The Power of Storytelling for Nepalese Women

**Lauren Yanks**

**Blue Butterfly Foundation, Inc.**

**PO Box 387**

**Tillson, NY 12486**

**USA**

**Lauren.yanks@aya.yale.edu**

**or**

**Info@bluebutterflyfoundation.org**

**ABSTRACT:**

Women in Nepal are subject to vast discrimination and violence. These violations come from entrenched socio-cultural norms, practices, and traditions. Aspects of gender inequality include violence against women, child marriage, menstrual alienation, and accusations of witchcraft.

**Objective and Scope:**

This paper measures the utilization of storytelling initiatives on a group of 50 women in select communities throughout Nepal as a way to fight harmful discriminatory practices. Storytelling is essential to humanity, and these initiatives seek to empower women through sharing their lived experiences, feelings, and opinions with each other over a 3-month period. The women use their voices freely. This research also examines the process of storytelling as a tool for personal and societal development, advocacy, and community building.

**Methods Used:**

The research methodology is centered on storytelling processes for measuring societal norms and transforming consciousness to find what helps change societal norms. The research process places female storytellers at the center of their own research based on their lived experiences and uses a gender analytical framework utilized by UN Women. The research teams also include peers selected from various community organizations.

**Results:**

The findings highlighted the resiliency of women survivors and emphasizes the roles of relatives, friends, and peer networks. The storytelling initiatives strengthened these roles significantly and enabled women to help each other through challenges with greater significance. The women reported a greater power dynamic in their relationship with the men in their lives. A few women began local programs with the support of their storytelling group, creating greater community building.

**Conclusion:**

While the research did not find across-the-board evidence that each woman was freed from harmful practices, sufficient evidence showed bringing women together to share their stories transforms personal relationships between women and men both individually and communally, empowering more women to speak out about harm and take leadership roles.

**Keywords and/or Phrases:**

Nepal; Gender Discrimination; Violence against Women; Storytelling; Community Building

**Biography:**

Lauren Yanks holds a Master of Divinity degree from Yale University and a Master's in Fine Arts in Writing from New York University. She also holds a certification from Harvard Medical School in Global Mental Health: Trauma and Recovery. Lauren is the founder and executive director of the Blue Butterfly Foundation. A professor and writer, Lauren first travelled to Nepal in 2008 to write about girls trafficked into sex slavery. She has since opened a variety of schools and run numerous programs for impoverished women and children, including the first school with a trauma-centred curriculum for trafficked girls. She also started Samriddhi college, emphasizing critical thinking, humanities, and gender research. Additionally, she runs numerous workshops to uplift and empower those in need, including workshops in language skills, public speaking, teacher training, citizen reporting, arts, human rights, and more. She conducts various research teams on societal norms and gender throughout Nepal.

**Presenting Author Details and Photo**

Full Name: Lauren Yanks
Email ID: lauren@bluebutterflyfoundation.org

Phone No: 845-518-7844

www.bluebutterflyfoundation.org