

RISING AFTER FLOOD



Almost a decade ago, a massive flood in Mahakali river rampaged against Khalla Maseti village in Kanchanpur district of Nepal. The forthcoming story intends to shed light on the undeterred resiliency of Anjali Bohora, a local resident of the village, whose house was washed away in the flood, making her family homeless overnight.



A community turned inhabitable by flood in Khalla Maseti village, Kanchanpur district, Nepal. Photo: Grishma raj Aryal/Oxfam

Anjali Bohora takes a nostalgic trip of the past as she walks in the arid sand washed by the flood in 2013. Her house, and nine others in the community were swept in the fury of nature, making the entire community inhabitable. A stark contrast of what the community has become today could be easily imagined when Anjali described her village before the floods. “The entire stretch of land was painted with little specks of green vegetables that provided livelihood for the families living near the riverbanks”, says Anjali. But a fateful night turned everything upside down for Anjali as she narrates the entire incident of the flood in 2013.

“It was a gloomy afternoon with small amount of rainfall which was normal for us. During the daytime we didn’t think anything serious would happen. But at night when we were asleep, I heard people crying for help and shouting to save their lives. I immediately took two of my children out of my house and moved to a higher ground. Within hours, our house, farm, and cattle were washed away in the floods, leaving us with nothing”, says Anjali. After the flood, she started living with her sister, which provided some respite to Anjali. “For several months after the flood, I was lost. I had several questions in my mind - how I will educate my kids, how will I start earning



Anjali Bohora stands on top of her destroyed house with only a metal pipe as the memory of her home. Photo: Grishma raj Aryal/Oxfam

again. I was also aware that I cannot stay with my sister forever and add up to her financial burden. So, one day, I decided to fight back with my fate. I borrowed some money from local people with an intent of starting a general shop”, says Anjali.

Anjali approached a local temple who let her use their land to construct a shop. Within a month, Anjali was able to set up a modest structure where she started a tea shop. Gradually, she expanded her shop and started providing snacks, lunch, and grocery items.

Anjali’s friendly nature started attracting customers, and she started earning livelihood. She tells us that not only has she repaid all her loans, but she also managed to educate her children.

“My son is currently studying in grade 11 and my daughter has finished her high school and has now started her bachelor’s degree in commerce”, says Anjali. She further adds, “My children mean the world to me. My major concern in life now is to provide good education to my children”.

Having lost her house and cattle in the flood almost a decade back, Anjali has gradually picked herself back and has been the breadwinner of her family. Her husband, who left home looking for a job in India 2 decades ago, never came back home.

“My husband probably doesn’t even know about the flood and that our children have grown up. I had to go through all of this alone”, says Anjali while standing on the same spot where her house used to be before the flood.

She grabs a water pipe which is the only remaining structure of her house. “This pipe is the only memory I have of my house”, says Anjali who was not able to control her tears while saying these words.

And as she quickly recovers from her tears, she tells us that she does not want the younger generation to go through all the hardships that she has faced. That’s why Anjali is actively involved as a Community Disaster Management Committee member established by Oxfam’s Strengthening Community Preparedness, Rapid Response and Recovery in Asia (SCOPR3) project.

“As a member of CDMC my role is to organize coordination meetings with the local ward office to prepare crisis management plans and to inform government to conduct rescue operations in case of emergency”, says Anjali.

Anjali also received a portable steel container shop as a part of livelihood support from Oxfam’s SCOPR3 project which was recommended by the member of Women Empowerment Center (WEC) established by another Oxfam project called



A portable metal shop provided by Oxfam as a part of livelihood support. Photo: Grishma Raj Aryal/Oxfam

Transboundary Rivers of South Asia (TROSA).

“My shop right now is just besides the road, and I have made it on someone else’s land. I might have to evacuate this land anytime. With the portable shop, I feel more secure about my livelihood as I can easily transport this kiosk anywhere I want”, says Anjali.

Besides, Anjali was also involved in lobby meetings organized by the members of Women Empowerment Center. The lobby meeting was



A telecommunication tower established by the local authorities in Khalla Maseti village after being lobbied by WEC members established by Oxfam’s TROSA project.

“The members of WEC asked me to join a lobby meeting with the local government to establish a telecommunication tower in the village. “I immediately accepted to join the meeting because having a telecommunication tower in the village meant that we could use our phones to communicate information to different communities in case there was floods”. She adds, “If we had a tower back in 2013, we would have received information about floods on time, and I could have salvaged many valuable belongings that I lost in the flood”.

The telecommunication tower has not only helped in easing communication in the village but has also germinated new form of online services as internet connectivity has been es-

tablished in the village.

“The entire world has moved online these days, so I have also included the option of online payment in my shop”, says Anjali.



Local shops in Khalla Maseti village displaying signs of availability of online services. Photo: Grishma Raj Aryal/Oxfam

As Anjali serves lunch to her customers in her shop, get keeps getting many visitors from the village greeting her with respect. Most people in the village consider Anjali to be like an elder sister as they look up to her when they are in trouble.

And as she reflects back on her own life and the people who helped her during difficult times, she says, “It’s important to help each other out when times are difficult, because we all are vulnerable when we are alone, but when we are together, no one can break our spirit”.