

# THE FEDO POST

*Official newsletter of Feminist Dalit Organization*



## COVID-19 RESPONSE AND ITS IMPACT ON DALIT WOMEN AND DALIT COMMUNITY

The world is largely suffering from Covid-19 pandemic, so is Nepal. Despite of using all the possible measures: country lock-down to setting up health centers for corona tests, and isolation wards in different parts of the country, Nepal is not being able to control the outbreak to its full capacity. The booming cases of COVID-19 in Nepal have made the current situation chronic and frightening. People are threatened and traumatized by the situation as it only leads to the immense downfall of their livelihood. So, the necessary measure of lock-down has adversely impacted the vulnerable population: women, children, person with disabilities, indigenous people, migrants and Dalits as this pandemic has somehow deepened the pre-existing inequalities and exposing vulnerabilities in social, political and economic systems.

Across every sphere, from health to economy, social protection to government security, the impacts of COVID-19 are exacerbated for Dalits in Nepal. As we know, Dalits of Nepal are prone to any kind of disaster whereabouts half of their population is under poverty line and this lockdown has even worsened their situation.

### OTHER NEWS AND DEVELOPMENTS:

FEDO response to COVID-19

- Relief material distributed to Dalit and marginalized groups
- FEDO staged demonstration rallies
- Rapid Assessment survey conducted by FEDO
- FEDO coordinates with local government for spreading awareness

Killed for Inter-caste love

- Navraj BK

Some other cases of violence during lockdown

Most of them are landless, millions of Dalits rely on daily wages from informal sectors ultimately having no income to earn livelihood and facing dreadful crisis amid the lockdown. Yes, the effort made by the local government is appreciable while it comes to distributing relief material however it's not enough to look over the family even for a week, they are deprived of nutritious food, some family have pregnant women they are lacking nourishment. And the harsh reality is not only that they are deprived of economic opportunities and basic needs but are also facing discrimination in the society , domestic violence inside their household (from their respective partners), problem of hunger leading to starvation and death ,and the increasing rape cases of young Dalit girls and women.



Over than 250 cases of violence against Dalit women, including rape, untouchability, domestic violence, girl trafficking and attempted rape have been recorded but the worst thing is that most cases occurring now go unreported because the perpetrators are family members and despite of filing formal complaints, the survivors rather represses such instances even from their family members. So this makes the situation unpleasant and dangerous since the victims of domestic violence have very limited options when it comes to receiving help and support under lockdown.



*The most vulnerable of families are doubly victimised. They cannot afford to catch Covid-19 but they cannot afford to stay at home and not work either. For them, even a day without work can place them in dire straits*



# FEDO RESPONSE TO COVID-19

## RELIEF MATERIAL DISTRIBUTED TO DALIT AND MARGINALIZED GROUPS

In between the raging Coronavirus crisis across the world, FEDO has implemented Relief and Response program in different districts of Nepal by distributing food and some hygiene kits: rice, pulses, mustard oil, wheat, flour, potatoes, salt, sugar and soap to Dalits, poor and the most vulnerable ones as to address the urgent need of Dalit women and marginalized groups at local level. Along with this, FEDO also initiated to distribute sanitary pads and other medical kits to girls and women of different district for ensuring their improved menstrual hygiene and good health.



*FEDO Banke distributed sanitary pads to women and girls group of different RM of Banke*



Besides relief material distribution, the team also approach and inquired about the overall scenario of Dalits due to COVID-19: the number of Dalits received relief support from the government, number of Dalits infected from COVID-19 and status of treatment from the respective districts.





# FEDO STAGED DEMONSTRATION RALLIES; DEMANDING JUSTICE FOR CASTE-BASED VIOLENCE TO THE VICTIMS



FEDO team at the rally organized to demand justice to the victims



Feminist Dalit Organization (FEDO) staged demonstration rallies in many of its district chapters protesting against killing of Dalit youths in Rukum West and demanding strong action against the perpetrators of the heinous crime.

Meanwhile, Feminist Dalit Organization (FEDO) has drawn the attention towards the growing number of incidents of rape, murder and the other different forms of violence and discrimination against Dalits in Nepal. Also, FEDO along with other Dalit organizations and human rights defenders issued a global call urging the Government of Nepal and all the concerned national and international authorities to take immediate action against the perpetrators of caste-based discrimination increasing rampant in Nepal.

# **RAPID ASSESSMENT SURVEY CONDUCTED BY FEDO**

During this pandemic of corona virus (COVID 19) and lock-down period, the lives of the peoples, particularly Dalits who are the most disadvantaged and marginalized community in Nepal has been suffered extensively. By realizing this fact disclosed through various media and from community, Feminist Dalit Organization (FEDO) has conducted the rapid assessment of corona virus (COVID-19) by developing questionnaire, sharing it to its district chapters and finding out the impact to Dalit community and Dalit women in particular. Many Dalit women representing Dalit women groups and community of different provinces of Nepal has successfully participated in this study.

This study helped in assessing the impact of COVID-19 to Dalit communities and their status as most of the Dalit women were aware about the corona virus pandemic, its symptoms but due to multiple reasons as lack of access to health services, economic condition and restriction of mobility due to lock-down, only half numbers of respondents were able to adopt the preventive measure to avoid infection of corona virus. The corona virus has impacted the lives of Dalit woman in various aspects as they have been suffering from the economic problems, food supply, health problems and caste-based discrimination. Further, being a Dalit woman, they have been facing caste-based discrimination, burden of household chores, domestic and sexual violence, mental torture and so. Most of the Dalit women didn't know about the hotline number that is place in the case of violence to the women and even half of them cannot dial the hotline number.

Similarly, in term of relief distributed by local level of government, non-government organization and private level, they were aware about this and half of them had also received the relief. Most significantly, Dalit community and dependent families of Dalit women have been surviving through wage-based labor, agriculture, migrant worker as their income generating sources, which were collapsed by the pandemic of corona virus (COVID 19) and long run lock-down.

Therefore, their sources of income, food supply, health services and justice to the victims of domestic and sexual violence should be addressed immediately.



# REMOTE DATA COLLECTION ON VIOLENCE AGAINST DALIT WOMEN AND GIRLS DURING COVID-19

This global pandemic of COVID-19 has highly impacted on violence against Dalit women and girls. So, FEDO has been working rigorously on collecting data and information in order to prevent and respond to violence against Dalit women and girls.

FEDO finds it mandatory to follow evidence-based practice in collecting, compiling and documenting the data and information as it will further help in ascertaining whether the policies are working towards preventing and combating such violence.

*"Our work is always focused on supporting the most vulnerable people in society- but now, more than ever, it's critical that we take steps to ensure that no one is left behind."*

## FEDO COORDINATES WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENT FOR SPREADING AWARENESS

One of the most effective ways we can help combat the spread of COVID-19, and limit its impact on fragile health systems, is by building people's knowledge and awareness.

So, FEDO is working in close coordination and cooperation with local government, health workers, DRR actors, business and civil society for raising awareness amongst community people to reduce the suffering caused by this pandemic situation. Safeguarding the safety and welfare of our Dalit community to reduce the spread of virus respecting national government guidelines and expert advice on social distancing, various Information, Educational and Communication materials in line with government is being distributed in most places of Nepal.



# KILLED FOR INTER-CASTE LOVE

## NAVARAJ BK



*Picture of Navraj BK AND HIS FRIEND*

While the world is fighting COVID-19, the death of Navaraj BK along with five other young men in Rukum, Nepal, garnered national attention. The men did not die from COVID-19 however; instead they were murdered because of caste-based discrimination.

Navaraj, a 21-year-old from Jajarkot who loved playing sports and wanted to join the police force, was born into a Dalit family. He fell in love with Sushma Malla, an upper-caste, 17-year-old girl. Once her family learned about their relationship, Navaraj and his family received frequent warnings to keep away from her, and on one occasion, he was reported to the police.

On May 23, accompanied by 18 friends, Navaraj had gone over to Soti to bring home his girlfriend as Navaraj's bride. Tragedy followed immediately as Soti's villagers pelted stones and chased the group of 19 young men to the shores of the Bheri River where they were swept away.

However, Police have arrested Dambar Bahadur Malla, ward chair of Chaurjahari Municipality-8 along with fifteen others in connection with the death of three youths in Rukum West and the bodies of Navaraj BK, Tikaram Sunar and Ganesh Budha have been recovered while three other youths -Lokendra Sunar, Govinda Shahi and Sandeep BK are still missing. So, what was their fault? Navaraj was a Dalit; his would-be bride, a Thakuri - one of the "upper castes."

Nepal was declared free from caste-based discrimination on June 4, 2006, but almost 14 years since this declaration people from so called "lower castes" are still facing gruesome discrimination and are deprived of basic facilities and infrastructures. This caste-based discrimination not only took innocent lives but also our humanity. Navaraj BK was only one face of many Dalits who have been killed over caste-based discrimination and until and unless strict action is not taken by the authorities, many more people like Navaraj BK will have to suffer. Hence, this tragedy should be a national reckoning.

# SOME OTHER CASES OF VIOLENCE DURING LOCK DOWN

## 13 YEAR-OLD ANGIRA PASI

Cases of the bodies of young girls from poor, marginalized communities are being treated as expendable; raped, mutilated, murdered, is as horrifying as it is commonplace in Nepal. Recently in Devdaha, Rupendehi, a 13-year-old Dalit girl named Angira Pasi was raped by an upper-caste man. The “solution” was to marry the young girl get to her rapist! But even then, the rapist’s family refused to accept her marriage as she was a Dalit. The girl was later found dead, hanging from a tree. It took four days to even register a police complaint.

However, many human right activists are calling for fair justice by demanding the decision-makers to take strong action against the perpetrators.



*Picture of Angira Pasi*

*"Despite constitutional guarantees, impunity for caste-based discrimination and violence remains high in Nepal."*

## 14 YEAR-OLD DALIT GIRL WAS RAPED- 1ST MAY 2020

On Baisakh 19, 14-year-old girl of Morang Miklajung-9 was raped by a man named Dhiren Magar. She was sleeping all alone that night and taking that situation in advantage, the culprit forcefully raped that child. Hearing her screams, the villagers came around to help her. Later on, the victim's family lodged a complaint at the district police office and the man was arrested after 9 days as he was caught hiding in one of his relative's home.



## **DALIT YOUTH FINED FOR ENTERING NON-DALIT'S HOUSE** **MAY 4, 2020**

Locals have made **Shyam Bahadur Pariyar**, a Dalit man pay Rs. 1500 as a fine for entering the house of Netra Kaucha, a Magar, in Kaligandaki Rural Municipality-5 of Gulmi.

The victim shared that he was made to pay the amount for 'cleansing' the house after he entered the house of a non-Dalit. Pariyar sheltered himself from a storm at Kaucha's house on May 4. After the rain stopped, he went back to his house. However, it caused a commotion in the locality and the locals decided that he had to pay Rs 1500 as compensation.



*Picture of victim Shyam Bahadur Pariyar*

## **CASTE BASED DISCRIMINATION IN QUARANTINE, FOOD COOKED BY THE DALIT BOYCOTTED IN ARGHAKHANCHI** **JUNE 02, 2020**

Some people of the so-called upper caste have boycotted the food cooked by a Dalit youth in Arghakhanchi. The incident took place at the Social Welfare Primary School quarantine of Malarani Rural Municipality-4.

**Krishna Bahadur BK**, who has been working as a volunteer through the ward office, has been cooking in the quarantine. Dinesh Ghimire from Shit village, a returnee from Delhi, boycotted the food he cooked there and he further claimed that he gets nightmares, shivering and sick after having the food cooked by the Dalit boy- Krishna Bahadur BK. 'He drank water that I fetched but did not eat the food I cooked' said BK.

So, according to Ward Chairman Bishnu Prasad Pokharel, Dinesh Ghimire was shifted to the quarantine of Kalika Nepal National Secondary School after he boycotted the food cooked food.

Well, these recent cases have been a fresh reminder to all of us that caste-based inequalities remain as pernicious as ever, so now we need to hold the community leaders accountable and set a precedent for future cases of caste-based exploitation. So, in response, FEDO is continuously work together in close coordination and cooperation with the local government, DRR actors, and other Dalit organizations by organizing different campaigns and programs as to fight against domestic violence; increased information to potential victims for facilitating their access to help services; increased awareness and social recognition of the problem. This initiation will ultimately help in heightening awareness of the problem and increasing action for addressing it.

Furthermore, FEDO has also initiated *Reaching to Unreached* approach to understand and work on improving the Socio-economic situation of Dalit and Marginalized communities during this crisis.



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