

International Women's Day 2013

Empowerment of Women: A many splendored thing

The start to 2013 is a promising one for women globally. The year's theme for the International Women's Day on March 8 is a rallying call that **"A promise is a promise: Time for action to end violence against women"**. The promise is a necessary one as even a cursory look back at 2012 is replete with jarring incidents of the different forms of violence that women across the world have faced. The scene is no different in Nepal. The recent data from the National Demographic and Health Survey (2011) present the statistics on women's experiences of violence and alarmingly, in 77% of the cases, they never seek help. The urgent need to address gender gaps across development programs is arguably one of the most resounding implications of these findings. Empowering women through diverse and innovative channels is continuously needed to strengthen their voice in matters that affect them

Saath-Saath's Gender Strategy

USAID funded Saath-Saath Project (SSP) continues to work towards bringing the gender agenda to the forefront in 2012. To begin with, a strategy document articulating the project's approach to gender in line with the central tenets of FHI 360 Gender Integration Framework was developed. Three key intervention areas form the rubric for the project's activities – (a) building advocacy skills, (b) promoting equitable relationships, and (c) encouraging equitable leadership. Many activities were done to implement these strategic areas. Some pertinent examples include SSP's continued efforts to promote equitable leadership by encouraging increased recruitment of qualified and competent female staff within SSP's central office and among its implementing agencies. As of January 31, 2013, women now comprise 71% percent of staff in IAs carrying out field activities on HIV prevention; 62% of the Team Leaders for Community and Home Based Care activities are women; and 73% of women are working as Management Information System officers. 41% of board members across SSP's implementing agencies are women.

Technical Assistance on proposals for Gender Based Violence

The SSP team also provided technical assistance to three of its implementing agencies to submit a proposal for the PEPFAR small grants initiative for programs addressing Gender Based Violence. The selected agencies consisted of a national network NGO for female sex workers and organizations working with/for women in the Kathmandu Valley and Kaski district in western Nepal. The organizations were able to utilize and sharpen the skills they developed through SSP supported trainings on Proposal Writing. Most recently, SSP also provided selected partners with technical assistance to apply for the Key Population Challenge Fund on Gender Based Violence through USAID.

FACTS: Situation of Violence Against Women in Nepal

22

The percentage of women of reproductive age who have faced any form of violence since 15 years of age

51

The percentage of women with no education who have ever experienced physical violence

35

The percentage of rural women who have ever experienced physical violence

12

The percentage of women who experienced any form of sexual violence in their lifetime

29

The percentage of women whose first sexual intercourse was against their will

28

The percentage of ever married women who experienced physical or sexual violence from a husband/partner

77

The percentage of women who experienced any form of violence and never sought help

PORTRAIT OF A LEADER: PUSHPANJALI SINHA

She's already a Leader - a Team Leader overseeing the Saath-Saath Project activities with Sahara Nepal, an NGO that currently runs several projects in eastern Nepal. On November 2nd 2012, Pushpanjali was felicitated by the *Jai Nepal Pratibha Protsahan Pratisthan*, a local academy that honors exemplary work in a wide array of development areas, from the arts to the sciences, in the Mechi Zone. She was honored for her outstanding leadership and contributions in the areas of Health and HIV, Media and Education. (*Pushpanjali receiving the award*)



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Capacity building of women through Internship

Using a gender-sensitive approach, the SSP internship program was rolled out in 2012, completing its first year of implementation. Interns were nominated from 5 National Network NGOs for people considered to be most at risk for and/or living with HIV, along with MPH students from the BP Koirala Institute of Health Sciences, an eminent academic institution. Nominees, totaling seven, representing marginalized groups based on gender, ethnicity, geographical dispersion, and HIV status received priority placements. Five of the 7 interns were female. The interns engaged in tasks that were tailor-made to fit their interests and abilities. They also participated in activities for their personal development.

Women's participation in other Capacity Building activities such as Trainings conducted by SSP (Aug '12 – Jan '13)

Indicator	# Total	% Women
In HIV-related stigma and discrimination reduction	4,742	61
To promote HIV prevention	602	76
In Counseling & Testing	24	67
To deliver ART services, according to national and/or international standards (incl. PMTCT)	19	63
To provide HBC (subset of palliative care)	28	75
In the provision of STI services according to national guidelines	27	67
In the provision of lab-related activities	23	26
In strategic information (incl. M&E, surveillance, HMIS)	245	25
In HIV-related institutional capacity building	494	47
In Family Planning/Reproductive Health (FP/RH)	153	54

Monitoring Trafficking in Persons (TIP) and referrals

Trafficking in Person (TIP) monitoring and reporting was implemented innovatively in Nepal through SSP using custom tracking forms, timely reporting and close coordination with anti-trafficking agencies. This has contributed to Nepal Government's efforts at curbing human trafficking. SSP has given high priority to TIP and the suspected cases are always tracked and where found, offered services through SSP services sites (all prevention outreach and expanded integrated health services sites) and referred for appropriate services to the agencies with anti-trafficking programs.

Under SSP, arrangements have been made to report every female sex worker below 18 years of age and any other cases of the worst forms of trafficking as defined by the United States Government's Unified Policy Guidelines for TIP. Additionally, SSP is also coordinating with USAID-funded Combating Trafficking in Persons (CTIP) Project to curtail such trafficking.

As of January 31, 2013 SSP received 541 reports (216 cases from Aug '12 to Jan '13) of suspected TIP and offered referral services. SSP organized a national coordination and sharing meeting in July 2012 and most recently one of the implementing agencies took part in a district level coordination meeting with agencies working in CTIP in

the mid-western Kailali district, which was facilitated by the USAID funded C-TIP project. The experience so far is that the referred TIP cases do not always avail of referral sites because they are required to remain there as part of the rehabilitation requirement/process for which the women are often reluctant. Referring to local authorities to register the complaint has also been challenging. Despite these obstacles, however, SSP is continuously working to step up its efforts to develop linkages through coordination for referral services.

Initiatives with and for Female Sex Workers

Empowering women is a multifaceted approach under SSP. The project's focus on working with female sex workers puts women squarely in the middle of some of the major activities undertaken. Examples include condom negotiation skills building trainings, promoting safer and health workplace environment and awareness raising in various contexts where sex work occurs, and creating a coordination committee to strengthen the implementation of guidelines pertaining to a safe and healthy workplace for female sex workers. Web SMS services for women who use mobile phones to communicate with clients have also been initiated to reach and ensure that the women are safe and connected to access and use appropriate health and protection services. They are also empowered through engagement in the community as peer educators and through micro-credit initiatives. Overlapping risks for women who also inject drugs are addressed by referring them to the project's Expanded Integrated Health Services and Drop-in Center sites. Coordination with national networks of female injecting drug users, female sex workers, and community based organizations is one of the key strategies through which women with overlapping risk behaviors are reached with the services that SSP offers for them.

Celebrating 8 March 2013

The implementing agencies are celebrating the 103rd International Women's Day on March 8 with gusto. Rally programs denouncing violence against women (VAW) will be organized in different districts where SSP's partners in the field will show their solidarity along with other local stakeholders. Community interaction and dialog programs will take place in some of the Terai regions to bring VAW issues out into the open. Blood donation drives feature as key initiatives contributing to the day in some districts.

Looking ahead

For SSP, the year ahead will be about continuing and accelerating last year's momentum. Empowering women in many more ways while surmounting the challenges that remain will be at the heart of the project's efforts. Strengthening and leveraging the well-formed partnerships with national and local actors committed to improving the state of women in the country will help spearhead the process of making meaningful contributions in keeping pace with the global promise to women on this International Women's Day.