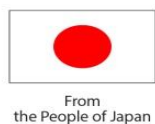




WORKSHOP REPORT

National Workshop on SDGs and ICPD 30 Commitments for Parliamentarians of Nepal

February 22, 2025, Kathmandu, Nepal



INTRODUCTION

National Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (NFPPD) in collaboration with Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (AFPPD) convened a day long National Workshop on SDGs and ICPD 30 Commitments on February 22, 2025 in Kathmandu, Nepal.

The workshop provided an opportunity for parliamentarians to review Nepal's progress in SDGs and ICPD agenda while building an informed and more committed group of parliamentarians willing to work toward through actual actions in policies, legislations, and budgeting.

OBJECTIVES OF THE WORKSHOP

The objectives of the workshop were as follows:

- To enhance the parliamentarians understanding of the SDGs in relation to the ICPD agenda focusing on national commitments and priorities;
- Build consensus around sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), aiming to create tangible national outcomes in policy development, funding allocation and accountability mechanisms to support the ICPD agenda and sustainable development goals;
- Facilitate discussions on identifying key legal and policy priorities necessary to advance the ICPD agenda and align national legislation with global commitments, particularly in response to changing population trends; and
- To expand the pool of parliamentarians/ champions who have sufficient knowledge and support the ICPD agenda.

Altogether 62 participants attended the workshop including parliamentarians, Ministry officials, experts/resource persons, UNFPA representatives, AFPPD representative, civil society representative (Y-PEER Nepal), and NFPPD members and staff.

INAUGURAL SESSION

NFPPD Secretary Hon. Parshuram Tamang opened the program with brief overview of NFPPD's works and the context of holding this workshop. Dr. Bhisma Nath Adhikari, Vice Chairperson of NFPPD highlighted the objective of the workshop stated that NFPPD has been working closely with UNFPA, AFPPD and key stakeholders since its inception, shaping policies on population dynamics, women's health, and reproductive rights. Following the promulgation of the Constitution in 2015, NFPPD raised important women's rights issues that required legislative action. Additionally, NFPPD led a pressure campaign to ensure recognition of these rights. NFPPD also actively engaged with parliamentary committees and participated in parleys with lawmakers, influencing the formulation of laws that have improved family planning, reproductive health, and women's rights, said Dr. Adhikari.

Ms. Hitomi Tsunekawa, Representative of AFPPD spoke about the Japan Parliamentarians Federation for Population, which was established 51 years ago and has been instrumental in creating a network of parliamentarians. She highlighted how Japan's efforts to recover from the 2011 earthquake demonstrated the country's commitment to peace and development. Ms. Tsunekawa shared that policies and budgets are focused on addressing gaps, particularly for underserved populations like women. She urged the parliament of Nepal to take further action that would have a significant impact, noting that issues such as sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR) and biodiversity are becoming increasingly challenging. She emphasized the importance of discussions like these within the global network to foster idea exchange and collaboration.



Ms. Won Young Hong, Country Representative, UNFPA Nepal (L) Ms. Hitomi Tsunekawa, Representative, AFPPD (R)

Ms. Won Young Hong, Country Representative, UNFPA Nepal highlighted Nepal's remarkable progress since being party to ICPD, particularly in education, healthcare, and advancing women's rights. She presented a grim figure that said despite Nepal progress in reducing maternal mortality rate (MMR) still two women are dying every day is a matter of serious concern. She stated that despite laws criminalizing child marriage, weak enforcement allows the practice to persist depriving many girls of their childhood. It is a matter of concern that many lawmakers fail to uphold these laws within their own constituencies, further hindering progress. Ms. Hong mentioned that as Nepal moves toward middle-income status, declining international funding and slow domestic revenue growth pose as financial challenges. Strengthening domestic financial resources is crucial for ensuring long-term and sustainable development. This transition also presents an opportunity for Nepal to become more self-reliant.

Minister for Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation Hon'ble Badri Prasad Pandey, in his inaugural speech reflected on the journey of policy discourse of population and development Nepal beginning around 2013 after the Constituent Assembly (CA). Minister Pandey who is also the former Vice Chair of NFPPD, referred to the formation of NFPPD as a loose framework to fulfill the mandate of ICPD which has had a direct impact on policymaking, influencing the government, parliament, and various parliamentary committees where health and population related issues were pushed forward. Hon'ble Minister Pandey referred to the progress made

citing the UNFPA Country Representative's remarks about the importance of addressing issues head-on, rather than "wiping dirt beneath the carpet". The Minister also highlighted improvements in women's representation, with 33% in the federal and provincial parliaments and 40% in local governments. He highlighted that the renewed ties between NFPPD and AFPPD will serve as key mechanisms for advancing population issues on international platforms. Citing Nepal as an example of how balancing population dynamics with geography can drive development, he stressed that with majority youth population, Nepal is in a key phase to reap the benefits of youth population where we can shape them for better future.



From L to R , NPC Vice Chair Prof. Dr. Shiva Raj Adhikari, NFPPD Founding Chair Mahalaxmi Upadhaya 'Dina', Minister for Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation Hon. Badri Prasad Pandey, NFPPD Chairperson Hon. Yogendra Chaudhary, and Ms. Won Young Hong, Country Representative, UNFPA Nepal

NFPPD Chairperson Yogendra Chaudhary delivering vote of thanks emphasized the importance of turning discussions into action. He acknowledged Nepal's progress in population and development and its alignment with the SDGs. However, he stressed that more effort is needed, particularly on sensitive issues to ensure sustainable growth and social equity. He concluded by thanking participants and expressing optimism for continued efforts toward achieving Nepal's population and development targets.

PRESENTATIONS

There were four presentations by the experts on four different topic including Policy and Development Planning, Implementation of International Commitments, Financing for Population and Health Programs and Addressing Population Dynamics and Policy Responses.

Each topic aligned with a key aspect of Nepal's population and development agenda paving the way for comprehensive approach to policy discussions among the parliamentarians.

Session 1: Overview of the ICPD and SDG Goals

The session was chaired by Hon. Mahalaxmi Upadhyay 'Dina' Founding Chairperson of NFPPD

Presentations

1. Navigating Nepal's Policy Priorities amid Emerging Demographic Shifts: A Focus on the 16th Periodic Plan, SDG Goals, and Achievements in Nepal's Transition to a Middle-Income Country - presented by Hon. Prof. Dr. Shiva Raj Adhikari, Vice-Chair, National Planning Commission
2. Taking Stock of ICPD+30 Progress: Parliamentarians' Role in Implementing the ICPD and 2030 Agenda and Ensuring ICPD Commitments in National Policies – presented by Advocate Purna Shrestha

Prof. Adhikari's presentation provided an in-depth overview of Nepal's 16th Periodic Plan, detailing its formulation process and key priorities. He mentioned that the government's plan is designed to ensure inclusive development, where the benefits of developments reach all citizens. The plan follows a thematic and sector-wise approach, built around 13 key themes that drive Nepal's long-term growth strategy. This plan as Prof. Adhikari mentioned that it underscores the importance of strengthening the informal economy, increasing productivity, and expanding economic opportunities. In terms of development priorities, Nepal's maternal mortality rate (MMR) remains a significant concern, with the goal of achieving 41% progress by 2030 while keeping MMR below 60%. The country's financial strategy involves 58% funding from the government.

Prof. Adhikari highlighted a major need to focus on integrated planning, which aims to enhance coordination among ministries, preventing duplication and ensuring that different sectors work in synergy. Other measures include:

- Strengthening collaboration among federal, provincial, and local governments.
- Investing in education, healthcare, and skill development to maximize human potential.
- Ensuring sturdy yet flexible urban development strategies.
- Advancing Nepal's transition to a middle-income country.
- Aiming for size of economy of NRs. 100 trillion under the 16th Plan.
- Enhancing global partnerships and economic cooperation.
- Balancing national development goals with SDG indicators to ensure sustainable and inclusive growth.

Advocate Shrestha in her presentation stated that Nepal made progress in reproductive health and rights, but legal enforcement, awareness, and access to services remain crucial for achieving ICPD and SDG goals by 2030.

Advocate Shrestha suggested key measures to be advocated by the parliamentarians in meeting Nepal's SDG and ICPD goals, highlighted Nepal's current status.

- As part of Nepal's commitments to the ICPD and SDG agenda, it has set ambitious targets, including reducing the Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) to 70 per 100,000 live births by 2030 keeping gender equality at focus and ensuring access to essential reproductive health services to all.

- Nepal’s approach to reproductive health policy improved after it focused from the population control toward a rights-based framework. The Interim Constitution 2007 formally recognized reproductive rights as fundamental human rights is one of the milestones.
- Raising legal marriage age and expanding access to contraceptives marked critical progress in ensuring reproductive autonomy.

Suggestive measures:

- The effective legal enforcement of reproductive rights, with ongoing debates on abortion laws, especially concerning pregnancies up to 28 weeks.
- The role of private clinics in reproductive healthcare also requires better regulation to ensure ethical medical practices.
- Child marriage persists as a social issue, prompting discussions on shifting its legal definition from “improper customary practice” to a “Criminal Offense”.



Hon. Prof. Dr. Shiva Raj Adhikari, Vice Chair, NPC (L) and Advocate, Ms. Purna Shrestha (R)

Session 2: Demographic Processes and Population Dynamics

The session was chaired by Hon. Bhagabati Neupane, Member of the National Assembly and Treasurer of NFPPD

Presentations

1. Strengthening Parliamentary Action for SRHR Financing in Nepal: Advancing the ICPD Agenda and Achieving the SDGs – presented by Dr. Balkrishna Subedi, Former Chief, Planning and Policy Section, Ministry of Health and Population
2. Population Dynamics in Nepal: Migration, Aging, Infertility, and Urbanization – The Role of Parliamentarians in Shaping Responsive Policies - presented by Mr. Dhundiraj Lamichhane, Deputy Chief Statistician, National Statistics Office

Dr. Subedi began the session by emphasizing Nepal's commitment to the ICPD Agenda and the Nairobi Summit's 'Three Zeros' - Zero unmet need for contraception, Zero preventable maternal deaths, and Zero gender-based violence. This served as a curtain-raiser for parliamentarians, providing a clear understanding of mandates in advancing SRHR. Key highlights of his data-based presentation provide insight into Nepal's current status in reproductive health. Some of his statistics were alarming, such as 17% of adolescent girls (15-19 years old) being pregnant or having already given birth and 18% of women of reproductive age suffering from malnutrition. Likewise, 35% of women suffer from anemia, while more than 29% of married adolescent girls lack knowledge about SRH services and around 10% suffer from uterine prolapse.

The key driving forces behind the challenges in reproductive health include a weak healthcare system, inadequate budget allocation, and slow implementation with a lack of accountability. Weak regulation, limited access to services, and deep-rooted cultural and social norms, stigma and discrimination are also top contributors to these challenges.

Recommendations:

- Advocate for resource allocation to address challenges in SRHR.
- Monitor the status of sexual and reproductive health services and hold discussions on targets, progress, and action plans.
- Discuss implementation status of Nepal's international commitments in various parliamentary committees.
- Initiate coordinated efforts among all three tiers of government for effective service delivery.

Mr. Lamichhane's presentation provided key insights into Nepal's population dynamics, emphasizing the evolving demographic trends revealed by the National Census 2021 and the impact of COVID-19 on development indices.

Gaps in the working-age population have raised concerns, as highlighted by the 2011 census pyramid, necessitating urgent policy interventions. The focus is now shifting towards increasing the population while ensuring a balanced ratio of children and the elderly to reduce dependency burdens. The mountains and hills require better population management, rapid urbanization in the Terai has introduced challenges in ensuring quality living standards. He mentioned that 30-year population projection is currently underway, analyzing trends across all age groups, particularly the returning migration trend, to guide long-term policies.

The presentation further highlighted Nepal facing a declining 0-14 age group, a reduced dependency ratio and a falling fertility rate. While mortality rates have improved, urbanization has risen to 27%, yet 300+ local levels show population decline. Internal migration and youth absence highlight the need for education reforms.



Dr. Dr. Balkrishna Subedi, Former Chief, Planning and Policy Section, Ministry of Health and Population (L) Mr. Dhundiraj Lamichhane, Deputy Chief Statistician, National Statistics Office (R)

Recommendations:

- Crucial role of Parliamentarians in shaping policy discussions on population growth by advocating for strategic policies that address declining fertility rates, youth migration, and urbanization challenges.
- Ensure strong legislative frameworks, resource allocation, and oversight to manage demographic shifts effectively thus drive sustainable development.

Points raised by participants

Taking part in the discussion, Parliamentarian Hon Rama Poudel spoke on a critical issue of menopause leading to depression and even suicide among women. She called for urgent attention in both healthcare policies and legal frameworks to specifically address menopause related mental health challenges.

Another participant Mr. Nishant Kumar from Y-PEER Nepal said progress in ensuring accessible and inclusive services for young people with disabilities remains crucial. He suggested the policymakers to focus on effective implementation to ensure real access to healthcare, education, and support.



In his concluding speech, NFPPD Chairperson Hon. Yogendra Chaudhary said Nepal faces resource constraints that hinder progress toward ICPD and SDG goals. He called for continued discourse and policy dialogue will be key in addressing challenges.

CONCLUSIONS

The National workshop on SDGs and ICPD 30 Commitments for Parliamentarians of Nepal reaffirmed the central role of the parliamentarians in promoting Nepal's population and development agenda. As Nepal aspires to graduate to a middle-income country, the priority must be on self-reliance, increased domestic resource mobilization, and inclusive policies to entrench gains. Stakeholder's commitment at the workshop must now be translated into concrete action through policy development, legislative action, and resource mobilization towards ensuring an equitable, just, and sustainable future for all Nepalese citizens.

WAY FORWARD

- Enable policy, advocacy and legislative reforms to address gaps in SRHR, Child Marriage legislations, and reproductive health policies.
- Ensure adequate budgetary allocation for reproductive health, family planning, and gender equality programs while promoting transparency in the use of funds.
- Enhance data driven policymaking by strengthening census and demographic data collection to guide long term population strategies.
- Promote awareness and access to reproductive health services, particularly among marginalized groups, including women, adolescents, and persons with disabilities.
- Promote parliamentary oversight and accountability to monitor Nepal's commitments to ICPD and SDGs through regular progress reviews and policy updates.

AGENDA:



National Workshop on SDGs and ICPD 30 Commitments for Parliamentarians of Nepal

Venue: Hotel Hilton, Kathmandu, Nepal

Date: February 22, 2025

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- Facilitate discussions on identifying key legal and policy priorities necessary to advance the ICPD agenda and align national legislation with global commitments, particularly in response to changing population trends; and
- To expand the pool of parliamentarians/champions who have sufficient knowledge and support the ICPD agenda.

DRAFT AGENDA

8:00 AM - 9: 00 AM	Arrival of the Participants, Registration and Breakfast
9:00 AM - 10:00 AM	Inaugural Session
	<p>MC: Hon. Parshuram Tamang, Constituent Assembly Member and Secretary of National Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (NFPPD)</p> <p>Chair: Hon. Yogendra Chaudhary, NFPPD Nepal Chair</p> <p>Chief Guest: Hon. Badri Prasad Pandey, Minister for Culture Tourism and Civil Aviation</p> <p>Guests:</p> <p>Ms. Won Young Hong, Country Representative, UNFPA Nepal</p> <p>Ms. Hitomi Tsunekawa, Representative, Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development Association (AFPPD)</p>

	<p>National Anthem of Nepal Welcome and Objectives of the program: Dr. Bishmanath Adhikari, Vice Chair of NFPPD Nepal Opening of the event by Hon. Badri Prasad Pandey, Minister for Culture Tourism and Civil Aviation</p> <p>Remarks: Ms. Hitomi Tsunekawa, Representative, Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development Association (AFPPD) Ms. Won Young Hong, Country Representative, UNFPA Nepal</p> <p>Keynote Speech by Chief Guest: Hon. Badri Prasad Pandey, Minister for Culture Tourism and Civil Aviation</p> <p>Inaugural Session Closing Remarks by the Chair</p>
10:00 AM - 10:30 AM	Tea Break and Group Photo
10:30 AM - 11:45 AM	<p>Session 1: Overview of the ICPD and SDG Goal</p> <p>Session Chair: Hon. Mahalaxmi Upadhyay 'Dina' Constituent Assembly member and Founding Chair of NFPPD Nepal</p> <p>Presentations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Navigating Nepal's Policy Priorities Amid Emerging Demographic Shifts: A Focus on the 16th Periodic Plan, SDG Goals and Achievements in Nepal's Transition to a Middle Income Country – <i>Hon. Prof. Dr. Shiva Raj Adhikari, Vice- Chair, National Planning Commission (NPC) – 30 minutes</i> • Taking Stock of ICPD+30 Progress: Parliamentarians' Role to Implement ICPD and 2030 Agenda and Ensuring ICPD Commitments in National Policies – <i>Ms. Purna Shrestha, Advocate - 25 minutes</i> <p>Q & A – 15 minutes Session Closing by Chair - 5 minutes</p>
11:45 PM - 13:00 PM	<p>Session 2: Demographic Processes/ Population Dynamics</p> <p>Session Chair: Hon. Bhagabati Neupane, National Assembly Member and NFPPD Treasurer</p> <p>Presentations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening Parliamentary Action for SRHR Financing in Nepal: Advancing the ICPD Agenda and Achieving the SDGs – <i>Dr. Balkrishna Suvedi, Former Chief of Policy Planning Division, Ministry of Health and Population- 25 minutes</i>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Population Dynamics in Nepal: Migration, Aging, Infertility, and Urbanization – The Role of Parliamentarians in Shaping Responsive Policies – <i>Mr. Dhundiraj Lamichhane, Deputy Chief Statistician, National Statistics Office (NSO) – 25 minutes</i> <p>Q & A (15 minutes) Session Closing by Chair (5 minutes)</p>
13:00 PM - 13:15 PM	<p>Closing Remarks and Way Forward</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hon. Yogendra Chaudhary, NFPPD Nepal Chair
13:15 PM - 14:15 PM	<p>Lunch and Departure</p>