

Municipal Platform Meeting

27th June 2017

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NCE Nepal together with CARE Nepal organized a program titled “Municipal Platform Meeting on Safety and Security Issues of Marginalized Girls in Education” on 27th June, 2017 at Alfa House, Baneshwor.

Dalit women members of Municipalities Executive’s and 6 Deputy Mayors from the municipalities of three districts namely Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur; representatives from civil societies, journalists, students, and Members of Parliament were present at the program.

Ms. Suman Tuladhar, Dr. Vidyanath Koirala, Ms. Seema Rajput each presented a paper during the program. Professor Dr. Mana Wagle facilitated the program.

The program aimed at

- Capacitating recently elected officials of local government with regard to girls’ education.
- Exploring the safety and security issues of marginalized girls in education.

The program kicked off with Nepalese national anthem sung by school children, Mr. Shubendra Man Shrestha gave a brief introduction of NCE stating NCE being a network of 286 members representing I/NGOs, journalist groups, teachers federation with 19 district level coalitions and that NCE works towards strengthening public education. He reported that Right to Education Forum (RTE), CARE India, Care Nepal and NCE-Nepal are working together on safety and security concerns of girls from marginalized community with regard to their education. He then urged President of NCEN Mr. Kumar Bhattarai to state the objective of the program and to formally welcome all in the program.

Welcome Speech: Mr. Kumar Bhattarai, President NCEN

Mr. Bhattarai welcomed all the participants at the program; He highlighted the common grounds between India and Nepal with regard to the situation of marginalized community, and their access to education.

He claimed that the presence of recently elected officials of local bodies and representatives from regional forums made this a national as well as global platform and that the objective of the program was to address the problems of girls from marginalized communities towards accessing education, their safety and security concerns. He further stated “we have Dalit females elected officials and representatives from RTE Forum and CARE India, who will later share their experiences working on the said issues which will also help us address problems in Nepal.[...]” Thanking every one for participating Mr. Bhattarai ended his speech.

Mrs. Indu Pant Ghimire, CARE Nepal

She explained the issues on which CARE Nepal works, citing girls and women being the primary focus. Highlighting that CARE India has been working on education for 16-17 years from whom we can learn many things Mrs. Ghimire stated that even though we have good policies but still girls do not come to schools, to address this we are working towards bringing changes through the evidence gathered from research works.

She stated NCE-Nepal being partner for CARE Nepal in Nepal and RTE forum in India on promoting girls education and that by NCEN long experience working in education sector CARE Nepal and the state itself can learn many things. Finally thanking NCEN for giving the opportunity to speak Mrs. Ghimire ended her speech.

Paper Presentation: Ms. Suman Tuladhar

Ms. Tuladhar presented a paper titled *Girls education for better future* during the program. She stated that only the safety and security of girls can lead to better future and that she was very excited for the presentation because of the presence of recently elected female municipal officials. She explored on how the issue about girls education in the society have been changing; before 50's people used to say that girls will become witches if they learn in schools, in the 70s people needed educated daughter-in-law but did not encourage them on working outdoors and how finally in the 90s and till now society finally is encouraging girls education and working women.

She pointed out that child marriage is one of the problems behind out of school girls and that even though the admission rate is high among girls but their pass percentage is low and claimed that infrastructure, social norms and lifelong learning are 'the areas' to be worked upon.

Finally suggesting pointers namely strong political will, feeling of ownership, working with stakeholders and effective & efficient use of resource to elected leaders she ended her presentation.

Paper Presentation: Dr. Vidyanath Koirala

Dr. Koirala presented a paper titled "*Implementing policies in favor of marginalized and indigenous communities of Nepal*"

Dr. Koirala stated that since we have many policies in Nepal, we must first analyze these policies and keep what is required and repeal unnecessary policies. He highlighted the need of Municipalities to address Dalit community issues with regard to education and claimed that NGOs work does not really address the core areas.

He had listed out various discriminations that Dalits face on the basis of caste in his paper; some of the examples were about how teacher throw dusters at students to punish them so that He/She does not have to touch Dalit children, Dalits charged of being witches, Social boycott on Dalits, and no Dalits participation on decision making platforms.

Finally emphasizing the need of local level dialogue on the matter at hand Dr. Koirala ended his presentation.

Remarks: Dr. Aparajita Sharma, RTE Forum

Dr. Sharma gave a brief introduction about RTE Forum, elaborating that it works to achieve equal education for all. She explored the history behind the Right to education Act in India stating that it was only after the formation of Kothari Commission (1964) the ideal of right to education for all propagated and that only after 8 years since the inclusion of education as the fundamental right, the Right to Education Act (2009) was enacted.

She further elaborated the Right to Education act stating that, it defines what an ideal school is, has prohibitions such as no detention policy, zero tolerance to violence. However, according to her the implementation of the said act is not in par with the ideal which Kothari Commission had envisioned.

Stating that the issue of safety and security of girls from marginalized community with regard to their getting education is a huge issue and the time to cover this is never enough she ended her speech.

Paper Presentaion: Ms. Seema Rajput, CARE India

Ms. Rajput stated that CARE India is working since the early 50's; at first it focused its work on health issues and after 90s it has been working in various issues, education being one of them.

She explained that free education does not only mean free admission but also free school dress, free textbook, free food at school and that it is the work of local authority to ensure compulsory education; and that fear free education meant leaning in such environment that promotes no fear , with no failing policies , no violence ,and no corporal punishments.

She stated that they found out why children from marginalized community had low attendance rate, it was the safety and security concerns that had been obstructing them. Hence Nepal and India having such a cordial relationship and common problems led CARE to work together on ensuring education of girls from marginalized community in safe and secured environment.

She highlighted 8 issues namely: Physical, Emotional, Sexual Harassment, Educational neglect, Infrastructure, Emergency & disaster condition and health & hygiene which being the barrier to girls education are also the areas to be worked upon.

Thanking for the opportunity, and pointing out the remarkable female participation in the program and at the recent election and how India could learn from it she ended her presentation.

Remarks: Mrs. Hariprabha Khadki Shrestha, Deputy Mayor of Kathmandu Metropolitan

Mrs. Shrestha stated that just recently the jurisdiction of these areas was given to deputy mayors so we need to work hard on this issue. She emphasized government employees and public office holders not admitting their children to public school as the main problem, and also that there are more teachers than students in the metropolitan

Stating the need of prioritizing the education issue of *Dalits* and *Janajatis*, and the need for civil society and Municipality to discuss on this issue in the future she ended her remarks.

Remarks: Hon. Rameshwor Phuyal, Member of Parliament

Metaphorically and poetically expressing the problems of *Dalits* in household and schools he emphasized the importance of 'us' as individuals to address the issue not someone else.

Quoting the recent incident of 3 former IGPs going to jail because of corruption he warned recently elected officials not to act as their predecessors.

He glorified his contribution towards making women representation possible through reservation in recent election and in making both son and daughter heir to parental property.

Pointing the common kitchen in the program and saying if every household started do so then transformation of society is possible, he ended his remarks.

Remarks: Hon. Deepshika Sharma Dhakal , Member of Parliament

Highlighting the duty of parliamentarian as only of making laws and policies, she stated that it is actually up to the bureaucrats and the elected executive heads to implement such laws .

She thanked all the presenters for the wonderful presentation and ended her remarks.

Remarks: Mrs. Bindu Simkhada, Deputy Mayor of Kageshwori Manohara Municipality

Mrs. Simkhada thanked NCEN for organizing the program and said “I am not the expert of all the things here but I will surely try to work on this issue. In my experience the public school is always despised [...] in current scenario almost all the children have got the opportunity to study however in most of the schools there is not the facility of sanitary pads and other facilities which are girls friendly.[...] Though we treat people equally, old people do not do so, it is very hard to change their mindset. At last I promise that I will work for the advancement of children and *Dalits*, and that we will sit together again with civil society further on this regard, Thank You”

Remarks: Mrs. Saraswoti Khadka, Deputy Mayor Kirtipur Municipality

Mrs. Khadka stated “We learned many things today by this program. Within Kirtipur private schools are more in numbers than public schools, the quality of public school is not in par with private school so we are trying to merge public school for better resources and quality. Our problem is such that public schools teachers admit their children in private schools, when asked about it they show fear that their children might learn unsophisticated peasant culture from public schools students. [...] Old people still believe in caste discrimination it is really hard to change their mindset. We must conduct various programs to make women, *Dalits* skilled, saying this I want to end my speech here thank you”.

Remarks: Mrs. Bina Bastola, Deputy Mayor of Changunarayan Municipality

Mrs. Bastola said “I am very happy for being able to participate in this kind of training program organized by civil societies. We at Changanarayan have always treated *Dalits* as equals but it is hard to change the structure of patriarchy. [...] there are great individual who became a famous name were the product of community schools so why not admit our children to public schools. Thank You”

Remarks: Mrs. Bhanu Dotel, Deputy Mayor of Takreshwor Municipality

Mrs. Dotel emphasized in her speech that the awareness campaign for old people must be promoted and work should be done according to the need of respective areas.

Dr. Wagle then urged children present to share their experience in schools. School Children present in the program shared their schools situation with mostly positive comments. Then the floor was opened for discussion.

The floor discussion brought forward questions and suggestions regarding the education of children from marginalized groups.

Open Floor Discussion

- In some places the job placement of teacher is high in some place low, school are compelled to hire private tutors on certain wage, how can we balance this and what were the challenges working in India on this issues?
- The student who studied at 7 class in Terai area was admitted at class 3 in Kathmandu due to incompetency, why these differences and how can we address it?
- We hear that teacher destroyed student’s ear and eyes on the news, how can teachers be so cruel and how can we address it?
- *Dalit* representative from Kageshwori Manohara Municipality stated what can you do for *Dalits* and what can we?

- *Dalit* representative from Nagarjun Municipality stated that she have seen discrimination on the basis of caste in her area and asked how can we change this.
- *Dalits* who converted to Christianity and Buddhism in India post independence were not given scholarships by the decision of the cabinet, what you have to say about this?
- In my area girls are going to schools, even old people go for learning we even have night classes for them.
- I am from *Dalit* community (please censor this) I was not given the opportunity to teach at school on the sole reason of being a *Dalit*.
- I was married to a *Dalit* husband, who suffered from kidney failure and I donate d one of my kidney to him. I cannot do hard work because of it. It is hard for me to admit my children to schools.
- People in village even have not heard about school sector development plan this shows that holding these kind of discussions at national level does not help, we need to focus on local level.
- *Dalit* representative Mrs. Sharmila Bayelkoti from Changunarayan Municipality said that there is still discrimination on the basis of caste in her area.
- One *Dalit* representative stated that if Deputy Mayors of Municipalities say that it is hard to convince their parents to treat everyone equally then how can we expect them that they will change the society.

Response from Mrs. Seema Rajput:

“This discussion made such a tense environment that we are able to grasp the gravity of the situation. These questions cannot be addressed at conferences it will take a long time just to address the issues superficially.

First you must look into your policies understand them properly, these kind of meetings discussions must be regular this will help to bring out issues. You must also focus on school and

community relationship it must be developed it is very essential. Monitoring of whether or not the policy is implemented must be looked into.

In India we have the slogan *Primary school in every kilometer and upper level school in every 3 kilometers*; we have the provision of 25% reservation quotas for children from marginalized group in schools. We support your statement that the children of bureaucrats and leaders must study at public schools”.

Response of Dr. Sharma:

“We also have school development plan in India like in Nepal. [...] What we can do is write laws and policies in simple language and distribute it in grass root level”.

Response from Dr. Koirala:

“We can change the mindset of old people; I changed the mindset of mother by explaining to her that it is written in scripture that *‘Hari is in everyone’* (God is within every one). If people discriminate on the basis of religion we can debate and ask them in which scripture, we must be expert in these things then we can change people.

We have laws that bar public school from taking fees, however our laws have created the exception of donation this is huge loophole which must be addressed.

Disparity in education can be addressed by conducting special class for the students who are weaker in certain subjects.

Teacher using corporal punishment must be identified and made aware of the consequences of his/her actions.

To fully realize NGOs work, local government and NGO should coordinate and work together”.

Questioning the elected officials present stating “can you make a law which compels the children of leaders and bureaucrats to study in public school” and thanking everyone for coming Dr. Wagle concluded the program.

Conclusion

The meeting program was successful to fulfill its objective, the discussion and the presentation of experts helped capacitate the recently elected local bodies representatives towards the issue of marginalized girls education, and the discussion helped to explore and to find solutions to the said issue.