

# NEPAL

**IN NEPAL, FRONT-LINE COMMUNITY-BASED JUSTICE ACTORS ARE KEY AGENTS IN SECURING WOMEN'S ACCESS TO JUSTICE.**



# JUSTICE FOR WOMEN, JUSTICE FOR ALL

## ADVANCING THE COMMUNITY-BASED JUSTICE MODEL IN NEPAL

### INTRODUCTION

In 2019, UN Women launched a justice pilot model to strengthen the capacity of community-based justice actors to facilitate and enhance women's access to justice. The pilot engaged front-line justice providers, including Judicial Committee members, mediators, community-based justice actors and representatives of grassroots women's organizations in 10 local government units (LGUs) across three districts: Sarlahi, Doti and Kailali, in Madhes and Sudurpaschim Provinces. The justice needs of women were placed at the centre while supporting decentralization of justice systems through community-based mechanisms. The pilot model focused on responding to the barriers in access to justice that women face, and it strengthened justice mechanisms to deliver gender-responsive people-centred justice. "I am glad that the Judicial Committees prioritized my case and referred it to the District Court. The legal advisor has been providing continuous follow-up and necessary support for my case." Geeta\*, survivor of domestic violence, Kailari Rural Municipality.

Since launching the pilot model, UN Women led a series of collaborative and holistic interventions in partnership with the Legal Aid and Consultancy Centre, the Village Community Development Center, the Equality Development Centre Nepal and the Dalit Women Rights Forum. The aim was to do the following:

1. **Strengthen capacities** of local justice systems to deliver gender-responsive people-centred justice.
2. **Foster dialogue** to bridge the gap between formal and community-based justice mechanisms.
3. **Empower grassroots and community-based women's organizations** to document, monitor and advocate gender-responsive justice.

#### Strengthening gender-responsive justice delivery



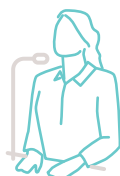
Legal standards and procedures



Collection of evidence



Filing of applications for cases



Preparation of victim statements

### KNOWLEDGE FOR ACTION

In the initial phase of the pilot, a series of guidelines and materials for training of trainers (ToT) were developed on enabling access to justice and procedures for gender equality and social inclusion (GESI), as follows:

- "Guidelines on Gender Responsive Justice for Informal Justice Actors, 2021".
- "Enhancing Gender-Responsive Justice: User-friendly resource book for Judicial Committees, 2021".

Since the development of the guidelines, all **10 Judicial Committees under the pilot have endorsed and adopted the guidelines and GESI procedures**. High-level acknowledgement has been secured from key government officials, including the Secretary of the Ministry of Women Children and Senior Citizen, regarding the significance of the guidelines for enabling gender-responsive justice at the local level.

Along with developing those resources, **four legal advisors were assigned to the 10 LGUs during the initial pilot phase to provide direct advisory support** and guide the Judicial Committees on legal standards and procedures, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

### ENGAGEMENT

To support the roll out and adoption of gender-responsive procedures, a series of dedicated trainings led by **experts and legal advisors engaged 890 participants (46 Judicial Committee members; 325 mediators; 334 community-based justice actors; and 185 assembly members)** to further strengthen their capacity to deliver gender-responsive people-centred justice to women and marginalized groups.

### HIGHLIGHT

Although the target was to distribute the resource book in the 10 LGUs, UN Women led extensive dissemination efforts to ensure it was delivered to all 753 LGUs across the country.

## FOSTERING DIALOGUE: BRIDGING GAPS

**More than 40 community-based exchange dialogues and interaction events** were conducted to bridge relationships and foster sharing, learning and coordination between formal and community-based justice actors, and community members, including women justice experts and women seeking justice. The events directly contributed to the following:

- **Establishing a regular exchange platform** among a diverse group of participants, including representatives of the district court, mayors, police, lawyers, women human rights defenders, grassroots women's organizations and community members.
- **Fostering trust** between community members, notably women and members of marginalized groups, and justice actors.
- **Strengthening coordination** and referrals, and bridging gaps between formal and community-based justice actors.

### KEY QUOTE



This interaction programme has made me realize the gaps in the mechanism from the perspectives of women and marginalized groups. We are committed to strengthening our system to create conducive environment for women and excluded groups to access justice”.

Chandra Bahadur Kunjeda, member of Judicial Committee, Doti

## GRASSROOTS EMPOWERMENT AND MOBILIZATION

In recognition of the vital role of grassroots women's organizations at the community level to enhance women's access to justice, the pilot provided 10 organizations with institutional funding and training on rights-based advocacy, documentation and monitoring.

During the project period, **members of grassroots women's organizations facilitated a total of 277 cases of women's access to justice and services**. The facilitation was provided to

survivors of gender-based violence and discrimination to help them to access Judicial Committee services. The grassroots women's organizations **led exemplary efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic to support women** through regular well-being checks via phone, sharing of COVID-19 prevention messages, and information or direct outreach to service providers.

## FROM THE GROUND UP: CATALYTIC IMPACT

The pilot has directly demonstrated the applicability of people-centred justice and contributed to increasing both the quantity and quality of gender-responsive and community-based justice service provision in and beyond the project areas. Key results related to quantity and quality are summarized below.

### QUANTITY

- **Capacity of 890 community-based justice actors** was strengthened to deliver gender-responsive people-centred justice.
- The Judicial Committees and other community-based justice systems **facilitated 544 cases brought by women** (406 cases were settled and 138 were referred).
- **Legal counselling was provided to 199 survivors of gender-based violence** – out of which 56 received legal aid, including court representation through legal advisors (of which 26 cases were settled).
- **Sensitization of 43 media persons** (21 women, 22 men) in the project locations on gender-responsive reporting – and 81 national radio episodes were broadcast to raise awareness of the community members on justice/services for GBV survivors and vulnerable women, including in the COVID-19 context, reaching 41,94,000 listeners.

### QUALITY

- The satisfaction of the community with community-based justice providers **increased by 54 per cent- from 14 per cent** during the baseline survey in October 2019 to 66 per cent in December 2021.
- **Two Judicial Committees received recognition** from the district court and federal government, respectively, for their exemplary work.
- **The allocation of resources increased** for the work of the Judicial Committees, including an approximate increase of \$24,165 for gender-responsive budgeting in project locations.

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