

Discussion on the Role of Youth in the Health and Protection of Girl Child And Adolescents' Girls

To mark the International Youth Day 2021, Jagriti Child and Youth Concern Nepal (JCYCN) in joint collaboration with National Youth Council (NYC) and National Coalition for Girls Rights (NCGR) had organized an interaction programme “*Discussion on the role of youth in the health and protection of girl child and adolescents’ girls*” in support from Kanallan Switzerland. The programme was organized in collaboration with CARE Nepal, Good Neighbors International Nepal, World Vision International, Save the Children, Caritas Germany, Mercy Corps, Plan International, TDH Germany, SDG Studio, WOREC, Restless Development Nepal, SPCSN, NCFL-G, Lions Club of Kathmandu Child Rights, Nepal Youth Network, and Hami. The virtual event was facilitated by Mr. Tilottam Paudel, Executive member of National Youth Council (NYC) Government of Nepal and President of JCYCN which consisted of around 150 participants that included representatives from ministry and related government organizations, respective networks and alliances, development organizations, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) along with peer educators, adolescents’ child club member, teachers, parents, journalists.

International Youth Day (IYD) gives an opportunity to celebrate and mainstream young peoples’ voices, actions and initiatives, as well as their meaningful, universal and equitable engagement. Every year JCYCN celebrates International Youth Day with different concepts along with the youths from different parts of the country. This year the main agenda of the programme was the inclusive role of youths in the health and protection of girl child and adolescents’ girls thus improving child nutrition. The participants were also made familiar with the issues on legal provisions and policies for child nutrition and health under Child Rights Act 2075.

In order to address the issue of youth, the United Nations has decided to celebrate 12th August every year since 1999 as International Youth Day. The day has been celebrated in Nepal for the first time since 2004 under the leadership of youth led organizations. It has been officially celebrated since 2016 under the leadership of the Nepal Youth Council after its establishment in

2015. In 2008, the Ministry of Youth and Sports launched the National Youth Policy for Youth Development and Mobilization in Nepal to address youth issues. The government has been working for the collective development of youth leadership by issuing Youth Vision 2015-2025. Nepal's National Youth Policy (2015) aims to make qualitative role of youths and capacity inherent in them for building prosperous, modern and just Nepal, while integrating the youths in the mainstream of national development, through meaningful participation, capacity and leadership development. Today youths in Nepal have been widely involved to protect the health of girl child and adolescents.

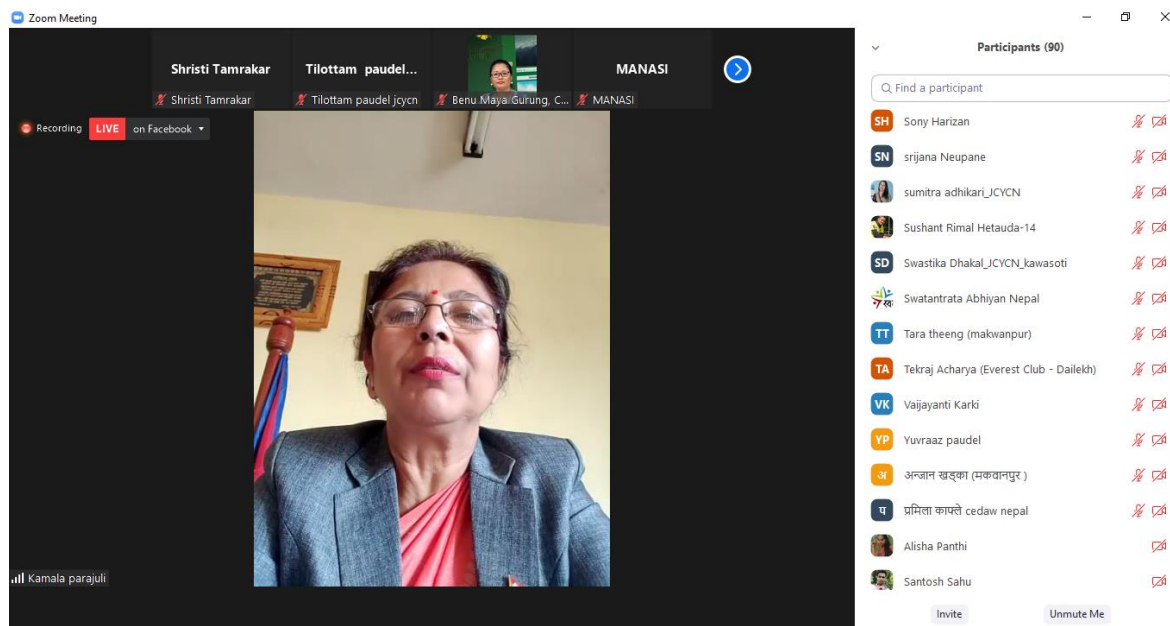
According to the stakeholders, although 40.3 percent of the total population in Nepal are young, sectors like education, health, security and employment are not guaranteed. In the opening remarks, Mr. Madhav Dhungel, Executive Vice President of the National Youth Council (NYC) Government of Nepal said that today's children and adolescents are tomorrow's youth which stresses on the need to be serious about their health and protection. Ever since the establishment of the youth council, policy advocacy and capacity building of the youth have been continuously carried out. He said that the council has initiated its activities with the participation of the youth by developing their capacity to end the stereotypes and bad practices that existed in the society. Ms. Indu Pant Ghimire, the resource person of the programme introduced the background of youth ratio in global population and in Nepal. She emphasized on the importance of social justice and sexual justice. Highlighting the privilege and power of men in the male dominated society, she stressed on youth male advocacy for girl's rights. Basically, there is a need of the role of men and boys in enabling safe environment and health measure for girls.



Likewise, Youth Representative Sameer Pariyar and Adolescent Representative Priti Bhushal highly underlined on the fact that youths should raise awareness on sensitive topics such as reproductive health, menstruation, sexual violence, exploitation, female nutrition, need of child and gender friendly infrastructure on continuous level. According to them, it would be better if

the State pays more attention to the issue of adolescent girls as they are one of the vulnerable sectors of the society and they still face the discrimination. Though State has included young girls as representatives in few programmes but their mere participation is still absence. For this, a representative from one of the development partners, Ms. Rakshya Poudel, emphasized that State should initiate more effective development programmes with collaboration with local development partners that involves young girls to increase their participation in decision making level. This will not only help in protection of health of adolescents' girls but also will create overall progress in the society.

Dr. Padam Prasad Khatiwada, Vice-Chairman of Social Welfare Council, said that the next generation should be developed as a committed group for bringing equality. Advocacy and lobbying should be done in designing the programs and projects from all donor agencies as to focus on increasing the participation of children, adolescents and youth as a whole or even as a cross-cutting theme. Ms. Benu Maya Gurung, Chair of National Action and Coordination Group (NACG) talked about reproductive health of adolescent mothers in rural communities who are deprived of proper nutrition due to poverty and cultural norms like "eating only after all family members have eaten". Hon' Lily Thapa, member of the National Human Rights Commission, rightly emphasized the role of youths in creating awareness in such ill-practices. Further, she informed about government plans to facilitate the formulation of policies and programs to end all forms of discrimination and inequality against young girls. She informed continuous working of the government for the protection and promotion of all kinds of rights stipulated by the constitution and also assured that the representation of sexual minorities and marginalized communities will continue to be built properly.



Moreover, Hon' Kamala Parajuli, Chairperson of the National Women Commission said that a girl child faces discrimination starting from a mother's womb. Growing up to become a youth, her sexual and reproductive health is largely ignored due to societal norms. So, she has also suggested to include issues of girl child in school curriculum so that these sensitive issues are

made conscious from the very beginning. Likewise, other prominent speakers like Bandana Rana, Member of CEDAW spoke about positive masculinity i.e., respecting rights of women.

Young girls face risks everywhere as they might not be police and rescue organizations all the time to prevent buying and selling of girls, violence against girls, child rights, child marriage and rape. In this case, youths should play an important role as responsible citizens in terms of protection. Most importantly, girl's health does not only mean physical health but also a mental health. The discrimination behavior causes negative impression towards a girl's mental health. Therefore, youths should focus on implementing SDG indicators and achieving these related SDG goals. Provided with the necessary skills and opportunities needed to reach their potential, young people can be a driving force for supporting development and contributing to peace and security. Hence, in overall the event addressed issues of adolescents and young people about ending child marriage, violence, risk, and abuse, self-defense, menstruation, nutrition, abortion which effects their physical and mental health. Also, there should be unity among related stakeholders to create a child and girls' friendly environment for their betterment in the society.

Similarly, another event was organized on August 13th, 2021 to mark International Youth Day by Nepal Dalit Human Rights (DHR Nepal) in joint collaboration with NYC, Jcyn, AYON, COCAP, SDG Studio on *Extensive virtual interaction on the role of youth against caste discrimination*. The prominent speakers of the event were Mr. Kiran Paudel (Chairperson of Youth Federation Nepal), Mr. Surendra Basnet (Vice President, Akhil Krantikari), Mr. Manish Kumar Mishra (Chairperson, National Students Federation) and Mr. Jagdish Ayer (AYON) who rigorously advocated for youth involvement in eliminating caste-based discrimination. The Chief Guest of the event, Mr. Madhav Dhungel, Executive Vice President of National Youth Council shared that there is constitutional provision to include the marginalized community i.e., Dalit in every step of development and structure of development but there are negligible representatives from Dalit community those are also targeted from elite Dalit. In his welcome remarks, Mr. Tilottam Paudel, Executive member of National Youth Council (NYC) Government of Nepal and Chairperson of Jcyn emphasized that caste-based discrimination must be treated as a matter requiring the introduction and effective implementation of laws that will hold the perpetrators of abuses responsible for their actions, and ensure adequate compensation for the victims. Mr. Kiran Poudel, Chairperson of Youth Federation Nepal stated that though, the Government of Nepal has repeatedly expressed a commitment to eliminate caste based discrimination from the country by its fifteenth and sixteenth periodic reports submitted under the International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination, the practice of untouchability, rooted in the caste system, continues to stigmatize and dehumanize the 4.5 million Dalits in Nepal as 'polluted' or 'impure'. Likewise, Sushil B.K. Chairperson and activist of Dalit Human Rights (DHR) advocated Article 11(4) of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal, 1990 (hereafter referred to as the constitution) which guarantees the right against untouchability however untouchability remains rampant, and the perpetrators of Dalits' human rights violations are in most cases not prosecuted. Moreover, representatives from CSOs, journalists, activists, development partners emphasized that democratization processes are not only about bringing representative democracy but also supporting local and participatory

democratization with empowerment and participation of the Dalits which has to be initiated by youths. Hence the programme focused on the role of youths as an important actor to address development-based inequality. In total, 80 participants from the sectors like students, youth leaders, representatives from CSOs, development organizations, networks and alliances attended the virtual programme.

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वृहत भर्चुअल अन्तरक्रिया कार्यक्रम

मिति: २०७८ साउन २९ गते
शुक्रबार, १३ अगस्ट
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Logos: Ministry of Health and Sports, National Youth Council, Sanathoni, Bhaktapur; JYCYN 2021; and other youth organizations.

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