

Report on

World Day of Prayers and Action for Children in Nepal

Submitted by:



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Global Network of Religion for Children Nepal
Hindu Vidyapeeth – Nepal
Youth Society for Peace

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A World Day of Prayer and Action for Children



Introduction:

The World Day of Prayer and Action for Children brings people together to pray and take action for the well-being of children on Universal Children's Day (20 November) every year. Universal Children's Day, established by the United Nations in 1954, also commemorates the 1989 adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The World Day of Prayer and Action for Children was first celebrated in 2008. In 2009, more than 9,000 people in 29 cities in 22 countries participated in the World Day of Prayer and Action for Children. In 2010, the World Day was celebrated in 47 countries through 69 events with more than 33,000 participants from around the world. In 2011 a record number of 96 World Day activities took place in 72 countries worldwide.

The United Nations established universal Children's Day in 1954. For over 55 years, governments have celebrated Universal Children's Day on 20 November to promote the well-being of children. This date also marks the day on which the United Nations adopted the Declaration on the Rights of the Child (1959) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989).

Nepal as a multi-religious and multilingual country consisting mainly **Hindu, Buddhist, Islam, Christian, Jain, Sikha and Bahai** has been celebrating WDPAC since 2008 with various program.

This year too **Shanti Sewa Ashram (Peace Service Centre)** took the leading role to **Stop Violence Against Children** with an active involvement and support from **Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC) Nepal, UNICEF Nepal, Religions for Peace Nepal, Hindu Vidyapeeth Nepal, Inter-Religious Council Nepal, Youth Society for Peace Nepal, National Inter-Religious Network Nepal on Violence Against Women , Nepal Interfaith Movement** and **Universal Peace Federation**

With a dynamic guidance of **Mr Kul Chandra Gautam** who is international chair of DPAC organizing committee series of pre meeting took place in various forms and in various places of Nepal. **Dr**

Chintamani Yogi, the coordinator of Global Network of Religions for Children and other supporting organization decided to work to “**Stop Child Marriage**” in Nepal.

Child Marriage in Nepal

Child marriage is very common in poor countries of the Third World. In Nepal, with a population of about 30 million, over half the adults married when they were still children. A UNICEF study reports that 60% of Nepalese women were married by the time they reached 18.

When girls marry at such a young age they leave school and start taking care of their parents-in-law. After they have had children, only very few of them have the chance of going back to school. They spend their time working for their new families.

Now the Nepalese government and human rights groups are working together in order to help such children and teenagers. They are trying to show them how bad marrying at such an early age can be. Some success has already been made. The number of girls who were married by the time they reached 15 has dropped from 25% to 7%.

The key to the problem is getting children to stay in schools once they are there. They have to resist the wishes of their parents who want them to marry at an early age. According to human rights groups the government must also create more jobs for females, so that they have a chance to work after their education.

According to Nepalese law, a person must be at least 20 years old to get married, but people are not punished if they do not obey. The hope remains that today’s women who had to marry at an early age will influence their children not to do the same and finish school.

The adult literacy rate in Nepal for men is 71.6 per cent and 44.5 per cent for women. According to the Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2011, of the 7.6 million adult illiterates in Nepal, 67 per cent are female.

Source <http://www.english-online.at/news-articles/people/child-marriage-in-nepal.htm>

Please, read the article written attached by a senior member of Youth Society for Peace Ms Minakshi Yogi.

Inter-Religious Prayer

The influential leaders and the representatives from various religions (mainly Hindu, Buddhist, Islam, Christian, Jain and Sikh) gathered in **Shanti Sewa Ashram** on **November 16th 2011**. The religious representatives prayed for the welfare of the children. They also committed to work to stop violence against the children. The religious leaders also agreed to celebrate WDPAC in their own vicinity with Prayers and Actions for the children. There were more than 100 people who gathered at Shanti Sewa Ashram for the prayer of the children.

Interfaith Conference to Stop Child Marriage

Date: Tuesday, November 20, 2012

Time: 2: 00 PM

Venue: Nepal Pragya Pratisthan, Kamaladi, Kathmandu

Program Detail

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| 1. Taking Seats | (By Chief Guest, chairperson, various religious leaders & guests) | 05 min |
| 2. Offering flowers to guests | | 05 min |
| 3. Lighting Peace Lamp (candle) | | 05 min |
| 4. Opening Remark | (By Mrs Indira Manandhar, chair RfP Nepal) | 05 min |
| 5. Placard show and sharing msg. (By students of HVP) | | 10 min |
| 6. Inter-religious Prayers | (By children from various faith) | 15 min |
| 7. Message by Religious Leaders | (Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, Christian, Sikh, Jain, Bahai) | 20 min |
| 8. Interfaith Songs | (By Mr Shishir Yogi /Mr Sujan BK) | 10 min |
| 9. Documentary Show | (About Child Marriage by Media Service Nepal) | 10 min |
| 10. Situation of Child Marriage | (By Ms Nafisa B Shafique, UNICEF representative) | 10 min |
| 11. Speech | (Mr Kul Chandra Gautam - Chief Guest – Int DPAC Org chair) | 20 min |
| 12. Vote of Thanks | (Dr Chintamani Yogi- Coordinator GNRC Nepal/Founder of SSA) | 20 min |
| 13. Tea / Snacks | | |

Announcer: Mr Naman Upadhyaya / Mrs Roshani Karmachary

Total Participants: more than 250

Main Speakers:

- **Ms Indira Manandhar**, chair Religions for Peace Nepal:

'RfP Nepal is very much determined to stop child marriage. Let's work together to fight this disease. If we work together God will listen our prayer.'

- **Mr Damodar Gautam**, representing Hindu :

'Even the Goddess has prayed for ages sincerely in Hinduism and has married God after reaching a suitable age, so, let us all give this message of suitable marriage rather than early marriage.'

- **Anuja Guruma**, representing Buddhism:

'Buddhism supports only the marriage which is done in mutual understanding.'

- **Mr Najrul Hussain**, representing Islam:

'Muslim gives higher freedom for marriage. All the men and women are given independence to choose their soul mate. Let us see the original part of religion rather surface.'

- **Father William Robinson**, representing Christianity:

'Let all have a comfortable life; let all the children get child right.'

- **Mr Pratap Singh Tater**, representing Jain:

'Poverty and illiteracy leads to child marriage. We all should reach to the nook and corner of villages to provide education. Education only eliminates child marriage.'

- **Mr Lary** , representing Baha'i:

'Education is a key factor to stop child marriage, let all the parents send their children to school.'

- **Ms Nafisa Binte Shafique**, chief HIV and AIDS section UNICEF Nepal:

'Nepal is a land of beauty and multicultural and has many challenges. We should all combat this issue with proper care. UNICEF is determined to eradicate child marriage with the support of GOs, NGOs, INGOs, religious and non-religious organizations.'

- **Mr Kul Chandra Gautam**, chief guest of the program and the international chair of DPAC organizing committee:

'Child marriage is one of the worst forms of violence; it has to be eliminated by the religious leaders as they can highly motivate the general people. No religious text supports child marriage but religious leaders should be aware to stop it in practice too. With sincere prayer let us all unite for a concrete change. In the next few years let us all try to decrease the number of child marriage keeping the promise that we have done today. What we need today is some promising youth and practically working selfless true leaders. DPAC wants some real change.'

- **Dr Chintamani Yogi**, coordinator Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC) Nepal:

'As Swami Vivekananda said that a religion is not a religion until it satiates the empty stomach and wipe the tear of a widow, similarly now the time has come when we religious leaders should be accountable for any sorts of violence that has hindered the sound development of children. We should not only speak, it is a crucial time for each of us to be more dutiful towards our work. I would like to thank all the organizations who whole-heartedly supported us to make this inauguration program a grand success but as Kul daju said this is just a beginning. The real time starts now.'

Related Activities to Celebrate DPAC in various institutions

1. Dr Chintamani Yogi along with various interfaith leaders were interviewed in **Ujyalo FM** Network which connects almost all the FM stations of Nepal, regarding DPAC and the theme Stop Child Marriage on **9th of November**, 2012.
2. On **November 10th**, 2012 **Swargadwari FM** based on Mid-Western Development region of Nepal interviewed Dr Chintamani Yogi regarding children issue.
3. **Radio Nepal**, the government owned radio that has nationwide network interviewed **Dr Chintamani Yogi** on **18th of November**, 2012 in the issue of child marriage.
4. Interview based **article** and **editorial** was published in the **Himalayan Times**, national daily newspaper on **20th November**, 2012.
5. **Image FM**, Kathmandu based FM interviewed **Dr Yogi** to highlight the program of DPAC on **20th November**, 2012.
6. **News** of Interfaith Conference was published in only government owned national daily **The Rising Nepal** on **21st November**, 2012.
7. **Asna Child Rehabilitation Center** organized a drawing program to raise awareness on **24th November** among the (orphan) children.
8. **Image Channel**, international television interviewed **Mr Yogi (Hindu)**, **Mrs Indira Manandhar (chair RfP Nepal)**, **Mr Nazrul Hussain (Mulsim)**, **Anoja Guruma (Buddhist)**, **Mr Chirendra Satyal (Christian)** to raise awareness and to stop child marriage on **26th November**, 2012.

9. **Dr Yogi** himself has been visiting different **schools and colleges** advocating about child rights and raising awareness to stop child marriage.
10. **Children's Study Center** also organized a video show and interaction within the children who come to study in Shanti Sewa Ashram on **30th November**, 2012.
11. **Youth Society for Peace Nepal** has conducted a youth discussion session to end child marriage among the youth who are in Kathmandu valley from various places for their further studies on 1st December 2012.
12. **A story of DPAC celebration by UNICEF Nepal**
http://www.unicef.org/nepal/5476_7990.htm
13. Special **editorial** published in **Gauri** national monthly magazine on **December 4**, 2012.
14. **Dr Yogi's** interview will be published in **Log In** monthly magazine and in the **Samabeshi Naya Samrachana** bimonthly magazine.

'Panchabinshanti Paryantam Brahmacharya samacharet'

One should respect celibacy until 25 according to Hinduism.

Thank you

We are so much encouraged to be a part of **GNRC**. We are electrified by our own Interfaith work as it seems to be a very good way to flow the message of Peace, Service and Non-violence. We promise to conduct the programme as per need.

We are Thankful to **Mr Kul Chandra Gautam** who has been assisting and guiding us for this noble cause. We whole-heartedly thank GNRC and Arigatou Foundation for involving us for this dignified cause.

We are very much determined to work for the welfare of children to achieve the **UN Millennium Development Goals** coordinating with local, national, educational, interfaith, governmental and nongovernmental organizations. We will continue to work as every child matters.