

**FINAL REPORT COUNTRY SEMINAR**  
**ON**  
**“ADDRESSING CHALLENGES AND EXPLORING**  
**OPPORTUNITIES ON SAFE ABORTION ADVOCACY”**  
**SUBMITTED BY:**  
**YOUTH CHAMPIONS ADVOCACY NETWORK NEPAL**  
**(YOUTH CANN)**



## **Acknowledgement**

Firstly, team Youth CANN considers it our privilege to express our sincere gratitude to our mentor organization Asia Safe Abortion Partnership for providing for supporting us to conduct our first country seminar.

With a sense of honor and pride we owe our sincere indebtedness to our mentor Dr. Suchitra Dalvie, Co-ordinator ASAP for her continuous guidance and supervision, vital encouragement and undue co-operation and believing in us and having patience on team despite our flaws and delays.

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We also express our gratitude to the panelist Mr. Anand Tamang from CREPHA, Dr. Deeb Shrestha from IPAS, Mr Babu Ram Panta from AYON and Ms. Pratichya Dulal from the Kathmandu Post (Media) . The rich inputs they provided have certainly paved the way towards better advocacy. Our sincere acknowledgement goes to all the government officials especially Dr Jhalak Gautam from FHD for trusting in newly formed network and making presence in our program despite his extremely busy schedule and encouraging us with words of commitments for collaboration in future. We hope to receive their guidance and support in future as well.

We also thank our participants who were so sincere and interactive during the entire sessions. And last but not the least, the team would like to thank all the people and organization who were directly and indirectly involved in making it a success.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

With the support from Asia Safe Abortion Partnership, Youth Champions Advocacy Network Nepal (Youth CANN) organized its first country seminar on 20th May, 2016 in Kathmandu to bolster Youth CANN mission in advancing the sexual and reproductive health and rights of women with especial focus on promoting access to safe abortion services as human right in Nepal. This seminar aimed to build an important platform to bring together youth women activists, organizations and other diverse stakeholders, including government representatives at national level to discuss on addressing challenges and exploring opportunities within Safe Abortion Advocacy. The overall purpose was to formally introduce the Youth Champions Advocacy Network in Nepal to others stake holders working for safe abortion advocacy. Furthermore, also to disseminate information, experience sharing and exchange of ideas, strategic thinking and planning for a collective vision aimed towards safe abortion services and finally to have enhanced collaboration and cooperation within organizations and institutions working for strengthening SRHR of Nepalese women.

## 2. IMPLEMENTATION

The entire program was divided into two major parts:



Registration Desk



## PARTICIPANTS PRIOR TO THE START OF THE PROGRAM

### First Half

The program started with welcome speech by vice-coordinator of Youth CANN Ms. Minal Singh who also highlighted the objectives of the program.

Coordinator **Ms. Smriti Thapa** then formally introduced Youth Champions Advocacy Network Nepal where she shared the organizational history and support from Asia Safe Abortion Partnership in formalizing this network, network's vision and goal and the various objectives that Youth CANN have formulated in accomplishing its mission and vision. She also briefly highlighted the work YCANN has embarked upon and also urged for the need of support, guidance and cooperation from the organizations and institutions working for strengthening SRHR including safe abortion so that we could exchange the ideas, plans and collective vision aimed towards ensuring safe abortion services.



There was then series of presentations from the members where they shared their small grant project implemented as Youth champions starting from findings from the project on Female Community Health Volunteers (FCHVs) of Nepal on Safe Abortion along with screening of a short video documentary clip 'women for women'. She also shared our First ever National Level Youth Led Youth Advocacy Institute in Nepal in September/October 2015.

The session continued with presentations from Minal, Deepa, Sujiti who shared about their wonderful projects like; orientation to Media Journalist on Safe Abortion, video competition on safe abortion and the Project Prayaash (project done with medical students) respectively.

Furthermore, Yasodha presented the other projects undertaken by the youth champions like "Safe Abortion through Gender Lens on behalf of Coordinator Smriti, while Randhir informed about the Safe Abortion Advocacy Program for Media which was organized by Youth CANN in collaboration with Media Advocacy Group (MAG).

Various queries and positive remarks were received from all the participants about this variability in these projects so far. The media personnel especially commended in our variety of target groups in safe abortion advocacy ranging from youths, medical personnel and most importantly including media personnel in our various advocacy programs. Some of them were even unaware of the fact that even after 13 years of legalization in Nepal; we still had 62% of women who were still unaware about the legalization. They felt the need and responsibility towards positive media access and coverage in changing the situation in future.

There were positive feedback, sense of support and encouragement from the dignitaries present of which the most important remark came from Dr. Jhalak Gautam from Family Health Division of Department of Health Services where he highlighted the need for Youth CANN team to carry out such projects in future as well. However, he also reminded the fact those women in rural remote parts like Bajhang, Bajura and the Terai region of Nepal are still unaware about safe abortion and its legality. He suggested YCANN to continue advocating on safe abortion combined with family planning and contraceptives to address the challenge regarding unsafe abortion in Nepal. He assured any technical help required from the division and government in implementing so will be





## YOUTH CHAMPIONS PRESENTING SMALL GRANTS





Dr. Jhalak Gautam from Family Health Division making remarks on our small grant presentation





## Second half

The experience sharing session was followed by Panel discussion on advocacy for safe abortion as a women human right, its challenges and possibilities and how it can help in ending abortion stigma and promoting right based services in Nepal. The panelists were **Mr. Anand Tamang from CREPHA**, **Dr. Deeb Shrestha Dongol from Ipas**, **Pratichya Dulal from the Kathmandu Post (Media)** and **Mr. Baburam Pant from All Youth Organization Network (AYON)** whereas Youth Champion Apekshya was the facilitator of the session. These panelists were selected on the basis of their long lived experience of working long in this field of safe abortion advocacy here in Nepal and across the region. Our network's coordinator couldn't make it as panelist because of her poor health status.



**PANEL DISCUSSION ON ADDRESSING CHALLENGES AND  
OPPORTUNITIES FOR SAFE ABORTION ADVOCACY**

**MR. SATISH DEO, MEDICAL COUNCIL ON HIS REMARKS TO THE PANELIST**







Participants asking queries regarding ways to improve medical education in making it more women centered

Each Panelist were given 5 mins time to respond to particular theme as put forth by the moderator Ms. Apekshya by large and supplemented by our coordinator Ms. Smriti .The panel discussion brought some interesting subject matter to limelight as the panelists presented/discussed based on the theme listed below and they explored both challenges and opportunities in the particular thematic section

- How can we use findings of research in our advocacy to deal with emerging issues surrounding safe abortion?
- What is the role of both print and electronic media in handling issues regarding abortion?
- What is the role of midwives and health care provider in providing right based care?

- How a youth led advocacy can promote safe abortion advocacy in Nepal?

After the panel discussion, the audience actively participated in the discussion by sharing their opinions and queries to which the panelist gladly responded.

The panel discussion was followed by a session on networking where ways for enhancing coordination and collaboration of Youth CANN with the government, NGO/INGOs, Youth Organizations and other stakeholders were explored while sketching the future plan on how we go hand in hand for joint advocacy on SRHR including safe abortion. This session was facilitated by Ms. Smriti Thapa where the invited dignitaries suggested on possibilities in networking as well as gave a commitment to Youth CANN to support the youth network in the future projects.

### **Result of Panel Discussion**

#### **“Challenges and Opportunities for Advocacy on Safe Abortion in Nepal”**

- ✓ Mr. Anand Tamang from CREPHA revealed some of the finding of research regarding safe abortion. He shared that choice of the couple for getting safe abortion service in Nepal has shifted from service center to self-administered drugs. However, due to lack of information on the actual cost of the abortion pills, service users have been paying hefty sum of money to get the pills.
- ✓ Due to haphazard selling of the abortion medicines, without providing accurate information on correct way of taking them, women have had to face serious complications. Hence, Mr. Tamang emphasized on the need to train the pharmacists/drug providers on Medical Abortion method to ensure women receive safe and quality abortion services.
- ✓ Mr. Anand Tamang tried to address the negative attitude public have towards women who have an abortion. We must empathize the woman who has an abortion rather than judge her for “deciding to undergo the procedure like deciding to eat a chocolate”, only then we will realize her need for doing it. We should always be respectful towards the women seeking abortion.
- ✓ Ms. Pratikshya Dulal, from the Kathmandu Post shared that it is very difficult to dig on issues surrounding SRHR as people hesitate to talk about it. As a reporter, she shared her difficulty while trying to get access on the data/information regarding Safe abortion in Nepal as monitoring and follow up is not adequately carried out. Also there isn’t separate bit for news on Reproductive Health in the media.
- ✓ Ms. Dulal suggested using social network to empower boys and girls about their rights, aware people about issues on abortion through articles and opinion etc. She added media is isolated at times on emergency or existing issues like abortion, and are often limited to political news so media should be involved while carrying out surveys or research so that series of stories can be brought to attention that can inspire and change and the people.
- ✓ Youths led media programs are also limited in national television programs, so such programs should be given priority.
- ✓ Dr. Deeb Shrestha Dongol from Ipas emphasized on providing quality safe abortion services from human rights perspective. However, on one hand we are lacking in providing quality

safe abortion service especially in rural area, while on the other hand, there are still stigma and biasness for women at all level.

- ✓ Dr. Deeb highlighted different level of stigma a woman has to face while getting safe abortion service beginning from the individual level, family level, community level upto the health facility level where there is provider's barrier for accessing services.
- ✓ Dr. Dongol also gave an example of such barrier. A girl who came to get an abortion is denied from the service because she was in school dress as youth and adolescents friendly abortion services is still lacking in our system. She also shared similar story of another woman who came seeking abortion.
- ✓ Quoting the woman she said, "Why does woman have to face everything from abortion to child birth to looking after the family? Can't there be a birth control injection for male as well?" Dr. Dongol stressed that services providers must provide safe abortion services from human rights approach.
- ✓ Youth Activist Baburam Panta, from AYON discussed on the prevailing stigma on SRHR as even the highly educated group of youths have shyness and hesitation in speaking about contraceptive, menstruation. Talking about safe abortion the stigma is even much more than that.
- ✓ He shared that most of the people in the society consider abortion legitimate only during life threatening condition and incest rather than recognizing it is as a woman's choice. The patriarchal society only promotes women's reproductive role, thereby completely neglecting their sexual role.
- ✓ Due to the power relation between couples, the men do not use contraceptives which lead to unwanted pregnancy further causing severe consequences. People must not view abortion service merely as a clinical procedure but also consider its social and cultural determinants.
- ✓ Some of the audience members were curious why was it necessary to advocate on safe abortion rather than promoting contraceptive use. The curiosity was well answered by sharing of the data given by WHO i.e. despite of accurate and appropriate use of contraceptives, 6 million unwanted pregnancies occur worldwide. Hence, advocacy on safe abortion and contraceptive use must be taken together.
- ✓ There are various challenges that pose threat to ensuring safe abortion services in Nepal like geographical challenges, stigma, service affordability and other barriers. Youths can make a use of social media for promoting information and facts on abortion in Nepal. Youth must come together and be a watchdog to guarantee that state ensures safe, affordable, quality and stigma free abortion services.

### **Challenges in Networking**

- Intergenerational gap creating a barrier in networking and coordination.
- Program duplicity i.e. multiple programs with same objectives.

After the remarks and answering the questions from the participants, we came under following conclusions to take this momentum further.



## **Future directions and combined decisions**

1. Generation and utilization of resources in a collective way for capacity building activities on SRHR and safe abortion.
2. Increasing collective public awareness regarding the availability and cost of abortion services.
3. Advocacy to address the need for programs that train pharmacists for medical abortion
4. Removing stigma and barriers and some myth that is deeply rooted with public awareness raising public positivity program
5. Advocacy at higher level to impact policy change. This was particular for government decision to free the abortion service in Nepal and having a separate bill for safe abortion which have been in limbo for a long period of time.
6. Encourage media houses to have separate correspondents on addressing sexual and reproductive health issues and use of social media and separate youth related programs that features and highlights key SRHR issues of young people in national platform.
7. Mainstreaming of gender and human rights in medical and nursing curriculum to address the stigma from the health care providers and also to provider frequent refresher to the providers in enabling stigma free services at the listed abortion sites.
8. Address the Young people SRHR including safe abortion to address not only the global goals and targets but also to transcend them into realities back home and in doing so coordination and collaboration with youth led and youth driven network like Youth CANN.
9. Conceptualize fresh and new ideas to reduce program duplicity through exploring possibilities of multi sectorial collaboration.
10. Commitment from the stakeholders to support and guide the network.

The entire panelist were felicitated with the token of love at the end of discussion and acknowledged for their valuable time and presence.

## **3. OUTCOMES**

The Country Seminar created a platform for YCANN not only for exploring opportunities and addressing challenges in safe abortion, but also a stepping stone for YCANN to further strengthen networking and collaboration at national level with the government, NGO/INGOs, Youth Organizations and other stakeholders. The major outcomes of the project were:

- Introduction of the network with the front runners of safe abortion advocacy in Nepal;
- Youth led and youth driven initiative for safe abortion advocacy were integrated into mainstream safe abortion advocacy in Nepal through inter-generation dialogue and collaboration;
- Discussions from the diverse panelist served as foundation to the future safe abortion advocacy;
- Commitment from the stakeholders (Government Officials and CSO including media personnel and youth working in SRHR) to support and guide the network created a strong network for newly formalized network like Youth CANN for future work together;

- Effective follow-up to localize the commitment made by various participants.
- Increased understanding in safe abortion advocacy and enhanced leadership and advocacy skills of members of Youth CANN involved in the project.

#### **4. CHALLENGES**

1. The major challenges was the effect of devastating Earthquake that hit Nepal in April and May 2015, and economic blockade which resulted in adjustment in the activities and completion date of this seminar which was planned and postponed twice.
2. Inviting dignitaries from a newly formalized network and getting their support was extremely difficult in the beginning.
3. Organizing preparatory meeting and getting sustained and combined efforts from all the members was also difficult at times.
4. It was difficult to have the presence of all the invited participants and even those who came it was difficult to have their presence (especially media personnel) for the entire program.

#### **5. LESSONS LEARNT**

1. Involvement of people from diverse movements/background helped to understand different perspectives and angles to the challenges and opportunities for safe abortion advocacy his created sharing of experiences and has helped to build strong SRHR advocates in different arenas by enhancing their knowledge and advocacy skills.
2. Youth led initiative can build the bridge for intergenerational gap in SRHR advocacy especially on advocacy of safe abortion as women human right.
3. Sustained and enhanced cohesion between the members of the network for the proper implementation of programs and actions.

#### **5. CONCLUSION**

This country seminar was the stepping stone for the newly formalized network Youth CANN. It has provided an excellent platform for working in the larger national advocacy spaces building the bridge of intergenerational gap. This seminar also acted as a forum to foreground women's sexual and reproductive rights issues especially on establishing safe abortion as women human right issue in Nepal. The plethora of information obtained from panel discussion explores both the challenges and future opportunities to put forth the ray of hope towards more intersectorial coordination and has extended the networking for newly formed network. This has also built a sense of ownership and confidence within the team mates of Youth CANN and to keep the spirit of leadership ongoing to put forth safe abortion advocacy at the national priority discussion and work with government to bring about the changes in policies and program. Furthermore, it has also laid the foundation for designing and implementing the programs and policies at the grassroots level with the help of government and other concerned stake holders in future.



**BEGINNING OF HOPE AND GREATER WORK THAT AWAITS !!**