

Dialogue on Dignified Menstruation in Dailekh

“मर्यादित महिनावारी हामी सबैको जिम्मेवारी”

मर्यादित महिनावारी सम्बन्धमा घामी भाँज्री, नगरपालिका
प्रतिनिधि, महिला, युवा सँग छलफल तथा अन्तरक्रिया
(Dialogue on Dignified Menstruation)

मिति:
स्थान:

संयोजन	सहजिकरण	समन्वय	समन्वय	आयोजक
सामाजिक सेवा केन्द्र (सोसेक) नेपाल, दैलेख	राधा पौडेल फउन्डेसन	चामुण्डा विन्द्रसेनी नगरपालिका दैलेख	जिल्ला समन्वय समिति दैलेख	महिला तथा बालबालिका कार्यालय दैलेख

Save the Children | RVWRMP III | HELVETAS | NEPAL | Aide à l'Enfance de l'Inde et du Népal | terre des hommes | 50 years

Facilitated and Prepared by:

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Background: Suddenly, Dailekh becomes popular globally due to death of 14 and 19 years girls in Lainchaur village of Chamunda Brindrasainee Municipality, Dailekh, five hours ride by bus from headquarter of Dailekh district. These deaths were not surprising for this writer because the menstrual practice is severely practicing even in the headquarter that was revealed by assessment in June 2017¹. The villagers, faith healers, political leaders, school teachers etc. have had high level of resistance toward dignified menstruation at Chamunda Brindraine Municipality. This writer has just completed the recitation of her poem on Chhaupadi from Dailekh at Ujyalo FM July 2017 where the live news aired by same radio of death of 19 years Tulashi Shahi². This visit or intervention was the outcome of restlessness from the deaths of these two girls at same month.



Figure 1 Funeral of Tulshai Shahi

Writer aware that the situation was tough like Jumla in 2001 though she dared to go there in coordination with Women Development and Children Office and Social Service Center (SOSEC) specially Ms. Anita Gyawali and Hira Singh Thapa, Founder President of SOSEC respectively. However, the other stakeholder also extended their solidarity for cause. In order to build capacity at local level as well as building synergy for fighting against menstrual restriction, she determined to go there with her 80 years father Mr. Devi Prasad Paudel, with following key reasons; i) I knew that faith healers, older people are key influencing people thus her father's story could be the tool for neutralize the angriness that provoked from the internationalization of death of Tulshi and police case and ii) her father could be happy to see Dailekh about 50 years back that he walked through Dailekh foot trails while went and returned from Jumla.



Figure 2 Radha Paudel from left, Kamala Bhandari, Frankie Father, Maya Singh, Devi Prasad Paudel, Saroj Shahi with hat

It was not only odd heading towards field during festival but also purely voluntary contribution. The travel and accommodation of her father, Frankie, Saroj Shahi, photographer from Jumla and Kamala Bhandari from SOSEC was managed from Frankie and royalty of her book '*Khalangama Hamala*'^{3,4}. Team shifted in guest house of Municipality office where five people (two men and three women) were fit in a single room after bed bugs in local hotel. Ms. Maya Singh was in team from same Municipality from WDCO, Dailekh who had done fabulous coordination at the local

¹ District Coordination Committee, Dailekh. Assessment on Menstrual Practice in Dailekh, July, 2017

² Refer to the photo, funeral of Tulashi Shahi

³ Jumla, A Nurses's Diary, 2016

⁴ The royalty of book is accumulating under the Radha Paudel Foundation since 2016

level. The SOSEC managed for banner and stationary. Team had lived in village for five days that helped to build trust tremendously for initiating dialogue on dignified menstruation as well as got cheaper price for food and accommodation.

Psychologically, this team was on stress while heading towards this village in two ways; i) community has high resistance for change that was seen observation, media and assessment report (July, 2017)⁵, ii) received many threatens, blaming due to filing the police case as well as media mobilization specially targeted SOSEC and writer herself. Indeed, the police case filed for challenging to my state head, prime minister, speaker who never speak as well as due to not having any specific policy and law.

Objective:

The main objective was to build confidence of local stakeholder for establishing the dignified menstruation in Dailekh. The specific objectives were;

1. To educate the local stakeholders, mother's group, faith healers, political leaders, youths, schools etc.
2. To create pressure among stakeholders for holding accountability for dignified menstruation
3. To celebrate the Teej⁶ for create awareness around dignified menstruation

Methodology/Activities:

Team had quick meeting with Chief District Officer, Mr. Prakash Chandra Adhikari in August 21, 2017 for sharing a week program and planned for district level program. In August 22, 2017, team went to the Chamunda through Karnali high way due to landslide at shortcut road. Team also had to walk for an hour to reach the destination due to heavy rain, the river flooded at Rati river and the road was so bad. Team had brief introductory meeting with Mayor and team of Chamunda Municipality at their office then had interaction with 25 faith healers at school's premises. The discussion covered concepts such as gender, sex, menstruation, constitution and role of faith healers through brain storming, question answer, discussion.



Figure 3 Faith healer's meeting

In August 23, 2017, team had discussion with mother's group, faith healers, politicians at Liyati, 8, Chamunda. It was raining though about 100 participants gathered and had live discussions on

⁵ Annapurna Post Daily, July 2017

⁶ Teej, a festival for Hindu women, largely patriarchal

menstruations. The experience sharing of my father on god, health, menstruation, culture was so fascinating.

Likewise, during day time, had discussion with municipality members. They worked in four different groups; i) what is menstruation, ii) what are policies on dignified menstruation including analysis of manifesto of key political parties as well as constitution, iii) the current programs on dignified menstruation and iv) the status of dignified menstruation in public institutions and presented in plenary. The mayor and vice mayor spoke on their commitment though it is vague.



Figure 4 Discussion with Women's group



Figure 5 Chair of ward presented

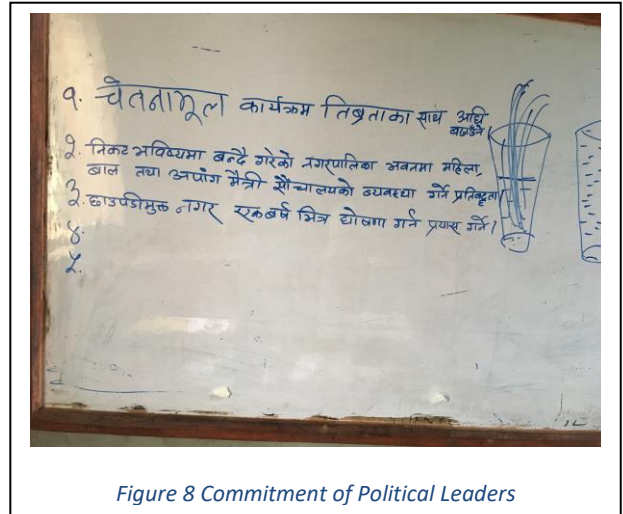


Figure 8 Commitment of Political Leaders

Few political leaders expressed their anger due to police case and few were resisting for culture



Figure 7 Mayor expressing commitment

and religion. Later, they convinced while team discussed on construction of nature and society as well as constitution and role of local government.



Figure 6 Observed shed

government.

In between, team had visited few homes in order to explore the status as well as build the trust in community. Each family are following the restriction, most of them have very beyond imagination.

In August 24, 2017, after visiting few homes near by hour residence, team joined Teej celebration. On the way to celebration, team observed couple of women who were sitting on the road with old clothes then and untidy facial expression due to period. Team also found a hotel with shed for menstruation which is more than hell.

In Teej celebration, Frankie and writer delivered speech where Frankie shared her experience on menstruation means in UK and here with over 3000 audiences. As always, writer's speech more focused on importance of dignified menstruation including democracy, constitution, human right, rule of law and role of political leaders, faith healers, women, girls, men and boys. There were various groups for song competition, all were singing on abolishing Chhaupadi.



Figure 10 Inauguration

The Municipality organized this program for creating

awareness for

END CHHAUPADI. The messages of songs included; god, how do we girls/women impure? Faith healers, we won't like to kill other girls so won't go in shed, don't asked us to go sheds. Mothers when do you love us? The program was jointly inaugurated by the priest and mother (Dhirja Shahi) of late Tulashi Shahi and giving special



Figure 9 Addressing mass of Teej Celebration

message on end Chhaupadi.

Team members also sang and danced along with other women. Later, team had managed to discuss with Dhirja Shahi who was in severe depression due to losing her teenage girl child Tulashi Shahi. She was very cleared and committed to save other girls and women so she joined the Teej program.



Figure 11 Family of Ishwar and Ambika

In August 25, 2017, team went to ward no. 3 for meeting with role model family (Mr. Ishwar and Ambika Bohora). It was great and inspiring family who grabbed the daughter's arms and asked to stay at home even during first menstruation two years before. They were challenged by their priest mother and hegemonic villagers by not coming and not sharing kitchen and food. Eventually, they all changed and started to mix with this family after 3-4 months.

In afternoon, team had very lively discussion with the students from grade 7,8,9 and 10 about menstruation. They also promised to initiate dialogue on menstruation at their home. Team returned to headquarter at the same day.

August 26, 2017, Devi Prasad and writer had shared their past and current experience via Radio Dhruva Tara with Amar Sunar, senior journalist. Later, on the same day, they



Figure 12 Devi Prasad sharing his experience

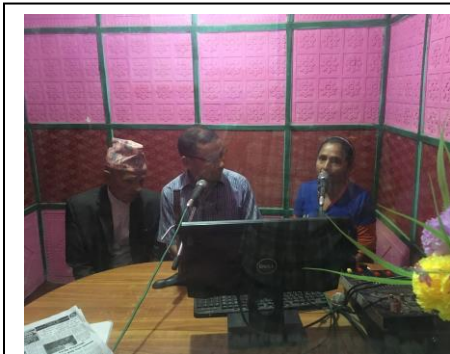


Figure 14 Speaking via radio Dhruva Tara

also addressed an interaction program with civil society organizations, politicians, student union members etc (n-60).

It was organized by SOSEC, WDCO, and moderated by Amar Sunar. Primarily, the



Figure 13 Moderated by Amar

following

concepts were included; dignified menstruation including democracy, constitution, human right, rule of law and role of political leaders, faith healers, women, girls, men and boys. The vice mayor chaired and LDO was chief guest of the program.



Figure 15 Vice Chair addressing program

In August 27, 2017, writer had utilized the opportunity for delivering message through three radio live broadcasting as well as over 200 people as audience at the General assembly of SOSEC. It was focused on importance of dignified menstruation including democracy, constitution, human right, rule of law and role of political leaders, faith healers, women, girls, men and boys.

During the stay of Dailekh, total 50 pieces of book *Khalangama Hamala* were distributed to child club, special interviewee, supporters, schools, municipality etc. as gift by expecting the contribution in social transformation. Team got the consent for all photos and videos (written consent for special video and photo and oral consent in mass meetings).

Key Results:

1. Enhanced knowledge on menstruation among all stakeholders; physiology of menstruation, deconstruct the myths.
2. Increased participation of men specially boys, faith healers, political leaders on discussions of dignified menstruation.
3. Realization of rights of women and dignified menstruations in relation with constitution and political manifesto.
4. Increased the accountability at the level of faith healers, men, political leader, media etc.
5. Developed common understanding on rule of law and filing the police case.
6. Expressed Commitment on abolish of all forms of menstrual restrictions by: Chamunda Municipality within a year, within five years by Narayan Municipality at district level and students from today.

Recommendations:

The entire Dailekh has shaken by the dialogue of dignified menstruation. This is the very high time to continuously push, encourage and establish the fact of dignified menstruation. Therefore, the district level stakeholders should be serious on coach, monitor, dissemination and follow up as suggested the assessment report of Dailekh (2017). It will go deliberately, transformation is possible within a year otherwise, all will worthless.

Acknowledgments:

In a course of a week program, got relentless support of many actors. The special thanks and gratitude goes to the individuals, families and groups who were participated in interview, videography, discussion programs and allowed team to observed their sheds, worship. Likewise, like to thank to Mayor Surya Bhahadur Shahi for his incredible cooperation and acceptance of us. At last but not least, thanks go to CDO, WDCO, SOSEC, Radio Dhruva Tara for their collaborative actions.