

Workshop on Conflict Related Sexual Violence



21 August, 2017
Kathmandu, Nepal

Brief Report

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National Workshop on Conflict Related Sexual Violence

Summary

A national consultative workshop on ‘Conflict Related Sexual Violence’ was organized jointly by Saathi and Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction under the aegis of British Embassy in Nepal and UN Women. The daylong event organized in Kathmandu on 21 August 2017 was mainly aimed at discussing on conflict related sexual violence (CRSV) and understanding the stigma experienced by sexual violence survivors as well as generate a set of recommendations to tackle stigma at different levels. Two regional consultative meetings in Pokhara and Kapilvastu took place prior to the workshop in early August to bring in the district perspective. The overall workshop and the regional consultations were led and facilitated by Bandana Rana, Member of UN CEDAW Committee.

Last year on 16 November, Saathi under the auspices of British Embassy in Nepal organized a similar kind of workshop on "Preventing Sexual Violence". The first such workshop focused solely on sexual violence, a pressing issue across Nepali society, brought together key stakeholders ranging from policy makers and implementers, survivors, civil society organizations, police and key government officials to discuss on the multifaceted impact—physical, psychological, and socioeconomic- on sexual violence survivors.

This second national workshop was built on the recommendations of the first workshop and the outcome of the two regional consultations with specific focus on developing precise action plans around them. The overall objective of the workshop was to recommend necessary measures in creating a stigma free society for sexual violence survivors and enhance their access to justice based on discussion amongst key stakeholders.

The workshop further dwelt on the situation of sexual violence survivors of conflict and their right to justice. More specifically, the workshop pondered over how stigma related to sexual violence in general and conflict related sexual violence in particular can have limiting effects on the lives of survivors. It also discussed the local understanding of stigma related to sexual violence, the forms and manifestation of stigma on the victims' life at structural, community and individual level before recommending specific areas of action in tackling with the problem. The workshop also identified strategies and actions that need to be taken to prevent sexual violence in Nepal. The findings of the workshop related to CRSV will be integrated in the Second National Action Plan (NAP) being drafted for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 & 1820.

Prior to the national workshop, two regional consultations one each in Pokhara and Kapilvastu were conducted to discuss diverse perceptions related to stigma related sexual violence and the status of conflict related sexual violence (CRSV).

The regional consultations were attended by district level government officials, civil society organizations, activists, conflict related sexual violence survivors, representatives from the security and justice sector and few journalists.

The main findings of the district consultations were that there is a lack of conducive environment for the victims of sexual violence to open up. They also do not have faith in the judicial system and fear the social stigma they have to face once they reveal their status as sexual violence survivor. CRSV survivors

majority of whose status has now changed (many are married with children) are reluctant to speak up because they fear that it will have a negative impact in their present life due to stigma from family members and society. The consultations also revealed the lack of shelters and counselling services. Even the few shelters that exist do not have the required capacity to cater to the needs of victims. Also the system of maintaining confidentiality during the judicial process is not effective and the victims often turn hostile due to political interventions pressuring them to come to terms with the perpetrators and to settle cases out of court.

The national workshop in Kathmandu was attended by around 70 participants from diverse sectors. Government organizations participating in the workshop were represented by Ministry of Women Children and Social Welfare (MOWCSW), Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction (MOPR), Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, National Planning Commission and Nepal Police. Others were parliamentarians, representatives from NGOs working in the sector, Religious Leaders Network, LGBTI, service providers including those from government hospitals, shelter managers, counsellors, and persons with disability, survivors of CRSV, youth and few journalists.

Methods

The workshop was based on the learning, experience and findings from the first workshop conducted in November last year and the two regional consultations held to understand the situation of stigma at the community level.

The regional consultations served as a platform for the stakeholders including sexual violence survivors to share their experience and make recommendations for enhanced justice and a stigma free society. The process involved the introductory session followed by a presentation from the workshop facilitator setting the tone for the discussion and interaction. The participants were asked to have their say on the situation of stigma related to sexual violence including CRSV at three levels - structural, community and individual.

The program formally took off with the opening session with remarks from notable guests including Honorable Chairperson of the Parliamentary Legislative Committee on Women, Children, Elderly Citizen and Social Welfare Ranju Jha, British Ambassador to Nepal Richard Morris, UNWOMEN Country Representative Wenny Kusuma, representative of Conflict Victim Common Platform Gita Rasaili, President of Saathi Uma Shah and Workshop Facilitator UN CEDAW Committee Member Bandana Rana. The session was chaired by joint secretary at Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction Rishi Raj Bhandari.

The Second session was a panel discussion with specific focus on stigma and justice chaired by Dr. Kiran Rupakheti, Program Director at National Planning Commission and participated by Srijana Shrestha, on behalf of CRSV victims, Ram Kumar Khanal - former Deputy Inspector Gender of Nepal Police, Laxmi Khanal - Inspector of Nepal police and Sadhana Shrestha - President of Legal Aid Consultancy Center (LACC). The panelists deliberated on the situation of stigma and justice related to sexual violence focusing on three levels - structural, individual and community level. The panel presentations were followed by an open floor generating an active interaction amongst participants.

The Third Session was a panel presentation on Conflict Related Sexual violence components in the draft of the second NAP on UNSCR 1325 & 1820. Joint Secretary Rishi Raj Bhandari who is the focal point

at MOPR heading the drafting of the NAP presented the achievements and challenges of the first NAP and the priority focus on CRSV placed in the second NAP. Pinky Singh Rana, NAP drafting committee member presented the conflict related sexual violence components in the draft NAP -II. Bandana Rana highlighted the key findings of regional level consultations which she had facilitated.

The participants were divided into three groups for the Breakout Session. The Groups were divided in such a way that every group comprised of government officials, representatives of civil society, police, organizations working in the sector of sexual violence and the survivors of sexual violence. Group I worked on recommendations for 'preventing overall sexual violence', Group II on 'Stigma related to sexual violence' and Group III on 'Conflict related sexual violence'.

The workshop concluded with a plenary session where each group presented the recommendations on the given theme. After each presentation the floor was invited to add recommendations if any on the theme presented.

Discussion

Following is a summary of the discussions and highlights of the key points that took place during the opening and the plenary sessions and the open floor discussions.

1. Formal recognition of CRSV victims: It has been suggested that government recognize conflict related sexual violence victims as 'victim of war'. In the absence of formal recognition, the CRSV victims are unable to access the justice and qualify for reparation programs. The recognition from the government side not only paves the way for the victims to the relief package and justice but also help reduce the stigma faced by them. The participants recommended the government to issue apology letter recognizing the plights of victims, ensuring them the needed justice and due reparation.

2. Meaningful engagement of victims: Generally, victims are considered as passive agent, needing external help and are subject to sympathy. However, the participants underscored the need of considering victims as agents of change. A strong emphasis was stated for the need of survivors' meaningful engagement in all stages of policy and program design and implementation to ensure that policy and program is better suited to the victims thereby yielding the desired impact.

3. Justice and Reparation program: Announcement of justice and reparation package for the CRSV victims is likely to light a beacon of hope among the survivors waiting for justice which has been deferred for very long time. The participants also hoped that announcement of such a program will also encourage the victims who have been hiding their status till now to break their silence and come forward to seek justice.

4. Reformation of Law related to Sexual violence: Currently, there are separate laws for different forms of sexual violence. An integrated legislation accommodating all forms of sexual violence will be

instrumental for effective justice delivery. The need of stringent legal provisions for the severe cases of sexual violence was emphasized.

5. Improvement of documentation system: Numerous cases of human rights violation including sexual violence during and aftermath of the conflict were reported. However, formal documentation of such cases is very scarce. The workshop recommended putting proper documentation system in place with defined case protocol aimed at maintaining confidentiality of the victims.

6. Protection mechanism for survivors and witnesses: In view of the impunity, corruption and the political interference in cases related to sexual violence in the country, recommendation was made for proper protection mechanism for survivors and witnesses. The protection is also recommended for the family members of CRSV as well as other SV who are likely to be threatened to come to terms with the perpetrator's proposal to settle the case out of court or forcibly reconcile with them.

7. Formal abolition of social ills: Stigmas are rooted in societal factors including social and gender norms, cultural taboos, beliefs and customs. Therefore, it was suggested that the government should identify and compile all superstitious customs, beliefs and gender biased norms and harmful traditional practices and formally announce their abolition.

8. Non-formal / non judicial reparation: Acknowledging that reparation does not have to be exclusively monetary or even material, non-formal / non judicial ways of reparation was underscored. The non-formal reparation maybe community sharing platform to consolidate the voice of the victims. Building of memorials, inter-generational dialogue on the issue, counseling and yoga for the victims and their family were proposed. The developing of role model from among the victims to enhance the confidence in other victims was also stressed.

9. Capacity building and awareness for stakeholders: Capacity building of the service providers and awareness on the sensitivity of the issue was emphasized. The insensitive attitude and behavior of the service providers including government agencies and police towards the CRSV was discussed. The capacity building of the service providers to better address the stigma and the need of survivors was underlined.

10. Policy coordination between central and local governments: With the restructuring of the state, local governments have been mandated with the rights of forming their own policy and relevant local laws. Coordination between central and local government was highly recommended to ensure that the policy and law formed at the center will be integrated into the local level policy making.

General understanding of Sexual Violence Related Stigma: Sexual violence stigma is based on the concept of virginity and purity attached with women's sexuality. Sexual violence or rape is considered as

a violation of the purity of women and girls. They are considered degraded once they become victim to such violence. This concept is harbored by social practices and reinforced by religious, cultural and traditional customs; most of which promote sexual chastity of women and girls. Such customs have equated women's dignity to their sexuality.

From the very moment that girls' and women are violated physically they are debased and lose dignity before the society. They are termed as substandard, unholy, and called loose character. It destroys the victim's future, their confidence in life, put them to lifelong psychological trauma and endow them with the permanent badge of being impure and immoral.

Sexual violence results in immense mental trauma and physical trauma. The physical wound may be healed with the passage of time but the mental stress of the violence is deeply entrenched and almost indelible, said a number of participants including survivors attending the workshop.

All the participants were in unison that different forms of stigma attached with sexual violence exacerbates the situation of the survivors, making their living harder and limiting their options in life.

Prejudices, discrimination, use of hostile language are problems to name only few that the survivors face as a result of stigma related to sexual violence.

Proceedings

A. Opening Session

Gita Rasaili, Representative of Conflict Victim Common Platform

"Concerted effort is required for enhancing the social acceptance of sexual violence survivors"

Gita Rasaili, Representative of Conflict Victim Common Platform expressed her dissatisfaction at how rarely discussions on sexual violence takes place. Particularly conflict related sexual violence is hardly addressed by the state compelling the victims to live and face the torture in silence. The issue of sexual violence was never a priority of the state. Women and girls are increasingly falling prey to sexual violence incidents.

Frequent discussions will help decrease the taboo and stigma and women and girls will start breaking the silence on this issue. If the victims start coming to the fore and share their status, the issue will get more attention and force the concerned authorities to take it seriously. She further said that the mindset of most security personnel towards the victims was negative and it was mostly during custody in conflict that women and girls were subjected to torture including sexual violence. Even if you win a court case which is very rare it is not the full justice delivered. All the stakeholders should make concerted efforts to create a conducive environment where rape victims/survivors can confidently share their status and can be easily accepted by society and family with dignity. They are no more considered debased and a burden.

Wenny Kusuma, Country Representative of UN Women

"More events like this will help normalize dialogue and discourse on what it is meant to have survived conflict"

Conflict related sexual violence survivors have waited long enough in Nepal. We need to find alternatives while the formal process is being addressed in cases related to sexual violence. We can learn from what Cambodia has done in the non- formal /non-judicial sector of reparations. Documentation were in place, voices became stronger, and attention in the media grew so much so that the court system addressed the issue with priority. The survivors organized their own tribunal to show what happened to them during the conflict. Nepal should also make the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission more people centric.

The report of UN Secretary General on conflict related sexual violence since 2009 has consistently recommended that Nepal address issue of CRSV survivors. In his guidance note for CRSV the SG states that the reparations do not have to be exclusively monetary or even material. They can in fact be signification acts such as apologies and recognition of plights of victims through the construction of memorials and other symbolic acts. Non-formal reparation program that put survivors need at the center and that in future links to the formal system should be an immediate consideration and key component of NAP II.

Richard Morris, British Ambassador to Nepal

Addressing the social stigma that survivors of sexual violence face is a priority of the British Government. Survivors continue to suffer long after their physical wounds may have healed. The stigmatization not only hinders their recovery it also prevents communities coming back together after conflict. That is why tackling survivor's stigma is one of our top priority. This workshop is aimed at:

- To further develop understanding of how stigma is understood locally
- To further develop understanding of how stigma is manifested in victim/survivors lives at the structural, community and individual levels. What limitations are experienced?
- To generate a set of recommended areas for action at the structural, community and individual levels and consider how these could be achieved.
- To encourage information sharing and transparency about PSVI-related activity across the range of actors in-country; identifying synergies, areas for collaboration or resource re-allocation and work to be done to address stigma

There is no single solution that will work everywhere. Every country and culture may need to work differently. That is why this event is so important to know and identify locally applicable solutions.

Ranju Jha – Member of Parliament

Chair of Legislative Parliamentary Committee on Women, Children, Elderly Citizen and Social Welfare

"The issue of sexual violence which was not adequately addressed in the first NAP will be addressed with priority in the second NAP"

Sexual violence decimates the life and dignity of women and girls. It's an unbearable, unacceptable and inhumane act. We have wounds from the conflict time which we need to address. But even today we increasingly hear of news of girls as young as 3 being raped. This is too gross. We are working on reforming our legislation with the provision of stricter punishment for perpetrators. Life imprisonment provision has been included for such horrible crime of rape and killing. We have also challenges in addressing the problem of children born out of rape. Data and documentation on sexual violence is weak and needs to be improved.

I have to admit that political parties are not sensitive enough towards the issue. More needs to be done to sensitize them. The bureaucracy too needs to work on this issue continuously and seriously. We also need concerted efforts from all quarters to ensure effectiveness of the TRC.

Rishi Raj Bhandari, Joint Secretary at Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction

"Sexual violence is the worst crime against women and girls"

Sexual Violence is likely to increase during the conflict or aftermath from the warring side or state parties. The degree of different forms of sexual violence against women in Nepal is yet to be fully understood. It is a crime that is massively under reported. Even when reported, women encounter many obstacles related to stigma and access to justice. Conflict related violence falls under the crime having

no possibility of amnesty and reconciliation. Truth, justice and reparation and condition of non-recurrence of such crimes must be made available to victims of conflict related sexual violence. This is going to be the priority issue in the implementation of NAP II.

B. Panel Discussion: Conflict Related Sexual Violence - focusing on stigma and justice

Chair: Dr. Kiran Rupakheti, Program Director at National Planning Commission

Srijana Shrestha – Representative of Conflict Victim Common Platform

Stigma is a result of discriminatory social perceptions existing in our society. There is a need for attitudinal and behavioral change on the part of community and people to accept the victims of sexual violence without any hesitation and prejudices. The psychological analysis of the victim will help understand stigma internalized by the survivor and identify the effective intervention to deal with these stigma (shame, self-blame etc.) harbored by victims at a personal level. Long term psychosocial counseling for victims will help them ward off the trauma while education and awareness would help establish the issue. With the ongoing state restructuring process, we need to focus on how the issue of sexual violence can be integrated in the local government policy and program. Awareness and sensitization not only for grassroots level but also for the government officials and political parties is key to tackling sexual violence related stigma. Accountability on the part of the state machinery is very much lacking. It needs to be improved in assuring the rights and reparation of victims related to CRSV.

Ram Kumar Khanal, Former Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of Nepal Police

Increased acceptance level of community and society to stop further victimization of victims is the key to tackling stigma related to sexual violence. Empowerment for victims is essential to help them open up and raise their own voices for justice. Creating supportive environment, enabling the victims to a respectful life in the society, is the responsibility of each individual members of society.

Though much has been discussed about CRSV, the issue of former women combatants, who also faced sexual violence, is heard very little. Research on the issue has revealed that many of them were forced to join armed groups following the threat of abduction from the warring sides. The women combatants, mainly worked as ancillaries, assisting in kitchen works and used for sexual purpose of the male combatants.

Dr. Kiran Rupakheti, Program Director at National Planning Commission

Generally, police staff in the directorate of women and children get transferred at regular intervals.

We can create sub-cadres under the directorate of women and children of Nepal police so that they can stay in the directorate for long and develop expertise to better handle the issue of sexual violence with much sensitivity

Laxmi Shrestha, Inspector, Nepal Police

Evidence collection and documentation is a huge challenge with the investigation procedures in Nepal police. Police personnel also require training and capacity building on the issue of dealing with sexual violence to enhance their understanding and sensitivity.

Sadhana Shrestha, President, Legal Aid Consultancy Centre (LACC)

Trauma still persist among sexual violence victims of conflict time. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission should make their status known to public on how many cases have been registered and what actions have taken place. The reintegration of the victim is equally important in tackling stigma related to sexual violence. After rape, a girl is pushed by the society and even her family to think that her life has been destroyed and there is nothing left for her to do.

The incidents of sexual violence have gone up alarmingly high. Our children are not safe even at home. They are being abused from very close relatives. In one recent case we dealt with that the father was exploiting his minor daughter for a long time. It was revealed that the father had brainwashed the daughter saying that it is usual act between father and daughter. Massive sensitization reaching out to households, families and individuals is needed to address the stigma related to sexual violence. Advocacy and awareness should start right from the school to mitigate the frequent recurrence of sexual violence cases. Besides, stringent legal provisions need to be introduced to discourage incidents of sexual violence. Above all, political commitment is instrumental to deal with the issue of sexual violence.

C. Panel Discussion: Conflict Related Sexual Violence in Second NAP

Chair – Kapil Kafle, Senior Media Person and Coordinator of Men Engage Movement of South Asia

The objective of this panel was to present the status and background of the Second NAP being drafted and the issue of CRSV that it will address

Rishi Raj Bhandari, Joint Secretary MoPR

In the first NAP, CRSV was not adequately addressed, hence we have decided to focus prominently on CRSV in the Second NAP that is in the final stage of drafting. It will focus on how to recognize conflict related sexual violence victims, how to collect data and prepare documentation, how to deliver justice to them and how to enhance their livelihood options. It will also include the reparation guideline and provision for such victims. Ensuring Non recurrence of sexual violence is yet another pillar for the Second NAP. However, the inclusion of the issue in NAP alone will not ensure that it will be addressed. For the effective implementation, all concerned stakeholders should come together and work together.

Bandana Rana – Workshop Facilitator

Highlights of District Consultations on Overall Sexual Violence (Kapilvastu & Pokhara)

The consultations were participated by district administration chiefs, security chiefs, representatives from court, victims, representatives of Bar Association, religious leaders and media. There is no conducive environment for the survivors to open up because they fear the social stigma and family

persecution. The survivors do not have faith in the judicial system. They think that even if they open up they have nothing to gain.

In many instances sexual violence victims are disowned by their own family. Society puts blame on victims themselves. Confidentiality of victims and witness is a grave issue. The service providers including police, shelters, and organizations' providing psychosocial counseling lack capacity to cater to the needs of sexual violence survivors. In many instances SV cases become hostile influencing the victims with political power, threatening them or luring them with money. Medical reports made in relation to sexual violence incidents are found to be fabricated under political pressure. Therefore, providing evidence for SV is a huge challenge. Migration related SV was also expressed by many as a burning issue.

Key suggestions

- Working with the local Media to create awareness related to stigma and for exerting pressure in strengthening justice system
- Provision for immediate counselling and improving complaint procedures
- The provision of camera court has to be effectively implemented
- Awareness in schools and youth is key to address stigma and change societal mindset
- One Stop Crisis Management Centres (OSCMC) need to be more effective where they exist and expanded where they don't.
- Ensure the Protection of Human Rights Defenders
- The policy related to zero tolerance to SV is in name only – should be strictly implemented and monitored
- Women doctors need to be assigned to District hospitals to deal with SV
- Awareness and capacity building of newly elected local authorities needs to take place
- Increase resources for the District GBV fund
- Shelters should be established in all 75 districts
- Accountability mechanisms need to be made more stringent
- Capacity Building of police in the Women and Children's Cell

Pinky Singh Rana – NAP Drafting Committee Member

Though there were activities and programs included in the First NAP in relation to Sexual Violence in Conflict, the monitoring reports on its implementation revealed that nothing much was done to address CRSV. Survivors of such violence had not been identified, there was no data related to it and thus no programs to address their needs or their access to justice took place. With this in mind the NAP II will focus primarily on CRSV and programs to address the needs of survivors. Following are provisions specially focused to CRSV victims in the NAP II being draft:

National Action Plan (NAP) Phase II on the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and 1820 (2016/17 -2019/20)

Aim: Ensuring Sustainable Peace and Just Society

Objective: Guaranteeing security and proportional representation of women in the process of sustainable peace and development.

Pillar 1: Representation

Objective: Equitable, proportional and meaningful participation of women in peace building efforts as well as in decision making process will be ensured.

Strategy 1: Ensuring representation of women in all level of state mechanism, peace building and development process.

- Policy and legal reformation to promote women representation in all area and every level of state mechanism
- Election related law to be reformed to increase participation of women in every structure of political parties
- Sensitization program for the political party leaders and activists at local level to raise awareness on women, peace and security (women rights, gender based violence, sexual violence and domestic violence) to be organized.
- Gender monitoring in all levels of election to be conducted
- Prospective women candidates to be capacitated to increase the participation of women in security forces and civil service.

Pillar 2: Safety and Security

Objective: Ensuring rights of women and children in pre-conflict, during conflict and post conflict period

Strategy 1: Effectively deal with cases of gender based and sexual violence related to conflict

- Data bank with the disaggregated data of women and girls affected by conflict to be established.
- A team with special relief package to deal with the cases of sexual violence of conflict time to be mobilized to immediately address the need of sexual violence survivors of conflict time
- Capacity of concerned agencies and stakeholders, inculcating them with the gender sensitivity while dealing with the cases of gender based and sexual violence, to be built.
- A team comprising of right activists, government officials and experts on the issues to immediately address the needs of gender based and sexual violence victims and provide relief to them.
- Standard operating procedure (SOP) to be drafted to address the issue of confidentiality of the victims while dealing with the gender based violence including sexual violence.
- Appropriate safety and security provision to be made for the victims and witness of the sexual and gender based violence cases.
- Citizenship certificates to be provided to the children born out of rape during the conflict era.
- Free legal service to be provided for the victims of gender based and sexual violence

- Mobile application to be developed for the mitigation and help investigate the gender based and sexual violence.
- Help desk and hotline services to be established at the local level to ensure easy reporting and prompt delivery of the services to the victims of sexual and gender based violence.
- Inter-generational dialogue and self-defense training to be provided to the women and adolescent girls at local level to enhance their confidence level.
- Legal education and sensitization programs on women rights, gender based violence to be conducted across secondary level schools and other educational institutes.
- Based on their contribution, capacity and effect of their work, victim women, adolescent girls, former combatants to be appointed as messenger of peace.

Strategy 2: Addressing the special needs of women and children victims of conflict and sexual violence

- Free medication, psychosocial counseling and reintegration programs to be conducted for the gender based and sexual violence survivor women and children.
- One Stop Crisis Management Centers and safe houses for better protection of the victims to be strengthen
- Mobile Health Camp to be started to help victims with required services

Strategy 3: Ending impunity regarding the sexual violence committed during and aftermath of the conflict

- Investigation, justice delivery and punishment process related to sexual violence committed during and aftermath of the conflict is to be prioritized.
- The court decision regarding the incident of sexual and gender based violence of during conflict and post conflict time to be duly implemented.

Strategy 4: Effective implementation of all the recommendation made by Truth and Reconciliation commission and Commission on Investigation of Enforced Disappeared Persons

- Necessary provisions to be made for the effective implementation of all the recommendation put forward by Truth and Reconciliation Commission as well as Commission on the Investigation of Enforced Disappeared Persons.

Pillar 3: Relief and Recovery

Objective: Prioritizing the conflict victim women and girls in relief recovery programs to address their special needs.

Strategy 1: Ensuring participation of victims in designing and implementing of relief and recovery programs to find out their real needs.

- Relief and recovery programs based on the needs of the victims to be implemented

- Relief and recovery program focused on special needs of the sexual violence victim women and girls to be conducted.
- Memorial parks to be built to reflect the effect of conflicts
- Advocacy and monitoring programs for vital registration and acquisition of citizenship for the women and girls to be conducted.
- The process involved in the transfer of property of the people killed during the conflict to be simplified.

Strategy 2: Making conflict affected women, girls and former combatants independent through education, skill and self-dependent programs.

- Provide employment opportunities to the conflict affected women and former combatants in coordination with government and non-government organization.
- Programs to be launched to make a conducive environment for the conflict victim women, girls and former combatants to reintegrate into the society.

Due to constraint of time there was no open floor after the above panel but participants were encouraged to share their perceptions during the breakout sessions.

Findings and Recommendations

The participants were divided into three groups and asked to generate specific area of recommendations for action at structural, community and individual levels in tackling stigma related to sexual violence.

Group 1: Recommended Area of Action on Preventing Overall Sexual Violence

Structural level

- National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 & 1820 should be integrated in the policies and legislation to be introduced by the local governments.
- Existing government agencies related to women and children issues should continue to function actively in the provincial set up as well.
- Formulation of integrated legislation at central, provincial and local level to deal with sexual violence as a whole rather than dealing with different forms of sexual violence separately.
- Sexual Violence Education should be included in the School curricula
- Coordination among the concerned stakeholders should be enhanced to produce best result possible in tackling with stigma and ensuring justice to the CRSV
- *Community Level*
- Sensitization programs on sexual violence and stigma particularly for the newly elected leaders at local governments

- Trauma relief package for survivors and their family members (yoga, psychosocial counseling)
- Enhance the capacity of existing rehabilitation centers, providing them with necessary resources.
- Establish new well-equipped service centers able to cater to the diverse need of the victims
- Program for economic empowerment of sexual violence survivors is key to tackling stigma

Individual Level

- Capacitating the survivors enabling them for open dialogue on the issue of sexual violence
- Creating secure and confidential environment so that survivors can share their experience without any hesitation
- Aware at all levels family, household, village, district and national level
- Economic empowerment and livelihood options for survivors of sexual violence
- Immediate as well as long term counselling is a must for survivors of sexual violence

Group2: Recommended Area of Action Addressing Stigma

English dictionary defines stigma as “a mark of disgrace associated with a particular circumstance, quality or person”. However, Nepali equivalent word for Stigma needs to be worked out as there is no any particular corresponding word to define stigma in Nepali.

Individual level

- Creating enabling environment for boosting self-confidence of the survivors
- Maintaining privacy and confidentiality
- Strengthen trust between survivors and community people
- Showing empathetic behavior toward the survivors

Action for individual level

- Finding role model from among the survivors who can encourage other survivors to open up and raise their voices for justice
- Motivational training for survivors
- Relocation of survivors
- Create a sharing and discussion platform/forum for survivors
- Awareness and sensitization for the survivors on the issue
- Education opportunities for the victims/ survivors
- Include the topic of stigma in the school curricula

Community Level:

- Program to change the negative social perception towards sexual violence survivors
- Sensitizing religious leaders, CBOs, faith healers in tackling stigma related to sexual violence
- Media mobilization
- Creating community sharing forums to discuss the issue
- Awareness programs at schools and colleges
- Survivor friendly environment at the community level

Structural Level:

- Orientation on sexual violence to newly elected leaders at the helm of local government.
- Ensure reservation seats for sexual violence survivors in employment opportunities
- New manifestos of the political parties should ensure their non-interference on the issue of sexual violence
- Representation of the victims in the transitional justice systems should be ensured
- Government should acknowledge and recognize the problems of sexual violence survivors (e.g. apology notes, circular etc.)
- Official abrogation of the social ills and traditional superstitious customs will help minimize the degree of severity of the stigma
- Language, glossary and concept related to sexual violence need reformation (e.g. Rape is understood or described as the robbing of dignity or loss of prestige or becoming impure)
- The sexual violence should not be linked with the victim woman being impure or robbed of dignity and prestige.

Group 3: Specific Recommendations on CRSV for the NAP

Individual level

- System to ensure victim's confidentiality should be put up
- Skill oriented training package for the victim after assessing their diverse needs
- Using Psychosocial counseling as a tool to identify survivors
- Documentation of the cases of sexual violence
- Creation of memorials, starting inter-generational dialogue on sexual violence between survivors and their children or grand-children
- Providing apology letters from the government side as a recognition of the problem

Community Level

- Creating sharing / discussion platform for the survivors to ward off their psychological trauma
- Public awareness program (Street play, interaction, outreach programs)
- Empowerment of the government and non-government agencies specially on maintaining confidentiality
- Support and encourage community based organizations working on the issue

Structural level

- Development of case management protocol to ensure confidentiality and improve documentation aspect
- Provision of well -equipped safe house for survivors
- A focal person should be appointed in dealing with conflict related sexual violence or sexual violence in general in the Judicial committee led by vice chair of the municipality/ rural municipality

Conclusion

Though more than a decade has elapsed since the cessation of the armed conflict, CRSV conflict victims/survivors continue to suffer. Sexual violence victims undergo immense physical and mental trauma, almost indelible throughout life. The social stigma related to sexual violence exacerbates the situation of the victims, limiting their options in life. These stigmas are rooted in social practices and reinforced by religious, cultural and traditional customs; most of which promote sexual chastity of women and girls. Such customs have equated women's dignity to their sexuality. Concept of sexual chastity has taken the toll on the life of victims as they are considered unchaste and debased. Such concept is deep rooted in the districts with low literacy and awareness among the people. The stigmatization is higher in the district in comparison to the capital where the educational and awareness level is comparatively higher. An incident of sexual violence is likely to go unreported in the district while the chances of reporting in the capital are higher.

Sexual violence victims are faced with the internal stigma of shame and self-blame beside the social stigma where they are considered degraded, immoral and a person without dignity. Victim girls are blamed for the incident and in some instances married off with the perpetrator. Victims are subject to stigmatization, harassment and foul language. They have inadequate access to service and vulnerable to further incidents of sexual violence. Victims are forced to remain silent due to the lack of support, protection and redress mechanisms necessary for victims to raise their voice and look for justice.

State recognition of the CRSV survivors as victims of war would help address the stigma and ensure their access to reparation and justice. Increased awareness and education on the part of the stakeholders including community and individuals helps the stigma to subside. Informal and non-judicial reparation will be helpful to establish the issue and decrease the chance of recurrence of incident of sexual

violence. Setting up of formal documentation system will help evidence collection and maintain the confidentiality of the victims in line with Do No Harm concept.

Follow Up

The first phase of the National Action Plan on the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and 1820 focused on overall safety and security of the women and girls. The NAP II being drafted has identified CRSV as a priority issue to be addressed including the stigma related to sexual violence. The findings of this workshop will be used as input to the NAP II draft which will also identify the potential stakeholders to work together to ensure stigma free society for sexual violence victims.

Based on the findings of the workshop increased consultation will be held with the Parliamentary Committee on Women, Children, Elderly Citizen and Social Welfare to strengthen advocacy amongst parliamentarians.

Saathi is organizing a three day national conference for the newly elected municipal mayors and deputy mayors. Preventing Sexual Violence will be one of the thematic issue to be presented and discussed. Opportunities will be explored to work and network with – Nepal Police, Network of Religious Leaders, Conflict Victim Common Platform, and Inter Party Women’s Alliance for strengthening prevention work and for addressing stigma related to sexual violence.