

PROMISE PAPER

*An appeal to filmmakers, film professionals, actors, and cinema policy makers
from young women and girls of Nepal*

This Paper' is an appeal to filmmakers, film professionals, actors, and cinema policy makers from young women and girls of Nepal. Plan International Nepal's champions from it's Girls Get Equal campaign drafted this promise paper as a reaction after learning the realities of how women and girls have been represented in Nepal's cinema so far.

This letter is framed after multiple discussions with the girls– it is a positive call to filmmakers and film policy makers to consider equal representation of all gender, cast, and creed to find solutions and hope for the best.

On 2 June 2021, Plan International released a research paper called 'Representation of Women and Girls in Nepal's Cinema' written by Plan Nepal and Docskool. The paper reveals that Nepali films perpetuate harmful stereotypes preventing girls and young women from fulfilling their potential. The research also shows that Women and girls are rarely presented as leaders, and even when they are in leadership positions they are far more likely than men to be sexually objectified.

The research was released on the first day of 'Let's SHE-NEMA', a 4 day symposium. The letter is read out on the fourth and final day of the symposium on 5th June 2021 amidst film stakeholders- film producers, directors, and actors of Nepal's cinema and art sector.

The promise paper will be sent to Film Development Board Nepal along with other stakeholders of the Girls Get Equal Representation campaign.

Here we call every individual to be part of our demand for equal representation of girls and women on the screen while calling out the harmful damaging stereotypes portrayed on the screen.

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Dear Storytellers, and Policymakers, Do Better.

We love the magical world of films, who doesn't? The songs, the dancing, the dialogues, but we don't watch Nepali films anymore.

Because one after the other, your films echo the same message, that my dreams don't matter, I don't matter. That my hopes of studying computers and becoming a hacker are foolish because once I grow up, all I'm good for is to be a lover or a wife.

According to Plan International Nepal's research 'Representation of Women and Girls in Nepal's Cinema', from 47 films and out of 102 women characters analyzed, only 5 women characters were shown to have a mission beyond romance.

Dear Storytellers, and Policymakers, Do better.

Why don't I ever see someone like me dream big and achieve it? Why can't women ever stand up for themselves?

Why are my sisters dressed in skintight clothes for lusty eyes to drool when they themselves can hardly move or breathe? In the same research, 35% films had at least one item song that normalized men staring at women in such sequences. Why are women beaten and raped only as a plot device for a man to prove his character? 43 out of 47 films had scenes of violence against women and 14 had instances of rape.

We see no difference between the man who kidnaps and the one who saves. They both use us.

You use us. For fame and money. In the adult world is money bigger than morality?

Dear Storytellers, and Policymakers, Do better.

You are the elders, the ones we look up to, our guides to the world, but do you ever even think of us? Because you're breaking our hearts and dreams of an equal future when your art reinforces the very stigma we fight hard to end every day. Your choice to prioritize cheap thrills over your art's impact on the society, has given the Nepali film industry a bad name. And now even when we dream of working in films, our families and schools advise us otherwise.

There are only 15 women registered in the Nepal's Director's Guild. Only 3 films are directed by women out of 75 films released every year.

Sometimes, I wish I was a boy because boys get to dream and have ambition. "They are the heroes while all we do is cook yet stay thin, bear discrimination and torture but smile and look pretty."

But we will not give up. The present will not be the future because now we will write our own poems, we will rewrite films and create art. And don't you worry, because when the time comes for us to be storytellers and policymakers, we'll write a world that is fair and treats everyone with the dignity they deserve. We will ensure fair representation of every caste, class and gender identity. We will hold hands in support and make this world a better place for all.

Dear Storytellers and Policymakers, do better because we're watching you.

Girls Get Loud, Girls Get Equal!