FIRST LOCAL YOUTH ADVOCACY INSTITUTE ON SAFE ABORTION RIGHTS

27-29 December 2019

About the organization
YoSHAN (Youth led Sexual and reproductive Health Rights Advocacy Nepal) is a young feminist led youth advocacy network which is a youth network of Asia Safe Abortion Partnership in Nepal. We are a group of Youth Champions committed to protect, promote and advance the sexual and reproductive health rights movement in Nepal with primary focus on safe abortion rights. We challenge the discriminatory norms and amplify our feminist actions through collective efforts. We continuously aim to establish women right as human rights.

**Background:**

By understanding the importance of promotion, protection and expansion of sexual and reproductive rights in Nepal, youth champion should initiate their action on right to access safe abortion services, which is taken as the most challenging issue among all the SRHR dimensions. Being a youth champion, one should be able to cope up with the superstitious, cultural conservative practices and challenge those interpretations that restricts the right of youth, particularly young girls and women.

With the dynamic aspects taken into account, incorporating the gender and human rights is very essential in order to build up capacity as well as to make government accountable in fulfilling the rights of its citizen. By using social networking platforms along with offline means productive alliances with the core stakeholders as well as with the communities is possible. Therefore, Youth Champions should always make their effort in strengthening SRHR, especially Safe abortion in Nepal.

**About Youth Advocacy Institute (YAI)**

Youth Advocacy Institute is an intensive workshop on safe abortion which is designed for interested youth from varied fields. With the support from Asia Safe Abortion Partnership (ASAP), YoSHAN organized its first local YAI on Safe Abortion Rights Advocacy. It was held in Hotel Sweet Home, Bhaktapur from 27-29 December 2019. A total of 20 youth from diverse field gathered together for 3 days residential workshop. Participants were from nursing, public health, law, social work and related backgrounds and from different geographical region. Participants were from diverse professional background and were passionate on Safe Abortion, with some experience in SRHR arena, therefore, the workshop was focused mostly on socio legal as well as technical aspects of safe abortion enhanced by interaction, participation, group discussion and experience sharing method. YAI focused on safe abortion along with other cross -cutting issues affecting access to safe abortion such as sex and gender, patriarchy, safe abortion stigma and taboos, national and global scenario of abortion related laws, etc. All the participants of local YAI completed the three days’ workshop and became youth champions of YoSHAN and were motivated to advocate for safe abortion in various platforms in their upcoming days.

**Sessions covered throughout the workshop:**
As the entire workshop was divided into three days, the sessions marked up as follows:

**DAY 1**

- Understanding Gender and Patriarchy and their linkage with abortion
- Gender and Sexism in Mass Media
- Human Rights, Fundamental Rights and Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights
- Differences between Right based approach and Need based approach and Video on Unsafe Abortion
- Gender and Sexuality
- Value Clarification

**DAY 2**

- Intersectionality walk
- Reproductive Anatomy of Male, Female and Intersex people
- Menstruation and Menstrual Hygiene Management
- Pregnancy and Contraception
- Overview upon Abortion
- Abortion Law in Nepal and Asia
- What does it mean to be a pro choice?

**DAY 3**

- Interpersonal communication
- Creating content using social networking platform
- Digital security
- Action plan and way forward

**About the Facilitators:**

As a part of capacity building, all the fresh Youth Champions of ASAP were encouraged to facilitate which was supported by the senior youth champions Pushpa Joshi, Durga Sapkota, Shreejana Bajracharya and Prabina Sujakhu.

**Workshop in Details**

As all the participants were gathered a day before the workshop date, there was a warm welcome by the Youth Champions – Durga Sapkota, Pushpa Joshi and Prabina Sujakhu to all the participants for utilizing this platform as a gate to become a Youth Advocates in future. They encouraged all the participants to have a participatory voluntariness in the three days residential sessions. It was followed by a short introduction game for all the participants that helped memorizing name of each other. Along with this, the ground rules were set forth by all of the
participants facilitated by above mentioned Youth Champions. Following are some of the key principles that were agreed by all the participants:

- Principle of equal Participation
- Principle of Confidentiality
- Principle of consent which includes consent on Photo / Video
- Principle of mutual respect. (Respecting each other in terms of their socio-economic and cultural background as well as their opinion)

All the participants were provided with PHOTO/VIDEO CONSENT FORM, respecting one’s willingness to get public in social media.

**DAY 1:**

**Session 1: Understanding gender & patriarchy and their linkage with abortion by Youth Champion Akanksha Dahal**

The first session revolved around Gender and Patriarchy. Facilitator Akanksha Dahal prepared this session with an objective to trigger the discussion on patriarchy and how it manifests in our daily lives. The importance of understanding the Linkage between patriarchy, gender and abortion was discussed. The presenter was amazed about the prior knowledge of the participants on what patriarchy is and why it is related to SRHR advocacy movement. It is a fact that we discuss about patriarchy but discussion and realization on how deeply it is rooted and how often we get manipulated by it has always been a rare Discussion. Participants shared their experiences about how they might have been subconsciously manipulated by patriarchy in their lives. Likewise, importance of intersectionality and acknowledgment of gender diversity in increasing access to safe abortion was also discussed on by highlighting that ‘it is not just women who need abortion, acknowledgment of trans, non-binary and gender non-conforming group is also equally important.

Patriarchal manifestation and its dynamics were also discussed in the session. Variation in patriarchal manifestation according to time and person was also discussed. "My mother imposes things on me saying a girl should behave in a certain way and sit in a certain way. So, I think women are women's enemy and they pull each other down", said one of the participants. Likewise, the other said "My family loves me and asks me to get back home before it's dark. They tell me not to take job placements away from home. They care for me and are worried about my safety but I think the very notion of them worrying about me and confining me to my hometown is so a subconscious reflection of patriarchy because when my brother got a job placement away from home, he took it and the family was very happy and supportive".

Discussions on how patriarchy may reflect itself not only through discrimination but also through love, care, culture, traditions, etc. Likewise, the roots of patriarchy were also discussed where different dimensions like family, society, religion, political and legal institution, educational institutions, etc. were talked about. The fascinating thing about how all the religions
claim to be different from one other but have a same opinion when it comes to women, non-binary, trans-gender, non-confirming people and their SRHR.

The first session can be concluded by saying that Patriarchy is not the reflection of men but a very old, manipulative and deep-rooted power play which affects everyone: men, women, transgender, non-binary and gender non confirming people. Patriarchy has somewhere along the way become people's lifestyle and we ourselves may get manipulated by it subconsciously. Thus, it is very important to understand the roots of Patriarchy and the ways it manifests itself. In order to stop feeding patriarchy, it is very important to understand various dimensions of patriarchy and work on it jointly, starting from ourselves.

**Session 2- Gender and Sexism in Mass Media by Youth champion Pushpa Joshi**

Everything we have today is the product of our Patriarchal society. Today, Media is also playing crucial role in glorifying patriarchy. Discussion on the issues which portrays patriarchy, sexism in songs, movies, advertisement, etc took place during the session. Some of the examples of sexism and misogyny in media was shared by the participants and discussed during the session which includes use of female actresses in all advertisements related to detergent powder, washing soap and kitchen utensils further encouraging the stereotypical gender roles. Moreover, the objectification of female body and stereotypical portrayal of the non-binary people were also discussed through various examples.

With the intensive and participatory discussion session on this issue, it was concluded that we need to start thinking about how social media influences in shaping gender roles. It is recommended that maybe, we need to coordinate with the media personnel or commercial as well as film industry to stop glorifying sexism and misogyny in the field of media.

**Session 3: Human Rights, Sexual and Reproductive Rights and Fundamental Rights by Youth Champion Tirtha Raj Koirala**

The session on human rights, sexual and reproductive rights and fundamental rights started with a question on what the participants understand when they hear the word “Human Rights”. People have two kinds of rights: fundamental rights and human rights. Fundamental rights are the rights provided by a country which may differ from one country to another. It is bounded and limited according to a country’s constitution while human rights are inevitable. Human rights are the basic rights that are not limited within a country’s border. It is followed and respected worldwide. The participants had some mixed idea and were all aware that it was the rights that an individual gets for being a human irrespective of their gender, color, race or background they belong to. After that the participants were introduced about the definition of Human Rights followed by a brief introduction to Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). After that fundamental right was described and was distinguished in comparison to Human Rights briefly. The importance of knowing these rights and documents was discussed showing its importance in Advocacy of Abortion Rights.
The participants were then introduced to SRHR and why it is important to know SRHR as a whole stating the fact that the importance is given to Reproductive Health and Rights only. After that international documents that support the SRHR and right to Safe Abortion were listed out from ICPD, CEDAW and Beijing Platform to UNHCR. Following this document brief discussion on the Constitution of Nepal was introduced particularly on Right of women and Right to health and explained how this led to the formulation of "The Right to Safe Motherhood and Reproductive Health Act 2075." The safe Abortion policy under this document was briefly discussed and the session was ended with a reminder on the importance of this kind of policy and laws to step out into the community to perform advocacy on matter like Safe Abortion.

At the end of this session, the participants were encouraged to understand the importance of Abortion, but being Youth advocate acknowledging its importance is not enough, but the facts, proof, legal documents must be incorporated within Safe Abortion rights advocacy. Being youth advocate, we need to go through Constitution, know our rights, and should make aware of these rights to our society as a whole. We need to go through International documents as we can obtain logical ideas, experiences and other supportive tools to become a TRUSTED YOUTH.

**Session 4: Differences between Right based approach and Need based approach by Youth champion Pushpa Joshi**

Discussion also took place on difference between need-based approach and rights-based approach which are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Needs based approach</th>
<th>Rights based approach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May or may not be met</td>
<td>Enforceable by law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May fluctuate, can be arbitrarily decided or withdrawn Rights based approach</td>
<td>Not arbitrary but according to established principles and standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identified by provider – a client/ patron relationship is established</td>
<td>Are negotiated and the bearer of rights has a say. (E.g.: Doctor must understand their incompetence, and should refer to a more competent health professional)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May be reduced</td>
<td>Dynamic and open to expansion (not regression)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of benevolence</td>
<td>Fulfilled because there is a right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No consequences to the provider if not met</td>
<td>Consequences in terms of accountability to mechanisms and remedies for claiming rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-fulfillment becomes crucial only when needs of a large section of society are affected (e.g. Many deaths due to malnutrition, destruction of a huge number of homes due to earthquake)</td>
<td>Violation of a single individual’s rights is a wrong (single woman sent back without an abortion is a wrong)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Therefore, there is no bargaining, arbitrariness in Right based approach as it is based on standards and principles. Therefore, our Advocacy must be on the basis of Right based approach.

**Session 5: Gender and Sexuality by Queer rights activist Dipesh Shrestha**

Dipesh Shrestha is a young queer rights activist who has been actively engaging with the advocacy on QUEER rights in Nepal and also on SRHR and Sexuality. The main objectives of the session were to make the participants well informed about the various terminologies relating to sexual orientation, gender identities, queer rights so that participants can become very sensitive about the issue and inclusive in terms of language they use being a Youth Advocate.

Dipesh began the session by posing question to the participants who were divided into 4 groups:

1. What is QUEER?
2. What have you heard about QUEER?
3. What word comes into your mind when we talk about QUEER?
4. What do you expect from this session?

So, the answer by each group is as follows:

**Group 1:**
1. It is a special group where LGBTIQ is included.
2. QUEER means those who are attracted to both male and female
3. Confusion
4. To become familiar with technical term, understand policy

**Group 2:**
1. It is an umbrella term of LGBTIQ
2. Different group
3. Confusion, query, together
4. Explanation of technical term, Queer, SOGIE

**Group 3:**
1. Umbrella term
2. Unidentified gender, as a puzzle,
3. Umbrella, rainbow
4. To strengthen the knowledge and issue of terminologies

**Group 4:**
1. Group under gender minorities, having question with their own sexual orientation
2. Gender minority, anyone can be under this
3. Questioning character, third gender
4. Detail understanding with LGBTIQ, current scenario, legal provision, is it a problem being a Queer and what are the challenges

After listening to the answers by all the groups, the presenter added that, QUEER is an umbrella term, which is not used to denote heterosexual and cisgender. The presenter made participants clear on Lesbian, Gay, Transgender, GSM- Gender and Sexual Minority, SOGIE- Sexual Orientation Gender Identities and Expressions, MOGAI- Marginalized Orientation Gender Alignment and IntersexVariations. Dipesh explained about all the terminologies through the help of a diagram called gender bread. Our brain denotes our gender identity – what you identify being as? Our Heart denotes our sexual orientation – who you are attracted to? Your sexual preferences. Our genital organ denotes our biological sex – what you are born with? And at the end, our Gender Expression – what you express yourself as?

The presenter also talked about Gender fluid that means inconsistency in femininity and masculinity expression, the scale tends to fluctuate. The scale of masculinity and femininity sometimes goes up and sometime goes down and sometime becomes both or neither.

Hence, through this session, the participants learned about various terminologies related to queer movement and committed to be inclusive in the future advocacy programs.

**Session 6: Value Clarification by Youth champions Durga Sapota and Pushpa Joshi**

The session value clarification is one of the interesting and eye-opening sessions of the YAI where the participants challenges their values and have productive discussions on some of the difficult questions within the issue of abortion and sexuality. In the session, few sentences are displayed on the slides and the participants have to either agree or disagree with the statement; they also have to provide their opinion about the statement and a reason behind why they agree or disagree with that particular statement. Some of the sentences that were discussed thoroughly during the session are as follows:

a) A woman should stay with her husband even if he beats her, if he truly loves her.
   b) A sex worker cannot be raped
   c) Women who have HIV/AIDS should not have babies.
   d) Women who have an abortion are ending a life.
   e) Making abortions too easy will lead to more irresponsible sexual behavior.
   f) A woman should be able to have an abortion even if her husband wants her to continue the pregnancy.
   g) Choosing the sex of one’s child is a reproductive right

In this way, the session of value clarification was very helpful for the participants to become clear on the concepts of sexuality and abortion rights.
DAY 2

Session: Intersectionality walk

The second day of the workshop started with the INTERSECTIONAL WALK. The activity was led by youth champions Durga Sapkota and Pushpa Joshi. The main Objectives of this activity was to make the participants understand how a variety of social, cultural, and gender values both limit and enhance our life opportunities and outcomes and to make the participants realize on how it feels to stand in the shoes of someone whose life circumstances are very different from their own and to make them recognize that young people are not a homogenous population/group.

The participants were asked to stand shoulder to shoulder in a straight line. The participants were provided with small slip of papers, enough for all the participants. They had to read the cheat by themselves only. They had to follow the instruction as provided by the facilitator. The participants were asked not to tell anyone else what is written on their slip of paper. The participants were told that for this activity they will become the person who is described on the slip of paper they hold. After that, the facilitator read a series of instructions, and that the participants had to follow instructions according to the new identity on their slips and whether the instructions apply to them. The facilitator read a series of statements and told the participants that if the answer to the statements are yes, take a step forward and if it’s no, take a step backward. The entire walk would be done by the participants closing their eyes.

After all statements have been read, the participants were told to look around them and notice where they are standing in relation to others. The facilitator asked the participants following questions:

- You all started in the same place. How does it feel to be standing where you are?
- How do you feel about where you are standing, in relation to others?
- How do you feel about where others are standing, in relation to you?
- What are some of the factors that caused these differences? What role does gender play?
- Where you would you be standing in your real-life situations?

Some participants shared their experience as a person as written in the slip of paper. The participants who shared their experience also revealed their identity to the other participants. Later, all the participants revealed their identity.

While participants were remained in their locations, the facilitator pointed out that although they all started in the same place on the line, and although we may be taught to believe that all people are born equal, many factors influence the opportunities, successes, problems, and outcomes we experience in our lives. Because of social structures, including class and gender structures, some of us enjoy privileges that others do not enjoy. Life experiences and opportunities or disadvantages create huge disparities among various youth populations in terms of needs and desires, and interventions that are relevant to their circumstances.
Session: Reproductive Anatomy of Male, Female and Intersex people by Youth champion
Insha Poon

The first session began with the similarities and differences of male, female and intersex reproductive organs, along with the myths people heard related to it. The facilitator provided 4 metacards to the participant to outline their expectations from the session. After listing out them, the session started by setting out the main objectives such as:

| To introduce about basic embryology and development of male and female reproductive organs |
| For self-reflection |
| To ensure self-internalization |

The facilitator differentiated among male, female and intersex reproductive organ anatomically, while asked to prepare the diagram of the male and female reproductive organs using a chart paper where all the participants were divided into two group. They were given 10 minutes of time to complete, and one member presented on the assigned diagram while facilitator added up on the part which was missed and corrected the mistakes. After this, the presenter also showed a slide to clarify more about the parts of sex organs along with their functions.

Some of the myths discussed on the forum along with the clarifications from the facilitator countering those myths are stated as below:

- “The sex of a child is determined by the side of position that a female sleep after the sexual intercourse”  
  (This is not true, as the scientific process of fertilization and sex differentiation is solely based on the type of chromosomes that the fetus acquires from the male and female partner)
- Is the sex of child correctly defined using Chinese calendar?  
  (No, it is scientifically in explainable and that the scientific process of fertilization and sex differentiation is solely based on the type of chromosomes)

Hence, the participants learned about the anatomy of the male, female and intersex during this session.

Session: Menstruation and Menstrual Hygiene Management by Youth champion Neha Malla

Some of the major contents covered by the facilitators are:

- Menstrual cycle and its phases
- Hormones and their roles in the menstrual cycle
- Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM)
- Myths and taboos associated with menstruation
- Innovation in MHM Advocacy
Discussions in Details:

Part I: Menstruation
The facilitator briefly summarized the discussions in the previous session which was on Female reproductive system. She then went on to explain the different reproductive organs that play a role in the process of menstruation. She went on to explain the basic terms that are frequently used in the menstrual cycle and also the four major phases which are as follows:

- Menstrual flow
- Proliferative phase
- Ovulation
- Luteal phase

She also talked about the roles of the anterior pituitary hormones Follicle Stimulating Hormone (FSH) and Luteinizing Hormone (LH) as well as the sex hormones Estrogen and Progesterone, the roles they played and their levels in each phase of the cycle.

In addition to that, Neha explained about the length and the timing of the cycle and the other cyclic changes that take place in the female body simultaneously which were:

- Cervical mucus cycle
- Basal body temperature cycle

She ended the session on Menstruation by explaining about the Pre Menstrual Syndrome (PMS) and the mood fluctuations that are associated with it.

Part II: Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM)

The facilitator then shortly explained about the concept of Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM). The session discussed about the major key components in MHM and its importance in the lives of women and girls. She talked about access to menstrual hygiene products, availability of menstrual friendly infrastructure (toilets), safe and private disposal system of used menstrual hygiene products as well as reach of pain relief medication and services during menstruation. All these played a major role in attaining proper MHM as it affects the four major aspects of women’s lives which are as follows:

- Health
- Education
- Economics
- Dignity

Part III: Myths and Taboos

It was followed by the discussion about the different myths and taboos associated with menstruation in the Nepali community. In this part of the session, the facilitator asked all the participants to list down the major myths and taboos they themselves have experienced or seen being practiced on their houses and communities. She gave a time of 5 minutes to complete it
and then a representative from each table shared the myths and taboos. Some of the shared ones form the participants were as follows:

- A menstruating woman is considered impure and hence barred from entering the kitchen and worshipping/prayer room at homes.
- A menstruating woman is forbidden to touch foods, plants as it is believed that the plants will wilt and foods will get decayed after that.
- A menstruating woman is not permitted to touch a male member of the house/community as it was believed that she will get pregnant on physical contact with the males.
- A girl menstruating for the first time is compelled to live in a dark room and avoid sunlight as she has become impure.

The session was very interactive where the participants also shared about the practices of “Chau-Goth” in the western part of Nepal that is existent even today despite it being criminalized in 2017. This discussion ensured that they were able to bust some of the myths related to menstruation and then onwards advocate strongly against it.

**Part IV: Innovation in MHM Advocacy**

In the past part of the session, the facilitator explained about how the participants can bring in innovative ideas, ways or products for advocacy in MHM as Youth Champions form YoSHAN. She talked about community and target group appropriate advocacy methods and platforms that could work best for the flow of message on MHM and breaking the taboos associated with it. She then shared a real life example of the “Red Cycle Bracelet” form her organization SOCHAI, which has been a successful innovation in delivering MHM Advocacy to young girls across different communities to normalize menstruation as a natural process in young adolescents. The concept of innovation in MHM advocacy was well received by the participants.

**Session: Pregnancy and Contraception by Youth champion Kamala Bista**

The contents covered up by the facilitator in this session are-

- What is pregnancy
- How pregnancy occurs
- What is multiple pregnancy
- What prevents pregnancy
- What is contraception and its working mechanism

The facilitator explained her subject in a participatory method and she introduced participants with all family planning device and their working mechanisms. The participants got to know about all the modern contraceptive devices, their working mechanism, side effects, effectiveness and limitations. In this way, the participants became familiar with all the contraceptive devices during the session.
**Session : Overview upon Abortion by youth champions Garima Nepali**

In this session, the facilitator continued with the previous presentation, followed by what actually Abortion means. The facilitator then differentiated between "abortion and miscarriage" and clarified the doubts of the participants by guiding them on the criteria upon which Abortion is termed. The facilitator cleared the queries of participants on unsafe abortion related to trauma, then further explanation on the concept of unsafe abortion and its impact upon mortality and morbidity. Duration or gestational age of pregnancy was new term for the most of participants so this was clarified by the facilitator and the two major methods of abortion were discussed in detail – Surgical – Medical.

Then, facilitator provided in brief the status of women in Nepal with the help of NDHS (Nepal Demographic Health Survey 2016) data, to convey the status of women of reproductive age regarding the knowledge of abortion, knowledge about places providing safe abortion. Barriers and problems to access safe abortion were discussed briefly and actions to address these problems/barriers were discussed.

So, in this session, many of the participants put forward their queries on Abortion and its method that made the session more interactive, participatory and interesting.

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**Session : Abortion Law in Nepal and Asia by youth champion Bhuwan Raj Giri**

The facilitator before going directly into the topic, asked all the participants about their experience in this Local YAI. Then, some of the general questions regarding the knowledge of abortion law was asked to the participants. Facilitator Bhuwan briefly described how Bill becomes law so that participants could understand about ACT clearly. After that, Need of Abortion law and its importance in women’s life were thoroughly discussed in the forum. The facilitator explained the status of abortion law all around the world by the help of world map that showed which countries had adopted the progressive law as compared to others. Some country like Canada provided the services till they could save the life of women without any gestational limit while country like Sri Lanka only provide the service to save the life of women.

Then, all the participants were aware about the Abortion law in Nepal beginning from the history and the momentum of legalization and liberation of abortion law as presented in timeline by the facilitator. The case of Laxmi Dhikta and Manju Devi against Government of Nepal facilitated the inclusion of abortion in the constitution, included in reproductive act and fetus was not given validity as human life. Moreover, the easy accessibility of five modern contraceptives in all the health post was assured by the Government of Nepal.

Brief discussion about the Safe Motherhood and Reproductive Health Right Act-2075 and its elements along with the provisions also took place. Short discussion on the differences in the recent and previous law was covered up by the facilitator. With this, the facilitator gave a small group work, where each group were given time to decide among themselves about the major
The participants watched Achham Video in the first day, due to lack of time, the discussion on the same video was done in this session. Where all the participants explained what they have understood after watching the video. As per the observation from the participants, there is a lack of health facilities in remote districts like Achham. The participants also empathized with the women of the rural women who go through unsafe abortion.

After the discussion, it was remarked that Government must highlight these serious issues through the means of Radio, Television presenting the Risk of life of women in Achham and other rural areas like Achham which is still to be discovered.

Additionally, the causes of unwanted pregnancy was also listed out by the participants:

- Failure of contraceptive devices
- Rape and incest
- Sometimes the wanted pregnancy can also become unwanted pregnancy due to various life circumstances

Facilitator Pushpa added that no matter what is the cause of the abortion, the choice of the woman should be respected. She further added that if abortion is decriminalized, made accessible and stigma free, women will have safe abortion and if the abortion is restricted, more unsafe abortion will take place threatening the life of many women.

**Session: what does it mean by Pro-choice?**

Youth Champion Pushpa began the session by asking the participants about their understanding on the term “Pro-choice”. The participants answered, “The choice we take over our body”. The facilitator emphasized that Pro-choice means respecting the women’s right to choose. But if you are a pro-choice only for the choice that you think is right, you are not a true pro-choice. For example, if you are telling a woman that she is discriminatory for choosing male fetus over female, because she has no other option as she will have to face difficulties if she gives birth to a girl child, then you have to question your ideology. She also talked about the limited option women are given to choose. For example, some male partners of women are very violent and controlling that they do not let their partner use any contraception and refuses to use condom by himself; she never has the privacy to visit doctors too. The only option she is left with is keep
taking emergency contraceptive pills. Hence, we should never judge the person without knowing where they are coming from.

The facilitator Pushpa Joshi tried to differentiate the terminologies “Sex selection” and “Abortion” by saying that if women go for sex determination, does not mean that they will have abortion. For example, if a woman wants to have son and she goes for sex determination of the fetus, if she finds out that there is a male fetus, she will not terminate her pregnancy. Hence, all sex selection does not end with abortion; it also ends with not having an abortion. The facilitator also talked about antenatal and post-natal sex selection. The participants gave some examples of Post-natal sex selection as female infanticide, abandonment, massive and conscious neglect of girl child (no nutrition, no health care, no immunization) (the death rate of girl child is massively higher than the boy child) This is also sex selection. She further asked the reason behind abortion after the sex determination being very problematic. The participants’ answered few points:

- If abortion on the basis of sex determination is allowed, there will be more boys and the sex ration will be unequal.

The session discussed about the debate over natural and unnatural. She said that it is not necessary for everything to be natural for example, vaccination is not natural, contraception is not natural. We do so many things which are unnatural, then why do we need to have natural sex ratio by forcing a woman to have a girl child that she does not want? People might say that aborting a female fetus is discriminatory towards girl; but why do they want to have a girl child? So that they can have brides for the boys. It does not sound empowering to women. The patriarchy wants girls to get married. People do not want girls because they are girls, they want girls as brides for the boys.

Youth Champion Pushpa further added that the above argument of desiring equal sex ratio of males and females is very hetero-normative. By assuming that equal sex ratio of males and females is natural and perfect, we are excluding the population with diverse sexual orientation. Similarly, we are also assuming that everyone will marry, which might not be true. The facilitator emphasized that the problem is very deeply rooted to the patriarchy and the numbers will not solve the problem. She used the story of Birbal to clarify it. As per the story, the king Birbal searches for his lost ring under the lamp. One person also accompanies him and helps him the search the ring. They both become unable to find the ring and the person asks the Birbal whether he has lost his ring at the same place they have been searching, Birbal replies that he had lost his ring in some other place but it was too dark there so he searched for the ring under the lamp instead. Like this story, people are targeting the sex selective abortion because it is the easier one. Government does not want to control the social structure that encourages gender inequality but they want to control the women’s body because the later one is easier. The root problem is patriarchy and gender inequality which are in shadows and people do not want to talk about it because they cannot challenge it. She encouraged the participants to question everything and think from the different perspective.
In this way, the session provided a space for the participants for starting the conversation on the issues that has been in shadows for ages. The session facilitated the discourse on sex selection and abortion and convinced the participation that abortion cannot be viewed in isolation.

**Day 3**

The session of Day 3 of the local YAI revolved around building movement through effective communication and campaigns. The participants also prepared action plans to be implemented after the YAI and discussed the way forward. At the end, the three-day workshop was well celebrated among the youth champions.

**Session: Interpersonal Communication by youth champion Prabina Sujakhu**

The session was facilitated by the youth champion Prabina Sujakhu. The main objective of the session was to enhance the interpersonal communication of the youth champions so that they can be good advocates of SRHR.

As per the facilitator, interpersonal communication is any communication between two individuals. This may include phone calls, face to face communication. Common mode for communication could be verbal or non-verbal i.e. through messages, email, phone calls, letters or face to face.

Elements of interpersonal communication includes following:

- People
- Message
- Channel
- Noise
- Feedback
- Context
- Effect

**Activity: Chinese Whisper**

The participants were made engaged with the activity called “Chinese Whisper” to make them understand about how the interpersonal communication works and the elements of interpersonal communication. In the activity, the participants were asked to sit in the shape of ‘U’. The facilitator whispered a sentence to one of participants ear and the person had to pass the sentence to the other participant next to them through whisper. At the end, the participant who received the message last had to speak loud about when they heard. Usually the last receiver says the sentence which is completely different than the one heard from the first receiver. Through this
fun exercise, the participants made aware about how the messages could be manipulated with few hurdles. The facilitator also related the exercise with the advocacy on SRHR and stressed that the message should be short and simple.

Session: Social Media for advocacy by youth champions Shreejana Bajracharya and Pushpa Joshi

The session was facilitated by the youth champions Shreejana Bajracharya and Pushpa Joshi. In the session, the facilitators shared that social media can be effectively used for the purpose of advocacy. The facilitator also gave few examples of social media campaigns such as Metoo Movement, Arab spring and so on which had created a buzz all around the world. Few tools and techniques such as Canva, video editing tools were also demonstrated during the session. Similarly, discussion also took place on how we as youth advocates initiate social media campaigns to promote the cause that we are passionate about. Few examples of the previous social media campaigns initiated by Asia Safe Abortion Partnership and YoSHAN were shown through the slides. In addition, the participants were also made informed about the threats one can get while advocating in the online space and how to tackle such problems with various techniques and strategies.

Session: Digital Security by youth champion Pushpa Joshi

Following the session on social media advocacy, the facilitator shared some of the risks and threats while advocating online. To be safe from the online threats upto some extent, we can use some of the tools and techniques. The tools and techniques to be secure in online spaces was shared by the facilitators which includes, password storage software, changing passwords of the social media regularly, being aware about the social media privacy settings and so on. In this way, the session provided brief but important knowledge on online security to the participants.

Action Plan and Way Forward:

At the end of the workshop, all the participants were provided with a form to write down their plan of action that they would implement within a duration of a month. The action plan was to provide an opportunity for all the participants to share and implement their knowledge and skills among the community people.

Closing ceremony

At the end of the workshop, all the participants were felicitated with certificate of completion by one of the core team members of YoSHAN. The core team of YoSHAN congratulated and formally welcomed all in the team as Youth champions.