sunsari	Bara	Myagdi	Bardiya	Baitadi
3	Dhankut	Rautahat	Kapilvastu	Surkhet	Doti
4	Saptari	Parsa	Rupandehi	Dang	
5	Tehrathuma	Kathmandu		Rolpa	
6	Siraha	Lalitpur		Humla	
7		Bhaktapur			
8		Sindhupalchowk			
9		Kavre			
10		Dhanusha			
11		Chitwan			
12		Nuwakot			

## Inauguration:

On day 2, March 27, 2009, the program was formally inaugurated by Subash Nembang, the Chairperson of the Constituent Assembly and Krishna Bista, senior-most member of the WMCA. Anjana Shakya (HimRights), Subash Nembang (Chairperson of the Constituent Assembly), Arjun Karki (NGO Federation of Nepal), Amoda Shrestha (Women's Commission), and Gauri Pradhan (National Human Rights Commission) addressed the participants with words of congratulations and encouragement on being part of the process to make the new constitution truly inclusive and to ensure that women's rights are guaranteed in it.

## Women Mock Constitutional Assembly (WMCA) in Brief:

The WMCA was organized completely under close guidance of Joint Secretaries from Constitutional Assembly. The lawyers and constituent experts facilitated during the sessions whereas various other volunteers acted as the performed the role of secretaries of various committees practiced during the WMCA sessions.

During the first sessions of both the first and the second day of the program orientations about the programs, CA process in brief and thematic issues concerning to CA were discussed. The election process was held to select five positions to conduct the Constitutional Assembly sessions through inclusion. The participants were divided into four groups based on ethnicity (Dalit, Indigenous/Ethnic, Madhesi, and Bahun-Chhetri) as per suggestion from the participants. Four candidates namely Chairperson of the WMCA, Vice-Chairperson of the WMCA, Chairperson of the Constitutional Committee and Chairperson of the Committee on Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles were elected through this process and fifth candidate, Chairperson of the Public Opinion Collection and Coordination Committee was chosen by a process of lottery from participants at large who were interested.

"It was easier to understand why political leaders fight so hard for positions in the real life after seeing how the process for selecting people for just five positions could be so difficult and challenging because people fought to have a "position" even within the WMCA"- A participant .

The participants were divided into three committees - Constitutional Committee, Committee on Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles (FRDP Committee) and Public Opinion Collection and Coordination Committee (POCCC) as per their wish to participate. The secretaries required for each committee were also selected. The chairpersons had Reading Papers to assist them procedurally. The Reading papers were updated each day by the Joint Secretaries and Facilitators as per the changes in the sessions of the WMCA and the context of actual CA of the country.



WMCA was formally started from second session of the second day after formal inauguration on the second day which continued to the third and the fourth day. During the WMCA three committees namely Constitutional Committee, Committee on Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles (FRDP Committee) and Public Opinion Collection and Coordination Committee (POCCC) were performed based on the real CA practice.

A draft report on women’s rights, created by the legal experts, was handed to the WMCA members (WMCAMs) to assist them in beginning the discussion on the issues at hand. During the sessions the Bills were also drafted and presented. The process to endorse it was also practiced during the sessions.

At the end of the WMCA, the participants signed a suggestion of issues identified by WMCA to be integrated in the new constitution which was also handed over to the Constitutional Assembly Member Mr. Prahlad Lamichhane and Mr. Atma Ram Shah, who expressed their commitment to present women’s issues as their own issues.



### Lobby Group Formation:

Five lobby groups representing five development regions were selected. Each lobby groups contained two members. They were selected based on -----They will be extended as per their need and sensitivity of the issues in the regions. These groups will work in coordination with the various local stakeholders, civil society, NGO/INGO , Community Based Organization to collect the women’s issues of their region and lobby to the concerned CA members both at district and national level.

### Impressions from Participants:

“What change have you found in yourself after participating in this program?” participant responses ranged from “No change” to “I have found a lot of change. A woman who could not speak in her village has changed into [someone] with the ability to come to the country’s capital with women from 30 districts and express her desires.”

“I want to become politically active, be involved in policy planning, and interested in constitutional issues. I have felt a difference in my capacity, self-confidence, and self-esteem.”

“After I return I will go door-to-door and share what I have learned about women’s rights and the constitutional process at the WMCA with women in my villages and districts”.

### Achievement:

- Women Mock CA was successful in compiling the women issues to be included in the upcoming new constitution. Some of them were Rights of Women, Rights to Justice, Right to Inherit property, Right to Education, Right to Citizenship ( Citizenship of children in the name of mother ), Special Rights of women, Policy regarding language, Right to health, etc
- The issues collected during the WMCA and a copy of questionnaire from the CA Secretariat were submitted to the Constitutional Assembly Members during the program
- Increased awareness amongst women participants about the constitution making process
- Increased self confidence of the participants
- Constitutional Assembly Members were empathetic towards women issues raised in the WMCA

- They have understood and internalize the importance of the constitutional assembly and have learnt the constitutional assembly process
- Five lobby groups for each development region were formed.

**The Effective Practice of the Constituent Assembly in the  
Context of Constitution Making**  
May 29 - June 3, 2009

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The “*Effective Practice of the Constituent Assembly in the Context of Constitution Making*” was held from May 29 - June 3, 2009 at Dhulikhel and Kathmandu. The program was organized in coordination with the Capacity Building and Source Management Committee, CA secretariat.

The main objective of the program was to strengthen the capacity of women Constituent Assembly members (WCAMs), especially those representing marginalized communities. The program consisted of presentations and workshops on topics ranging from “Presentation and Negotiation Skills” to “The Constituent Assembly’s Session and the Process for Submitting Proposals.”

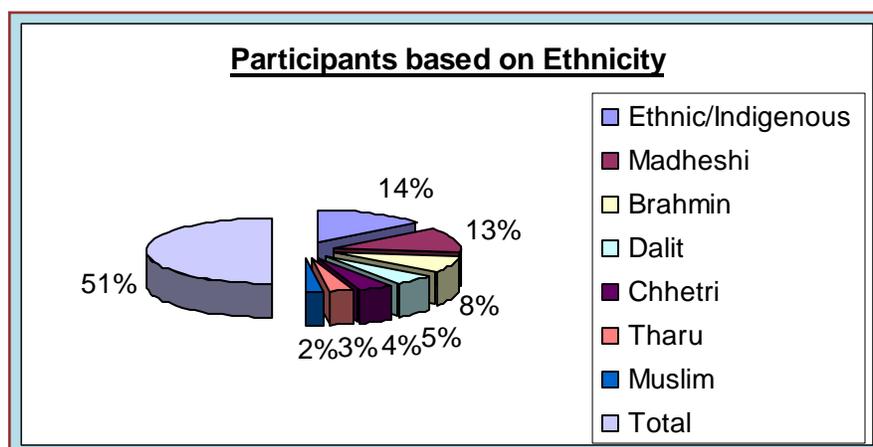
**Participants Information :**

Altogether 67 (34%) of the total 197 WCAMs participated in the training program. The participants represented 13 political parties and came from different ethnic/caste backgrounds.

**Political Affiliation of Participants**

S.No	Political Party	No.
1	United Nepali Communist Party	21
2	Nepali Congress	17
3	Communist Party of Nepal (CPN UML)	14
4	Madheshi People Rights (Jana Adhikar) Forum	3
5	Terai Madhesh Democratic Party	3
6	Sadbhawana Party	2
7	Rastriya Janamukti Party,	1
8	Rastriya Democratic Party	1
9	Nepali Janta Dal	1
10	Communist Party of Nepal (United)	1
11	Communist Party of Nepal (Marxist Leninist)	1
12	Rastriya Janasakti Party	1
13	Communist Party of Nepal (Unified)	1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>67</b>

**Participants based on Ethnicity**



### Methods and Process:

- Presentation and Lecture on theme
- Focused Group Discussion
- Question Answer
- Practical classes
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### Schedule of the program:

S.No.	Date	Days	Topics
1.	May 29, 2009	Day 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentation and Negotiation Skills;</li> <li>• Lobbying, Advocacy and Negotiation</li> <li>• Sharing Session by Women Leader</li> </ul>
2.	May 30, 2009	Day 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Constitution Building Process: International Experience and Nepal's Exercise;</li> <li>• The Rights of Minority and Marginalized Communities in the New Constitution;</li> <li>• The Relationship and Cooperation between CA Members and CA Secretariat</li> </ul>
3.	May 31, 2009	Day 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CA Session and Protocols for Submitting a Proposal;</li> <li>• Women's Rights: Achievements and Challenges</li> </ul>
4.	June 2, 2009	Day 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legislative Procedures of the Legislature-Parliament and Provisions for Drafting and Amending the Constitution;</li> <li>• Operational Procedure for the Legislature-Parliament and Constituent Assembly Committees</li> </ul>
5.	June 3, 2009	Day 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Restructuring of the State and Federalism in Nepal</li> </ul>

### Program in Brief

The five-day program was historical in bringing together WCAMs, who represented various marginalized communities, from 13 different political parties in one space to discuss issues surrounding negotiation and lobbying skills, women's rights, rights of minority

"We have been trying to work with the CA Members for enhancement of their capacity but never succeeded until when approached us with their ideas of working with CA Members. Thus we finally succeeded in organizing the program meeting our objectives."

- Rup Jyoti, Joint Secretary, Capacity Building and Source Management Committee

and marginalized communities, constitutional and legislative procedures and federalism in Nepal. The program created an opportunity for WCAMs to strengthen their ability to effectively represent the voice of the people to ensure that the constitution they are writing is truly inclusive of all marginalized voices. Throughout the program, one could hear the WCAMs wishing that they had received these presentations and training much earlier. Although, the organization tried to organize a similar program for over two years, in the form of a mock Constituent Assembly, different barriers prevented them from doing so. Eventually, the enthusiastic participation and the dedication of the WCAMs was a testament to the importance and the need of the program. In CA member Durga Pariyar's own words, "We are just getting all this information after a year of being a CA member. My name was not on the initial list [of participants], but when I learned about the program and that some people were not going to be present, I decided to come."

### **Participant Impression:**

Out of the 36 participants who completed evaluation forms, 17 (47.22%) thought the program was relevant and 8 (22.22%) thought it was very relevant. Thirteen (36.11%) participants said their expectations of the program were met and 17 (47.22%) said that it was somewhat met. Seven (19.44%) wrote that the program was a little late and that time-appropriate subject matters should have been chosen.

There were a range of responses to the question about what changes the participants found in themselves after the program: a couple of the participants wrote that they felt more capable; others wrote that the opportunity to work with members from other parties enable them to get to know each other and to learn from each other. Participants also mentioned that their understanding had expanded; they had received some political knowledge; and they felt the increased need for more study and investigation.

### **Achievement:**

- HimRights is the first organization to work with CA secretariat in any of the events. The coalition was successfully accomplished
- As the event was organized in coordination with the CA secretariat it was easy to invite the CA members and their respective parties to make them understand the objective of the program.
- Women CA members from diverse and marginalized community were

### **Challenges:**

- It was very challenging program from the preparational phase. The changing context and political scenario made it even more crucial as the need of the CAMs differed than the conceptual phase. Series of revisions of schedules and contents of the program were done. It was very difficult to identify the exact need of the CAMs and design the workshop accordingly. Number consultations with the CA secretariat, resource persons and experts were done during the process. It was also delayed due to the long procedures from the secretariat.
- It was very hard for the CA members to participate in the workshop due to their busy schedules and changing political scenario at the very nick of time. Thus the two days workshop was rescheduled to Kathmandu in the early hours as per their comfortable.

## **Theme: Peace and Reconciliation**

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**Workshop on Peace Building and Reconciliation**  
**February 28 – March 3, 2009**  
**Hetauda, Makawanpur**

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## Background

Women were one of the hardest hit groups during the over decade long armed conflict. They suffered mentally, psychologically, and physically. They were sexually abused, raped, killed, disappeared, tortured, and maimed. However, there are some positive impacts too.

During armed conflict they had to face various challenges and problems from both conflicting parties—Maoists and State. Many rural areas men and youth fled to cities or India to escape the possible threat from both Maoists and State which left women, children and old people behind. This increased the workload of the women tremendously, the gender disaggregated work had to be solely done by women including cremation of corpse. The Maoists forced them to provide with food and lodging on the other hand, the Security force tortured them for doing so. They were even arrested as Maoists. They were sexually abused and raped in many cases. One of example is of Maina Sunuwar, a 16 year old girl from Kavrepalanchowk who was supposed to be raped and killed. Her remains were excavated from the vicinity of the army barrack by UN OHCHR Nepal. The positive side of this case is her mother fearlessly sought for justice in public sphere from national to international level. A village woman was able to lead her way, to successfully find the remains of her disappeared daughter. Many women were pushed to or space was created for women' leadership in public sphere.

A respondent in the recent research conducted by HimRights (June, 08) talked about rape of many women in her village, in Bhajani, Kailali (Far West). However, rape victims have difficulty to raise their issues in public as the women will be re-victimized for doing so. They do not want to speak for fear of losing social dignity and respect in their society. In early 2006 a team was sent by himRihgts LifeLine project in Rautahat to conduct fact finding mission with rape victims. They refused to talk as they felt they would be re-victimized. But their pains are pushed in within themselves. As one of the participants of the comic book "Path to Reconciliation" initially said, "If I find the army who tortured me I would tear him apart."

Many have feelings to retaliate and avenge killings and torture of their family members and/or themselves by the conflicting parties from both sides, Government and Maoist. There are many other issues like reintegration of the displaced people, compensation for those who lost life and/or injured, whereabouts of the disappeared, status of the children born from rapes, trauma of the raped and sexually harassed women, single women, orphans, survivors of the landmines and IEDs explosions are some of the visible challenges. There is no data on rape or children born out of it.

This shows what people feel within their hearts for the opposing conflicting party. Thus, it is important for people to understand root causes conflict to minimize the revenge cycle. Achieving reparation, reconciliation and reintegration is very hard and tough. The drafted TRC bill does not seem to give them justice and it gives an easy escape to violent perpetrator of the conflict. Thus the workshop would be helpful for women to overcome their trauma and provide a space for them to express themselves.

1900 cases were filed in HimRights Lifeline service from 2004-08 which deals with grave human rights violations, majority of which was successfully settled but only handful of women cases were filed. HimRights negotiated dozens of girls' return to their families from Maoist Cantonments. The point is many of women's cases are not filed by families for fear of further threats or did not care about their lives or whereabouts. HimRights have conducted five researches on armed conflict: Role of Para Legal Committee in Reintegration of Child Soldiers, 2005 for UNICEF; Impact of Armed Conflict on Women and Children in Nepal, 2005, Research Fellow WISCOMP; Access to Justice, 2005 for UNDP; Social Impact of Armed Conflict- Causes, and Impact, 2006-2008 Research Fellow- Social Inclusion Research Fund and Conflict Impact Assessment for Sansthatag Bikas Sanjal, 2008. Over 150 women victims of conflict were interviewed. It included widows, victims of torture; imprisoned; families of disappeared, abducted and killed; victims of Maoists and State. However, women's cases are hardly visible in public sphere or recorded/documented publicly.

Some programs and workshops have been organized for reconciliation and conflict victims. HimRights has its own experience of working with the conflict affected victims during and after the armed conflict. During in-depth interviews with the conflict victims and child participants directly affected by armed conflict/CAAFAG of comic book, "Farewell to Firearms" and "Path to Reconciliation" they clearly mentioned they would take revenge for killings of their family members or tortures on them or themselves. Many talk about forgive and forget but this is not an easy process for victims and their families. Few Maoists militias too said that they joined Maoists to avenge the killing of their family members. Maoist victims too in earlier researches said that they are waiting to take revenge. Victimhood perpetuates the revenge cycle. The participants from both the comic books after few days of participation on root causes and impact of conflict, structural violence, revenge cycle, concepts on reconciliation decided revenge is a violent cyclical process with no end but only aggravates violence, thus, they would not take any revenge. Furthermore, would talk to their families to prevent further violence and revenge. They realized revenge is not the solution.

They started to understand the painful impact on both sides of victimization; both CAAFAG and conflict-affected children were able to have a compassionate and friendly relationship amongst themselves. They were able to articulate their traumatic experience and went through healing process as well as, felt compassionate towards others; their attitudes changed; they felt comfortable speaking than before as well as building trusting relationship. They felt it was important to both talk and listen. This clearly depicts that people affected during conflict need to be heard, their issues addressed and given support. Especially policy makers tend to undermine women but they need to be heard and understood from conflict-affected women's perspective; need to value their experiences and include their perspective for sustainable peace building in this country. Women need to come up with their own reconciliation process.

Most cases of women and girls affected by armed conflict have not been addressed in policies and Truth and Reconciliation Commissions (TRC). Women's realities and experiences of conflict are not viewed as important issue. Women have suffered tremendously during the conflict. There is a long term impact from the traumas during this period which has not been addressed. In general, psychological issues are not viewed

as important aspect which needs to be dealt. There is huge need for reconciliation work with women. Furthermore, this is a critical space and period to raise the voices of women directly affected by armed conflict in the Constitution and in future policies.

### **Goal:**

#### **Objective:**

- Highlight the issues and experiences girls and women in armed conflict
- Create empathetic environment for women and girls in armed conflict in society
- Conflict through women' and girls' lens.
- Raise issues of women and girls in armed conflict in CA
- Promote social harmony, trauma healing and reconciliation process in the society.

#### **Target Groups:**

- Women and adolescent girls survivors of armed conflict
- Women directly involved in armed conflicts including ex-combatants
- Civil society and government stakeholders

### **Participant's Information:**

A total of 33 participants including 3 girls participated in the workshop. Women and girl victims and survivors of the armed conflict, widows of Maoist- police-army- other political parties, ex-combatants, mothers, sisters, eye witness, tortured, Internally Displaced People (IDPs) and families of disappeared, participated in the workshop.

### **Geographical Coverage:**

The participants were selected from 14 VDCs and Hetauda Municipality, Makwanpur districts. These VDCs were selected based on the degree of impact of armed conflict in the district.

S.No.	VDC/Municipality	S.No.	VDC/Municipality
1.	Sarikhet	2.	Manhari
3.	Raigaun	4.	Chatiwon
5.	Padam Pokhari	6.	Manthali
7.	Churiyami	8.	Gathi
9.	Hetauda	10.	Betani
11.	Hatiya	12.	Tistung
13.	Dhiyal	14.	Sukaura
15.	Phaparbari		

### **Literacy:**

Majority of participants were illiterate. Ten Participants were able to just write their name. Five out of the total participants were functionally literate. While remaining sixteen participants were illiterate.

### **Specific Objective of the workshop**

- To understand conflict from women's and girls' lens
- To highlight the plights of women and girl in armed conflict
- To document the experiences of women and girls by themselves
- To understand the root causes of conflict, its impact, and ways toward reconciliation
- To facilitate a positive environment for reconciliation and peace building

### **Process**

Using a participatory approach, the workshop addressed the issues of historical injustice, structural violence, root causes of conflict, impact and ways of reconciliation. Trauma healing and the revenge cycle were important aspects of the workshop. Participants were encouraged to create their own agenda for peace and reconciliation.

The workshop was a common platform for all those affected from various sides of armed conflict and exchanges their experiences. It was focused on different impacts on the women and girls and changes brought in their lives due to armed conflict.

### **Tools and methodologies:**

As majority of the participants were illiterate role-plays and games were crucial techniques used. Facilitators and resource person summarized at the end of the sessions. For example, the wider dimension of conflict, root cause and impacts of conflict and different scenarios of the incidents such as killing, torture, maiming etc were presented using role-plays. Different games relevant to the content and issues were played during the sessions. For example breaking of human rights bead necklace of different colors representing different rights helped them understand the how their rights get scattered in society due to the armed conflict. Making them make the necklace again helped them to internalize the need to get back their rights as well as reconcile in the aftermath of the armed conflict. Besides these tools and methods, different methodologies and tools were also implemented. The level of participation and articulation by the participants was worth mentioning. The individual counseling sessions, in-depth interviews, group discussions and informal talking contributed to their effective participation. All the tools used during the workshop were effective.

### **Program in Brief:**

The level of hatred was blatantly visible from the first session against the State, Maoist, or both and other political parties, whoever was the perpetrator for them. They hated supporters of those institutions. They grouped themselves covertly based on who victimized them, caste, class, and party political wise too. Especially, two groups seem to be obvious, Maoists supporters versus others, earlier State representatives or political parties. There was also division of those who received compensation, Rs, 1,000,000,

100,000 or none. They had snide remarks for each other. Furthermore, there were some victims who had nothing to do with all these divisions as well as have no access to any facilities/ compensations provided so far by the government.

Few participants were very keen to share their personal experiences and not listen to others. They did not have a platform where they were heard respectfully and to address them meaningfully. Thus, they interrupted the regular sessions by sharing what they or their family members have gone through and expressing their immediate needs. They had their own story to share rather than to hear from others but few silently listened through out the workshop. These included those who participated for the first time in any programs conducted by any agency. Some of others have had access to other organizations, compensation and or medical support. Few of these women were instrumental in release of their husbands from the clutches of Maoist or State.

The workshop became a platform for many to meet victims from various sides. Initially, they were not listening to each other but they realized they are not only the ones bearing all the pain and facing tremendous problems due to the armed conflict; there are many like them. One of the participant shared, "I have not participated in any kind of workshops in the past. Before attending this workshop, I thought I am the only victim of the armed conflict. I am very interested to be in contact with all the conflict victims just to share our problems."

Some burst in tears and cried during the sharing sessions. At one point, it was very hard to continue the session. However, the whole process of the workshop helped them to transcend the division between Maoist and Army or victims from both side to "we all suffered" but it will take more work with the group to build a compassionate empathetic relation and transcend all divisions.

The individual sharing and counseling sessions were very effective. The counseling sessions were also effective, as many women were not exposed to such opportunities in the past. Depending upon the participants' articulation, few women were eager to share their experiences. They had a very clear objective during sharing sessions: to let others know about the pain they'd suffered.

Many of them were heads of the households, thus, had to bear full responsibilities but they managed to participate in the workshop. Many of them had to earn their daily wages for their livelihood. In this context the participants' participation and commitment through out the workshop were overwhelming. This somehow submerges the issue of their immediate need and expectation of assistance from HimRights. The participants' expectations expressed during the first session and all throughout the workshop were high. Their expectations ranged from reporting to concerned authorities of the cases, help with disappearance cases, advocacy to direct support and income generation activities.

Many did not speak in the first day but as the days passed by, they started talking and sharing their stories. Some cried during the lunch as they felt they were eating good meals while their children are hungry in their homes, "What would our children eat? I am having such a lavishing lunch in this program". Majority got sick from eating good food as they were no longer used to rich non-vegetarian meals. They were signing and dancing

during the workshop. In the latter part of the workshop the faces changed from sad and angry faces to happy/ cheerful/ optimistic faces. They felt very respected for who they are in the workshop and not judged in any way.

## Overall Findings:

- ❖ **Rigidity and Lack of Trust:** In the initial days of the workshops participants were rigid and many they did not speak. They hardly shared their stories. Few participants were knew of the government compensation programs. Although, they tried to get access to it but failed, thus were frustrated and angry. In those visits to the concerned government office, the officials were interested in their stories rather than helping them get compensation or other facilities. Initially, they felt that they were brought in the workshop to get their stories only. Many of them said they would not participate in the workshop unless there is something for them. Some others who have had exposure to NGO activities and other government facilities did not want to talk either as they did not feel safe to trust anyone. Some of them were very rude to the facilitators and organizers. One major aspect observed in the workshop was lack of trust. Due to armed conflict people specially, victims have lost their trust with others as they have been used by others especially for information and thus, hardly trusted anyone for anything which made facilitation very difficult and tough.
- ❖ **Pain, Anger and Frustrations:** It was difficult and traumatic experience working with them. Women victims are in much pain than ever imagined and with whom HimRights have worked in the past. The intensity of pain, anger, and frustration is far beyond what we have encountered so far and complex. The participants were victims from State and Maoists and few victimized by both sides. Initially few participants even said, "We would not like to share our stories unless there is concrete benefit." Some of them expressed, "I want to chop the perpetrators like I chop a squash" The expression of hatred and pain was extremely intense. At times, it was difficult for the participants and organizers.

They were very furious and angry with the perpetrator and the local stakeholder as they could not get the long awaited relief funds made available by the government. They are intensely frustrated and looking for alternative ways to make their voices heard. Moreover, one of the girls whose brother was disappeared by state during armed conflict called on others to join together for demonstrations, "bandhs"/ general strikes to make their voices heard. They were ready to take up violent ways to be heard and their issues be addressed. The culture of violence has become part of life for many. They saw violent means are heard and addressed, thus, alternative violent means are implemented.

- ❖ **Culture of Silence:** Some of the participant had seen and experienced such magnitude of violence they did not want to talk. One girl during sharing session shared that she had witnessed the rape of her friends by the police and many more during her affiliation in the armed conflict. She was used and abused by both the Maoist and Army. During the entire time in the workshop she did not interact much with any participant and was very quite and seemed to be lost in her own world. She was not affected by any activities of the workshop (after the workshop she is a changed person, warm, glowing person who is teaching 31 children and 21 affected by armed conflict to take positive alternatives rather than revenge). Furthermore, those who have been oppressed especially lower caste and indigenous people who

have been oppressed for centuries did not want to dwell in what had happened to them but to forgive and go ahead with whatever they have. Most of these women never approached anyone for help or compensation or have their loved one be recognized as Martyr.

❖ **Poor Economic Conditions:** Many of the participants had good economic conditions before the armed conflict but are living in poverty which they never imagined before. They have to do everything by themselves as they have lost their husband, sons or daughters in the armed conflict. They are facing tremendous economic hardships; many of them do not know where their next meal is coming from. One of the women shared, “We were very happy. We started new business in Kathmandu. We had wholesale of Chinese goods from Khasa. We had earned good money from it. Because of this we also had many enemies as our living standard had increased than before. One day my husband was detained by army and was killed. This changed my whole life. Our business was completely ruined, those who took goods on credit never returned. All of a sudden my life changed. After my husband's demise I had to live in extreme poverty. My family's condition had worsened and my children had no other option than to go to government public schools as they used to go to boarding/ private schools.” Another woman whose husband was an ex-army had rice mill in her village and doing very well but her husband was killed by Maoist. The villagers did not support her so she lived as an Internally Displaced Person in Hetauda. She poked one of the HimRights team with a needle and asked "Does it hurt; I want to show you what kind of pain we are living in." From the time she left her village nobody even bothered to ask how she is doing. These are just two examples, almost all have similar stories. Few managed to have small scale vegetable or fruit stalls but others remained as before.

❖ **Status of Disappeared and their hope:** Families of the disappeared also participated in the workshop. They had lost their husbands/ sons/ daughters. The whereabouts of them are still unknown even after three years of the post conflict in the country. Their families burst into tears when they shared their grave experiences. Those families, whose loved ones have disappeared, are living with hopes to see them return. One woman sobbingly shared, “We want to know what had happened to them. If they are dead, we must know so we could do the death rituals. We just feel that they will come and the hope of seeing them once again kills us every day. We die thousands times in a day. We live physically but are dead spiritually”. The traumas they have are very deep and traumatic. They are in tremendous pain. One of the women shared, “I don't want the relief fund but want the recognition for my son who has lost his life as ‘Martyr’ ”. They are furious and frustrated and searching for alternative means to protest and demonstrate. One of the girls whose brother was detained by army said, “They (government) have turned themselves deaf and dumb. We need to violently demonstrate. This is the only way to voice ourselves. They do not want to listen to us. This is the only means to make ourselves heard”.

Both the government and Maoists are silent on their whereabouts. Although the government has repeatedly promised after the reinstatement of democratic government but it's been only words not in action for most.

- ❖ **Political biasness and division:** The participants were from various political parties. They were mostly from Maoist, Congress, and United Leninist Marxist. Congress who had led the government for most years since 1990 and operated massive operations against Maoists and less so by UML had clear division who is the enemy of whom. Thus, it reflected in the Workshop too. Whenever, Congress or UML women were speaking others rolled their eyes and vs versa. It was very difficult for them to come into any common ground. Only toward the end of the workshop they came into consensus that they all suffered regardless of any political affiliation.
- ❖ **Increased Roles and Responsibility:** Traditionally, women engage in long and tedious household burdens which have increased dramatically during and after the conflict. The death, missing and physical loss of breadwinner or family-head has worsened the situation for women. The responsibilities of women have gradually shifted as breadwinner, in most of the cases in addition to taking care of their children, older relatives, and agricultural work.
- ❖ **Access to Compensation and Govt. Stakeholders mentality**  
Many of them had knocked the doors of the local administration, political parties, organizations, and some in person to get any help but they remain helpless. 'We have to go different rooms in the administration office to register our complaints but finally at the end of the day we end nowhere' one shared in the workshop. Some of their names are listed as relatives in the record prepared by the local administration and political parties, still they have no access to the relief funds that has been allocated to the District Administration Office. Many were even not aware of this information. The Local Peace Committees has been formed but is nowhere in the scene.

#### **Achievement:**

- ❖ Participants had empathetic and respectful space to express their experiences and voice their issues
- ❖ The workshop was able to assess the magnitude of the suffering, pain, trauma women are experiencing as directly involved in the armed conflict or as family members whose voices and rights has not been addressed in the context of armed conflict. The pain, trauma, grief and worst experience were raised.
- ❖ The workshop was a platform for them to share their experiences and learn from each other. Participants were able to share their horrendous experience and trauma they have gone through. It was counselling on its own. They learnt that they are not alone in their situation.
- ❖ They were able to express what has been suppressed in them for years through experience sharing.
- ❖ They had opportunity to be listened by other participants, experiences and realities as well and understand from their perspectives
- ❖ Opportunity to share their experience without the fear of being judged and retaliated.
- ❖ With additional program they would be able transcend from hatred to compassion.
- ❖ During workshop the participants got the chance to live a dignified, caring and in conducive environment
- ❖ Lots of hidden trauma and experiences surfaced.
- ❖ Participants were able to realize their common ground; they all suffered regardless of which side of the conflict.

## Lessons Learnt:

- ❖ Usually with children we end the 5 day workshop with tears for each other and difficulty to leave new found friends and adults but working with women is more complex, lots of baggages, lots of responsibilities-- financial, social, educational and cultural of her children and elderly relatives and themselves.
- ❖ Working with these victims we have felt that certain DSA per day should be allocated for them as many of them have to earn their daily livelihood.
- ❖ Pictorial books and films on Peace and Reconciliation would have been asset for workshop to make them understand and take away with them as written documents would not be too helpful.

## Conclusion:

Women have far too complex a baggage for easy reconciliation. Their anger, pain, and frustration, needs to be addressed. They need to have workshop for at least a week with a stipend to sustain their family's basic need, food. The workshop needs to be geared to listening to them, and gradually facilitate them to listen to others and be empathetic to their lens and focus on what is peaceful reconciliation for them. This workshop's duration is short for the kind of complex baggage women carry compared to children. There is a need for legal support to get help with restitution and skill training or seed money to start some kind of small entrepreneur venture to get out of whirlpool of poverty.

The workshop has been able to address just a tip of an iceberg or a drop in an ocean of 100,000 of armed conflict affected women. There are still thousands of women who need to be identified and brought in reconciliation and reintegration process. If their issues and grievances are not addressed there might be more violent conflicts in future in this country. One of the participants said, "If our issues are not addressed we will start another violent conflict". Reconciliation is a means to address conflict affected women's experiences and the worldview is seen from their lens, creating empathetic environment for them for effective reintegration and reparations. The stakeholders stereotype, ostracize, and marginalize them in every way possible. Thus, unless these groups' difficulties and traumatic experiences are understood by the stakeholders, they are not going to be sensitive, empathetic and caring towards these women. Their issue needs to be addressed by the policy makers at district and national level to institutionalize restitution and for sustainable peace.

## Schedule of the workshop

#	Topic	Time		Method
Day One				
1	Environment Setting			
1.1	Welcome	08:00	08:10	
1.2	Introduction	08:10	08:45	Game
1.3	Expectation Check	08:45	09:10	Pair-share
1.4	Objective of the Workshop	09:10	09:20	Lecture
1.5	Workshop Norms	09:20	10:00	Plenary
	<i>Tea Break</i>	<i>10:00</i>	<i>10:15</i>	

#	Topic	Time		Method
2	Conflict			
2.1	What is Conflict?	10:15	11:30	Role Play
2.2	Root Causes of Armed Conflict in Nepal	11:30	12:30	Group Assignment
	<i>Lunch Break</i>	<i>12:30</i>	<i>01:30</i>	
3	Violence			
3.1	What is Violence?	01:30	02:45	Role Play
3.2	Causes of Violence (focus on GBV)	02:45	03:30	Group Assignment
3.3	Structural Violence	03:30	04:00	Multimedia Presentation
	<i>Tea Break</i>	<i>04:00</i>	<i>04:15</i>	
4	Effects/Impacts of Armed Conflict	04:15	05:30	Whole Group Discussion
5	Review of the Day	05:30	05:45	Plenary Discussion
<b>Day Two</b>				
1	Recap	08:00	08:30	Whole Group Discussion
2	Impacts of Armed Conflict (Contd.)	08:30	10:00	Presentations & Plenary
	<i>Tea Break</i>	<i>10:00</i>	<i>10:15</i>	
3	Trauma			
3.1	What is Trauma?	10:15	11:15	Group Assignment
3.2	Why I/us became victim?	11:15	12:15	Snow Balling
3.3	Broken Human Rights Necklace	12:15	12:30	Game
	<i>Lunch Break</i>	<i>12:30</i>	<i>01:30</i>	
3.4	The Pain I/We Suffered	01:30	03:00	Drawing and Presentations
3.5	Consequences of Trauma	03:00	04:00	Role Play
	<i>Tea Break</i>	<i>04:00</i>	<i>04:15</i>	
3.6	Continued	04:15	05:30	Discussions
4	Review of the Day	05:30	05:45	Plenary Discussion
<b>Day Three</b>				
1	Recap	08:00	08:30	Whole Group Discussion
2	How could my suffering be pacified?	08:30	10:00	Personal (Writing/Speaking)
	<i>Tea Break</i>	<i>10:00</i>	<i>10:15</i>	
3	Revenge/Counter-Violence			
3.1	What is Revenge?	10:15	10:15	Brainstorming
3.2	Do I/we want revenge? Why and How?	10:15	12:30	Role Play
	<i>Lunch Break</i>	<i>12:30</i>	<i>01:30</i>	
4	Justice			
4.1	What is Justice?	01:30	02:00	Snow Balling
4.2	What kind of justice do I/we want?	02:00	04:00	Group Assignment
	<i>Tea Break</i>	<i>04:00</i>	<i>04:15</i>	
5	Transitional Justice	05:30	05:45	Multimedia Presentation
6	Review of the Day	05:30	05:45	Plenary Discussion
<b>Day Four</b>				
1	Recap	08:00	08:30	Whole Group Discussion
2	Peace			
2.1	What is peace?	08:30	08:45	Group Assignment
2.2	What are essentials for Peace?	08:45	10:00	Whole Group Discussion
	<i>Tea Break</i>	<i>10:00</i>	<i>10:15</i>	
3	Reconciliation			
3.1	What is Reconciliation?	10:15	11:30	Role Play
3.2	Is Reconciliation Possible? How?	11:30	12:30	Whole Group Discussion
	<i>Lunch Break</i>	<i>12:30</i>	<i>01:30</i>	
3.3	How can Reconciliation be achieved?	01:30	03:30	Snow Balling
3.4	Pillars of Reconciliation	03:30	04:00	Multimedia Presentation
	<i>Tea Break</i>	<i>04:00</i>	<i>04:15</i>	
4	Re-sewing Human Rights Necklace	04:15	04:30	Game
5	What can we do?	04:30	05:15	Whole Group Discussion
6	Workshop Evaluation	05:15	05:30	Individual Writing
7	Closing and Vote of Thanks	05:30	05:45	

