

MEDIA HAS LEAD ROLE IN ENSURING GENDER EQUALITY

- By Staff Reporter

Kathmandu, Nov. 19: Advocates for women's cause think the media have not been giving due importance to issues related to women and gender. For them, this lack of gender sensitivity in the media has often resulted in gender-based stereotyping and continuation of the portrayal of negative and degrading images of women in the media communications.

The accusation is that media, both print and electronic, have failed to provide a balanced picture of women's diverse lives and their contribution to the society. Focussing on key gender concepts and CEDAW (Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women) and its relevance to Nepal, a one-day consultative workshop was held in Kathmandu today. The theme of workshop was 'Mainstreaming Gender in the Media'. The workshop was organised by the Federation of Nepalese Journalists (FNJ), Mainstreaming Gender Equality Programme of the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare and UNDP and Sancharika Samuha.

As the main speaker at the workshop, Minister of State for Women, Children and Social Welfare, Kamala Pant, said media is the main tool for change, but it has often failed in positive discrimination for women's cause. There are times when media have falsely projected women cause and development. She said the ongoing 9th five-year plan has fulfilled some commitments towards women as laid out in the international convention on women but a lot still remains to be done.

Minister of State Pant expressed the view that communications media can play a lead role in increasing social awareness of women's empowerment and gender equality.

She said as no development of the country is possible unless the upliftment of women is achieved, there is a need for implementation of the constitution of the country and laws and international conventions without limiting ourselves to slogans.

As resource person Dr. Arzu Rana Deuba said most of the times women's issues are taken more as problem.

Suresh Acharya, President of FNJ, said the programme was meant for journalists and the media to give more focus on gender issues and to bring gender issues to the fore. National programme manager of the Mainstreaming Gender Equity Programme, Indu Pant Ghimire said the programme aims at sensitising the gender issue in the media in line with one of the plans of action adopted in the Beijing +5 Conference held in July this year.

Chief Secretary of His Majesty Government, Tirtha Man Shakya, as another resource person, in his paper, said the CEDAW, adopted by the United Nations in 1978 is a major document to make women stand side by side with men in all - political, social, economic and cultural - spheres.

He said although the Constitution of the country has encompassed the basic features of the Convention the implementation aspect has been almost dismal both in legal and practical terms. Thus, he said, the media can play a vital role in disseminating information regarding the Convention as well as in raising awareness about women's rights and women equality.

Meanwhile, one participant at the workshop commented that sometimes women themselves are the cause of women's oppression and discrimination. The struggle for gender equality has not yet reached to such women.