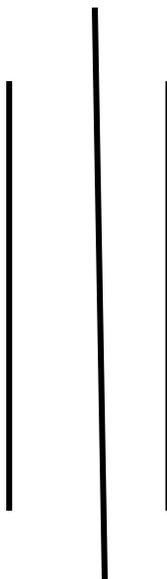


# PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT

ON

"ENSURING DALIT AGENDA IN CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY"



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# PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT

ON

## "ENSURING DALIT AGENDA IN CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY"

### **4. BACKGROUND**

Dalits are Nepal's most disadvantaged large group. They make up more than 13 percent of the population and are socially excluded, and economically and politically marginalized. Nepalese society is extremely discriminatory and exclusionary based on caste, sex, ethnicity, class, location, language and culture. While socialization processes, discriminatory and exclusionary mindset has been developed in every Nepali citizen. Due to this, certain groups like Dalits, women, and indigenous nationalities lag far behind in political and socio-economic spheres.

Though, Dalits constitute 13% of total population officially (the Dalit movement claims it to be 20%) their representation in the state governance is very negligible. According to a recent study carried out by World Bank and DFID poverty incidence in Dalit is almost fifty percent where as it is 12-16% among Bahun, Chhetri and Newars. The appalling situation resulted Dalits as a portion of population as untouchable, excluded, poor, illiterate and access less.

Nepal has undergone various forms of political change processes including the recent people's movement of April 2006. In all these political process of change Dalits have contributed significantly. During the recent popular movement of 2006, out of 22 martyrs declared 3 are Dalits. The non-government sector of Dalit lead by Dalit NGO Federation also played a crucial role and many of its officials were arrested during different agitation and demonstrations organized against the royal regime.

The constitution of 1990 was considered as one of the best constitutions of the world but it could not address the issues and problems of Dalits and create ownership. One of the main reasons of being so is null participation of the excluded groups in the constitution making process. Even the recent initiative of making an interim constitution, there was frustrating situation as at the very last moment only one Dalit was included. The outcome of the interim constitution has not been widely accepted by most of the social movement groups including Dalits.

Constituent assembly, after people movement, has become a proper exit to settle all the problems that Nepal is facing. All the excluded groups including Dalits of Nepal have considered it is an opportunity to establish their rights through proportionate representation in the constituent assembly.

Usually the Dalit communities including other excluded groups are not so much aware on the meaning and process of constituent assembly since the pre-set date of CA is coming near. The people who come from urban claim they are aware on the process though the majority of population lags behind. The voters' education, political discussion and issues of marginalized people are seen unplanned. The state mechanism itself is not able to run these series of programs to the needy peoples within this time frame. In the other side, the necessity of making Dalit people aware on their rights is very crucial to this moment in Nepal.

This project concept, therefore, aimed to establish the Dalit agendas through human rights based programs organized on the occasion of 21<sup>st</sup> March (As a day of Racial Discrimination Elimination Day).

## **5. PROJECT OBJECTIVES**

The overall objective of the project was to increase active political participation and meaningful representation of Dalit communities in the whole processes of making the new constitution and secure constitutional guarantee on Dalit rights. The specific objectives were:

1. To establish Dalit agendas in forthcoming constituent assembly through series of human rights based seminar, interaction program on the occasion of Racial Discrimination Elimination Day-21<sup>st</sup> March.
2. To sensitize and mobilize the youths and students for the rights of Dalits in order to sensitize the key stakeholders (political parties and media) on Dalit issues and agenda and adopt and promote inclusive policies.

## **6. ACCOMPLISHMENTS/ACHIEVEMENTS**

Several activities have been accomplished in pursuant with the set objectives by coinciding the occasion of 21<sup>st</sup> March, an International day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Each objective-wise activity performed during the given period is illustrated subsequently.

**Under objective No. 1**, a series of mass rally, cultural programme, signature campaign, poster, pamphlet and leaflet publication, press conference and exhibition were the major activities. DNF organized most of these activities in association with its member organizations. Events and activities accomplished under this objective are described below:

### **1.1 Mass rally/meetings**

DNF organized a series of mass rally and mass meetings at all level including central and regional by bringing thousands of Dalits and non Dalit supporters on Dalit cause. Under mass rally, DNF did the followings:

#### **1.1.1 Organization of 42<sup>nd</sup> International Day for Elimination of Racial Discrimination in Kathmandu**

The 42<sup>nd</sup> International Day for Elimination of Racial Discrimination was observed in Nepal on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2007 with a variety of programmes. In the coordinated efforts of Dalit NGO Federation (DNF) and its member organizations celebrated the day. First, the day began with a rally, which started from Tundikhel open theatre (Khula Munch) passed through the main thoroughfares and converged into a mass meeting at Basantapur, Kathmandu. Nearly, 10,000 participants attended the mass rally.

During mass rally/meeting day, DNF organized an exhibition program in Basantapur, Kathmandu with the aim of demonstrating and sharing the culture, historical materials of Dalits, traditional instruments of Dalits, literatures, books and other publications pertaining to the issues and concerns of Dalits. Likewise, on the same day, Dalit Women Utthan Center, Galphutar, Kathmandu in coordination with DNF organized fine art competition at the premises of Valley Public School. Altogether, 49 students from various schools took part in the competition. In addition to Kathmandu, DNF regional offices organized fine art competition in their concerned region by involving school level students. The drawings of six winners have been used to create a calendar.

Various leaders from different political parties and Dalit organizations stressed the end of all forms of discrimination, while addressing the mass meeting. Madhav Kumar Nepal, the general secretary (CPN-UML), Mahendra Anand (Sadhbhavana), Khagendra Basyal (NC), Min Biswakarma (NC-D), Sebal Ram (Sadhbhavana), Kesh Man Biswakarma (Jana Morcha), Ganesh Deulal Bk (civil society), among others were the speakers in the mass meeting. Altogether speakers urged the government to reduce poverty

and raise public awareness to establish discrimination free society. However, the General Secretary of CPN-UML, Madhav Kumar Nepal said that the government should introduce the laws to penalize the people who discriminate others on the basis of caste. He added that the laws have been amended, but not practically implemented. Still, political leaders and upper caste people speak high speeches against racial discrimination in public, but in practice they discriminate Dalits. However, perpetrators are safeguarded by administration. These people, especially the leaders from political parties should not only be punished but should be excluded from the society.

Durga Sob, Chairperson of Feminist Dalit Organization (FEDO) said that Dalits have been celebrating this day as a protest against the discrimination of Dalit, oppressed and disadvantaged people. Unfortunately, the discrimination still persists in the country. Another speaker, Bhakta Bishwakarma said that the government should be clear about the inclusion of people from all castes and races in the constituent assembly. Photos gallery is shown in annex.

### **1.1.2 Organization of 42<sup>nd</sup> International Day for Elimination of Racial Discrimination in 4 Regions**

Apart from Kathmandu, DNF organized the mass rally through its regional offices across the country. DNF Regional Offices (Biratnagar, Pokhara, Nepalgunj and Dhangadhi) separately celebrated the 42<sup>nd</sup> International Day for Elimination of Racial Discrimination in association with their member organizations. Approximately, 20, 000 participants (5,000/region) attended the mass rally across the four regions of Nepal. However, organizing or celebrating method and approach, and the proceeding of the programme (function) was similar to that of Kathmandu including mass rally, mass meeting, demonstration and exhibition in each region.

### **1.2 Cultural programme**

On the occasion of 42<sup>nd</sup> International Day for Elimination of Racial Discrimination, DNF organized a cultural program in Kathmandu by involving many Dalit as well as non-Dalit artists, who performed for the awareness raising on Dalit issues, elimination of discrimination. More specifically, the songs related to emancipation of Dalits from all forms of discrimination and exclusion was performed. The programme was performed during mass meeting in Basantapur, Kathmandu.

### **1.3 Signature campaign**

DNF and alliance member organizations collected nearly 50,000 people signatures in the support of Dalit human rights, elimination of all forms of exclusion. Earlier, DNF finalized the slogan "Mainstream Dalit community ensuring the end of caste discrimination! Guarantee the proportionate representation of Dalits in all state affairs at all levels!!" for organizing signature campaign and then disseminated it to all its regional offices across the country. Of the total signatures, 20,000 are collected from Kathmandu and the rest from regional offices (eastern, western, mid western and far western regions). DNF has handed over the collected signatures to the government for necessary action. Photos are shown in annex.

### **1.4 Poster, pamphlet and leaflet publication**

DNF set the Dalit agenda and published a total of 11,500 publications including 2,000 pamphlets, 4,000 leaflet, 5,000 posters (4,000 in English and 1,000 in Nepali), and 500 calendar and disseminated to all concerned authorities including media, political party, civil society organizations, public places. Publications thus produced were delivered to its member organizations through the regional offices of DNF for wider distribution. Examples are in annex.

## **1.5 Press conference**

DNF organized a press meet on 18 March at its premises by inviting 28 journalists from the renowned media houses with the purpose of disseminating DNF's week long programs to be organized on the occasion of 21<sup>st</sup> March (As a International Day of Racial Discrimination Elimination). This conference intended to disseminate the programs and agendas of Dalits, so that mass media could cover the events on large scale. Various prominent scribes and journalists praised DNF activities to be organized on the occasion.

After the completion of overall activities as planned by DNF, another press meet was organized on 24 March 2007 by inviting 10 journalists at DNF premises with the purpose of sharing the information as well as the extent of coverage of 21<sup>st</sup> March activities and events by media houses of Nepal.

Nepal Television (NTV) covered the press conference events in the first week through its "Paribartan Programme" at 7.30 pm, whilst it transmitted 7 minutes special report regarding 21<sup>st</sup> March activities in the following week.

## **1.6 Exhibition**

During mass rally/meeting day, DNF organized an exhibition program in Basantapur, Kathmandu with the aim of demonstrating and sharing the culture, historical materials of Dalits, traditional instruments of Dalits, literatures, books and other publications pertaining to the issues and concerns of Dalits.

**Under objective No. 2**, college/school level speech competition, seminar with youth and student, fine art competition on school level, and interaction programme were the major activities. Activities carried out under this objective are described below:

### **2.1 School level speech competition**

Community Welfare Service Committee in association with DNF organized a school level speech competition (oratory programme) on "The Role of Students to end Untouchability" on 18 March 2007. The programme was organized at the premises of Gyan Bhumi English Boarding School, Phutung, Kathmandu. Altogether, 18 students (9 girls and 9 boys) from nine schools from across the Kathmandu district participated in the oratory programme. Mr. Shiva Khakurel from INSEC was the chief guest along with other guest participants. Mr. Raj Kumar Acchami, the vice-president of Community Welfare Service Committee chaired the session. Urmila Maharjan, a girl student from Gyan Bhumi School was declared first in the contest of three hours and 15 minutes long speech competition programme. List of participants is shown in annex.

### **2.2 Seminar with youth**

Cultural Campaign for Equality (CUCEQ) and Nepal Dalit Women Organisation in collaboration with Dalit NGO Federation (DNF) organised a seminar on "Youth's Role in Reconstruction of Nation" on 19<sup>th</sup> March 2007 at Hotel Ashoka, Kathmandu. The programme mainly focused on the condition of Dalits, especially youth and their contribution and role in reconstruction of Nepal at the present context.

The programme was chaired by Ms Tulasha Gautam, the president of Nepal Dalit Women Organisation. Other guests were Mr. Min Bishwakarma, Ms Sita Bishwakarma-the Member of Parliament, Ms Shanti Burma-representative of Mukti Samaj, Bishnu Khatri-Youth Action Nepal, Iman Sunar-central executive member of DNF and Ms Pabitra Sunar-youth journalist. Mr. Ramsharan Khati, the secretary of CUCEQ facilitated the programme. See list of participants in annex.

### **2.3 Seminar with students**

DNF Central Regional Office in association with DNF Head Office organized an interaction programme on "**The Role of Youth Students for Social Change**" in Law Campus, Kathmandu on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2007. The programme was attended by several student leaders of student wings of eight political parties. Altogether, 72 persons participated in the programme. See list of participants in annex.

### **2.4 Fine Art competition**

Fine art helps to reveal the miserable life of Dalit in picture that gives the message to eliminate the exclusionary practices. To make it happen so, Dalit Women Utthan Center, Galphutar, Kathmandu in coordination with DNF organized fine art competition at the premises of Valley Public School. It was organized during mass meeting's exhibition on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2007. Altogether, 49 students from various schools took part in the competition. In addition to Kathmandu, DNF regional offices organized fine art competition in their concerned region by involving school level students. The drawings of six winners have been used to create a calendar. The excellent art are also published in media. See calendar in annex.

### **2.5 Interaction programme**

DNF organized several interaction programmes on different issues and concerns, particularly focusing on the agenda of Dalits in forthcoming CA and intending to pressurize the political leaders, government mechanisms, civil society organizations. Interaction programmes thus organized are described as followings:

#### **2.5.4 The role of local party representatives for ensuring proportionate representation of Dalits in constituent assembly**

An interaction programme on "The role of local party representatives for ensuring proportionate representation of Dalits in constituent assembly" was organised on 20 March 2007 in Hotel Sweet Home Bhaktapur. The programme was organised by Creative Forum Nepal in coordination with from DNF. Mr. Sundar Bishwakarma, the vice-chairman of Utpidit Upekchhit and Dalit Barga Utthan Bikas Samiti was the chief guest of the event. Altogether, 65 participants participated in the programme.

Representatives from various political parties, sister organisations, civil society organisations, and distinguished personalities were invited as guests in the programme. In the programme, Mr. Som Prasad Mishra, secretary-Bhaktapur district of CPN (UML), Mr. Nirmal Dhola, the central member of Nepal Utpidit Jatiya Mukti Samaj, Ms Tulasa Gautam, the president-National Dalit Women's Organisation, Mr. Bhes Bahadur Karki, the representative of Nepali Congress, Mr. Himalayashwor Bhul, the representative of NeMaKiPa, and Mr. Udhav Koirala, the vice chairman of Dalit Bikas Samiti-Bhaktapur were present. Mr. Eak Raj Lakandri, the president of Creative Forum Nepal presided over the function, whilst Mr. Sangam Gahatraj extended welcome to the participants. Mr. Baburatna Dhola facilitated the proceedings of the interaction programme. See annex for list of participants.

#### **2.5.5 The issues of Dalits in constituent assembly**

A daylong interaction programme on "The Issues of Dalits in Constituent Assembly" was organised in Hotel Ashoka, Bagbazar. The programme was divided in two phases. In first phase, the leaders from political parties expressed their views on Dalit and their representation in constituent assembly and in the second phase, the participants of the programme interacted with leaders on concurrent issues of Dalit movement.

The guest leaders were Ms Shanta Manabi from CPN (UML), Mr. Min Bishwakarma from Nepali Congress (D), Ms Anjana Bishunkhe member of interim legislative parliament, Mr. Manai Mahato-OBC Federation, and Mr. Mahendra Ananda Mahato-SVP. They insisted on united movement of Dalit for the influence of polices on Dalit issues.

The programme was jointly organised by Social Inclusion for Equality (SIFT) Nepal and Ram Samaj Kalyan Manch. The programme was chaired by Mr. Sewal Ram, the president of Ram Samaj Kalyan Munch. Altogether, 65 participants attended the programme. See annex for list of participants.

### **2.5.6 Representation of Dalits in constituent assembly**

Samantaka lagi Jagaran Kendra in coordination with DNF organized a daylong interaction programme on "Representation of Dalits in constituent assembly" on 20 March 2007 in the premises of DDC of Lalitpur District. Altogether, 41 persons including 13 women attended the programme. Local Development Officer, Mr. Danduraj Ghimire was the chief guest, whereas District Education Officer, Mr. Surya Prasad Gautam, Planning Officer Suryabadana Pandit, Social Development Officer Ramji Chaulagain, Mr. Madhu Sudan Paudyal, the secretary of CPN-UML, Mr. Bala Bahadur Pariyar from NC-D, Mr. Arjun Bagale from DNF, Mr. Pradeep Ramtel, Mrs. Maina Acchami and Mrs. Chandrawat Bisunkhe were among the guests in the programme. The programme was facilitated by Mr. Kumal Nepali, the secretary of Samantaka lagi Jagaran Kendra.