

ELEVENTH ANNUAL BUDDHIST NUN'S EMPOWERMENT PROGRAM

1st July – 7th July, 2019

Kathmandu, Nepal

The eleventh Annual Buddhist Nun's Empowerment Program was held from 1st July to 7th July at Keydong Thukche Choeling Nunnery, Kathmandu, Nepal. The seven days Gender Sensitization and leadership training was attended by 36 nuns. The focus of the training was on Gender, Conflict Resolution, Communication Skills development and leadership skills.

Pre-Training Preparations:

TWA coordination team after discussing with the abbot of Keydong Thukche Choeling Nunnery decided to carry on with the training in the first week of July. The nuns had to observe fasting for about half a month in June and July was appropriate time for them. After rigorous discussion amongst ourselves and with the coordinator from the nunnery, we decided to keep duration of the training/workshop not more than a week. The nuns have exams coming up and some of the nuns who are participating in our workshop/training have to appear in the preliminary Geshema exam. If we extend the duration of training beyond first week of July, we were informed that it will be really hard for the students to adjust.

Our Project Officer then designed the tentative schedule of the training accordingly. It was in our plan to organize yoga sessions for nuns in the morning but we weren't able to because the coordinators from the nunnery informed us that the nuns have to wake up from 4:30 am for prayer session and self study. The morning, before breakfast and evening, after the training/workshop is their exam prep time. Even though we could only design the training for no longer than a week, we don't want them to miss anything important so we worked hard to include as much as we can within the week long. We decided to keep this training comprehensive yet effective. Considering the hectic schedule of the nuns at the nunnery because of their upcoming exams and the availability of limited number of days, in this 11th BNEP, we included Gender Sensitization training, Communication and Leadership Skills training and Conflict Resolution Training.

Our project officer talked with the resource person. The team then readied the travel and accommodation for both the organizers and trainers. Our Research & Media Officer Ms. Tenzin Choyang la designed the standee and banner for the program as well as ID cards, certificates, notebooks for the organizers, trainers and participants.

The trainers left for Nepal on 28th evening, reached Delhi on 29th morning and left for Nepal on 29th itself. The organizers reached the destination on 29th evening. On 30th, the organizers went to purchase stationary and training kits.

The training was held from 1st to 7th July, 9:00 am to 5:00 pm.

1st July, 2019

Registration, Opening Ceremony and Welcome Dinner:

The organizers set up the workshop/training venue. Banners were put up; mikes and sound system were set. Laptop and projector were installed. The participants' sittings were arranged. The participants were then made to register and during the registration, they were each provided with their ID cards. They were each provided a file with necessary stationery kit inside.

The opening ceremony/ Orientation round was held in the afternoon, attended by the 36 participants along with the abbot and principal of the nunnery. The vice-president of TWA, Kalsang Youdon la talked about our association, its aims and objectives and our multiple campaigns and activities. It was followed by introduction and aims of BNEP by our project officer Tenzin Khando. Our General Secretary, Dolma Tsering la talked to them about what to expect from this training for the upcoming week.

The coordinators then organized a welcome dinner for the participants. The sole purpose of the welcome dinner was for the participants to feel at ease with the organizers, trainers and their peers during the training. Only if they are comfortable with the surrounding will they be able to learn and absorb the knowledge imparted.



2nd July, 2019

Gender Sensitization, Tenzin Khando

The second day of the training was led by our Project Officer Tenzin Khando. She started the session with an Ice Breaking session with the participants. For the Ice Breaking session, the participants had to attach an adjective in front of their name while introducing themselves. It was a fun session, to make each other know better as well as lighten the mood in the room.

After the Ice Breaking session, Tenzin Khando started the Gender session with the difference between Gender and Sex. This session enabled the participants to reflect on their understandings of sex and gender and to increase the comfort level of the participants with other issues. They were distributed cards with statements on men and women and were asked them to read aloud and decide which statement denotes characteristics/behaviors based on sex and which are socially constructed.

After that, Tenzin Khando listed out common articles, roles and activities. The names of each article, role and activity were called out and the participants were asked whether it belongs to a man or a woman. The responses of the participants were discussed. This exercise revealed how our association with articles and activities is reflective of gender and how it could be different in different socio-cultural contexts.

The participants were then divided into groups of five. They were told to enact men and women in different scenarios. It helped participants identify and understand the differential behavioral norms ascribed to men and women. The participants then broke for lunch.



After lunch, Tenzin Khando led a session on Gender Stereotypes. She narrated a story and asked the participants to identify which of the character in story is male and which one is female. They

were asked to substantiate their choice with concrete example of associative qualities assigned to men and women and how that influenced their decision. Through this activity, they understood the stereotyping of female and male qualities and gender biases in them.

The participants were then divided into two groups and they were each given charts, papers and pens. One group has to write comments to indicate how one is supposed to 'Act like a lady' and the other group has to write comments to indicate how one is supposed to 'Be like a man'. The differences in stereotypes and consequences of breaking the norms for girls and boys were discussed. This activity increased the awareness of female/ male stereotypes.



3rd July, 2019

Gender Sensitization, Tenzin Khando

The second day of the Gender Sensitization Training started with the recap of yesterday's training. After the recap, the participants were each distributed a piece of paper on which they have to write why they are glad that they are woman and why they sometimes wish they were a man. The participants were asked to discuss the responses in groups of three and identify the differences and similarities in their responses. This activity provided an opportunity to express some of the feelings of our own sex roles assumptions.



The participants were then asked to form a circle, were told that they are going to construct biographies of two imaginary people, the king and the queen. A ball was given to a single participant, she was asked to throw it quickly to anyone in the group. The person catching the ball has to say something about the life of the queen and the person then throws the ball to another participant. In this way, as the ball passes hands, a story is built, based on the life of the king and queen by reversing their roles and qualities. This exercise will reveal how difficult it is for some of the participants to reverse qualities and roles of men and women. Changing in existing roles is found

to be uncomfortable and funny. It is established at the end that in reality, both men and women are found to have a combination of so-called 'masculine' and 'feminine' qualities.

Afterwards, the participants were asked to speak out on whatever comes to their minds when they think of violence against men and violence against women. They were asked to recognize the differences in violence against men and women. The many forms of Gender-based violence were highlighted and the damaging effects of it were examined.

The participants were then told to reflect on the lives of their grandmother, mothers, and their own. They were asked to focus on whether they have observed any changes between the roles their grandmothers played, and their mothers. This exercise establishes the fact that gender is a social construction, which can and does change over time.



The two days training was concluded with recap of everything they have learnt so far.

4th July, 2019

9:00 am – 12:00 pm

Leadership, Kalsang Youdon

Kalsang Youdon started the session with introduction to the term leadership. She provided definition of what is leadership and talked in detail of the characteristics of leadership. She then showed the participants animations and short clips to show how a leader should be and how a leader should act.

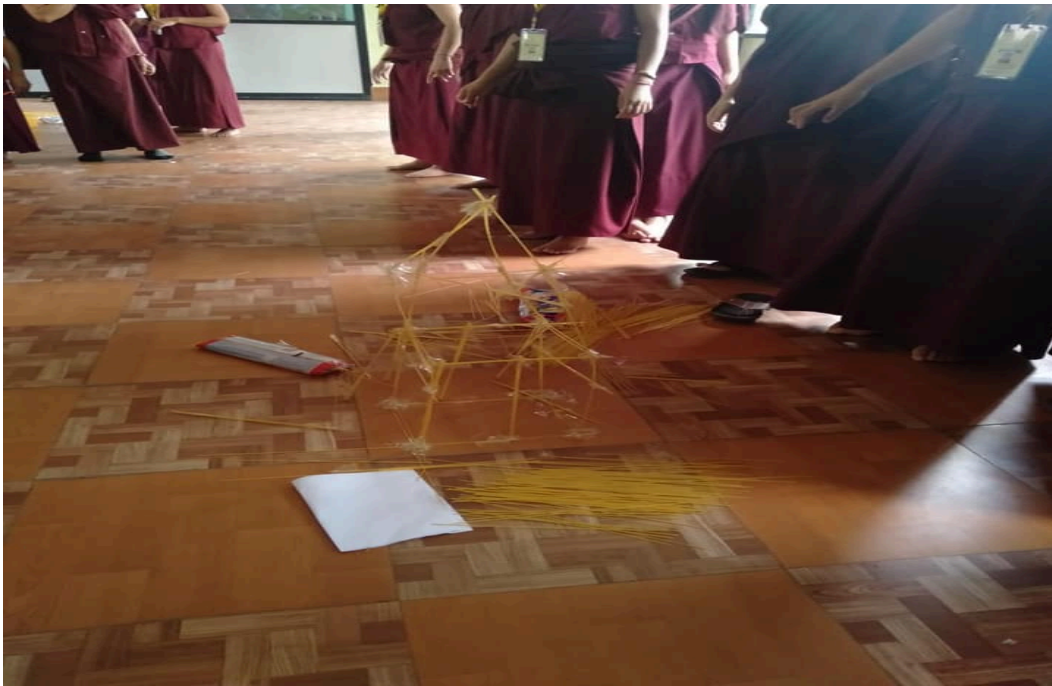


She carried on with two activities for the participants for them to understand the concept of leadership. For the first activity, the participants were divided into groups. An individual from each group was appointed as leader from that group. The leader has to pair members of the group and then put a balloon between them and then all the groups has to walk and cross the finishing line without members dropping the balloon under the guidance of the team leader. Again, for the second activity, the participants were divided into groups and the papers were laid out in a single line in front of them with little gap in between. The leader had to lead the group and the group had to follow the leader without stepping foot outside the paper. Such activities made the participants realize characteristics of leadership.

She then did a power point presentation on history of women leaders in political, social and economic sphere and showed how women are more than capable of becoming great leaders with great influence.

She then again carried on with activities. The participants were yet again divided into groups, Each group was given a pack of noodle out of which they have to build a tower as tall as they can. This activity was followed by another activity where the group had to stick as many paper as

they can between two people. Such activities demonstrated the idea of teamwork and team building where a group of people are working together effectively as a team through motivation, creativity and cooperation.



She concluded the session by differentiating between leader and boss.

2:00 pm- 5:00 pm

Communication Skills, Dolma Tsering

The afternoon session was led by Dolma Tsering la. She explained to the participants in detail about what communication is and the process of communication. She then talked to them about Effective Communication which is more than just exchanging information. After this, she talked to them about communication barriers to effective communication; about what is stopping us from communicating effectively. It was followed by talk on effective communication skills. She played “Chinese Whisper” with the participants to demonstrate the idea of effective communication. After this activity, all the participants were paired into two. They were given a paper with a drawing on it. The pair had to sit with their back on each other. The person with the drawing has to describe the drawing in detail to the other and the other had to draw it.



Later, she talked to them in details about the different types of communication focusing both on Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication. It was followed a game. The participants were divided into four groups. All the participants had to face backward except for the person on the front. She did an act which has to be done by the first person and to be shown to the next person in line. The last person on the line had to guess the act. This game was for them to realize the importance of effective non-verbal communication.



She then carried on her session with talk on Active Listening. She played 'Stop-Go' game to allow them to realize the importance of Active Listening.

5th & 6th July, 2019

Conflict Resolution, Karma Lekshay and Sonam Wangchuk

The fourth and fifth day of the training was led by Karma Lekshay la and Sonam Wangchuk la from Tibetan Centre for Conflict Resolution on Conflict Resolution. The session started with providing an overview of how we can categorize conflict. The participants were informed about the meaning of conflicts; roots of conflicts and how it affects relationship. Through various group as well as individual activities, the participants are made to recognize that to prevent further conflicts; one must not only resolve present conflicts but also mend the relationship.

They were then informed of multiple ways to resolve conflicts and how one should learn to listen with body, speech and mind. It was a session of active interaction between the trainers and participants as well as amongst participants. They were divided into groups and were made to stage a play displaying different levels of conflicts and also on how conflicts escalate and how to stop it from escalating further.





The trainers made sure that students engage in the training. Rather than explaining and informing only through speech, explanations are done through power point presentation and physical activities. The trainers also pointed out the positive aspects of conflicts when people generally view it negatively.

The session ended with the trainers training the participants about the dangers of stereotypes and how to dismantle it through exploring.

7th July, 2019

Farewell & Certificate Distribution Ceremony:

After successfully completing the training, we held farewell ceremony. During the farewell ceremony, our Vice President Kalsang Youdon la and our Joint Secretary Dolma Tsering la gave a thank you speech. It was followed by certificate distribution to all the participants and then the farewell ceremony was concluded by speech from the abbot of the monastery.



After the farewell ceremony, we had feedback session from the participants. The most common feedbacks received are:

- They learned something different and along with that they gained clear perception of topics new which were new to them.
- Most of the trainings were active training with participatory method implemented. They felt that the participatory training method implemented by the trainers were more effective as they were never once felt bored.
- They felt that the topics of the training/workshop are very relevant to them and that's why they felt the training has been really helpful.
- Most of them felt that the Gender Training was something which was fresh for them and they find the training really effective and felt it was much needed.

After the feedback session, we organized games for the participants and after that they were treated with a special lunch.

Conclusion:

The workshop was successfully concluded. The participants engaged thoroughly throughout the week. They were all very inquisitive and eager to learn which helped the trainers to facilitate the workshop better. We are extremely satisfied with the participation level of all the 36 nuns. We genuinely feel that this workshop has helped the participants immensely. We want to thank Science Meets Dharma for continuing to support this project and for enabling us to work towards the benefit and betterment of the society.