

MUSSOORIE DECLARATION ON CAPACITY BUILDING FOR GENDER RESPONSIVE GOVERNANCE IN SOUTH ASIA, 26 SEPTEMBER 2012

Delegations from eight South Asian countries – Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka - led by ministers and senior officials from ministries of gender equality and governance, and comprising apex training institutions and reputed civil society organisations met in Mussoorie from 24-26 September 2012 to participate in the Conference to deliberate and discuss strategies and practical steps for **“Building capacity for Gender Responsive Governance in South Asia”**

The consultation organised and hosted by the National Gender Centre –NIAR, Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration, India in collaboration with UN Women, focussed on specific themes – promoting women’s political participation, women’s economic empowerment, ending violence against women, strengthening anti-trafficking initiatives, and planning and budgeting for gender equality.

These themes reflect persistent challenges that are particularly stark in South Asia – and require specific solutions, including regional cooperation to share knowledge resources and build capacity to make measurable progress. The deliberations in each of the thematic sessions focussed on current status and prospects across South Asia, ongoing initiatives and good practices as well as imperatives for future action. Each of the thematic discussions highlighted the imperative of promoting women’s leadership at all levels and central role of grassroots politics in improving the status of women in South Asia.

The participants also formed groups to further brainstorm on the five themes and on training and capacity building in the region and after further discussion in the plenary, the Workshop Declaration reflects recommendations on priority areas for action and suggestions for South-South cooperation.

The following recommendations were made by the groups :

I. Creating an enabling legislative framework

- Women’s equal share in political decision-making at all levels is a key determinant of their voice and empowerment. In order to ensure an enabling environment for women’s political leadership, it is essential to make provisions where required for changes in laws to ensure adequate representation of women in politics at all levels through appropriate interventions, e.g. quotas or reserved seats or identifying women-only constituencies for elections, etc. In addition, fixed quotas for women at decision making levels in all government / corporate/ private sector should also be considered.

- For ending violence against women, where required, laws may be enacted by those countries who do not have existing legislations. To facilitate the process, adoption and adaptation from models of other SAARC countries should be considered.
- In the context of the legislative framework, implementation of existing laws such as those related to inheritance, violence against women, harassment at work place, against female foeticide, “honor killings” remains a major challenge and needs to be effectively enforced and monitored.

II. Promoting women’s political leadership

In order to promote women’s political leadership, countries should work towards giving women adequate representation in legislative bodies and local government institutions through affirmative action such as quotas/reserved seats/ earmarking women only constituencies or other relevant mechanisms, including working with political parties and election commissions.

Capacity building of women, both as elected as well as potential female candidates and as voters, should be systematized.

- Joint research might be undertaken in South Asia and training institutions should facilitate sharing of technical expertise between countries. The South Asia Women Parliamentarians’ Caucus under the SAARC umbrella could be formed.

III. Access to and control of productive assets and enhancing market access for women producers

Enhancing access to and control of productive assets is critical to women’s economic empowerment. Governments need to ensure an enabling framework through legislation for equal access to land, property, housing, credit and livelihood opportunities in areas which have not already been addressed, and provision for measures for affirmative action such as ensuring titling in the name of women especially those in difficult and vulnerable situations, for which many good practices exist in the region. Market linkages are critical to enhance the returns from production by women/women’s groups. For this to be effected, systematic focus on skill development and enhanced access to technology requires to undertaken by a wide range of stakeholders including government and civil society. A healthy, safe and conducive working environment for women needs to be created to have more women participating in economic activities.

At the regional level there is a need to exchange success stories of sub-national and national projects and programmes on women’s economic empowerment Experience

sharing platforms at the regional level need to be created for different stakeholders – governments, civil society organization and international organizations.

IV. Strengthening Anti-Trafficking Initiatives

Human trafficking, especially of women and girls, is a complex and multi-dimensional phenomenon, which requires strengthening of both national and cross border anti-trafficking initiatives. In addition to Commercial Sexual Exploitation, it is necessary to recognize other causes such as forced marriage, forced labour and organ transplant racket. Concerted action, as under, is required to effectively deal with the problem:

Strengthening prevention will require long term approaches to deal with structural cause of trafficking of women and girls -the mapping of endemic areas, advocacy and specifically addressing issues of poverty and skill development. The legal framework for migration of women in paid employment, including domestic work, needs to be revisited to facilitate the process accompanied by strict regulation of placement agencies, both domestic and abroad. The proper certification of outbound laborers a good practice being followed by Sri Lanka, could be an example for other countries.

Improving implementation and efficiency of existing processes and procedures: through strict enforcement of legal provisions and registration of cases and a focus on criminalising demand, the reduction of delay in trial processes including survivor/victim sensitive procedures and the protection of victims/ survivors/ witnesses. This will also require a systematic approach to capacity building of, and coordination between the agencies involved. In addition, enhancing provision of adequate number of shelter homes and reintegration measures with skill development are essential to the permanent rehabilitation of survivors.

To achieve the above effective coordination among different entities within the government Ministries of Home, Women's Affairs, Judiciary, Law enforcement agencies is essential for which there are some good models in the region and also critically important to promote better linkages/networking with credible civil society organizations to achieve this.

At the regional level the following actions are required:

- The national governments need to strengthen capacity of concerned agencies including sensitization and joint training of the administrative bodies, judiciary, law-enforcement agencies and the border security forces.
- It is required to urgently operationalise the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) among/between the SAARC countries

- There is a need to strengthen the database in the region with inbuilt mechanisms for experience sharing and data mining, such as by creation of a common data bank. In other words, this should obviously lead to regular sharing with and updating all SAARC countries of data on missing children/women.
- Establishment of a Protocol for home verification of victims/ survivors and a regional network for survivors.
- There is a need for more bilateral agreements among countries in the region and formation of entities on the lines of the Indo-Bangladesh Task Force
- There is a need to promote networking of non-governmental and international organizations working in the region on trafficking.

V. Strengthen gender responsive budgeting and planning

Progress on the implementation of GRBs and mainstreaming of gender planning at national and local levels varies widely across the region, with some countries at an initial awareness and environment building stage while others have developed mechanisms for mainstreaming across the national budget and within major ministries, creating the potential for cross learning and intra regional exchange and support. The general agreement was that the Finance Ministries should lead the initiatives to be effective, and work closely with the Ministry responsible for women affairs.

To strengthen gender responsive budgeting and planning, governments should support, where necessary, formulation of guidelines and protocols for systematic gender budgeting and gender planning, and a continuous process for gender impact assessments and gender audits of various ministries to ascertain the progress made. Special focus should be attached to the establishment and strengthening of suitable mechanisms (where they do not exist), such as gender budgeting cells in national ministries to enhance capacity for gender responsive budgeting and also to meeting the gaps in research and sex disaggregated data

Advocacy for gender assessment of national plans and budgets is also required. One of the major challenges relates to the insufficient capacity existing for effective implementation and sustainability of GRBS, and to facilitate this body of trainers, experts and resource material need to be collated at national and regional level. The creation of a regional group on gender responsive budgeting is necessary not only for exchanging experience and good practice, but also for sharing resources and to follow up on the nature of progress made

Changing Mindsets, Gender Sensitisation and Capacity Building resisting patriarchal norms continue to dominate mindsets impacting adversely on the attainment of gender equality. In order to change this, a concerted effort should be made to sensitize the following:

- Parliamentarians
- Judiciary
- Law enforcement agencies including border security agencies

- Media
- Local self government institutions

In addition, massive awareness campaigns to educate women regarding their rights, benefits and entitlements need to be conducted.

School curricula and professional training modules need to be developed/ elaborated in a rights-based perspective to cover issues regarding gender stereotyping of roles and responsibilities of men and boys; women and girls in households and community, access to economic opportunities and participation in political processes. Leaders of faith based organizations should also be included in the awareness programmes

VI. Gender Friendly infrastructure

Women's access to resources in the political, social and economic spheres is limited by their reproductive roles and the burden of care, and they also have special needs of safety, security and space arising from the nature and prevalence of violence against women. Specific attention needs to be given to addressing the unmet needs of women for day care, community resource centres for women, enhanced and improved shelter homes, reducing the drudgery within the home and those related to fuel, fodder and water collection. Governments, private sector and Civil Society Organisations need to take responsibility for these activities

VII. Care Economy

Women's unpaid and invisible work needs to be accounted for and acknowledged as a factor which determines their access to formal employment. Governments need to take steps to include women's unpaid work in the Extended System of National Accounts. In order to reduce this burden government needs to take responsibility in providing effective support systems such as day care centres and flexible working arrangements.

VIII. Training and Capacity Building for Gender Responsive Governance

- For greater regional collaboration in this sphere, a virtual network of apex training institutions in South Asia with knowledge resources and database should be created. This should be an open network model with links to existing credible knowledge networks, e-groups and resource centres on gender and governance to enable the creation of a common pool of certified trainers, resource material and modules – to be accessed online and in person
- Shared programmes for Training of Trainers and joint training exercises on Gender and Governance should be organised – including conducting multi-campus training for mid-career training programmes. Region-wide capacity development strategies should be developed on shared programmes to address issues of political

participation, anti-trafficking, ending violence against women, economic empowerment and gender responsive budgeting and planning.

- Joint research programme should be conducted to develop content for capacity development and to update existing programmes and for this purpose funds could be leveraged from the SAARC.
- A Biannual Regional Consultation of apex training institutions should be held to define action plan and accountability of agreed results.
- There should be a rotation for regional co-ordination of responsibilities of the network on an annual basis (this point should be incorporated under the first bullet point)

IX. Sustainability and follow up - Formation of a Regional Core Group

To take forward and implement the recommendations of the Mussoorie Declaration in a meaningful way it was agreed to form a Core Group constituted of the heads of the countries participating in the Conference. The apex training institutions would act as the Secretariat for the core group, and this may be rotated annually amongst the South Asian countries. Initially this responsibility would be taken up by LBSNAA, Mussoorie.

The responsibility of the Group would be to monitor the effective implementation of the Mussoorie Declaration and track progress against the measurable indicators identified and developed.