



UN Women’s Access to Justice Programme Enhancing Rights Based Advocacy



Shila Ale is a well-recognized woman human rights defender from Barahathawa Municipality, Province 2, Nepal. As member of Respect Nepal, a grassroots women’s organization (GWO), she has been working relentlessly to strengthen access to justice for women and excluded groups.

Photo: UN WOMEN

Monday, August 24, 2020—

When the lockdown began, I was informed by community members in our Municipality about Uma*, a single mother with two children who was constantly tormented by her mother-in-law and her husband’s brother. Ever since her husband’s death a few months ago, Uma had been subjected to both physical and psychological violence. When I

heard about Uma’s situation, I reached out to her.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had far reaching impacts on the society as a whole. These are strange times indeed. Women who are already deprived of access to rights and resources are impacted the most. Cases of domestic violence and other forms of violence have also been on the rise in my community.

I began my career as a primary school teacher in a government



From RC a.i.’s Desk

Though a challenging month in many ways, I have the pleasure of starting this message with two pieces of inspiring news. First, Nepal has been re-elected for a second term in the United Nations Human Rights Council. We look forward to this to further strengthening our collaboration and partnership with the Government of Nepal and society, to continue the work of advancing human rights in Nepal and globally.

Secondly, I have the pleasure to congratulate all our colleagues at the UN World Food Programme (WFP) for being awarded the 2020 Nobel Peace Prize. The Norwegian Nobel Committee said they chose WFP in recognition of their efforts ‘to combat hunger, for its contribution to bettering conditions for peace in conflict-affected areas and for acting as a driving force in efforts to prevent the use of hunger as a weapon of war and conflict.’. In this issue, we will learn about how WFP is addressing severe malnutrition amongst children

school. In my spare time, I volunteered to provide basic literacy to a group of 20 women who had expressed interest to me. As the women gradually learned to read and write their names, I felt motivated to support more women.

When a fellow teacher in my school established Respect Nepal in 2019, a grassroots women's organization (GWO) in Barahathwa Municipality, I got the opportunity to join as a member. The GWO was formed with the goal of improving the situation of women and children in our community. After hearing about my commitment to the GWO, the founder of Respect Nepal also told me to prepare to lead the organization in the future.

In early 2020, the Deputy Mayor/head of the Judicial Committee (JC) of our Municipality, informed us about a training opportunity for members of Respect Nepal. This was timely for me, as I was keen on strengthening my knowledge and skills to advocate against discrimination faced by women. The training implemented under UN Women's Access to Justice programme was conducted with the objective of enhancing the capacity of GWO members to strengthen rights-based advocacy for women's access to justice. During the training we participated in mock-session and simulation based on various real-life scenarios - violence against women perpetrated by men, VAW perpetrated by women, and by community members. These practical tools also helped us to map the key justice actors, service providers and pathways of justice in the process. The training was effective in fostering critical thinking and peer learning among us. The knowledge I gained has enabled me to help survivors of

domestic violence during the nationwide lockdown.

When I heard about the violence inflicted on Uma by her deceased husband's family, I immediately went to her house to inquire more about her situation. Her family members were present in the house, but they treated me cordially as they know about my work. I talked to Uma in a private space so that we were not overheard. I told Uma about the work of GWO and how we have been supporting women like her. Initially she was too stressed to share what she was going through. But she gradually relaxed when I told her that she could choose to have me check on her in the future. After she shared her experience, I told her about the help and services providers that are available in our community. She told me that she was feeling scared but her biggest concern was that the violence perpetrated to her may extend to her children. Given the severity of her situation, I was in constant communication with her either through the phone or by making home visits. I also explained to her why it is important to speak out against violence and seek support if and when she wants. We also discussed that if her in-laws tried to be violent Uma could remind them that, she would have no choice but to seek justice from the police or reach out to a non-governmental organization (NGO) to get them arrested. Much to my relief her situation improved after some time. The family members refrained from violent behavior and mistreatment towards her after hearing about the legal repercussions of their action from Uma. Over time the family members changed their ways and also made an effort to amend their relationship with her. As I am still

as caused by losses of household income and school closures due to necessary lockdown measures to combat the COVID-19 virus. This is a true testament to the lifesaving work done by WFP in times of crisis.

In this edition, you will learn how UN Agencies continue to tirelessly address the needs of those most vulnerable and marginalized in the context of COVID-19. One example is IOM working with government to support returnee migrants. Others relate to the escalation in cases of gender based violence (GBV): UN Women training counselors to support GBV cases, and logistical support to monitor quarantine centers using a gender lens; or UNFPA launching the second phase of a landmark project aimed to reduce GBV in two provinces.

You will also read of UNDP's recently published "Rapid Assessment of the Social and Economic Impacts of COVID-19 on the vulnerable groups in Nepal." The report provides us with valuable data to inform our programming, particularly on the needs of those most vulnerable and marginalized. It is well established that these members of Nepali society have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic and response.

You likely know that Valerie Julliard fulfilled her four-year term as Resident Coordinator (RC), and now leads the United Nations team in Indonesia. While I now fulfil the role of RC ad interim, I am also happy to introduce you to two additions to our UN Country Team - the newly appointed WHO Representative to Nepal, Dr Rajesh Sambhajirao Pandav, and the UNHCR Representative in Nepal, Ms. Carolin Spannuth Verma.

concerned about her, I continue to make regular calls to her or visit her to ensure that she is fine.

After the Deputy Mayor who is also the head of the Judicial Committee found out that Uma's case had been resolved, she approached me to support more women who were in a similar situation. Subsequently, I was able to reach out to 18 women in a little less than a month to check on them and offer support. I have communicated the challenges faced by these women to the Deputy Mayor for necessary action.

I have been actively involved in the COVID-19 response in our Municipality. I have been raising awareness among women about COVID-19 preventive measures such

as physical distancing, hand-washing and use of masks. I also met the Deputy Mayor to inform her about some women who had lost their livelihoods and were facing food insecurity in the pandemic. As government funds were scarce, the Deputy Mayor contributed her personal savings to support the affected households to provide relief. Similarly, when the relief of basic food items did not reach our village on time, I immediately brought it to the attention of the Deputy Mayor. This resulted in timely distribution of relief to those who were in dire need of it.

In the COVID-19 context, mobility restriction and decreasing funding support to GWOs pose challenges to our advocacy and we need to find

ways to address such obstacles so that we can continue our work.

Shila Ale is human right defender working as a member of Respect Nepal, one of the GWOs supported by Legal Aid and Consultancy Centre (LACC) and its three consortium NGO partners under the joint programme of UN Women, ICJ and OHCHR "Enhancing Access to Justice for Women in Asia and the Pacific: Bridging the gap between formal and informal systems through women's empowerment". The programme is generously supported by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA).

* Name has been changed to protect their identity

Celebrating Youth Day for Empowerment

This year's International Youth Day was a celebration through collaboration and honoring the youth's work. UNV Nepal in collaboration with UNICEF Nepal, UNDP Nepal, WWF Nepal, and Youth Advocacy Nepal held workshops and discussion programs for youths under a skill booster package initiated by United Nations Nepal.

The theme of this year was youth engagement for global actions. UNV Nepal aimed to connect youths from the grassroots level to global platforms. This aim was not just limited to youth engagement but was implemented with full of empowerment.

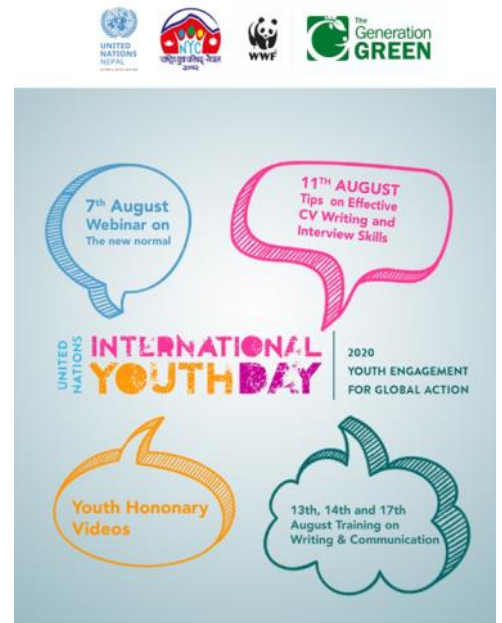
Through collaboration with UNICEF Nepal, we trained over 300 young people from different parts of the country. They took part in a virtual CV-writing and interview skills workshop on 11th August 2020. This training geared at providing

participants practical tips and advice on applying for jobs and boosting their employability.

UNV Nepal also collaborated with WWF Nepal to deliver the training on Writing and Communications training held on 13th, 14th, and 16th August 2020. 50 youths were offered this training through a selection process, training on effective writing, and responsible storytelling.

As this year's theme echoes the youth engagement for global action, UNV and WWF initiated a campaign on showcasing young people's efforts to reinforce positive change in their community. A 10-video series on honoring the young was showcased every week from 12 August to 12th October 2020.

In collaboration with Youth Advocacy Nepal, a series of national and global programs were conducted with the hope to convene development partners, stakeholders,



and government to discuss the important agenda on youth engagements and development.

Cross Country experience sharing program was one of the major highlights where speakers from 15 countries of four continents shared their experiences on COVID-19 crises, the situation, and the response and effort.

I am listening, I am with you

Sabina Rimal is the Program Officer at Women's Rehabilitation Centre (WOREC) Nepal, an organization working for the protection and promotion of women's human rights. In her role, Rimal counsels survivors of gender-based violence (GBV) and manages supervision of psycho-social counseling sessions and coordination of safe houses across WOREC's network in Nepal. Currently, WOREC is working in 16 communities in Nepal and has catered to over 800 survivors of GBV during three-months-long COVID-19 lockdown in Nepal.



Sabina Rimal

July 23, 2020—

My phone vibrated, and an unknown phone number flashes on the screen. I slid to answer, but even before I said hello, I hear sobbing. I say, "I am listening, I am with you". Sometimes it is a relief for survivors to express their emotions without inhibitions. A few minutes later, the woman on the phone told me that her husband brutally hit her when she refused to give him more money. In normal circumstances, I would urge the survivor to immediately come to our safe house. But the entire nation is under lockdown, and she is stuck at home with her husband.

Over the next few days Gyanu* called me whenever her husband was not around. We discussed ways for Gyanu to process her emotions, made plans on safe places to go to if her husband gets violent again. With time Gyanu and I developed a strong bond. She felt confident that I can support her to heal and that I can be a trusted witness if she decides to have legal proceedings. Time and again I worry about her like I would for my own family, especially when Gyanu does not call.

Phone calls such as Gyanu's have increased drastically during the COVID-19 lockdown in Nepal. The Government imposed nationwide

lockdown from 23 March till 21 July to prevent the spread of the virus. There are times when I speak to more than six survivors a day on our hotline. It is challenging when phone calls are the only option to aid survivors during lockdown. If their lives are at risk, I coordinate with local governments to ensure they have access to safe houses closest to their homes. Our data at WOREC shows an average of seven murder cases every month since the lockdown in Nepal.

Other challenges that are part of working for women's rights also persist. Community members are initially encouraging of women who seek help from our organization. However, as they start speaking up against injustices, the community becomes intolerant and push back. The survivors of GBV are criticized for being "too outspoken" and our supportive interventions are labeled as "a ploy to break families". It is very frustrating to deal with biases of people in positions of power and not uncommon for the police or judges to blame victims for their situation and pressure them to forgive their perpetrators. Even when systems are in place, I need to hold them accountable to do what is right.

It is easy to feel hopeless, but I dedicate time to look after myself.

When I am not counseling, I love tending to my garden. Speaking to my plants and dancing with them gives me solace. I also never compromise on my sleep and try to drink as much water as I can.

Had it not been for my family's support, I doubt if I would have followed my dreams of trying to change society. As farmers, my parents were determined to give me the education they did not receive. I would walk an hour every day to reach the school in my village. My parents went against the norm advocating for me to master not only domestic chores but also to embrace the outside world. My hope is to provide Gyanu and other survivors access to means to overcome all forms of violence in their lives and lead a dignified life."

In efforts to end all forms of violence against women and girls, UN Women partners with WOREC to train counselors on supporting cases of GBV, to ensure survivors of GBV have access to services and to run national radio campaigns against GBV. In response to the increasing cases of GBV during COVID-19 pandemic, UN Women has supported WOREC with relief supplies as well as logistic support to monitor quarantine centers from gender lens.

* Name of the survivor is changed to protect identity.



Food distribution in Bhajang.

Photo: WFP

Nepal's Out-of-school Children Get Food at Home

Children missing out on school meals get food at home, thanks to a WFP-US partnership

August 7, 2020 - Children in Nepal are under the risk of severe malnutrition due to loss of household income and resulting food insecurity brought on by the lockdown to control the COVID-19 pandemic.

The extended closure of school means that 2.4 million children who used to benefit from the government's school meals program are not getting supplementary nutritious food – especially in the grain deficit Far-western and Karnali Provinces.

Now, the World Food Programme (WFP) with the Nepal government are distributing 1,500 metric tons of fortified rice, lentils and vegetable oil donated by the United States to school-going children from grades 1-8 in rural Nepal.

The campaign will benefit families most vulnerable to COVID-19 lockdown impact in the western provinces.

“The lockdown has put a far greater burden on parents to provide their children with balanced and nutritious meals at home,” says Pippa Bradford, WFP Country Director in Nepal. “These take home rations will provide an interim respite for these families until children return to school – while facilitating at-home learning.”

Families in western Nepal are unable to provide enough daily food for themselves or their children, so often opt to keep the children at home rather than send them to school on empty stomachs. But many schools in the recent years have been able to motivate poor parents from food-deficit districts to send their children to school knowing that they will be fed a free lunch.

Because most families in the region are subsistence farmers and do not grow enough food, many of their

men are seasonal migrants to India. However, this year many of them have lost their jobs and have come home to Nepal.

Says American Ambassador to Nepal Randy Berry: “The United States is proud to stand together with Nepal in supporting and protecting the most vulnerable among us. Our partnership with the United Nations World Food Program and the Government of Nepal to distribute rations to school children in Sudur Paschim and Karnali provinces will help 150,000 families through these difficult times.”

In turn, school feeding program has helped enroll more children and successfully retain them as well as increase their nutritional status with healthy school lunch.

Since 2005, the U S Government's McGovern-Dole Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program has been supporting the WFP school meal initiative in Nepal with a total contribution of more than \$81 million, helping over 250,000 children access nutritious food.

WFP has started handing over McGovern-Dole supported schools to the Nepal government, and about 95,000 students have already been integrated into the government's national school meal program.

WFP with the support of the US government is also working to ensure and widen the supply of local food to schools. Home Grown School Feeding program has focused on linking school meals to local agricultural production.

IOM Assists 63 Nepali Migrants With Voluntary Return From Cyprus



19 September 2020, Kathmandu –

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Nepal and Cyprus, with support from the Government of Republic of Cyprus, and in coordination with the Government of Nepal, organized the voluntary return of 63 Nepali nationals. The migrants landed at the Tribhuvan International airport today, 19 September.

The mixed group of men and women were mainly students no longer able to pay college fees in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the national economy and human mobility as well as travel restrictions compelled many migrants to turn to IOM for daily subsistence and support to voluntarily return to their countries.

“We are glad to extend our support to Nepali migrants in need. An IOM

Nepal team was present at the airport to assist them through immigration in coordination with the country’s COVID-19 Crisis Management Centre and other relevant authorities,” said IOM Nepal Chief of Mission Lorena Lando.

Prior to their departure, all returnees were tested for COVID-19. On flight day, IOM Cyprus staff members assisted the migrants with all airport procedures and one-time cash assistance was given to each as a contribution to their initial expenses upon arrival and immediate needs, chiefly onward travel to their home communities.

Nepal government is ready to receive them and apply all necessary COVID-19 measures as applicable in the country.

“Following the migrants’ registration with IOM to voluntarily return—and thanks to the cooperation with government authorities in Cyprus and Nepal — everyone was ready to

IOM staffs brief the Nepali migrants upon their arrival at Kathmandu airport from Cyprus with IOM support

Photo: IOM

help the stranded migrants to voluntarily return to their homes,” said Natasa Xenophonos Koudouna, Head of Office for IOM Cyprus.

During the flight, all passengers were required to wear masks and gloves. Upon arrival in Kathmandu, information material was distributed, explaining COVID-19 measures, reintegration support and how to contact IOM and the respective country offices.

IOM Nepal has been regularly assisting vulnerable Nepali migrants for their return and reintegration ever since IOM was established in the country in 2007.



IOM physician conducts pre-departure health assessment of a migrant at Migration Health Center in Kathmandu.

Photo: IOM

Merely 22% of Municipalities of Nepal have Systematic Migration Data Retention – IOM Survey Findings

A Rapid Assessment on impacts of COVID-19 on Returnee Migrants and responses of the Local Governments of Nepal was conducted by IOM between 23 June to 8 July 2020 and it has found out that only 22% of municipalities of Nepal had provision to systematically retain migration data, which in turn has a great impact in affected the designing and planning of migration sensitive plans and policies.

The rapid phone assessment analyzed the impacts of COVID-19 and preparedness and response plans of

local governments covering nearly 97% of the total number of municipalities of all 77 districts.

The main objective of the survey was to obtain baseline information on returnee migrants, along with the challenges they could face in the public health and socioeconomic spheres following the pandemic, and the respondents were chief administrative officers, information officers and health coordinators of the municipalities.

Other Notable Findings of the Survey Were:

- i. 23% of the municipalities did not have plans for reintegrating returnee migrants, while 77% had draft plans that included a focus on reintegration.
- ii. 32% of the municipalities had reported stigmatization and discrimination related to COVID-19
- iii. 90 percent municipalities believed that there could be economic crisis as a biggest problem post COVID-19 with so much of returnees. They considered unemployment, lower income for households,

and financial insecurity as major issues under economic crisis,

- iv. Nearly 72000 individuals from 209 municipalities had requested assistance for repatriation, the reason for 79% of them being losing their job or unpaid leave
- v. 83% municipalities believed that unemployment would be the biggest problem in the country due to the huge number of migrants returning to Nepal

The survey concludes, a major impact on the health and socio-economic aspects of the country has been observed following an unprecedented

situation because of the pandemic. With a huge number of individuals returning to their hometown, the possibility of transmission of COVID-19 into deeper pockets of country is imminent.

A need of a system to maintain a database on the returnee migrants is found to be significant which will assist the local stakeholders in preparing, planning, managing and allocating resources at the moment and in the days to follow.

Reintegration of returnee migrants should be prioritized aligning the available strategies of the government of Nepal. It is also recommended that each municipality has own unique

needs that are based on geographical and socio-cultural contexts. Therefore, rather than focusing on population-based planning, reintegration plans for returnee migrants should consider the specific needs of municipalities.

Likewise, managing the large numbers of returnees, inadequate human resources at quarantine centers, the shortage of test kits for swab collection, inadequate PPEs for health workers, and lack of crisis management plans and funds were reported as challenges by the local units.

Full report can be found [here](#).

The Global Goals Week


As 2020 marks the 5th year of the Sustainable Development Goals, it's time to reflect and re-evaluate the progress of the development works and the progress of the goals that we have achieved so far. The government, development partners, stakeholders and even the beneficiaries are well aware of the goals to obtain sustainable development for all. With these on set, it's now time to accelerate the sustainable development goals.

To echo the progress and accelerate the solutions, the United Nations Volunteers celebrated the global goals week from 18th to 26th September 2020. Numerous like-minded organizations namely YUWA (a youth-led, youth-run organization), Blind Youth Association Nepal (an organization working for the people living with disability), Girls Empowered by Travel (A women-led organization to enhance the leadership of women for community transformation), and Youth Advocacy Nepal (A youth

organization working to advocate on youths issues) were convened for a powerful collaboration to connect local to global youths and accelerate the implementation of sustainable development goals.

The list of programs conducted during the global goals week are outlined as follows:

1. Discussion program on the involvement of young people with disabilities in achieving SDGs by 2030.
2. Showcasing mini research in the form of infographics on the progress of SDGs.
3. Panel discussion on education framework, challenges, and opportunities
4. Global Youth Meet Up to share the contribution of youths all over the globe.
5. Podcast series on the theme of Youths role in localizing SDGs



BEING A COVID-19 WARRIOR ON THE STREETS OF KATHMANDU

As a high school student, Shrestha didn't have the option to pursue many kinds of jobs. But due to his family's economic condition, he needed to work and support his family

When the government declared a nationwide lockdown in response to the COVID-19 pandemic on March 24, Sunil Shrestha's life was thrown into disarray. In the initial days, all services were closed and no one was allowed on the streets except for essential work. For Shrestha, a 19-year-old high school student who works for the private waste management company Hatemalo Clean City, the lockdown robbed him of his only source of income.

The lockdown was eased for essential services in a few days' time and while Shrestha was eager to get back to work, he was also confronted with the very real risk of contracting the coronavirus while working the streets of Kathmandu Metropolitan City's Ward 14.

"During the lockdown, everyone was restricted to their homes but we had to go out to collect waste. It was risky but there was no other option," said Shrestha, who has been working for Hatemalo for the past two years.

Despite his anxiety over contracting the virus, Shrestha had no choice but to go out to work with barely any

As a high school student, Shrestha didn't have the option to pursue many kinds of jobs. But due to his family's economic condition, he needed to work and support his family while simultaneously going to school. Waste management was one of the few jobs that did not require a high school degree.

"I consider myself very lucky to have been a part of this programme. Without the PPE and this opportunity to learn about safety, I could have been a victim."

— Sunil Shrestha, 24

protective measures except for a mask and gloves. He and his elder brother Sujal both work in waste management, a job that their father had held for 13 years before retiring due to health complications.

Shrestha knew very little about the coronavirus when he went out to work in the midst of the pandemic. He had learned bits and pieces from the media and from friends but was not aware of how exactly the virus



spread and what measures he could take to prevent contracting COVID-19. All he knew was that the virus was dangerous and that it was rapidly spreading across the world.

Shrestha, however, got the opportunity to enroll in a training programme designed and implemented specifically for solid waste workers by UNDP Accelerator Lab and Médecins du Monde, a French medical humanitarian organization, as part of the COVID-19 rapid response. He was among 300 waste workers who were enrolled in the training and provided with safety gears. He began to participate in periodic Behavior Change Communication (BCC) awareness sessions with his supervisor and also attended orientation sessions on how to use and take off re-usable personal protective equipment (PPE) and the proper procedure for cleaning and disinfecting his gear. These training

sessions not only taught Shrestha how to safeguard himself against COVID-19 but also gave him a boost of confidence. After learning about the coronavirus, Shrestha took it upon himself to educate his family members, peers and friends on safety and hygiene measures to prevent COVID-19, such as proper hand washing, cleaning and disinfecting PPE, and maintaining social distancing. The programme also provided solid waste workers like Shrestha with proper PPE to use while on the job.

“I consider myself very lucky to have been a part of this programme. Without the PPE and this opportunity to learn about safety, I could have been a victim,” said Shrestha. “Today, I proudly teach my family and inform my peers and community members about the proper way to wash hands and wear masks. I believe I am a COVID-19 warrior and will continue to be one

for the overall safety and well-being of my community and loved ones.”

UNDP's study - “Rapid Assessment of the Social and Economic Impacts of COVID-19 on the vulnerable groups in Nepal” – shows that COVID-19 has disrupted supply chains, shut or threatened the survival of small and informal enterprises, and made people highly vulnerable to falling back into poverty through widespread loss of income and jobs. The study recommends the government to guard against vulnerabilities by strengthening social protection and livelihoods, reorient public finance to augment human capabilities and introduce measures to limit bankruptcies and create new sources of job-creating growth. UNDP has rolled out its COVID-19 Response which focuses on four main areas: governance, social protection, green economy, and digital transformation.

Download Full Report Here: <http://t.ly/hK3Y>



GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND RESPONSE PROJECT II

Embarking on a New Chapter in
Nepal's Commitment to Ending Gender-based Violence

UNFPA Launch Phase II of Landmark Project to Prevent Gender-Based Violence in Coordination With Nepal Govt, Switzerland and Norway

KATHMANDU:

In coordination with the Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizen (MoWCSC) and relevant provincial and local authorities, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) on 7 September 2020 launched the second phase of a project that seeks to reduce gender-based violence and discrimination against women and girls in two provinces.

The Gender-based Violence (GBV) Prevention and Response Project Phase II is supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC and the Norwegian Embassy in Kathmandu.

The project will provide GBV survivors in 19 municipalities across 8 districts in Sudurpaschim and Province 1 with essential services that support their safety, health and access to justice. It will empower communities to challenge beliefs and practices that encourage GBV, and support local and provincial governments in the project-supported locations and the federal government to promote policy reforms that will improve women's empowerment. The project aims to

reach almost 300,000 beneficiaries over the next four years.

“Phase II of the project comes at a critical period in Nepal when the COVID-19 pandemic has worsened gender inequalities and GBV,” noted Ms. Yam Kumari Khatiwada, Secretary, MoWCSC. “We are pleased that the project builds on the successful experiences of Phase I, which demonstrated the importance of strong coordination among all actors on the ground as well as how effective response interventions can be made sustainable.”

Ending GBV and harmful practices against women and girls is critical to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. “GBV is a genuine crisis in Nepal and globally. It undermines the health, dignity, security and autonomy of its victims, yet it remains shrouded in a culture of silence. Phase I gave us a lot of hope and encouragement that change is possible with sustained support,” said Ms. Lubna Baqi, UNFPA Country Representative in Nepal.

Violence against women and girls, be it emotional, physical, sexual or financial is borne from deeply-



rooted discriminatory practices that value men and boys and normalize violence against women and girls. “Promoting gender equality and non-discrimination is one of Switzerland’s key priorities and therefore we are keen to support this project which will work with men, women, boys and girls to address such negative social beliefs and unjust practices,” noted Ms. Silvana Hogg, Chargé d’affaires of the Embassy of Switzerland in Nepal.

Nepal has made significant strides towards ensuring gender equality and ending gender-based discrimination and violence through policy and legislative measures. However, more still needs to be done to put the provisions of these legal instruments into reality on the ground. “Advancing women's rights and gender equality is an important priority for the Government of Norway. Violence against women can never be accepted, never excused, never tolerated,” says Mr. Lasse Bjørn Johannessen, the Ambassador of the Norwegian Embassy in Kathmandu.

New UNHCR

Representative in Nepal



Newly Appointed UNHCR Representative to Nepal, Ms. Carolin Spannuth Verma presenting her Letter of Credentials to the Honorable Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Pradeep Kumar Gyawali.

Photo: UNHCR

Kathmandu, 6 October —

The newly appointed UNHCR Representative in Nepal, Ms. Carolin Spannuth Verma, presented her Letter of Credentials to the Honorable Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Pradeep Kumar Gyawali.

Ms. Spannuth Verma, a German national, arrived in Kathmandu on 15 September 2019 to take up her new assignment as UNHCR Representative in Nepal.

Upon resuming Office, Ms. Spannuth Verma said “The Government and people of Nepal have an impressive tradition of protecting those who are forced to flee persecution. The generosity of Nepal is acknowledged by the international community, especially in light of its own challenges of resources. I look forward to advancing with the Government and other UNHCR partners this important agenda in a spirit of collaboration, law and compassion”.

Ms. Spannuth Verma’s journey of serving the cause of refugee protection through UNHCR has now spanned almost 25 years. She has served in various international protection and legal positions in Morocco, Malaysia, Indonesia, Republic of Northern Macedonia, Bulgaria and at UNHCR Headquarters in Geneva in the Division of International Protection, Asia and Africa Bureaus.

During her service with UNHCR, her thematic focus has included but was not limited to International Refugee Protection, Resettlement, Integration, Voluntary Repatriation, Refugee Status Determination,

New WHO

Representative in Nepal



Newly Appointed WHO Representative to Nepal, Dr Rajesh Sambhajirao Pandav, presenting letter of credence to the Honorable Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Pradeep Kumar Gyawali..

Photo: WHO

Kathmandu, 7 October —

The newly appointed World Health Organization (WHO) Representative to the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal, Dr Rajesh Sambhajirao Pandav, presented his Letter of Credence to the Honorable Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Pradeep Kumar Gyawali.

Dr Rajesh arrived in Kathmandu on 18 September 2020 to take up his new assignment as the WHO Representative in Nepal.

Dr Rajesh said “The Government of Nepal and the WHO have built a strong partnership over the last 50 years. This partnership shares a vision of a healthy Nepal. I look forward to further strengthening the partnerships with the Government of Nepal and other partners, and to take forward the important agenda of Health for All.”

He also emphasized the importance of the work being done by health workers in Nepal and said “It is imperative that we join forces together to fight the COVID-19 pandemic while ensuring essential health services for all. I am concerned by the increasing number of frontline workers getting infected with COVID-19 the world over and in Nepal. If health workers are at risk, we all are at risk.”

On taking office as the WHO Representative to Nepal, Dr Rajesh expressed his greeting to the people of Nepal for the upcoming festive season, and also made an appeal: “I urge every member of the Nepalese society to celebrate responsibly. Mass gatherings are bound to

International Humanitarian Law, Protection of Civilians, Child protection, Gender issues, LGBTIQ inclusion, Capacity Development, Refugee Law Training and Staff Welfare.

Ms. Spannuth Verma practiced law in the courts of Hamburg, Lübeck and Schwerin in Germany before taking her expertise to the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in New York. She attained her higher and post-graduate Law Degree from the University of Freiburg and Hamburg, Germany and in 1995 obtained her license to practice as a Judge in Germany.

Ms. Spannuth Verma is married to Dr. Sunoor Verma, a heart surgeon and an international development specialist. They have two daughters. Along with an international civil service career, she still carries in her heart the city of Hamburg where she was born and educated.

amplify the risk of spreading the disease to all corners of the country.” He appealed to the youth of Nepal and said “The youth have to ensure the safety of the elders and other vulnerable members of the family. Youths must remember that they are at equal risk of getting COVID-19. The choices are -they could save or put people at risk of losing their lives.”

Prior to Nepal, Dr Rajesh was the WHO Representative to Timor-Leste from April 2015 until September 2020. He has served the WHO in various capacities since 2004. He was Health Policy Advisor, WHO Country Office for Timor-Leste, (2011-March 2015); Medical Officer (Public Health,) WHO Country Office for Maldives, (2009-2011); and Medical Officer, Mental Health and Substance Abuse Unit in WHO Regional Office for South East Asia Region (2004-2009).

UNFPA Urges Stakeholders to Uphold Rights of Girls

KATHMANDU, OCTOBER 10—

Voices of girls are too often silenced and the silence is enforced through gender-based violence, child marriage and other harmful practices, said United Nations Population Fund today.

Such practices violate a girl’s bodily integrity and autonomy, they steal her confidence and ability to make informed choices about her life, said UNFPA Executive Director Natalia Kanem, issuing a statement on the occasion of the International Day of the Girl. The day focuses attention on the need to address the challenges girls face and to promote girls’ empowerment and the fulfilment of their human rights.

This year’s theme of the day is, “My voice, our equal future” that

reimagines a better future inspired and led by adolescent girls. Harmful practices against girls are happening in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Various studies showed pandemic could lead to an increase in child marriages and adolescent pregnancy.

“With the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda as our guide, we need to do better to ensure that girls are not left behind.

We cannot allow the current COVID-19 crisis to derail the future of an entire generation,” Dr Kanem said.

National data showed Nepal has one of the highest child marriage rates in Asia, with four in 10 Nepali girls marrying before the age of 18. The legal age for marriage in the country is 20.

According to UNFPA, there is an increasing imbalance in the sex ratio at birth in Nepal – from 103 male per 100 female live births in 2005 to 110 males in 2015 – and it is further evidence of the persistent gender discrimination that undervalues girls.

Menstruation is considered a taboo across the country.

Although criminalised, Chhaupadi, which prevents women and girls from participating in normal family activities when menstruating, still continues. “Let’s redouble our efforts towards a gender-equal world, where every girl has the power to make informed choices about her body and her life,” UNFPA chief said.

Vegetable farming training improves lives in Sarlahi



“I am stunned by my vegetable production now. I did not expect that the production could be increased to this scale and that I could earn money.”

– Prem Sahani, Balara, Sarlahi

Prem Sahani of Siraha district who was one of the participants of the off seasonal vegetable farming training organized by Kaka CLC with UNESCO's support in 2019

Photo © Kala CLC

Sahani was one of the 20 trainees who participated in the off-seasonal vegetable farming training of constructing plastic tunnels, organized by Kala Community Learning Centre with the support of UNESCO in April 2019. The training provided many theoretical sessions and practical activities on the production, storage and market management of various types of vegetables.

“Joining the training helped me gain knowledge and increase my income. By applying the technical knowledge gained in the training, I was able to increase production,” he said.

However, vegetable farming was not free of challenges. After the training was over, Sahani planted eggplants in his field, but the seedlings were

damaged due to floodwaters. He then planted beetroots, which were again destroyed due to continuous heavy rainfall. The weather had damaged his vegetable plants twice but he did not give up and planted bottle gourds. The bottle gourds grew well and have now become a major attraction not only for the villagers but also for those who visit the area.

Patience, determination and hard work definitely yield great results. Sahani now grows both seasonal and off-seasonal vegetables, which brings him good earnings. He was also able to get two ponds contracted for fish farming. Prior to the training, his income was only enough to cover the basic expenses of his family. Sahani and his family are happy that now they have a good income source through vegetable production, they can help their community.

Like Prem Sahani and nine other trainees have started vegetable production. They grow off-seasonal vegetables like tomatoes and bitter gourd, as well as seasonal vegetables

like cauliflowers, radishes, and eggplants in the plastic tunnels.

“They have done commendable work and succeeded in earning a good income. During this lockdown situation, these products have met the vegetable needs of the local community,” said Kamleshwar Sinha, the chairperson of KAKA Community Learning Center.

UNESCO supports Community Learning Centers to improve their sustainability and deliver gender-responsive and inclusive lifelong learning opportunities, which address the needs of the most vulnerable and marginalized people of the community.

The UNESCO's CapED programme continues to support non-formal education stakeholders and the community learning centers in promoting literacy and lifelong learning education for all, particularly with the objective to achieve SDG4 Education 2030.

Driving Home Preventive Practices



Young volunteers on what they witnessed and learned from being at the forefront of a recent campaign to reinforce key public health safety measures against COVID-19 in communities across Kathmandu Valley.

Kathmandu, Nepal:

“It’s not that people have not understood. They are wearing masks, for example, but not in the correct way.”

Nepal Scout Alisha Dahal recently saw firsthand how despite knowing about the key public health safety measures against COVID-19, actual practice on the ground is falling well short of expectations. “We found that a lot of elderly people wear masks, but they don’t know the right way to put them on,” she says. “But a lot of children are not wearing masks at all.”

Research has shown that thanks to a range of awareness campaigns conducted across various mediums – radio, television, social media, mobile phones, and the news media, among others – since the pandemic first began its spread in Nepal, an impressive 90 per cent of the population are now aware of the behaviours they need to adopt to protect themselves and others from the disease. The awareness, however, has yet to translate into effective action.

It was therefore with the objective of driving home SMS practices –

namely, distancing, mask use and hand hygiene – through targeted interpersonal communication efforts that Alisha and her fellow scouts, together with public health students, had taken part in a recent campaign. The SMS Behaviour Reinforcement Campaign was launched by the Ministry of Health and Population in collaboration with UNICEF and USAID and in partnership with Nepal Scouts and the Higher Institutions and Secondary Schools Association Nepal, and saw volunteers such as Alisha had headed out to communities across the Kathmandu Valley, promoting the SMS practices.

For 15 consecutive days, these young volunteers made their way to different spots around the valley where large groups of people tend to congregate – including markets and public squares. Here, they interacted directly with members of the public, discussing preventive measures and fielding queries, and distributing flyers and masks. They also held live demonstrations on the right way to wear masks, wash hands and use sanitizer, as well as disseminating messages through speakerphones.

“It was very rewarding,” says Roselini Shrestha, a student of public

health at Nobel College, and one of the volunteers. “For people who already knew about the SMS practices, we were able to reinforce their knowledge and provide tips on how to make it more effective, and for those who didn’t know, they learned something new.”

Nepal Scout Pawan Koirala is happy to report that even within the campaign’s limited time, they witnessed visible change. “We visited the same places in a few days’ interval to follow up and found that more people were wearing masks correctly and maintaining distance,” he says. He feels that having a “mix of backgrounds”, in terms of the scouts’ experience with community engagement and the public health background of the students, made for great exchange of ideas and strengthened the campaign.

With the campaign having come to a close on a positive note, plans are presently afoot to extend efforts beyond the Kathmandu Valley to other parts of the country. “If we could take this model and apply it to the rest of the country, I truly feel it would help people internalize these practices and prevent further spread,” Pawan says.

“As a scout and citizen, I’m glad that we have been able to serve the nation in this hour of need, and we would be honoured to support future campaigns.”

Reiterating this sentiment, Rosellini says, “At a time when the whole world has been hit hard by the pandemic, and we’re still waiting for a vaccine, each individual’s action matters more than ever.”

Consultation on The First Draft of The Legislation on Smuggling of Migrants



Consultation meeting on the first draft of the Smuggling Legislation in Nepal maintaining physical distance in the meeting.

Photo: UNODC

October 2—

UNODC ROSA conducted the consultation over the first draft of the Smuggling Legislation on 2nd October 2020 in Nepal in collaboration with the Office of the Attorney General. The consultation

was aimed at receiving feedbacks and inputs over the draft Smuggling Legislation with an aim to revise the legislation. The training was attended by 27 participants from Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security,

Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizen, Office of the Attorney General and Nepal Police including civil society organizations working on this sector. The discussion provided so many feedbacks and inputs from the experts and various relevant ministries to prevent and combat the smuggling of migrants, as well as to promote cooperation, while protecting the rights of the smuggled migrants and bring perpetrators to justice.

Workshop on Preventing and Responding to Trafficking in Persons Enabled by Internet



October 1—

The UNODC Regional Office for South Asia (ROSA) organized trainings on preventing and responding to cyber-

enabled trafficking in persons on 1st of October in Kathmandu. The Training workshop was hybrid in nature with some panellists participating physically and some

virtually. This Training Workshop was aimed at the stakeholders at operational level, responsible to address cyber-enabled trafficking. The training was attended by 26 participants from various government departments/agencies and civil society, including from the Ministries of Law, Labour, Women, Home and Foreign Affairs, the Attorney General's Office, and Nepal Police. The training garnered a lot of discussion on practical challenges in investigating cases and highlighted the need for greater cooperation between the online hosting social media platforms, and between countries.



UNODA Youth Champion for Disarmament Ms. Linh Trang, presenting UNODA's Youth for Disarmament initiative and its objective of providing knowledge and skills to young people and empowering them to make their own contributions as national and world citizens.

Photo: UNRCPD

and non-proliferation. Mr. Humphries outlined the binary stereotypes of “masculine” and “feminine” surrounding WMD policy and decision-making, as well as the need of overcoming the tradition of women underrepresentation and the subsequent lack of gender considerations in WMD disarmament instruments highlighting positive trends of greater visibility for women in United Nations negotiating bodies on arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. Finally, Mr. Humphries raised attention of the relevance of advocating for gender equality and disarmament during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ms. Linh Trang Phung, the invited UNODA Youth Champion for Disarmament, joined UNRCPD to present the UNODA's Youth for Disarmament initiative, as well as her role as Youth Champion for Disarmament. Her presentation inspired the subsequent discussions with the University students on the role and the opportunities for the youth in the field of arms control and disarmament.

The presentations of the three panellists were followed by an insightful discussion with the audience on the importance of integrating gender perspectives in disarmament and security policies and actions - with also reference to emerging security threat linked to artificial Intelligence - and on the role of women as key agents of peace.

Kathmandu, Nepal - 1 October 2020:

The United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific (UNRCPD) delivered a lecture on Gender & Disarmament in the fourth session of the webinar series on Peace & Gender organized by the Prajnaya Trust and Sansristi. The Prajnaya Trust and Sansristi are civil society organizations from India engaged in women empowerment for peace and development and in fostering research and dialogue on issues of gender concern. The webinar series targets university students and aims to build knowledge around the integration of gender perspectives in human security issues with a focus on the Women, Peace and Security Agenda, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable development and youth involvement.

The UNRCPD lecture consisted of two parts covering gendered impact of armed conflict and the influence of

gender norms in disarmament and arms control, and gender mainstreaming in the field of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD). Gender and Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) project coordinator, Ms. Ida Scarpino, led the first part of the virtual presentation. Having provided a quick overview of the global instruments addressing gender perspectives in small arms control, Ms. Scarpino explained the gendered nature of SALW and the socially constructed associations of small arms and masculinity. Special attention in her presentation was paid to the linkages between the Disarmament and the Women, Peace and Security agendas, and their convergence with Sustainable Development Goals.

Mr. Steven Humphries, Security Council resolution 1540 Project Coordinator, led the second part of the presentation and elaborated the importance of theme of women mainstreaming in the area of WMD

Lockdown

Sunil Shrestha, 24



“During the lockdown, everyone was restricted to their homes but we had to go out to collect waste. It was risky but there was no other option,” said Sunil Shrestha, 24, who has been working for Hatemalo for the past two years.



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