

IAW INTERNATIONAL MEETING BANKYA BULGARIA
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WOMEN NETWORKING IN PRACTICE

By Goma Bastola, President of RUWON Nepal

Hello! Namaste everyone! I am Goma Devi Bastola, President of Rural Women's Network Nepal (RUWON Nepal). Firstly, I would like to thank IAW International meeting task force for providing me this opportunity to present here.

My rural upbringing in Nepal provided me with the insights into the challenges and inequalities faced by women and girls in Nepal. This contributed to my desire to become actively involved within the sector of women's rights, education, and empowerment.

I joined Rural Women's Network (RUWON) Nepal in 2014 to help provide a voice to rural women, champion equality, and improve access to education. My vision as the president is to encourage women's organizations to become active participants within their communities to increase unity, promote their individual contributions to society, and seek greater equality. I joined Soroptimist International in 2017. This global volunteer service organization is dedicated to promoting peace and elevating the lives of women and girls, both locally and globally. Presently, I serve as the Program Action Officer of the Kathmandu Club.

My contributions have been internationally recognized, with notable achievements such as receiving the Hurford Youth Fellowship from the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) Feb 2016 and being selected to be in the Intersectional Feminist Collective (IFC) by the RAFTO Foundation for Human Rights, Norway in May 2016. Also, the Vice President of IAW and now the board member.

Today I am presenting here about the networking in Practice in Nepal:

Networking: Networking means the process of making connections and building relationships with likeminded people and organizations. The connections can

provide you with advice and contacts with many individuals and organizations, which can help you to grow yourselves and your organizations.

Rural women's Network Nepal (RUWON Nepal) is a national network that has been working hard to improve the condition of girls and women in Nepal since 2007. RUWON Nepal strives to contribute for the economic and social development of the country at local, national and international levels by helping grassroots women and marginalized people through networking, empowerment, education and shelter. RUWON Nepal has the especial Consultative Status to the [United Nations Economic and Social Council \(ECOSOC\)](#). It is the highest status granted by the United Nations to non-governmental organizations (NGO's), thereby allowing us to participate in the work of the United Nations.

RUWON Nepal has developed the very strong trust and network in the grassroots level/community that we serve. To Network with the women in our projects we contact with the local government bodies and the other related organizations like schools, colleges, women groups, local medias and NGOs etc. So they will help us to find the most needed women and girls in the community. Also we will be touch with the known peoples of the targeted society like social worker, politician, Teachers or media person and through them we reach with the women and girls in our project. So this will help us to recognize the women and girls who are in the need of our support and also who will help us to grow our work and organization.

The new constitution (2015) of Nepal, have given a lot of rights to women. The constitution under the article of citizens' rights, there is the separate provision to protect women. Women shall have the right to obtain special opportunity in education, health, employment and social security. Even though, these are the responsibility of the government to implement the constitution and to ensure that every women and girls are getting their rights according to the constitution but unfortunately In our world even though women are the major founders of the society, they have still not achieved equality with men. There are many countries where women are seen as second-class citizens. No matter how talented they are, they never get a chance to improve their own's lives. Women are still treated as subordinates even though the Constitution guarantees equal rights. In Nepal, two out of three women face domestic violence. Women are being discriminated in every aspect of the society.

Nepal is a patriarchal society and has vast inequalities in terms of education for boys and girls/men and women. Culturally, this means that women are seen as inferior to men. Socially, that they are more subject to physical, emotional and sexual violence. Politically, that women are confined to private spaces and less likely to be aware of their rights and freedoms, of civic participation, so less likely to be politically active. In all, this means that rural women and girls always finish last.

So what we all have to agree on it that women and girls have to become aware of their rights, develop the appropriate and relevant skills (such as problem solving, effective communication and negotiation skills) and get a better understanding of how to voice themselves and their ideas – and nothing should stop them!

My organization, RUWON Nepal, works with women and young girls who have never participated in political activities. Most of them did not have access to education or any employment opportunity outside of their homes. This results in a lack of economic independence. We run leadership and capacity building trainings, literacy classes and economic empowerment programs which have proved effective in bridging the gap in terms of women participation in social development and political process. And RUWON Nepal's activities is helping/supporting to implement the constitution and the local, regional and national governments are appreciating the work we do. So we are having a great relation with the governments bodies in Nepal.

We do have media person in our executive board, where we work we invite the local medias always to cover the activities we do. It is also, win win situation for the media and the organization. The media will get the organic news and RUWON get the publicity and retokenization of our work in the community. For this we have a very strong relationship/network with the local and national medias in Nepal.

The both organizations I work in Nepal, RUWON and Soroptimist focus on women's rights, empowerment and bridging the gender gap in Nepal. We transform the lives of women of all ages through leadership training, capacity building, literacy programs, and economic empowerment initiatives.

THANK YOU!