

# Social Families

In the Empowerment of Marginalized People



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Bulletin

## A trip to Terai to observe SFs

On 28th Manshir, 2067, a team of 53 people, consisting of members of SFs from Dhading, Gorkha and Lamjung districts and some central office staff, including the General Secretary, set out to the eastern region with the objective of observing how the SFs are functioning there. Comprising of 40 women and 13 men in all, the team also included Youth F.M.'s managing directing Madhav Sigdel and Ramchandra Yadav and senior journalist Krishna Murari Bhandari. After having visited Ramjanaki temple in Janakpur, they took the night shelter at Lahan.



Next day morning, the team held an interaction meeting with the members of Kamana SF of Sishubari VDC, at Pipra West, ward no. 3, in Saptari district. They were briefed on how at the initiative of the SF, the trainings conducted for the local people on advocacy against human rights violation and conflict management raised their general awareness. They also discussed about their interactions with the chiefs of the local government offices and NGOs at the district headquarter and also about how the endeavors towards institutionalizing human rights were being made. The topics for discussion covered flood control initiatives and exchange of common concerns faced by both the hills/mountain and the terai. While deliberating on achievements, the local SF members referred to the collective savings raised from amongst the members, which is also loaned out to the members to help them tide over their financial crisis. They said, "We have opened up consumer cooperatives undertaking petty businesses; we have strongly warned the local dominant people against their ongoing oppression/exploitation of our community people. In the field of development works, we have undertaken several agricultural development works such as planting mango orchards, banana plants in the backyard of our residences.

We have preserved onion seeds and started onion cultivation on a wider scale. We have managed to access VDC fund for its utilization in our rural development projects. With the assistance from the local NGOs, we have installed hand-pumps and tube-wells to provide drinking water services to the people". While deliberating on those success stories, there was cheerfulness in their faces.

Manju Khulal Magar, Chairperson of Kamana SF greeted the guests with flower garlands, while other members received them putting red Tika on the foreheads. The journalists of the visiting team held a separate interaction meeting with the local people. The SF members reported on the social changes that have lately been institutionalized in the society, such as, seeking consent mandatorily of wives prior to disposing off landed property, prohibition of liquor sales/consumption, registration of child-births / marriage, acquiring citizenship certificates. In all those cases, SF members became active participants in making those things happen as a matter of common practices. Similarly, prohibition of exerting violence against women/wives by men and in case such incidents take places, such acts would be treated as violation of human rights. The Shishubari SF of Saptari has made a rule that all the members are required to deposit with the SF Rs. 20 every month. They have also instituted a system under which financial/physical assistance is provided to any member, whenever he/she faces family crisis caused by such incidences of illness or child delivery, maternity period or demise of a family member and so on.



The interaction event was participated by the members of several SFs, namely, Pragati, Makhamali, Navprabhat, Jankalyan, Srijanshil and Janachetana, that were in operation in West Pipra VDC. It gave opportunities for the active female participants to express their opinions freely. The speakers were Manmaya Khapangi, Premmaya Karki, Manju Choudhary, and Ganga Darlami.

After that event, the visiting team left for Udaypur district. When they reached ward no. 5, Dugaha of Hadiya, they were

warmly received by SF members under the leadership of Janajagaran SF and the other host SFs were Saraswati, Dalit Integrated and Women SFs. The members of those SFs expressed their joy in receiving the quests through the display of water vessels filled with water that were lined up along the both sides of the decorated welcome gates erected to receive



them. On either side of the way, the SF members were lined up in queues with flower garlands, bouquets, holding trays with red tikas. With wide smiles and cheerful eyes, they received the quests in their traditional manner and in a special way. None of the hosts or guests had entertained any expectation/stakes in exhibiting such receptive behaviors. It was a demonstration of pure love and respect. While observing the scene of mutual respect and love displayed at both ends i.e. on the one hand, the guests from Hills-Mountains and on the other hand, the host party representing Madhes/plain lands, both parties in receptive moods displaying simplicity and honesty in their behavior, one can't but experience happiness, indeed. There is no word to express fully the feelings of genuine joy felt by all, generated from the peaceful unification of two diverse rural communities who are facing the common plight of poverty and deprivation/marginalization.

After the reception, an interaction meeting got started in an open air environment. Welcoming the quests seated in the chairs, Durga Bahadur Sharki, a representative of Janajagaran SF, expressed his opinion in the following words, "Our residential areas, located along the river banks, always face the high risk of being washed away by the swelling river/stream floods due to heavy rainfall during the monsoon. In the summer we are forced to bear the scorching heat of the sun. We earnestly wish that some kind of embankment be built along the river bank ensuring relief to us."

Soon after SAMAGRA's entry into our settlements, we became enabled with capacity building, following our ability to read and write. We have also joined the observation tour programme arranged to visit Gorkha, Lamjung and Dhading districts. We got the opportunity to closely observe what was happening in your communities. Now you have come to us with an observation mission. I request you kindly bless us with your best wishes to us," While speaking, he became emotional. Durga Bahadur Dai, has been a general member since the time of SAMAGRA's advent into the VDC. Fulia

Devi Sada, vice chairperson of Integrated Dalit SF observed, "We have concentrated on eradicating discrimination of all kinds at any cost." Bhola Man Tamang, a member of the observation team opined to extend an open invitation to the host members to visit them in return next time. In the same manner, Sher Bahadur Pariyar observed, "As you have seen, this is how we have been living. We have land but no water. We have been making efforts to bring irrigation facility to the land. We are thankful to you for your kind visit to us." That SF is inclusive in true sense of the term. There are members originating both from the Hills/Mountain and Terai, working in unison.

After that, the team visited Hadiya ward no. 4 to observe the activities of Shiva Shakti SF. In the interaction meeting held at the premise of a school, Ram Bahadur Shrestha said, "We have started goat farming with the support from the Agriculture Department with the facilitating services from SAMAGRA." Devika Karki Namita Ghale, Soma Shrestha informed how they have been working in the field of human rights. On behalf of the team, Krishna Murari Bhandari, Madhav Sigdel and Durga Datta Ghimire expressed their best wishes to the SF. Stressing that organization generates strength, they have raised their level of enthusiasm. We have observed that you have organizational strengths and have also explored development potentials in the VDC. We have seen how you have unilaterally accessed the right to water for irrigation through boring the ground water. Our best wishes for your progress and prosperity!" Goma Shrestha added, "We have deposited SF's group saving in the bank, let us see to what extent we can proceed with the pace of progress. We are thankful to you for your kind visit to us."

On the third day, the observation team visited Siswani VDC ward no. 8 in Siraha district. The ward is located at the southern part, near the Indian border. Majority of the members present were Madhesi women since the SF was located in Madesh-Terai. Welcoming the quests, Kago Devi Sada, representative of Milan SF said, "We have learned a lot from the training programme. As you know, there is wider prevalence of caste-based discrimination even amongst Dalits communities. We have to initiate campaigning against this exploitative system. With the advent of SAMAGRA in our VDC, we have been enabled to speak out our minds openly and freely discarding our face-covering shawl. We have become bold enough to speak on rights-based issues. SAMAGRA has encouraged to initiate open discussion / dialogue with district-based departmental heads.

Sita Devi Ram, Chairperson of Ma Bhadra SF, Sano Devi Ram, the chairperson of Saraswati SF, Swagdevi Ram, Panudevi Ram etc. delivered on various initiatives taken by them to encounter / overcome various problems faced in the VDC. R.C. Yadav from Youth FM congratulated them on their taking such initiatives. The last leg of the observation tour came to an end, following an interaction with SFs in Diman of Saptari. That part of the tour proved to be a memorable event with replicable values. A farmer, no matter

whether he/she belongs to the communities located in the hills/mountain top or in a Madhesi plain land overcomes any constraint emerging from the use of local language or local costume or creed. And, this is what we call the characteristic feature of a Nepali. We have to learn from the poor farmers



living either in thatched hut in the hills or simple cottages in the Terai/Madhes. A strong message has emerged from the interaction programme that "Yes, we are poor, but no doubt, we are rich at heart!"

In Diman VDC, Like in other VDCs, Dadajee SF members warmly received the visiting observation team. The local

language, fashion and costume of Madhesi people, living in simple thatched-roofed huts do no match at all with those of hill people. Yet, there is commonality in their objectives. There is uniformity in their target settings. Both the community people, living in different environments, shared the common problem of being victims of discriminations. They sang a group song in their own mother languages. They commonly participated in the group dances as well. The SFs shared their various experiences relating to how they encountered with human rights violations, citing the related rules and regulations. They also preserved the mango orchards grown in public land. Other instances were that they mobilized their group savings to help needy SF members tide over SF crisis that has befallen on them. They have also taken a variety of lobbying initiatives to tap the local public fund / resources at the hands of public authorities / INGOs etc. to finance local development works. In the same fashion, *Pahade* (hill) SF members shared with *Madhesi* SFs their experiences of their woes that they had to face in their social lives. They, at the end, offered an open invitation to the *Madhesi* SFs to arrange a reciprocal observation tour to *Pahade* SFs with a provision for a overnight stay with them.

After that, the *Pahade* guests returned and on the return journey, they looked back to the hosts with due respect / obligation for their warm hospitality shown to them.

### Participation in "A Human Rights Based Approach to Development Programming" training

Amar Adhikari, Programme Officer of SAMAGRA attended a training programme entitled "Human Rights-based Development Approach to Development Programming" from 22 November – 10 December 2010, organized by Danida Fellowship Centre and Danish Institute for Human Rights. There were altogether 18 participants from six countries, namely, Nepal, Bangladesh, Gambia, Ghana, Siera Leon, and Benin. The training programme addressed human rights and development concepts, including those adopted by United Nations and other international agencies, and other regional and national level concepts and values; the challenges facing human rights and development. It also dealt on how to formulate a project proposal on human



rights advocacy and its applicability; empowerment of Dalits and marginalized communities. The training programme also included a visit of the participants to the Danish Parliament, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Commission for Investigation of the Abuse of Authority, and Human Rights Commission. The speakers on those specialized topics were experts of international repute.

## Activities completed during the month of Manshir

Activites	No. of participants			
	No.	Female	Male	Total
Human rights monitoring at the local level	62	873	410	1273
Awareness campaigns against human rights violation	34	1153	477	1630
Social Audit	3	47	102	149
Exposure visits	1	40	13	53
Participatory Planning and Resource mapping	55	863	372	1235
Celebration of human rights related days	8	234	285	519
Conflict management events	17 cases			
Resources / Rights claiming	10 Organizations			
Orientations to SFs on OD	45 SFs			

## If I were a Leader !

**Shatrughan Ram**  
Motivator, Mahotari



If I were a Leader,  
I would put forward the marginalized people's issues;  
Respecting their settlements as my ToR,  
I would visit their settlements as my working places. If I ....  
I would regard their shattered huts as temples,  
I would pay respect to their society as deities,  
and consider their issues as *Prashad*-gifts in return! If I ....  
I would take pleasure in being associated with them!  
I would love them as if they were my brothers,  
and bring literacy program for the deprived children! If I ....  
Establishing their access to all state agents,  
I would ensure their rights protected,  
and introduce good leadership and equitable societies.  
If I ....  
Fight against discriminations, I'd institutionalize the justice!  
Delivering them from the reign of oppressive tyrant,  
I would raise the slogan, "Long live the civilized society."  
If I ....

## Celebration of Human-rights Day

On the occasion of International Human rights day, (10 December 2010), SAMAGRA, along with its district / regional offices and SFs celebrated the event by organizing various programs and awareness raising campaigns. Some instances are as follow:

- In Dhading district, various institutions joined hands to celebrate International Human Rights day including an advocacy programme against gender violence that lasted for 16 days. The programme included an interaction on the topic Dhading district and human rights, release of Peace Monument, distribution of prizes to the winners of the essay competition and Folk song competition;
- A special weekly radio feature program focusing on SFs began in the Youth 8 FM 96;
- In Lamjung district, Chetanshil and Shivashakti SFs organized single and duet folk song competition and co-feasting. Similarly, Subhalav, Hariyali and Laligurans SFs of Ghanapokhara displayed a public drama addressing the issues of caste-based discrimination/untouchability. Likewise, SFs of Simpani, organized interaction meeting and public songs addressing human rights and social vices/superstitions in the presence of local society representatives and school teachers;

- In Gorkha, Annapurna SF of Khopang VDC organized a fine art competition addressing human rights violations. An interaction programme was organized by Janajagaran SF of Mashar in Municipality;
- In Lahan, at the initiative of the district-based human rights alliances including SAMAGRA organized various programme including blood donation event, public speaking on various burning issues and honoring the publicly declared human rights activists;
- In Gaighat, Udaypur, SAMAGRA district office, in association with the Human Rights Network, led a public rally with a slogan carrying banners and organized a public meeting in the city hall. The slogan of the event was- "Speak freely and bring an end of the system of discrimination of all kinds." On the occasion, the children displayed street drama with the message of discarding human rights violations. Similarly, various local civil society representatives spoke on how to arouse public awareness campaigning and protection and promotion of human rights;
- In Dhanusha, Mahottari and Saptari districts as well, SAMAGRA organized various programs in cooperation of the district based human rights advocating agents.

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