

# A Report On Civic and Voters Education, Second Phase.

Project  
Completion  
Report

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Community Action Center-Nepal

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## **1) BACKGROUND**

Civic and Voter's Education was one of the programs undertaken by Community Action Center Nepal (CAC-N) with the technical and financial support of Forum for Women Law and Development(FWLD). Bhaktapur, the implementing district of this project is the smallest district among the 75 districts of the country. This district is surrounded by Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Kavre districts. With the 2 constituencies in the entire district the Election Commission has allocated 41 polling booths for approximate of 160,000 voters'. The literacy rate in this district is 51 percent. Among Tamang, Newar, Chhetries, Brahmans and other Dalits residing in this district the Newar holds the majority of 56 percent of the total population. This district has 2 municipalities and 16 VDCs'.

The project aims to educate and aware the local voters of Bhaktapur district on the concept of the Constitution Assembly, and the up coming Constitution Assembly Election on the 10<sup>th</sup> of April 2008, that is 28th Chaitra 2064. The voter's education as the second phase of the whole "Civic and Voter's Education" project aims to aware the voter's about the Constitution Assembly, Constitution Assembly Polling procedure, the confidentiality of the vote and to introduce to the votes about the materials to be used in the polling. This project attempts to empower and strengthen the most vulnerable group of society namely women through education.

It focuses on the inclusion of women's groups which can significantly contribute to fostering dialogue and discourse about the up coming Constitution Assembly by sharing information amongst the family and in turn the community.

## 2) TITLE OF TRAINING

### Voter's Education

## 3) OBJECTIVES

### 3.1 Detail

In a country like Nepal where many people are still uneducated, the Constitution Assembly Election is a big challenge for the entire nation and the existing government. As aforementioned the literacy rate of the Bhaktapur district is 51 percent. It is essential that the awareness program takes serious steps towards the success of the Constitution Assembly Election. After a long time the people of this country are casting their vote. Since this is the election to select our representatives to make the supreme law, the Constitution, it is a must to ensure active participation in this election.

This project focused on raising awareness of potential voters especially women about the Constitution Assembly and Constitution Assembly Election. It emphasized the awareness about inclusion of all the castes, ethnic groups and religions, in the Constitution Assembly and about the mixed election system and the two ballot papers. The major highlights were on how to mark the Swastik Chhap (the stamping mark) on the Ballot paper in the proper manner, types of ballot paper to be used in the election, the provision of the secret polling cabin to ensure the confidentiality of the voter, the importance of the vote, the responsibility of the citizens to prepare the constitution, the materials to be used during the polling, the voting process and the provisions available at the election booth.

### 3.2 Specified

- a) Encourage the potential voters' of Bhaktapur district to take an active participation in the up coming Constitution Assembly Election
- b) Highlighting the importance of the Constitution Assembly polling.
- c) Aware the potential voters' of Bhaktapur district about the inclusion of all the Casts, ethnic groups, religions i.e. representation from women, Dalits, Janajati, and other marginalized groups.
- d) Educate about the election system, as a mixed system
- e) Introduce the potential voters about two voting papers.
- f) Educate about the procedure of voting to the potential voters'.

- g) Aware the proper way of marking the Swastik (Chhap) on the ballot paper.
- h) Highlighting the provision of secret polling booth to ensure the confidentiality of the vote.
- i) Introducing the materials to be used in the polling process.
- j) Emphasizing the condition of the cancellation of the vote.

#### **4) LEVEL OF PARTICIPANTS**

The level of participation was diverse. Potential voters' (participants), 18 years and above attended the program. They consisted of 404 males, 1396 female, 188 dalits, 423 chhetries, 239 Brahmins, 940 janajatis, and 10 Madeshi. The level of participants was not same, some graduated and some were non- graduated and many of them were illiterate.

#### **5) PROCEEDINGS**

The program was conducted in more participatory approach. The workshops were conducted using the Constitution Assembly Calendar, Constitution Assembly Hand Books, news cuttings and group work and discussion. However, most of the programs were conducted by lecture methods. A Mock election was held which was very exciting for the participants as it was the first time that the participants were casting 2 votes in a single election.

#### **6) DATE AND VENUE**

*Please see attached list of dates, locations and facilitators details for all workshops held. (Annex no. 1)*

#### **7) PARTICIPANTS (Composition of the participants)**

*Please see attached Composition of the participants by casts and sex for all workshops held. (Annex no. 2)*

## 8) GENERAL DESCRIPTION

This project was divided into two phases. Prior to the workshop at the local level the selected facilitator attended one day refresher training (in Chundevis, Bhaktapur) on the Training of Trainers program. After the TOT program the facilitators' ran the voter's education on the Constitution Assembly Election in 30 different sites of Bhaktapur district. All together there were 1,800 participants attended where 404 were males and 1396 were women. On average there were 60 participants in each workshop. (*Please refer Annex no 1*).

Although the main cities are occupied by Newars there are other castes scattered all around. Among the participants there were 52.22% Janajati; 23.50% Chhetri; 13.28% Brahmin; 10.44% Dalit and 0.56% other (*Please refer Annex no 2*). The whole program focused especially marginalize and minority women groups.

As the objective of the project was to raising awareness amongst potential voters about the up coming Constitution Assembly and the Constitution Assembly Election. Facilitators conducted the workshop and highlighted the importance of the Constitution Assembly Polling. They educated about the Election System, the number of seats in both election systems and the total number of the Constitution Assembly members. The facilitator introduced the materials to be used during the election including the two ballot papers. The Light blue color for the *PRATAKSHYA Nirwahan* and light red color for the *SAMANUPATIK Nirwahan*. The right way of casting the vote was another major aspect of the workshop which provided an aid to the participants. The right way of keeping the Swastika Chhap on the ballot paper ensured the quality voting. The workshops emphasized about the secrecy maintained in the polling process. Many participants found it quiet new, since, it was their first time voting. The information provided to the potential voter's and the knowledge gained was checked during the mock election. The mock election made the participants familiar with the up coming Constitution Assembly Election. It was a huge challenge for the facilitator to convey the message properly due to the level of participation being so diverse. The evaluation of the project seemed positive as the voter's felt that it is the duty of each and every individual to cast their vote for the candidates so as to ensure that the public plays the deciding role in deciding the future of Nepal.

## **9) ACHIEVEMENTS**

- The Training of Trainers (TOT) program on "Constitution Assembly Voter's Education" was very helpful to get the clear view on a of Col the issues related to the Constitution Assembly. In this program the participants committed to share their learning in their respective allocated VDC's and therefore bring about a multiplier effect.
- The TOT program provided a common platform to all the participants from diverse social, cultural, linguistic, geographical backgrounds, where they could get a clear vision about the projects concepts and processes.
- Some political parties of Bhaktapur were totally indifferent towards the project when it was initially started. But, after the orientation, they not only had a positive response but also, helped the facilitator in the overall duties for the Voter's Education Program.
- After the work shop at the local level the potential voter's were aware and enlightened about the Constitution Assembly election. The project succeeded to orient people about the mixed election system, the right way of marking the Swastik Chhap on the Ballot paper, the voting procedure, the secrecy maintained in the voting and the importance of everyone's vote.
- The mock election allowed the participants to have a clear understanding about the election booth and the process of casting the vote in the coming Constitution Assembly election.

## **10) PROJECT CHALLENGES**

- As the project is related to Constitution Assembly and Constitution Assembly Election, its scope is very wide and broad. To gather a large number of people especially the women of VDCs' and educating them was very challenging. The project team worked extremely hard to meet the criteria in Bhaktapur districts.
- To gather the people in the peak time of the Constitution Assembly Election was very challenging as the potential voters' at first thought that the facilitation was from a representative from some political party?
- All the interested potential voter's queries could not be fulfilled due to the reduction in the number of the workshops in this project.
- The participants were very interested in the mock election and this had the largest number participations. The level of the participants was very mixed. Thus, to address all levels and to meet their expectations was another challenge.

## **11) LESSON LEARNED**

Learning is a continuous process. There were always new things to learn in every small activity and phases of the project. All the team members learned different things. Some of them are as follows:

- Every community member has the capacity to make positive changes if provided with knowledge and skill.
- During the workshop at the local level the project team learned that it is easier to work in cooperation with the local clubs and the groups. Networking with other organizations working for the Constitution Assembly is also essential to avoid duplication.
- As this project's topic is wide, it became difficult for the team to manage the time and activities of the project.

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