



# YOUTH

AS AGENTS OF  
SOCIAL CHANGE







# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

ActionAid International Nepal, believes in the power of youth to transform the power relations in the society, encourage accountability, and promote the rights of the people across the country. In response, AAIN has prioritized its activities on developing youth leadership, organizing youth and harnessing their power, as well as building networks for campaigning and social movement for change. By training, developing skills, and developing their own spaces and platforms, young people have been able to strengthen their agency and challenge discriminatory social norms, harmful practices such as chaupadi, child marriage, the dowry system, and different kinds of violence against women and girls. As part of their advocacy, they are advocating for systemic reform by holding the government accountable for ensuring quality education and health services. Moreover, they have taken an active role in the local structure, platform, and decision-making process.

Through their motivational stories and trust in collective work for reform, these young people are succeeding in their actions because of their will power, commitment, belief in themselves, motivation, and influencing capacity to other young people.

Since 2019, youth-led efforts in the form of YOUTH HUB in different seven geographical places as localization of Global Platform Nepal program with support of ActionAid Denmark (AADK) have brought together over 200 young people, 75% of whom are female. AAIN and its partner organizations have also taken out several initiatives to strengthen youth-led initiatives and leadership programs on the ground. Through adolescent clubs, around 500 adolescent females are participating in different systemic reforms and campaigns, and more than 150 adolescents have been trained as feminist leaders.

In this context, ActionAid International Nepal has gathered stories of young people who have inspired, encouraged, and given aspiration to volunteering, activism, youth leadership, and a belief in the potential of youth for social change and development. Additionally, it is anticipated that this storybook will motivate youth who are striving for social change and leadership development on a local level.

Finally, I would like to extend my gratitude to the young people associated and provided their stories for wider sharing, the local partner organization for all their coordination and contribution to motivate youths, AAIN colleague Mr Devendra Pratap Singh for immense guidance to young people, Ms Sunita Chaudhary for drafting stories, coordinating with media and engaged with youth for their capacity development and mobilization at different levels to finalized the stories in the form of the storybook.

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# EFFECTIVE CAMPAIGN BY YOUTH AGAINST CHILD MARRIAGE

When Ganga Parki returned home from school one day, she was surprised by a large number of guests laughing and dancing in the front yard. Soon her surprise turned into a shock when she found out that the people were there to celebrate her marriage of which she was unaware. The 13-year-old broke down in tears and told her mother that she didn't want to get married. Parki's family members tried to persuade her to get married, telling her that the event had already been fixed. But the teenager stood her ground. The wedding was ultimately canceled.

The incident took place in Doti district six years ago. Parki, now 19, says the incident changed her life. She is now a member of an adolescent club that actively prevents child marriage. She and her fellow club members educate parents and teenagers in their communities about the

consequences of child marriage. Also, she is studying in grade 11. The club was established as part of ActionAid Nepal's local rights program to offer a variety of managerial support and training. Through eight adolescent clubs, eight youth groups, and seven child clubs in Dipayal Silgadhi Municipality, Shikhar Municipality, and KI Singh Rural Municipality of Doti, about 400 children, adolescents, and youths are actively involved in the fight against child marriage. They engage in community outreach programs like door-to-door campaigning and perform street dramas to discourage underage marriage.

**“Some people claim that we are stopping child marriages out of jealousy because no one has come to us with a marriage proposal,”** says Bimala Pariyar, one of the club members. But criticisms and pushbacks have not deterred these youth activists.

Thanks to their tireless campaigning, local level representatives and officials are now pushing for a law at the local level to prohibit child marriage. According to Bigyan Dewal, a former youth focal point person for Equity Development Center, Doti, Dipayal Silgadhi Municipality has created a draft version of the anti-child marriage ordinance and other local authorities are also committed to following suit.

The club has already prevented 13 child marriages in Doti. Also, 2 cases against child marriage were registered and the verdict was in favor of the adolescents. And most youngsters who were rescued from getting married off by their parents are now in school and actively involved in anti-child marriage campaigns. Besides preventing child marriage, the club also gathers update on the situations of minors who were married as children and offer to counsel to both parents and children. **“Initially, nobody was in support of this youth-led campaign. But soon after they managed to prevent 13 child marriages, the local representatives were on their side,”** says Dewal.

Today, the club enjoys the support from local police, elected officials and some parents. Some local units have even started allocating funds to empower the youths. For instance, in the fiscal year 2020/21, K.I. Singh Rural Municipality allocated Rs 50,000 for capacity building of youths and prevention of child marriage.

Many youth fellows in Palpa are also involved in the fight against child marriage. In collaboration with ActionAid Nepal and with assistance from the ActionAid Denmark Global Platform, the YOUTH HUB was established under the Youth Fellowship Leadership Development Project in the Bagnaskali Rural Municipality in 2019. The project is involved of youths and coordination with the local government to organize various campaigns to prevent and stop child marriage. Four child weddings have already been prevented as a result of the campaign, and one lawsuit has been filed. Bagnaskali Rural Municipality-1 in Palpa saw zero incident of child marriage this year compared to 10 in 2021.

This was possible due to teenage interventions, such as color analysis, orientation, and peer counseling. Through color analysis, 86 individuals this year who were most at risk of child marriage received counseling. About 500 adults from 398 families were also taught about the risks of child marriage.

The members of the club, Yuva Sangam, led the initiative and gathered information on the hotspots for child marriage. In collaboration with the police, they formed a youth club to educate young people about the legal system in the battle against child marriage. To show the consequences of such dangerous practices, they included teachers and health professionals in their campaign.

**“Everyone in our area now knows that child marriage is a bad thing. They have heard the testimonies of those who got married as children,”** says Manoj Sharma, a club member. A 13 year’s girl’s parents married her







off at a young age. But she was lucky enough to continue her studies. Today, she is an active member of the club that has been preventing child marriage in her area. Srijana Gaire, another club member, says despite awareness campaigns, child marriage is still a fairly common practice because many people still think that it is normal.

## 4 COLOR ANALYSIS TOOL AGAINST CHILD MARRIAGE

Members of the Yuwa Sangam designed experimented with and used this tools. With the help of this tool, young people can discuss child marriage in confidence and discover the best way to solve the issue in their neighborhood. Apart from that, this is a secure method for triangulating evidence.

The objective of this tool are to identify young people who oppose child marriage and who are at risk of getting married at a young age and becoming trafficked, to stop child marriage through peer counseling with young people who are at risk of getting married at a young age, and to advocate against child marriage to parents and local authorities. Approximately takes 3:30 to 4:30 hours to use at the community.

Targeted adolescents include those who are in relationships and are likely to get married before turning twenty, as well as those who are at risk of child marriage because of their relationships, violence, and family issues or problems, as well as those who want to run away from their current situation in the hopes of having a better future. There are four color cards: red (high risk), yellow (risk), blue (vulnerable) and green (safe).

**“It will be easy to reduce child marriage if all municipal governments were to strongly support our campaigns,”** she says. Bagnashkali Rural Municipality is one of the local units where the partnership between local government and youth activists against child marriage is bearing desired results. In the fiscal year 2021/21, the rural municipality allotted Rs 20,000 to keep the youth campaigns against child marriage running.

In Bajura district, too, a network of girl clubs is fighting against child marriage. It intervened and stopped four unlawful marriages this year in wards 3, 4 and 9 of Budhinanda Municipality.

Youth clubs in the Siraha district are also writing a success story by lowering child marriage incidence with their campaigns in places like Dhangadhimai and Lahan. These clubs are supported by the local governments, ActionAid partner organization Dalit Janakalyan Youth Club, Women’s Rights Forum and other social organizations.

The same goes for Parsa, where local youths in some villages are campaigning against child marriage in areas where the practice is common. Based on one survey, they have achieved a 70 percent success rate in child marriage prevention.



## YOUTH INITIATIVE TO REDUCE DISASTER RISK

You might imagine that Kathmandu residents do not experience natural disasters like landslides and floods, but this is not the case. Residents of various sections of Kathmandu drown as the monsoon arrives. They are the inhabitants of squatter communities that are located along the banks of the rivers Bagmati and Manohara. They frequently lose their food, clothing, and shelter during the monsoon season each year. Sometimes their crucial documents are lost which is another stress.

The settlements that will see more flooding this year were identified by the youth who have been witnessing this predicament every monsoon season. They recognized the settlements of Banshighat, Sinamangal, and Manohara as flood-affected areas and began working there first. The Youth Hub is made up of all the young people who are from the most afflicted areas. As a low-cost way to aid, they

started showing the locals how to create Go bags. Go bags? During a disaster, a go bag should be maintained in a secure location and filled with critical documents, dry food, and emergency clothing. They began creating this bag after the monsoon season of last year.

About 105 people learned how to create go bags last year. Anju Dewali of Banshighat, who was trained to make bags, said that every year when there is a flood, citizenship credentials get soaked. **“We used to suffer agony and hardship going to the government office again to make documents, even after the disaster.”** The youth taught us how to build go bags the previous year so that records wouldn't get wet during the flood, she says.

In order to prepare for the rainy season, the youths have been training them how to make Go bags since June of 2022. This year they



have trained about 90 residents of Manohara, Sinamangal, and Banshighat who were devastated by the floods. Last year, about 105 people were taught to make Go bags.

The Budhanilkantha Municipality-10 gave Rs 150,000 to support the involvement of young people in humanitarian action in 2021. According to former ward chairperson Nawaraj Bhattarai, the money was given to help youngsters build their ability for humanitarian aid and action as well as to recognize their contributions to the community during the Covid. The youth training was carried out using money from the ward budget. The identity of young women has grown in the community along with their involvement in the humanitarian activity.

Similarly, every summer, fires burst out in Dhangadhimai Municipality, Aurahi Rural Municipality and other villages of Siraha district. Every year 10 to 15 houses were affected by the fire. People used to lose their house, they used to have problems finding food. No fire has been reported in Dhangadhimai Municipality-13 and Aurhi Rural Municipality-5 last year (2020). No family has been displaced from its home.

The youth's activism and initiative are to credit for the avoidance of fire in the village. The youths have been launching numerous anti-fireworks campaigns since the beginning of the year to quell fires in the region where they occur yearly. The young people located the communities that were prone to fires, spoke with the locals, and spread awareness of the importance of fire protection. A folk dance called *Dholho Pipihi* is performed in the area using regional musical instruments to attract people. In this Dholhi Pipihi dance, the youths chose a song that promoted fire safety. These events took place in Dhangadhimai Municipality-13 and Aurahi Rural Municipality-5.

After continuous campaign by youths, Dhangadhimai Municipality has developed a disaster management policy and allocated Rs 30,000 following constant follow-up and youth advocacy in 2021. Whereas Aurhi Rural Municipality-5 had allocated Rs 1 lakh.



Policy making also included the participation of youth. The priority of the disaster management committee also involves youth mobilization. The survey of Dhangadhimai Municipality-14, which is a high-risk area, has begun after being brought to the youngsters' attention, and recommendations are also being gathered. All of these tasks were aided by partner organization DJKYC of Siraha, as well as by the ward office and Red Cross Society.

A sudden rainstorm started at the end of Oct 2021. The paddy crop, which is known in Nepal as the grain storehouse, was harmed in Rajapur Municipality of the Bardiya district. Numerous homes suffered damage. No accommodations were made. But the youths responded. They worked together with the ward to keep the victims in a secure location while they independently collected food. The youths spent three days working in the field to assist the community in drying, moving, and storing the remaining paddy. They further coordinated with the ward to save and provide families who had drowned with aid.

Similarly, Samanata YOUTH HUB, Parsa is creating awareness in the community for pre-preparation to avoid floods in different tole of Paterwa Sugauli Rural Municipality. They distributed handwritten informational banners and brochures in the flood-affected areas to raise awareness. They held this session on so far about 200 members of the community.

To lower the risk of fire in Palpa, Yuwa Sangam gathered and cleared fallen leaves. They removed and burned fallen leaves that had accumulated near Tansen Bazar as it risked of catching fire. In cooperation with the Division Forest Office and the Nepal Army, 13 youths from Yuwa Sangam, served as coordinators.



## YOUNG WOMEN WARRIORS IN DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

It is a widespread belief that disasters can be used to give vulnerable communities new chances to reduce their vulnerability. In response to this statement, ActionAid Nepal and KMJS Nepal implemented a project in Rajapur, Bardiya, named ‘Youth and women leadership for community resilience and humanitarian action’, which ran from Jan to Sept 2022.

Young women have been effectively trained in disaster risk reduction (DRR) preparedness and response based on the project’s theme work. Among the many are Siva Chaudhary, Rabina Chaudhary, and Antila Tharu. These young ladies are tackling the complexity of the gendered effects of disasters.



The 24-year-old Antila Tharu is currently pursuing a bachelor’s degree. She and her seven-person family reside in Tediya-3, one of Bardiya’s Rajapur’s most flood-prone areas, and have endured severe flood damage. **“We didn’t have suitable dwellings, were strapped for cash, and had**

**a limited food supply,”** she says. Her family and neighborhood had suffered severe effects from the event and its aftermath.

Tharu’s life has, however, undergone a significant transformation because of extensive training, trying to raise awareness of early preparedness information, and sharing it with others in the community. She had been a

community-disaster response team member and an active participant in notifying the community about the flood, and she worked hard while distributing the cash voucher.

She claims that before getting involved with the project and working as a volunteer, she only saw flooding as a problem and lacked the necessary knowledge of disaster preparedness and response. Now, however, she sees challenges not just in floods but also in her lack of knowledge of preparedness and response.

She is now working to make sure that youngsters and their families know what to do in an emergency and that activities for disaster preparation, prevention, response, and recovery consider the needs and resources unique to young people.



Shiva Chaudhary, 24, is a YOUTH HUB member who is well-known in her neighborhood for her skillful writing and knowledge-sharing methods. She had a little understanding of the flood and its effects, though, stretching back seven months. She was also unconcerned with disaster preparedness,

prevention, response, and recovery activities that incorporated youth-specific needs and assets because she was a settler from an area that had not been flooded.

I had no notion that flood mitigation and an early warning may assist to reduce a wide range of calamities, she says, adding that her participation in the youth hub and her training made her proactive. Chaudhary actively participates in raising awareness in the community of disaster risk reduction and resilience. By promoting a multisectoral strategy that focuses on shelter, housing, and human settlements, as well as education, health and nutrition, water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH), social protection, child protection, livelihoods, the environment, public open spaces, and placemaking, she hopes to increase the overall impact of DRR and resilience building.



The 20-year-old Rabina Chaudhary's experience is like Shiva Chaudhary's. Before joining Youth Hub, she was utterly uninformed of the flood risk in her community. But as of late, she has placed a strong emphasis on the DRR plan and directed community members to lower disaster risks through decreased exposure

and susceptibility, effective management of the environment and land, and enhanced readiness for unfavorable events.

Chaudhary is certain that learning about natural disasters would enable her to find

solutions to pressing problems in the future. She is currently distributing knowledge about various catastrophe risk reduction strategies along with a group of others that share her interests. She has also taken concrete steps to create a 'community catastrophe management committee' because there isn't one in her area.

These three teenagers serve as the best illustrations of how involving youth in disaster preparedness and recovery efforts can help increase youths' awareness of hazards as well as the likelihood that they openly discuss how to adequately protect their families and loved ones and understand how to seek help should their community be affected.



## EMPOWERED YOUTH HUB AND YOUTH HUB MEMBERS

In Rajapur, Bardiya district, a YOUTH HUB was established under the Youth Fellowship Development Project supported by Global Platform in 2019. The Youth Hub is locally named 'Yuwa Bakheri Kendra' and in short 'Bakheri'. Bakheri includes young people from each of Rajapur Municipality's all 10 wards. Rajapur Municipality ward number 5 provided 2 rooms for Bakheri. The young volunteers underwent various trainings when it was established. They coordinated with wards and municipalities. Also, they have been running various advocacy campaigns on different issues of youth and their community. These initiatives have helped them build their leadership and capacity.

As a result, some young people have discovered employment prospects in the area. In other structures, some young people have also acquired leadership roles. Two young women from Bakheri, Maya Chaudhary is associated to practical Action. Anita Chaudhary is working in the cooperative this year, Bhumi Chaudhary is working with AAN's partner organization Kamaiya Mahila Jagaran Samaj (KMJS) while Jiwan Raj Subedi and Dilip Ratgaiyan have been elected to the student union of Shahid Amar Multiple Campus, Rajapur. Similarly, employment has also been provided to one member of Yuva Bakheri by providing regular salary facility. They all claimed that the leadership growth that occurred while



participating in various activities was what caused this change in their life.

With the establishment of Bakheri they have been offering the photocopy service at low cost and writing application free of cost for the service recipients. Now, Bakheri's earnings have increased. They made Rs 45,000 the year before, and in 2021 they made Rs 34,000. They also began out by renting out library books and offering a photocopying service. Even one of the destitute members of Bakheri was given a job by them. Since this year, they have controlled their finances by opening a bank account. Food grains worth Rs 4,000 were given to a desperately poor household in Rajapur from Bakheri's income during the Covid time.

Since it was established, the youth hub in the two rooms supplied by the ward office of Rajapur Municipality-5 of Bardiya has been highly busy. The number of youths who desire to join the youth program is growing because of youth activism. Parents have begun asking to enroll their children in Yuva Bakheri after becoming aware of the group's efforts. In addition, various organizations at the local level and others have begun working with the youth of Bakheri because of their advocacy and labor. They have started requesting assistance with several tasks. Bakheri has worked in collaboration with organizations like Om Shanti Om, Tayar Nepal, and the local level. Bakheri is now invited to take part in numerous local-level initiatives since it has kept up good relations with local-level representatives.

Like this, local authorities encourage Bakheri's youth to take part in a variety of training programs. The youth of Bakheri are pleased that their advice and suggestions will be included during the program since previously the name of Bakheri was not even mentioned while participating in it.

While working with Bakheri, they felt that their abilities were developed through the youth hub and felt the need for the youth hub to provide such an opportunity for juniors as well. Then, they started lobbying and advocating for physical space in Ward No. 3. They set up a table and chair in the cramped corner of ward office and began filling out applications for service recipients. The youth's work made it simpler for the staff members and reps. Following that, the youth were given a room and an old photocopier by ward number 3. The service recipient and the ward are now continually receiving assistance from the youths. They have some savings as well. Finally, the members of the Bakheri have succeeded in setting up and expanding YOUTH HUB of their dreams.



# EMPOWERED YOUNG WOMEN FORM YOUTH HUB



Has your two years of work experience in Bakheri assisted you in finding employment? Anita Chaudhary was asked. Yes, of course, she quickly responded with excitement. A lot. I am at a loss for words. ActionAid Nepal, KMJS, and Bakheri are always in my mind.

Anita Chaudhary, a former Bakheri member, now works for Unique Nepal, a significant and well-known financial organization in the area. She collaborated actively with residents of the neighborhood from 2019 to 2021. She gained communication skills while participating in several campaigns with local representatives and stakeholders.

Anita stated, “When I first started working in a financial institution, I had to travel to the neighborhood to encourage people to start saving groups by outlining the advantages of living communally. I formed a lot more groups at that time than any of my other coworkers. **“At this time, I am employed as a field assistant in the Banganga 11 Odari branch of the Kapilvastu district, one of Unique Nepal Microfinance Institution’s 38 branches,”** she continued. She claims that working in Bakheri gave her the self-assurance to work in Kapilvastu from Bardiya because she had the chance to travel to Kathmandu, Surkhet, and Palpa districts for training when she was there. Due to her prior experience, she believes that working outside the area is not difficult.

She has encouraged her brother and niece to join Bakheri because she feels changed herself. Her family includes Bipana and Milan, who recently

joined Bakheri. She frequently asks her niece and brother about Bakheri when she calls home. She leaves for Bakheri as soon as she gets home and spends her free day participating in Bakheri activities.

At the conclusion of the conversation, she stated, **“I go to the office wearing a jacket, bag, and t-shirt with the logo and name of ActionAid Nepal and KMJS printed on them.”** When coworkers inquire, I discuss Bakheri. Inform them of our work.

Similar to this, Nirma Chaudhary of Ward No. 5 of Rajapur Municipality joined Bakheri when Bakheri was established in Ward No. 5 of Rajapur, Bardiya in 2019. She also joined her friends in the neighborhood to support anti-child marriage and anti-suicide campaigns.

She initially feared making small talk and public introductions to strangers. But eventually she began interacting with people and had the independence to run campaigns alone in the neighborhood. She started putting in a lot of effort in the community since she enjoyed working alongside her friends. She gained coordination and cooperation skills while working in Bakheri by interacting with the service recipients and representatives who visit the ward office. She became more assured about herself. She was getting ready to join the Nepal Police Department in the meantime, in accordance with her interests.

**“I used to feel anxious when I considered how to handle an interview. My confidence in my ability to handle an interview rose when I started working at Bakheri,”** she spoke. If I didn't work in Bakheri, I might not have been able to pass the interview, she said, **“I passed the interview with the same confidence.”** I did, however, have no trouble passing the physical. She joined the Nepal Police 2 years ago.







## YOUTH-LED REMEDIAL CLASS TO RECOVER LEARNING LOSS DURING COVID

Remedial learning is well known for filling in any gaps in a child's academic performance caused by factors such as delayed learning styles, physical impairments, and absences from class or other learning activities. This is an efficient strategy to close the achievement gap, enable kids to continue their education, and increase their self-confidence. One of the better options for making up for learning deficits caused by Covid-19 may be youth-led remedial sessions. For grades 5 through 8, youth volunteers taught the remedial lessons here. Under ActionAid Nepal's education theme, the remedial class was conducted in 58 schools of working areas of the Local Rights Program in 10 different districts in 2022.

The engagement and conversation in the remedial class have benefited both the teachers and the students. Bhuwan, a fifth

grader in Bagnashkali in the Palpa district, used to ask his teachers questions in normal lessons only infrequently. Since the young volunteers encouraged the children to join in the classroom interaction, he now feels extremely at ease speaking with his teachers.

Another student remarks, "If we do not grasp any subject matter the volunteers constantly explain the topic and offer us many examples," during the Focused Group Discussion (FGD) held with the students in Palpa. We did not have these opportunities in the traditional classroom. While in ordinary classes, teachers want us to memorize the material, in remedial classes, they provide examples and ask us to practice instead. This is the aspect of remedial lessons that I enjoy the best.

Volunteer teachers in Palpa who participated in the interview reported that these kids were

routinely urged to take part in class discussions, group projects, pair projects, and presentations.

Remedial programs have raised students' self-esteem while enhancing classroom instruction. For instance, Pooja, an eighth grader from the far-off village of Siraha, now feels comfortable asking questions in class. She continues by saying that she can now communicate in English as well.

The remedial class's ability to meet the basic needs of those children who were much behind their peers in learning was one of its most significant features. They had the chance to somewhat enhance their learning. Deepa, a volunteer teacher in Parsa, remarked that even extremely weak children were paying attention to their studies during the virtual meeting with volunteer teachers.

As Bishnu, a teacher in Bardiya, indicated, the kids started finishing their homework once they started attending the remedial sessions, these programs were also proven to be supportive for the teachers. They started to become engaged in their academic work as well.

Siraha, another Lahani educator, had backed Bishnu as well. She also saw the value of remedial classes for kids at all levels, not just those in grades four through eight.

The program had advantages for the Youth Volunteers as well. Their educational skills

were enhanced by it. The study gave the young volunteers an understanding of how kids behave in the classroom and during learning activities. According to Krishna, a volunteer teacher in Palpa, this enabled the volunteers to introduce novel concepts and develop their own teaching strategies based on the abilities and environments of the children.

The Youth Volunteers have discovered that taking remedial classes has improved their social and communication abilities. They learned how to establish relationships with parents, students, and other organization members, as Shristhi explains. Because students frequently had the chance to speak in front of the class and were visited by head teachers who were accompanied by parents and local partner organizations, it lessens the feeling of self-consciousness while speaking in front of others.

This effort aims to create, establish, and demonstrate a youth-led alternative that is both cost-efficient and effective at helping children who have suffered learning deficits because of the covid pandemic. The initiative's specific results include the closing of the English and math learning gaps in post-covid contexts for at least 7500 students. Additionally, at least 314 young volunteers received opportunities for capacity building and school volunteering, and many of them were members of Youth Hub. They shared their stories to inform future policy engagement. Through their siblings, at least 7500 more children's learning gaps were filled.







## YOUTH ACTIVISTS AS CHANGE AGENTS IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM'

One day, Jiwanraj Subedi's neighbor, a member of Bakheri, came to his home asking for a loan. It was to pay his daughter's school fees since she had been advised she won't be able to sit the exam if they weren't paid on time. Jiwanraj, who had recently taken part in a training session sponsored by ActionAid Nepal and discovered that Nepal's constitution ensures free and obligatory basic education, was deeply moved. Free education is guaranteed by the Free Education Act of 2075.

Jeevan talked about this matter with other Bakheri pals. All the young people gathered to schedule community score cards at various municipal schools. They discovered that free education has not been implemented in the schools after speaking with the pupils. They asked the llocal-level politicians for free

education based on that reality. However, despite numerous attempts to get the llocal-level legislators' attention through various means, they resisted, but the youth didn't give up. Together with its partner organization Kamaiya Mahila Jagaran Samaj, ActionAid Nepal assisted the youths during this process with both financial and technical support (KMJS).

Jiwanraj stated, "We started this campaign because we think that our rights shouldn't be restricted. As part of the campaign, we went to schools. We came to the realization that there was nowhere to go and talk to the students, and even if we did, they wouldn't discuss the prices the school charged openly. **"To raise the attention of the stakeholders, we even complained through the means of social media, namely Facebook, over the lack**

**of participation of local level leaders and teachers in the program,”** said Maya Chaudhary, a member of Youth Bakheri.

Through gatherings in person and social media, the youths persisted in applying pressure on local-level representatives. As a result, the municipality added mandatory free education in all the Municipality’s schools in its annual program (the fiscal year 2077/2078 B.S.), which is currently being implemented. The Kisan Higher Secondary School’s principal Prem Bahadur BK remarked, **“The municipality has provided funds to the schools for free education. After the introduction of free education, collecting student tuition is no longer a bother”**. In addition, he continued, **“the number of pupils has climbed to 56 after introducing free education.”**

Representatives from the Municipality and ward levels have also affirmed their commitment to successfully implementing free education. The youth, according to Ram Bahadur Chaudhary, a former ward chairperson of ward number 5, is responsible for driving social change. Therefore, we can become role models for young people if we launch a campaign for free education with these kids. I’m working hard to make that happen.

The parents and pupils of low-income families now have it easier thanks to the establishment of free education. A youngster at the school named Garima stated, “My mother is blind, and my father is crippled. It was challenging to send my big brother and I to school. But thanks to the free-education program, things are now simpler for my family. My pals and I are overjoyed. The fact that school supplies and uniforms may now be purchased with school fees has made the parents very happy.

The Municipality kept providing free education in fiscal years 2078 and 2079 after promoting it in fiscal years 2077 and 2078 by allocating funds under the annual program. Parents, however,

began griping that some schools had resumed charging tuition. After that, the youth visited a few schools and began observing by speaking with the staff, pupils, and parents there. A Yuva Bakheri member named Dilip Ratgaiyan claims, **“Once we achieve something, we cannot go.” It also requires ongoing supervision and monitoring. Therefore, we collaborated closely with parents and schools to provide ongoing free education.”**

They anticipate that witnessing Dipesh Tharu (Rajesh), the Municipality Mayor was elected in the local elections held during the current fiscal year 2079/ 080, pledge his support for free education will make things simpler. The newly elected Mayor Tharu announced that education up to class 12 would be free after taking office in April and included it in his list of five important announcements. Tharu has additionally committed to establishing a scholarship fund for students in order to support their higher education studies. They are thrilled by the mayor’s statement in his fight for free education. The second priority, according to the youth, is high-quality education.

The youth of Bakheri, local level representatives, instructors, parents, and students are now extremely delighted and proud that all of the municipality’s schools now offer free education. The young people of Bakheri are aware that their strong resolve, perseverance, solidarity, and effective use of many platforms are what have made the free education campaign successful.

Meanwhile, once the evening classes began at the Shahid Amar Multiple Campus in Rajapur, the girls who were traveling there began to experience sexual harassment. They caught the attention of the college administration as certain Bakheri members were in charge of the student union on campus. The morning session from 2076 BS was begun after much deliberation and repeated attention from the campus administration.





## CREATIVE YOUTH-LED ACTIVISM FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE

The YOUTH HUB members of Bardiya, Palpa, Kathmandu, Siraha, Parsa, and Doti districts affiliated with ActionAid Nepal and supported by Global Platform are running advocacy campaigns through creative activities like demonstrations, flash mobs, role play, and hiking. Similarly, they have been conducting dialogue, discussion, and policy discussions to collect stakeholders' commitment and include climate justice issues in the policy at the local level. As well as community awareness programs are running like orientation adolescents and young people, door-to-door campaigns plantations, etc.

At a time when the daily lives of the community are being affected due to climate change, environmental degradation, and insensitive human behavior, the youth had started raising

their voices for climate justice. Climate campaigner Sunita Gaha from Pala said that the voice of climate justice has been promoted as a campaign to raise awareness in their community and draw the attention of the stakeholders as the citizens of Nepal are also being affected due to climate change and its effects.

On the issues of climate justice, the youth have been also coordinating and collaborating with the local level and stakeholders and different local networks working for climate justice. Bardiya's Yuwa Bakheri Kendra, Parsa's Samanta YOUTH HUB, and Palpa's Yuwa Sangam have planted trees in partnership and coordination with the Forest Consumer Committee and Ward Office. They also



interacted in schools on World Environment Day. In a similar manner, Bagnaskali Yuwa Sangam Palpa collaborated and Nawa Jagriti Yuwa Club and local police to remove sallipir (fallen leaves) to reduce the risk of fire.

In an event organized by the youth, Sharma Chaudhary of the Community Forest Users Federation of Nepal asked young people, including those from Bakheri, to work with the local deforestation and forest protection team to protect the forests in the Geruwa Rural Municipality and Rajapur Municipality. Mayor Dipesh Chaudhary stated, **“The Municipality has plan to initiate a campaign on “one person, one plant” in Rajapur Municipality and set up control mechanism to take care of haphazardly forest deforestation as a priority of the Municipality.”** Deputy Chief Mankala Kumari Choudhary added, **“we are excited to work with the youth on these issues.”**

After policy discussion, organized by Yuwa Sangam Palpa, the executive members of Bagnashkali Rural Municipality signed the program and expressed their commitment to the issue of climate justice. Also, Baganaskali Rural Municipality signed a letter of commitment to formulate local climate policies and programs to mitigate the effects of climate change and implement them in individual practices.



**Due to Youth-Led advocacy, campaigns and initiatives related to Climate Justice, the outcomes so far are as follows.**

- More than **80** plants have been planted to contribute to climate justice and environmental protection.
- **1500** people are aware of climate justice through the different Climate Justice Campaign.
- More than **200** young people, including 60 percent of young women are active in the Climate Justice Campaign.
- The commitment of **75** people including signatures for climate justice has been collected.



# YOUTH CAMPAIGNER SUNITA



Sunita Gaha from Palpa led Youth- led Climate campaign in Bagnashkali Rural Municipality -4. After the Global Platform performed training on how to run campaigns, strategy, media relations, and communication during the campaign, she acquired the fundamentals. She gained knowledge of the tactics and procedures used by activists engaged in campaigns for climate justice in several nations during the training.

In the training and discussion, she made comparisons between the problems with her surroundings and the problems with climate change and climate justice. She pursued her studies of justice and climate change. She carried on the conversation with the engineers for climate justice. With the aid of her youth organization, Bagnaskali Yuwa Sangam, she

also began promoting community awareness activities in her area. She covered several activities not covered by other campaigns.

Because this issue was new to our community, Sunita remarked, **“We have organized a lot of events to grab people’s attention because it is vital to draw people’s attention to new issues.”** **“If we can catch people’s attention, it will be simpler to gradually convey the subject,”** she continued. We have included several tough, time-consuming tasks like flash mobs and demonstrations. There has been a lot of interest in this.

She joined her young friends in educating the youth for the campaign on the effects of climate change on us through local instances. She clarified this to other young people in the neighborhood. Along with flash mobs and demonstrations, she also carried messages. The members of Sunita’s group think that these initiatives are successful. One of the main pillars of their dedication to the village is the success of their climate justice initiatives. With the local level representatives, they also talked about climate justice at the district meetings.

It was suggested that the program incorporate the problem of climate justice into the Rural Municipality’s policy. Rural Municipality former Chairman Krishna Prasad Basyal committed to drafting the new policy and incorporating the topic of climate justice throughout the meeting. The Rural Municipality’s representatives of various groups have also signed and shown support for climate justice.

Sunita continues to spearhead the district’s effort for climate justice and deepens her understanding of the issue. She has taken part in several climate justice initiatives and contributed her opinions and experiences to those initiatives. She also discussed her involvement in a Bangladeshi youth-run organization.

## BHUMI, A CLIMATE CAMPAIGNER

“We went to plant trees in the empty lot in our ward as part of the Climate Justice Campaign. There, folks were ecstatic. When he came back, he inquired about the timing of his return to plant trees and flowers. **“Working on climate justice became more and more crucial after seeing how happy our tiny effort and labor made people,”** joyfully remarked Bhumi Kumari Tharu of Bardiya. And we’ve put a lot of effort into achieving climate justice.

Through her group, Yuwa Bakheri Kendra, Bhumi Kumari Tharu of Rajapur Municipality-5 in Bardiya is actively involved in the fight for climate justice. When I learned more about the issue, I realized that it was related to our community and the lives of the residents. She learned from conversations and inquiries that while numerous crops were once cultivated in her community without the use of chemical fertilizers, no crops are currently grown due to soil degradation.

She came to know fish were abundant and there were many water sources when elderly people were young, but now those water sources are becoming less and less accessible. She started researching the topic, talking about it with her friends, and being extremely involved in the campaign.

Bhumi is now knowledgeable about climate justice. She coordinates several initiatives at the local level by connecting her difficulties with those in the community, explaining them, having discussions with them, and working with friends. She has developed sensitivity



in her daily life since she is aware that women would be significantly more impacted by climate justice. She has been asking her mum to build an upgraded stove to cut down on smoke.

She began urging her farmer father to consider alternatives to the pesticides and synthetic fertilizers now being used in agriculture. Bhumi works to educate young people like herself on how climate change affects our lives and the importance of speaking out for climate justice.

Bhumi said **“we receive a lot of assistance from ward office and representatives of our ward number 5. to promote climate justice.”**

To progress the campaign for climate justice in the municipality more successfully, coordination with the ward is now the plan, according to Bhumi.





## YOUTH-LED CAMPAIGN TO END GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Due to the problem of wild animals and frequent floods, everyone from Madi had to travel to Bharatpur for general shopping, higher education, and medical care. Madi municipality is located in the rural area of the Chitwan district and is surrounded by a national park, rivers, and canals. Sexual violence against women and girls was allegedly committed during the two-hour public transportation trip from Madi, according to the ladies and girls themselves. In order to stop sexual harassment inside buses and undertake a safety audit of public transportation, a youth organization made up of 7 boys and girls from Madi Nagar Municipality was formed.

The safety audit revealed that the owners, conductors, and drivers of the public transportation system did not care about the incidents; they viewed them as routine. These

incidents also occurred among the passengers. Between Madi and Bharatpur, there are often 70 public vehicles operating each day, and these vehicles follow the owner-imposed rotation schedule. Women and teenagers find it unpleasant when songs containing foul language are played on public transportation and offensive posters are stuck to the walls of these vehicles.

It was discovered that when speaking to the transport professionals, such matters were not taken seriously. The local service providers accuse the passengers of failing to follow the seat reservation regulations when it is discovered that the reserved seats have not been used. Therefore, a steering committee of 11 persons has been formed to end sexual assault against women and girls in public transportation on the

basis of the papers from the safety audit, and the program has been running constantly in public transportation.

The Chitwan Active Women’s Foundation came to the conclusion that there should be a change in both the behavior of the passengers and the employees of public vehicles based on the safety audit carried out by young people in the Madi Municipality. Based on the survey models BC model and Com B Diagnosis, the situation has changed.

It was decided to design a poster for public transportation about the rights and legal processes of women, place those posters in public vehicles, and conduct an awareness program for the passengers and transportation staff, playing a jingle with message and installing CC cameras in 4 public vehicles every month to the steering committee. This was done in coordination with the local service provider in the community. The steering committee was present when it was determined to keep an eye on harassment situations and to issue warnings for further legal action if the rules were broken.

The steering group was established to inform the public on the laws, regulations, and legal process pertaining to violence on public transportation. Every three months, meetings with drivers and operators were scheduled, and flyers were circulated on public transportation. Similar to this, conductors and drivers were required to carry out government policies for public transportation by keeping an eye on instances of misbehavior. Every year, conductors and drivers were recognized for their efforts to stop violence on public transportation.

The campaign to end violence against women and girls in public transportation has resulted in a favorable improvement in the behavior of drivers and other staff members. Out of 70 public transportation systems, 35 have started playing jingles with message, posting message posters in place of wrong ones, and reporting violent incidents right away to the local police station.

Men are deterred from using violence in public spaces by jingles and posters; women and girls have begun to do the same. In this way, the campaign to end violence against women and girls in public transportation, which was carried out in coordination with local authorities, is credited by the young with allowing women and girls to begin commuting in safety.

25-year-old Sabin Sunar lives in Madi-3 in Basantpur. He claims that after joining the Safe City volunteer organization, he became aware of the violence that occurs to women and girls in public settings. **“I then maintained strong relationships with all of my female friends, and I also began to educate others about the brutality being committed against women and adolescent girls.”**

Sujitha Adhikari is 45 years old, too. Additionally, she was subjected to a great deal of violence and abuse while riding the bus to college. She claims that she felt uncomfortable discussing the experiences with her friends because she was unable to criticize the boys. **“Now I understood what she needed to do.”**

The same drivers and conductors now make a statement that they do not abuse women and girls, speak in simple terms, and immediately cease violence if male passengers misbehave. Previously, the same conductors would use abusive words, be teased by male passengers, and the driver would not care when they misbehaved. Girls and women are thrilled when they can use public transportation in safety.







## THE STORY OF POND AND NISHA KARKI

Agriculture is the main source of income for the residents of Karki Village, Wayal, Karki Bagar, and other surrounding villages in KI Singh Rural Municipality Ward No. 4 of Doti. However, there was no alternative way to irrigate throughout the summer and there was no source of water for irrigation. The people were talking about possible irrigation systems. They demanded an irrigation pond during the local level planning process in the fiscal year 2076-077.

After their plan was selected that year, they formed a user's committee for the pond's construction. The Rural Municipality completed all requirements before the pond's construction could begin. Conflicts arose in between as a result of different economic transparencies, political differences, etc. Everyone stopped paying attention to the development of that pool as a result, including the head of the

consumer committee. The pond's construction has begun but has not yet been finished. The pond's construction was put on hold.

Pond construction was difficult because of political strife, a lack of cooperation from the populace, and disagreements over transparency. Yes, it was challenging. Meanwhile Nisha Karki was nominated as a chairperson of user's committee of Bagar Irrigation Pond for pond building. She was serving as the secretary of the Pariwartan adolescents Group at the time and continues to do so under the auspices of ActionAid Nepal and ActionAid's partner organization, the Equality Development Center. How did you get the bravery to assume control of the User's committee at that time? She responds, **"We had to overcome many challenges when we were in the adolescents group, even**

**when we were running the Chhaupadi and child marriage campaign. I made the decision to lead the user's committee in light of my experience.”**

She added **“I was encouraged by several brothers and sisters in my village and the brothers from EDC who assured me I could do it.”** She assumed control of the nine-person user's committee in the fiscal year 2077/078. She took the initiative, but this work was exceedingly difficult. When she went to the rural municipality to request the user's committee's approval and recommendation, a complaint was made to have the plan itself canceled. She had a hard time getting the go-ahead to start working. But she was able to obtain approval to work from the RM thanks to the persistent advocacy and support of her father and other supportive members. Many people let her down by telling her that she couldn't do it.

She didn't give up, though. There were numerous attempts made not to grant her a dozer after she demanded one to dig a pond in the community. There was an eight-lakh rupee plan. Many also brought up the subject of financial transparency and charged her with embezzlement. However, she fought for financial transparency from the outset by creating a planning board with a budget and schedule, and at the conclusion of the plan, she held a legally required public hearing.

It took 5 months to create the pond. She feel that the plan was finished fast because the villagers responded promptly when each hamlet was called to provide a public service (jansramdaan). **“Financial transparency is necessary. I viewed the demand for financial transparency positively and conducted my business in a transparent manner. In our village, an irrigation stream has developed this year. Additionally, I have demanded a report on that.”**

After the pond was built, farmers from roughly 100 families used it to water their fields during

the summer. Seasonal veggies are raised there. Additionally, there are preparations being made for fish breeding. After the pond was built, farmers who struggle with irrigation in the summer felt comfort. Goma Karki, a 30-year-old resident of Karkigaun, claims that since the pond was constructed, watering the plants has gotten simpler. It would take roughly one and a half hours to carry it away from the location if there was no pond. We women had a lot of work to do, including farming, sending our kids to school, and cooking.

There is relief now that the pond has been constructed. In the same vein, Mohan Karki of Karki Bagar claims **“We construct the pond, irrigate it, and grow veggies. We market it and sell it there. The cost of maintaining the residence is paid for.”**

Now, she is highly regarded. Even those who previously chose not to speak or converse with her have suddenly begun. An engineering team from the RM monitored and suggested the final payment when the pond was built. But when she finally realized that the deputy chief had refused to help, she was disappointed. It took four days to obtain a single signature, she said. But if you do a good job, everyone will be behind you. She was coerced by all the villagers to sign that as well.” **“After making a commitment and working honestly, no matter how difficult it is, it can be done,”** she said. There is now a desire to participate and work in other users' committees.”



## MAYA'S EFFORTS TO END THE CHHAUPADI



Maya Parki is my name. I am in class 11 and am 16 years old. My home is in Mudhegaun's Shikhar Municipality-2. When I was 11 years old, I started having periods. I was forced to sleep in a chhaugoth at that time (the separate house where women sleep during menstruation). I spent that night waiting for morning. I was quite afraid. I wasn't even permitted to have curdled milk at the time.

There is a belief that states eating curd and milk during menstruation will anger the gods and cause cattle to cease producing milk. It was forbidden to eat healthy meals, yet heavy lifting was necessary. I did this for a few of

my menstrual years. Today, though, I no longer confine myself to the chhaugoth during my period. Along with doing as much housework as I can, I also consume milk and curd.

It was difficult to alter conduct and lifestyle in opposition to the long-standing Chhaupadi custom. It called for bravery. The Pragati Adolescent Group of the Local Rights Program of the Equality Development Center (EDC) Nepal and ActionAid Nepal brought it about after I joined them.

I discovered that chhaupadi is a negative custom that is harmful to girls and women in the community. I was able to talk about the issues that the Chhaupadi had caused for me

and my friends. I also discovered that chhaupadi is a criminal offense. In the adolescent group, I also learnt how to make sanitary napkins. My confidence grew as a result of my extensive knowledge.

I believed that I should now work against Chhaupadi in the community as well after beginning the practice against it in my home. My mother had joined me at this point. From the teenage group to the community, we ran a campaign against the Chhaupadi custom. We pushed females to start the transition process at home. We used to warn their parents that if they didn't agree, we would take our mothers' support and go into REFLECT.

To raise awareness of Chhaupadi's effects on women and clarify the legal provisions, we ran awareness campaigns like street plays. Girls from 25 families in the community began eating wholesome meals while menstruating as a result of our ongoing efforts. Additionally, they permitted people to sleep inside the house.

In my school, I am now actively working to spread awareness about the chhaupadi practice and child marriage. Throughout the campaign, I received a lot of hate and criticism. But now that the community has changed and females like me are more at ease, I am delighted to see it. The days of unsure when it will be morning during menstruation are long gone.

The ideas that one should avoid touching plants and stay inside while on their period have changed. I'm happy to see this. However, I am also aware that there is much to be done in many other groups to combat Chhaupadi. The neighborhood still needs to be informed.





## NEETU AND NEHA WALKED DIFFERENT PATHS TO CHANGE



“The biggest loss in the world is the loss of family’s trust and the struggle to regain it is like winning a lost battle.” Nitu Yadav, a 17-year-old resident of Siraha’s Lahan Municipality Ward No. 14, said, **“I battled hard to win this war.”** She learned to think critically and communicate her opinions from her early life’s hardships. At this age, she started to seek her education and grasp the meaning of life. She was a dedicated student

at her school and in the ninth grade at the age of 14. She would attempt to get her friends to focus on their studies.

She would explain to her friends the drawbacks of early marriage because child marriages were frequent in her village. Although early marriage was common in her community, her parents did not press her to get married. While she resided with her parents in the village, Nitu’s brother, a member of the Nepal Police, resided in the city. Her brother was the one who handed Nitu a cell phone.

Once she had the phone, she began speaking to a boy on a regular basis and slowly started to fall in love with him. She soon lost control of her studies as her attention was quickly diverted. The boy repeatedly tried to persuade Nitu to

accept his marriage proposal, but she refused.

Since most Nitu’s acquaintances were getting married young and in love, gradually, Nitu began to believe that she should as well. The youngster sought a dowry of one million rupees while the couple was preparing to get married. Nitu was horrified, but she was unable to express her feelings or speak to the lad. She was unable to resist the boy’s proposal of marriage, yet at the same time conceded to the demand of paying one million rupees from her parents. For Nitu’s family, one million rupees was a significant sum of money, and she was aware that her family could not comfortably afford it. Nitu started to feel the effects of this, and her mother observed that she was stressed out. Finally, Neetu broke down in tears and told her everything. Her parents confiscated her phone after learning about it, and they forbade her from attending school. The confidence of her family was broken.

After much persuasion from her family, she agreed not to marry and wanted to rejoin her school but her family didn’t believe her. She then turned to her neighbor Neha Mahato for assistance. Neha was a prominent young person in her society who opposed dowry and underage marriage. She was permitted to attend school after Neha gave an explanation of Nitu’s family. Nitu soon entered class 12 and hoped to support her parents and become independent.

On order to prevent others from going through what she did, she joined the adolescent club in her ward. Her other aim was to eradicate dowry and child marriage from her neighborhood.



She visited the houses of neighborhood young teenagers and their parents to raise awareness because she now feels as though she has survived a serious accident. When she learned that there would be child marriages in her community, she would be first in line to stop it by organizing and carrying out a plan with her friends. It was crucial for her to maintain her family's trust.

This is the tale of Neha, who assisted Nitu, in the meantime. Neha Mahato is 24 years old, which is considered to be rather elderly in her society for marriage. Neha's tribe viewed her as having to wait until she was twenty to find a husband and that she should have wed earlier. Despite what the locals said, Neha insisted on being married without having to give a dowry.

In her neighborhood, this was practically impossible, but she wasn't discouraged. She railed against dowry and the improper usage of it in her community with constant vigor. She learned that the groom, her cousin, had requested a bike and a dowry of three lakh rupees.

Knowing this, she asked for her cousin to get married without a dowry and said she wouldn't go to the wedding if a dowry was required. She didn't show up at the wedding until her cousin's brother made a dowry-free pledge. She thinks that only through family can change occur. She is guiding her younger siblings in this. She had been speaking out against dowries and child marriage since she was a ninth-grader.

She did, however, have the audacity to rebel in her tenth grade after her family forced her and her 19-year-old sister into marriage. She rebelled against the dowry and child marriage

customs. The marriage was finally annulled when the family reached a consensus. Due to this, her sister was able to complete up to grade 12, and Neha is now in her third year of graduate school.

She believes that she would not have been able to finish her education if she had not rebelled at the time. **“In the past, I used to promise that I wouldn't engage in child marriage or wed someone who demanded dowry. I was not widely believed, but I have been true to my word. People that disagree with this or won't say what they believe to be right or wrong are ignored by me. She said, “I'm right. I know.”**

She said **“I adhere to what I feel is the proper thing to do, regardless of what others may think.”** By discussing their siblings and parents, she also helps junior members of adolescent and youth groups with their personal issues. She serves as an example for a lot of young people in the neighborhood and community.

Neha worked as the social mobilizer for the inclusive girl's education program in Lahan Municipality-24 which is administered in association with WaterAid and the Dalit Janakalyan Youth Club. Both Nitu and Neha are a part of the youth initiative and adolescent club established by ActionAid Nepal. Also, both Neetu and Neha are members of Mithila Yuva Baitar, a YOUTH HUB established in 2022 with the support of Global Platform and ActionAid Nepal in partnership with AAN's local partner Dalit Janakalyan Yuwa Club (DJKYC).

After being given the chance to take part in various trainings and programs run by the Dalit Janakalyan Youth Club with the assistance of ActionAid Nepal, they have advanced. They now have the chance to work and lead at the local level as a result. They says **“we are grateful to ActionAid Nepal and Dalit Janakalyan Youth Club for providing them with the knowledge, skills, and opportunities they have.”**



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