



CRUSADERS OF CHANGE



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END OF GAMBLING ERA



Bimala Lama
Fakhel-1, Makwanpur
45 years

"Two years ago, there was a discussion on forming a Ward Citizen Forum in our village. Though it was not for the first time, the formation was beyond our notice. But this time we were fortunate both because of the formation of the Forum and enhanced with the opportunity to know more about how the Forum functions," said Bimala's Lama of Ekupata Community Discussion Center. She further added that the details of Forum formation was described well in the book provided during the preliminary discussion classes and the facilitator had also talked much more about the formation. As a result of that we decided to participate in the Forum in good numbers, she said adding.

UNPRECEDENTED ACHIEVEMENT

In the past, the women in the village were confined only in the kitchen. In the recent meeting, women shared their travelling experiences to Katmandu valley, and meeting with the President, and other key political leaders. They are now capable of presenting and circulating women right in different forums, to make other women conscious about their rights through drama, and Nepali calendar. This was a great achievement.

Dhan Bir Shangtang

President, Management Committee, Kaliki secondary School, Fakhel

After that we were all set to participate in the Forum. It took quite a long time than expected as we couldn't decide about whom to participate. Everyone recommended the name of Bimala for the post of member of Forum. Based on the decision made in the meeting center, Bimala's was selected as the member of the Forum. She also vowed to actively participate in the forum. Bimala's, who believed her participation in the Forum would prove worthy of only if she could integrate programs and policies for the rights of women, echoing to a saying-morning shows the day.

In the same year, under her initiations the Village Development Committee (VDC) allocated some budget to provide women with different trainings related in preparing pickles and herbal soaps, as an attempt to make women financially sound and self dependent. Twenty one women participated in the training related to preparation of pickles and other 21 participated in preparing herbal soaps. Bimala's herself received training for preparing pickles.

"We had been preparing pickles before the participation in the training but during the training period we realized that there were lots of things to bear in mind while preparing pickles," she said adding. According to her, she has been selling pickles in the shops located in the village and the incomes have remained helpful to meet her expenses.

This was the case of last year. This year too, under her initiation, the Village Development Committee has allocated some budget to train women on preparation of dry foods and velvet shoes. Bimala's informed that the training is

soon to start and all the related preparation was over. After the last year's training provided to the women in the village, other remaining woman who were only confined at their household chores in the past, has been busying themselves in preparing soaps, dry foods and pickles among others. Those women who missed the training opportunities last year have now started inquiring about such training with great enthusiasm. This was the reason behind the allocation of the budget from VDC for the training purpose, according to Bimala's.

After she was part of meeting center, Bimala's was encouraged to contribute something for the sake of village, society, and community people. There are many works initiated by her. Among them was regulation in gambling and playing cards in the village. With the growth in trends of gambling and playing cards, the money meant for purchasing books and stationeries was spent in playing cards and those claiming themselves about not having money to buy spices were found in the gambling dens. As a result of that there were disputes between husband and wife and whole the society seemed victimized by the malpractices. And it was obvious that the malpractices couldn't hide from meeting center's notice. Bimala's said, "After that we carried out intensive discussion on the issues and on the modality of controlling such problem existing in the village."

As a result of that we came to a conclusion. The conclusion was—to aware about villagers about not playing cards and gamble, and to dispatch public notices with the warning of financial penalties in case anyone was found playing cards or gamble. The issue was also raised every fortnightly meeting of the agricultural groups, bearing in mind that the message could be more effective, there as the number of male members was higher in comparison to women. It was decided that those involved in playing cards would be charged with Rs 10,000 and those found involved in operation of the gambling would be fined with Rs 5,000. Even the male participants of the meeting also encouraged the decision naming it a 'nice work'.

Then without any further delays, the participants of the discussion center began their campaign actively. They first identified the gambling dens and spots of such unlawful activities and visited such spots and dens to aware the gamblers, operators. While inspecting one of the operators of such gambling dens—Sunn Bahadur Pakhrin—was warned of not repeating such unlawful activities again. Those involved in playing were found ashamed and guilty of their act. After Sunn Bahadur claimed that he was unaware about the public notice beforehand and assured of not repeating again, the team of nine women returned back from there. Bimala's claimed, "I don't know if anyone was playing undercover but to my knowledge no one was found to have playing cards or gambling in the village since the last year."

The initiation by Bimala and her group was not confined only in empowering women and controlling gambling in the village. There are other important areas that the group worked on. After the devastating earthquake, the source of water level was very low in the village. It was very hard for them to get drinking water and had to walk more than an hour to get just five litres of water in the gallon. They were compelled to buy drinking water. As the discussion center was major forum to discuss vital issues and problems existing in the village and hence the issue related to water shortage was not an exception for the group to discussion on. Consequently, the issues discussed and the decision made in the forum was the matter of concern of every single villagers.

Yet again, the meeting center reached a conclusion that they had to find some solution to end the problem related to drinking water supply. As huge budget was needed, they concluded with the decision to knock the door of district headquarters. Renu Dimdung, Bhim Bahadur Moktan, Kanchha Ram Bal and Bimala's herself accompanied to the district headquarters. After repeated follow up, they were able to get a budget comprising sum of Rs 400,000. Bimala's was selected as a treasurer of the consumer's committee for drinking water project. As the works of water supply were about to kick off in few days, she now believes that villagers will soon get pure water for drinking.

A woman with dark hair tied back, wearing a red long-sleeved shirt with black and white horizontal stripes across the chest, and a red sarong with a white floral pattern, stands next to a large, weathered concrete structure. The structure appears to be a well or a small building. The background shows a hilly landscape with bare trees and some greenery. The lighting suggests it's daytime.

**BIG ENDEAVOR BY
COMMON WOMAN**



Sanu Rimal Karki

Markhu-1, Makwanpur

40 years

Women in the village are worried for water even for a whole day. Why they should not? Women have fetched water from Ushin Kholsa, a gorge in the hilly region, located in two hours of walking distance from the village. Despite of their hard efforts to get water, they could hardly fetch pure and edible water. A part from that leeches were other problem during rainy season. Because of their mothers spending more time to fetch water, even the studies of their children got badly affected as they couldn't give more time to them.

The water problem is so huge; therefore, it has been discussed in Satyaswor women group. Sanu Rimal Karki, president of Satyaswor women group, proposed to solve the water problem in the village. All 26 participants clapped in the support of the proposal and appreciated her.

Despite of their decision to solve the water related problem there were many questions arising alongside. The major questions were related to the resources and gathering people for the noble cause. There were other prompt issues arising alongside. But, women in the group, who had never learnt to step

back, dared to continue with their vision. As per their strategy, women invited their male partners in a group and let them know about their plan for solving the water problem. And obviously there was no chance of any denials against the proposal. The males in the villages also assured to join hand in hand to end the long lasting water problem in the village.

The male groups set out to find the origin of water source as per the plan. The water source was found in the Budi forest. Previously few attempts were made to connect the water supply to Sarwang village of same V.D.C but that couldn't be possible as the source was below the village. After that the origin of water-level, which was 10 meters deep inside the tank build to collect water, was left abandoned. The successful attempt to find the water source brought happiness among the villagers and villagers gathered to observe the source of the water.

Sanu and others in the group were worried about how they could carry the water to the village. That was one of a big challenge for them. But, they didn't weaken their hearts. RADO Nepal, which had been working in their village, provided them with the pipes to bring water to the village. They also decided to use unused pipes left in the village for the purpose. They were now in need of tanks among others. They visited to village development committee (V.D.C) and floated their strong proposal for the task they required.

The task to deal with the VDC official was not that easy. That was really a tough task. They hardly quarreled. They argued for the budget and questioned them about why they should not get pure water to drink. Finally, she and her team were able to convince the officials. They had sought Rs 300,000 but were assured of only Rs 165,000 only. They decided to divide the budget among two adjoining village as well.

The problems still continued to follow

them after they started construction of water tank. The budget allocated for was insufficient. In order to manage the budget crisis, Sanu started collecting Rs. 1000 from each houses in the Sera village. In the process of collecting money, she was blamed; many denied giving money, but Sanu never got disturbed. She even alerted villagers to not supplying the water to those not providing money. Even after Rs 1000 was collected from the villagers, the budget was not sufficient.

First, women purposed to collect Rs. 2000 for each house but thinking that it would be hard to collect Rs 2000 at a time they made a covert plan to collect Rs. 1000 in the first phase and remaining Rs 1000 in second phase. Moreover, the plan was implemented by collected another Rs 1000 for 31 houses from the village.

The pipes were arranged, tank was constructed but water taps were yet to be constructed. The villagers were ready for contributing their labors but they were still running out of raw material like cement, concrete blocks, and metal taps among other. There was no budget for. The central level meeting was held to solve the problem. As it is said where there is will, there is a way, they ended up with a conclusion to request a Thresher factory that was running at the bank of Palung River. At their first attempt, the factory also agreed to provide necessary blocks, cement and sand for making water taps. Even after those arrangements, Sanu and her group members were not confident about the completion of the construction easily. They were still in doubts about the budget as there were other stuffs needed for the construction.

Sanu shared the problem in the joint political mechanism. Political representatives suggested them to manage from the unspent money reserved in the VDC. They also suggested them to immediately lobby the VDC officials for the purpose. According to their suggestion, Sanu with no delays

set up meeting with them. Consequently, they were able to bag Rs. 50,000 and some additional requirements were fulfilled by some dues.

This level of awareness and courage in Sanu and the group members was the result behind the success of making the Sera village independent for water supplies. Now, the water taps were distributed as per the population in the families of each area. Some taps were for 3 houses, some were for 5 houses, some were for 2 houses, and even 6 houses shared a single tap depending upon the water force outting the tap. The water is distributed in the morning starting from 5 am to 10 am, and in the evening starting from 4pm to 7 pm. The water is not only used for drinking, but it has also helped making the kitchen garden more fertile. They collect Rs. 20 every month from each household and have employed one person from the village to take care, maintain water tank. Every month, Sanu is routine to visit individual houses to collect Rs. 20. I am not annoyed to collect Rs 20 from each house every month but feel happy about that, she said.

The level of awareness and consciousness generated from meeting centers helped bringing positive changes in the village. At the present, Sanu has been selected as a president of village level committee to monitor the negative impact brought by Thresher factory. She has given an ultimatum to the factory operator to maintain the damaged road by gravelling within a period of one month. In the support of Rado, an NGO, the village is named as pollution free village. She also heads that campaign. A part from that V.D.C has also allocated Rs. 150,000 (one Lakhs fifty thousand) to construct a vegetable storage center in the village. Sanu is also appointed as a president of the committee formed to construct the vegetable storage center. "All the achievement and courage I have received so far is the result of the meeting center," she said while describing her success.



**EMPOWERMENT
IN REAL SENSE**



Lalita Thapa Magar

Markhu-4, Makwanpur

35 years

About two and half years ago, Samjhana Balami, a social leader, reached the village with the concept to form community meeting center in Barjmat tole aiming at women empowerment. While promoting her idea among the women in the village about her objectives and related activities, Samjhana proposed Lalita Thapa Magar for the post of president. Lalita was nervous and ashamed with red face, bearing in mind about how a woman could lead any group? But everyone others too forced her to take up the post, she was compelled accept the proposal and nodded saying 'ok'.

After 6 months of meeting center's establishment

They decided to form a V.D.C level women network so that they could effectively

manage women targeted budget allocated for the VDC communities. This time, no one had to request or force Lalita to take up the leadership of the network of the women. Lalita showed her interest to remain in the network as a treasurer of a group and finally she was a treasurer.

After being treasurer

After Lalita became treasurer of a women group network, she was invited from various sectors in the community. During the time, she had to frequently visit VDC office for various reasons like planning among others. In the meantime, she could closely get to know more about the VDC budget. She was more interested in the budget meant for women empowerment. Lalita was willing to invest women targeted special budget on women development and awareness. Therefore, Lalita regularly conducted discussions about and where to investment women centric special budget in the meeting center.

Last year, the women centric budget was just Rs.267,000(Two Lakhs sixty seven thousand), Lalita said addin, the women network had received Rs.160,000(One Lakh sixty thousand) from VDC and trained interested women to make soaps.

The remaining amount was deposited in the local cooperatives, said Lalita. This year, the total budget is Rs.525,000(Five lakhs twenty five thousand). Of the total budget, Rs 200,000 was allocated for Uterus prolapse Health Camp, Rs. 100,000 for Velvet shoes making and Rs 1,00,000 for field visit, Rs 50,000 was separated for

increasing capacity and skills of women, Rs. 50,000 for female health workers, and Rs. 24,000 was separated under other important topics.

Lalita said, she was unknown about the women centric special budget before she had joined the meeting center. She now understands more than she actually needed to about the roles of the V.D.C. and its work procedures. In the past, other people had to speak in favor of women and women centric budget but now women started to speak for themselves. Lalita said, "Women have become capable and independent. As a result of that there has been no intervention in the budget meant for women."

Village in a light:

Lalita's active initiations in enquiring women centric budget for her village and help making woman become independent and capable, brought many positive changes in the village. Kripa Bisata, a member of meeting center, was manhandled by her husband and mother-in-law. In order to resolve the problems the meeting center called both Kripa's husband and mother-in-law and counselled them for their behavioral changes. Kamala Bista and her husband in their old ages, were complained of victimized by their own grandson. In this case too, she helped in resolving problem witnessed in the family. In both the cases, Lalita was initially threatened by the alleged, but she was not hesitated or scared of those threats but instead she was more dedicated and stronger to support the helpless and empower the women via meeting center, the hope and the strength of all the village women.

The keen interest of Lalita and other members of the center to build the village could also be noticed after their initiations in construction of the road. The road was constructed in the contribution of labor from the villagers. Lalita said, "Sometime three members of my family contributed in the road construction."



Women equally competent to men

Women in the village, under the leadership of Lalita, have proved themselves about their competencies, capabilities and knowledgeable like men were in the past. For instances, when a widow Ganga Thapa was serious during her pregnancy, women in the village gathered and immediately carried her to the nearest health post. Unlike in the past, this time they didn't have to burrow support from the male members of the village. The attempt of the women implicated that women if united could do works like a physical fit or muscular men could do. There are many other such stories of their exemplary and exceptional works. At present, if any female in the village got sick or needed to be taken to the hospital, they do not have to wait for their male partners. They collect money in their own initiation and take them to hospital if anyone got sick in the village.

COURAGEOUS WOMEN OF MEETING CENTER

"Even if I am not a member of the meeting center, I am very much amazed and jealous to see the courage and team work of women from meeting center. At present, with the help of different local bodies, we were successful to distribute 3-phase electricity, and constructed water tank for drinking water," said Sabitri Gautam, President, Khimkhet drinking water and sewerage group. She also informed that they got support from the members of meeting center to make the project successful.



**WORRIES FOR
SCHOOL**



Kamala Waiba

Sisneri-5, Makwanpur

26 years

The meeting center in the village was recently established. Since there was no school, health posts, community forest, drinking water and sewerage committee, the consequences added more burdens on the part of the women. Because of which, women had to suffer a lot. With the facilitators there were many problems discussed and focused would be again the role of women in the village and their extraordinary performances. Likewise, the discussion in Sungabha community meeting center was of great importance in the life of Kamala Waiba. She not only heard about the words expressed during meeting but also she internally desired to represent such bodies in the local level.

In the meantime, time for selecting management committee of Ajadeshor secondary school had approached them. Everyone in the village was aspiring to get the new president. Likewise, the topic was also strongly discussed in the meeting center, where Kamala was a member. During the meeting the group decided to propose Kamala as the president of school

management committee.

Kamala was the first choice for everyone in the group. Though 22 women member in meeting center equally and actively participated in every activities of the village, Kamala was the first choice as she was more determined to solve the problems despite of her households works and could manage participating every events in the village amidst her busy schedule that includes caring of four children and husband away in Kathmandu for other jobs.

Finally, Kamala was selected as a president of school management committee and everyone praised her achievements with wide hearts. They said the achievements were also possible because of her logically powers and patience to listen the problems.

Proving the expectations of the people, Kamala brought many positive changes in as the president of school management committee. Based on the complaints by the students about their parents deploying them in cleaning and transporting drinking water, despite of the fact that there were office assistants assigned for the job, she strictly instructed to not to misuse the students on the office works. As a result of that, student do not have to work now, those who are assigned for job accomplices them and the school is also clean, water is also available there.

When an english teacher got transferred from the school, problem evolved in recruiting new teacher as a replacement. There was a female English teacher but she didn't showed interest in teaching the subject when principal Pralahad Regmi approached her for the job. The study of students was continued to remain hampered as she refused the proposal. Kamala heard of the problem and set out to take some initiation. Kamala in

coordination with principal of the school requested the female English teacher. To everyone's surprise she agreed to teach english subject and student were happier then.

The reconstruction of school building damaged by earthquake was the most challenging job awaiting Kamala. She visited district education office (DEO) with principal of the school. With hard efforts, the DEO agreed to provide budget for the reconstruction of school building under the condition that all the make-shift huts used as the classrooms, donated by different I/NGOs, were removed. Even if Principal Regmi could not give much time for the purpose after he was sick, Kamala, continued to followed the instruction from DEO. She deployed people to remove all the make-shift huts from the school premises on the given time and hence finally, school got budget. The construction works are underway and DEO Chief also promised to provide furniture for the school, Kamala said. I am very desperate to see the complete school building, she added.

Kamala has made an extraordinary example to Sesne's village people, who used to underestimate/ question her and women's real potential and capacity. Now, students are also happy as their complaints were heard by School Management Committee.



POLICE ACCLAIMS CENTER'S ROLE IN MAINTAINING LAW AND ORDER

Although, police is responsible for maintaining law and order in the community, the contribution of the meeting center in different V.D.Cs in Sesneri, has helped in regulating alcoholism and gambling. And, the initiation has been completely successful and village free from alcoholism and gambling. As a result, the domestic violence against women has been reduced. Personally, I have also visited women of meeting and encourage them for their courage. Also, if any one of you get threaten from anywhere, then please inform police. Police will help you in any situation. The initiation taken by women help police in achieving their goal- said Devendra Rana, In charger police station Sesneri, Makwanpur.



मानवसंसाधन विकास विभाग
महिला-६ ओएसडी
महिला-६
संस्था-२०८५

**BUILT OWN
BUILDING**



Susmita Blown

Sisneri-4, Makwanpur

38 years

Recently, the meeting center was started in the village but there was no place for the meeting. But also, meeting conducted in the open space in the village. There were 29 women in meeting center. During the meeting, women started to identify the solution to problem for place. Different difficulties came up while conducting meeting in an open space. First, the meeting is cancelled due to rain. Second, the meeting is not comfortable to organize in sunny days, and last the open space is near to the road. The vehicle noise, dust and smoke irritate the meeting members. Despite the discussion were organized in relevant, important and contemporary issues, meeting members could not concentrate.

How long do the women have to come up with such intolerable situation? One day there was a vigorous discourse in the discussion center. Members participating in the discussion came up with different alternatives to sort out the place for meeting. Some suggested about vacant homes owned by somebody else, some opined that terrace would be a better place while some preferred open space within the forest. While undergoing discussion, a unique proposal

stroke our mind which was building of children development centre established in the village. The building had remained vacant after it was destroyed by the quake hit.

The proposal was unanimously passed. But, there was no budget and resources needed for the reconstruction building. Thereafter, Villager was called in the meeting center to ask them for help us in the reconstruction of the building. We played Deusbhailo, and collected Rs. 6000. The money was only sufficient for making doors and windows. Other, necessarily blocks were supported by the individual houses in the villages. Male partners help in building foundation and roof of the building, whereas other remaining work was done by the women of meeting center. The snacks and other expenses were made by participants of women center themselves. That's how the building was ready- said Sushmita Blon.

It was very surprising to get the active support of male members. Even if they were not associated with the center, they contributed in building construction. From this success, Women were motivated and encouraged to move forward and achieved another victory for widening road up to the village. These achievements were received in Sushmita leadership. It was very dangerous, smooth, sloppy, and narrow road. Many people fell down and got injured. During night, and raining season, it was very risky to walk in that road. Now, everyone can walk very easy in any time. For this courage in me, I would like to thanks meeting center-said Sushmita.

Despite of the fact, the main aim to construct the building was organizing the meeting, but now, it is used for many purposes. It has been very easy and convenient for mother groups, farmer groups, drinking water and sewerage group, ward citizen form, community forest groups, and other local bodies as well. Not only meeting, various training has been conducted by herbal groups and

cooperatives. We were unaware of the fact that many people are very positive towards us after the construction of building, and we are very much happy now-said sushmita

Furthermore, Sushmita added we are planning to charge certain amount of money for training and meeting other than meeting center. The money will be invested in garbage management, to buy furniture, cushions and white board etc. If we can manage resources in the building, then can be use for multipurpose, and earn money too. After my affiliation in meeting center, We got an opportunity to participate in the public advocacy and social transparency training. It makes use clear on issues such as importance of citizenship, communal land certificate, said Sushmita. In addition, I learnt the issue of communal land certificate and advocating other too for the same. When I talked with my husband, he was very happy for us. The learning and knowledge gained for training is effective if we can implement it on our life and aware other on same issues. Otherwise, it is like the waste of time.

Sushmita used to be a victim of domestic violence. Her husband physically abused her from 20 years but, she never speaks against him. After she joined meeting center, she realized that she was manhandled by her husband. Prabin (her husband) was called in meeting center for counseling after she shared with women in meeting center. Women counseled him for three to four times, but there was no any change in his behavior. Immediately, Meeting center decided to take him to the police station although, he was so loyal in front of police, and be same at home.

The ignorance prabin was intolerable for Sushmita and meeting center women. Prabin started to threaten women if complained the police. Finally, women jointly carried him for interrogation. This time, police gave the ultimatum to prabin. Now, all are amazed to see good man. He started to respect, love Sushmita. Sushmita is very happy now. And thanks to meeting center for their help. It the proudest moment for me said Sushmita.





**IDEAL WORK BY
IDEAL COUPLE**



Buddhimaya Bal

Kulikhani-5, Makwanpur

34 years

What do you do early in the morning?

Buddhimaya- I go to forest for woods and bring grass for cattle.

What time are you back to home?

Around 9:30 am.

Who cook morning meal for your family?

Krishna Kumar (Her husband)- I will cook morning meal.

What do you do in the home?

I cook morning meal, prepared our two daughter for school. And, have my morning meal and go to my office-Road Department.

Who look after buffalo, goat? Who wash clothes?

Both of speak we jointly look after buffalo, goats and wash clothes as well.

This is the daily routine of Buddhimaya and Krishna Kumar, residential of Lambagar. But, the relation between them was worse.

Buddhimaya said Krishna kumar used with come home drinking alcohol. He used to scold her and physically abuse. They always fight, and did not to work as well. Buddhimaya was frustrated and depression with her husband behavior. The budget meant for the stationary of children was invested in purchasing alcohol by him. Along with Buddhimaya her children were also worried with their father habit.

Krishna kumar quickly replied- After I joined the male classes.

According to him, about 2 years ago he has joined community meeting center at Lambagar. Every Saturday, meeting center was organized for men, whereas, on monthly basis, interaction between men and women was organized on gender issues. The behavioral change of Krishna Kumar is the result of community meeting, and interaction between men and women. Therefore, he realized and regrets inhuman behavior toward his wife and started loving, caring and supporting her in every work.

Furthermore, Krishna Kumar added- first I was trapped to participate in the meeting center when facilitator of meeting center called me. I joined without any hope to learn anything new. But, it sounded great and useful when I participated in the discussion. I used to attend every community meeting and program whenever it is possible for me. Because of which, I am good husband instead of being a drunkard.

Buddhimaya added with Krishna Kumar- Truly, my husband is a gentle man. Nowadays, He does not drink alcohol neither beat me. Only during festival, he drinks with my consent. Though, he is very silent and clam. He discussed for anything and respects my decision as well. Krishna Kumar works in Road Department in a contract and his salary is monthly RS. 15, 000 (Fifteen thousand only). He hands his salary over his wife. Wife Buddhimaya gives daily Rs.50 for Tiffin to husband. When in the village

meeting center started, not only we, but you can find many couple, who are spending their successful happy life-said Krishna Kumar.

Krishna Kumar used to drink alcohol and stay free for whole day due to which, he has wrong friend circles. But now, he is very busy working in home and supporting his wife in household. He clarified the busy day as a reason for stopping drinking alcohol. Also Buddhimaya added- sometimes I asked him to join me for drinking but, he never drinks.

Another behavioral change came after joining the meeting center was concept for gender equality among husband and wife. The parent of 4 daughter started tuition of 7 grade daughters. For one daughter, they spend Rs.700 for the tuition fee. Both husband and wife in one voice said both son and daughter are same for us. We provide them good education and make them good human being. Other daughters, one is pursuing her 5 grade and other in class one nearer to their home.

Last Mangsir, these couple were honored by community meeting center with best couple in the village. The certificated awarded was great assets for them, which has been decorated in the wall of their house. Also, they proudly show the certificate to every relatives visiting to their home. Now, the picture of this home is wife is making carpet,



husband is cooking food for all and children are reading. That is normal story of this house. Two years ago, it was very rare to see.

Now, Krishna Kumar deeply loves his wife. Life insurance was done by Krishna Kumar for his wife. They deposited RS 13,000 as premium every year. Krishna Kumar further added she use to work risky job, and bring grass for cattle from inclined slope. Also, she saved small amount of money in cooperatives. Therefore, life insurance is necessary for her more than me.



ASPIRE TO BE A DAUGHTER OF KHULEKHANI

My organization has selected me as a moderator/facilitator of meeting center. Ward number 5 village is so much scattered that it very difficult to conduct one time discussion. Therefore, I decided to conduct discussion in three different places- Gogeni about an hour distance, Bhalukhark 2 hours distance, and Chuhawan 3 hours distance from my house. The discussions were conducted on weekly basis for 2 days in one meeting center, whereas Saturday the discussion is held for men group. It is difficult for me but I am happy with what I am doing. For this reason, I am indentified as a daughter of Khulekhani. Sunita Bal, Moderator, Kulekhani-5, Makwanpur



**AWARENESS THROUGH
DRAMA SCREENING**



Nanimaya Shyangtan

Kulekhani-7, Makwanpur

25 years

In a hilly village, where early marriage, gambling, alcoholism and domestic violence against women were deep-rooted, the women had to work harder in comparison to their male partners, who stay idle and inheriting negative attitudes towards wives. This was the situation of women in the village and women were unable to change their behavior. Nanimaya Tamang, felt this is unjust and inhuman behavior, but how she can control them?

Nanimaya Tamang joined the community meeting center started in the villages. She

felt very blessed to in that center. When she regularly participate in the meeting center she was aware of many alternatives to control such inhuman deform. Nanimaya knew the power of unity to tackle with such inhuman practices prevailing in community. With the support and courage of moderator and women in meeting center, she aspires to reduce such inhuman practices for the community.

Drama could be the best way to raise awareness in the community, for which, the selection of interested candidate is ongoing in meeting center. Nanimaya showed her interest to play drama, and through the mutual consent she representing through Mangal community meeting center. Actually, she is happy and counting day for the drama training.

Nanimaya spend one week for drama training in Godawari, Kathmandu,, and 11 days in Surkhet. Also, she prepared drama near to her village-Fakhel and screened in four places of same village. The 2-2 member from 5 V.D.C of Makwanpur district made a drama team of 10 people and planned to screen in 4 V.D.Cs.

Nanimaya's characterized the role of early marriage, house wife, and other. These role are praised and appreciated by the audiences. Therefore, she feels this is the right place and job for her. In the beginning,



she felt little difficult to present in front of larger mass, but now, she thinks drama is her passion. when she I used to be alone in home or room, she flashed back her struggle and remembered audience positive feedback that energizes, motivates and encourages me moving ahead-said Nanimaya Tamang.

A shaman or traditional healers cured the pregnant women instead of taking her in hospital, chant and magic are used to change the sex of a girl are most revolutionary character played by Nanimaya. In doing, she was rebuke by audiences, and it was a path to my success said Nanimaya. The audience used their wisdom to judge or evaluate the existing mal-practice in society, she adding said. This success could not compare with anything else. I believe I am reaching to the heart of the audiences for internalizing the issues for gender equality. Nanimaya wants to dedicate rest of her life in raising awareness on social issues though acting and drama.

Not only in acting/drama, is she equally active in social work. The experiences and

learning of meeting center made her capable of holding leadership for the construction of road from Devtar to Pyutar. The money, collected from 31 household on Rs. 3/3 thousand basis, was further, used for dozer to widen and gravel the road. She highlighted the importance of road construction, was also for bringing cement, stones, and other item up to the village, which is necessary for the reconstruction of houses destroyed by earthquake hit.

Otherwise, the transportation cost is more expensive than the cost of goods and item. Also, villagers have to carry it to the village. Therefore, we were determined to construct the road. During the process, we collaborated and make people understand the importance of road in the village to those, who were not willing to provide their land. But, most people supported us. From this achievement and good work, people are helping us as well. Now, I am a member of Amar Sana Kishan cooperative. Before, the cooperative is not interested for my membership, but I fight to this position.



THIS IS AN ERA OF WOMEN

Although, I am the president of Road construction user committee, almost all the work is done by the women of meeting center. The concept for the construction of road was brought by women of meeting center, therefore, they are actively engaged in. In the starting time, villager did not provide their land for road construction. Then, we talked to the children of villagers who used to stay in Kathmandu valley. The idea of convincing parents through children was successful. Otherwise,

in our generation we were unable to construct the road to village. Women of meeting center helps to get these tricks, therefore I prefer to help them in any possible situations.

Hari Krishna Sapkota

President, Devlatar road user committee, Kulekhani, Makwanpur



**RAM BAHADUR
CHANGED**



Ram Bahadur Dangi

Lekhparajul-4, Surkhet

62 years

I started drinking and gambling when I was 17 years old. I used to in wrong friends circles in the age to read, write, and work. Because of which, the door for success were closed for me. Similarly, I got married and have children, and nephew in the span of time. Our family asked me to stop drinking, but it was my childhood habit, therefore, I was not in the side to stop. Due to which, my family never stay happy, had always some sort of money crisis, and mostly, we had fight in the family- said Ram Bahadur Dangi.

In the month of Shawarn, 2017, whole village was adversely affected by flood and

landslide. The days of Ram Bahadur passed were surrounded by huge struggles. His land and house was washed by flood and landslide. The whole family was in trouble. Unlike, the flood and landslides affected all the village people, but Ram has no saving, resources and money to overcome from the disaster. He has finished all in drinking and gambling. In contrast, he started drinking lot than before, maybe because he thought, the best and easy way to get relief. However, it is destroying the life saved in flood and landslide, and another, he was identified as a most bad people in the village. For this reason, he used to have unnecessarily fought and quarreled with villagers. Villagers and neighbor villager perceived Sudhe ram as a drunkard man, who used to sleep anywhere in the toxic of alcohol, disappeared for 3/4 days from home. This behavior has been very normal to his family and relatives.

It is about few days ago, Ram was called in Chandrashowri community meeting center. He was curious to know why women of meeting center call him?, and he visited there. The meeting center asked him to maintain peace in the society, social harmony and behave friendly behavior with his family as well. Ram agreed to do so as well, and returned back to home.

Ram Bahadur continued drinking alcohol few days after he was called in meeting center. Karna bahadur Khatri, president, School Management Committee of Chandrashowri primary school, complained about him in

meeting for his wrong behavior with him. Again, members of meeting center called Ram Bahadur and present strong in front of him, and asked for his commitment to stop drinking alcohol for the last time. If he started drinking again, they warn to charge him Rs. 500 and drag to police custody. This time he is quite afraid, and committed not repeat such behavior again.

Ram Bahadur used to sleep unconsciously in the road by toxic alcohol. Now, we found him in the meeting center. He has finally changed his behavior. He has promised himself to stop drinking alcohol. The environment to believe He was created by the meeting center's women. He started to attend monthly meeting organized for the men. By which, he has taken an initiation to improve the village school. He started counsel drunkard people around him, the happiest thing for his family and the villagers.

Ram Bahadur commenced to work in the community and took leadership on road construction that is connected to the village's school. For upcoming days, the possible alternatives are planned to minimize the risk, destruction, and damage from the flood and landslides, and looking forward to safe human being life during the disaster. The positive attitude is the out of meeting center discussions, therefore, he suggested and encouraged his family members, better half, and son-in-law to regularly participate the meeting center.

Ram Bahadur is now busy in working in Amrit Khadka's land, as Amrit Khadka lives outside of the village. His days were spend working in land, participating in meeting center, for development community through different activities. That result to stay far away from alcohol. Villagers admire his work that changed the perception towards him. I am feeling good to be appreciated/ behaved well in the village, family, wife, daughter-in-law and other members of the family, said Ram Bahadur.

He has also received a refresher training related to use of numerical and timeline in the community. He used to train others based on the training and knowledge gained in meeting center. He is perfect example for changing his behavior to good from worse. His life history shows everything is possible if you are determined for positive attitudes. He regrets for all his old days, time and behavior because of which he has no saving now.

"HE IS IN A RIGHT TRACK"

I am migrated from Jajarkot, and became a neighbor of Ram Bahadur since last few years. The good and bright side of Ram bahadur, who was ready to help other any time, was in shadow due to the drinking alcohol habit. He fight, and make unnecessary noise when he was drank because of which no one used to love him. But, now, after the affiliation in meeting center, he stopped all his negative habits and moving forward in right path. Now, he is spending prestigious life in the village.

Bhim Bahadur Shahi

Ram Bahadur Neighbor



**SOURCE FOR
ACHIEVEMENT**



Sushmita Pun

Sano Harre, Bheriganga
Municipality-9, Surkhet

29 years

A villager named Keshar Rokaya raped a nine year girl. The villagers along with community leader gathered when people knew the news of rape and decided to solve the case themselves. Sushmita Pun, secretary of Samjhana Community Discussion forum, was against the idea of solving the rape case internally. She reported that it is the responsibility of people to bring the brutality into legal platform and punish the rapist. However, community did not support her idea taking case to the court.

As a member of Community Discussion forum, Sushmita decided to hold a discussion session as to take an initiative regarding the rape case. It was concluded that we should file a rape case against the rapist. She said, "if the rapist is not punished, chances are that they might commit such crime. We should not keep silence against the rape case, which is what our community discussion forum has been established for. We, therefore, we

decided to take a legal action against the assault.

It was then decided from the discussion to file a case against Keshar and he is now arrested. Sushmita states, "He and his family is sending threatening messages to me. Since I am receiving help and support from women from discussion forum I am not afraid to do my work.

The abuser is kept in jail but the girl, after a traumatic experience, is mentally disturbed. The challenge is to bringing the girl out of a traumatic event and punishing the abuser. Even though she is receiving threatening messages, she thinks that they feel the responsibility to inform others about the brutality that girls are facing. "We are strong daring enough to face the challenges", says Sushmita.

It can be seen clearly how actively she has been involved in participating in the discussion forum. Sushmita knew that, first and foremost, women should be financially stronger. She is engaged in cultivating cash crops. The vegetable collection center nearby the village has motivated her to do so. Her husband is working outside the village. Apart from rearing livestock- 3 buffaloes and 3 goats, she is working in other organization and effectively managing time. She says, "I feed livestock early in the morning. My in-laws help me in the household chores; therefore I can freely work in the field and work outside home.

She is known as the vice president of Bardiya National Park, a member of Agriculture and animal cooperative, president of bhawisya ujwal saving and credit, secretary of samjhana women's group, vice president of citizen ward. She is invited as a chief guest by schools, VDC and other programs. She says, "I go everywhere I am invited to as I get a chance to learn new things".

She is leading the training which has been involved in generating a fund amount Rs. 1 lakh for women in Bardiya National Park. The collected fund has been used for providing tailoring training to 22 women. For this year, we have already collected fund Rs 1 lakh for the training purpose. As Sushmita said, the training is provided to those women belonging to low income families as to provide a platform make aware of their identity.

The village used to receive fund for organizing training program, but they were unaware of the fact. She further said that ever since they joined the discussion forum they are receiving a lot of information. She is happy for they are able to make use of the fund for opening a library. They are involved in collecting fund from DDC particularly targeting women and janajati. They used collected fund Rs. 1 lakh for buying and distributing seeds among the villagers. However, they have planned investing the fund in livestock and helping the poor women. Sine before starting any work, they discuss among the group so they get success in everything they do, said Sushmita. She stated, "Wherever I am involved today and whatever I am doing is because of my participation in the discussion group. I get strength in work due to my involvement in the discussion group. Therefore, to me, getting involvement in the group is a source for my achievements.



**DOING RIGHT
THING**



Pabitra Baral

**Sano Harre, Bheriganga
Municipality-9, Surkhet**

50 years

No education background. but responsibility to handle cash Rs. 60 lakhs.

Pabitra Baral, vice president of Kakare Bharleni Drinking Water and Sanitation Committee, is responsible for managing financial aspect. She said, "My signature always gets wrong every time I write it. I get it correct after writing many times. Other than that I do not have any problem. She shared her experience such that even a person having no formal education can work as a vice president.

But she did work hard for performing the role and responsibility of vice president. It was when everyone in the village felt the need of having women leader that I did there should be woman leader in

Pabitra stated, "When I was elected the vice president everybody protested for I had no formal education and the job of vice president is to handling financial matters. Everybody did try to stop me getting the position; however, I did fight against the circumstances. With the full support of

women from discussion group, I did get success in attaining the position. Also, I did get help and support from men as well. Only after getting involved in the discussion group that I learned to write and sign the cheque. Had they knew I was unable to have a handwritten signature, I would have never attained the position of vice president".

During her working days, it was found that they have withdrawn thrice. Since she is the authorized person to signing the cheque, she visits headquarter in Birendranagar. However, in case of her busy schedule, she requests other person through signing a cheque. Since the cheque requires the signatures of all members, she does sign only after the president and secretary do so. She further stated, "Only if I know things in detail I sign the cheque otherwise I can get in trouble".

Not that she performs her job only by signing the cheque, she has been involved in opening a river bank in the village. Though she is a woman, she never felt tired walking the hills alone. She shared that the village has faced a lot of problem due to lack of water resource such that she forgets all other hardships.

However, they have started fitting water pipes to transport drinking water to the villagers. Everyone was found equally working with a full spirit. And Pabitra, she reviews everyone's work and monitor the task well enough. If any problem or obstacles arises, she, along with her colleagues, tries to finding solutions to the issues raised. She believed that the tasks which they are doing for benefitting the community need the support from the community as well. Therefore, she operates any tasks and seeks help and support from the community in the first place.

In addition, she has been involved in collecting fund from the national park as well. When the request for releasing fund Rs. Sixty thousand, which she initiated for



providing irrigation management services, was halted, she then decided fulfilling the wish with the funded amount Rs. 18000.

Why is she so determined?, when asked her the question, she answered that, " look at those charts that depicts about rights. We demand a lot about equal rights, but do not take initiatives for ensuring those rights. We hung those charts on the wall so that it helps us remind of the rights we have. It is because right to information is one of the most important things.

As a vice president of drinking water committee or the president of Madhyawarti community forest, she does take decision and sign the cheque only after knowing things in detail. At first, she reads document in detail. She takes help from her trusted person and makes them read, then only does she takes decision.

During the discussion session it was felt that the participants were provided with all the materials including information charts, pictures and the tools. She says, such programs have made them aware of establishing women leaders, and they are getting success as well.

गौरीगंगा नगरपालिका
मुख्य कार्यालय
चौखेत

जिल्ला प्रशासन कार्यालय
का.ब.२०७३/०५४

संस्था दर्ताको प्रमाण-पत्र

दर्ता नम्बर :- ०६५४/०५४
दर्ता मिति :- २०७३/०५/२५

श्री बध्यस/सर्पिच ज्यू,
गौरीगंगा नगरपालिका, चौखेत
सुदूरपश्चिम प्रदेश, कैलाली जिल्ला, सुर्खेत

दर्ता ऐन २०३४ को दफा ४ बमोजिम २०७३ साल ११ गतेमा
दर्ता गरी यो प्रमाण-पत्र दिइएको छ ।

जोड :-
(१) प्रमाण-पत्र एक आर्थिक वर्षसम्म बहाल रहनेछ ।
संस्थाको दर्ता बहाल रहने अवधि समाप्त भएको मितिले तीन महिना भित्र
नियमानुसार दस्तुर तिरी नवीकरण गराउनु पर्नेछ । सो ब्याच नाघेमा एक आर्थिक
वर्षको लागि रु. १०००/- का दरले चप दस्तुर लाग्नेछ ।

दस्तावेज :-
पुरा नाम :-
दर्ता :-

०६५४/०५४
मुख्य कार्यालय
प्रशासकीय अधिकारी

THE MODEL OF
COOPERATION



Dhan Bahadur Shahi

CholpaChautara, Khanikhola-2,
Surkhet

66 years

Context-one

With the financial support from Oxfam, a local implementing partner Women Association for Marginalized Women (WAM) called a meeting for discussion. A problem arises because there was no proper place for meeting and accommodation. The women interested in the discussion took it as the stone in the first bite. It was decided that the training to be held at the local level. This also caused a problem. Again, there was no proper training hall as well as the place for food and accommodation. The VDC training hall was not in good condition. The city was far from there. This village is located in a very remote area and such programs are rarely conducted in that place. The participants from the center, facilitators as well as the social mobilizers feared that people might be deprived of benefiting this program.

By this time, they all have understood that their problem should be discussed within themselves and seek solutions. Therefore,

this problem was also discussed locally and concluded that the participants should take the responsibility to conduct training. It was also decided that the local people would feed and accommodate participants in their own houses. They also decided to make training space on their own. Like where there is a will there is a way, a local rural club provided a tent and they built a small training space and conducted training there. Motisara Mahara allowed to prepare food in her house. She was generous enough to allow the center be conducted in her house without seeking any financial gain in return. The locals accommodated the participants in their own homes. They divided the responsibility among themselves and conducted training successfully.

When the first training was completed, the confidence of the participants of the Bhotechuli Community Discussion Center grew exponentially. They now have a confidence that they can run any such training in future. Trainings were also conducted. In addition, the center also helped others to conduct their trainings and this became a huge role model for women empowerment in the local level.

Context two:

The local women gained confidence that they can do anything if their willpower is strong. Certain circumstances were very difficult to deal with for example the tent didn't protect from rain during the training. The flooring covered by the tent was muddled and caused obstruction to conduct training conveniently. This subject was again brought to the discussion center. After the long discussion, the group came into conclusion that the center needs its own training hall. However, many questions were unanswered for example how, where and who will fund for that?

"I will provide land for building" said Dhan Bahadur Shahi, a local social worker.



The headmaster as well as Bhima Malla told that they would also donate land for constructing a building. Likewise Resham Mahara including dozen other pledged to donate land for the same. Finally, it was decided that Dhan Bahadur Shahi's land would be used to construct a building. His land was close to the road and it makes the construction work easy and convenient. On top of that, the location is also appropriate for everyone's movement. The happiness in the face of Dhan Bahadur was palpable. Immediately after this, he went to the local revenue office and transferred the legal title of the 120 sq meters land in the name of the discussion center on 17th Poush, 2073.

After the problem of the land is solved, everyone's attention now grew towards

constructing a building. An exciting debate took place in the center. Motisara had made her house available to run the office and she had not taken rent and therefore there was some saving. We conducted training ourselves and this also yielded some extra saving. However, this money was not sufficient to construct a building. Therefore, they bid a proposal to village development committee. VDC released Rs. 80,000. We demanded some wooden materials from our own Cholpa Chautara community forest. The money was used to purchase necessary construction materials. The villagers worked voluntarily.

A building was constructed. Trainings began to conduct there. Now, none of the organizations here need to look for a

separate party palace or catering house to conduct such trainings. Neither have they had to look for a place and the tent. Last year, the people associated with the centers played Deusi/bhailo and made substantial fundraising. From that money, they purchased 12 chairs and tables; these are necessary items to conduct trainings or any other programs. The local organizations have realized that the construction of this building has really solved a big problem in that area. It was probably, with this reason, the VDC released another 100000 budget this year to build a toilet. Dan Bahadur is also agreed to provide land for toilet construction. He further opined, "I am ready to donate land for toilet construction anytime you want to me to do that."

Context three:

A huge empowerment is seen among women. They have realized that they can do anything. By now, they have their own building. The people in the discussion center realize that it must adopt sustainable approach. However, nobody has any idea on how making it sustainable. After the rigorous discussion, they came to the conclusion that the programs supported by Women Association for Marginalized Women (WAM) are for a limited time period and therefore they should develop center as the permanent entity. What to do for that? The center was then registered in the district administration office and this made them easier to approach donors for the funding.

Therefore, now the Bhotecholi Community Discussion Center has been registered with the district administration office as a non-governmental organization. The registration number is 795/073 and it was registered on 24th Shrawan, 2073. This has become the matter of great pride among the women here.

The local women have kept the organization registration and land ownership document very safely. A local social mobilizer Chetmaya Chand termed these documents as the symbol of women empowerment in Cholpa Chautara.

Result:

These three contexts have made the women associated to Cholpa Chautara different. It is also proved that cooperation leads us to become a role model. In addition, this has also clarified that the women are capable of fulfilling any roles provided they have a support and cooperation of local social workers and youth clubs.





सुदूरपश्चिम प्रदेश सरकार
सामाजिक न्याय विभाग
लुम्बिनी

मान्यता दियो, हाम्रो उल्टो जीवन रहेसम्म
सापेक्षता बनाउन कामा किन हुन ?
मान्यता दियो
महिलाहरूको हाम्रो दृष्टि सदापरे
हिसा मिलाउन सकिने परिवार न
किन विवादकारीको (हाम्रो)
किन महिलाको हक छैन, भोसो ?
मान्यता दियो
मान्यता दियो



**THE COURAGEOUS WOMEN
NOT AFRAID OF ANY CASE**



Yamsara Thapa

Khanikhola-1, Surhket

45 years

Individual disputes are abundant in villages. Sometimes it takes them to the court. Dealing with the court cases related to the entire village is no less harassing than dealing the individual cases. That too by an illiterate house maker! The president of the Cholpa Chautara Community Forest Ms. Yamsara Thapa has proven herself as an exemplary figure by dealing one case related to forest border. Therefore, she is being regarded as the most courageous women in the village.

There is one forest in this village named Cholpa Chautara. This is the joint forest of ward no 1 and 2. This is obviously a big forest

as it has been spread into 2 wards. One day, there was talk about separating a boarder with Dandakhali Community Forest situated in ward no. 4. It followed a dispute. As a chairperson, Yamsara didn't only confront this dispute, but also played a significant role to settle this dispute amicably.

Her struggle in favor of all inhabitants living in 2 wards doesn't end here though. This was further followed by another boarder dispute with ward no 6. They demanded for a pasture area. Yamsara and her team declined the demand and it further escalated the dispute. The people from ward no. 6 filed a case against Yamsara and her group. During this period, Yamsara and her team had to go/meet several people and places. After sometime, Yamsara and her team took initiation to settle this dispute. Both parties were agreed to gain and loose equally. After that, they took the case back. "Having a dispute with two groups at a time is really troublesome and full of anxiety, but we settled it without losing our determination." opined during Yamsara.

"When there are fights and disputes, I wouldn't sleep the whole night, pondering over how to settle them. At the same time, I also had a fear that people might say that this problem was created due to a woman president. Some people were also talking behind my back saying that a male president could have solved this problem quite early." she added. She further opined, "With the trust from my sisters in the discussion center as well the full cooperation from four

women in the community forest, I succeed to solve this problem. I felt that this struggle has strengthened the courage and pride of not only mine, but also the women in Khanikhola."

After becoming the president, Yamsara took initiation to legally register the forest. Not only that, she also recruited one person to look after the forest with 6000 monthly salary. However, this person has not performed his job properly, which caused the problem. One of the reasons of this problem is that many people let their cows graze in the forest. "We have been studying the process and legal remedies about how to punish such people" shared Yamsara. She is also in the process of visiting district headquarter Surhket shortly to understand possible prosecution for such people.

One day during a patrolling, she found that 51 cows were left to graze in the forest. When she asked the cow owner, why they left their cows in the forest, they humiliated her saying that who made such an insane person president. They further humiliated her saying that an illiterate person like her knows nothing. On top of that, people also threatened her to file a case against her. This didn't deter her determination because she has now experience of dealing with the case filed against her by the entire village. Then she went on to make a rule to charge penalties for those who leave their cows in the forest. She made a rule to pay Rs. 50 first time and Rs. 100 for second time. "This has not completely solved the problem. However, it has reduced the frequency significantly." told Yamsara.

Despite being the president, her complaint is that she couldn't work as per her desire due to the non-cooperation from male colleagues in the team. She further shared that they didn't call meeting on instructed time, refused to go for patrolling and always want her to take an initiation for any work. However, she never forgets to mention that if there is one thing that constantly motivates

her to move head, it is the morale and cooperation of the women colleagues from the discussion center and the group.

Many rules were formulated after Yamsara became president. This forest is good at thriving red pepper, but in the past people would pluck and take it freely. This time a contractor named Shankar Dangi has signed an agreement to pay 30000 annually for collecting red pepper from the forest. Firewood and khar were used arbitrarily. But now the villagers must pay the bill for using these items. On the one hand, this has controlled the arbitrary use of these items and on the other hand it has also increased the income of the forest. "I have been learning to become successful in my endeavors despite resistance from male colleagues. I wouldn't have dared to do this had I received full support from all." opined Yamsara for finding an idea to convert her adversaries into strength.

As the president of the community forest, she has to sign the cheques and decisions. Yamsara told that she always consults her husband and daughter before signing any such documents. Her husband is the teacher in a local school and daughter is one of the members of the discussion center. Her brother-in-law is a secretary there and she asks him to read out all minutes before putting signature on them. She puts her thinking cap seriously on such important documents.

She has solved many problems head-on. She is associated with Himalaya HSS as a management committee member as well as the treasurer of the ongoing building construction project of the same school. These are some of the examples of her unfaltering energy and determination. She is also the member of the Ward Citizens Forum. "All these positions and responsibilities were conferred after my association with the discussion center." She is never reluctant to give credit to the center.



PROGRAM WAS EXCELLENT

We were in a dilemma at the beginning. Later on, the discussion center proved to be fruitful, particularly to women. This is helpful for empowering women to express their views clearly and claim the leadership. Having realized this, we also started to support the program.

Lokendra Bahadur Chand

Headmaster, Nera Primary School, Mungre, Khanikhola-3



**DISCUSSION CENTER HAS
BECOME GUARDIAN**



Durga Rawat

Jhamki, Shubaghat
Municipality-1, Surkhet

23 years

It has been 12 years; father went to India, but not in contact. It was very difficult to provide education and feed three children and therefore mother also went to Kuwait four years ago. Then Durga Rawat had to become the guardian of her two brothers and sister as well as act as the head of the house. She had to raise the brother/sisters as well as look after for their education. It was really difficult for her to assume the role of guardian such a young age when she herself needed a guardianship.

"I have a sister who is 6 years old. She cries

for mother all the time. Sometimes she gets persuaded, but very often it has been difficult. I would also cry many times. When sister and I would cry, brother also follows the suit." Recalling past Durga further said, "Suffering can't be shared, and it is indifferent to age. We have spent many nights crying together."

What to do? This is a human life and we have to bear whatever happens. When she was studying in 8th standard, she started the work to collect money for a local cooperative for her living. After some time she had to leave the job because she didn't have citizenship card. Her mother sent Rs. 30000 from abroad and she started a small grocery shop. She was small in age and didn't have necessary management skill. She couldn't continue the shop. This engulfed her with more depression. There were lots of confusions. She could see only a problem everywhere and this increased her level of depression and anxiety.

Life was moving ahead like this. The sisters, mothers, grannies came together and started Kalika community discussion center. They shared their problem in this platform and explore possible solutions together. This has given Durga a hope. Durga saw others problems being raised and solved there. After that, Durga also shared her problem in the discussion center and the members suggested her move forward patiently. They also promised her to provide needful support.

It was very difficult for her to save the money sent by her mother. Firstly, the members included her in the saving group initiated by the discussion center. This inculcated a saving habit in Durga. She also controlled all unnecessary expenses. In addition to this, she also opened a bank account in Kakrebihar bank situated in Mahelkuna and also started depositing some money there. This has made her life easy and convenient these days.

After she started attending discussion center, her domestic problems got solved and she started keeping herself engaged in productive work. This also provided her an opportunity to change her anxiety-filled life with fun. The people from the center included Durga in a Kachahri Natak campaign launched to remove evil practices from the village. This made Durga happy. "After my involvement in drama, I started forgetting my past miseries and got inspiration to move ahead in life." says Durga.

"During the Kachahri natak training, I had to go to district headquarter Birendranagar for 11 days. It was in September, the time of harvesting maize crop in the village. I told them my inability to attend this training because of the same reason. But the sisters from the center encouraged me to go for the training and also promised to harvest my crops. When I returned back, I saw that harvested maize crops were stocked very carefully at my home." told Durga. "In addition, during my training in Kathmandu, it was also the time of harvesting paddy crops. At that time, they also sent me for training and helped harvest my crops. I can never forget this goodness of the center." exclaimed Durga.

The sisters at discussion center supported Durga and her sister/brother immensely. They didn't only suggest Durga to save money sent by her mother, but also helped her to build a complete house. During her

absence, they also took care of her brother and sister. This is the reason why I go everywhere freely and this would have never been possible without their assistance." said Durga.

"They are small kids. They even didn't have idea to grow vegetables despite having adequate land space. They used to spend money for buying vegetables. According to the suggestions given by sisters, Durga started growing vegetables in her own land and I also helped her to get some loan from the saving group for the same purpose. Now Durga doesn't by vegetable, instead sell vegetables and makes a good income." All in the center opined in a single voice.

These days, on the one hand Durga is busy in awareness campaigns against child marriage, gambling and alcohol consumption and on the other hand, she is capable of looking after the house as well as continuing her sibling's education. In addition, she has also come to the conclusion to continue her halted education. Now she is committed to complete at least SLC even by taking additional tuition classes and she further realized that the education is the biggest weapon for women.

EMPOWERMENT ASPECT IS EXCELLENT

The main characteristic of the discussion center is women's empowerment. The participants from the center also visit school frequently and inquiry about our activities. This has also made us aware and therefore such programs must be continued.

Dhanapati Dhakal

Headmaster, Aanand HSS, Gumi, Surkhet

"The main objective of the discussion center working in the village is women empowerment. The people in the group came to the conclusion that women's empowerment is not possible until they financially become strong. This conclusion also gave birth to another question- what next? As a part of becoming financially

independent, we started monthly saving group" recalled Pushpa Pahadi, a social mobilizer from Gumi.

We decided to start saving, but didn't set the limit. How to decide where to deposit? Whom to provide a loan? How to make an investment? How to fix the interest

rate? The right to make the decisions pertaining to these questions was delegated to discussion centers as per their convenience. To further clarify this, people started saving from Rs. 1 to 20 in different discussion centers. It is also decided that the concerned discussion centers started keeping the record of collection, mobilization

and accounting of the fund.

Within three years time period, around 11 Lakh 81 thousand 3 hundred and 47 rupees was collected from 11 centers in Gumi. It is very difficult to have such amount of money even in the established cooperatives. There was a kind of indirect competition between



**12 LAKHS
IN A PURSE**



Puspha Pahadi
 Ghumi, Shubaghat Municipality,
 Surkhet
 26 years

centers to collect money. Gradually people started saving up to Rs. 100 per month when they came to know that others raised their saving from 20 to 50. On top of that, other groups saved 20 rupees more. This is the main reason behind huge collection in a short span of time.

Money is collected, so what? Anyone can do this. Some people might complain. Thus collected money has been useful to solve each and every problem of the sisters. This has also supported to start a small business or enterprises. Farmers have been able to

purchase fertilizers and seeds. The expense of children's education is covered. This has also eliminated the compulsion of begging money with the money lenders during the time of need. Those who have been hitherto lending money in high interest rate have been alarmed.

The first example is Harimaya BK from ward no. 2 who took loan from saving group and has started a mushroom farming as well as the poultry farm. She didn't have any specific income in the past, but now all her expenses are covered by the income of these two enterprises. She is also happy to have been able to purchase a computer for her children. Durga Rawat from ward no. 1 also took a loan from saving group and started a vegetable farming. In the past, she used to spend money sent by her mother to purchase a vegetable, but now she makes additional income by selling her home grown vegetables. This has also helped her immensely to educate her siblings.

One can find many people in the discussion center who have started their own business ventures with the loan from saving groups. Dilsara Rawat from ward no 7 is another such an aware woman who has started a grocery shop with the loan. Her husband has already passed away and this shop has become the main basis to meet the household expenses as well as the education expenses of this 69 year old grandmother. "These are just few examples; dozens of other women have withdrawn loan from the saving group and have become the role model of economic

empowerment." One of the social mobilizers Pushpa says with pride.

Different people have withdrawn loans for different purposes such as rearing goats, poultry farming, grocery shops, vegetable farming, and emergency support as well as the educational purpose. At this moment, it is very difficult to find a woman in the village who complains for not having money to do any business. Rather, we find some women who curse themselves for not making enough savings. This experience in Gumi has taught the lesson that economic empowerment also leads to other empowerment.

Having seen this progress, the male members in the discussion center have also opened saving groups which are a positive aspect of this endeavor. The male members from ward no. 7 have saved Rs. 35000 by collecting Rs. 100 per month. Other discussion centers have also followed the suit. Pushpa opined, "They regretted for lagging behind in saving and have planned to deposit more in order to have equal saving to woman group."

Surprisingly, the children's groups formed in the discussion centers have also come to the conclusion to start saving habit. As a result, the members of Fulbari children's club have collected Rs. 9000 by deducting small saving from their regular pocket money. Similarly, the saving of Silsila children's club has reached to Rs. 3000. "This trend has been spreading into other areas as well," says Pushpa Pahadi who has been coordinating this work.

There are some management challenges as the amount of money is being increased as well as the loan investment and dues are also increased in huge volume. The saving groups are also increasing significantly and this has posed challenges. Therefore, Pushpa and her colleagues in the discussion center have been making the

Ward Number	Community Discussion Center (CDC)	Savings Amount (in NRs)
1	Phulbari	1,10,000 (excluding children's 9,000)
2	Kalika	1,65,500
3	Nari Utthan	1,50,000
4	Namuna	85,000
5	Shanti	1,68,849
6	Tribeni	2,62,274
7	Silsila	1,11,220 (excluding children's 3,000)
8	Shanti	1,14,000
9	Himchuli	1,15,000
10	Chautari	30,200
11	Laligurans	43,300
TOTAL		11,81,347

(Note: Savings as of February 2017)

long term planning in order to use saving groups for women's empowerment. Pushapa further explained, "We have been thinking of registering one cooperative and further planning to operate it sustainably by associating all saving groups in it." For this to happen, we have also formed an ad hoc committee under the leadership of Bimala Chand, one of the members of Namuna Discussion Center. This committee will take the lead for all registration process.

CREATING AWARENESS IS MAIN THING

The main thing is creating awareness. This women leadership program has given women something, which is a good aspect of this. This has made women more curious, willing to know as well as develop an ability to seek their rights. The level of awareness among women has been increased significantly in the village.

Tek Bahadur Khatri
 CEO, Shuvaghat Municipality, Surkhet



**COOPERATIVE
MISS**



Khima Rasaili
Maintada, Bheriganga
Municipality-7, Surkhet
20 years

Responsibility: To collect saving, release loan, provide training and responding the queries raised by group members of 45 saving groups of 5 wards of Maintada VDC. In addition, to assist in the cooperative shops

Position: social mobilizer, SAFAL SAMAJIK MAHILA UDDHAMI SAHAKARI

Age: 20 only.

Khima Rasaily works in these 5 wards and it is rare to find people who do not know Khima. But people do not know her by her name but a cooperative miss. Khima meets all women associated with the group every month. Khima accompanies all group members through the entire process which includes but not limited to saving, recommending for loan, debt recovery, guides in the process and respond their needful queries. Therefore, she is more known as the "cooperative miss" than by her real name and relationships with the people. "I feel very surprised when the people with my parent's age greet me. When I ask them not to do so, they respond that

it's not me but for my work. I also feel glad." says Khima.

How did Khima with a just SLC degree achieve this huge responsibility? According to her, she was very active in all activities of the Devsthal Creative Community Center, which ultimately led her to this position. She wouldn't merely participate; she would always actively participate in the discussions and never be afraid of voicing her opinions. She would always come with the new ideas and has thoroughly understood the importance of women's leadership at all levels. Further, she takes roles and also encourage and provide needful support other to take roles.

This dedication got her the position of secretary in the VDC funded tap construction committee. There could be several people in the village for completing this work of the 4 lakhs budget. However her maturity, understanding and dedication helped her grab this job. Khima opined, "The chairperson of this committee is a woman. Everyone insisted me that I could be a great support to her." This also shows that the villagers have placed their trust on Khima.

She credited the discussion center for helping her to earn the trust of not only the cooperative but also the entire village. This enabled Khima to speak up, raise questions and improve her ability to find solution of each problem. Khima has become one of the reliable persons in the discussion center. When some situations arise, everyone turns to Khima first to get her ideas. This has inculcated a great confidence in her.

She has also acquired some skills such as writing, playing and directing kachahari drama. For this, she went to Surkhet and Kathmandu for 11 and 7 days respectively. This training gave her a conceptual clarity on drama making. Many dramas produced by her group were shown in Chinchu, Lekhpurajul, Maintada and Gumi. She is now in the process of showing drama in Khanikhola.



She has acted in multiple roles such as a child bride, a woman with uterus problem, volunteer and naughty girl. She feels comfortable to act in any roles she is given. "You can do anything if you are committed," says Khima. She acts in all roles with honesty and full dedication and this has earned her everyone's appreciation. "No matter which roles you have been given, it is important to satire evil practices deeply rooted in the village." She responded while answering the question on which roles in kachahari she likes and why?

In order to get the depth of her introduction as a playwright, we present you here one example of the drama shown at Little Flower Academy on 29 Magh. The principal of that school approached her to make one drama for the program to be conducted in his school. She accepted the offer and prepared and staged one drama to create

awareness against the child marriage. She took the characters from her own class. "When you present mothers as the character whose children are studying in the same school, it makes the presentation more artistic. Everyone watched this with full of enthusiasm and excitement," says Khima.

She also approached teachers and showed her drama in one high school in Jigni. Everyone liked and appreciated work there, and this has further inspired her to do so in other schools and public places. Now, when she has free time, she collects small kids in the village and start teaching them acting. She is committed to preparing more actors in the village and mobilize them to wipe out evil practices from the village. She has a full support and cooperation from her mother and elder brothers and this has motivated her to continue this work.



**BENEFITS OF
SAVING**



Pabitra Thapa

Sattari, Lekhparajul-6, Surkhet

33 years

There is a four ropanis of land. It only grows wheat and maize. There was a small piece of land suitable for paddy crop, but the nearby Chhinchu River swallowed it. This has caused a huge problem to Pabitra who is a mother of two sons and one daughter. After that, they withdrew some loan and her husband went to Malaysia to work. Pabitra also started collecting and selling firewood, collecting/selling gravels from Chhinchu Khola and earn her living from there. Providing education to her children had really taken its toll on her.

"When the discussion center was established in the village, everyone appointed me as a secretary. Then the discussion began to take place about solving people's problems as well as empowering women. A lot of comments and suggestions surfaced. Everyone came to the same conclusion that women can't be empowered without their economic independence." Shared Pabitra, secretary of the creative community center, recalled her initial days.

Pabitra and her friends started a self-dependent campaign while talking about

women's rights and taking leadership in different mechanism. As a starting point, the members in the saving group started saving money within the group. They provide that money to the people so that they can use it to solve their problem or start some kind of business. This enabled women not to turn to males in the house or money lenders in the village for a relatively small amount of money.

Pabitra also decided to take some loan and start something. She withdrew Rs. 3000 loan from the saving group of her own discussion center. Then she brought potatoes, cucumber and pumpkin at low price from far villages and started selling them by taking some profits. These activities increased over the time. This income eased in her household expenses as well as ending her children to school. Having been motivated by this, Pabitra now grows vegetables such as cauliflower, radish etc. The discussion center has a provision of withdrawing money when needed and paying it back when there is a plenty of savings. This provision has not only improved her vegetable farming, but also the business.

Her husband who had been in Malaysia five years back sent some money for their children's education in the beginning. But he is not in contact for the last one year. Her vegetable farm and small business has become the foundation for her children's education. Her daughter and son have been studying in class 9 and 6 respectively. "Thanks god, I started saving in the discussion center. Otherwise, it would have never been possible to start vegetable farming, run a business and provide quality education to my children." She thanked her for this wise decision.

The discussion center has not only improved Pabitra's financial condition, but it has also earned her some respect in the society. She also accrued some determination from this. She has now become the treasurer of community forest in the village and she



is equally devoted to the protection of the forest. After becoming the president, she also succeeded to recover 65000 misappropriation of the previous board. It took her one year to recover that money. Because of her, the previous board chair Prem Badi had to apologize for this misappropriation.

When Pabitra and her team came to the executive committee, the loan was released to 11 poor families for goat farming. This support was made possible by the equal investment from the district forest office and community forest. They also successfully carried out cleaning bushes, tree plantation, set the border and make fire breaks in a forest. Jasmati Gurung is the chairperson of the discussion center that Pabitra is associated with. Pabitra believed that her presidency has also eased their work to protect forest.

Every people have their own sufferings and struggles. Despite this, some people have become the role models to do something

for the society. That's why, according to the decision of the discussion center, she led the campaign to collect 200 rupees from each household to dig a well which is supposed to be sufficient to 15 families. There was a huge scarcity of the water and now it is available in abundance. There was a little unspent money from this project and they purchased some lentils, cooking oil, salt and rice to donate one old lady in the village. These sorts of work always make her grateful to the discussion center.



**CHILD MARRIAGE
HALTED**



Rajkumari Badi
Shantipur, Bheriganga
Municipality-3, Surkhet
27 years

During the last week of Mangsir 2073, Rajkumari was preparing breakfast at her own shop. At the same time, a micro bus came in front her home and stopped. She thought for a while that people are heading somewhere else and halted here for a tea break. But, they all got down from the bus and went towards Bhadra Bahadur BK's house. Half of them were women. All were formally dressed. Rajkumari got curious and wanted to know what actually brought these people to her neighbor.

She couldn't concentrate on her work and many speculations started playing in her

mind. She went towards Bhadra Bahadur's house. People were whispering to each other. After some minute's observation, she came to know that people from Nepalgunj came there to beg the hand of Bhadra Bahadur's daughter. Rajkumari bite her teeth when she found this. She felt uncomfortable and decided to stop this anyhow. Else it will spoil the future that little daughter.

What made her so determined to stop this? Rajkumari shared that Bhadra Bahadur's daughter Sapana was just 16 at that time. If this marriage ever takes place, that would be considered illegal because child marriage is illegal in Nepal. On the one hand, this very act is punishable and on the other hand Sapana will have to face different problems after getting married so early. "Immediately I talked to Sapana's parent and sisters; and tried to persuade them to stop that marriage." Said Rajkumari.

By this time, people gathered there. This divided the people in 2 groups. Some people were saying that if both parties are okay, no need to intervene in their personal affairs. There was another group led by Rajkumari and they think that this marriage must be stopped because child marriage is illegal. Rajkumari also sought support from the village leaders. Finally Rajkumari succeeded in her initiation and the boys' party went back to their home.

"Rajkumari and Sapana both are the members of discussion center and they were taught there, that child marriage is a

punishment and the gateway to suffering for girls. Rajkumari reminded this to Sapana. The other group members from the discussion center also highlighted this fact. After that Sapana also stood firm against this marriage. It took some time to convince people and finally the truth prevailed." Exclaimed Rajkumari.

Having been returned home after briefly staying with her husband in India, Rajkumari got involved in the activities of discussion center and got familiar with many such things. She personally had gone through a lot of troubles after getting married at 18. After marriage, she realized that it was not the right time to give birth to a child. She took time to let Sapana understand the consequences of early marriage. "I'm one of the victims of the consequences of early marriage and therefore I am determined not to let such practices occur in my place." She expressed her determination.

Sapana has five sisters. Three of them married quite early. One elder sister eloped when she was studying in 8th standard. After one and half year, there were some problems that led her to divorce. Sapana further told that her elder sister's unpleasant experiences and the proper guidance of Rajkumari really helped her to take the stand. The party from the boy's side was headstrong but I didn't bother to listen them anymore.

This is the only reason that gave a new name to both Rajkumari and Sapana- the determined girls. The people in the society also call their name while giving the examples of nice and courageous girls. Rajkumari felt pride for her this newfound identity and Sapana also realized that her decision was absolutely correct. This has also given the clear message to other girls in the village that child marriage is not good.

Rajkumari's work is not limited to this. As an active group member of the discussion center, she was able to solve many problems



in her own initiation. She has helped to settle disputes of many people and for that reason she has travelled far and wide from Mahelkuna to Kolhapur. She has also accumulated the experiences of visiting police office as well as both houses of the victims. In addition, there are many stories of satisfaction in her memory accrued from solving people's problem.

Raj Kumari has also become the trustworthy person in the eyes of municipality office. That's why the municipality office delegated her responsibility to collect data of the Badi community who need immediate support to build a house. Finally, she told that she submitted the proposal stating that 13 Badi families are urgently needed support to build a house.

FIGHT AGAINST EVIL PRACTICES IS MUST

"The women associated with the discussion center have really worked hard to remove evil practices from the village. Among them, child marriage is immense. Being influenced by their good work, I have been also supporting them as much as I can."

Laxman Rana
 CPN (UML) Leader, Maintada, Surkhet



**WELL BEING OF A
STUDENT OF CLASS SIX**



Saraswati Deula

Chaumas Danda, Chitlang-4,
Makwanpur

32 years

It was 2 and half year back, there was a talk about opening a discussion center in a village filled with a dense Dalit population. Everyone asked me to become a chairperson. I didn't know then the word chairperson and the responsibilities it carries. However, I agreed to become the chairperson with everyone's support. Somehow I accepted this proposal, however, my husband never allowed me to step out of the house. I would make different excuses and plays some

tricks to attend such meeting. Sometime I would also lie. Despite this, I have developed a great respect and affinity towards the center.

Saraswati Deula added, "I was not regular in the meeting and this hugely affected the center. Other friends also questioned my sincerity. When the facilitators brought this to my notice, it became compulsory for me to attend all meetings now. My absence caused other a bit discomfort which was natural. It was a Dalit settlement and everyone had a difficulty to step out of their houses and talk. I decided to become regular at the meetings without worrying much about the consequences." Her husband would warn her and ask not to go there next time. However, she didn't lose her hope and continued to persuade husband. "I have learned from the center that change must be started from home itself. Therefore, I took initiative to make my husband positive about my work first. I would laugh when he used to get angry. I understood that this approach is very fruitful." told Saraswati.

It is said that the stone also melts after certain time. If that is the case, I used to wonder why it is not possible to melt the heart of human being. Gradually my husband became positive towards my work and it became easy for me to go to the center and support the change. "One day, we discussed about the importance of education and

my desire to education also grew. I have some experience of adult education, but never been the part of school education. I expressed my desire to study with my husband. In the beginning, he took it as a joke, but when I informed him that I already took admission in school, he encouraged me. The school also asked me to sit for an entrance test and enrolled me in class 5. I started learning with the children below my age." told Saraswati.

Saraswati's husband is also getting excited after he attended the sessions. At the beginning, he didn't bother about her interest. The facilitators and the social mobilizers had to take initiation for Saraswati's admission. After completing class 5, her husband enrolled her in class 6. "Having seen all sisters happy and excited, I proposed to name this center as the UTSAH community center." opined Sarawati.

After that Saraswati took trainings and her engagement grew after taking women's leadership training. Meanwhile, she also came to know about the women targeted budget allocated at VDC level as well the need of women's initiation to ensure the best utilization of that budget. They used that budget to conduct training for making cushions, dalmoths and furundana. Now they make furundana in a group and make earn good income.

After attending five days training in Hetauda, she formed a women's alliance and became the chairperson. The VDC also provided training to the members of this alliance. She also benefited from that training. She is wondering what brought more changes in her husband than in her. "In the past, my husband would direct me to return back home same day when I used to go to Kathmandu for training. I am going to Hetauda for training for five days and he is happily sending me there now. My husband would attend the male classes of discussion center regularly and this must have brought

changes in him." She imagined the causes of changes.

Saraswati was confined to household chores. Initially she could go to the discussion center and then to the school. After that, she also made it to the district headquarter. She visited Kathmandu and then Pakistan.

"In the beginning, I used to go to discussion center secretly. You could see the change now. I am going to Pakistan and my husband would look after all household chores. This has made me happy and excited. When it was the time of going abroad, my husband accompanied me for getting recommendation letters from Hetauda as well as getting a passport from Kathmandu." shared happy Saraswati.

Now Saraswati has gained confidence that she is capable of doing anything. People would say that building a road in this her village is like turning earth upside down. However, she managed to build roads there by becoming the chairperson of the local consumers' committee. She has been playing a critical role in the agriculture group as well as a drinking water committee in the village. She is also equally committed to ending domestic violence and child marriage. Many people have also got their citizenship card and birth certificates with her help.



Dil Bahadur Deula
Saraswati's husband

I'M HAPPY WITH MY WIFE

My wife learned many things after she started going to the center. She also started her studies. She went abroad by plane and accomplished many things in the village. Everybody knows her now. People in the village also look up to her with respect. That's why I fully support her all endeavors. I didn't know many things in the beginning unfortunately.



SEVEN TIPS OF DISCUSSION CENTRE



Kabita Lama

**Thulo Chaur, Fakhel-7,
Makwanpur**

33 years

I was in dilemma even if I was the treasurer of the Laligurans discussion center. I couldn't make eye contact with people while speaking; it was also difficult for me to look into people's eyes during the talk. When I started attending the discussion center, it was not possible to continue to do that. We have to speak when the facilitators would ask the questions. Gradually my shy nature disappeared and had to speak anyhow.

If there is one thing that took Kabita's shy nature away, it's her regular participation in the discussion center. She has now become the leader of local women and she has been helping them to get rid of their shy nature. For this to happen she visits VDC office regularly and seek information about women targeted budget and also take the lead to get that funding. She is always committed to spend that budget to meet its true objectives. The budget was used to provide capacity building training to women.

What did she really learn from the discussion

center? The first lesson she learned is to get the women targeted budget from VDC and use it appropriately. The second lesson is that they used to clean houses, but now clean streets, public places and roads. They used to clean such places once in three days, but now they clean it once in a week. The disease won't leave you unaffected when the house is clean, but the backstreets are dirty. The third lesson that they learned from the center is to become self-reliant. "That's why I opened a small shop. Previously I used to sew clothes for people who come to my home. But now I have developed it as the tailoring shop. I have also started selling clothes which has given me a good income. As a result, I have been able to save 1000 per month. Previously I would save just 200 rupees." She has been also helping others to be self-reliant.

The fourth lesson that Kabita learned from discussion center was the need to claim the leadership. That's why she chose to be the chairperson of the child development center in the village. Now she has been working hard to make sure the holistic development of the child who come to the center. She made the parents to understand the importance of sending their children in the child development center and urge them to maintain regularity in this respect. She always makes sure that the available funding is utilized properly as well seek external funding. As the result of the initiation taken by Kabita, the number of children in the child center grew from 4-5 to 12-13.

The fifth lesson that Kabita learned from the discussion center is social service. That's why; she is very committed to build roads, provide capacity building trainings, sending children to the school as well expanding the role of women beyond kitchen rooms. She also thinks such program should include male as well. Her logic behind social service is very straightforward- "Animals are also capable of getting their food and rearing children. As a human being, we have to do more than that." Says Kabita.



The sixth lesson that Kabita learned from the discussion center is that people learn more when they go to the meeting and interact with people. That's why she attends all meetings of the VDC as well as the schools. She doesn't only attend the meeting of cleaning committee, but also attend the meeting called by community forest and other organizations. She listens carefully others opinion and then put her views to others. This has helped her to accumulate more information. She never fails to oppose if someone humiliates her in the meeting. She realized that this has helped her grow more confident.

She prefers to call all the lessons that she learned from discussion center as women empowerment. She takes it as the seventh lesson. "When women learn all these lessons and apply in their daily life, then they become fully empowered and independent.

This is how women empowerment takes place." says Kabita. She also shared that many women have been benefited from the center.

Kabita mentioned that she has a full support from her husband who is away from home due to his work. This enabled her to go to discussion center regularly and learned many things. In fact Kabita's husband was not positive about the center in the beginning. When he began to understand more about the center and took it positively. Since then Kabita mentioned that her husband started encouraging her. Thus her understanding is that the male plays huge role in helping women to move forward. That's why women's empowerment is possible only through the coordination of male and female.



MODEL COUPLE



Mayia BK

Ratmate, Chitlang-4, Makwanpur

38 years

Big family. She is the eldest among the eight children. On the one hand, she had to look after her siblings. On the other, she also had to help with the household chores. And then there was poverty. All these factors added up, impeding Mayia BK from getting education despite her wish. "I felt an urge to go to school when I saw others who were my age going there. But my wish never materialized," she says.

When she grew up to be 18 years of age, she fell in love with Prem BK. She then came to Chitlang with Prem after getting married to him. Then, like any married Nepali women, Mayia got busy with household chores and work in the farm. She had, in some corner of her heart, hoped that she could go to school after getting married. But it remained a mere wish. Especially, because Prem's parents had already passed away, and there was no one in the family to guide and support the couple.

Two and half years back, the Mayia, along with other women of her village decided to run a Community Discussion Center (CDC). After the CDC was established, they

began attending it regularly. They started discussing issues that were important to them: how to assert their rights? How to solve problems that prevailed in their village? How to access local decision making structures? What to do when they have access to them? Mayia also started participating in these discussions actively. Actually the CDC reminded her of the school she wanted to go but never made it.

Mayia got to learn about these issues through the discussions in the CDC. She also learnt about gender violence and discrimination, and about women empowerment. This she says, has, to some extent, fulfilled her want of school. "I wanted to know about these things. I got to learn through the CDC", she says happily.

After being aware of gender violence, she takes keen interest in resolving them if she comes across it in her locality. She informs the other members of the CDC and they discuss about ways to resolve it. After they reach a consensus on how to resolve, they collective take action. Since they know that such cases are better dealt with before it gets late, they try to resolve it as soon as they can.

Mayia took the initiation to resolve a case that occurred in her neighborhood. The mother-in-law and daughter-in-law were not in good terms and they used to quarrel from time to time. When Mayia knew about this, she shared about it with her fellow members in the CDC. The CDC members decided to invite both the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law to the CDC for discussion. But the dispute was not resolved. The CDC members even visited them in their house in an attempt to resolve the dispute. But when they realized that rapprochement was not possible, they facilitated for amiable separation of the two. They now stay separately. Hence, there is no dispute.

This is just one case in point.



Mayia has realized that empowerment of women is very important. Thus, she, along with her fellow CDC members, got budget sanctioned from their Village Development Committee (VDC) for a training on making 'furandana', a local dry food. After they participated in the training, they prepared it and even sold it.

While attending the CDC, Mayia realized the importance of women representation in local structures. Thus, she readily accepted the offer when she was offered membership in the school management committee of a school in her VDC. She has learnt a lot about how schools function, and also how she can contribute to better manage the school after working in the management committee.

Prem supports Mayia and encourages her to engage in social work and community development activities. He even does

household chores occasionally in order to make it possible for Mayia to attend meetings. Mayia also supports Prem in running the house. In lack of senior member in their family who can support and guide them, they have to rely on each other to solve any problem that arises in the family, or to plan for the future.

The understanding, trust and cooperation have been a matter of great interest in their locality--and source of inspiration for many. Recognizing this extra-ordinary conjugal relationship, the CDC in their village felicitated them as model couple.

Mayia and Prem have indeed become model couple in Ratmate!





Oxfam implemented Women Leadership Programme (WLP) with the goal of increasing the influence of poor and marginalised women in decision-making in community level governance structures. The programme was implemented in 10 selected Village Development Committees (VDCs) of Makwanpur and Surkhet districts in Nepal for a three-year period. Containing direct quotes of the women concerned and witnesses, this publication is a first-hand account of the changes that have taken place through the programme initiative.



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