



National Conference of Dalit Women
For
Dignified Life, Inclusion and Social Transformation

Feminist Dalit Organization

Conference Highlights

The Feminist Dalit Organization is a national level non-government organization founded in 1994 to establish the rights of Dalit women by organizing and empowering them for mainstreaming in national development. FEDO has been working to promote Dalit rights and to eliminate caste and gender discrimination and promote justice and equality in Nepalese society since its establishment. FEDO works in three layers (Local, National and International Level) with special efforts for women's advancement such as women participation in decision-making level, protection and promotion of civil and political rights of Dalits and Dalit women, improving access to justice, improving access to health services, Dalit women in modern professions, education, advocacy, economic empowerment and livelihood program, sanitation, organizational development and access of resources and so on. FEDO takes a participatory approach to development and its programs assess the needs of the local communities in which it works in order to increase the community members' ownership of the project. FEDO has been working with marginalized women in Nepal for over 17 years. It is a National level organization which has branch offices in 45 districts, including in the most conflict-affected areas, where the problem of untouchability, caste and gender discrimination and violence against women have been particularly acute. FEDO has 2000 women groups and more than 400 women activists.

Why National Conference

In the context of Nepal, Dalits and particularly Dalit women have been suffering from violence and discrimination associated with caste, class and gender over the centuries. Dalit women in all sectors are at the bottom of the ladder. They are being deprived of living a dignified life in their community and barred from the access to state resources due to discriminative practices resulted from caste based social hierarchy and patriarchal structure. Even in a present day Republic Nepal, Dalits in general and Dalit women in particular, are treated as second-class citizens.

Therefore, Nepali Dalits want immediate cessation of discriminatory practices which have prevented them from enjoying the full rights provisioned in the present constitution and this necessitates putting pressure to different Constitution Committee of Constitution Assembly for timely promulgation of inclusive Constitution for the country. To fulfill demands of Dalit women, the new constitution is believed to be a panacea in terms of their participation in all organs of state structure thereby enabling to live a dignified life. Demands of Dalit community have remained unheard as the political parties are indifferent to their agenda. Realizing the fact that problems will not be addressed until and unless the marginalized groups themselves do not raise their issues and sensitize strongly the lawmakers, political leaders and Government to make a Dalit and women friendly constitution, FEDO decided to organize a National Level Conference of Dalit women with participation from throughout the country.

Conference Objectives

- Sensitize political parties, government and civil societies on various Dalit women's issues of different regions.
- Exert Pressure to political parties and CA members for the timely promulgation of inclusive constitution.
- Pressurize political parties, government and civil societies to conclude ongoing peace process to logical end.
- Build solidarity among Dalit women and expose them at National and Internationalize Dalit women's issues through sharing experiences by representatives from Asia and Europe.

Program

1. Rally:

A huge rally will be organized and marched through different parts of the town chanting various slogans related with Dalit women rights and upcoming new constitution. The rally will begin from Bhadrakali and conclude at City Hall, Exhibition Road, Kathmandu. The Dalit women activists along with various like-minded organizations from all over the country will be joining to show solidarity for their rights.

2. Opening ceremony:

Rt. Hon'ble Mr. Subhash Chandra Nemwang, President, Constituent Assembly will inaugurate the ceremony of the National Conference followed by remarks by senior Political leaders, UN representative, Commissioners of various commissions, International Representatives and Civil Society leaders.

As a highlight of the program, there is a felicitation program to honor Anuradha Koirala, CNN Hero 2010 for her contribution in social sector.

3. Paper presentation on various themes:

The Dalit experts will present papers in five thematic areas of Dalit women's issues as:

A. Constituent Assembly and State Restructuring and Issues of Dalit women Chair by: Dr. Surya Dhungel (Constitution expert) Paper by: Bishwo Bhakta Dulal (Ahuti) (CA Member) Comment by: Sapana Malla Pradhan (CA Member) Yam Bahadur Kisan (Advocate)	B. Badi women and their problems Chair by: Dr. Renu Rajbhandari (Activists) Paper by: Uma Badi (Dalit Activist) Comment by: Binod Pahadi (CA Member) Dhana Kumari Sunar (NWC Member)
C. Madhesi Dalit women and their problems Chair by: Sarita Giri (CA Member) Paper by: Ganga Mahara (Activist) Comment by: Ranju Thakur (Advocate) Shanti Devi Paswan (Activist)	D. Issues of Far western Dalit Women Chair by: Dr. Arju Deuba Rana (CA Member) Paper by: Ganesh BK (Political/Social Activist) Comment by: Hari Ram Sripaili (CA Member) Gyanu Gaire (NDC Member)
E. Impact of Inter-caste marriage on Dalit women Chair by: Teku Nepali (Politician) Paper by: Sabita Singh (Women Activist) Comment by: Ambika Gajmer (Women activist) Kamala Hemchuri (Activist)	

There will be intensive group discussion on the theme of the papers and be finalized incorporating the suggestions and feedback from the participants. Finally, an agreed paper will be developed as a set of memorandum to be submitted to political parties, lawmakers, government and different thematic committees of Constituent Assembly.

4. Panel discussion on International Experience sharing:

Rikke Nohrlind, the Coordinator of IDSN (International Dalit Solidarity Network) will present paper on the role of IDSN to highlight and address the issues of Dalit women at international level especially lobby in UN and EU.

Representatives from India Dr. Ruth Manorama and from Bangladesh Moni Rani will also share their experiences and views on Dalit and Dalit women movement. This panel discussion program will be chaired by Dr. Sumitra Manandhar Gurung

5. Conference Participants:

Around 150 Dalit women activists from 75 districts of Nepal, Dalit NGOs, Dalit intellectuals, FEDO (Centre, Regional and District Chapters), representatives from HR organizations, Women Rights organizations, Legal Rights organizations, INGOs, Donors, UN, Media and representatives from Denmark, UK, Sweden, Hongkong, India, Bangladesh will be participating the Conference

Venue: City Hall, Pradarshani Marga, Kathmandu

Date: May 11-13, 2011

6. Expected Output:

• Submission of Memorandum:

The concluding matters pertaining to thematic papers presented will be developed as a set of Memorandum and be submitted to the Chairperson of the CA, Prime Minister, and Political Parties.

• Book Publication:

FEDO will publish one reader friendly books (1000 copies) in Nepali and English compiling all the papers and findings of the workshop for wider dissemination to make aware concerned stakeholders on the output of the conference. These books will help the stakeholders to further advocate on the prime issues of Dalits women at constitution making process.

"Please join us to make this Conference a Great Success"