

Profile of Gauri Pradhan



General Introduction:

Gauri Pradhan is the International Coordinator of LDC Watch, the executive head of the organization since mid-2015. He previously held office as a Commissioner and Spokesperson of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), a constitutional organ of Nepal. He is a well-known social activist and human rights defender in Nepal and South Asia. He is the founding President of a number of national institutes including a pioneer child rights organization CWIN - Nepal (Child Workers in Nepal) established in 1987. For his work on child rights and human rights in Nepal he has been conferred with a number of national and international honors including the *UNICEF Global Leadership on the Rights of the Child in 2000* along with Mr. Nelson Mandela, the former President of South Africa.

He was born on 5 August 1962 in Chautara, Sindhupalchok, Nepal. He did his schooling in his native village and higher studies in Kathmandu, the capital city of Nepal. He has studied Masters in Business Administration (MBA) and Bachelors in Law from Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu. He has also undertaken professional training on Human Rights, Child Rights, Human Resources Development on Poverty Alleviation, Conflict Management and Peace Building, Development Studies, Leadership Development, and Gender Justice at variety of international institutes.

By invitation, Gauri Pradhan has attended numerous international conference, seminars, symposiums, and dialogues on human rights, child rights and social development issues, both as a keynote speaker, advisor, and participant. Such engagements have led him to the United Kingdom, USA, Germany, Japan, China, Finland, Holland, Switzerland, Cambodia, Thailand, Iraq, India, The Philippines, Bangladesh, Hong Kong, Austria, Australia, Belgium, Denmark, Norway, India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Italy, Brazil, Chile, Argentina, Sweden, Norway, France, South Africa, Mozambique, Malaysia, Singapore, Kirgizstan, Poland, Turkey and Kenya. He has also widely travelled across the country during his field works, studies and human rights missions.

Involvement in Democratic Movements:

Since 1980, Gauri Pradhan has worked extensively in the pro-democracy movement in Nepal. Since then he has been an integral part of the broader civil society movement for democracy, human rights and social justice. He was the elected President of the University Free Students' Union from 1983-1985 and national president of ANNFSU playing a leading role in the movement for the restoration of democracy. During his student activism in 1980s, he was arrested and detained a number of times by the then dictatorial regime. As a representative of Asian Students Association (ASA), he has also extended his solidarity to the movement for the restoration of democracy in other Asian countries. During 1989/90, he has significantly mobilized the international support and solidarity in favour of Nepal's pro-democracy movement. He was again arrested in 2005 for his international campaign against the then dictatorial rule and for people's democracy in the country. Many International human rights organizations including Amnesty International had campaigned for his protection and urgent release at that time. He was later released by the decision of the Supreme Court of

Nepal. As an NHRC Commissioner and a member of the civil society, he has been working with utmost dedication in influencing Constituent Assembly for the formulation of human rights friendly and democratic constitution as well as sustainable peace in society.

Work on Human Rights:

He joined the first human rights organization in Nepal - FOPHUR (Forum for the Protection of Human Rights) - as the Secretary in 1986. He coordinated the first Asia regional seminar-workshop on Human Rights held in Kathmandu in 1986 under the repressive government. He was the executive coordinator of the National Election Observation Committee (NEOC) during the first democratically held General Elections in 1991. He is one of the founder members and National President of the Human Rights Alliance, a common platform of human rights organizations working throughout the country from the period of 2003-2007. Besides this, he has been an important part of the civil society initiatives to advocate for the rights of women, children, Dalit, persons with disability and Economic, Social and Cultural rights.

For last four and half years, Gauri Pradhan has been serving the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) of Nepal as one of the Commissioners and the Spokesperson. During this period he has led a number of fact-finding missions and forensic investigations on grave cases of human rights violations and abuses that occurred during a decade long armed conflict in Nepal. In the same capacity, he has also led a number of delegations to national and international forums on human rights and development held in different parts of the world. He has also played a significant role within the NHRC in introducing a number of guidelines and directives for the promotion and protection of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights in Nepal. As the head of the delegation he has also led a mission consisting of NHRC, National Women's Commission and National Dalit Commission to the UPR Session of Human rights Council held in Geneva in 2011. Likewise, he has been actively involved in dialogues at the highest national level on the issues of human rights, justice, and peace building in Nepal. What is more, he currently serves as Human Rights Adviser to the OECD Good Governance and Human Rights programme.

Work on Child Rights:

Immediately after graduating from university, and recognizing that the rights of the child were not being adequately considered in Nepal, Gauri Pradhan established the NGO called CWIN-Nepal, the pioneer child rights organisation in Nepal. During the 1980's Nepal was still in an era when an independent NGO movement had not yet taken root, and social work was limited to a few charity actions strictly under the government control. He became one of the pioneering leaders of a general movement for NGOs, and specifically to raise the voice of an independent civil society on issues such as child labour, child abuse, bonded labour, street children, human trafficking and child marriage, which were almost non-issues in the society at that time.

Gauri Pradhan also became the first national chairperson of Central Child Welfare Board (CCWB), the high level state organization on the rights of children, representing civil society. As the national coordinator, he was actively involved in the formulation of the "Ten Years National Plans of Action (NPA) for Children in Nepal for the period 2005-2014." He was the President of Children at Risk Networking Group (CAR-NWG) from 1992-1997. He had also

served the Global March against Child Labour as the South Asia Regional Coordinator and International Coordination Committee member from 2003-2007. Likewise, he was also nominated to act as an Adviser to the UN-NGO Committee on Violence against Children in 2006.

He has been also engaged in a number of rescue-operation of children at risk for protection including the repatriation of 138 trafficked girls to Nepal from Mumbai in 1996. He co-initiated the Women Defend Pressure Group and Alliance Against Trafficking in Women And Children together with women activists in Nepal.

Work on Conflict Transformation and Peace Building:

During and after the decade long armed conflict of Nepal in 1996-2006, Gauri Pradhan has initiated and joined a number of fact finding missions to monitor the violation of international human rights and international humanitarian laws in the conflict areas of Nepal. Likewise, he was a part of civil society initiatives for conflict transformation and peace building process between the State and the agitating CPN (Maoist). He has been actively engaged in Friends for Peace (FFP), a peace building research and 'think tank' institute, serving as the Secretary General from the time of its establishment in 2005. "Friends for Peace (FFP)", a civil society initiative that supports the peace process for the conflict transformation has been carrying out a number of research and policy-advocacy in the areas of conflict management and peace building in Nepal. He has been instrumental to help support the civil society facilitators to hold peace dialogue between conflicting parties and political parties both during the conflict and current transitional period. He was also a member of Ceasefire Monitoring Committee formed as per the Comprehensive Peace Accord in 2006.

He has conceptualised the 'Children as Zones of Peace' national campaign to protect children during the conflict situation in Nepal. The major political parties and the government of Nepal now fully endorse the campaign. He has also contributed a number of articles and papers on Children in Conflict, Conflict and Women, Conflict Transformation and Peace Building, Human Rights and Federalism based on his research, advocacy and experiences.

Social Service and Development Work:

Gauri Pradhan has also been contributing a great deal in the field of social service. Since his college days he has been engaged in social service in the areas of building schools, libraries, health centres, and blood donations in different communities. He has also helped establish a number of childcare centres, community child services, schools, colleges, and hospitals in various parts of the country. Furthermore, he has coordinated many emergency relief support programmes for the victims of natural disasters, armed conflict and pro-democracy movement. He has also successfully served as the national president of NGO Federation of Nepal for the period of 2001-2003. He was also a member of the National Development Council during 2001-2003. He has delivered statements in various development forums including in the EU parliament on the issues of Nepal's development and human rights in 2006. He has attended several international development forums including the World Congress on Social Development held in Copenhagen, Denmark, 1995, LDC Civil Society Forum held in Brussels-2001 and in Istanbul-2011 respectively.

Research, Training and Publications:

As a researcher, Gauri Pradhan has coordinated a number of research programmes on child rights issues, such as child labour, child protection, child education, social security, and on human trafficking and labour issues. He has been the coordinator of the Street Children's Project Review Team in Colombo, Sri Lanka, 1992, Convener of the Technical Committee on Children of the National Council of Women and Children, HMG/Nepal in 1996. He has also coordinated some international seminars- workshops and conference held in Nepal and abroad.

Gauri Pradhan has written, edited and published several books. Some of his selected publications are: State of Children in Nepal (1998, 1999, 2000), Misery Behind the Looms (1993), Urban Child Labour in Nepal (1992), Child Labour in Nepal (1993), Trafficking in Young Girls in Across Indo-Nepal Border (1992), Back Home from Brothels (1996 & 1997), Juvenile Justice in Nepal (1998), Unfair and Exploitative Labour Relations (1998), Child Sex Abuse in Nepal (1999), Management of Child Care Centers (1999), Children under the Whirlpool of War (2002), Children and Peace (2004), Child Protection (2004), and Children and Religion (2005) and over 200 working papers and academic articles on the rights issues, federalism, human rights, democracy, labour, conflict transformation, peace building and social justice.

He was the founding member and President of National Labour Academy, a research and resource centre for labour and development. He was one of the research advisers to the Rapid Assessment of the Worst Form of Child Labour jointly undertaken by the Central Department of Population Studies (CDPS, Tribhuvan University) and ILO in 1998.

Gauri Pradhan has so far trained over 1000 people from the government, law enforcing agencies, judiciary, NGOs, university, mass media and community organizations on the subjects of human rights, child rights, labour relations, trafficking, conflict transformation and development in the country and abroad.

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