33rd Annual General Assembly and election of New Executive Board

On 6th Oct. 2017, Legal Aid and Consultancy Centre held its 33rd annual general assembly. Annual progress report along with audit report was distributed among the general members and presentation was made on the programmatic and financial transaction of various ongoing and phased out programs. Some queries were raised which were clarified through interactive discussion.

As this year was the final 3rd year of the previous executive board, an election was held for selection of the new board members. A new team of eight member Executive board is elected for next 3 year tenure.

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<th>Chairperson</th>
<th>Advocate Anita Neupane Thapalia</th>
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<td>Vice Chairperson</td>
<td>Prof. Savitri Malla</td>
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<td>Advocate Rabina Shrestha</td>
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Celebration of 31st LACC Annual Day

LACC celebrated its 31st annual day on 17th Aug. 2017 amongst its board members, well wishers and staffs. The chief guest of the program was current chief justice of Nepal, honorable Gopal Prasad Parajuli.

This year LACC has awarded ‘Dr. Shanta Thapalia women empowerment award’ to Ms. Chadni Joshi, an expert on Gender, Rights and Policy Specialist and Former Regional Director, UNIFEM - South Asia Regional Office. Likewise, Deputy Secretary Ms. Sunita Nepal from the Ministry of women Children and Social Welfare and S.P. Durga Singh from Nepal Police were awarded for their contribution in minimizing GBV in Nepal. Deputy Mayor of Lalitpur sub metropolitan city Ms Geeta Aryal was also honored for her victory in the local election and for her successful tenure. Advocate Anjana Neupane was provided with the best performance award from among the staffs of LACC for her tireless advocacy for women’s right.

This year LACC got this opportunity to congratulate former Chairperson Advocate Sadhana Shrestha, former Chairperson Prof.Dr. Shashi Adhikary Raut and former Board Member Advocate Sandhya Basnet were awarded as Senior Advocate by the Supreme Court of Nepal.
DPAC Meeting

District Project advisory committee meeting was held in Manbhwan Lalitpur with active participation of District Police, District coordination committee, District Administration office, Women and children office. During the meeting description of organizational activities, achievements and challenges were shared.

Extensive Activities:

Community Paralegal services for Legal Identity:

LACC has trained 40 paralegals in Jhapa and Kanchanpur districts that are providing door to door community paralegal services to obtain vital registration documents including birth registration, marriage registration, migration registration, divorce certificate and death certificate. From June to Dec. people received the certificate of their identity. In Nepal, still a large portion of the citizens are unregistered in the National registration process as its civilians. The marginalized and poor community people especially are unaware of the consequences of not having themselves legally register which often ends in denial of lawful access to education, employment other opportunities.

Mobile camps to deliver on spot vital registration:

Collaborating with the Government unit (Village Development Committee and district administrative office), LACC conducted 3 mobile camps in Jhapa and Kanchanpur districts. Altogether 207 people were benefitted by these mobile camps.

Paralegal trainings: To enhance the capacity of the local paralegals to handle legal identity cases of ultra poor and marginalized communities and contribute them to obtain their vital registration certificates, LACC organized trainings in Jhapa and Kanchanpur districts on 25-26 Nov. and 23-24 Dec.
respectively. Skill building sessions and capacity enhancement sessions were organized for the paralegals which included sessions on mediation, leadership and communication. The paralegals were introduced to the new federal structure and roles of various government authorities and the facilitation role of paralegal in making accessible justice for all. They were introduced to the concept of ‘seed money’ and its use for economical empowerment which enhanced financial literacy of the paralegals.

A sharing meeting between paralegals on the challenges they face while working in the community. It provided a platform to share, mitigate and learn from each other while facilitating the process of acquiring vital registration documents along with citizenship certificate.

People are attracted more towards social security scheme provided by government. An old woman with her family making her citizenship at the age of 75, to get the ‘old age allowance’ provided by the government.

**Continuation of Legal Desk for free legal aid services**

In the premises of women and children office at Sindhupalchok and Kavrepalanchowk districts, LACC is providing free assistance to the disaster affected women and SGBV survivors to get their rights in the post earthquake context. This legal desk supported women and survivors of earthquake with the free legal aid including paralegal, litigation, and referral services.

Social inequity, lack of social justice and rule of law mingled up with deficient gender friendly legal aid mechanism has affected the live of women in particular. Thus, LACC is continuing the service of legal aid through Legal Desk.
Training to the local level disaster risk management unit

Capacity building trainings are provided to the Local level disaster Risk management committees (LDRMC) of Kavrepalanchwok. After earthquake, Nepal Government had formed local disaster risk management committee from each district’s VDC and municipality through local level for disaster management. Even though government initiated that scheme, there was no proper flow of information about work and rights/responsibility to contribute in local level by the LDRMC group form committee. Similarly, there was no any training and capacity accretion for the disaster management to the LDRMC group. They were directly sent to work not even providing simple information which led to misapprehension. Without capacity accretion there was difficulty for disaster management. In order to increase the capacity, projects were initiated followed by LDRMC group capacity buildings training design with project preparation. Two trainings were conducted in Kavrepalanchwok district. During the training period it was observed that majority of the LDRMC members were involved in social service in local level, but they were not clear about the own roles and responsibilities in disaster management. After the training, the particular group learned about disaster in detail. They also learned about their responsibilities before disaster and after disaster. They also acquired skills for realizing their own roles in disaster management. There was result of capacity acceleration to make plans regarding risk reduction followed by local level risk mapping for disaster management.

Training to the newly elected ‘local Judicial Committee’ of 12 municipalities/rural municipalities of Sindhupalchok district

LACC organized the very first one training of this kind for the judicial committees of Sindhupalchowk district. The new constitution of Nepal has provided an ample power to the newly elected members of local level to handle legal problems. Under the New constitution of Nepal Local level government laws were issued but guidelines are still not issued. This committee can play direct role to formulate new laws and guidelines concern in their local level. This committee can solve the legal problem through mediation and also make verdict or order. These committees are judicial body in local level or quasi-judicial body of government. But these political leaders are totally raw in legal field and they are not aware about their role and responsibility, the judicial process.

The 3 member judicial committee includes elected municipality’s vice president along with other 2 elected members in the judicial committee. The people of judicial committee are appointed from the political background so they don’t have any proper judicial
knowledge. Even though there has been provision of local government operation act there is no manual set up and guidelines. This had resulted in difficulties and confusions for members of the committee about what should be done to the complaints filed. For eliminating this confusions and creating a smooth judicial administration, role of judicial committee, procedures to be followed for judicial representations, way of writing judgments, 3 days training program was conducted by LACC. 36 local judicial members out of 12 local bodies of Sindhupalchowk district are trained. The training was successful in terms of its ability to capacitate the local judicial members on the judicial processes, legal knowledge and also to make them able to realize how sensitive one should be while deciding cases.

**Coordination meetings between District disaster risk management committee and local disaster risk management committee**

Coordinating within the Government formed mechanisms at different level is usually lacking in Nepalese context. Weak stipulation of knowledge management, sharing and flow of information cause hindrance at working stage. Thus, to make coordination between DDRMC and LDRMC coordination meeting is held in both the district. The platform provided an opportunity to clarify; update, share gaps and challenges between the committees and it also encouraged the committees to work in coordination.

**Outreach program for awareness**

For the marginalized and backward communities LACC has organized mobile camps with immediate legal counseling services. The objective of such outreach programs are to inform the remote population of the reconstruction, relief and rebuilding programs run by the Government of Nepal and LACC's free legal service which ultimately support to access rights/justice especially of vulnerable communities.
Advocacy Workshop on ‘will system and its effect on women's property right’

On 13th and 16th Sept. 2017, workshops were organized in Kaski and Banke district among the various stakeholders including representatives from high court and district court, NHRC, government authorities from local level, women and children service centre, Nepal police, Bar Association, Journalist, lawyers, women’s activist and representatives from different civil society organizations.

The program was organized on the issue "Civil code 2071-The effects brought by will system on women's property right". The provision of proposed bill in chapter 11 states "any one at the age of 18 with full conscious could make will paper on property of possession, ownership of rightful property to transfer after death to another person to posses, by hand overing at free will." This new provision have adverse effect on women's property right obtained after long struggle for equal of daughter as son to ancestral property which had been guaranteed through the 11th amendment of civil code 2020 B.S. In article 18 (5) of the new constitution of Nepal 2072, there is the provision that there shall be equal right in ancestral property without gender discrimination. Similarly, in article 38(6) there shall be equal right of married couple on the matters related to property and family under fundamental rights.”

The programs were targeted on the issue of will system. If the proposed law is applied, as the society is patriarchic, people would make will paper to make women deprived of property right. The participating stakeholders provided mixed response on the issue. Whereas representatives from organization working in sector of women's right were not in the favor of the will system. They would even suppress the issue by various programs. According to them before applying the will system, enough infrastructure should be developed like education at free of cost and guarantee of employment. Women's are deprived from legal rights just because there may arise the condition of giving property to women even after their marriage.

Free Legal Aid services

As an integral part of LACC, free legal aid is provided to the most marginalized and vulnerable women and children. 663 cases are provided with legal aid services through various programs.

LACC has been providing legal counseling to its clients as the firsthand service. When the client visits LACC for legal the support, after hearing their story, the trained lawyers provide legal counseling. Legal options are explained to the client and clients are asked to decide which option they would prefer to solve their problem. Client’s decision and consent is taken to take the case forward for solution through various means including paralegal services, mediation services and legal representation in courts.

1145 Hot line - Serving as a legal aid provider in hot line established by National Women Commission

LACC is providing legal aid and legal related services along with basic legal counseling services to the identified survivors of GBV referred cases through the helpline established at NWC. It mainly focuses on the women, children and marginalized population who are survivors of gender discrimination and defend for their rights. From Nov 2017 to Jan 2018, 54 cases has been provided with legal counseling services among which 41 cases has been registered in various courts of Nepal.
LACC - mediation center

LACC has registered itself as mediation centre, from now onwards; LACC is an authentic institution for settling disputes through mediation of cases.

Kick-off Meeting to explore and promote the projects and initiative to combat GBV among youth across world

In support of EACEA (Educational, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, acting under powers delegated by the European Commission), LACC is working on yet one new initiative to decrease GBV in Nepal.

This is an initial meeting between six countries; i.e Nepal, India, Bangladesh, Madagascar, Spain and Greece was held from 9th to 13th in Lalitpur district, Nepal. The meeting was geared to - to share plan for leading the project to a successful completion, to energize group, to set proper expectations and to establish guidelines that will help us complete project on time and within budget.
Study visit in Spain for Capacity Building Activities and Mobility

To strengthen the capacity of the participants from six countries working for reducing GBV, a sharing program through peer-review and mutual learning activities and in order to share good practice and lessons learned from experiences, the study visit is organized.

The study tour provided participants with an insight of how key institutions and specialized services work in the field of violence against women in Spain, and exchange of information on best practices mainly based on non formal working methods in the field.

It also promotes the understanding of several practices and policies in different countries and organizations, and motivates workers in the area of youth to give a response to the needs of the disadvantages that women are suffering and setting strategy for further development.
Gender & Protection in Recovery and Reconstruction, Humanitarian Program

LACC in close coordination and consultation with Oxfam team has developed the tools and learning materials. Detail content on legal documents (citizenship, vital registrations, role & responsibilities of local government under new federal system) has been developed. Likewise, training manual on ‘women leadership’ has been revised integrating information on women representation under new federal system and new constitution. Similarly citizen charter has also been developed on issues of citizenship, vital registrations, role & responsibilities of local government under new federal system.

Facilitated various NGOs on legal issues concerning citizenship and vital registration

LACC has facilitated training on "vital registration and citizenship" for local partners of Oxfam and gender officers in Gorkha, Nuwakot, Dhading, Kathmandu, sindhupalchowk districts. LACC has provided support to local partners with necessary actions to be taken regarding the referral cases for legal aid, to obtain/process legal documents (citizenship certificate and vital registration).

Facilitated Training program on Combating Trafficking in person.

LACC facilitated a two days two “Capacity Building on Anti Human Trafficking in Person" for Women empowerment group (Worth group) of Hamro Sajhedari project at Banke District. Altogether 63 members had actively participated. Main objective of the training was to sensitize the worth members and make aware on human trafficking issue and strengthen their capacity to reduce and control the risk of human trafficking in community.
Participated on Legal Empowerment program in Thailand

The Centre for Peace and Justice of BRAC University, in close collaboration with the Open Society Justice Initiative, ‘Asian Leadership Colloquium on Legal Empowerment and Access to Justice’ was held in Bangkok, Thailand.

The colloquium brought together the leadership of legal empowerment organizations across Asia to discuss the state of legal empowerment in various countries, particularly the challenges faced by such organizations. The colloquium was also focused on the issue of sustainability of legal empowerment organizations and explored innovative sources of revenue, which will make such organizations less dependent on external sources of funding. The three-day event also explored the strengthening and promotion of paralegalism in order to enhance access to justice across Asia.