

A Report On Civic and Voters Education. First Phase.

**Project
Completion
Report**

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Introduction

Bhaktapur

Bhaktapur is the smallest district among the 75 districts of Nepal. It is surrounded by three other districts namely; Kathmandu, Lalitpur & Kavre. There are a high percentage of people of the Newar caste in both the main city and in rural areas; there are also Tamang, Chhetries, Brahmans and other Dalits. There are 2 Municipalities and 16 VDC's.

CAC – Nepal

Community Action Centre -Nepal (CAC-Nepal), a non-profit, non- governmental social organization, was established in April 1993 by a group of intellectuals, social workers and persons experienced in community development.

The Centre believes in developing in the people the spirit of working together in partnership to promote sustainable development with special emphasis on women and children. The centre works together with communities in empowering and developing community to solve the problems of women and children. It can be achieved by effective support service systems.

VISION: Discrimination towards every member of society is eradicated through education so that everyone may live in a peaceful and equal society.

GOAL: By empowering women and children in the community we aim to focus on gender equality in order to make them independent and self reliant.

MISSION: Empowerment and development of the community to tackle problems of women and children. This can be ensured through an effective implementation and strengthening of support service systems. CAC-Nepal works through formal and informal partnerships with communities, local organizations, local and national governments, and the private sector.

Objectives:

- Empowering women and children within their communities through support and education.
- Taking action against the trafficking of women & children in Nepal
- Taking action against the domestic violence experienced by women & children in Nepal and advocating on their behalf.
- Taking action against HIV/AIDS & the sexual exploitation of women & children
- Implementing programmes for high-risk child labourers & child migrants
- Developing the sustainability of the organization by coordinating with different regional, national and international donors.
- Conducting research work related to the issues of women and children.

The Centre's basic principle is based on the conviction that the paramount need is to develop in the people the spirit of working together in partnership to promote sustainable development with a special emphasis on women and children.

Civic and Voters Education, First Phase

CAC-Nepal in conjunction with FWLD worked together on the first phase of the Civic and Voters Education Programme from March 1 to June 30, 2007. The objective was to facilitate education workshops in the Bhaktapur District about the upcoming Constitutional Assembly (CA) elections.

This was with a view to raising awareness amongst village groups, especially marginalized and minority people about the upcoming Constitutional Assembly elections, their right to vote and their responsibility for making this Assembly successful.

Program activities

1. Pre-workshop Training of Trainers for Public Dialogue Facilitator

Prior to the workshops, selected facilitators attended a 3 day training workshop (in Chundevi, Bhaktapur) on a Training of Trainers programme. Among the 25 Public Dialogue Facilitators of 5 males and 20 female, the composition was 5 Dalits, 5 Brahmins, 11 Janajaties, 3 Chhetries and 1 other. At the end of this, the facilitators were prepared and organized to run 40 Constitutional Assembly education workshops in the Bhaktapur District.

2. Training

Constitutional Assembly Education Workshops in the Bhaktapur District

After the TOT programme the facilitators ran civic education workshops on the upcoming Constitutional Assembly in 40 different sites in the Bhaktapur district. A total number of 2,186 people took part in these workshops, amongst whom, 368 were men and 1818 were women. For each workshop there was an average of 55 participants

Although the urban areas in Bhaktapur are mainly occupied by Newars, there are other castes in these areas too. Among the participants there were 44.14% Janajati; 31.38 % Chhetri; 11.48% Brahmin; 10.43% Dalit & 2.56%. The whole program focused on marginalized and minority women's groups. These topics covered are listed below:

- ⇒ What is the Constitution
- ⇒ Constitution making process
- ⇒ Principals of the Constitution
- ⇒ What is the Constitution Assembly,
- ⇒ The importance and the procedure of the Constitutional Assembly
- ⇒ The role of the citizen in the Constitutional Assembly
- ⇒ The difference between Constitution Assembly election and by election
- ⇒ Inclusive Democracy

- ⇒ Introduction to political restructuring
- ⇒ Federal system of government
- ⇒ Local Self Governance
- ⇒ Voting arrangement in Constitution Assembly election
- ⇒ How to cast your vote in Constitution Assembly election
- ⇒ How do the Constitution Assembly members pass the Constitutional Bill
- ⇒ The involvement & duties of each citizen in Constitution Assembly.
- ⇒ Brief introduction to the Loktantra and Ganatantra
- ⇒ What is multi-party democracy

During the training, posters, calendars and small guidebooks were used to provide information to the participants. Discussions were held on various issues regarding the CA elections to ensure that the participants had a clear understanding on the subjects covered. Our discussion programme also included participants speaking of their own experiences in civic and voter education. These included the Chairperson of Water Resource in Bhaktapur, an Ex-Mayor of Thimi and an Assistant Chairperson of Forestry. Some of the workshops were held in VDC offices, parties or at local gathering points.

Achievements

Our programme workshops covered most of the Bhaktapur district including both municipalities and all the VDC's. Though the subject matter were quite new to the women groups, after this training they became enlightened about the Constitutional Assembly and its importance, They also had a greater understanding of the role of each citizen to develop the country and their responsibility towards the system of Government.

According to the women's group, they are now able to talk freely about the up coming Constitution Assembly & how to vote properly, which they say they will share with others.

Participants thanked CAC-Nepal and FWLD for providing these workshops. This programme also helped CAC-Nepal to reach the community on a grassroots level. The newspaper (Rajdhani) published the news about the program on 27th May 2007 and 28th May 2007. The local Bhaktapur FM stations also frequently broadcasted news about the programme.

- 2,186 people attended 40 workshops; most of these people were uneducated.
- On average there were 55 people at every workshop.
- Among the participants 84.13% were women and 15.87% were men.
- Participants were given information about their rights and responsibilities with regard to the Constitution, their Rights and the Constitution Assembly elections including:
 - Constitution making process, Principals of Constitution.
 - Constitution Assembly
 - Importance and the procedure of the Constitutional Assembly
 - Role of the citizen in the Constitutional Assembly

- They could understand the difference between the Constitution Assembly election and the By Election
- Inclusive Democracy
- Introduction to political restructuring
- Federal system of government
- Local Self Governance
- Participants now understand about Loktantra and Ganatantra
- Participants now understand about the political restructuring of the state.
- Voting arrangement in Constitution Assembly election
- How to cast vote in Constitution Assembly election
- How do the Constitution Assembly members pass constitutional Bill
- The involvement & duties of each citizen in Constitution Assembly

Challenges

The main challenge was that many of the participants were uneducated. It was difficult to ensure that they understand the whole subject matter. Some of the words used during the workshop were very difficult for many people to understand. Some of the more complex and detailed parts of the workshop were also difficult to comprehend. Participants did not find many of the issues and topics covered very interesting. We had to visit all participants before the programme to encourage them to attend each workshop which was not easy to do. Having both educated and uneducated people in the same workshop did cause some problems. The major challenges are listed as below:

- All the participants did not give full interest due to difficult words.
- Difficult to encourage all the participants to attend
- Linguistic difficulties.
- Difficult due to combination of literate & illiterate participants.
- Monsoon season made travel difficult
- Cost of transportation was not covered for the participants

Lesson learnt and suggestions for change

- The need to expand the targeted sites for these workshops, 40 sites was not enough as many people requested us to hold workshops in their villages but this was not possible.
- More visual aids would have helped to ensure that our messages were understood.
- The workshops should be shorter or run over a longer number of days.
- The language used should be translated into a local context, even local language so that terms are easier to understand.
- There should be various levels of workshops available according to the education status of the participants.
- Due to seasonal work for many (like Ropai) these workshops should also aim to include these people who otherwise would miss out.
- We should aim to target young groups in the Valley.