

International Consultation on Good Practices and Strategies to Eliminate Caste-Based Discrimination

Description of the practice:

What was/is the background to the practice? Describe any key events or actions that led to it?

Dalit women are the most marginalized community in Nepal. They have been facing triple discrimination at the same time for being Dalit, women and Dalit women. They are economically deprived and socially and culturally backward which make them vulnerable to different kinds of violence and human rights violation.

Dalit women are less organized and are not aware about the importance of group. They are scattered, are limited within their house and their household chore. The literacy rate is very low among Dalit women and they are not aware about their rights and cannot raise their voice for justice and dignified life. After realizing this fact, FEDO coordinate to form the Dalit women group formation and mobilization. It is considered that until and unless Dalit women are empowered, they cannot come into mainstream development and grab opportunities.

What was/is the title/name of the practice?

Mobilization of Dalit Women's group.

What was/is the aim/purpose of the practice?

FEDO has realized the importance to organize Dalit women for their overall empowerment. Our target is to reach maximum number of deprived Dalit women who do not have any access to the development programme. FEDO from its establishment, have been forming Dalit women group and conducting various awareness raising program on various issues, economic and leadership development activities which has supported them to speak for their rights.

What was/is the target group(s)?

Dalit women

Who were/are the partners involved (e.g. community based, NGO-based, government institutions, and other related stakeholders)?

We mainly work with the local government bodies. Dalit women visit local bodies and lobby to exert pressure to allocate the budget, plan program for them and for the participation of Dalit women in their trainings, workshops. We coordinate and collaborate with community groups, local NGO's, local and national government bodies; District Administration Office, District Education Office, District Health Office, stakeholders, partners, alliances, different committees etc.

What was/is the duration of practice?

FEDO was formed in 1994 by the group of active Dalit women and since its establishment it has been practicing the Dalit women's group mobilization approach.

Legal and institutional frameworks:

Please explain the legal and institutional framework of the practice, if needed with inspiration from the following guiding questions:

- How did the practice meet the criteria of non-discrimination, equality, and inclusion? Did the practice link up to a national and/or international human rights framework? How was this linkage achieved?

- Did the practice involve advocacy, lobbying and involvement of the media; if yes, then how?

- Did the practice specifically address the situation of Dalit women or other women affected by discrimination based on work and descent? How was this done?

- Were there any other positive targeted measures?

Answer:

Dalit women from the groups are empowered and their capacity and leadership has been enhanced. They have now become aware about their rights and are able to speak against the discriminatory practices and behavior in the society. They have been struggling for just and equitable society where they can live with dignity and self-respect. Dalit women are now involved in various fields and their participation is high. They have been nominated as members in peace committee, school management committee, forest users group and various district and national level organizations. Dalit women are organized and mobilized to claim rights and tap the local resources which is supported by human rights frameworks.

Dalit women groups are mobilized to end discrimination on the basis of caste and gender. They have challenged the old norms and values where Dalit are treated as polluted/impure where women are being limited within their households. Now, they have been running campaigns to eliminate such unfair and discriminatory practices within their society.

FEDO also support to institutionalize these women group so as to make their role more strong. Different women have received different training and awareness on various themes; such as leadership, advocacay, public speaking, national and international laws, convention and provision. They have been mobilized themselves in advocacy and lobby at local and national level so as to eliminate caste and gender based discrimination and violence. They also coordinate with media to bring out their cases and issues.

Implementation of the practice:

Please describe how the practice was implemented, if needed with inspiration from the following guiding questions:

- What was the tangible impact of the practice (on the policy environment and/or as an actual change on the ground)?

- What were the implementation methods, means, and strategies to make this practice a success? What made it possible to effectuate a change? Can you identify the key factors of success which may be replicable?

- Did the practice involve a dialogue with affected communities and was it a participatory process? If yes, then how?

- Is the practice sustainable? If yes, then how and if no, then what can be done to sustain it?

Answer:

Dalit women's group formation and their mobilization has brought socio economic changes among Dalit women. They have been able to convince local bodies to allocate budget for their welfare and to tap the local resources. They are nominated and elected in different committees and their meaningful participation and representation in different sectors has encouraged other Dalit women. Their involvement in political parties is also one of the important achievement. Five Dalit women from FEDO women's group family have become the Constitution Assembly (CA) member representing different political parties. Similarly, Kalawati Paswan, one of the board members of FEDO from Bara district chapter was appointed as the Assistant Minister for Physical Planning and Works.

FEDO has its own working approach. First, Dalit women were identified and organized and district board gave orientation about the importance of group formation and mobilization. Secondly, groups were formed and different awareness program were conducted, they were given exposure and opportunity through different training. When they became sensitized and were able to speak for their rights different pressure groups were formed to advocate and lobby for the elimination of caste and gender based discrimination. They coordinate and collaborate with government agencies, local level organizations, community members and different committees. This has been effective in jointly organizing and conducting various programmes, trainings and campaign for just and equitable society for Dalit women where they can live with full dignity. FEDO's strength is its women's group scattered across Nepal and their empowerment. Dalit women activists are working voluntarily to mobilize Dalit women and make them able to fight against caste and gender based inequality and discrimination.

Successes and challenges:

Please describe the successes and challenges to implementing the practice, if needed with inspiration from the following guiding questions:

- *What were the conditions for success (what is the history, what was the capacity of the actors, what were the social, economic and political conditions)?*
- *What were the key challenges and obstacles to success? How were these removed?*
- *How was this practice innovative?*
- *Identify three key recommendations for similar practices/initiatives that can be replicated in the future. How could the process have been improved and sustained?*

Answer:

Dalit women being most underprivileged group, have their own priority in their life. It is difficult for them to engage in awareness programs, meetings, workshops and trainings. Dalit women are busy with their household works and other economic activities. Unless they engage in various economic activities, they can not earn their bread. In such situation, how can we motivate them to participate in various awareness program? They are restricted within their house and society and have social prejudice as women in the patriarchal society. Dalit women have low economic status, they are illiterate, and living in isolation where they are out of reach from various resources and exposure.

The group formation of Dalit women and their mobilization in different activities for the elimination of caste and gender based discrimination has been effective. This is innovative and successful among Dalit women as it provide opportunity for them to have time to talk about their problem and find the solutions. The most important changes that this practice brought to Dalit women life is building leadership capacity through which they can collaborate with like- minded organizations and agencies.

Publicity:

Can IDSN use this case publicly, e.g. on an open conference website or in a conference report?

Yes, IDSN can use this information publicly.