



SANCHARIKA FEATURE SERVICE

सञ्चारिका लेखमाला

VOLUME 9

ISSUE 2

Monthly Publication

February 2006

Why go abroad without adequate training?

✍ By Neha Sharma

Why are women going abroad for work without receiving any training?

Suicide among women on the rise

✍ By Shree Ram Nepal

Suicide by women is increasing in Nuwakot

Women sports coaches face discrimination

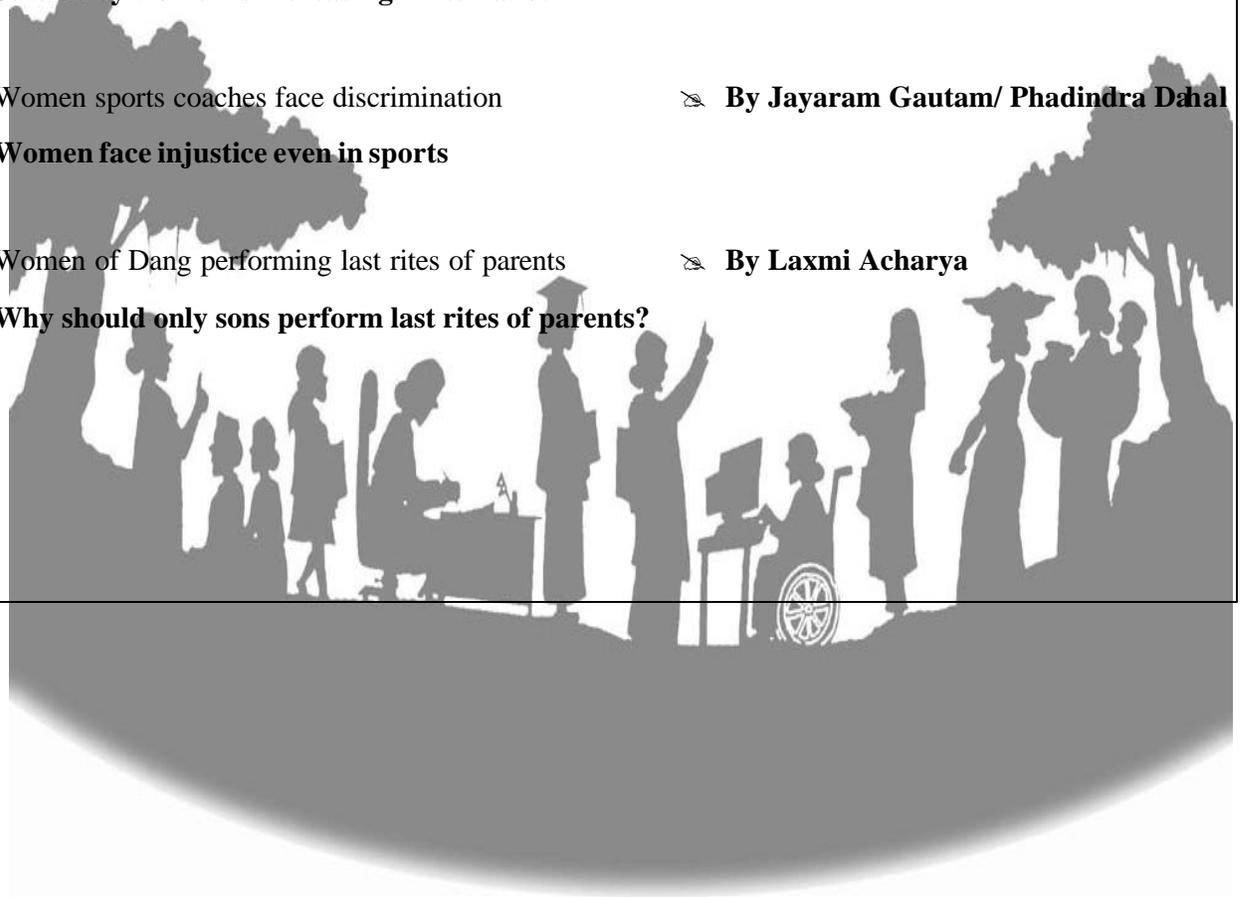
✍ By Jayaram Gautam/ Phadindra Dahal

Women face injustice even in sports

Women of Dang performing last rites of parents

✍ By Laxmi Acharya

Why should only sons perform last rites of parents?



Why go abroad without adequate training?

There are neither opportunities nor environment for employment in the country. The on-going conflict has robbed women of opportunities and weakened their economic condition. No wonder women, from widows having to singlehandedly provide for their children to those simply unemployed, are attracted to foreign employment. But women who go abroad for employment do so without receiving adequate training. The fact is that there aren't any training centres here for female foreign job aspirants. Thus pre-departure training for anyone going abroad for employment—domestic or official—has become a must so that they are not left in a lurch in foreign lands.

✍ **By Neha Sharma**

Nima Lama, who went to Kuwait sometime ago through an agent, says she suffered a lot because she did not know that it was necessary to receive training before setting off for foreign employment. She was frequently scolded by her employer for her inability to operate gadgets. She had thought that she would be doing familiar household chores only.

Due to the current adverse economic, social and political conditions in the country, the number of people going overseas for employment is increasing by the day. His Majesty's Government has prohibited women from going to the Gulf countries for employment, citing security reasons. Even so, the trend of Nepalese women going to forbidden countries via India or third countries continues unabated. As such, women going abroad, legally or illegally, are deprived of many opportunities due to lack appropriate training. Because they lack access to even basic orientation programmes provided by some organizations on the

peculiarities of the concerned destinations, such as spoken language, customs, work habits and rules and law, women find themselves sold into prostitution or slavery, do not get remuneration as initially specified, and suffer domestic violence.

Nima Lama, who went to Kuwait sometime ago through an agent, says she suffered a lot because she did not know that it was necessary to receive training before setting off for foreign employment. She was frequently scolded by her employer for her inability to operate gadgets. She had thought that she would be doing familiar household chores only.

For not being able to use a washing machine and iron clothes perfectly, Nima Lama did not receive the specified Rs 10,000 per month, although the foreign employment company which found her the job in Kuwait had promised her a monthly salary of Rs 10,000.

She points out the need for orientation training programmes in the country that would instill in foreign employment aspirants the confidence of being able to do any kind of work overseas.

Her own experience has been that women have to work under psychological fear if they go overseas without receiving any training.

Saru Joshi, regional programme director of foreign employment at UNIFEM, says that as such training programmes boost the confidence and bargaining power of

women, there is a dire need for a training centre to exploit the opportunities offered by the international labour market.

She stresses that the present foreign employment orientation training has to be extended from Kathmandu Valley to villages all over the country so as to bring it within the reach of women. Says Joshi: "It is necessary that women returning from abroad are hired as trainers in orientation training and that the personal experiences of returnees are narrated. The training must teach them how to use a photoframe where the address of the embassy is kept, and must include aspects like economic literacy, legal knowledge and self-confidence."

Pushpa Thapa, who went to Saudi Arabia in 2050 B.S. due to poor economic condition of her family, says she suffered a lot because she could not speak English fluently and had no prior knowledge of the work style and rules there. Orientation training programmes must be organized keeping in mind the uneducated rather than the educated. If need be photographs should be used to make the former understand.

According to the information provided by the Department of Labour and Employment Promotion, in the first five months of the fiscal year 2005/06 the number of women going abroad for employment has reached 540, whereas in the preceding fiscal year the total number of women leaving the country for foreign employment was 966—590 of them institutionally and 377 individually.

Though the law requires foreign employment companies to provide orientation training to everyone they send abroad, it is rarely followed in practice. Most go abroad without receiving training.

Over the last few years, the government has arranged pre-departure orientation programmes for citizens getting jobs overseas. So far, training is being conducted through 125 public and listed private companies.

Though the two-day training includes counseling in areas such as health, security and work along with various problems confronted in the course of foreign

Pre-departure orientation training programmes claim to impart knowledge essential for women such as how to do domestic chores abroad, how to iron clothes, how to wash clothes in a washing machine, how to scrub the floor, how to receive telephone calls, where to pay telephone bills and how to send money home. But in practice, most training organizations give away certificates without providing ANY training. As a result, such training programmes have not been able to reach and benefit women.

employment, it has failed to become organized and result-oriented.

Women are at risk and reeling under heavy debts because they do not know what pre-departure orientation training is all about and why it is provided.

The issues incorporated by and the duration of the pre-departure orientation training being currently provided are not adequate in the context of women. Rajeshwori Gyawali, who runs the Gyanbigyan Pratishthan [Knowledge-Science Foundation] which conducts foreign employment pre-departure orientation training in Baneshwor, believes that orientation programmes have not been able to incorporate relevant issues adequately. "The training duration must be lengthened and other essential issues must be added to it."

Pre-departure orientation training programmes claim to impart knowledge essential for women such as how to do domestic chores abroad, how to iron clothes, how to wash clothes in a washing machine, how to scrub the floor, how to receive telephone calls, where to pay telephone bills

and how to send money home. But in practice, most training organizations give away certificates without providing training. As a result, such training programmes have not been able to reach and benefit women.

Chairman of Foreign Employment Orientation Association Sanjay KC says that the government and its diplomatic missions are not playing an adequate role to help out women going abroad for employment. He recommends that training programmes allot one full day exclusively for women, as the present training duration is not enough.

The currently provided pre-departure orientation training is highly ineffective. KC further suggests that as such centres have turned into shops selling certificates, the government should facilitate coordination between foreign employment entrepreneurs and training providers and enforce a code of conduct.

What is needed is an understanding among the stakeholders, followed by effective training programmes. Spokesman for the Ministry of Labour and Transport Management Dhruba Kumar Sharma says the government will soon introduce policy to regulate foreign employment. He says that the policy will provide for hiring foreign employment returnees as trainers and holding separate training programmes on each country's policy, law, customs, culture and work rules and habit.

Discussions have already been held between UNIFEM and organizers of orientation training programmes on ways to make such programmes effective. Final preparations are under way to submit a draft code of conduct to the government, says chairman of Foreign Employment Orientation Association Sanjay KC.

Courtesy By
Sancharika Samuha

Suicide among women on the rise

Although a district adjoining the capital, Nuwakot lags far behind in development. Senior leaders of all political parties got an opportunity to be in power by making the district their political constituency, so it may be hard to believe that women in a district that is just a two-hour bus-ride from the capital commit suicide due to domestic violence. But it is a fact: this year, in three months, five women have committed suicide. According to the District Police Office, the number is on the rise. The time has come to ask political leaders: Are you only going to do politics, or promote public awareness too?

 **By Shree Ram Nepal**

A young woman in the district's headquarters, Bidur Municipality, had tried to commit suicide sometime ago, but she was saved. The cause of the attempted suicide was her family's refusal to allow her to marry a boy she liked. Even after her treatment her family married her to some other boy

Twenty-year-old Sunita Khadka of Khadgabhanjyang VDC in Nuwakot district committed suicide a month ago by hanging herself in her house's attic. She took her life after her husband, Ashok Khadka, subjected her to physical and mental torture. Her fault: watching a wedding ceremony in the neighbourhood that day. Though her husband's family claims she was not tortured, according to eyewitnesses, her husband had dragged her out of the wedding house, beating her. Villagers say that although Ashok and Sunita had a good relationship initially, Sunita

committed suicide after being unable to bear the pain caused by her husband's beatings in a momentary loss of temper.

Rupa Shrestha, 20, also of Khadgabhanjyang VDC, committed suicide a few months ago by jumping into the Trishuli River. Her paternal home was also in Nuwakot. She had been married to Arjun Dhital, a fellow villager, for just two months. They had married at an NGO in the capital working in the area of women rights. Arjun had urged her to return to the village because he could not support both of them in Kathmandu with his meagre income. Rupa committed suicide within a couple of days of her return to Nuwakot from Kathmandu. Police suspect that Rupa took her life fearing she would be spurned by Arjun's family because she belonged to a lower caste.

Likewise, sixteen-year-old Sita Neupane of Bageshwori VDC-7 committed suicide a month ago. She hung herself from a tree. Her suicide is attributed to family and economic crisis.

A young woman in the district's headquarters, Bidur Municipality, had tried to commit suicide sometime ago, but she was saved. The cause of the attempted suicide was her family's refusal to allow her to marry a boy she liked. Even after her treatment her family married her to some other boy.

Chandrakala Pyakurel, 45, of Gorkhu VDC committed suicide after hearing that her husband, who was in Kathmandu, had taken another wife. She hung herself in her house's attic a day before the day of *Tika* last Dashain. However, her husband has not taken another wife. Her family is still in shock caused by her suicide.

All these are suicide cases that have occurred in Nuwakot district in the past three to four months. The cause of the majority of suicides was domestic violence and mental tension. The majority of married women who committed suicide seem to have taken the drastic step after being unable to endure humiliation by their husbands and in-laws.

Why is suicide rate higher among women than among men? Ramsharan Pyakurel, who heads an NGO working in the area of human and women rights for the past one decade, says that the majority of the

The data with the District Police Office also shows that the number of women committing suicide is higher than that of men. In the first four months this fiscal year, five women and three men committed suicide, while four women committed suicide in the last two months. Various data show that the number of women committing suicide was higher than that of men in the past years, too.

women in the district suffer from domestic violence. He thinks that they are forced to commit suicide by their loss of willpower resulting from domestic violence.

Advocate Ganesh Prasad Pokharel, who has been fighting cases concerning women rights, also claims that suicide by women is on the rise because of domestic violence and mental tension. He says that lack of education and backwardness also contribute to the trend.

In many cases women committed suicide unable to bear the mistreatment by family members after their husbands marry another woman. The main reason behind the tendency of women to take their life is their dependence on others. Intellectuals of the district say that suicide rate among women is increasing because their parents do not care about them after they are married off, while their husbands and in-laws do not treat them properly. Thus, if conservative attitude is changed for the better, the suicide rate among women can be reduced. Never do men commit suicide after entering an inter-caste wedlock, despite sharp criticism by the society. But women in such a situation frequently do.

Chairman of Intellectual Council Nuwakot Ram Hari Rimal suggests that the awareness level in the society has to be raised in order to reduce suicide rate among women.

Looking at suicide cases in the district and the country as a whole, lack of self-confidence and awareness among women appears to be a prime factor. Rimal believes that increasing the awareness level of women would cut suicide rate by half.

Various governmental organizations and NGOs in the district purportedly working

for women's rights have not given much attention to this problem. If a special study on suicide is undertaken and then awareness-raising programmes are conducted, suicide rate among women is likely to fall.

Courtesy By
Sancharika Samuha

Women sports coaches face discrimination

Women coaches complain that they are not allowed to lead the national female sports team in international competitions simply because they are women. Team leadership is monopolized by men not only in international events, women coaches charge, but also in domestic games. If women are discriminated against even in sports, which entail physical exertion, one can easily imagine the status of women in other professions. When will this unfairness catch the attention of the National Sports Council?

✍ **By Jayaram Gautam/ Phadindra Dahal**

“It's been more than 20 years since I started to work as a coach. But till date I have never been allowed to lead a team in international events,” complains Gurung. Pointing out that as soon as opportunities for foreign visits come up male trainers vie with one another for the same, she suggests that the National Sports Council be alert so as to ensure proportional distribution of such opportunities.

Puja Shrestha and Sumina Shrestha from Nepal won silver in female doubles in the First Asia Satellite Badminton Competition held in Kathmandu three months ago. It is by far Nepal's best performance in

Asia. Behind the success lay the hard work and dedication of the national badminton coach, Rajani Shrestha. She had also led the Nepalese players in the competition. However, few women coaches of Nepal have received such an opportunity.

Shanti Singh, who had taken part in sports right from her school days and had been a regular *kabaddi* player, participated in the Asian Games of 2039/40 B.S. As a result of her commitment to the game, she got an opportunity to receive training in *kabaddi* from India in 2041 B.S. After that, she worked as chief assistant trainer at the National Sports Council for two years, and for the past five years she has been working as senior chief trainer. Yet she feels her hard work has not been given due recognition.

Women are discriminated against even in seniority-based promotions, says Shanti Singh. She says: “Even though we do the same work, men get promoted sooner.”

She complains that women are not allowed to lead the team in international sports events simply because they are women.

“Not only in foreign events, male coaches were entrusted with leading women’s team in the most recent South Asian Games held in Nepal,” she says.

Stressing that priority must be given to women coaches for coaching women players, Singh argues that such an arrangement would contribute to better performance of women players.

Not only Singh, Shanti Gurung, senior chief volleyball coach for women, also says that women face discrimination at the National Sports Council. A former national volleyball player, Gurung received training in volleyball coaching from Bangalore, India in 2041 B.S. After that, she entered the National Sports Council as an assistant trainer.

Pointing out that women and men had practised equally while receiving training, she says that sports officials of the time had pledged not to discriminate between men and women while selecting coaches. But contrary to the pledge, there is currently severe discrimination between male and female trainers.

“It’s been more than 20 years since I started to work as a coach. But till date I have never been allowed to lead a team in international events,” complains Gurung. Pointing out that as soon as opportunities for foreign visits come up male trainers vie with one another for the same, she suggests that the National Sports Council be alert so as to ensure proportional distribution of such opportunities.

She says: “Even the attempt to form an association for the rights of women trainers in 2057 [B.S.] failed. No such attempt has been made since then.”

Women coaches outside the capital face even more difficulties, says Kaushila Khatri, district volleyball coach of Baglung. A trainer since 2052 B.S., she says that women face lots of difficulties in sports. On the one hand, they have family duties to discharge while on the other hand, they have to be physically fit. Then there is the traditional way in which society views women players.

Even so, Khatri admits that are some advantages of being a female coach. “While raising funds for conducting sporting events in the district, there are many instances of

At present the National Sports Council has a total of 603 coaches in ten different games. The number of women trainers is just 50, though. Among the women coaches, there are 16, the highest, in Karate, while lawn tennis, gymnastics and football have just one coach each—the lowest.

locals contributing for being unable to say no to women.”

At present the National Sports Council has a total of 603 coaches in ten different games. The number of women trainers is just 50, though. Among the women coaches, there are 16, the highest, in Karate, while lawn tennis, gymnastics and football have just one coach each—the lowest.

Likewise, volleyball has eight female coaches, athletics seven, shooting five, *kabaddi* four and badminton two, according to Keshabraj Gautam, deputy director of Training and Coaching Department at the National Sports Council.

Tika Sedhain of Jhapa is a national athletics coach. She joined athletics in 2050 B.S. challenging the traditional notion that women cannot do anything. She has the same complaint as other women coaches—women coaches are not given responsibilities commensurate with their aptitude.

But member secretary at the National Sports Council Kishor Bahadur Singh does not agree with the women coaches. “Coaches are judged on the basis of their capacity and qualification, and opportunities are provided accordingly,” he claims.

Citing the example of Shanti Gurung who recently returned from Germany after completing an advanced level course in volleyball coaching, Singh said that two women coaches are going abroad for further training soon.

Mentioning that women coaches are being provided with equal opportunities as men, he said qualified, capable and

hardworking coaches are selected, regardless of their sex. He added that the Career Development Committee under the Council has already initiated a scientific system in all disciplines and areas, and that whatever problems remained would be solved.

Member secretary Singh also claimed that while a good player can become a good coach, not all players can become coaches. He said: "Many players still take coaching lightly, but the Council is making efforts to change that attitude and establish the international concept that coaches should pay attention to aspects like the players' psychology, team management, physical condition of players and playing style. In this regard, women coaches will also be included in a proportional manner."

Mentioning that he has ordered male and female coaches to prepare an action plan with regard to preparations for the next SAAF Games, Singh said such exercises would enhance the quality of coaching and the capacity of the coaches.

Dismissing charges that the National Sports Council discriminates against women coaches, member secretary Kishor Bahadur Singh claims that promotion prospects and opportunities for foreign trips and leadership of national teams are determined by the individual capacity of coaches.

Courtesy By
Sancharika Samuha

Women of Dang performing last rites of parents

Challenging the social tradition that a son is necessary to perform one's last rites, women of Dang have of late started to perform the last rites of their parents. They have taken up the cudgels against the taboo against daughters by participating in funeral processions and performing the whole gamut of last rites. To break tradition, women like Krishna, Mamata and Basanta are performing their parents' last rites. Their defiance of social customs earned them acerbic remarks, but for the sake of progressive change they paid no heed to them.

✍ **By Laxmi Acharya**

Krishna had to hear harsh comments from villagers over her decision to perform her mother's last rites. Even respected members of society and her own brothers disapproved of her decision. Everything possible was done to prevent her from touching her mother's body and joining the funeral procession. But Krishan prevailed. Her so-called relatives left no stone unturned to prove her decision wrong and brand her an evil omen.

Challenging a social taboo, Krishna Rana of Tribhuvannagar Municipality-11 in Dang district performed the last rites of her mother. When her 73-year-old mother, Indira DC, died, she did not stay put like other daughters, crying and immersed in grief. Rather, she joined her brother in performing her mother's last rites. She took part in the funeral procession, lighted the funeral pyre and, upon returning home, performed all mourning rites.

"My mother had passed away, I was not going to have her back no matter how much I cried. If my brother can bear the grief over mother's death, why can't I?" says 45-year-old Krishna, reminiscing her feelings then. "When my mother died, my father told me to

go home and come back later because I am their only daughter. But while returning home my heart became restless with the realization of my responsibilities towards my mother. I turned back and went to my parents' house. Alongside men I kept a vigil beside my dead mother throughout the night. I took part in every activity from tying up the body to carrying it to the river bank. Despite pressure from others, I did not step back."

In recent times, some women of Dang have been performing the last rites of their parents, challenging the social convention that a son is a must to perform such rites. They are engaged in activities considered taboo for girls and women, such as taking part in funeral processions and performing mourning rituals. They are attempting to change society's view of daughters as second-class citizens.

Sometime ago, Basanta Kalathoki, a resident of Tulsipur Municipality-4, went into mourning along with her two sisters after her mother's death. When their 66-year-old mother, Khima Budhathoki, died, instead of searching for a man to perform her last rites, they decided to do so themselves, says Basanta. The three sisters say they performed their mother's last rites in order to make a point that daughters too can and should perform their parents' last rites.

Likewise, Mamata Gurung of Damargaon in Tulsipur Municipality-1 performed her mother's last rites, paying no heed to social customs. Mamata's decision was opposed by even the so-called intellectuals of the village. But she did not desist. Rather, she asked the opposing intellectuals where was it written in the religious scriptures that daughters must not perform their parents' last rites. Enraged by those who opposed her decision to perform her mother's last rites, Mamata opines that society's attitude towards daughters must change. She argues that if women get organized then they can succeed in knocking down regressive rituals and practices in a patriarchal society.

Krishna had to hear harsh comments from villagers over her decision to perform her mother's last rites. Even respected members of society and her own brothers

They charged that the body did not burn because Krishna had touched it. Says Krishna: "The body did not burn for sometime because lots of lowers, vermilion powder and water were showered on the body. But not understanding even that much, they accused me of bringing ill omen by touching the body." But what hurt Krishna more than anything else was the absence of support of women for her.

disapproved of her decision. Everything possible was done to prevent her from touching her mother's body and joining the funeral procession. But Krishan prevailed. Her so-called relatives left no stone unturned to prove her decision wrong and brand her an evil omen. They even charged that the body did not burn because she had touched it. Says Krishna: "The body did not burn for sometime because lots of lowers, vermilion powder and water were showered on the body. But not understanding even that much, they accused me of bringing ill omen by touching the body." But what hurt her more than anything else was the absence of support of women for her. Women do not have the habit of supporting one another in times of trouble. They are always worried about what the society thinks. Krishna believes that the main reason behind the backwardness of women is their reluctance to make even the smallest effort to change the status quo.

"Rather than be worried about what others will think, we must be clear about what we want. We women are lagging behind because of our habit of talking about equality but when opportunity beckons not taking one step forward but taking three steps backward," says Krishna. "We will never be able to improve our lot if we feel disheartened and cry just because people backbite. Instead,

if we move ahead with courage the society will have to accept our good deeds sooner or later. A patriarchal society cannot be changed overnight. So even while hearing nasty remarks we must bear them and must not step back at any cost.” She believes that while performing the last rites of their parents women must do so considering it to be both their right and duty.

Secretary of Widows Concern Centre Huma DC appears to be very happy to see women of her own place performing last rites. She is optimistic that the readiness shown by daughters to perform rituals that the society considers to be the exclusive preserve of men will reduce discrimination against daughters. She argues that at least those advocating gender equality must not be miserly in providing due recognition to and encouraging women challenging social taboo.

Founding coordinator of the NGO Coordination Committee Rishi Ram Jangali takes women’s challenging social tradition as an important facet of women empowerment.

According to Jangali, until women take part in every social activity the narrow perception of their role in society will not go away. Thus, he believes that if they continue to actively take part in all social rituals and activities, women’s lot will improve.

Spokesman of Civil Society Dang Tikaram Regmi says that women are deprived of all kinds of opportunities because their role in society is underestimated. “That’s why they lag behind,” says Regmi. According to Regmi, women must actively participate in every social ritual in order to make their presence strongly felt in all sectors of society. Those working for women’s rights and the intelligentsia should encourage and help them. Everyone must understand that empowering women does not mean empowering them in technical areas only.

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**