



Combatting Caste Discrimination in Earthquake Response Human Stories from Dolakha, Nepal



A member of



Combatting Caste Discrimination in Earthquake Response Human Stories from Dolakha, Nepal.

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Design and Print: Beeline Communications

Message from the Country Director

Responding to natural disasters has traditionally been seen as a humanitarian response to people in need to save their lives and alleviate their sufferings. While humanitarian values are at the core of humanitarian action, there is increasing consciousness of the fact that disaster is not neutral and so as the humanitarian assistance. Poverty, discrimination and vulnerability have intricate links, that the poor and marginalized are disproportionately affected by natural disasters. Natural disasters may exacerbate existing caste-based discriminations, gender inequalities and pre-existing vulnerabilities. As a result, the humanitarian actions can have long-term negative consequences if affirmative actions are not taken to support the neediest as disaster response move from humanitarian relief to early recovery and socio-economic reconstruction.



Inequality in access to rescue and relief provisions for Dalit communities is documented in the *Waiting for Justice in Response: Report of Initial Findings from Immediate Needs Assessment and Monitoring Responses towards Affected Dalit Communities in Nepal Earthquake 2015*, released by the Dalit Civil Society Massive Earthquake Victim Support and Coordination Committee and the Asia Dalit Rights Forum (ADRF). In the Amnesty International Report *Nepal: Earthquake recovery must safeguard human rights*, released on 1 June 2015, concern was raised over caste discrimination in relief work in Nepal.

Realizing the importance of affirmative action to support the most affected Dalit communities affected by the Earthquake, LWF Nepal worked with Dalit NGO Consortium of Dalit Welfare Association (DWA), Legal and Research Center (LARC) and Nepal Grassroots Development Forum (NGRDF) with the support from Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) in Dolakha district. LWF Nepal worked closely with the local government and the elected representatives on the ground. The success is the combined efforts of all.

“*Combatting Caste Discrimination in Earthquake Response: Human Stories from Dolakha, Nepal*” is the collection of case stories as expressed by the communities, local and national elected representatives, and Dalit NGO Consortium. Our experiences reflect that possibilities are numerous

once we decide to act and work differently. Involving Dalit civil society organizations and representatives in planning and provision of recovery and reconstruction, collecting disaggregated data along caste lines to monitor results, and linking voice and participation of Dalit communities to local government decisions and services are critical to combat caste discrimination in disaster response.

I take this opportunity to thank the communities, local and national government representatives and authorities, Dalit NGO Consortium, and ELCA. I would like to thank Mr. Keshab Poudel, Editor of New Spotlight and his team for collecting and analyzing case stories. I would also thank the LWF Nepal team members - Gopal Dahal, Aswin Poudel, Menuka Rajaure and Aagya Pokharel for editing and coordinating the publication.

Thank you.



Dr Prabin Manandhar
Country Director
The Lutheran World Federation Nepal

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Earthquake Recovery in Dolakha

Exclusion to Empowerment

Discriminated and excluded, Dalit women from the Dolakha district have shown that implementations of livelihood programs backed by reconstruction and advocacy help them take political power and become economically independent.

San Maya BK, 50, a ward member of Gauri Shankar Rural Municipality had never imagined that a day would come when she would get elected as a member of the Rural Municipality. After attending a six-month long Transformative Education Program (TEP), her entire vision changed and she took part in the election to establish the rights of the Dalits.

Representing Marbu, a remote village of the Rural Municipality, BK has been attending the board meeting and pushing the agenda of the Dalits and Dalit women since she was elected 16 months ago. "I am grateful to TEP for the change."

Thirty-two-year-old Ganga BK became a legendary farmer of Chankhu Village of Garui Shankar Rural Municipality Ward 6 for her Akbare Khusarni (Habanero Chili). She is producing Akbare Khursani, also known as King of Chili, to sustain livelihood.

Four years after the earthquakes, the Dalit community, particularly Dalit women, have found new life in three wards, 5,6 and 7 of Suri, Chankhu and Marbu village of Gauri Shankar Rural Municipality of Dolakha district.

Implemented by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF-Nepal) with the funding support of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) in collaboration



TEP participants



with the Dalit NGO Consortium, the Dalit women empowerment project has transformed backward, excluded Dalit households of Dolakha. As the project, which was implemented after the 2015 earthquake, is at the wrapping up phase, it has helped make Dalit women resilient, confident and self-reliant.

Dolakha District is far from the capital, almost 150 kilometers northeast of Kathmandu, where Dalits from these three villages have suffered exclusion, poverty and suppression for centuries. As most of the men leave the village for employment, the women have been bearing the entire burden of tending to the children, elderly and managing household chores. Dependent upon the subsistence-based agriculture, their livelihood options did not bring any economic transformation.

As the earthquake badly affected Dalit women with the destruction of their homes, livelihood options and limited infrastructure including drinking water taps, their state of living was miserable. Things have changed now following the implementation of aid relief, recovery, reconstructions, and livelihood and advocacy programs through the Dalit women empowerment project.

The experiences of three small villages have shown that focused and unified projects can bring transformation which could help formulate better strategies for future disaster recovery programs in Nepal.

The programs demonstrated that the marginalized and excluded groups need different recovery strategies than others after major disasters. Although the

government provided a blanket grant of Rs. 300,000.00 for housing reconstruction for victims, had LWF Nepal and ELCA not funded an additional Rs. 75,000.000 for reconstruction, many houses of the Dalit community would not have been completed even now. Constructed following the Building Back Better (BBB) scheme, the new houses and infrastructure like drinking water taps and public buildings will likely to resist disasters in future. Moreover, without livelihood support of both these organizations, many Dalit women would have continued to face exclusion and economic hardships.

The programs implemented under the Dalit women empowerment project supported poultry rearing, goat rearing and vegetable farming. These programs have been generating employment for women and putting cash in their hand. However, this is not going to be enough. There needs to be long term social recovery and capacity building programs and projects to bring Dalits out of the current cycle of poverty and discrimination.

In the last three years, the project offered start-up capital, ranging from Rs. 17,500.00 to Rs. 25,000.00, for small rural businesses like livestock and farming, coupled with necessary skills and guidance training in the first phase.

The project also ensured the creation of equal opportunities across the Dalit society. As well as that, project has targeted the most vulnerable groups, such as families headed by single women, the disabled and elderly.

As the project is at the stage of conclusion, Dalit women have built secure, safer and more sustainable communities but they are still vulnerable to exclusion and domestic violence.

“Along with implementing the earthquake reconstruction, we have also launched the governance, inclusion, advocacy and livelihood programs. Thanks to the programs like TEP, many Dalit women are elected as ward members. We provided them training to build capacity to raise the issue of Dalit women and put pressure to increase the budget for the Dalits,” said Dr. Prabin Manandhar, Country Director of LWF-Nepal.

Different Approaches

Unlike other earthquake recovery and reconstruction projects implemented in various other districts, LWF-Nepal, ELCA and the Dalit NGO Consortium have implemented different approaches in the three villages. LWF-Nepal mobilized the Dalit NGO Consortium to make the program more effective and the members of the Dalit NGO Consortium got involved in their specialized areas with united missions directed for the economic progress of Dalits.

LWF-Nepal's project modality in Dolakha was different than other districts. Instead of building homes, they encouraged victims to access the government's grant and provide additional support to complete the housing construction.

The National Reconstruction Authority (NRA) provides a blanket grant of Rs. 300,000 to all earthquake victims. As Dalits are in worse economic conditions than other people, they were unable to complete the rebuilding of their homes with just the government grant, so LWF-Nepal and ELCA came to aid them with an additional Rs. 75,000.00 to completely finish off their housing.

Side by side, with housing reconstruction, LWF Nepal and ELCA have also supported the WASH, TEP and livelihood programs.

Women Focused

As the focus of the project was to reduce the burden of women, the activities were also directed towards them. Under the program, a number of water taps were installed in different localities to reduce the time of women having to carry water. Likewise, livelihood support was given to women in areas like vegetable farming, construction of tunnels, livestock, poultry and tailoring.

"We have provided support to livelihood and infrastructure including water supply and irrigation. Other programs are related to governance, advocacy and inclusion. It focuses on local governance, especially women," said Moti Lal Nepali, Chairperson of the Dalit Welfare Association (DWA).

"We have constructed several water taps in three villages. After the completion of the taps, the time to fetch water has been reduced from 2 hours to 10 minutes. What we want is to provide water for all households. We are working in close coordination with the local level."

Although the project's contributions are just Rs. 450,000.000 for drinking water in three villages, water users' associations and local levels are contributing to the remaining budgets. This has helped establish a sense of ownership. Whilst LWF-Nepal and ELCA funded the project, the role and responsibility was given to the community. "Our technical advisors frequently visited the sites. The project encouraged the community. In WASH, the community and local level were involved with transparency and accountability in the entire process," said Aswin Poudel, LWF-Nepal Project Officer in Singati.

The support of the community was different in the three areas. In Suri, each household contributed Rs. 4000.00. In Chankhu and Marbu each household made a contribution in labor by carrying stones and sand. However, there was still a strong sense of ownership in the three villages.

In Marbu, the project also supported source protection; maintenance and constructed 8 new water taps. As the remotest village out of the three, transport cost is very high in Marbu. People contributed by transporting all the materials on their own.

"In the first phase, there were nominal contributions of communities. Now communities have been showing interest to take ownership and also provide their own contribution, this is what the fundamental change is. The participation of the people is high and they are taking leadership. I found the community must be empowered. The quality and support is high that is one of the biggest things I have seen. There is realization that this is our project and it is for us," explains Nepali.

TEP for Change

Under TEP, all three villages received two classes each for six months, focusing in the theme of environment protection, justice, empowerment, domestic violence, exclusion, disasters, social welfare, business plans and literacy.

In the last four years, Dalit women have become economically independent and more aware about their rights. One of the significant achievements of the project is that all the elected representatives in the wards were the product of TEP.

By implementing TEP, the project empowered Dalit women giving them information about how the law and constitution protects them. The first phase program was entirely related to earthquake response. However, the second phase include governance, exclusion, livelihood and WASH.

"During the training period, we taught them how to raise the issue of Dalits and how to accommodate Dalit welfare and education schemes at the local level. We focus our program on governance and inclusion. The experiences have shown that education is an important sector to improve the livelihood of Dalits," said Gaura Nepali, Chairperson for the Center for Dalit Women.

"In the first phase, we supported women who were unable to secure the second installment of funding for the earthquake reconstruction. We also supported single women and Dalits with no land registration certificate and citizenships to secure the grant."

In the second phase, efforts are taken to raise the issue of caste-based discrimination and exclusion to try and bring the Dalits into the mainstream. The constitution and laws state to treat all individuals with equality but what has not changed is the mindset of the people. Although there are more elected Dalit women, they are not being invited to partake in meetings in the local body. They are elected but they are yet to secure their own rights. As Nepali put it, "Despite

efforts to empower Dalits, Dalits are yet to be in a top administrative position. There is yet to have a Dalit Secretary, IJP and Army Chief.”

Beneficiaries

With women being the main beneficiaries of the programs, the income and decision-making rights of Dalit women has increased a lot. Women are empowered through the livelihood program.

In three wards, there are 900 populations of Dalits and half of them are women whose financial conditions are still bleak. Through the CDN, out of 74 elected Dalit women representatives, 57 elected representatives were trained. The project also provided training to Dalit related organizations, as well as 18 human rights defenders from the district.

Under the entrepreneurship training program, the project trained 25 young women. Though this program they were taught how to maintain logbooks. Under the agriculture and market program, the project helped Dalit women to establish links with cooperatives, financial institutions and insurance offices. Connections were also established with Singati Market mobilization. As the project is in the final stage, the villages of Suri, Chankhu and Marbu have seen drastic changes in the overall state for Dalit women.

After the implementation of the program, one can see qualitative changes in the lives of the Dalits. One of the major successes of the program was its ability to integrate development and advocacy together.

“Dalits, who have been living in society full of so much of exclusion, have realized that there are certain organizations which speaks for them and to provide them with some resources,” said Moti Nepali. When the program launched the awareness level was very low. The situation is different now; there is realization that they have to do something for themselves.

“When we launched the project, the local Dalits expressed the feeling that there was someone who could speak for them. When I went to conduct the training, the women expressed their own difficulties openly. They trusted me so much,” said Gaura Nepali. “As a woman from the same community, I understood their difficulties. In all of the Rural Municipality of Dolakha, we have trained two human rights defenders. We constituted a network of human right defenders, local Dalit activists and human right activist.”

“Although they have suffered greatly, many victims do not have landownership certificates or a citizenship certificate. We supported them to take both. Since the males of most of the households are working in foreign countries, women are

denied facilities. We took the issue at DDC and CDO office. We have created a conducive environment. They were living in their own difficult circumstances. From a hopeless community, the situation has changed and victims are now living with hope," describes Moti Lal Nepali.

CDWN's main focus is building the capacity of elected Dalit representatives through the following activities: raising awareness of new government policies and provisions, human rights training and cross-learning and exposure visits. In the first phase Rs. 25000.00 will be provided.

What Next?

The marginalization and exclusion of Dalits cannot be solved just by launching short-term programs. There needs to be more awareness generated of plight of the Dalits and there needs to be more frequent classes conducted for all.

Although infrastructure was rebuilt and livelihood programs implemented, the social status of the Dalit community is yet to improve. "Building drinking water, toilets and other infrastructure alone are not enough to completely transform the Dalit community. What they require is the means to exercise their constitutional and legal rights and share the positions of power. There needs to be programs against oppression and discrimination launched. This issue must be addressed at local level, provincial level and national level. This should be go to international level in order to raise the issue," states Dr. Prabin Manandhar, Country Director of LWF-Nepal. "We worked with the Dalit NGOs to use the Dalit Network to support Dalits."

"Just giving one or two training courses is not enough. We need to address the challenges to move ahead. Today's ward member is going to be the ward chair of tomorrow and maybe she will be Member of Parliament at the Center and province. We need to enhance her capability," said Gaura Nepali.

"What are the achievements and what are ways forward, this is very important," said Gopal Dahal of LWF-Nepal.

Instead of giving a small amount of money, there need to be more resources with long-term commitment. Although the communities concerned and impacted population have developed considerable self-resilience, the support is still inadequate to ensure full recovery and reduce the poverty, social disruption and vulnerability to future potential hazards.

Finally, other members of society also need to be integrated into the Dalit's program, only then can the problem of discrimination be effectively addressed.

1. Jackets Help Children Fight the Winter Cold in Jiri

As winter approaches, the snow has started falling and the mercury is down to minus at Jiri, 190 kilometers east of Kathmandu; on January 8, six-year-old Sushant Tamang had no other option than to leave his home to attend school without warm clothes. Although the weather was freezing, Tamang and his classmates, all residents of Jiri Municipality, spent the entire day without winter clothes. Destroyed by the earthquake in 2015, the primary school children of Jiri Secondary School, a public school of ward no. 4 of Jiri Municipality, have been attending the classes in temporary buildings constructed of zinc sheets. As the temperature decreased to -3°C , the room was freezing with an icy wind blowing from the two sides of the windows. However, for students like Tamang, who come from the villages and are too poor to go elsewhere, they have no option but to stay.

For impoverished children, there is no one to feel their plight and provide some kind of warm clothes. Having a very limited budget for social welfare, the school administration and municipality were merely silent spectators to the predicament of the children.

Jiri Municipality has knocked on the doors of several organizations requesting for winter clothes for the children but no one responded. Until the Lutheran World Federation Nepal (LWF-Nepal) and Evangelical Lutheran Churches in America (ELCA) saw the bleak situation of the young children from marginalized and Dalit



Jacket distribution in Jiri

communities, answering the pleas for help and immediately agreed to provide 500 winter jackets to primary level school children through Jiri Municipality.

As the prolonged winter season has just begun, the Mayor of Jiri Municipality, Tanka Jirel, and the deputy mayor, Krishna Maya Budhathoki, distributed 500 jackets to primary and pre-school level students on January 8, 2019 at the school premises. In the presence of the Chairperson of Ward 4 of Municipality, Gopal Bahadur Karki, the headmaster of Jiri Secondary School, Gopal Bahadur Karki, teachers, leaders of political parties and a Representative of LWF-Nepal, Aswin Poudel, the Mayor and Deputy Mayor handed out blue-colored winter jackets to each primary school child. All the children present picked up the blue jackets with a smile knowing that they will feel secure in the next day of class with their new warm clothes.



Jacket distribution in Jiri

Along with Tamang, all the other children expressed rejoice. “I feel much warmer now,” said Ausha Khatri, 6, a young girl from the Dalit community, who wore the warm jacket over her sweater. Sushant Tamang came with just a shirt in the cold temperature but now he looked much confident in warm clothes. All the other children displayed similar reactions.

“The warm jackets provided by LWF-Nepal and ELCA help children of poor and marginalized communities to cope through the winter. This is a solid contribution to the children of disadvantaged communities living in the municipality,” said

Mayor Jirel. “At a time when there is limited internal revenue generation and the annual grant of central and provincial governments is spent on other sectors, there is virtually no budget for social welfare. The municipality is very much obliged to LWF-Nepal and ELCA for their kind support.”

Situated in the eastern part of Dolakha District, poverty is highly prevalent in the rural parts of Jiri Municipality. As one of the largest and most reputable community schools, the students of Jiri Secondary School come from more elevated regions or live one to one and half hours walking distance away from school.

“We have a large number of primary level students who walk at least one to one and half hours from their homes. As the temperature declines, then comes the snow and frost,” said headmaster Karki. “Because the school building is now under construction, the students have to wait another two to three years to have a new school room with proper windows.”

Since Jiri Secondary School is a government school with free education, an overwhelming number of primary level students come from Dalit and other marginalized families living off an average monthly income of Rs.3500.00 (USD 30).

Having 645 students at primary and pre-school level, Jiri Secondary School is the largest school of Jiri Municipality. “In fact, ours is a school of poor and working-class children,” said Karki. With a big chunk of money being spent on food, purchasing warm clothes is a low priority.

“Through LWF-Nepal and ELCA’s winter support of providing warm jackets to pre-school and primary level students, the children from marginalized communities have not only been able to continue their studies more efficiently but they have also saved their lives.

Although the amount and volume of the support is small, these jackets have supported the children to cope with the cold. One of the major highlights of this contribution is that it involved all the major stake holders: humanitarian organizations like LWF-Nepal and ELCA, Jiri Municipality and elected representatives, school administration and political parties joining hands together for the cause of compassion.

“We all have the same mission, to serve society. This is a good example to show how we can work together. Jiri Municipality wants to collaborate with LWF-Nepal and ELCA in future for the benefit of Dalits and other marginalized communities of Jiri Municipality,” said deputy Mayor, Krishna Maya Budhathoki.

Dr. Prabin Manandhar, Country Director of LWF Nepal says, “We are extremely delighted to be able to respond to the urgent winterization needs of the children with dignity in partnership with the Jiri Municipality with support from ELCA”.

2. Dalit Girl Earns Student Scholarship

Born in a poor Dalit community, she saw people, particularly women and the elderly, suffering from diseases and dying because they were unable to visit doctors and unable to consume basic medicines. Twenty-one-year-old Radhika Khati set a vision for herself at a young age to study medicine and help the people of her community in Suri Village, Ward no. 5 of Gauri Shanker Rural Municipality. It is located in the northern remote part of Dolakha district, around 180 kilometers east from Kathmandu.

With her dream to be in the medical profession, Khati attempted to study to be a medical assistant in Jiri Technical School following the completion of secondary school level education. However, she was unable to pass the entrance examination. Although private medical schools had spaces available, Khati's family were unable to bear the fees for the 18-month course.

At that moment, when she was almost giving up her hope to be the first woman from her community to study medicine, the Center for Dalit Women Nepal (CWDN) came with a proposal to fund her academic course in Dolkha Health Technical College. With support from LWF-Nepal and funding from ELCA, CWDN helped her to materialize her dream.

Upon completion of her 18-month course, Khati will be the first Dalit women from Suri Village, ward no. 5 of Gauri Shanker Rural Municipality, to be a lab technician. Pursuing a diploma at Dolakha Health Technical College, Khati, who is currently a first-year student, aims to provide lab assistance work in her village



Radhika Khati, first year student of Dolkha Health Technical School, Chairkot. She is studying lab assistance

or nearby. Supported by LWF-Nepal with the funding support of ELCA and in collaboration with Dalit NGO consortium, Khati is on the path to complete her long dream to complete medical education and serve the people of her village.

“I am the first woman to study medicine in our community. I am really grateful to LWF, ELCA and the Center for Dalit Women Nepal (CDWN) for their financial support to study the diploma for technical assistant,” said Khati. As the financial condition of her family is poor, she has dropped her initial idea to study the assistant nurse course in Jiri Technical College.

“Actually, I was losing hope and thinking of moving to my next options which were to join 12 classes specializing on education. Had they not supported me, I would not have many choices,” explains Khati. “My actual dream was to serve as an assistant nurse. However, a lab technician does also have important role to play.”

Due to the scarcity of lab technicians in the district, Khati will not have to wait long to secure the job. From a family of six, Khati is the youngest daughter. Living in a rented room in Chariot, Khati stressed the need to continue this program for the future as this kind of support helps the Dalit community acquire sustained livelihood.

“Since our community has a very nominal representation in the health sector and the government only provides very limited scholarship programs, LWF-Nepal and ELCA scholarships can bring major changes to uplift our economic and social status,” states Khati. “If there is an increase of Dalits in the health sector, it will help to end caste-based discriminations in the hospitals. All will be able to come for treatments irrespective of caste.”

Realizing the importance of medical and technical education for dignified life and sustained livelihood, the program has supported two Dalits from earthquake affected areas. “We have been supporting another Dalit boy from Gorkha to pursue sub-overseer course,” said Gaura Nepali Chairperson of CDWN. “Our experiences have shown that those with technical skills and academic background secured employment easily. This is the reason we have supported two young people from the Dalit community.”



Gaura Nepali chairperson of Center for Dalit Women

3. Water Taps Save Time

When she was thirteen, Ratna Maya Bishwokarma, 73, had never imagined that a day would come when she could fetch water from her doorstep. This is now a reality for the Dalit of Suri, Gauri Shankar Rural Municipality Ward No. 5 of Dolakha district. After the completion of the construction of water taps two years ago under the earthquake reconstruction and recovery program, many things have changed for the lives of the women in the once water starved Dalit settlement of Suri.

It would take a total of four hours of walking from Singati of Kalinchwok Rural Municipality, a once water scare community, for women to carry a bucket of drinking water from nearby sources. Situated 1900 meters above the sea level, water scarcity used to be a major concern.

“There was a time no parents from other villages wanted to establish matrimonial ties with the boys of the village given the difficulty to fetch water,” said Bishwokarma, who got married to somebody from another village almost five hours walk from her paternal house in Suri.

With untouchability rampant, Dalits of Suri were not allowed to fetch the water from a tap fixed for upper castes such as Brahmins, Chhetri is, Gurungs and Sherpas. Bishwokarma explains, “We collected the water from the lowest parts of the springs or left over water from the upper parts of the springs where the higher castes had a monopoly.”



Water tap under construction in Marbu



A woman washing cloths in open place in Suri

However, the construction of water taps by Lutheran World Federation (LWF)-Nepal with the funding support of ELCA and in collaboration with Dalit NGO consortium, has changed the state of the drinkable water supply. After the construction of water taps, women do not have to walk more than 5 minutes to fetch water. Following the completion of the current phase of expansion of the main pipeline, sub-pipeline and water taps, the past suffering of over 280 people of 55 households from the Dalit community will end.

“With regular water supply from the taps located at the Dalit settlement, the people from so-called upper castes also come to us,” assures Bishwokarma. Completely destroyed by the earthquake of 2015, settlements of the Dalit community of Suri, is now in the process of recovery following the completion of the reconstruction of houses and other infrastructure such as irrigation and drinking water taps. The project will provide water to 56 households or around 275 individuals.

“Since the availability of water nearby homes, it has also supported the Dalit community to grow vegetables in the garden and raise more livestock,” said Bishwokarma. “There were few livestock during my early years but now I see each household grows vegetables in their garden and all of them have cows and goats.”

Although the earthquake destroyed houses with a few casualties as well, it has also brought major positive changes in the lives of the Dalit community, particularly women.

“Water is a gauge to decide untouchability. The supply of water through water taps to Dalit settlements was the first step to end the discrimination against Dalits in society,” states Moti Lal Nepali, chairperson of Dalit Welfare Association. “This is the reason the consortium has been giving priority for the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH).

LWF-Nepal with the funding support of ELCA and in collaboration with Dalit NGO consortium has been implementing the ‘Dalit Women Empowerment’ project in Dolakha in the aftermath of the 2015 earthquake.

“After the reconstruction of houses and other buildings, LWF-Nepal and ELCA with Dalit Consortium has been supporting the livelihood programs, irrigation, WASH, Dalit women and Dalit women empowerment programs under Dalit Women Empowerment and the Inclusive Governance (INCLUDE) Project,” said Gopal Dahal, Coordinator, Emergency Response and DRR Program, The Lutheran World Federation LWF Nepal.

As part of the Dalit NGO Consortium, the Center for Dalit Women Nepal (CDWN) is implementing the Dalit Women Empowerment and Inclusive Governance (INCLUDE) Project, which is funded by LFW-Nepal and ELCA in Chankhu, Suri and Marbu areas of Gauri Shankar Rural Municipality of Dolakha district.

The overall goal of the project is to enhance the living conditions of Dalit communities, in particular Dalit women, through socio-economic empowerment and inclusive governance.

The Dalit NGO Consortium set 3 main objectives to improve the advocacy and leadership skills of newly-elected, local government representatives to increase access to sustainable income, employment opportunities and WASH facilities to enhance the capacities of communities to carry out human rights-based support at local, district, provincial and national levels.

4. Akbare Khursani Changed Her Livelihood

Once a dependent housewife, thirty-two-year-old Ganga Bishwokarma, who lives in the remote Chankhu Village, Ward no. 6 of Gauri Shanker Rural Municipality, has transformed herself into an innovative agriculture entrepreneur. Along with her other neighbors, Bishwokarma relied for years on subsistence farming, growing traditional crops like corn, potato, barley and wheat. However, these traditional crops neither met her annual food requirements nor generate cash. “Despite of hard efforts, we used to produce the crops to fulfill six to seven months a year. For the remaining five months, male members had to go for other areas for employment,” said Bishwokarma. “Even I had to go for labor work to purchase food.”

One of the hottest chilies of the world, Dalle Khursani (round chili) is usually grown in the mid-hills of Nepal above 5000 feet, it belongs to the Capsicum family and is known to be amongst the most extreme chilies in terms of heat.

Facing hardship year after year and working here and there to feed her family, Bishwokarma decided to plant Akbare or Dalle Khursani as alternative product in her land. This had a big demand in the local and nearby market where she has already sold over Rs. 10, 000.00 (US\$ 100) worth of Akbare in the previous year. Currently, she still has Dalle Khursani worth Rs. 7000.00 (US\$70) in her field. Having made so much profit from just 35 plants, she is now planning to plant another 150.



Gana BK in her field with Akbare Khursani

“At a time when many farmers are growing vegetables, we have to under price produce due to competition. There is also scarcity of water for irrigation. With a high demand in the market and a need for less water, Dalle Khursani has good commercial value,” explains Bishwokarma. “Next year, I want to triple my income from DalleKhursani. Since I earned a bit of money this year, I was able to pay all the expenses of school for my two children. I don’t have to go away from home for employment now.”

Implemented by DWA, a member of the Dalit Consortium, with support from LWF-Nepal and funding from ELCA, Bishwokarma received Rs. R.17,500.00(US\$170) through the Dalit Empowerment for Recovery and Fighting against Inequalities program. Combined with the financial support, she is also occasionally given technical support from a Junior Technical Assistant (JTA) from time to time about vegetables and the market, Bishwokarma’s hard work has shown how proper training and financial support enables women to become innovative entrepreneurs.

Although the earthquake destroyed her house and temporarily made her homeless, Bishwokarma has now secured a new title as the mother of Dalle Khursani in her village. “The earthquake has brought new opportunities in the village to transform the social and economic status of Dalits, particularly women,” she declares. Receiving technical support and guidance intermittently from agricultural experts, female farmers like Bishwokarma are benefiting a lot.

“I have been visiting house to house in all three wards of Gauri Shanker Rural Municipality providing technical guidance and other support required to grow vegetables,” states Laxmi Bishwokarma, a JTA. “Apart from guidance for crops, I have also been providing market information about various vegetable. In order to support sustained livelihood, an understanding of market linkage needs to be established.”

With financial and technical support, Dalit women have started to plant vegetables such as cauliflower, radish, cabbage, mustard, tomato and others. The JTA, Bishwokarma describes.

“Before the earthquake, only a handful of people used to bring all these agriculture products from Singati and Charikot. Now, almost every Dalit households grows a variety of vegetables for family consumption as well as commercial purposes,” said JTA Bishwokarma.

Bishwokarma’s success has shown that vegetable production can be a good option to increase the incomes of women and to provide employment opportunities from their own home. Along with Bishwokarma, the project is covering 42 households and the population of over 200 Dalits in Chankhu.

5. Elections Empower Dalit Woman

Being an elected member of local level or higher level alone does not guarantee the empowerment of Dalits and women. This is what one can learn from the experiences of Apsara Bishowkarma, 45 a Dalit woman and elected member of Gauri Shankar Rural Municipality Ward no. 5 of Dolakha district. Discriminated and deprived for centuries, only a handful of Dalits in the remote part of Dolakha know legal and other rights. Dalit women are more disadvantaged than men. This is what one can see in the life of Apsara.

For over six months, Apsara played merely the role of a silent spectator in the board meetings and General Assembly of the Municipality. Her position during the period was to sign the minutes of meetings, documents and give consent to almost all programs presented in the ward meetings. As she did not know much about her role, responsibilities or legal rights, Apsara did not have any other option than to sign the documents. The Chair of the Ward and other ward members had rarely bothered to tell her about the legal rights of elected members.

“Frankly speaking, I was a mere spectator for over six months. Although I attended two Rural Municipal Assemblies and 14 meetings of the ward committee, I just did what the other senior colleagues told me to do,” said Apsara. “Although I was an elected ward member who is supposed to raise the issues of my community, women and other development issues, all I did was attend all the meetings in the



Apsara BK, elected ward member of Ward 5 of Gauri Shanker Rural Municipality

dark for over six months. Nobody told me about my role, responsibilities and legal rights or the Rural Municipality Regulations.”

However, things have changed after a three-day intensive capacity enhancement training was organized by the Dalit NGO Consortium with support from LWF-Nepal and funding from ELCA for the elected Dalit Women of Dolakha district.

“The three-day training has taught me a lot. As well as learning the legal and constitutional rights of being a ward member, the legal and constitutional status of rural municipalities, I also learnt about the budget process of rural municipalities and how to conduct meetings, speak up in them and so on,” describes Apsara. “After attending the training, I have understood the way to see allocations of resources in the budget in areas like drinking water, irrigation, road, welfare of women and Dalit women and education.”

Along with electing them, the other most challenging part is to generate awareness among Dalit women members about their rights, role and responsibilities. Although some efforts have been made to alleviate the economic conditions of Dalit women, there is still a dire situation. Despite this, the ward has decided to allocate the entire budget for the expansion of roads this year.

“As the ward allocated the entire budget to construction and expansion of roads, there is no budget left for Dalits, women, indigenous communities, children, irrigation and WASH,” explains Apsara. “Having no basic knowledge last time, I did not make much contribution in the last budget making. Now, since I know the skills of presenting and pressing the majority, next year’s budget will be more accommodating to Dalits, women and Janjati.”

In recent months, elected Dalit women members have been expressing their concern over majority members ignoring their issues and voices. “There are constitution and laws to guarantee equality for Dalit women. What is required is to change the perception of others and generate awareness among Dalits, Dalit women and other disadvantaged marginalized groups about their rights,” states Gaura Nepali, chairperson of CDN.

“When we heard about the low level of awareness regarding legal and constitutional rights, we organized a three-day training course for Dalit women elected members in Dolakha. After this training, there has been a qualitative change in the behavior of Dalit women members,” said Nepali.

As laws, by laws and other issues are in the process of amendments and changes, they also transform the role and responsibilities of members of elected representatives at local level.

“We need at least one or two short training sessions a year to understand the changing context of the political landscape. To further empower women and Dalits, there needs to be constant support from LWF-Nepal and ELCA for some time to come,” declares Apsara.

6. Human Rights Defenders for Dalits Prevent Discrimination

Despite the overall, positive changing situations of the Dalit community, they are still facing discrimination in Chankhu Village, ward no. 7 of Gauri Shankar Rural Municipality. Although there are very few Brahmin and Chhetris in Malbu, the Dalits' woes have not ended here as they continue to face discrimination from Gurung, Sherpa and Tamang castes.

27 year-old Subash Bishwokarma has been working as a human rights defender for almost three years under a project implemented by the Dalit NGO Consortium and supported by LWF-Nepal with funding support from ELCA. Out of 66 Dalit households, the program is covering 42 Dalit households where there are still occurrences of child marriages, domestic violence and polygamy. With low literacy rates, women have been burdened with much of the discrimination, particularly in the form of domestic violence from men who have over abused alcohol.

“As soon as people inform me about any issues of rights violation, my first duty is to rush to the place and rescue or protect the victim. If things cannot be settled, I need to seek the support of the police,” explains Subash. “I have been raised amidst



Subash BK, human rights defender from Sankhu village of Garui Shanker Rural Municipality ward 6

all kinds of discrimination and exploitation. Although the ratio of child marriage has come down, there are rampant incidents of marrying girls before the age of twenty.”

Being a human rights defender, Subash frequently visits the homes of Dalits to raise awareness against child marriage and domestic violence. Due to the lack of legal knowledge, villagers consider the age of sixteen a right date to marry girls. These are socially accepted norms in the community.

“Rights-based awareness programs need to be also backed by sustained livelihood programs to end exclusion and discrimination against women,” said Gaura Nepali, Chairperson of CDN. “This is a lesson learned by us.”

Trained under the Dalit Empowerment and Fighting against Inequality for Rehabilitation project by Dalit Consortium, Subash’s duty is to teach people about rights violations and how to deal with issues related to discrimination against Dalits. “I visit families to generate awareness on domestic violence and discrimination. Among the Dalits, women are facing all kinds of discrimination and oppression,”

As there are high rates of unemployment, illiteracy and lack of awareness about their rights, women are too afraid to speak up against discrimination, domestic violence and exclusion. “After the earthquake, many programs were implemented in the areas but the problems related to Dalits are yet to be fully resolved. Our focus is entirely on the economically and socially most disadvantaged and discriminated Dalits,” describes Subash. “In our areas, Dalits are exploited not only by Brahmin and Chhetri’s but are even discriminated by Gurung, Tamang and Sherpas. Frankly speaking, although we are taking several initiatives, discrimination against Dalits are yet to end.”

Whilst almost all the houses destroyed by the earthquake have been reconstructed and the lives of people are returning to normalcy, Dalits in particular are still discriminated and excluded from the mainstream in wards 5, 6 and 7 of Gauri Shankar Rural Municipality.

After the introduction of livelihood programs, the economic status of Dalit women has changed. However, some more economic empowerment programs need to be further implemented to sustain the current progress. As Subash declares, “Economic empowerment and literacy are the key to end the discrimination, domestic violence and exclusion.”

Unlike other programs, the Dalit Empowerment for Recovery and Fighting against Inequalities is one which has both the components of economic empowerment and rights-based awareness.

“In the past, we used to provide either economic empowerment or rights-based approach. This is the first time we jointly launched the rights-based and economic empowerment program together,” explains Moti Lal Nepali, Chairperson of the Dalit Welfare Association. “We are working in a consortium of two Dalit organizations with different areas of specialization. The last three years of experiences have shown that it is better to be working together in a consortium to empower Dalits.”

The program packages given to the Dalits in three wards of Gauri Shankar Rural Municipality have shown positive results. “We have been implementing livelihood programs for economic empowerment backed by social empowerment to end the exclusion and discrimination,” said Rejindra Dangal, District Program Coordinator of the Dalit Welfare Association of Dolakha District.

Infrastructure can be built in a short span of time compared to the even longer period of time needed to change the mindsets of people. Although houses have already been reconstructed in three wards of Gauri Shankar Rural Municipality, it seems that it will take a long time to fully end the discrimination and injustice against Dalits.



Rejindra Dangal, District Program Coordinator Dolakha, in his Singati office

7. Elected Dalit Women Leaders in Local Government

Like most other Dalit women who are elected members, San Maya BK, an elected member of ward no. 7 of Gauri Shankar Rural Municipality, too has spent just one year as a member to have a stab in local politics. In the past year, she has attended almost 24 meetings of the ward and 2 General Assemblies of Rural Municipality.

Although she is an elected ward member, San Maya BK, who lives in Marbu Village in the remote, northeastern part of the municipality, she is yet to completely exercise her rights.

With low literacy rates, rampant poverty and no proper roads for vehicles, residents of Marbu Village are disconnected to other wards. Instead they have to walk at least four hours a day to catch a bus to go to Singati, the Village Development Committee Office or the District Headquarter Dolakha.

“As we live in remote parts of the village with no accessibility of bus or other transport, we too are facing a number of problems which the local level alone cannot solve,” states San Maya BK.

Although other members of her ward treat her well, fifty-year-old BK said that her voice is yet to be heard in the meetings. She holds the view that there needs to be more training given to newly elected Dalits and others to end the discrimination and exclusion issues.

As with all other wards, road construction is the first priority of ward no. 7 and almost ninety percent of the ward’s budget has already been allocated to construct a road to link with Singati.



Sun Maya BK, elected ward member of Gauri Shankar Rural Municipality Ward 7 Marbu

“I know there needs to be some sort of budget for women, Dalit and children empowerment, water, irrigation and other social sectors. When four ward members jointly proposed the construction of the road, I was in the minority,” explains BK. “Because of my insistence, other ward members accepted my point to allocate a certain amount of the budget to health, education and empowerment of women, children and elderly from next year.”

After attending the three days of training provided by CDN, a member of the Dalit Consortium with support from LWF-Nepal and funding from ELCA, BK, along with other elected members, learnt the rights and responsibilities of elected ward members, constitutional and legal provisions regarding the local level, budgeting and other issues.

However, the problem for elected ward member, BK, is having access to rural municipal by laws and other central and provincial laws. In the last four months, the provinces and central parliament have already passed half a dozen laws related to local level governance and a couple of local laws by her own Rural Municipality. “In every meeting, our Chairperson cites different laws and regulations to take decisions. Since the last three days of training, nobody has informed me of any developments. I am in confusion,” admits BK.

“Because most of the elected Dalit women ward members are new comers, they don’t have knowledge about the meeting process, their role and responsibilities, budgeting, constitutional and legal matters. LWF-Nepal with funding from ELCA are providing training programs to support them,” said Dr. Prabin Manandhar, Country Director of LWF-Nepal. “This program helps to empower elected Dalit women leaders of local level governance.”

Although LWF-Nepal through the funding from ELCA has helped to build the capacity of Dalit women elected members, stake holders think it needs to continue for some time to come. “LWF-Nepal through funding from ELCA has made a great contribution to strengthen the elected women members. Giving a short three days training once in a year cannot fully help them. Since the laws and bylaws are changing every month, there needs to be at least two such programs conducted yearly for the next three to four years, depending on funding,” advised Rejindra Dungal, District Program Coordinator of Dolakha district of DWA.

Along with domestic violence, incidents related to discrimination continues in ward 7 against Dalit women. “There needs to be training given to both Dalits and non-Dalits to end prejudice and exclusion. Similarly, more women empowerment and livelihood programs need to be launched to reduce domestic violence,” declares BK. “With limited budget, the local ward alone cannot launch such programs. Our municipality is ready to work in collaboration with organizations like LWF-Nepal, ELCA and DWA.”

8. Livestock Supports Sustained Livelihood

As the saying goes: hard work pays off. This is what exactly happened to twenty-six-year-old Anita BK's life. Anita came to Marbu Village from Dharan just a month before the earthquake and has seen many ups and downs in the last four years. However, she was able to change her fate with hard work and dedication. After her husband absconded to Kathmandu with his first wife, Anita BK was left with the great responsibility of taking care of two children.

Despite losing her house after the earthquake and then her husband, Anita did not lose hope. With no legal documents such as a citizenship certificate in her hand, Anita was disqualified for many livelihood packages provided by the government. Passing from a very difficult phase in her life as a victim of domestic violence, Anita received Rs. 25, 000.00 (US\$250) last year through the Dalit Consortium with support from LWF-Nepal and funding support from ELCA to rear goats.

After purchasing a male and female goat, within six months Anita's goats gave birth to two female goats. Then within a year, the three female goats gave birth to six more kids, four males and two females. "Now I have ten goats: four males and six female goats with two pregnant," declares Anita. "I now have a net property of almost Rs. 150,000 (\$1500)."

Because of the hardship and poverty Anita faced, she also received Rs. 17500.00 grant to grow vegetables. With money to buy seeds and cultivate them, she has planted 285 cauliflowers and 100 cabbages. Along with radish and potato, she is also growing tomato in her greenhouse tunnels.

"I am selling the vegetables at different prices. The price of per kilo of cauliflower is Rs. 60; cabbage is Rs. 80 and tomato is Rs. 100.00. I have already sold



Anita BK also rearing goat for livelihood in Marbu Village along with vegetables



Anita BK of Marbu village of Gauri Shanker Rural Municipality Ward 7 growing vegetables for livelihood

Rs. 10,000.00 worth of vegetables,” said Anita. Regardless of her disadvantaged background, she has now amassed over Rs. 200,000 of sell able produce. Proving to be a successful farmer, Anita is inspiring other poor Dalits from her neighborhood.

“With the low temperature, the growth rate of vegetables is slow. It took almost six months to fully grow cauliflower,” explains Anita. “I am grateful to those organizations that have supported me to have a sustainable livelihood scheme. After selling the vegetables and livestock’s, I will further invest in the goats.” In a note book, she maintains the records of her small farming. “This logbook helps me see my investment patterns and income, expenditure and saving.”

Along with money, Anita also regularly receives technical advice and guidance from a Junior Technical Assistant (JTA) who frequently provides advice about crop pattern, seeds and fertilizers as well as a market link.

“The market is not a big deal now. With three hours walk and one hour in bus, Anita can reach Singati’s largest market where fresh vegetables have big demand. Similarly, she can sell goats in the village or Singati,” said Laxmi BK, a JTA who has been advising the people with agricultural support. “Given the last two years of experience, what I can say is that growing vegetables and goat rearing is the best way to enhance the livelihood of Dalit women from the region.”

As the earthquake reconstruction and recovery almost comes to completion, earthquake victims from Dalit and other marginalized communities, like Anita, still need support for sustained livelihood to overcome exclusion and discrimination.

“Undoubtedly, Anita is a hard-working woman but without the support of LWF-Nepal and funding from ELCA, her present situation would be impossible. Dalits from these three wards still need support for sustainable livelihood,” declares Moti Lal Nepali, Chairperson of the Dalit Welfare Association (DWA).

9. Housing Reconstruction Support to Dalit Households

Despite the past few years of hardship, thirty-five-year-old Sundari BK, an earthquake victim from Suri Village of Gauri Shanker Municipality ward no. 5, does not have to worry about shelter. The mother of two daughters, Sundari is now living in an earthquake resilient, three-room house. Although her family lived in temporary shelters for two and half years, when her children took the Secondary Education Examination (SEE), they were living in their newly reconstructed house. With warmer rooms than the temporary shelters made of zinc, the two daughters lived in a conducive environment during their preparations for the SEE and secured second division.

The credit for the timely reconstructions of her house goes to LWF-Nepal, ELCA and the Dalit Consortium. Had they not provided Rs.75, 000.00 and helped to secure the money from the National Reconstruction Authority(NRA), she would not have been able to complete the building of her home. Because Sundari did not have a citizenship certificate and since her husband died eight years ago without transferring any property to her, LWF-Nepal, ELCA and the Dalit Welfare Association (DWA), a member of the Dalit Consortium, provided all the support to help her secure the government grant given to housing reconstruction.

With support from the DWA, she managed to give all the documents required to obtain the government grant. “Unlike other areas, LWF-Nepal and its partner organizations choose a different modality. Instead of just reconstructing houses, we supported earthquake victims to secure the housing reconstruction grant from the NRA. We provided additional funding to those who were unable to complete the house with the government grant money,” said Dr. Prabin Manandhar, Country Director of LWF-Nepal.



Sundari BK at her newly built house in Suri

Although she received a grant of Rs. 300, 000.00 in three installments from the NRA, Sundari, a single woman, was unable to put the roof on her house. With the monsoon season just around the corner, she was desperately searching for money to purchase a zinc plate for the roof. LWF-Nepal, ELCA and Dalit Consortium came as a savior, providing her with the amount she needed.

Had these three organizations not come to her aid, Sundari would not have any option other than to go to a money lender with high interest to get money, causing her family to be trapped in a vicious circle of debt. "I received Rs. 75, 000.00 support from LWF-Nepal, ELCA and the Dalit Consortium to complete my shelter last year. Had they not provided money, I would have had to make a straw roof."

Whilst she has shelter from the cold of winter and rain of the monsoon, what she lacks is the livelihood options to sustain her family. With a small patch of land which produces crops that are barely enough for five to six months, she goes to labor work to make ends meet.

"Currently, I am in a big financial difficulty to support my two children's education and feed them. Everyone knows our financial conditions and there are no other institutions supporting us. I am very hopeful that these three organizations [LWF-Nepal, ELCA and the Dalit Consortium] will again come to help us for sustained livelihood," describes Sundari, who makes a monthly average of Rs. 2,500 to 3,000 (US\$25). "We have an earthquake resilient house to live in. What we need now is some kind of support for a certain time period to help make us self-reliant."

At a time when rural municipalities are spending their money on road constructions, there is no social welfare and livelihood budget left for impoverished people like Sundari, whose daily income is less than US\$1.

"I am very much concerned about the state of people like Sundari. If we do not provide them with some sort of support for their livelihood, the progress which we have made in the last two years will crumble in a month," explains Moti Lal Nepali. "We have to come out with livelihood programs for a few more years to help the poor and vulnerable people."

In Suri Village, ward no. 5 of Gauri Shankar Rural Municipality, 56 Dalit households are living in miserable conditions. After the earthquake of 2015, they have lost everything they have.

With Sundari's two children studying in class 11, she needs regular money to pay their monthly tuition fee, stationary and books. "One of my daughters wants to go for technical education and my second daughter too has shown the same interest. Since I am not in a position to fund both of them with my present income sources, I need some kind of support. If they complete technical education, my children don't have to worry about employment which will ultimately end our cycle of poverty and discrimination."

10. Goat Rearing Helps Parents Raise Children with Disability

After the earthquake destroyed their home, Sunita and Gopal BK of Chankhu Village, ward no. 6 of Gauri Shanker Rural Municipality, had a double burden to face. As parents of three children, including a thirteen-year-old daughter, Sundari, with severe disability, their first concern was to keep her and their other two children safe.

Since Sundari cannot walk, speak or hear, she is completely dependent upon her parents. “Our house was completely destroyed and the debris buried all our food. Having a child with disability at home, we suffered all kinds of difficulties to feed our family,” describes Sunita BK. Just a month after the earthquake, the monsoon rain that was followed by a harsh winter added more burden.

Sunita and her husband had very little options. They could not go outside village for employment due to having to care for their disabled child, so providing for the family was tough work.

Although Sunita’s disabled daughter is a red card holder, receiving Rs. 2500.00 a month through social security benefits, the amount is too little to sustain a whole family’s livelihood. At a time when Sundari’s parents were searching for



Dhan Kumari BK Suri Village of Gauri Shanker Rural Municipality received livelihood support rearing goats

any kind of financial support, LWF-Nepal with funding from ELCA, offered Rs. 25,000.00 for goat rearing under the livelihood improvement program.

With the earthquake grant assistance of Rs. 300,000.00, Sunita and her husband reconstructed their three-room, earthquake resilient house. After receiving the livelihood improvement program money, they bought two high bred goats. In just a year and a half, thirty-seven-year-old Sunita, whose land only produced crops for 2 to 3 months, has now got 6 goats, two males and four females.

She has already sold four goats earning Rs. 16,000.00 and she will sell two goats by March. Due to the high demand for goats, they are easy to put on sale, goat rearing is a good way to improve livelihood. "Goats grow quickly and with a high demand in the market, goat rearing has a good rate of return," said BK. "After getting goats, it is easy for me to take care of my disabled daughter. Goat rearing is possible to do along with providing care for my disabled child. I, now have money to meet the minimum household need, food for my children and goods for WASH."

"From rearing goat in the past two years, what I realized is that I need to have at least 10 to 15 goats to improve income. When there is no dependable alternative profession, goat rearing is the best direction for those with weak economic conditions."

As Sundari is now 13, her mother must spend more time caring for her and her other siblings. Therefore, Sunita requires further grant support to purchase more goats and, along with this, she also wishes to participate in skill training for Dalit women. LWF-Nepal with funding from ECLA, has improved Sunita's financial situation helping to support her family's livelihood, however, they are still in the middle of recovery and they need some more help for sustained livelihood.

11. Tailoring Offers Sustainable Livelihood Opportunities

For the young women of Chankhu Village, ward no. 6 of Gauri Shanker Municipality, they need to visit Singati to order new clothes such as kurta, trousers, blouses and other dresses because they don't have tailor in the village to tailor the clothing they want. Thuli Tamang, 30, used to walk three hours to visit Singati to make her garments.

Since the earthquake, Tamang has seen many changes in the village, including dressmaking. Twenty-five-year-old Kopila BK, has opened a tailor shop to create all kinds of dresses, ending the woes of the young women of Chankhu who no longer have to walk three to four hours to order and collect outfits.

For Kopila, her new skills have not only offered new livelihood opportunities, where she earns almost R.15000.00 to Rs. 20, 000.00 (US\$ 150-200) a month, but also helped end the discrimination. "Along with other castes, Tamang women used to discriminate us by not taking water and tea in our households. With my new skills, they come to me to order clothes and do not hesitate to take tea and coffee with me."

After the earthquake, Kopila, a mother of two children aged 2 and 3 years old, went to Kathmandu for better livelihood options where she learnt the skills of tailoring despite dropping out of school in her 10th grade. She decided to come



Kopila BK. of Chankhu village of Gauri Shanker Rural Municipality ward 6 of Dolkha with her new machines and small children

back to Chankhu Village following the earthquake reconstruction and revival process which began in the village two years ago. Although Kopila reconstructed her house with a grant from the National Reconstruction Authority, she did not have money to start a business.

With no one willing to invest in her small tailoring business, Kopila was contacted by the Dalit Consortium as a potential beneficiary of its livelihood enhanced program. With the support from LWF-Nepal and funding from ECLA, she received Rs. 25, 000.00 to purchase sewing machines, clothes and other equipment required to start her tailoring business last year.



Kopila BK of Chankhu Village with she new sewing machine

As she makes increasing profit, she has now has bought an interlock machine. “Before, I needed to go to the nearby town, Gurungphi, which is a two-hour walk from the village or go to Singati that’s a further one-hour drive from Gurungphi to interlock clothes,” explains Kopila.

With almost five to six customers per day, Kopila has been busy in her business, tailoring all kinds of clothes. Tamang, who was waiting to collect her kurta set, declares, “Since Kopila did I started tailoring here on the hill, an overwhelming amount of people choose to come here. Nowadays, only a few people are going to Gurungphi and Singati because there are more options available there.”

Kopila’s successful venture, which recently financed the move of her business to an intersection of the village where the rent is Rs. 1,500 per month, is also inspiring 42 other Dalit households in the village. Using a business plan which she learned during her training provided by LWF-Nepal and ECLA through the Dalit Welfare Association, a member of Dalit Consortium, Kopila maintains her logbook. “Since I have a logbook to record transactions, income, expenditure and saving, I can see that where my business is heading.”

After getting trained, even other women who received support under the program for livelihood support are productively maintaining logbooks. Aswin Poudel, LWF-Nepal’s Project Officer, describes, “Unlike in the past, all the men and women supported by LWF-Nepal funding from ECLA in the Dalit Women Empowerment Project updates their logbook. This is helping them keep important.

12. From Dalit Activist to Parliamentarian Ram Lakhani Shares Views to Empower Dalits

Starting his career as a legal activist raising the constitutional and legal rights of Dalits, Ram Lakhani Hajare, who is a member of the National Assembly, believes that there is still a long way to go before the end of discrimination, injustice and exclusion of the Dalit community. Born in Nawalparasi Sustabardghat, in the western area of province 5, he worked for a longtime with Legal Aid and Research Center (LARC) but recently left the organization because of his new role as a parliament member of the upper house.

His nomination to the National Assembly was announced when he filed a petition at the Constitutional Court demanding the order to allocate a place for the Dalits in the upper house. Had not Hajare not petitioned, there would not have been a post reserved for Dalits.

With support from LWF-Nepal and funding from ELCA, MP Hajare implemented various programs to establish the rights of Dalits through his own organization. “We have started our work to address the issue in Dolakha and we are making a network of different Dalit organizations. It is not only in Dolakha where Dalits have been facing discrimination, exploitation and exclusion is found all over Nepal. We launched in Dolakha as a pilot project to show how a Dalit related organization can work together in a consortium to raise and address the issues of Dalits.”



MP Ram Lakhani Hajare, Legal Aid and Research Center

“After being elected as a Member of House, I have been concentrating my efforts to raising the issues of Dalits in parliament. There needs to be a redefinition of the Dalits. The old definition of Dalit was made to fulfill the interest of the higher castes who were power-oriented people, traditionally, Dalits are labeled as a landless, poor, dirty and untouchable people. Yet, the Damai community innovated the Daura suruwal and Topi which is regarded as Nepal’s national dress. Nepal’s identity was established by the Damai.”

“We need not feel inferior when introducing ourselves as a Dalit but we should be proud to be a Dalit. We were made poor by the exploitation of the upper class. We were not paid for our service but our profession linked with bartering since Dalits spend their whole lives serving people. I raised the question in parliament that there needs to be a definition of Dalit.”

Hajare holds the view that if the political parties honestly implement the provisions written in the constitution regarding Dalits, there would be a lot of possibilities for Dalits to move ahead. “Since there is a very minor representation of Dalits in parliament, we cannot make a bigger change. Even in parliament, members have to speak on the basis of political parties but even the political parties themselves are creating barriers for Dalits. My experience is that I am unable to speak fully on the real issues of Dalits because of time allocation. In so far as the issues of Dalit is concerned, the constitution has clear provisions. It is not only at local level or provincial, there are so many difficulties for Dalits in central parliament.”

There is a type of political syndicate which dictates the terms in the upper house. For instance, the constitution of Nepal says that the state should provide free education with a scholarship to children of Dalits. However, legal stipulations restrict the constitutional provision allowing Dalits education in only community schools and up to 12 class. The new law also gives ultimate authority to administrator who gets the scholarship.

“A few months ago, we passed a law saying that landless Dalits all over the country should be entitled to secure land. However, the new regulations restrict the areas of land with 5 anans in hills and 10 dhurs in Terai. This land is for housing. Land is related to livelihood. We have been fighting to establish our rights. The current trends show that the government is not willing to support Dalits. We are able to double the penalty in regards to the Discrimination against Untouchability Act. Recently, there has been a growing demand to remove Dalits as an untouchable caste. The Dalits of Terai have low representation in all sectors. Here, recent efforts are underway to place the backward community under the list of Dalits. Backward communities are not Dalits because they are not untouchable and are

rich and often landlords. If the government place the backward community in the Madheshi Dalit list, Madheshi Dalits will suffer badly.”

“Nepal’s new constitution is a progressive and inclusive document that addresses the issue of exclusion, discrimination and injustice against Dalits giving them some special rights. However, the situation in the reality is quite different.”

Hajare also worked in the Dalit Women Empowerment Project as a member of the Dalit Consortium. The project is currently undergoing in wards 5, 6 and 7 of Gauri Shanker Rural Municipality.

Recognizing that the Dalit community is related to service-oriented professions, Hajare declares, “The time has come for all of us to make Dalits proud for their professional contribution in the service sector. Dalits have never exploited any community and state in human history yet they served and continue to serve the state doing its lowly work. As a member of parliament, I have been raising these issues. Although the constitution talks about how all are equal before the law, Dalits are still suffering from exclusion and discrimination. This is what we have seen in Dolakha as well.”

He too has been suffering from discrimination with time limitation in the National Assembly. “When I raised this issue in National Assembly, all the members were surprised. Although I have been working in the limitation of political parties, I am advocating the cause of Madheshi’s. For instance, I am the only Madheshi Dalit member at the upper house.”

“It is unfortunate that there is no Madheshi Dalit in the House of Representatives. With Madheshi Dalit’s only making up 5 to 6 percent of the population, no political parties consider them as potential members of parliament for the lower house. Out of seven provinces, only two provinces have the presence of Madheshi Dalits. This is the harsh reality.”

“Dalits from the hills have better chances of getting access in all the levels. Although they are yet to get these higher positions, Dalits from hill areas are more aware about their rights.”

MP Hajare believes that Dalits all over Nepal still have to wage a long struggle to end discrimination and secure equal rights.

13. TEP Empowers Earthquake Victims of Dolakha

After taking a six-month course under the Transformative Education Program (TEP), Padma Maya BK, 36, of Suri Village of Garui Shankar Municipality ward no. 5, has greatly changed her overall situation. Along with supporting how to make livelihoods, raising awareness on disasters and climate change, TEP also assisted Padma on broader legal, social and economic issues. In addition to that, she is also literate now.

It was not only Padma who benefited from the course, TEP helped transform the lives of over 135 women from wards 5,6 and 7 wards of Gauri Shankar Rural Municipality, 170 kilometers of east of Kathmandu. In fact, following the six-month course, three women were elected as ward members in the elections.

“With the support from the National Reconstruction Authority’s grant, we have reconstructed houses destroyed by the earthquake. However, we really found true relief after the TEP program was implemented by LWF-Nepal with funding from ELCA in partnership with the Dalit Consortium,” said Padma. “The program helped to increase our income along with the skills of understanding markets, social difficulties and finally literacy.”

TEP integrates Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) principles into literacy and numeracy training. The aim of TEP was to build solidarity between men and women, and increase the likelihood of action against gender-based violence and discrimination both within the Dalit community and at the VDC level. After the completion of the course, TEP provided participants with literacy and numeracy



Padmamaya BK with her newly constructed house in Marbu

skills designed to support their small businesses. Through the literacy component, TEP engaged participants in discussions about Dalit rights, women's rights, and their experiences of caste and gender-based discrimination.

TEP also included a savings and loans component which created the initial economic incentive for participation and cooperation between men and women who were Dalit and non-Dalit community members.

Under this program, Padma along with 135 other women received support to improve and diversify their livelihood options as well as strengthened farm-to-market links. "After taking the six-month course, what I learnt was that we need to speak up and ask questions," reveals San Maya BK, an elected member of ward no. 6 of Gauri Shankar Rural Municipality. "The TEP class inspired me so much that I agreed to participate in the last local elections. This program empowered women of our area."

Starting in December 2016 and concluded in June 2017, six TEP courses produced three women leaders who are now elected ward members. Chandra Bahadur BK, a trainer for TEP describes that the classes contributed to the fast transformation of the Dalit community from the three wards. "Designed as an interactive class, Dalit women from these wards learned to raise the right questions and speak up against anybody."

Along with helping women to learn legal rights, TEP also played a major role to reduce the incidents related to domestic violence against women. "As women became more organized, they restricted the men's habits of over consuming alcohol. Some women even rebelled against their husbands," explains Apsara BK, another elected Dalit woman ward member of Suri village in ward no. 5 of Gauri Shanker Rural Municipality. She was also a beneficiary of TEP.

Fifty-year-old Dhan Kumari BK, who received support to raise goats under the women empowerment program, states that TEP taught her about the market, livestock and vegetable farming. "We are proud of the TEP project which helped us understand our rights, disasters and making women literate. My success in vegetable farming and goat rearing is thanks to the TEP."

Despite the tragic effects and psychological trauma of the earthquake, TEP has managed to bring together women on the same platform to understand each other's problems, constraints and challenges. Implemented with support from LWF-Nepal and funding from ELCA by Dalit Consortium, TEP came as a savior for the empowerment of women in the three remote areas.

14. Vegetable Production Helps Elderly Generate Income

Being elderly does not make any difference to those who want to work in the field. Sixty-five-year-old Kanak Bahadur BK has demonstrated this by generating income through his vegetable farming. The father of five children, BK is now living separately from his wife to tend his vegetables such as cauliflower, cabbage, tomato, potato and mustard.

Supported by LWF-Nepal with Dalit Consortium through funding from the ELCA, BK received seeds, fertilizers, water tank and other tools totaling the equivalent to R.17,500.00. With this, he has already sold vegetables for over Rs. 10,000.00 and his farm still has produce worth another Rs. 15000.00.

“As the demand of vegetables is high in Suri Village, I don’t need to worry much about the market. I am selling cauliflower for Rs. 50 per kilo, cabbage for Rs. 70 and tomato for Rs. 100. Had there been proper water irrigate on my land, the production would have almost doubled,” said BK of Suri village in ward no. 5 of Gauri Shanker Rural Municipality. “This year I was able to generate over Rs. 25,000 from selling vegetables but next year my income from vegetable farming will hopefully double.”

Along with other houses, the earthquake has completely destroyed BK’s house. Although he was able to reconstruct his house through the National Reconstruction



Kanak Bahadur BK of Suri growing tomato in his tunnel



Kank Bahadur BK of Suri village, a vegetable farmer

Authority's grant, his survival was at stake because of the lack of livelihood options. "In the first two years after the earthquake, I was just talking about the reconstruction of housing as if it would solve all our problems. However, now what I have realized is that with housing reconstruction there also needs to be this kind of livelihood program."

"Even though LWF-Nepal, ELCA and the Dalit consortium only supported us a small amount, their contributions have greatly benefited many people in our village. Since there are still people in the village who are yet to completely recover their livelihood, LWF-Nepal and ELCA need to continue their support. If they leave the village now, the success and achievements made in the last three years will vanish."

Junior Technical Assistant (JTA), Laxmi BK also holds the view that people require at least another two to three years support to sustain this new concept of commercial vegetable farming. "The Dalits living in remote and backward regions of Nepal, in the three wards of Gauri Shanker Rural Municipality, are just learning the importance of vegetable farming. This is first time these people are farming to make a profit. These people used to grow radish, potato and a few other species. They never knew that vegetables were a dependable way for sustained livelihood."

15. Searching for Support for Resilient Livelihood

Living in a newly reconstructed, three-room house, thirty-five-year-old Kalpana BK does not have to worry much about the house. Although she felt two tremors on January 10, there was no sign of panic on her face. She is confident that her newly reconstructed house that was built following the Build Back Better criteria is earthquake resilient.

With the help from LWF-Nepal and the Dalit Consortium, she secured Rs. 300,000.00 in housing grants from the National Reconstruction Authority (NRA). Due to the prices of carrying the cement and iron increasing the cost, the NRA's money was not enough to put the roof up. With additional support from LWF-Nepal and funding from ELCA, she received a further Rs. 75,000.00 to complete her house. With the money, they also provided solar lamps.

“I am very grateful to LWF-Nepal, ELCA and Dalit consortium for supporting us to complete our house and help us live in the light. However, the challenge for us is to make money. We are requiring some sort of livelihood option that LWF-Nepal and ELCA provide us with,” said BK, who lives in Marbu Village in ward no. 7 of Gauri Shankar Rural Municipality.



Kalpana BK from Ward 7 of Gauri Shankar Rural Municipality Marbu received additional support to complete the house



Five years old son of Kalpana BK playing in his newly built house in Marbu

She still remembers the most difficult time in her life when her family had to spend two years in temporary shelter dealing with the terrible weather conditions. “With the reconstruction of the new house, I don’t have to worry about the freezing cold and torrential rain.”

“Living in the protected zone of Gauri Shankar National Park means that wild animals like deer, boar and porcupine are destroying our crops. We are no longer worried about any possible earthquakes but with the wild animals,” explains BK. “The animals do not make any damage to livestock like goats and poultry compared to traditional crops like corn, radish or potato. Although some of our community members once earned good money growing vegetables, they are too afraid of the damage to their crop caused by wild boar, deer, and other wild animals. As the number of porcupines is higher, they are destroying our crops as well.”

With a strong house, solar lamps and training through TEP, the women of the remote village of Marbu in Gauri Shaker Rural Municipality have reason to rejoice. However, their worry remains on how to sustain livelihood, for which, they now want help with skill training for the collection and use of Lokta, a raw material used in making Nepali handmade paper.

“In all three wards of Gauri Shankar Rural Municipality, the challenges are to sustain livelihood,” said Moti Lal Nepali, Chairperson of the Dalit Welfare Association. “Oppressed and discriminated for centuries, Dalits living in these areas require some more firm support for their livelihood.”

16. Poultry Provides Nutrition and Money

At a time when all other women are either growing vegetables or rearing goats, forty-five-year-old Mira Nepali chose poultry as her livelihood option. With the support from LWF-Nepal and the Dalit Consortium with funding from ELCA, Nepali, a resident of Suri Village in ward no. 5 of Gauri Shanker Municipality, became involved in poultry.

Under the Dalit Women Empowerment Program, Nepali received Rs. 17,500.00 to carry out her choice of livelihood. Along with investing in vegetables, she also invested in poultry. Six months ago, she bought 47 high breed chicks and so far she has already sold 12 chickens totally Rs. 15,000.00.

With the remaining 30 chickens in cages, she is expecting to get Rs. 35,000.00. Since Singate is close to her home being a one hour away by local bus, there is a big market for poultry there. “I sold all my 12 chickens to people living in the surrounding areas. Local people will come to buy the remaining chickens



Mira Nepali of Suri village poultry is for livelihood

as well,” said Nepali, mother of five children. “Compared to vegetables, I can make more profit from poultry. I have already made three times more money from selling chickens than vegetables. Although there is good income in vegetables the market is very uncertain.”

She argues that the current grant money is too small. “If LWF-Nepal and ELCA increased the current support by double, they will see a complete transformation in Suri Village. Poultry is also helping me save money. I am providing eggs and meat to my husband and children from my own chickens.”

“People have their own opinions about the project. One of the major contributions of the Women Empowerment Project is the establishment of women power. Before the implementation of the project, our financial contribution in the family was very nominal. But, with the support under the program, the women of the Dalit community of Suri have started to financially contribute to the family affairs,” said Gopal Dahal Coordinator, Emergency Response and DRR Program, The LWF Nepal. “Along with the reconstruction of houses and other infrastructure under WASH and irrigation, this livelihood package will ultimately contribute to making the community more resilient.”

17. WASH Empowers Women

As the construction of the drinking water project is in its final stages, sixty-five-year-old Laxmi BK of Suri Village could breathe a sigh of relief. For the last three years, BK, a single woman, walked almost one hour to fetch water in a bucket.

After the completion of the expansion of drinking water in Suri and the construction of water taps in Marbu in ward no. 5 and 7 of Gauri Shankar Rural Municipality respectively, they will reduce the burden of Dalit women.

Constructed by Dubithan-Suridanda Drinking Water User Group with support from LWF-Nepal and funding from ELCA, Gaur Shankar Rural Municipality and the community, the water project has 2950 main pipes that will link 56 Dalit and non-Dalit households through 1000 meters of branch pipelines.

In the process of the earthquake recovery, this is a major project jointly launched by the elected local body, NGOs and the community. To pay the total costs, ELCA provided Rs. 450,000.00 through the Dalit Consortium, with Rs. 125,000.00 from the Rural Municipality and Rs.4000.00 from each water user.

“Despite the availability of water, some households still need to walk almost an hour to fetch water. After the completion of the project, there will be water taps within the periphery of 56 households,” said Kumar Nepali, Chairperson of



Ratna Maya BK of Suri village taking water from a tap constructed by LWF and ELCA



Kumar Nepali, chairperson of Ibithan Suridanda Drinking Water User Committee

Dubithan-Suridanda Drinking Water User Group. “Although it started late, the project will be completed by the end of February.”

Along with houses, the earthquake of 2015 destroyed water pipes, resulting in a major crisis of water. With the support from ELCA, the old system was revived and water taps were constructed in the Dalit settlements.

However, some of the old pipes were broken during the expansion of roads three months ago. “We are now working on a long term and permanent solution of water in our neighborhood,” said Sundar B.K. Secretary of User Association. At present, the User Association is distributing the water through the water collected through 4000-liter tanks. Destroyed by the earthquake, the user group is planning to restore the main tank with the capacity of 10,000 liters.

“The community alone cannot contribute such a large sum of money so we have already requested the Dalit Consortium and Rural Municipality to provide some more budget to fix the water storage tank,” explains Secretary BK.

After the water pipeline was damaged by the earthquake, people were forced to drink water directly from the water ducts. The consumption of water from open sources increased the incidents related to waterborne diseases.

Initiated by LWF-Nepal and the Dalit Consortium with funding from ELCA, the drinking water project is an example of how users, the elected local level, NGOs

and INGOs can work together to empower women and end the scarcity of water.

The construction of water taps and reconstruction of water tanks in Marbu Village in ward no. 7 of Gauri Shankar Rural Municipality is also in the final stages. Destroyed by the earthquake, the drinking water supply from Padhero Paniintake, forced women to make an hour long walk for water.

As the work of construction is in the final stage, the burden of women having to fetch water is soon coming to an end. “Given the present pace of work, the project will end the long woe of women,” said Sun Maya BK, an elected member of ward no 7. “The Rural Municipality have added additional budget next year to expand it as our mission is now to place one tap in one house.”

LWF-Nepal and funding from ELCA, Dalit Consortium is providing cement, pipe, concrete and paying for the wages of workers, with Water User Association bearing other costs.

“We need to complete the work and supply the water from water taps,” said Gabin Baral, Chairperson of Padhero Pani Drinking User Association. “The work is in the finishing stages of construction. As all the water taps and water intake has already been completed, we will release the water from the intake soon. After the completion of the construction of the project, it will cover 19 houses.”

“The supply of uninterrupted drinking water through water taps to nearby houses not only reduces the burden of women, but it will also reduce water borne diseases,” said Dahal. “If we supply uninterrupted water, the water can also be used to irrigate vegetable fields to support livelihoods.”

Following the completion of the reconstruction of houses, the three remote wards of Gauri Shankar Rural Municipality in the rural parts of Dolakha district is in the process of gradual revival. Under the WASH program, Water User Association are restoring and expanding the water supply with support from the community, local level, LWF-Nepal, ELCA and the Dalit Consortium.

18. Dalit NGO consortium on Dalit empowerment and Dalit rights advocacy

At a time when various Dalits rights and development related organizations have been working individually on each project with a lot of duplication and waste of resources, three Dalit NGOs, Dalit Welfare Association (DWA), Legal and Research Center (LARC) and Nepal Grassroots Development Forum (NGRDF) have worked together to form a Dalit NGO Consortium in three wards of Gauri Shanker Rural Municipality.

With very specific experiences in three different sectors, rights, advocacy and development, DWA, LARC and NGRDF have shown that they supplement and compliment to each other's projects. Headed by Moti Lal Nepal, a prominent Dalit activist, DWA has a specialty in the mobilization of the community in development and construction works. Supporting Nepal, as Chair is Member of Parliament, Ram Lakhani Harijan, of LARC which has a specialization in legal advocacy and rights, along with Gaura Nepali the Chair of NGRDF which is known for its role in ending discrimination and establishing the legal rights of Dalits.

LWF Nepal with support from ELCA has helped the Dalit NGO Consortium to implement several projects in the earthquake-affected Dolakha District. The Dalit Empowerment for Recovery and Fighting against Inequalities project is in its first phase as well as the Dalit Women Empowerment project.

In the past, 'Gender Justice' lead organization, CDWN mobilized 90 Dalit women and men to form 3 mixed-gender community groups in three wards of Gauri Shankar Rural Municipality of Dolakha District. These community groups formed



LWF Country Director Dr. Prabin Manandhar in a meeting with Dalit Consortium discussing the progress of the project

the basis for the Transformational Education Program (TEP) which integrates Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) principles into literacy and numeracy training. The overarching aim of TEP was to build solidarity between men and women, and increase the likelihood of action against gender-based violence and discrimination both within the Dalit community and at the VDC level.

TEP included a savings and loan component which created the initial economic incentive for participation and cooperation between men and women of Dalit and non-Dalit community members. TEP then empowered participants with literacy and numeracy skills designed to support their small businesses. Through the literacy component, TEP engaged participants in discussions about Dalit rights, women's rights, and their experiences of caste and gender-based discrimination.

CDW guided the process by which groups recorded their challenges, developed advocacy tools, and carried out advocacy activities to claim their rights. Through this model, CDW rallied both men and women in Dalit communities, to raise gender justice and provided training to elected representatives of the Dolakha district.

Although they have different specialties, each organization works within the areas of its expertise, supplementing and completing each other's work. In three wards, CDWN conducted activities to promote justice and protect the rights of Dalits and DWA worked in development areas supporting the construction works and livelihood related activities.

“Working through a unified consortium gives strength and a powerful voice for the cause of Dalits. This is what I have learnt from the experience in Dolakha,” said Moti Lal Nepali, Chairperson of DWA. “The implementation of programs in three wards of Gauri Shankar Rural Municipality teaches us that transformation can be made in remote and difficult regions like in Dolakha through a unified approach of different organizations working to uplift the lives of Dalits.”

“When we launched our program, the situation in Dolakha was very pitiful for Dalits with rampant social discrimination, low awareness levels and poor livelihood conditions. In the last three-year period, one can see the drastic changes in Dolakha with Dalits learning entrepreneurship skills to grow vegetables or rear poultry and livestock,” describes Nepali. “Drinking water is still a major problem in the Dalit community and we are launching a new project to provide one tap for one house.”

Along with the development and livelihood activities, CDW has launched advocacy and rights-based programs through training and delegating a human rights defender. Under the TEP, the Dalit women of Dolakha districts were empowered. “Disasters not only destroyed the physical infrastructure but it also destroyed the livelihood base of the poor people like Dalits. Our program has demonstrated how to restore both through the organizations working in the Dalit community.”

After launching the TEP, Dalit women of three wards of Gauri Shankar Municipality have achieved literacy. Moreover, Dalit women learnt their rights, how to express their views and run a sustainable livelihood, maintaining income and expenditure through logbooks.

“The three-day workshop for the elected Dalit women helped them understand their legal and institutional rights and their responsibilities in local level governance,” declares Gaura Nepali, Chairperson of CWD. “Through the consortium, we were able to implement development activities for WASH, irrigation and livelihood backed by advocacy, awareness raising and legal and constitutional rights through TEP.”

CWD also mobilized human rights defenders in all three wards to raise the awareness against caste based discrimination, domestic violence and to provide legal support. Nepali added, “Human rights defenders can launch different activities which help to change the mindsets of people.”

Although there is an increase in the presence of Dalit women in the local bodies, they are yet to fully know their rights, responsibilities and status of their position. “Winning the elections is one side of empowerment for Dalit women. However, they cannot perform their duty effectively without knowing the legal matters,” explains Nepali. “Our three-day workshop helped them understand their legal rights.”

At a time when there are duplications and overlapping of programs implemented by different Dalit related organizations, the program launched by LWF-Nepal with the funding support of ELCA and in collaboration with Dalit NGO consortium through Dalit empowerment projects in Dolakha following the aftermath of the 2015 earthquake has shown a new way to develop forward.

“We have adopted a different approach in Dolakha. We guided the victims of the earthquake to secure government grants for reconstruction but our focus is on livelihood, as well as WASH, advocacy and rights-based programs. LWF-Nepal with funding from ELCA also provided an additional Rs.75, 000.00 to complete the housing reconstruction. For the first time, LWF-Nepal helped mobilize three Dalit NGOs through a consortium to implement development, livelihood, advocacy and rights-based program,” said Dr. Prabin Manandhar, country director LWF-Nepal.

Although LWF-Nepal with funding from ELCA helped revive the livelihood of Dalit women, end discrimination and build new homes, the challenge now is to continue to keep an ongoing success of progression. The community is just in the middle of progress and they still require support for the sustained livelihood program. Discontinuation of the program at this stage would reverse the progress achieved in the last five to four years.

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