

EVALUATION REPORT OF INTERFAITH PROGRAM

Bardiya

October 2003

ORGANIZED BY

ASSOCIATION FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM-NEPAL
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SUPPORTED BY
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Submitted By

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1. INTRODUCTION:

The purpose of this report is two –fold. The first one is to compile and document the outcomes of the interfaith program recently held at Bardiya while the second one being to evaluate the program itself and communicate it to SACC and IARF.

This report is prepared by Association for Religious Freedom-Nepal after the groups' consultation with different religious groups separately to highlight the current status of community level religious groups /people in and outside of different countries with emphasis to remote sites of Nepal.

The report is solely based on the interaction with local people in formal program and informal discussion including their comment regarding what they are facing, what they want to do, what they are doing and what are urgent to do for them. However I could not go through other published literature while preparing this report. The “Investigation Symposium Meeting” was held within Gulariya municipality. Due to short time and small project we couldn't cover other more places far from municipality.

In order to create peace that brings reform & social equity, we need to respect the voices from different religion. Focusing the statement, ARF-N had performed a meeting as “Investigation Symposium Meeting” with all religious people on 1st October to 10th October 2003. The ARF-N proudly invoke a slogan from peace is:

“May Peace Prevail’ desire of every soul,
Through religious freedom in the world”

In this way the main purpose of this program is to organize a unitary committee in respectively religion, Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Buddhist etc. and become success too. Uniting the unitary committee we felt easiness to conduct “Investigation Symposium conference” and criticized of all religion past mistake. Also it makes easier to circulate the massage of peace and knowledge of human right, freedom in religious task and liberty to local people.

According to the decision of executive committee, ARF-Nepal has conducted interfaith dialogue program in Gulariya, the district head quarter of Bardiya. This program was for different religious people from grass- root level. The program was held on 1-10th October 2003. The place lies in western part of Nepal, Terai region. The program was a research program carried out through interaction, focus group discussion, personal observation and interview.

This report is divided as follows:

- 2 Conclusion
- 3 Recommendations
- 4 Narratives of the Program
- 5 Annexes

2. CONCLUSION:

The project circulates where creativity and artistic expression is the path to awareness and participation among all living being and to bring together “striving to unit pure religions and perfect liberty”. This project creates, where collaboration or inter-faith for religious freedom as key word. This program also helped us as a research program, and most fruitful is that we were succeeding to organize a unitary committee in every respective religion, through motivating them for peace.

Through this program we got to know the current condition of different religious group, and what the local people are facing and what they want to do? We had success to find out the relation among religions and how they respect, act. This knowledge will be a guideline for our future action plan.

All of the speakers strongly pointed out and request to Government and other organization for their contribution in religion sectors, to conserve the Mosques, Temple, Gumba, church because they are national wealth and cultural glory

The entire participants realized that if people would have knowledge about other religion, there would be mutual understanding among all religion. They also realized that as a lack of knowledge people starts feeling negative to other religion and push them into the violence. In modern-age only few people have deep knowledge, but other even we pray, but we follow or pursuance the materialism & materialist. We have to think, that all religion are good in their perspective and aims. These all are only various ways to get soul peace.

Observing the statement of the speakers’ in the interaction program and through the open discussion and dialogue programs we were successful in collecting many valuable points.

In the Society, we saw social harmony among different religious groups regarding livelihood issues. They come to assist others in farming, business and other types of subsistence activities including social work regardless of their culture and religious diversity. However purity is a concept deep rooted among all different religious people. It can be seen as inter and intra hierarchy feeling among religious group. Inter caste and inter-religious marriage has been a kind of sinful activity for all religious groups that need urgent attention of social and religious faith is to be achieved. Although, nowadays inter-religious marriage takes place but society is rigid to accept them. Some couples are escaped from their family and from their cast and religion too. People have general perception that when couple is from different religion, one of them should change her/his religion to enjoy their marriage life well.

3. Recommendations

In order to make the effective mobilization of the community people from different religious, socio-cultural background towards religious faith and harmony, there should be plenty of

opportunity for them to interact with different religious groups other than their own. I strongly recommend carrying out followings within a year:

- ❑ Organize a mega conference in district level through local unitary committee.
- ❑ Rally invoking for peace.
- ❑ Lecture in religious places
- ❑ Work and lecture in school and college: essay, debate and drawing competition
- ❑ Short dramas
- ❑ Help and motivate to preserve heritage and their culture.
- ❑ Training about freedom, liberty, harmony and tolerance national and international human right contest as well as important of cultural

4. Narratives of the Program

A. Investigation Symposium Meeting in Christian

Program Schedule:

Arrival/ Registration	10:30
Welcome/ Introduction	11:00
Introduction of ARF-N and Need of Religious faith	11:10 to 12:30
Open Discussion	12:30 to 1
Pray	
Refreshment	

The program began at 10:30 AM with introduction of the participants and objectives of the program. Then we heartily well come them selecting a chairperson for that formal conference.

All together 21 participants attended this program. The participant who participated that program was local priests, local people, chairpersons and other members from four different local churches.

Formally Surendra Prasad Tharu, Secretary of ARF-N, with the speech about the ARF-N and meeting or small conference, as well as the aim, activities and object of the conference and organization, started the program. He also appealed to work for peace indication contemporaneous events and important.

He shed light on the background and evolution of religion as social institution from sociological perspective. He further added that religion is neither social nor inherited. Here is the excerpt of his address:

It is an intensely personal thing. There is neither monopoly nor copyright on god or divine wisdom. Every thirsting aspirant can enjoy the glory of God. Every religion, culture, individual has right to find the divine enlightenment in its way. Every body is free to approach the supreme in his or her way. Actually all of us must try hardly to find our eternal peace that can be achieved only through union with the infinite one. Human must

communicate consciously with the cosmic one and get rid of desires, then will peace prevail, strength multiply and fear vanish.

The mind is gullible and impressionable, it keeps returning to its cultures to do so. To make a mind strong and pure our ancient saints and sages charted out certain disciplines and rule. Our holy books have mentioned the right way to govern or lead our lives better.

According to Father Jeevan Acharya, Shanti Nivas church, Suheluwa there are four churches within Gulariya Municipality and more than 500 people are Christian. Historically, there wasn't any Christian, but from last 20 –25 years, there is some Christian, some of them migrated from other places and some of them became Christians through motivation and publicity of Christian religion. The churches are funded from American Agencies through other bigger churches from Kathmandu. They pray, sing pray-song in each church for 3-4 hours on every Saturday. In Christianity, all the Christian believe the Jesus as a living God. They follow the voice of Jesus and they think their, as the main duty is to publish or circulate the dignity and charm of Jesus and message of Christian religion.

During meeting, they were unhappy for the blame that the people are accusing them for converting other religious people into their religion. They also mentioned that they were only spreading the word of God Jesus. Those who realize the values of his preach, they all wanted to be Christian. They also mentioned that they always respect other religion.

In the perspective of Christian they get fund from foreign donor, that's why they don't comment to government and other NGOs for cooperation. Father Jeevan Acharya clarifies "We never show any covetousness to poor, but if some one to come with us, he/she might pay 10% income what he get weekly or monthly"

After the speech and dialogue program, we start open discussion session since 12:30. Through the discussion, there are some important and notable outcomes i.e. although they follow Christian religion but they celebrate some big and special Hindu festival i.e. Dashain etc, because mostly the now Christian comes from Hindu family background by birth. But they never light the incense or resin and don't use red Teeka. They also never pray to other things or animal as Hindu, they pray only to Jesus. They thought only Jesus is god not other.

The participants agreed on the individual freedom of choosing their religion but they strongly opposed the attempt to change religion through ill motive like misconception and economic incentives.

After the discussion of half an hour, participants agreed to form a district level committee with representation of the whole participation. Here are the names of members:

Chairman:	Kaid Bahadur Shahi
Vice Chairman:	Prem narayan Adhikari
Secretary:	Mahesh Bikram B.K
Tresurer:	Jeevan Acharya
Members:	Bhim Bahadur Chaudhary Dhanulal B.K

Shobha Paudel

Chairperson of the program concluded the day and requested all participants to join the refreshment served at the end of the day

B. Investigation Symposium Meeting in Hindu

Program Schedule:

Arrival/ Registration	10:15
Welcome/ Introduction	10:15 to 10:30
Introduction of ARF-N and Need of Religious faith	10:30 to 1:30
Open Discussion starting from a poem	1:30 to 2
Refreshment	

The program began at 10:15 AM with a mourn for the death of our ancestor for 2 minutes. Then we heartily welcomed them selecting a chairperson for that formal conference.

All together 50 participants attended this program. The participants who participated in that program were local priests, local people, chairpersons and other members from different organizations, they were Vishwa Hindu Maha Sangh-Gulariya, Sanatan Dharma, Bedvyas Bateeka-Gulariya, etc.

Formally Surendra Prasad Tharu, Secretary of ARF-N, with the speech about the ARF-N and meeting or small conference, as well as the aim, activities and object of the conference and organization, started the program. He also appealed to work for peace in contemporary events and important.

He shed light on the background and evolution of religion as a social institution from a sociological perspective. He further added that religion is neither social nor inherited. Here is the excerpt of his address:

It is an intensely personal thing. There is neither monopoly nor copyright on god or divine wisdom. Every thirsting aspirant can enjoy the glory of God. Every religion, culture, individual has right to find the divine enlightenment in its way. Every body is free to approach the supreme in his or her way. Actually all of us must try hard to find our eternal peace that can be achieved only through union with the infinite one. Human must communicate consciously with the cosmic one and get rid of desires, then will peace prevail, strength multiply and fear vanish.

The mind is gullible and impressionable, it keeps returning to its cultures to do so. To make a mind strong and pure our ancient saints and sages charted out certain disciplines and rules. Our holy books have mentioned the right way to govern or lead our lives better.

The chairperson of Bedvyas Bateeka Sangh as well as the program chairperson pointed that the Hindu religion is a main and powerful religion pointing about the contribution. Most speakers were said that they always respect, love and cooperate other religions but they want

that the other religion should love and respect Hindu religion as well. He further explained that they couldn't tolerate violence, discrimination and hate from other religion. Speakers focused the necessary of changing the caste discrimination system, accepting the great mistakes of Brahmins ancestors. They expressed that is the time for all to thought with cool and sacred mind and heart about every soul and their liberty.

We have entered a new age, whether all of us will have to sign a new compact with our environment and inter into the larger community of all living being. The dependency of human beings on the natural world can be acknowledged in ritual & other expressions of appreciation & gratitude. There seems fighting and killing each other for right and freedom is painful and disheartening. In this way the local people painfully raised their voices and comment.

The participants agreed on the individual freedom of choosing their religion but they strongly opposed the attempt to change religion through ill motive like misconception and economic incentives.

Following the poem concerned with peace and religious faith written by Surendra Tharu, we started open discussion session since 1:30 PM.

After the discussion of half an hour, participants agreed to form a district level committee with representation of the whole participation. Here are the names of members:

Chairman: Narhari Upadhyay
Vice Chairman: Baburam Sharma
Secretary: Bishnu Pd. Marasainy
Treasurer: Suresh Uprety
Members: Harihar Acharya
Shobh raj Sigdel
Gangaram Adikari

Advisers: Lal Bd. Thapa
Khem Raj Gautam
Padmaraj Sigdel
Surya Mohan Sapkota

Chairperson of the programme concluded the day and requested all participants to join the refreshment served at the end of the day.

C: Investigation Symposium Meeting in Muslims

Program Schedule:

Arrival/ Registration	12
Welcome/ Introduction	12:20
Introduction of ARF-N and Need of Religious faith	12:20 to 2:00
Open Discussion	2:00 to 2:30

Refreshment

We had started our program since 12 then we heartily well come them selecting a chairperson for that formal conference.

All together 38 participants attended this program. The participant who participated that program was local priests, local people, chairpersons and other members from different organization.

Formally Surendra Prasad Tharu, Secretary of ARF-N, with the speech about the ARF-N and meeting or small conference, as well as the aim, activities and object of the conference and organization, started the program. He also appealed to work for peace indication contemporaneous events and important.

He shed light on the background and evolution of religion as social institution from sociological perspective. He further added that religion is neither social nor inherited. Here is the excerpt of his address:

It is an intensely personal thing. There is neither monopoly nor copyright on god or divine wisdom. Every thirsting aspirant can enjoy the glory of God. Every religion, culture, individual has right to find the divine enlightenment in its way. Every body is free to approach the supreme in his or her way. Actually all of us must try hard to find our eternal peace that can be achieved only through union with the infinite one. Human must communicate consciously with the cosmic one and get rid of desires, then will peace prevail, strength multiply and fear vanish.

The mind is gullible and impressionable, it keeps returning to its cultures to do so. To make a mind strong and pure our ancient saints and sages charted out certain disciplines and rule. Our holy books have mentioned the right way to govern or lead our lives better.

The chairperson of Jama Mosque as well as the program chairperson pointed that there are four Mosques within Gulariya Municipality, related with mainly two mosques named Jama Mosque and Nepal Mosque. In Mosque Muslims come for pray on every Friday and pray for about 2 hours at afternoon. We had visited their Madarsa named 'Madarsha Asarphiya Masaudul Ulum' where they shared about the problems what they are facing. There are more than ten thousand Muslim are inhabitants and more than 2 thousand Muslim come from India just for business. Their main income resources are business.

The participants agreed on the individual freedom of choosing their religion but they strongly opposed the attempt to change religion through ill motive like misconception and economic incentives.

Following the poem concerned with peace and religious faith written by Surendra Prasad Tharu, we started open discussion session since 2 PM.

We had little bit hard time to organize all Muslims to one place for our interfaith Dialogue program. We found that many orthodox Muslims were living in Bardiya. And also they all are business people so they have not time for other works mostly at morning and evening.

Even they opposed us to take photos. They mentioned that they only give approval to take photos for the government bodies. At last we could convince them and took few photos.

We discussed about their current condition, as well as religious and living status. We also had talked about contemporaneous problem with their comment. We had also invoked the way of consistency and harmony with other religions.

All Muslim orators expressed that they were only guard or servant to preserve the Mosque and other cultural wealth, and these were all national charity and should pay attention to preserve them. Because these all were natural wealth not a personal, all of them, they can use these were universals.

But Muslim community, they comment to government for fund and other cooperation. In the voice of chairperson of Jama Mosque Abbas Ali, “We have not got any fund or any help from any organization nor from government”. He said, “We build mosque by our own contribution and donation. Before 23 years, I donate some land for Mosque and some land for cemetery, but unfortunately now there is Sahid Park by the government rather than help. Due to our minority government neglect our demand”. Muslims are also known as aborigines’ tribes, so they were rich to offer field as a religious gift, but unfortunately they lost it now.

There is a primary school in Muslim society named “Madarsha Asarphiya Masaudul Ulum Primary school” conduction by their own contribution. Although this school is newly registered in District Education Office, Gulariya, but there is not any cooperation or help from neither government side nor other. There are about 200 pupils are studying, who are very poor. But in this school there is not quality education due to lack of fund. The school is depend on the fund what the local Muslim collect according to their capacity on the occasion of their great festival Roja. In the school there are not sufficient rooms so the pupil are divide in two groups.

After the discussion of half an hour, participants agreed to form a district level committee with representation of the whole participation. Here are the names of members:

Chairman:	Abbash Ali
Vice Chairman:	Rasid Ahamad Siddiki
Secretary:	Raies Ahamad Bhinhar
Vice Secretary:	Abdul Salam Halwaie
Tresurer:	Salim Siddiki
Members:	Bhakta bul Ahsmad Ansari Habib Telli Manjur hasan Minhar Anabar Khan M. Hasniph Halwaie Phaij Mohamad Siddiki
Advisers:	Jahir Ahamad Darji Bansher Ahamad Raien

Chairperson of the programme concluded the day and requested all participants to join the refreshment served at the end of the day.

D. Investigation Symposium Meeting in Buddhist

Program Schedule:

Arrival/ Registration

Welcome/ Introduction

Introduction of ARF-N and Need of Religious faith

Open Discussion

Refreshment

The meeting with Buddhist was small among the nine members of Buddhist family. We had little bit hard time to find Buddhist and gather them, because, even in Bardiya there are some Buddhist who migrant from neighbors districts Humla, Jumla Doti etc. but in municipality there are so few Buddhist and they have not any Stupa, Gumba because they haven't capacity to build and no one pay to attention for them. They remember their culture and the days of what they had spent in past. They are facing some problem because of their language.

According to Hindu religion the Buddha was rebirth of Bishnu God. Although the Buddhist has some special and different festival and culture from Hindu, but some are the same as Hindus. All Buddhist respect for peace as well all religion. They have not any comment to other religion because they follow the rule or enlightenment of Buddha (bodisatitwa).

They have good concept that the Nepal is a country of Buddha and country of peace. But they comment in the current situation of Nepal. They point out that fighting and killing each other for right and freedom is painful and disheartening.

Even they were very strict in their cultural but now they are not so strict they don't mind in inter-cast marriage also hardly. They feel some difficulties in Terai i.e. culturally and socially.

And finally we ask them for the form of a small committee but they don't agree. They feel very shy and show their business for their survive.