

Mohna Ansari, a locally well-known rights activist, and Nepal's only female Advocate (lawyer) from the Muslim community, was appointed as a member of the National Women Commission in June 2010.

A resident of Banke, Nepalganj, Ms Ansari started her social career as the local journalist at a very young age, reporting mainly on women's and children's issues. At the same time, she became involved with the work of Amnesty International and some women's groups at the regional level. She was also appointed as a member of the Regional Sports Development Committee for Mid Western Region in 1994.

After graduating in law in 2003, Ms Ansari was elected to the member of Nepal Bar Association Banke and started to oversee the Legal Assistance Program that aimed to provide legal assistance to victimized and needy women and children.

Together with her social work, linked with women's organizations and activists, she took up a professional career in 2004 working with national and international organizations in the area of women's rights, empowerment, justice and equality. She has worked with Action Aid Nepal, Women's Power Development Centre Nepal and UNDP. Her recent work was a "research" assignment on the social inclusion of Muslims in Nepal which she did for the National Inclusion Commission, working in a team of experts appointed by SNV/Nepal.

Ms Ansari has travelled and worked in more than 40 out of 75 districts across the country including the more remote ones, interacted with the communities living there, and closely observed the status of Nepalese women in all regions. The exposure gave her an opportunity, in her own words, to understand that, "Nepalese women face discrimination and in-equality in every community. However, sufferings faced by the women of Dalit, Madheshi and Muslim communities, especially in remote areas are incomparable".

Having received several training on gender and equity, conflict resolution, peace building and mediation, she graduated from a short course on "Human Rights and Peace Studies" conducted by South Asian Forum For Human Rights (SAFHR) in 2004. Ms Ansari is also a master trainer of "gender and equity concerns".

Ms. Ansari has always been a person committed to advocating for the rights of women in underprivileged groups/communities. Her work was recognized publicly when "Nepal Weekly" featured her in its 2063 Bhadra 25 edition, reporting about her work in the Muslim community. She has also been featured in documentaries about development issues aired on TV as well as the official website of The Asia Foundation features her under the heading "portraits of leadership". Her articles on women issues have been published by the national dailies such as Kathmandu Post.

Ms Ansari has also participated in several international forums presenting Nepali women's issues. She participated in international conferences in India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, and USA. She was nominated as one of the 10 Asian women presented as the "portraits of leadership" in an event organized by The Asia Foundation in USA California in 2008.

Ms Ansari sees her appointment to the National Women Commission as an opportunity to contribute to policy development at the national level for development of economic, social, cultural and human rights of Nepalese women.