



# SANCHARIKA FEATURE SERVICE

सञ्चारिका लेखमाला

VOLUME 8

ISSUE 12

Monthly Publication

December 2005

*Women displaced by conflict find themselves helpless while in search of jobs* ✍️ *Sangita Rijal*  
**Displaced Women and Employment**

*More women are taking up paralegal jobs*  
**Women Paralegals of Udaypur**

✍️ *Kamala Parajuli*

*Women Journalists in the Eastern Region compelled to work without Pay* ✍️ *Madhu Rai*  
**How long will name alone sustain women journalists without pay in mofussil?**

*Bote families go hungry when women do not crush stones*  
**Where Men Depend on Women for their Livelihood**

✍️ *Vishnu Prasad Sharma*



## Displaced Women and Employment

*Women displaced by the conflict from their village have had to be displaced in towns as well. They had left for towns in search of jobs, but unemployment there has compelled them to leave the country as well. However, an absence of appropriate laws to regulate foreign employment for women has meant that their are either trafficked to Indian brothels or some other third country.*

✍ By Sangita Rijal

***According to a preliminary survey carried out by an NGO named Nepal Institute for Development Studies (NIDS), about 120,000 women have been laid off from garment factories. Among them, the study says, 50,000 fall into the high risk category. It also says that there are only around 49 factories left today, from the 1,500 that were there until the year 2000.***

Rural inhabitants have been displaced by the decade long armed conflict by the thousands. The biggest brunt of displacement is faced by women and children.

These displaced women are forced to seek employment for the livelihood of their family members and because of their deteriorating economic condition. But getting a job is not as easy.

The story of twenty-five year old Anita

Karki [name changed] of Ramechchap portrays the plight of these displaced women. She had to leave her village three years ago to avoid being recruited in the Maoist militia. Before coming to Kathmandu, Maoists occasionally made her participate in their local programmes.

Upon arrival in Katmandu, she got a job in a garment factory which not only made her self-reliant but also allowed her to provide financial support to her family back home. "I was satisfied with the job as I had no education for a better one," she tells of her past. But that happiness did not last long. She was laid off after two years when the factory closed down.

There are many women who have lost their garment factory jobs and have a similar story to tell. Several years ago, when the preferential quota system on garments, awarded by importers to countries like Nepal, was being phased out, factories began closing down. This left thousands of garment workers unemployed. Women were more affected by the closedown of the factories for lack of alternative employment outlets. Men can leave for India or other countries for work, but in the absence of related legislation, women do not have it that easy.

According to a preliminary survey carried out by an NGO named Nepal Institute for Development Studies (NIDS), about 120,000 women have been laid off from garment factories. Among them, the study says, 50,000 fall into the high risk category. It also says that there are only around 49 factories left today, from the 1,500 that were there until the year 2000.

According to social scientist Ganesh Gurung, who was involved in the study, most of the men who lost their job in this manner are still leaving for India for work.

"It is difficult for women to work in Indian garment factories for lack of adequate skills," Gurung says.

"Many displaced women were forced to work in the factories because of the conflict and because of a lack of alternative job opportunities," Programme Officer Jagirdhan Gurung of NIDS says. "It is necessary to give special attention to these women as they need employment and cannot return home."

It is not possible to rehabilitate these women in the domestic labour market immediately, again, because of the conflict. That is why, sociologist Gurung says, opportunities for these women in the international market must be identified.

However, there are various risks faced by women in foreign employment. Sociologist Gurung sees these women facing a great risk of trafficking. "Such women are lured across the border by brokers who promise them jobs. The government must focus on this problem immediately," he says.

The risk of being compelled to engage in the domestic flesh trade is as stark for these women. "Many have already been trafficked while many are already involved in prostitution, according to NIDS Programme Officer Jagirdhan Gurung.

A study carried out by NIDS between June and September of last year showed that among the 30 women then returning from Bombay brothels two had previously worked in garment factories. The study says that all the 30 had been sold to the brothels after they took the employment bait. The two ex-garment workers had also taken the bait as they had just been laid off from their garment jobs and were seeking employment.

These incidents prove that ex-garment factory workers are on a desperate search for employment at the moment. "If these women do not find employment a very complex situation could arise," says sociologist Gurung.

***Sociologist Gurung sees these women facing a great risk of trafficking. "Such women are lured across the border by brokers who promise them jobs. The government must focus on this problem immediately," he says.***

Saru Joshi Shrestha of United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)-Nepal is of the opinion that these displaced women must be rehabilitated in the country as far as possible. She believes that the situation is such that

government agencies such as the Royal Nepalese Army, Armed Police Force, civil service etc must fix a quota for recruiting these women.

"But if there are no possibilities for doing so, the international labour market must be scoured for opportunities for them to suit their qualification," she says.

She suggests that those without education qualification can be sent abroad for jobs such as domestic help, cleaner or guards.

Women have a particular tendency to go to the Gulf countries for work. Latest studies show that there are 30 to 40 thousand women working in Saudi Arabia alone. Joshi says that the government must take initiatives to stop women leaving for third countries via India.

There is also a need to look for opportunities in other Asian countries, especially in the context of the ban on Nepalese workers imposed by Hong Kong and the stiff price to be paid to reach Israel. "There is a lot of potential in Malaysia and permission is granted to anyone wanting to go there," she adds.

She also thinks that Maldives could be a destination within South Asia.

It is better to send them in a secure destination even if the pay is less rather than leaving them in an environment full of risks, Joshi says.

The government must begin running training programmes for conflict-displaced women or those laid off from garment factories by allocating funds from the 600 million rupees it spends annually on women's training through various ministries. Sociologist Gurung stresses that Nepal must be a member of the International Organization of Migrants (IOM) for it to be able to give security to

women in foreign employment. Nepal must also ratify the international convention on migrants, he suggests.

But last month's meeting of the Council of Ministers decided not to take the IOM membership. The spokesperson of the Ministry of Labour, Dhruva Sharma has said that the government was not in the mood to immediately ratify the international convention or be a member of the IOM.

Courtesy By  
Sancharika Samuha

## Women Paralegals of Udaypur

*Men working as paralegals on the premises government offices, courts and municipalities is a common sight, but women have also started appearing on the scene in some areas. In Udaypur, women have begun this profession, but men appear to hesitate to pay adequately for their services.*

✍ By Kamala Parajuli

***"It was very difficult for us initially, as we had never been to courthouses or government offices before, but today, we have to visit the CDO office, land revenue administration and the court everyday. We have to consult the officials in our work. We are slowly getting used to it," says 25 year old Pashupati Chaudhari.***

Women who were initially shy to come out of their homes and introduce themselves to strangers are seen busy today in courthouses and government offices meeting officials and executing the tasks of their clients. These women have thus challenged the notion that women's role is limited only

to household chores and that it is the men who look after official and legal businesses.

A training was organized for women by CLRC Udaypur and the Triyuga Paralegal Committee, with assistance from UNICEF, on ways of conducting official work by paralegal professionals. Thirty-three women representing various sectors took part in the training which took place from Bhadau 26-28, 2062. Five of the 33 have already started working in Gaighat as paralegals after the three-day training.

"It was very difficult for us initially, as we had never been to courthouses or government offices before, but today, we have to visit the CDO office, land revenue administration and the court everyday. We have to consult the officials in our work. We are slowly getting used to it," says 25 year old Pashupati Chaudhari.

Similarly, Sabitri Dhungana, who was another trainee in the same batch, says, "We are getting used to visiting government offices and courthouses now. We have other women in the village who have taken the training and who help us. Clients have started looking particularly for us to solve their problems, especially women clients. At the moment, we help them with filling official forms and applications for passports, citizenship papers and land survey maps. Officials at the court or the administrative offices have been assisting us in our work. They also clear up the confusion if we face hurdles."

But the prevailing attitude among many about even women taking up professional jobs as a livelihood means still needs to change, complains Shakuntala Chaudhari. She says, "Women work in homes for free and there is no accounting of that. We work as social workers in a voluntary manner. The situation is such that people still find it odd to pay us for the professional service we provide them. We also meet people who believe that women can be made to work for free."

She has her own experience on this. "I helped some people with nine different forms, but they left without paying me. I

was surprised. I could not follow them demanding my fees. Had they gone to a male paralegal, he would have charged them anything between 500-1,000 rupees."

The women paralegals are unanimous in claiming to have gained self-confidence after joining the profession. They think that they still need to learn the ways as they are new to the profession. "Given the opportunity to learn and with the help of some experienced hands, we can do a lot after some time," they say. "We at least know now that we can do our own work and people cannot hoodwink women if they are bent on preventing it. We are

***Justice Shiva Prasad Parajuli of Udaypur says that the training of women in paralegal services has been a significant step as it will push them towards preserving the rights and privileges due women in the future. "If they continue working as paralegals, experience can lead them to become good lawyers later in their life," Justice Parajuli says.***

capable of assisting many victimized and helpless women now. We are developing our identity among officials and other male professionals. This has encouraged us very much." Justice Shiva Prasad Parajuli of Udaypur says that the training of women in paralegal services has been a significant step as it will push them towards preserving the rights and privileges due women in the future. "If they continue working

as paralegals, experience can lead them to become good lawyers later in their life," Justice Parajuli says.

He says that women's problems can only be understood by women. "Women victims can face harassment if they go to male professionals as men will not be able to understand their plight and feelings as women would", he says.

The campaign to train women paralegals began in Gaighat of Udaypur for the first time in the country. "There are many problems related with women. Since women are not very knowledgeable about legal matters it was appropriate for us to train women on paralegal services so that the plight of women could be properly addressed with help from fellow women," UNICEF Programme Officer Manju Wagle of Udaypur says.

Women victims who used to feel helpless before, even when they were exploited to the extreme, now have friends in government office premises. They have thus benefited from the paralegal training. "Most men paralegals do not play fair and hoodwink their clients, but women are honest. They do not know how to be dishonest. They love everyone. Should anything arise pertaining to legal and administrative matters, we refer them to the women's paralegal centre in Gaighat," says 46 year old Basuki Rai of Beltar Village Development Committee.

This is a pilot campaign of UNICEF. Women visiting the government offices in Gaighat have now found ease in seeking administrative services in government offices. Apart from the general services to victims they have been able to provide, women have found a new profession. They need more encouragement, opportunity and inspiration to make the initiative more effective.

Courtesy By  
Sancharika Samuha

## How long will name alone, and no pay, sustain women journalists in *mofussil*?

*Dharan, Jhapa and Biratnagar come after capital Kathmandu while talking of journalism. Many organizations impart journalism training in the Eastern Region. Duly, many women have been trained in journalism here. But, they have not been able to maintain the initial enthusiasm with which they took up the training.*

✍ By Madhu Rai

***A revolution has occurred in the Nepalese mass media after the restoration of multiparty democracy. But the change has accommodated only a limited class, group and community. In the absence of equitable access to the media, whole classes, groups or communities get left behind. The picture provided by women's participation in the Nepalese media makes it all too clear.***

reporting.

Sirjana Koirala, who received basic training from the same centre two years ago periodically, writes for local newspapers. Since her interest is in feature writing, rather than reporting, she also sends her write-ups occasionally to national newspapers. Household chores come in the way of adopting the profession full-time, says the mother of a son and a daughter.

Shanti Dahal who was trained five years ago in journalism by The Regional Media Resource Centre in Biratnagar for three months works with Dristanta, a weekly published and edited by her husband. But practical difficulties have forced her to assist the husband in the publishing aspect, rather than doing much news

There are others who are moving forward in the sector doing part time journalism while carrying the burden of household chores at the same time, just like Dahal and Koirala are doing. But lately, there are a few who have taken up the profession either after their retirement or after their children have grown up.

Fifty year old Bindiya Neupane took up the three-month basic training just last year. For some time she has been contributing articles regularly to a local daily, Darshan. The former teacher says that it was the social concern that prompted her to take up journalism.

There are very few women like Neupane who were propelled into journalism by the social cause. Journalism in the *mofussil* does not appear to have accepted such sudden entry by women with ease. The number of women working part-time or full time is negligible even today. Even those regularly reporting news are not suitably paid making it difficult for them to continue the profession.

The Regional Media Resource Centre in Biratnagar has trained 475 female journalists since its inception. But the number of women continuing to adopt journalism as a part-time or full-time vocation is frustrating even today. Those that are doing so have had to draw a fine balance between carrying out household chores and doing journalism. Lately, however, they are not just helping out in the publication aspect, but doing reporting and editing jobs as well. "Women participation in journalism has remained negligible in *mofussil*," says 60

year old Mithila Upadhya who has been editing and publishing Shanti Nepal weekly for the past 21 years.

"Women must work hard just to adopt journalism as a full time vocation," says editor and publisher of New Pathibhara weekly, Lalita Bhattarai who is an MA in literature. At the moment, the full timer Bhattarai is on the lookout for another job as well. "It is difficult to eke out a living from just journalism," she says.

Two other women have recently begun publishing and editing a weekly paper in Dhankuta, The Dhankuta Herald. Executive Editor Anjana Tamli, who is also a Gorkhapatra daily correspondent, and Editor Anuja Abuhang say that their priority is development journalism. "Readers have begun to like our paper as we present slightly different materials than others," Editor Abuhang says.

Women who make up half the total population are still miles away from any access to the mass media even in the 21st century. Participation of women in journalism is just 12 per cent. The *mofussil* women journalists do not know whether they are even included in this statistics or not.

The media play an important in creating a space for economic development. The communications media can also play an important role in increasing women's participation in the development works. But because of male domination in the sector, women wanting to adopt journalism as a full time profession are forced to abandon it after some time or leave for the capital, Kathmandu, in search of better opportunity.

Anjana Neupane of Biratnagar and Bimala Tumkhewa of Pathari are among those going to Kathmandu. Tumkhewa entered the capital after several years' struggle with *mofussil* journalism. Neupane for her part had been reporting from

Kathmandu for the Darshan Dainik published from Biratnagar before busying herself with the publication of National Weekly that is published in Kathmandu.

***The Regional Media Resource Centre in Biratnagar has trained 475 female journalists since its inception. But the number of women continuing to adopt journalism as a part-time or full-time vocation is frustrating even today.***

Those left behind to fend for their place in *mofussil* journalism have had to keep writing without remuneration. However, the concerned publishers do not appear to be encouraging these women to keep honing their writing skills. All this tells on the continuity of women's role in journalism.

"It is not just the women, but even most men do not continue the profession after temporarily working in newspapers immediately after their training," says Trainer and Editor of Darshan Dainik, Mohan Bhandari.

Only some men trained by the Regional Media Resource Centre in Biratnagar have taken up journalism full time. But the number of women in journalism is obviously rising lately, whatever prompted them to join the profession. However, the Regional Media Resource Centre for its part does not appear to be encouraging the women to continue with their profession. If the local newspapers provide remuneration to women journalists, there is no doubt that their numbers would increase further.

Courtesy by  
Sancharika Samuha

## **Bote families go hungry when women do not crush stones**

*Throughout the day, women of the Bote community crush stones on the banks of the Kali Gandaki and turn them into gravel used in construction. Their children are with them in their work. They say that the whole day's hard labour is barely enough for survival of the family. The family goes hungry when the gravel they put together does not sell. Meanwhile, the men stay home idling their time by the whole day, only to enter the bhatti, or local pubs, in the evenings.*

*✍ By Vishnu Prasad Sharma*

*It is when the stones do not sell after months of hard labour with bloody fingers that they become frustrated. "We do not know when it will sell-- sometimes we have to wait for months," says Deusari Bote. Borrowing gets them through their survival needs during such long and arduous waits.*

deep in the water risking life itself. These courageous women put their babies to sleep on the piles of gravel they have accumulated and go on hammering down more rocks into small pieces throughout the day, all this just to resolve their hand-to-mouth problem.

It becomes unbearable for them only when the months of hard labour, the piles of gravel and the separated sand, does not sell and they have to go hungry. It is then that hunger haunts them. It is not just themselves and their children; they will

By occupation, theirs is the job of finding gold using a sieve to separate fine sand from the courses on the river banks. They are hardly aware that they are bleeding through raw wounds on their fingers while breaking large stones into pebbles. They shovel out sand from the river daring to go waist

have to look after their husbands as well. This is a place where men live on the earnings of women even today. This is the story of women in the Bote community who live by the Kali Gandaki in Maldhunga near Baglung.

These women come out at the break of dawn in search of stones and sand. They do not know whether their wares processed in the midst of the mid-day sun and pouring rains will sell at all. Their routine is to eke out a living on the river banks with bloody fingers, blistered palms, empty stomach and dried lips. Extreme poverty has come in the way of their social, education and mental development, but what is more, the utter neglect and irresponsibility thus exhibited by the concerned authority and the state itself means that they are excluded from so many aspects of human freedom.

Anyone visiting their settlement can easily witness their plight. Dozens of huts made from branches and leaves of trees patched up with mud line up the settlement. The small huts that allow in the sun's rays, rainwater and even dewdrops made to accommodate three persons have to house in seven or eight persons of a family. "This is a compulsion," says 61 year old Sunkali Bote. It is difficult to meet their basic needs. In fact, they have been habituated to go to bed hungry on days when they cannot sell their broken stones. "We eat if the stones sell, otherwise go to bed

hungry," says Sunkali in a serious tone, "Still, it might just sell."

Most of those living in the settlement are middle-aged. The youth have left for jobs elsewhere but they do not know where. The men at home have not taken up any income generating activities because of lack of education and awareness. It is their women they order to work day and night.

Whether it is the freezing morning cold or the mid-day sun on the banks of the Kali Gandaki, women look busy hammering stones to little pieces. Lack of awareness and the means to send them to schools, the Bote children accompany their mothers in the hard work. The government's school enrolment campaign has not even touched the Bote children. When asked about the enrollment campaign, they did not know if it was fish or fowl. But the District Education Office claims to have included children of all deprived and backward communities in the campaign. The Maldhunga women say that they had to take up the occupation since nine years ago because of sheer poverty.

"We buy rice, pulses and salt with the earning from the day's work to barely make a hand-to-mouth survival. We have to feed the children and the husband first even if we have to go half hungry" says Majrad Bote while hitting a stone with her hammer. They say that it is easier to do the work early in the morning in an empty stomach. "We get a maximum of 18 rupees for the whole day's work, if the gravel sells," says Gauri Bote. "From that that we have to pay two rupees along with two *kattha* of the gravel to the contractor."

It is when the stones do not sell after months of hard labour with bloody fingers that they become frustrated. "We do not know when it will sell-sometimes we have to wait for months," says Deusari Bote. Borrowing gets them through their survival needs during such long and

arduous waits. The pay back only when they are able to sell. But fate plays a dirty trick on them when festivals like the Dashain and Tihar arrive, when spending is a must for various festive activities.

They only dream of having good food and wearing new clothes even

during the Dashain. The Bote who survive on fish, herbs and wild tubers settled here around 1992 after the Pokhara-Baglung highway was constructed. They were living in Khaniyaghat and Adubari of Parbat prior to this. They arrived here on the river banks after they were displaced from the earlier settlement by the Malfhunga-Beni road. They have nothing but the shacks made of branches and leaves in their name today.

The Bote women face huge problems for lack of appropriate means of earning. "How can families be raised with only women working stone," they ask? The sale of their products has declined this year making it even more difficult to take care of their families. "Last year we sold sand at 30 rupees per *kattha*, this year no one is buying it even at 15," says 21 year old Nauli Bote.

The government's behaviour towards the women and children of this disappearing community, which remains ignorant of the state's social, political and economic policies, makes the narrow political culture in the country quite

*Whether it is the  
freezing morning  
cold or the mid-day  
sun on the banks of  
the Kali Gandaki,  
women look busy  
hammering stones  
to little pieces. Lack  
of awareness and  
the means to send  
them to schools, the  
Bote children  
accompany their  
mothers in the hard  
work.*

obvious. If the state continues to ignore the basic social, economic and political rights of these people the Bote community is destined to exist only in history. They are uneducated, have little social awareness, and have not developed their faculties enough to distinguish between right and wrong. The concerned authority must come up with social awareness and income generating activities to free them from their oppressive conditions and their all round development.

It is necessary educate the Bote men, dependent on their women, regarding independence and self-confidence. The urban oriented school enrollment campaign needs to focus its attention on the children of the excluded, oppressed and the poor. The numerous government

and non-government organizations set up in Baglung to uplift women's status have not worked to raise the awareness of the Bote women so far.

If the government does not take initiatives to elevate the lifestyle of the Bote women, it will prove to be an unpardonable crime. And, ultimately, the slogans of equality among genders and races will remain mere slogans. Only when the Bote women and children are on a path to all round development can the country cross the Rubicon of equality and equity.

Courtesy By

Sancharika Samuha

**Publisher**

**Sancharika Samuha**

**Ekantakuna, Nepal**

**P.O. Box 13293**

**Ph: 5538549/5546715**

**Fax: 5547291**

**Email: sancharika@wlink.com.np**

**Website: www.sancharika.org**

**EDITOR**

**Nirmala Sharma**

Sancharika Samuha was established by a group of women communicator's in April 1996, with the primary aim of promotion of gender equality in Nepal. The Sancharika Feature Service incorporates monthly articles/features on the grave situation of women and children in our country, the social outlook towards them, the pain and agony that they have faced and the courageous steps that women have taken in this regard. We hope to fulfill the lack of news and articles on women and children to some extent through this feature service and we look forward to your kind support in publishing these articles in your respective newspapers. We would also like to request you to send us a copy of the published article and to mention 'Sancharika Feature Service' below the published article.

● **Sancharika Samuha Nepal**