

## CELEBRATION OF INTERNATIONAL WOMEN DAY IN BELDANGI BHUTANESE REFUGEE CAMP, 8 MARCH 2010

### 1 INTRODUCTION:

Around 1000 women marched along the Beldangi-I camp on March 8, 2010 on the occasion of the 100<sup>th</sup> International Women Day. They chanted slogans like - equal rights, equal opportunities and equal progress for all, women rights are the human rights and so on.



The marching rally dispersed into a gathering to witness and participate in a separate program jointly organized by Bhutan Media Society (BMS) and Bhutanese Refugee Women Forum (BRWF). The program was sponsored by Global Human Rights Defense (GHRD) and Bhutanese community in the Netherlands (BCN).

### 2 INAUGURATION:

Purni Maya Rai, BRWF General Secretary chaired the program while Harka Bahadur Rai, Camp Supervisor from Refugee Coordination Unit under the Ministry of Home Affairs inaugurated the program formally with a candle light.



Harka Bahadur Rai, Camp Supervisor (RCU) of Beldangi-I camp inaugurates the formal start of the program			<b>Affiliation</b>
1	Mr. Harka B. Rai	Camp Supervisor	Refugee Coordination Unit
2	Mrs. Ganga Sen	Field Assistant	UNHCR
3	Mr.Pawan Acharya	Training Program Officer	Lutheran World Federation
4	Mr.T.B.Gurung	Camp Secretary	Camp Management Committee
5	Mr. Bhim Lal Dhama	Chief, Council Board	Camp Management Committee
6	Mrs.Menuka Nepal	Former Camp Secretary	Sanischare Camp
7	Mrs.Purni Maya Rai	General Secretary	BRWF
8	Mrs. Ran Maya	Secretary	BRWF, Beldangi-I
9	Mr.Amber S Subba	Program Coordinator	BRWF, Sanischare
10	Mrs. Dil Maya Saru	Facilitator	BRWF
11	Mrs.Rupa Subba	Social Animator	BRWF, Beldangi-I
12	Mr.Indra Timsina	Coordinator	Children Forum
13	Mr. Arjun Pradhan	New Coordinator	Bhutan News Service
14	Mr. Jeetan Subba	Vice-Chairman	Bhutan Media Society

*Table 1: Guests/invitees of the program*

Rupa Subba, the Social Animator of BRWF welcomed all guests, participants and audience in the program. This was followed by guest speeches, where the speakers highlighted the importance of women empowerment in camp. They also thanked GHRD and BCN for financially supporting to organize the program.

<b>Particulars</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Remark</b>
Solidarity Programs (Inaugural sessions and Guest Speeches)	Indra Timsina, BRWF	Selected guests offered time for short speeches
Cultural stage performance	Indra Timsina, BRWF	2 dances and a song
Felicitation programs	BRWF	
Roundtable discussion on various issues of women	Jeetan Subba and Arjun Pradhan,	

*Table 2: The program details*

### **3 FELICITATION:**

The interesting part of the inaugural session was Dil Maya Biswa of Beldangi-1 camp Sector E/1, Hut 22 and Chandra Maya Rai of Sector B/1, Hut 46 were honored and asked to express short views. This attempt was to encourage the most vulnerable women in camp to share their own stories. Dil Maya Biswa even hesitated to come in front of the mass to receive token of awards since it was her first experience to attend such a gathering.



Chandra Maya Rai and Dil Maya Biswa

The Camp Supervisor in his speech in the program said every Bhutanese woman had her own stories, and she needed to open herself up. According to him if any women receive any forms of domestic violence, be it from her husband, she should raise voice against them. The UNHCR's Field Assistant Ganga Sen opined that the Women Day is not only of women's but a day to respect every individual in a society, with a top priority to women in worst conditions. It is the program that man has to attend to safe guard the rights of women and promote women at risk, Sen said.

#### 4 STAGE PERFORMANCE:

Lok Bahadur Mohora, who is affiliated to Youth Friendly Circle and his team, presented a beautiful song that explains dreams and unknown destination of youths in camp. Some school children staged a modern Nepali dance. A few young minds recited poems to add spices to the program. All these participants were presented some prizes to reward their participation.



#### 5 ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION:

With the completion of inaugural session and stage performances, Bhutan Media Society conducted a round table discussion. The participants for this were:



- Mr. Amber Singh Subba
- Mrs. Menuka Nepal
- Mrs. Mansari Rai
- Mrs. Krishna Dhakal
- Mrs, Rupa Subba
- Mr. Pawan Acharaya
- Mrs. Ran Maya Chaulagain

The discussion was open making the mass listen to the whole program. The round table was moderated by journalists in exile Jeetan Subba and Arjun Pradhan on the following issues:

- Situation of the women in camps and their stories,
- Violence on women
- Trafficking of women and children
- Women at risk

- Divorce rate
- Condition of single women
- Responsibilities of men
- Role of aid agencies

## 6 KEY ISSUES RAISED BY PARTICIPANTS

**Mr. Amber Subba:** Our women are doing a good progress and aware about their rights. With the start of BRWF various trainings they got inspired; they could rebuild themselves in the society, make them self productive. However, due to financial problem, BRWF was unable to continue similar empowering programs. Therefore, we couldn't meet our target. Today GHRD and Bhutanese communities in Netherlands helped us to celebrate this program. This is a praise-worthy contribution to our women in camps. Similarly, if our resettled friends help our community, we can jointly make our women educated, trained and fully empowered.

**Mrs. Manuka Nepal:** With the start of the third country resettlement program, the divorce rate is quite high. For me this has not done injustice to the Bhutanese women. In



the past, women were compelled to live under the trap of their husband, our society ruled them in whatever way it intended; by now every woman has understood and realized her rights and duties. I hope this type of programs keep on igniting women to search independent life rather than working as a slave in the family to satisfy family and husband needs.

**Mrs. Mansuari Rai:** We are trying to control trafficking in camp. Our ladies, who usually go to restaurants and hotels in tempt of money, are also attending counseling. We are always alert to act promptly for any information we receive to rescue our women from such compulsion.

**Mr. Pawan Acharya:** I'm very fresh to camp situation and as per my friends the rate of domestic violence has been reducing as expected. We are also offering individual counseling privately for women and girls in such situations. We have good mechanisms to address their concerns. But, we alone cannot do all these. The support form GHRD and Bhutanese abroad, like what we have seen today, is crucial to empower women in camps.

**Mrs. Rupa Subba:** Social and family reconciliation for victims of trafficking is the most important. We are trying to create homely environment for them and even treating them



medically. It is sad thing to note here that girls and women with no capacity to meet their needs financially get compelled join restaurants and bars ultimately, but if we give quality development program, skillful trainings and creative workshops, then these ladies will understand the importance and refrain from such connections. For this I request all of our resettled brothers and sister to help the community, wherever way they can. If we



help each other then we will never feel the absence of our friends since we remain in contact. Today, I am thankful to Bhutanese community in the Netherland and GHRD for their precious support. I request our friend to help so that we can give some useful training to empower our youths and children. We are in need of small supports for games and sports, music and entertainment, creative writings, paintings

and other forms of schemes.

**Mrs. Ran Maya Chaulagain:** The situation of the women is improving and more than 50 percent women are making updates to their rights. But, these programs are never sufficient.

#### **7 CONCLUSION:**

Purni Maya Rai, who chaired the program, addressed the gathering to conclude the program. She thanked everyone including BMS, BCN and GHRD for their supports and contributions. She hoped similar programs in future would bring changes in life of many women languishing in the refugee camps.

#### **Sponsors:**

Bhutanese Community in the Netherlands (BCN)

Global Human Rights Defence (GHRD)

