

STORIES *of* CHANGE

STRENGTHENING WOMEN'S COLLECTIVES IN NEPAL



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FOREWORD



ActionAid Nepal is a member of ActionAid Federation working to end poverty and injustice with thousands of communities and millions of people across the planet. It is working in over 45 countries in Asia, Africa, Europe and The America's with the poorest and most excluded women, men and children, taking sides with them, making long-term commitments to advance their human rights and to transform the world in which every person enjoys their right to life of dignity.

ActionAid started working in Nepal since 1982 to improve the basic living conditions of the people living in poverty and to carry out the pro-poor policy initiatives. From the very beginning, ActionAid has been working with women putting them at center of its work, focusing on poverty eradication, improved livelihood and sustainable development. It has been working explicitly on women's social, political and economic empowerment,

gender equality, social inclusion, social justice and transformation of unequal power relations through various programmes and projects adopting human rights based approach. Over the last three decades, ActionAid Nepal has worked in partnership with more than 50 local NGOs and people's organization across 35 districts for achieving its mission of social transformation and poverty eradication.

‘Strengthening women’s Collectives project’ is one of these initiatives. The project has focused on empowering women to recognize the extent of their unpaid care work and paid work with supporting actions to increase women’s incomes through collectives. Particularly, it was directed towards developing entrepreneurship capacity of rural women in order to increase their equal access to and control over the economic resources, enhance leadership capacity and redistribute and reduce unpaid care work at family and community level for their improved standard of living and wellbeing. In regard to this, project has made some remarkable achievements on promoting and advancing the socio-economic development of rural women in Terathum which contributes towards their increased access to decent work, income and dignified life.

This publication consists of “Stories of Change” explicitly expressed by the women and community from the project

area. Though it’s only a three years project, “Stories of Change” shows how this project has been instrumental to bring significant changes in the lives of women and community. The publication highlights the visible results around establishing the issues of unpaid care work at household and community level, developing entrepreneurship capacity of women on off farm and on farm activities, developing women entrepreneur, developing leader women, successful piloting of the community child care center and reformation of local market management committees for creating women friendly market spaces.

On behalf of ActionAid, I would like to appreciate the dedicated efforts made by the women collectives, local communities, partner NGOs Deurali Society, Dalit Awareness Society, Mahila Adhikar Manch- Prerana and ‘Strengthening Women’s Collectives’ project team

members of ActionAid. I am also very thankful to the government line agencies and all stakeholders for their valuable support. Project wouldn’t have been able to achieve the expected results without your joint efforts and continuous supports. Finally, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to the contributors, editorial team and all the colleagues whose hard work made this publication possible. I hope this publication will be a useful reference and learning material for social workers, development practitioners, project managers and everyone interested in community development for developing new projects and programmes in future.

Thanking you!



Bimal Kumar Phnuyal
COUNTRY DIRECTOR

Some Words **ABOUT PUBLICATION**



‘Strengthening Women’s Collectives’ is a three years multi country project implemented by ActionAid International in Nepal, India and Bangladesh in support of European Commission started from March 2013 to February 2016. In Nepal, ActionAid Nepal is implementing the project in 10 VDCs of Terhathum district namely Okhre, Hamarjung, Panchakanya, Phakchamara, Sudap, Ambung, Morahang, Shreejung, Pouthak and Oyakjung since March 2013 in partnership with Deurali Society (DS), Dalit Awareness Society (DAS) and Prerana – National Secretariat of Mahila Adhikar Manch.

The overall objective of the project is to increase women's equal access and control over the incomes. Particularly, it aims to empower women to recognize the extent of their unpaid care work and paid work. It also seeks to enable women to have an improved standard of living and dignity through better economic livelihoods, increased status and ability to negotiate relationships for economic independence, improved health and general well-being within their households, communities and decision-making structures both formal and non formal institutions at local and national level.

For this, project conducted various social and economic developmental activities for Indigenous, Dalit and underprivileged rural women of Terathum adopting human rights based approach. Throughout the project duration, it was working on organizing

rural women to come together as women's collectives for collective advocacy and efforts to combat VAW, claiming rights, creating better economic opportunity and establishing recognition of the unpaid care work. Particularly; on developing women leaders, developing entrepreneurship capacity of rural women on off-farm and on-farm activities, establishment of community child care centers, reformation of local market management committees for creating women-friendly market spaces, advocating for rural women's policy and engaging in policy drafting.

This publication consists of "Stories of Change" achieved from the above mentioned actions of the project explicitly expressed by the women and community from the project area. I hope this book will be a useful reference material for social workers, development practitioners, project

managers and community development organizations for developing new projects and programmes in future.

Finally, I would like to express my sincere thanks to the entire project team from partner NGOs Deurali Society, Dalit Awareness Society, Mahila Adhikar Manch-Prerana and ActionAid for your dedicated efforts and commitments to realize the outstanding achievements. I am also very thankful to the women collectives, local communities, women leaders, government line agencies and all the stakeholders for your enormous support. Project wouldn't have been able to achieve the expected results without your valuable supports.



Sunita Gurung

PROJECT COORDINATOR





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CHANGE MADE BY WOMEN-FRIENDLY AGRO-MARKETS

During summer, the vegetables used to quickly turn pale and dry and during monsoon, they used to get wet and rot. To protect them, she had to wrap her vegetables and run towards nearest shops and house for shelter.

A few years ago, Huma Devi Bhattarai of Morahang 7 had to face problems by blazing heat and rainfall while vending her hard earned agro-products in the local weekly market. During summer, the vegetables used to quickly turn pale and dry and during monsoon, they used to get wet and rot. To protect them, she had to wrap her vegetables and run towards nearest shops and house for shelter. Due to these unfavorable weather conditions, she was unable to sell her products on time. But the situation has changed now. She no longer has to tussle with heat and rain to sell her hard earned products as women of the Morahang market management committee have come together to establish a zinc shelter in the market. The shelter with women friendly agro-market has now helped hundreds of women farmers like

Bhattarai. They have started to trade their agro-products with no hurdles of heat and rain like before.

In the year 2013, Deurali society facilitated to reform Morahang agricultural market management committee with leadership of local women. In the year of early 2014, it was reformed by consensus of women participants from whole VDC. Shantila Khapung received the presidential position of the committee; which has 7 women members out of 9. Initially, the committee decided to create a separate spot for market and build shelters for selling their agro-products for which, committee estimated that the shelter task costs four lakh and thirty eight thousand. They insisted District agricultural development office (DADO) to provide the land to create separate spot and budgets for shelter. DADO gave a positive response to the request and allocated a small piece of land at Morahang Baazar and also provided two lakhs support. The project provided one lakh twenty thousand and the rest of the amount was supported by the Morahang VDC office for the construction of the zinc shelter with cemented base.

Though, shelter was constructed concentrating women farmers and their agricultural products; at the moment male

farmers and other business persons too are using this. It has become easy for female farmers of Morahang-4 like Uma Devi Bhattarai to sell products despite of heat and rainfall. She said, "Before it was too problematic, but after the construction of shelter it has become stress-free to sell vegetables." The vegetable market runs every Thursday, where all kinds of agricultural products produced by the villagers are sold. On the other hand, the traditional barter exchange still exists in this market. Women from the upper hill exchange their products with the goods of their needs from women of lower hill. Previously, women from the upper hill used to visit door to door with their products so as to exchange them. But this problem no longer exists now as both women from upper and lower hill gather in one place to sell their products. This in turn has saved their time and the burden of carrying their products and finding the exchange.

Morahang VDC secretary, Krishna Ghimire said, 'women's active participation has helped to improve traditional farming. Also, accessing markets for agricultural products has benefitted lots of underprivileged rural women. Additionally, construction of a shelter for vegetable sale has improved market access for women farmers.' 'This has even helped in growing women's

friendly economic access' said Puspadevi Gautam, president of Gaukhuri Women multipurpose cooperative. Similarly, the committee also marks price for agricultural products on a weekly basis and sticks on the information board to bring uniformity in market price. President Khapung stressed that it will help in an increment of economic accountability and no single farmer will have to bear the loss.

Once the properly managed shelter was constructed, assumption for the rise in agricultural trade has been felt. Seeing the prospects of comfort shelter, there is a considerable rise in women farmers to vend their agricultural products. Furthermore, the involvement of women farmers in vegetable farming has helped to boost their family income. Alike Shantila Khapung, many women associated to committee have developed their social status and self-confidence. The work which was not undertaken by male members of the village before is now accomplished in the leadership of women. At first, they used to feel uncomfortable to work and communicate in committee, said Treasurer Gautam but all these hitches have disappeared now.

Orientation training on construction of women friendly market, establishing market

committee in leadership of women and participating in various kinds of activities has helped to upturn their confidence to accomplish better deeds said Treasurer Gautam. Ramchandra Yadav, Senior Agriculture Development Officer of DADO Said, 'We also tried to reform the market management committee and its structure since long time but we couldn't. I don't know what the magic Deurali Society did within these two years of time, now it is fully women led and functioning very effectively.'

The first market management committee led by local women is also registered in District agriculture development office in the facilitation of Deurali Society. After being registered in the district agriculture office, women are getting different suggestions and supports periodically.



MOTI MAYA RECEIVES FORMAL INVITATIONS FOR MEETINGS

Moti Maya is leading a group of thirty three women. Continuing the leadership of the group, she is now a leader in her village. Her presence has become a compulsion in VDC council, which held's in January every year. VDC has also accepted her leadership growth in a short time period in assistance of the project.

Machhindra Secondary School, Sudap sent invitation letter to Moti Maya Maden, President of Makhamali women collective on November 1, 2015 for her valuable presence on public discussion meeting on accumulating sustainable economic

resources for school. The letter stated, "We hearty request for your honorable presence in the meeting to discuss upon ideas to collect economic resources for school in forthcoming days". It was signed by school Principal Kul Bahadur Basnet.



Moti Maya was never called to participate in this sort of important public forums in VDC earlier. She who studied only up to grade five has her husband in gulf country for foreign employment. She was alone by herself, engage in sustenance farming and bearing the family of five. Her identity was limited in it. In the meantime, Dalit Awareness Society Nepal entered the VDC with 'Strengthening Women's Collectives' project in the year 2013. The project organizes the women and she got the chance to lead the group. Time and often she also got a chance to participate in several trainings, seminars and other

activities conducted at the village and district level. While participating in these sorts of programs, she became able to improve her capability and develop leadership skills. Her voice started getting heard by community people in different VDC level activities.

VDC secretary Hari Koirala said, 'she is becoming influential in society.' She even participated in one day public discussion program conducted by VDC to summarize and evaluate developmental activities in past fiscal year and first quarter expenses. Moti Maya was invited formally by the VDC Secretary for the discussion program.

She credited Dalit Awareness Society for uplifting her current status from normal homemaker to a woman leader. She even stated that the project helped her to be confident, to be vocal and to lead the group in a harmonious manner. Moti Maya is leading a group of thirty three women. Continuing the leadership of the group, she is now a leader in her village. Her presence

has become a compulsion in VDC council, which held's in January every year. VDC has also accepted her leadership growth in a short time period in assistance of the project.

Along with leadership development, she with other six women members of the

group has started collective pig rearing to increase their economic status. At the moment they have twenty two piglets in their pig shed supported by the project. Like them, other members are also involved in ginger farming and chili farming.



AKBARE CHILI FARMING REPLACING 'PHERI' OCCUPATION OF JOGI COMMUNITY

It was not that easy for men doing Pheri in far flung villages at night time. It's more difficult for women even if they want. In this critical situation chili farming has become a reliable income source.

Three years ago Aruna Jogi of Oyakjung-9, Mehele had to struggle a lot to look after family consists of five members. Crops grown in her inherited one and half ropani land would sustain for a single month. There was no any other source of income. Although, her family was running with few earnings made by her husband outside the home from their ancestral job 'Pheri', it would not sustain either. However, he had to stay far from family for long duration to bring little money and food from this job. And her family was running in this way.

Mehele have a high population of the Jogi community. The community has the misconception that Jogi people should not work at farm and their ancestral job is 'Pheri'. Even their ancestors used to hand over Barath's horn and parts of village, districts and regions for Pheri as property. Those areas too need to be distributed again among other Jogi people. Therefore ancestral job was very tough and of low earnings. Wife and children have to tussle with hunger until they return from far-off performing Pheri. Including women, Jogi men who too had concluded that Pheri job will not hold their life, received immense support from Strengthening Women's Collectives project for creating alternatives for income generation and improving their livelihood. Afterwards, thirty other women like Aruna are commencing their income generating work.

Aruna is allied with Laliguras women collective formed in the facilitation of the project. The project provided training to the collective's members on commercial Akbare chili farming, preparing a business plan and entrepreneurship development, sustainable farming, controlling infections, preparing bio-pest, improving farmyard manure and producing compost manure for chili farming. They also received training on pickle making. Aruna along with many other women who

never believed they can grow chilies in their land, farmed akbare chili in a small area in the initial year. That year she could not receive benefit from it. But, like famous saying practice makes person perfect, Aruna after three years of continuous labor succeeded to trade chilies costing fifty thousand in a first lot in between shortages of irrigation. She was managing water for the chilies caring in a bucket during shortages. Seeing this, other women of the community too are farming chilies.

“Akbare chili farming has helped me a lot”, said Aruna while picking chilies in her land. She did not feel financial and material assistance as important as the skills for farming chilies from project. In the beginning year, Aruna and her sister-in-law Baal Kumari received chilly seeds, plastic and got training in how to maintain nursery and treat saplings of chilly as well. Prior to this, each member of the group were also provided with fifty chilly saplings by the project. That was the first chilly farming in their life. They manage to save seeds from the first farming. Chilly equivalent to ten thousand rupees reaped second year. In the third year, she could sell chilies costing fifty thousand from her field. Now she is selling chilies costing five hundred to seven hundred per day from her field. There are still lefts to pick chilies equivalent to twenty five thousand rupees. Other group members Aruna, Baal

Kumari, Khem Kumari Jogi, Kaushila Dhakal, Sarada Dhakal and Kalmaya Jogi are too producing high amounts of chilies.

Jogi women of this community even have started a campaign to plant more or less chilies in their kitchen garden after seeing the prospects of income from it, which their ancestors had never done. Before, they had to beg chilies for cooking when their husbands were out for Pheri. But now they are selling by themselves. Earlier, they did not have anything to sell during scarcities. But seeing heaps of chilies in their hand, women have grown confident to look after their family better way. Aruna spent fifteen thousand rupees earned from chilly farming to pay the loan. She managed for festive expenses too. She bought new clothes for children. She even started saving in a cooperative of amount six hundred rupees in her children's account and one hundred rupees in her account per month. Her husband Yuvaraj who used to go for Pheri has lessened his outings once his wife started to earn from farming chilies.

Aruna and her fellow members use raw materials available in the village for compost, manure and prepare bio-pesticides through the vaporization process as well. So they don't have to spend their money to buy fertilizers and pesticides outside said Aruna. Jogi women who used to strive hunger, having no

skills to farm in their petty land three years before are now generating incomes.

It was not that easy for men doing Pheri in far flung villages at night time. It's more difficult for women even if they want. In this critical situation chili farming has become a reliable income source. Along with Akbare chili farming, many Jogi women's skills and perception of farming have changed a lot. These days' earnings made by the wife through chili farming are far better than husband earning from Pheri. This has changed the lifestyle of Jogi people a lot.



('Pheri' means Jogi people visiting every household in a village or a particular region in night time and blow 'Pheri' a kind of horn sound and chant mantra in four corners of the house to protect human beings from the evil spirits. Since hundreds of years this job is performed only by Jogi community people who are mythically known as the loyal disciples of god Gorakhnath.)



TIME DIARY TURNED OUT INSTRUMENTAL TO VALUE HOUSEHOLD CHORES

The men and women shared their filled time diary with each other and calculated the economic value of their listed work. Which, reflected women were more limited in household chores and care work and that have highly contributed to maintaining economic balance in the family. However, the data also reflected women were investing more time in household chores as they neither get leisure nor incomes.



It was really troublesome for 40 years old Narmaya Tamang Ambung-8, Myanglung for doing household chores with no support from her husband. She used to wake up early every morning with a cockcrow and engage in firing stove, cooking, cleaning, washing, preparing fodder for animals, fetching water. Her husband Bal Bahadur would do nothing even bathing children. He would sleep till late in the morning and she needs to serve him either tea or hot water in bed. He used to wake up from bed only after she finishes the entire morning chores. Her endless chores were never valued.

Her husband used to participate in every kind of developmental decision making process, discussions and social gatherings. Narmaya too wanted to participate in such kinds of programs. But she has to stay quit with a broken heart as there was no single hand to lend her in household chores and husband never understood her pity experiences. But now that situation does not exist anymore. Narmaya has grasped the role of her husband. Her power relation has now changed both at household level and society. Voice of Narmaya is being listened in village meetings, discussions and for initiating any social works.

Narmaya being the member of Tribeni women collective, their couple got chance to involve in time diary collection and discussion through Deurali Society in the year 2014. The time diary tool was mainly introduced for reflecting upon the time spent on paid & unpaid work, unpaid care work and leisure by men and women for getting a comprehensive picture of their individual engagement. For this, they filled every detail of activities they had been engaged throughout a day in time diary table for 4 times. Along with Narmaya and her husband, 29 other women and 9 men were also involved in this rigorous reflection and discussion.

The men and women shared their filled time diary with each other and calculated

the economic value of their listed work. Which, reflected women were more limited in household chores and care work and that have highly contributed to maintaining economic balance in the family. However, the data also reflected women were investing more time in household chores as they neither get leisure nor incomes. Seeing this, Narmaya's husband started to realize that he was doing injustice to his better half. He committed not to repeat such kind of mistakes in forthcoming days and started to help with household chores.

Narmaya will not get time to watch television, although she had it in her home due to never-ending household task. The outer amusement was too way far for Narmaya who even did not have time to watch television at home. But these days her husband supports and in her absence also nothing piles up. Like Narmaya other women are also receiving support from their husband.

'It has become very easy for women in household works after male members started to assist' said Treasurer Puspa Bhandari of Tribeni Women Collective. The Tamang couple has farmed cash crops in their fifteen ropani land. Narmaya said, 'Income generation through farming has been possible as household task completes half earlier working together.' They have planted cardamom, ginger,

spinach, potatoes, Amlisho and Uttis (Alnus Nepalensis) in mutual understanding. She no longer has any problem to run family consisting nine members. Bal Bahadur said 'we all have ignored the household task knowingly and unknowingly, but time diary has helped me to open up my eye.'

Receiving assistance from their husband have motivated women and most of them have started to do income generation works in pig rearing, vegetable farming, ginger farming, cow husbandry and running shops. Kamala karki bought a buffalo and another member of the group Punam Bista bought a cow taking loan from the collective saving fund. Both women are earning money by selling milk in Jirikhimti market. Earnings from business are used in meeting expenditure of family, children's education and household expenses. They even have money for saving in cooperatives. This has given confidence to women. Kamala Karki said 'they would have not been succeeded if they had not made their husband to work involve in time diary filling.'



WHEN CARE WORK COUNTED

The burden of unpaid care work has descended once husband started to assist women. Now days, men engaged in time diary collection, support their wives in household chores. As their husband started helping them in household task from early morning, women have involved themselves in income generating activities.

A couple of years ago daily life of Dhak Maya Shrestha of Panchakanya-9, Phulbari used to start pretty tough. Husband Tanka Shrestha never assisted her in household chores. Her mornings used to pass doing household and kitchen chores which were not counted as valuable work. She used to feel pity as she was never assisted by her

husband in making tea and meals, serving family members and washing dishes.

Other village women having leisure used to participate in public programs held at local level. She too wanted to go to represent her on the VDC, school, community forest and other organizations. But she never got time.



In August 2013, women like her staying oppressed inside home got a chance to come together as “Samaj Sudhar Women Collective” in the facilitation of Dalit Awareness Society (DAS). Fortunately, Dhak Maya got a responsibility to lead that group.

DAS held various awareness raising orientation and discussion program on unpaid care work in the community. The discussions were more intensified through time diary collection where every member of the collective and along with their husband filled details of daily work in the diary for four times a year. The filled diary was analyzed and the data were calculated in monetary value which reflected women are investing more time

in household chores and care work and no time for their leisure and self care. The findings were shared among the members and even between husband and wife. This made male members realize the amount of economic contribution their wife has been making in their family through unpaid care work. Only then alike Dhak Maya, many other women started to get help from their husbands in household chores. "Task performed by women inside the home for twenty four hours a day was not counted. Time diary has opened up my husband's eyes," Said Dhak Maya happily.

The burden of unpaid care work has descended once husband started to assist women. Now days, men engaged in time diary collection, support their wives in household chores. As their husband started helping them in household task from early morning, women have involved themselves in income generating activities. Group members have started farming ginger, chilly and doing pig rearing for increasing income generating activities which has improved women's income.

When husband Tanka Shrestha sitting with group drew out the report of work

done by him and his wife. He realized that he is burdening his wife with lots of household chores. He too felt that if they work together, workload on his wife will be lesser. Once Dhak Maya's husband started assisting her, she is feeling lighter than before. In this way she is investing her leisure in income generating activities. She began to participate in social programs beyond the home. Now her incomes have improved. Her representation is seen in different social activities and discussions. Home maker Dhak Maya is in a campaign to change her identity as a leading woman of her society.



SHANTILA IN HER COLORFUL ENTREPRENEURIAL PATTERN

Despite having Dhaka weaving as the traditional occupation of Limbu community, women were fronting living problem due to lack of modern skills and skills on weaving new designs, producing different items, selecting threads & colors, setting up hand looms and exploring market opportunities. But after receiving the training they have succeeded to establish and run their business smoothly and establish their recognition as Dhaka weaving entrepreneurs in the community.

Five years earlier Shantila Khapung, President of Faktalung women's collective was skill less. Alike she, thirty other women from her collective were also skill less and were living their life doing traditional sustenance farming on petty lands. They even have to work at very low wages having no skills in their hand. With that little earned money they have to look after their family. Life was passing pity and hardly then; confining them in household and sustenance farming role only.

In the year 2013, Deurali Society through 'Strengthening Women's Collectives' project started organizing women and providing them leadership development trainings, entrepreneurship development trainings, skill enhancement training and supports. Shantila and her 30 fellow villager women come together as Faktanglung women's collective and started involving in these life skill trainings. From the entrepreneurship development training, they learned to identify their favorable business and prepare business plans accordingly considering their context and indigenous knowledge. Women mostly selected handloom Dhaka cloth production, ginger farming, pig rearing and Akbare chili farming as their business work. And 12 women who selected handloom Dhaka fabric production business further received two and a half months long Dhaka weaving

training on enhancing their indigenous skills and knowledge to produce different patterns and varieties of colorful Dhaka fabrics. 'Indigenous and Dalit women are now equipped with life skills for the better livelihood opportunities. Problems and insufficiencies from women's life are vanishing slowly afterwards', said Shantila.

'The women are not just confining this skill within them, but also transferring it to other fellow members in the collective. This training has led poor, underprivileged and Dalit women in the way of income generation' said Shantila Khapung. She even regarded 'Strengthening Women's Collectives Project' as their god.

Now most of the women have installed Dhaka cloth hand looms in their own home and produce fabrics regularly. In the past, despite having Dhaka weaving as the traditional occupation of Limbu community, women were fronting living problem due to lack of modern skills and skills on weaving new designs, producing different items, selecting threads & colors, setting up hand looms and exploring market opportunities. But after receiving the training they have succeeded to establish and run their business smoothly and establish their recognition as Dhaka weaving entrepreneurs in the community. Before involving herself in the women's collective,

Shantila Khapung used to tussle a lot to join her family's hand and mouth with the little yields from their lands. The project entered in the village amid shortages and supported women with various skill development work.

She and her peer members received basic weaving training at the first and refresher training again to sharpen their skills to produce quality and diverse Dhaka fabrics with new designs and patterns. Additionally, they also got opportunity for an exposure visits to various market areas at Dharan, Biratnagar and Kathmandu to understand the market demands and also to build relationships with key stakeholders in the market. This added skills and ideas on catering the consumer demand and to market their products. Since March 2015, Shantila has fixed up three hand loom sets in her own home and has started weaving Dhaka regularly. From last five months to till date she is able to sell Dhaka costing thirty five thousand. She is also running a shop at Morahang market to sell her and other woman's Dhaka products. She even buys Dhakas to sell from her peer members. Working in coordination with her peers has enabled them to increase economy. She has grown confidence of earning more than a lakh per year by weaving Dhaka. Her husband Lok Bahadur Khapung has lent a hand to give more time on weaving

by looking after home and shop. Buyers visit her home to buy a sari, traditional cap, shawl, shirt, blouse (Chaubandhi), etc. these days. She does not have any market problem selling her products. She was weaving traditional cap in her handloom in her shop while sharing above mentioned things.

She said happily 'though it was late, this training has helped her to live contented life.' Earlier women here were skill less and money less. Life was full of struggles. That situation is fading these days. Now women have skills at their hand and savings at home. It has become stress-free for them to run their family. Women have become confident and independent. They don't have to request for money with husband and mother-in-law to deposit in group saving. They even go to markets and spend their own money these days.



FROM TRAINEE TO ENTREPRENEUR TO TRAINER

‘Project has provided skills to kill the fish rather than teaching, eating dead fish. So no matter how hard the situation will be; I have full confidence to live my life doing Dhaka handicraft enterprise’

Goma Ruchal of Hamarjung-4, Fayak is pretty cajoled these days. Despite having studied up to class eight in village school, she now earns up-to twelve thousand per month. Her family, who once used to battle to join hands and mouth from the barren land producing food for only three months, is now living a blissful life. Middle daughter Goma is shouldering the family of four members.

Five years earlier she had no any skills in her hand. Dalit awareness society launch the Strengthening Women's Collectives project in the VDC in the year 2013 and started organizing women as

Subhasandesh women collective in the initial phase. She also got involved in the collective. Then, the project conducted various skill development, capacity development and awareness raising training. Among which, entrepreneurship development training became key for her where she learned to identify business and prepare business plans accordingly. She identified handicraft Dhaka cloth production as her favorable business. Additionally, the project also provided 3 months long Dhaka weaving training to women who selected Dhaka cloth production as their business for advancing their skills in weaving new patterns, designs, selecting colors & threads and setting up handlooms. She took part in this training as well. Along with her, there were ten women members participating in Dhaka weaving training, but she is the only one member who utilized the learnt skills fully. Nowadays, she has established herself as a successful entrepreneur and trainer in her village and Sukrabare area.

She has established the Dhaka cloth production factory in the Sukrabare market in her own and running it from

past one and half years. She invested forty five thousand for factory setting at the initial phase. Now she has extended to five hand loom sets from three in the beginning. She had already paid thirty thousand loans taken from forward micro finance for factory setting. Been working as treasurer of the collective, she even has provided employment opportunities for two underprivileged women. She is also providing training for three women at her factory at the moment. Till now, she has provided training to 46 other poor and backward women from various collectives through the project and made one lakh fifty thousand rupees earning from this job.

Ruchal is very pleased to receive training unintentionally along with friends. It has become a strong base for looking after family and living contented life. She found weaving as medium for living. She said hard labor has paid off. Her products do not have any market issues. Buyers visit her factory to buy products. 'She has become independent from Dhaka business' said social mobilizer Ram Nepali.

The project hasn't just provided three months Dhaka weaving training, but also took her for an exposure visit to understand

the market and build relationship with various actors in the market areas of Dharan, Biratnagar and Kathmandu. From the visit, she understood the customer's demand for design, color, quality and pattern and also got the opportunity to connect with various buyers. She credited Dalit Awareness Society for helping her to know the market of Dhaka clothes in Kathmandu.

'Project has provided skills to kill the fish rather than teaching, eating dead fish. So no matter how hard the situation will be; I have full confidence to live my life doing Dhaka handicraft enterprise' said Goma.

She is earning ten to twelve thousand per month by weaving Dhaka clothes. Earnings made from business are spent on family expenses as well as to buy raw materials for Dhaka such as threads, handlooms and other materials. Before engaging herself in Dhaka business she did not use to have money even to buy a recharge card for her mobile phone. Now she no longer has that insufficiency. She is even being invited by formal letter as women entrepreneurs in the VDC level meetings. Identity less Goma has now succeeded to establish her entrepreneurial identity in the society. This has heightened her personal and social status.



GREEN PEA FARMING, GIVING A NEW IDENTITY TO NIMA AND SEKHIMBA VILLAGE

Running several activities for exploring income sources along with pea farming has strengthened family, society and rural economy. These days Shekhimba is highly renowned as a pea farming area due to the hard work of Sherpa women.

Shreejung VDC was highly affected by insurgency compared to other VDCs of Terathum district during a Maoist insurgency. Local farmers felled prey under it. Even security forces have enlisted this village as Maoist affected area. Productive youths left the village in search of a safe place to live in. A village without youths directly affected in agriculture sector. Probability of commercial farming in the village went dwindling. Sources of income went shrinking day by day due to lack of knowledge in sustainable farming and selecting a suitable business.



'Strengthening Women's Collectives Project' entered the Shreejung VDC a few times after the end of the Maoist insurgency. Where, poor and marginalized Sherpa indigenous women of Sekhimba community got the opportunity to come together as a Pathivara woman's only collective. Afterwards, the women got training, orientation on different sorts of income generating skills, including skills for business selection, entrepreneurship development, leadership development and unpaid care work. The project also provided trainings on sustainable agriculture and green pea farming for the women collective

members. Having participated in these trainings and enhanced technical skills in sustainable agriculture; now days green pea farming has become the reliable income source for Nima Sherpa, Secretary of Pathivara women's collective.

Nima has succeeded to be a leader farmer of the community through her active participation in trainings, meetings and discussions. She said, 'I have gained confidence to do peas farming business only after getting entrepreneurship development training from the project.' Among thirty women in the group, fifteen planned to farm Akbare chilly and fifteen planned to do peas farming after the training. Many of the women involved in the Akbare chilly farming could not earn well. She said, Sekhimba is at very high altitude and the environment did not suit for the chilly farming, which resulted in the loss of chillies. She also shared the scope of income generation from peas farming with family and collective members. Then the women who were farming chilly before attracted to the pea farming. Nima said, 'because of the training she could able to sell her green peas product costing rupees twelve thousand initially.' She too stated

that 'she was also able to vend dried peas costing nine thousand in the same year.' This gave her twenty one thousand rupees incomes in starting year. This was the first time she had ever earned from agricultural job. Inspired from her income, other women in the group have also farmed peas in their fields. 'Strengthening Women's Collectives project' has contributed significantly to change the economic condition of Nima and the way society looks her.

The amount of saving fund in her collective has also now ascended to one lakh twelve thousand rupees started from ten rupees few years back. They have mobilized this amount within the collective for income generation work. Such as; pea farming, pig rearing and goat rearing. The collective meets on the 5th of every month and do the saving of fifty rupees per month individually to increase the amount of their current saving fund. Nima said, 'training on business selection, business plan development, sustainable agriculture, making bio-pesticides and exposure visits to various market areas are pretty rewarding and have brought immense change in the life of local women.'

Women's involvement in income generating activities has changed their identity and status in their family and society. Now, their voices are heard in meetings, discussions and also on the decision making things. VDC Secretary, Krishna Ghimire stated 'running several activities for exploring income sources along with pea farming has strengthened family, society and rural economy. These days Shekhimba is highly renowned as a pea farming area due to the hard work of Sherpa women. Increment in income sources has helped women of that community to forget the distresses of insurgency.'



CHILD CARE CENTER UPLIFTED INCOME AND LEADERSHIP ROLES

Women recognized child care as one the obstacles among many other hindering factors from the discussion. Only then community child care center was introduced in Kobek village.

Sanchamaya Limbu of Myanglung -9, Kobek is feeling relaxed to find a child care center in her own village. She has two years old little daughter in her five members family. Her older daughter aged ten years had to absent frequently in school until the child care center was established. High absence was for taking care of the little sister while her parents were out in the farm. After introducing community child care center by Strengthening Women's Collectives project in the village, Sanchamaya has not let her older daughter to miss school from last two

years. Her daughter goes school regularly and she goes to work with her husband leaving their little daughter at child care center.

Since September 2014, Sumbholung women collective is running community child care center in support of the project. There are thirty four women in the collective at present. Earlier, income sources of these women were low and they had less time to invest in income generating activities due to nurturing and caring responsibility



of their little ones. This had obstructed them to give their leisure time in earning activities. On January 2014, Deurali society entered the community with various developmental programs of the project and conducted awareness raising and capacity development trainings. In the mean time, Deurali Society also facilitated the discussion between women to identify the major obstacles of women's involvement in income generating activities. Women recognized child care as one the obstacles among many other hindering factors from the discussion. Only then community child care center was introduced in the community said, President Yogita Limbu. Like Sanchamaya, many other mothers left their children at the centers assuredly and go for the work. At the moment, there are eight children coming regularly at the

center from 1 year to 3 years of age. Child care center has helped mothers of this community to have free time and avail it to involve in earning income.

Treasurer Sarita Limbu said, 'a care taker receives rupees four thousand per month from the project for taking care of children for whole day. And as we have established the child care center management fund for its sustainability. In order to increase saving, we from the collective members take turns as caretaker and allocate certain percentage of the incentives in fund monthly. Also, the parents who bring their kids at center collect rupees twenty per month and the rest of the members collect rupees ten per month in the fund. We also do fund-raiser during festival time by doing cultural programs. It has become

very easy for women these days as their children are looked after by the child care center. Women have initiated collective ginger farming, chili farming and vegetable farming. This has lead in an increment of family income.

Seeing these affirmative action's of the centre; recently, local resident Prem Bahadur Sambahamphe has provided land in free of cost to build the child care center. Construction of the building is just completed costing three lakh eighty thousand rupees. Local people contributed labor for construction of the center and project helped financially to cover the expenses of the required materials. Such as, cement, zinc sheet, bricks, grill, mattress, blankets, cupboard, cradle, toys, utensils, etc. 'Child care center launched

for the first time in the whole VDC is being very effective' said local resident Dev Narayan Limbu.

For many women child care center has become a secured place to raise their children and involving themselves in income generating activities. Women have started to earn, participate in discussions on VDC and municipal level and put their voice as they don't have to clog at home looking after the children these days. They are getting information on their rights and budgets allocated for women, children and agriculture from VDC and DDC office. It has helped women in increased access to various sources for rights claiming and resources tapping. Now women are taking the leadership role in their society.



CHILD CARE CENTER LED TO INDEPENDENCY

Freeing women from child care work have dramatically increased the daily income and social status of women. Women are participating in public discussions and programs of VDC level. Increment in income and social status has made their life easy and dignified.

For Yanadevi Khadka of Jodisalla-2, Sudap, child care center established in her own village has become the only source to lead income generating way. She leaves her two years old child in 'Nawasrijana community child care center' before ten o'clock in the morning. After leaving her child in the center, she along with her family goes to field for taking care of Akbare chili. She who leaves her two years daughter at a child care center is able to earn ninety thousand rupees this year from Akbare farming. She said, "Still, there left to harvest chili costing fifteen thousand rupees."

Like Yanadevi ten other members of Nawasrijana women collective also leave their children in child care center. In the initial phase of the year 2013, there were



fifteen children in the centre. Now few children have decreased as they can go to schools said president Shiva Maya Khadka. Rest of other members who have little kids are all involved in income generating activities as their kids are being looked after by child care center from 10 am to 4 pm every day. Yanadevi's fellow members Seeta Khadka, Padma Khadka, Pramila Bagdas and Ran Maya Magar are doing Akbare chili farming, vegetable farming, potato farming and pig rearing leaving their little ones at the center. They have invested their free time in improving their income.

Yana Devi stated that she is planning to add five ropani lands for Akabare chili farming experiencing the benefits of

chili. Shiva Maya Khadka, President of the collective also has earned forty five thousand rupees this year through Akbare chili. Other members, Jog Maya Khadka and Damber Kumari Poudel, too have started commercial Akbare chili farming from this year. 'I worked for whole day, leaving my child at the care center', said Padma Khadka. Child care center has freed women like her to earn their own.

Since, entire collective member is involved in agro-based income generation work; they recently transformed their collective as a Pragatisil Agriculture Cooperative. It is formally registered in cooperative division office. Treasurer Krishna Kumari Poudel said, 'they have planned to involve all the women from VDC in their cooperative for collective engagement in economic activities.'

Freeing women from child care work have dramatically increased the daily income and social status of women. Women are participating in public discussions and programs of VDC level. Increment in income and social status has made their life easy and dignified. Hari Koirala, VDC secretary of Sudap said 'project has brought remarkable changes in the economic and social life of women.'



THE MOTHER SITS IN DHAKA HANDLOOM WHILE CHILDREN ARE IN CHILD CARE

‘We need to look after our children before, but now we are free as we can leave children in the child care center. Jobs are created in our own home. Almost all mothers are weaving Dhaka clothes in their handlooms at home.’

Samjhana Limbu of Pauthak-6, Siringbari weaves Dhaka clothes, leaving her four years old son in child care center which runs in her village. She got this opportunity through Strengthening Women’s Collectives project.

Child care center has supported a lot of the Himalayan women collective members to become an entrepreneur. Until the establishment of child care center, family members had to look after their children due to which they were not able to go for productive works. That is why income never improved. All household tasks were chaotic after they had to take care of their little

ones. But from last two years, women of the community have got rid of this problem. Child minder takes care of their children from the minute they leave their children at the center. Parents are improving their earnings working for whole days.

‘Many women have become entrepreneurs because of child care center. Treasurer Sabitra Limbu said, ‘We need to look after our children before, but now we are free as we can leave children in the child care center. Jobs are created in our own home. Almost all mothers are weaving Dhaka clothes in their handlooms at home.’ Currently Sabitra is weaving Dhaka in hand



loom leaving her three year old son in child care center. She is earning three to four thousand rupees per month from Dhaka business. I got training in leisure but my child was barrier then. But, this problem does not exist anymore. Eight mothers leave their child in the center at present.

‘While women are in hand loom, male members also go to earn. Due to which both husband and wife are making money’

said President Ambika Limbu. Apart from weaving, women even have started collective vegetable farming constructing plastic tunnel. Group member Yamuna Limbu has provided land for a tunnel at free of cost for collective farming. They have planted chilly, onion, tomato, chamsur, spinach, raddish, cauliflower, etc. inside the tunnel. They are working hard with objective to earn profit from vegetables in the coming year.

Life of women has changed immensely due to the establishment of child care center. Women who did not use to do productive work looking after their children have now become workaholics for earning money. Their husband are earning from wages based labor work as well. Incomes of family have climbed up. Child care center is becoming effective to make daily life easier of the community’s women.



CHILI INCOME IS SUPPORTING FOR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

President of Janasewa Samaj women collective of Panchakanya- Basmera, Bishnu Maya Limbu's family did not have any proper earnings. Her husband Fanindra Bahadur Limbu headed off to the gulf country for a better employment opportunity taking high interest loans from local creditors, as they were struggling to look after their family. But he could not earn well in a foreign land as expected. His all earnings ended paying back loans. Bishnu Maya used to take loans with neighbors to run her family as she has to take care of her family anyway in his absence.

Amid of struggles with poverty and shortages, Strengthening Women's Collective project entered the village in the year 2013. Prior the project she was

unskilled and jobless. The project provided entrepreneurship development training and skill enhancement training to women from the collective and made them became capable to choose their favorable business and prepare business plans accordingly. Some of them also received seed money support to establish their business.

Once the project provided life skills on income generating and supported her with seed money, she grew confidence of doing some productive works. She also received training on Akbare chili farming, producing compost manure & bio-pesticides, seed selection and on controlling infections. Afterwards, she boosted confidence to do Akbare farming in her empty lands. Her journey towards commercial Akbare

At the beginning year Bishnu Maya had planted one thousand Akbare saplings in her land. But it did not produce well. It manages to save seeds somehow. She did not lose her confidence in the second year too. She planted two thousand and five hundred saplings in the same land. It harvested well and she vends about fifty five kilograms of Akbare in Sukrabare market. She earned thirteen thousand seven hundred and fifty rupees this time. With that money she bought stationeries, uniforms and shoes for her children.

farming began with the assistance provided by the project of rupees two thousand and four hundred which she used for buying seeds. “Until that time I barely know about Akbare chili farming can happen in my land”, said Bishnu Maya while picking chilies for sell. She said, eight members of the collective are doing commercial Akbare farming out of eighteen members currently. Project even has assisted with a watering can per person involved in farming.

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number 8 have also been farming Akbare commercially. All of them earned about seven thousand to ten thousand rupees from selling chilies this year.

As wife at home started to earn well from chili farming, Fanindra got back home to help his wife in the farm. This year they have been able to buy fifteen ropani land costing four lakhs with the money he had earned in foreign and his wife saved selling chilies. Out of fifteen ropani they have planned to farm chilly in ten ropani land said Bishnu Maya. She has planted five hundred saplings of chili in the same land which she had kept in last August. She got information during trainings about planting chili in November so that they could be harvested off season and sold at

high prices. Project even let her chance to go on an exposure visit at the model farm on sustainable agricultural of Krishna Rai in Dharan. She learned a few things from there. She stated that she have been working hard keeping in mind to earn five lakhs rupees from Akbare chili farming in the forth coming year. Currently, Limbu couple is engaged in land preparations for chili farming.

Project too had provided training on preparing chili pickles. This has added self esteem in Bishnu Maya that even if there will be no market and best price for fresh chilies; they won't have any problems. They are skilled to diversify their products and trade accordingly.

AGRICULTURAL COOPERATIVE IN WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Women are getting multiple trainings like Dhaka weaving, commercial pea farming, etc. to increase their income and further contributing to increase the amount of cooperative. Eighteen women of the group have started commercial green pea farming while ten women have started commercial handloom Dhaka weaving business. Cooperative itself also run Dhaka weaving training time to time.

Menchhyayam Mothers Group of Shreejung-1, Asine has prospered to the Singhadevi Women Agricultural Cooperative, which began with twelve mothers in the year 2009. A group formed by gathering a few local women is speeding up in the facilitation of Deurali society.

In the initial phase, Deurali Society worked on organizing the village women to come together as Singhadevi Women collective. Then they were provided various awareness raising and skill development training on unpaid care work, women's right, business selection and planning, sustainable agriculture, cooperative management, etc. Further, women received technical skill advancement training on Dhaka cloth weaving, Akbare chili farming, ginger farming and peas farming based on the business plan they prepared through entrepreneurship development training. To support their increase involvement in these economic activities by freeing them from child care work for certain hours in a day, project also established a community child care center in the village. Access to such kind of activities prior forming collective and cooperatives were very rare. They were even not aware about their rights and dependable on family for income sources. And due to lack of collective feelings among the women, they were

always overshadowed in the family and community.

‘But with the arrival of the project, all sorts of the mentioned problems started fading’ said Deepa Limbu, President of the collective. Women these days raise voice for their rights, engage in different sources of income generating activities and are well recognized by the society as leaders and entrepreneurs. To aid more on such actions of women, collective was registered as agricultural Cooperative a year ago with the help of Deurali Society. The cooperative consist forty two women shareholders at present. And every woman member holds share amount of rupees four thousand. Aside, women are also putting their efforts to make the cooperative financial system smooth and well managed. ‘Project has been assisting women in these entire tasks to develop our capacity and skills of account keeping and cooperative management’ said Secretary Krishna Tamang.

Women who used to save five rupees at commencement phase have started to save up to rupees five hundred after the formation of a cooperative. The total collected amount of cooperative has reached two lakh ninety one thousand rupees till now. Likewise, the registration

of collective into cooperative has been beneficial to women as they are receiving financial supports and various trainings not just from the NGOs but also from the government offices.

Women are getting multiple trainings like Dhaka weaving, commercial pea farming, etc. to increase their income and further contributing to increase the amount of cooperative. Eighteen women of the group have started commercial green pea farming while ten women have started commercial handloom Dhaka weaving business. Cooperative itself also run Dhaka weaving training time to time with the assistance of the project, said president Limbu. The project even had helped the women group by providing fifty one kilogram of pea seeds costing rupees ten thousand to draw more women in income generating works.

Nowadays cooperative has its own building. President of cooperative Deepa Limbu has

provided land in free of cost for constructing cooperative office. Deurali Society supported one lakh forty four thousand, Shreejung VDC funded fifty thousand, thirty thousand from thirty shareholders and Bhagat Narayan Limbu of Sinhapur supported ten thousand respectively for the building construction. Three other shareholders allowed cutting timbers free of cost from their field and each member donated their labor free of cost for eighteen days. The entire hard works have helped to build their own building said president Limbu. Currently, six women are weaving Dhaka collectively in this building. The other trained four women are weaving setting hand looms in their own home. Women who once used to confine within the four walls of home and kitchen are now presenting themselves in various meetings, discussions, budget allocation forums, etc. at their VDC. Women are also linked Mahila Adhikar Manch network.



WOMEN GROUP TURNED TO THE COOPERATIVE



They have collected one lakh and twelve thousand rupees so far in their saving fund. Every member uses this amount as loan to invest in productive works. President Aaitu Limbu said, “We do not need to go to creditor’s home asking for loan in high interest”.

Thirty two women of Okhre-8, Marse was alone by themselves before the year 2009. A collective feeling was not developed then. They have to pay hefty loan interest to creditors during hard times. They even have to be dependent on a husband or adults for fewer amounts. But now time and the situation are changed. Some improvements have come in those awful

days after the Dalit Awareness Society’s (DAS) developmental interventions in Marse community.

Alike local Aaitu Limbu, thirty two other women gathered in Kafale women collective in the facilitation of DAS. The responsibility of group took over by Aaitu. There happened discussions on improving the income of the members. They decided

to save money in every meeting held on 1st of the month. That was the first idea of them to increase their collective saving. To support their motive further, the project trained women in different skills like pig and goat rearing, poultry farming, Akbare chili farming and to farm oranges to increase income as well as to improve their livelihood. With all these initiatives they have collected one lakh and twelve thousand rupees so far in their saving fund. Every member uses this amount as loan to invest in productive works. President Aaitu Limbu said, “We do not need to go to creditor’s home asking for loan in high interest”.

Anisha Maden, Treasurer, said, ‘we had also grown four thousand chilly saplings in collective nursery. All these saplings were

divided equally.’ Among which, Phiprani Limbu, Bishnu Limbu, Aasmaya Limbu and Saraswati Limbu have started commercial Akbare chilly farming in their own field. Sushila Nepali, Anjana Limbu and landless Bhagirani Gurung are doing pig rearing with the help of the group. The group has allocated per member five thousand loans in minimum credit for supporting them to establish their business. Also fifteen other women who participated in Akbare chilly farming training have farmed Akbare in their field. VDC Secretary of Okhre, Surendra Khadka said, ‘women are contributing in household expenses from chilly business.’ DAS have also given training to make pickles out of unsold chilies and diversifying their income opportunities.

Kafale women collective is also running “Food saving campaign” to prevent drought, landslide, earthquake, food shortages, etc.

foreseeing the future risk in the village. Along with this campaign, they too have established “Seed Bank” said president Aaitu. For it, every group members submit approximately 10 kgs of their food grains at the time of harvesting. They have also registered their group in district agriculture development office said secretary Maden. After seeing the energy and excitement of women, the District agriculture development office had provided one thousand and two hundred meters long polyethylene pipe and a plastic pond in the last fiscal year.

Realizing these progressive prospects, collective have even transformed them in agro-cooperative. The cooperative was formally registered in the Cooperative Division Office, Dhankuta as “Kalyankari Mahila Krishak Pashupalan Sahakari Sanstha Limited” in the year 2014. Currently, there are thirty two share

members and have invested five hundred rupees as shareholder in the cooperative. The feeling of togetherness has led to cooperative from a group said president Aaitu Limbu.

Women who once were only by themselves have started to raise their voice for rights after engaging in group to cooperative. Who once also used to find themselves of no worth now organize discussions on rights of the women farmers. They have knowledge on what are their rights and how to fight for it. It has shown a sign of change in their life. Distribution of power is a highly talked issue in their family and the society once they have started talking about their rights. Their status has risen up in their family and community as they are organized together and earning more income.



WOMEN UNITED FIGHTING FOR RIGHTS

It has become quite easy for women to run discussion focusing women's issues after the formation of Mahila Adhikar Manch. The issues that were not discussed in front of male members are being coming out openly. A lot of women are benefitting from Mahila Adhikar Manch as it fights against domestic violence, gender based violence against women, facilitates on rights claiming, access to justice providing bodies and campaigns on various issues of women and girls.



Aaitu Limbu of Okhre VDC was unknown about rights, policies and provisions until she took the responsibility of "Mahila Adhikar Manch (MAM)" of Okhre VDC as treasurer. As soon she had taken responsibility of the Manch, she also got trainings on women's rights, legal provisions and leadership development from the Dalit Awareness Society. Legal orientation and trainings were delivered by resourceful lawyers from district headquarter. Then she learns about various national and international policy provisions on women's rights. Once she knew these things, she is able to allocate budget for women and children from VDC every year.

Like Aaitu, Chuna Khulal, Treasurer of Mahila Adhikar Manch who now is a political cadre too also did not have the entire knowledge on women's rights until she was associated with Manch network. She too got trainings and information on the laws and rights from the project. "Time invested in Mahila Adhikar Manch leaving the other task behind has developed my leadership capacity and quality", said treasurer Khulal. Four years before women of this community could not speak up and put their words in front of groups and organizations led by men. Women did not used to participate in village level income generating activities organized by community forestry. But that circumstance has ended now. Twenty three women engaged in Mahila Adhikar Manch have developed their capacity and leadership said VDC secretary Surendra Khadka. Now they have Mahila Adhikar Manch extended in every ward.

Having knowledge about policy, provisions and budgets; Mahila Adhikar Manch has been mobilizing budget regularly from VDC in the name of women. Last fiscal

year, they succeeded to allocate 146,351 rupees budget from VDC. Out of which, thirty thousand rupees were spent in open defecation free declaration program and five thousand was used in organizing full immunization declaration program said MAM secretary Chuna Khulal. Rest of the amount was invested in income generating activities of women in all nine wards. Ward level MAM invested this money in goat rearing, pig rearing and ginger farming aiming to uplift women's economic status.

They too have begun leading VDC level committees. Prior the project intervention women were not represented in any kind of VDC level programs. Even women themselves did not think of their participation as compulsion. Only after the project intervention; school, VDC, community forest and other governmental and non-governmental organization have started calling them by the formal letters. This project has become very effective in the sectors of raising issues of women rights, increasing women's participation in leadership position, representing women in

decision making process and developing women's entrepreneurial skills.

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JOB CREATION AT A LOCAL LEVEL IS CONTROLLING MIGRATION

women are involved in income generation activities on Akbare chili farming, ginger farming, goat rearing, pig rearing and Dhaka cloth weaving. Particularly, 21 women are doing ginger farming, 6 are in goat rearing, 2 in Dhaka cloth weaving and rest of the others in pig rearing and chili farming. Their investment and hard work have started paying off. 'Seeing these economic alternatives and women's earning in village, migration ratio is reducing compared to few years back,' said Jhumka Devi Karki, President of the collective



Sundarichhap village of OKhre VDC ward number 5 sounds pleasing in name but the condition is opposite. Though, the village name sounds pretty the hardness and tussles of people here have long series. Women from Sundarichhap village have numerous stories of drought, scarcities, toughness and sadness. Another village of ward number 6 linked with Sundarichhap village is Baaspani. Which also sounds pleasing in name but it shares same story. All the sources of water have dried up and people are facing problem for drinking water. While hearing name it feels like it has its name because of the enormous probability of water. But reality is very different from that.



Due to scarcity of water and problems for trading productions, almost all of the villagers are migrating in eastern Terai leaving their residences. Dwellers remained too are ready for migration. Amid scarcity and toughness Strengthening Women's Collectives project entered the village. Initially, the project worked on organizing women as Nawajyoti Women collective where thirty women came together. The women then got life skills training on leadership development, entrepreneurship development and sustainable agriculture. Among all these, training on entrepreneurship development

followed by skill enhancement became key for the village women to fight poverty. They also received small grant support on ginger seed, seed money for buying goats and handloom sets to establish their business.

Afterwards, women are involved in income generation activities on Akbare chili farming, ginger farming, goat rearing, pig rearing and Dhaka cloth weaving. Particularly, 21 women are doing ginger farming, 6 are in goat rearing, 2 in Dhaka cloth weaving and rest of the others in pig rearing and chili farming. Their investment and hard work have started paying off.

'Seeing these economic alternatives and women's earning in village, migration ratio is reducing compared to few years back,' said Jhumka Devi Karki, President of the collective. Besides, they are also engage in off-farm income generating work such as preparing bamboo tools, tailoring etc. Women who did not have an idea on how and why to do business are being an entrepreneur after receiving trainings and skills from the project. Due to which income level of women is upgrading and rural economy is strengthening.

“

A woman caring for her children; a woman partnering with her neighbors to make their voice stronger; a woman striving to excel in the economic sector; a woman running for farm to produce food – they all have something to offer, and the more our societies empower women, the more we receive in return. ”





ActionAid Nepal is a member of ActionAid international federation working to end poverty and injustice with thousands of communities and millions of people across the planet. It is working in over 45 countries in Asia, Africa, Europe and The Americas with the poorest and most excluded women, men and children, taking sides with them, making long-term commitments to advance their human rights and to transform the world in which every person enjoys their right to life of dignity. With an aim to become “locally rooted and globally connected”, AAN has legally registered its entity in the concerned Nepal Government’s authority.

After ten years of its establishment as a charity organization in the United Kingdom, ActionAid started working in Nepal in 1982. Based on the learning from its engagement in various sectors at various levels from grassroots to international, AAN has evolved through various changes on approaches and working modalities in its 34 years journey of the fight against poverty and injustice. Starting from charity-based work in the 1980s to improve the basic living conditions of the poorest people, AAN has now adopted a human rights-based approach with an aim to enhance the capacity of the poor and excluded people to claim and exercise their rights to live a dignified life. Our approach reaffirms the role of popular struggles, social justice movements, popular actions, community-based organizations and people’s organizations for rights conscientisation and transformation of unequal power relations.



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