



Nepali Women's Global Network

4th Biennial NWGN Conference

MIT, Cambridge, MA

August 16, 2014



Theme: Nepali Women Uniting and Organizing Globally for Economic Empowerment



## Welcome Message from the President, Rukmini Karki



Welcome to the 4th Biennial Conference of NWGN (Nepali Women's Global Network), an organization established to advocate for the interests of Nepali women, no matter where they are. I have been honored to be the 5th President of this great organization and have the privilege to plan, organize and participate in this conference in my hometown of Boston, Massachusetts. I am also excited to see the level of interest and participation from many new members and individuals in the Boston community, where preceding the conference, several NWGN related activities took place recently.

Our conference theme is focused around economic empowerment, which is one of the many tenets of women's empowerment. We will be discussing success stories of Nepali women entrepreneurs and also talking about issues affecting Nepali women whose roots may lie in their economic hardships and needs. Our keynote speaker Dr. Renu Rajbhandari will be speaking on issues related to migration, trafficking, and other challenges facing Nepali women in Nepal, and the work that her organization WOREC has done to tackle these issues.

I would like to thank MIT for allowing us to use the space at no cost for our conference and the MITeri Group for helping with the details of the logistics of the conference at MIT. I would like to thank the NWGN Board members and the working committees for their tireless efforts for putting together this conference. I would also like to thank the individuals, businesses and organizations who made donations and provided sponsorships to support the conference, the funds from which this conference has been made possible. Last but not the least, I would like to acknowledge Etihaad Airways for sponsoring our keynote speaker's airfare to the US from Nepal.

I look forward to a thought provoking conference with a lot of energy from a lot of people who care about issues affecting Nepali women.

Thank you all once again for your participation and support!

Sincerely Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rukmini Karki'.

Rukmini Karki

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## Program Details:

9:00—9:30 am **Registration/Continental Breakfast**

9:30 –10:00 am Nepali Song by NWGN Members, Greater Boston  
Opening Remarks by MITeri president  
Welcome Remarks by Rukmini Karki, NWGN President

10:00—11:00 am **Empowering women through collaboration and activism**  
Shesh Ghale, NRNA President  
Khagendra Chhetry, NRN NCC USA President  
Rishi Ram Ghimire, Charge d 'affaires, a.i. Embassy of Nepal  
Message from Dr. Amreeta Regmi, Candidate Georgia House District 95

11:00—12:15 pm **Socioeconomic change:**  
Achievements and challenges of owning a small business;  
Experiences of Nepali Women Owned Businesses.  
**Moderator: Ruby Shrestha**  
Presenters: Sushma Barakoti, Kanchan Lama, Beenu Deuja  
Yaleena Shrestha, Nirmala Sherchan, and Sheela Manandhar

12:15—1:15 pm **Lunch Break**

1:30—2:45 pm **Media's role in improving status of women:**  
Portrayal of Women in Nepali Media  
**Moderator: Dr. Bidya Ranjeet**  
Presenters: Avima Uprety, Pradeep Thapa, Yerina Shrestha  
Ranjit, Yem Poudel

3:00—4:15 pm **Rights based approach to Empowerment:**  
Legal Rights Based Approach to Economic Empowerment of  
Immigrant Women in the United States  
**Moderator: Anu Lohani**  
Presenters: Lily Thapa, Bandita Sharma Dahal, Anu Shah

4:15—4:30 pm **Tea Break**

4:30—5:00 pm Poetry (moderated by Bharati Gautam) and  
Cultural Program

5:00—5:45 pm **Keynote Speech by Dr. Renu Rajbhandari**

5:45— 5:55 pm Vote of Thanks by Ruma Marshall, General Secretary

6:00—7:00 pm **Dinner**

## Dr. Renu Rajbhandari, WOREC Nepal, Keynote Speaker



Dr. Renu Rajbhandari is the founder of WOREC (Women's Rehabilitation Center) Nepal, an organization focused on working for the protection and promotion of human rights with special focus on the rights of women and other marginalized groups. The organization was founded by women's rights activists in 1991 in order to address the issue of human trafficking. Today WOREC is one of the leading organizations in Nepal that addresses the issue of violence against women, trafficking, migration, women's health and other programs targeted at the empowerment of women/marginalized groups. WOREC's strategies are multi-pronged and include advocacy, community organizing, activism campaigns, promoting public awareness/education in addition to direct support to those in need.

Dr. Rajbhandari has provided leadership to WOREC and partner organizations and alliances in various programs, most recently, leading a series of sit-in protests in Nepal to demand action and justice to victims of sexual assault.. She was a chairperson of the Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs) which is a group of concerned activists bringing cases of violence against women to public. She has advocated for women's right to property inheritance in Nepal, and women's reproductive health with special focus on the issue of women's uterine prolapse in the rural areas of Nepal. She developed training modules for training government officials, police and grassroots women activists on the issues of trafficking, women's health and advocacy.

She has represented Nepal's issues concerning the rights of women and marginalized groups on an international level by participating in several conferences as a panelist and presenting papers. She was involved in the preparatory process of the UN high level dialogue on migration. She is currently involved in advocacy for the ratification of the UN Convention on the rights of migrant works and their families.

Dr. Rajbhandari has a Master's Degree in Public Health from Mahidol University, Bangkok, Thailand (1994). She also has an MD in General Medicine from the Moscow Medical Institute (1985). She is a leader, activist and an advocate, especially with issues regarding women's rights. Her work and leadership has given voices to the voiceless, help to the helpless and opened the public's eyes on lots of prominent social issues facing Nepal.

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**Very Special Thanks to:**



For sponsoring round trip flight tickets for Keynote Speaker  
Dr. Renu Rajbhandari



For helping us organize the conference at the MIT campus

**Shesh Ghale, NRNA President**



Shesh Ghale is the President of the Non-Resident Nepali Association (NRNA). Spearheading this non-profit organization with members in 69 countries, Ghale has travelled around the world to address issues such as the rights of migrant workers and women. Alongside his wife, he founded the Melbourne Institute of Technology (MIT), one of Australia's leading private higher education institutions in the fields of Business and Information Technology. Besides being the Chief Executive Officer and Executive Director of MIT, Ghale is heavily involved in Melbourne's business community and has invested in commercial properties in Melbourne and Sydney. Ghale remains especially committed to promoting education.

**Khagendra Chhetry, NRN NCC USA President**



Khagendra Chhetry is the President of the NRNCC USA. Since 1994, he has been the President and Managing Partner of the New York law firm Chhetry & Associates in New York. He started his illustrious career by practicing law in Nepal and taught courses on property and international law at Tribhuvan University, Nepal. After coming to the United States, he worked as a law clerk for the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund. In 1987, he passed the New York Bar Exams, becoming the first Nepali member of the American Bar. He continued his dedication to civil rights law by working on the New York City Commission on Human Rights and the 1990 Constitution Recommendations Commission of Nepal. In his spare time, Chhetry also serves as an advisory member in various non-profit and Nepali organizations.

**Rishi Ram Ghimire, Charge d'affaires, a.i. Embassy of Nepal**



Rishi Ram Ghimire is the Chargé d'Affaires in the Nepal Embassy in Washington D.C. Since 1988, he has worked for Nepal's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, promoting Nepali interests in a variety of international platforms. After receiving a Master's Degrees in Public Administration from Tribhuvan University, Mr. Ghimire went on to receive a Master's Degree in International Relations from the International Institute of Public

Administration in Paris. Fluent in French, he is also trained at the Hague and participated in a Preventive Diplomacy and Peacemaking Fellowship Program in Oslo. Mr. Ghimire has also worked in the United Nations Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for four years. Dedicated to the goal of maintaining international goodwill, he spent three years as Nepal's Director in the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). Before joining the Embassy of Nepal in the U.S., he worked as Minister Counselor/Deputy Chief of Mission in the Embassy of Nepal in Qatar.

## Panel Moderators

### Ruby Shrestha (Panel on Socioeconomic Change)

Ruby Shrestha has been working as a Director of Compliance and Product Management at Seattle Chocolate Company in Seattle, WA, where she oversees the launches of premium chocolate products and manages regulatory affairs. She completed her MBA at the University of Washington's Foster School of Business as a Fulbright Scholar. She received her B.Tech. degree in Dairy Technology from Rajasthan Agriculture University in Rajasthan, India where she was a Colombo Plan Scholar. She is a recipient of various awards including University Gold Medal, Bhamashah Award, University Merit Award, and Mahendra Vidya Bhushan from the government of Nepal. She has worked extensively in the dairy sector development of Nepal; she visited numerous extremely rural areas in Nepal to help locals develop appropriate processes in dairy processing and standardizing traditional methods for sustainable economic growth. She has also worked as an international consultant for the Danish International Development Agency supporting National Dairy Development Board of Nepal where she helped prepare a national dairy development strategy for dairy sector growth from grass root level of cooperatives to big scale processing factories. Also a DANIDA fellow, she has professional work experiences from the U.S., Denmark, Japan and India. She is involved in various professional associations nationally and globally. On a local and regional basis, she is a board member and active volunteer/member of Nepal Seattle Society and Newah Organization of America, Seattle Chapter. She believes in investing in children's future and ran a Nepali language/culture class for four consecutive years for children of Nepali origin living in the Greater Seattle area. She is actively involved in local PTAs of her boys' schools and enjoys hiking in the beautiful northwest with family and friends.

## Conference Organizing Team Members :

Rukmini Karki  
Dr. Bidya Ranjeet,  
Sushma Barakoti  
Bharati Gautam  
Ruma Ranjit  
Sunita Siwakoti  
Anu Lohani  
Ruby Shrestha  
Rachana Shrestha  
Sheela Pradhan  
Biva Ranjeet

All the members from Greater Boston

### Membership Details:

Membership form is available to download from our website—

[www.nepaliwomen.org](http://www.nepaliwomen.org).

General Membership: US \$50  
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Sunita Siwakoti  
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Montgomery Village, MD 20886

Contact Details:  
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www.nepaliwomen.org

Rukmini Karki  
President  
617-953-5627  
rukminikpaudyal@gmail.com

## **Executive Board 2013-2014**

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## **NWGN Past Presidents:**

Annapurna Deo  
Bishnu Thapa  
Dr. Bidya Ranjeet  
Sushma Barakoti

## **Anu Lohani (Panel on Right Based Approach to Empowerment)**

Anu Lohani is a lawyer with a healthcare background. For over 3 years, she worked at a personal injury law firm in Chicago called Brustin & Lundblad Ltd. Prior to that she worked with the City of Chicago's Public Health Department working on public health law. Anu spent a year after law school working in Nepal for Forum for Women, Law and Development (FWLD) coordinating the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) Shadow Report for Nepal. Anu obtained her law degree from National Law School of India University, Bangalore India and a Masters in Law from George Washington University Law School, Washington, D.C. During her law school, she did internships at courts of India and Nepal. In the US, she interned with the D.C. Attorney General's Office and also worked as a fellow for an environmental organization in Washington D.C called Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL). Anu is currently training for the Chicago Marathon in October 2014 to raise funds for women entrepreneurs in Nepal by supporting FWEAN (Federation of Woman Entrepreneurs Associations of Nepal).

## **Dr. Bidya Ranjit (Panel on Media's Role on Improving Status of Women)**

Dr. Bidya Ranjeet is the past president and an advisor of the Nepali Women's Global Network, and is also the Executive Director of the center for Academic Programs at the University of Connecticut (UCONN). She has worked at UCONN since 1986, beginning her career as a counselor in both the SSS and Upward Bound programs. Before coming to the University, Bidya was part of the Nepali educational system as a teacher at Vanasthali High School and also as a co-founder and principal of the Indreni School. While Bidya specializes in facilitating the enrollment, retention, and degree completion of underrepresented students from post-secondary institutions, she maintains a steadfast commitment to social issues such as diversity and community. Through her volunteer and professional involvements, Bidya works to further the interests of underrepresented groups in her own community and throughout the world. She has been tireless in her advocating and assisting efforts on behalf of women in South Asia and of South Asian heritage through her involvement in Nepali Women's Global Network and NNRN NCC USA. Bidya's efforts extend to scholarly contributions as well; she is one of the first Nepali women living in America to shed light on issues confronting women of South Asian heritage including sensitive topics like domestic violence. Her academic work can most recently be found in her contributors to two anthologies, Body Evidence and Living our Religion.

### **Bharati Gautam (Poetry)**

Bharati Gautam is a life member of NWGN. She organized the first Nepali women's poetry competition that took place at the first NWGN Conference. She holds her MA in Economics from Tribhuban University in Nepal and her BA in Nepali literature from Dhankuta Campus (TU) in Nepal. She has served as a university librarian at Dhankuta Campus and as an assistant lecturer at Kanya Campus (Girl's college) in Biratnagar, Nepal. She served as the first female sub-editor for Gorkhapatra Sansthan Nepal. She worked as a school teacher and a reporter at a women's vocational training center in Nepal. She served as the editor for NASEA bulletin from 2000 to 2002. She is a guest editor and a regular contributor to the bi-weekly newspaper "Nepal Khabar" from Boston. In 2006, she held the post of President for the International Nepalese Literary Society in Massachusetts. She also served as the Vice-President of the International Nepalese Literary Society Headquarters. She was the coordinator of the First International Nepalese literary conference by the International Nepalese Society last August, held in New York. She is recently awarded with "devekota satavarsiki samman" for her continuous effort to promote and preserve Nepalese literature from abroad. She continues to write short stories, poetry, and essays. She recently published a book of poems Aakash mathiko Sahar in 2007. She has been awarded the best female writer's award from INLS for (2009-2010), for the book "Smritima Bhimu". Her second book - a memoir is coming out soon. Her goal as a Board Member is to empower Nepali women both in Nepal and elsewhere to speak for themselves. She encourages women to express their emotions through open discussions and through writing. She also hopes to address issues that Nepali women face once they leave Nepal.

### **NWGN: A Glimpse**

Nepali Women's Global Network, a not-for-profit organization was established in 2002 with a mission of promoting networking, support and self-reliance among Nepali women through education, advocacy, service and collaboration with groups with similar missions.

NWGN works with following goals:

- Foster a supportive global network of friendship and understanding between Nepali women and other women
- Collaborate with national and international organizations with similar missions on events, activities and projects
- Create global regional chapters
- Represent and advocate for the interests of women
- Provide leadership training and opportunities to participate in the affairs of the organization.
- Promote citizenship and civic involvement
- Support women in crisis through consultation networks, peer support, confidential social service referrals and resource pooling

NWGN has come a long way since its inception in 2002. Examples of some activities NWGN has performed in the recent years are:

- Organized International Women's Day Forum in Washington DC, Boston and in northern California
- Provided scholarships to women nursing students in Nepal
- Established NWGN Justice Fund to help women facing gender based discrimination
- Hosted a felicitation program for Ms. Anuradha Koirala, activist and CNN Hero 2010
- Felicitated Ms. Dil Shobha Shrestha, a social activist from Nepal running Ama Ko Ghar, an old-age home in Nepal; helped raise over \$24,000
- Organized biennial conferences and discussion forums
- Hosted forums with renowned women social workers from Nepal
- Coordinated with other non-profits working for Nepal for a common cause.
- Participated in Walk-For-Nepal and raised funds

### **Lily Thapa (Panel on Right Based Approach to Empowerment)**

Lily Thapa is a pioneer in establishing an organization that solely focuses on issue of widows. She is the founding chairperson of Women for Human Rights (WHR), which has been working for the social, political, economic and legal rights of widows in Nepal and in South Asia from the past 20 years. Through WHR, her advocacy has changed government policy, and has succeeded in including the issues of widows into the government agenda. Her work with the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare (MoWCSW) among others has led to the Ministry's announcement of its decision to set up an Emergency Trust Fund solely for widowed women in Nepal. The Ministry has also declared its decision to develop a National Action Plan for Widows in Nepal, which is, again, a first in the history of Nepal. She continues to raise pertinent issues concerning the need for social security schemes for widows at the national level, as has been reflected in the directive principles and policies for the interim constitution. She is also the General Secretary for the South Asian Network for Women Empowerment and Development, (SANWED) where she actively lobbies various issues pertaining widows across South Asia. She is also nominated as a member in the high level committee of government on National Action Plan of UNSCR 1325 and 1820, where she is lobbying to ensure that women are active participants in peace negotiations, so that their needs and roles and those of their children are properly acknowledged and addressed. Her efforts have been recognized by numerous national and international awards, including the recent one from the President of Nepal on her work towards women empowerment and for peace. By profession Lily is the Lecturer in the University of Nepal on Sociology and Gender. Lily herself became a widow when her husband died while serving as a medical doctor as peace keeper in Gulf War when she was 29 years of age with three small children.

### **Panel Members**

#### **Beenu Deuja (Panel on Socioeconomic Change)**

Beenu, a native of Kathmandu, is an entrepreneur and currently owns a high-end pet supplies boutique shop in the heart of Chicago. Her retail shop, inventively named Doggy Style Pet Shop, caters to both dogs and cats with high-quality foods, accessories, bedding, toys, treats and chews, and also has a spa. Prior to Chicago, Beenu worked for Round Rock Chamber of Commerce (Texas) as Director of Research for 5 years. In that role, she was responsible for all economic development research activities, including gathering and disseminating community demographic and economic data. In addition, she conducted quarterly ACCRA Cost of Living Index survey as well as provided specialized research for economic development projects in Round Rock. Beenu holds a Master of Science degree in Economic Development from the University of Southern Mississippi. She received her Bachelor of Science degree from Texas A&M University - Commerce with High Honors. She is also a 2005 graduate of Leadership Round Rock, a community leadership program. Beenu enjoys volunteering and spending her time with her family in her free time. She was a Rotarian and has served as the Secretary of the Rotary Club of Round Rock- Sunrise and as the Polio Chair for Rotary District 5870 where she was a proud participant of Polio Vaccination Drive in Nigeria. She was recognized as the "2007 Mentor of the Year- Berkman Elementary" at the Round Rock ISD. She has been a volunteer with the American Red Cross of Central Texas, Historic Hattiesburg Downtown Association, Hattiesburg Urban Development Department, Habitat for Humanity and many more. Presently, Beenu lives with her husband Ritesh, sons Arya and Sourya, and fur babies Stark and Pepper in Chicagoland.

#### **Sushma Barakoti (Panel on Socioeconomic Change)**

Sushma has been involved with NWGN in various capacities including the President in the past. Sushma has a Masters in Social Work degree from Pennsylvania and has worked on social issues pertaining to women and children for almost 20 years both in the US and in Nepal. She has extensive experience working in the fields of gender based violence, community development, HIV//AIDS, project management, and in refugees resettlement in the

USA. Sushma is a skilful grants writer and manager with proven record of increased revenue. She believes in feminist philosophy and follows participatory approach to development. Recently, Sushma became an owner of 'sunavworld, LLC.' a social enterprise with the mission to improve the socio-economic status of grassroots women artisans in Nepal and the Bhutanese refugee women in Atlanta. At present Sushma is working part-time with Raksha, Inc. a non-profit serving South Asian survivors of gender based violence in Georgia.

#### **Kanchan Lama (Panel on Socioeconomic Change)**

Kanchan Lama, M.A. Political Science is a board member of WOCAN ([www.wocan.org](http://www.wocan.org)) and has an extensive experience in gender mainstreaming in development programs. She is widely exposed to global policy debates in forestry and development through her involvement in UNFF, UNEP, UNFCCC, CSD, TFD, Mountain Forum, Global Forum of Farmers and FSN Forum (FAO). For more than 27 years, she has been working as Gender and Inclusion Specialist, promoting women's rights to productive assets and services, natural resource management for economic development. She has reviewed the national Irrigation Policy of Nepal (2012) and influenced addition of two new chapters on gender and inclusion. She also contributed to gender mainstreaming into the new national forestry sector strategy development (2013) by reviewing the forestry sector Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Strategy and provided recommendations for advancement. She has been a panel participant in post 2015 debate process of developing strategies for effectiveness for sustainable development by the United Nations. She has held senior management positions with multiple roles in INGOs, e.g., Action Aid, Lutheran World Federation; bilateral agencies, e.g., Canadian Cooperation Office (CCO), Finnish International Development Agency (Finnida), The Netherlands Development Organization (SNV), German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) ; and in multilateral agencies, e.g., Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD) and the United Nation Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). She has worked in Nepal and Timor Leste, and held short term assignments in India, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka and Pakistan.

#### **Bandita Sharma Dahal (Panel on Right Based Approach to Empowerment)**

Bandita Sharma-Dahal, Esq. is a partner in Chhetry and Associates, PC; Philadelphia Branch. Her practice is limited to immigration and nationality law. Bandita received her LL.M. from Touro College Jacob D. Fuchsberg Law Center in New York. She is admitted to the New York Bar and United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit. She is a member of the American Immigration Lawyers Association, New York Bar Association and the Montgomery County Bar Association. Being an immigrant herself, Bandita feels closely connected to the immigrant community in US and she takes a personal interest in all the cases she handles. She has great respect for the rights and freedoms enshrined in the US constitution, and the important role a robust judiciary plays in safeguarding them. She admires the opportunities this country provides to everybody regardless of race, color, religion, gender, country of origin, or political affiliations. She was born and raised in Nepal. She has always been a passionate human rights advocate and at the early age of seventeen she was one of the founding members of Forum for Women Law and Development, internationally recognized Nepal based NGOs. She has conducted legal advocacy and awareness programs in rural areas of Nepal. She has represented Nepal in various international forums as a young advocate. During her LLM at Touro Law Center, her concentration was immigration law, human rights clinic and sex based discrimination. She was recipient of Touro law center public interest fellowship. She has interned at Center for Reproductive Rights, New York. She has also worked as of counsel for local attorneys. She has been an active pro bono attorney for Pennsylvania Immigrant Resource Center. She is an executive secretary of America-Nepal Women's Association of Greater Washington (ANWA). She is also a board member of Nepal Foundation. She is a frequent speaker on immigration conferences organized by organizations like ANA, NASEA (Nepalese Association of South East America). She was also in the 8th by-laws committee of NRN USA.

### **Yem Poudel (Panel on Media's Role in Improving Status of Women)**

Yem Poudel was a news reporter in the Pokhara/Shyangja district of Nepal, where he focused on issues such as the environment, education, and tourism. He is now affiliated with Nepal Post, Himali Sandesh in Japan, Pokhara Darpan, Hiral Bulletin, and [ymknepal.com](http://ymknepal.com) in Boston. He has published innovative articles on Nepali art and culture, NRN foreign policy, and social work. He also handles media communications for Greater Boston Nepali Community and the Pashupatinath Boudhha Foundation. He is a founding member of organizations such as the Hiral Foundation of Pokhara, Dirpa Memorial Renewable Fund and Ishwori Trust.

### **Anu Shah (Presenter; Panel on Right Based Approach to Empowerment)**

Anu Shah is a poet, song composer and lyricist. Living in the United States since 1995, she has a continued creative presence in the Nepali lyricist and poetic arena. Presently, she is teaching at the Two Little Owls school in Cambridge, Ma. She is actively involved in the Nepali social community in the Greater Boston Area. She is going to share her personal experiences to NWGN members on right based approach to empowerment.

### **Yaleena Shrestha (Panel on Socioeconomic Change)**

Yaleena Shrestha is a truly remarkable Nepali woman whose personal story of overcoming great obstacles personifies the very themes of this year's conference. She received her BA in Economics from Padma Kanya College, Kathmandu. She currently owns Tedeschi Food Shop and Cummings Beer and Wine Boutique. Yaleena serves as Treasurer of Greater Boston Community. She is life member of NWGN and is member of Greater Beverly Chamber of Commerce and the North Shore Landlord Association. Yaleena's path to successful entrepreneurship has not been an easy one. She emigrated from Nepal to join her husband in the U.S. She endured domestic violence and ultimately ended up being hospitalized and homeless. Despite her family's request to return home to Nepal, Yaleena persevered and decided that she was going to try to make it on her own. At one point, she worked three jobs simultaneously, saving money whenever she could and eventually opened Tedeschi Food Shop, worked from 3:30 in the morning to 11 at night, and paid back her starter loan in nine months! With her unstoppable work ethic and determined patience, her business ventures have now grown beyond belief.

### **Nirmala Sherchan (Panel on Socioeconomic Change)**

Nirmala Sherchan was born in Myagdi Nepal. She completed her high school from St. Mary's School and completed her B. Sc. From Tri Chandra College, Kathmandu, Nepal. She is married to Mr. Jeevan Sherchan and blessed with two beautiful daughters. As other many Nepalese, Ms. Sherchan immigrated to the United States, a place called Land of Opportunity in the year 1999. She started her career as a cashier in Dunkin' Donut where her starting wage per hour was a mere \$6.25. Because of her dedication, perseverance and hard work, she kept rising in the ladder and is now works as a store manager. Her Store now makes about \$40,000 a week. She believes in team work and about 20 Nepalese staff works in her store. Nirmala has always helped new immigrants and supported them by providing opportunity for their economic improvement and family stability. Apart from her busy work schedule, she is an active member of Nepali Women Global Network (NWGN) getting in many NWGN social activities to move the organization forward.

### **Sheela Manandhar (Panel on Socioeconomic Change)**

Sheela Manadhar is the youngest of three daughters of late Mr. Anand Kumar Rana and Mrs. Tika Pun. She is married to software engineer Binay Manadhar . Sheela is the owner of a Nepalese restaurant. The reason she opened the restaurant is solely to fulfill her father's wish. It was his idea of Nepal to the people of America by sharing her cuisine with its authenticity. Thus she opened Kathmandu Spice in Arlington, MA in October 2006. She has been running the restaurant business successfully. Apart from her restaurant business, she is actively involved in social activities, helping other women, encouraging for their economic stability and better lives.

### **Avima Uprety (Panel on Media's Role in Improving Status of Women)**

Avima Uprety is a legal assistant and media personality who has advocated for human rights issues, particularly those affecting Nepali women. Whether it has been as a news anchor for Kathmandu's Avenues Television or as program officer for the EU-funded "Safe Able Free and Empowered (SAFE) Media Project," Uprety has tried to raise awareness among Nepali citizens about their rights and the role of government in their lives. Uprety started her career interning with various legal advocates where she became intimately familiar with Nepal's legal system by working directly with clients. She also pursued a law degree at Purbanchal University's Kathmandu School of Law, eventually receiving an award from the Nepal Bar Council for getting the second highest score on the advocacy exam. Meanwhile, Uprety also worked as a news anchor for Avenues Television and a radio consultant and presenter for Interface Nepal, where she reported on human rights issues. She was also directly involved in the publication of the international report "Media in Nepal: Opportunities for Peace building."

### **Pradeep Thapa Magar (Panel on Media's Role in Improving Status of Women)**

Pradeep Thapa Magar has been in the journalism profession since 1991. He has edited more than a dozen magazines both in Nepal and abroad and has written extensively on issues ranging from climate change to political affairs. He has also published seven books, including a collection of poems.

Currently, he is the Editor-in-Chief of the New York-based Nepali news portal, USNepalOnline.com which was launched in 2007. As an IT professional, he also develops and edits websites and advises institutions and individuals on digital branding and social networking. He is an integral member of many Nepali advocacy groups including the Nepali Media Alliance, the Federation of Nepalese Indigenous Journalists, the Expatriate Nepali Journalists Network, the Global Federation for Nepali Literature, the Nepal-Hungary Friendship Association, and the Federation of Indigenous Peoples of Nepal in America. He has also served on the Membership Verification Committees of NRN USA and Nepal-America Journalist Association and currently serving on the Court-appointed ANA Election Committee.

### **Yerina Ranjit (Panel on Media's Role in Improving Status of Women)**

Yerina Ranjit is a fifth year PhD student at University of Connecticut's Department of Communication. Yerina's main interest lies in health communication in developing countries. Some of her research include interpersonal communication with mothers-in-law and its influence on maternal health behavior among Nepali women, HIV/AIDS related misconception and stigma, and road safety behavior. Her research interest include the role of mobile media and its role in improving mother and child health in Southeast Asian countries. She has also published and presented her research in several national conferences . Yerina has taught communication courses including introduction to human communication, public speaking and cross cultural communication at the University of Connecticut. She has also facilitated discussion on patient-provider communication for medical students, and organization communication in corporations in Kathmandu, Nepal. Prior to academic career, Yerina worked as a print and radio journalist in Nepal, Massachusetts and eastern Connecticut. She holds a master's degree in journalism from Northeastern University, Boston and a bachelor's degree in social work from Nirmala Niketan, College of Social Work, Mumbai.