



# STORIES FROM NEPAL

## CHANGE IN THE LIVES OF PEOPLE



**OXFAM**

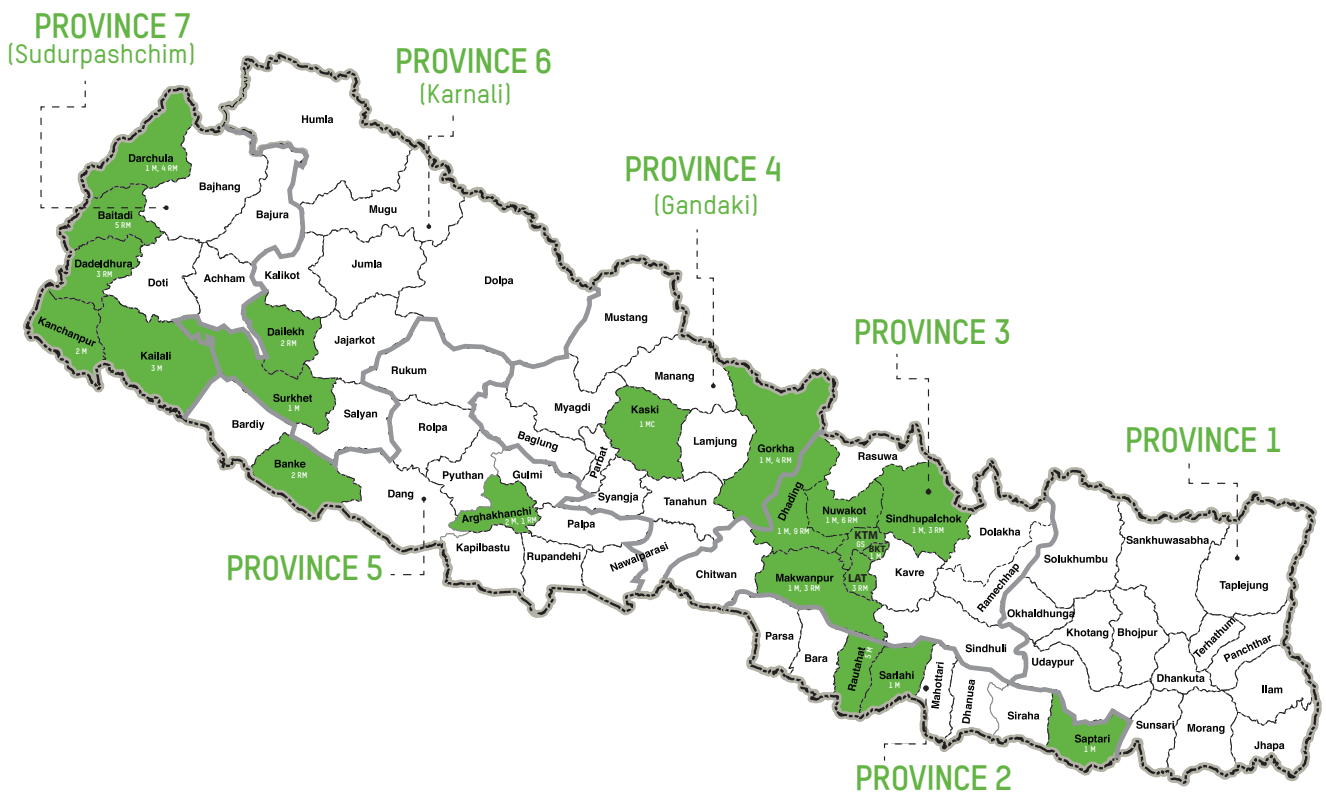
**STORIES FROM NEPAL**  
**CHANGE IN THE LIVES OF PEOPLE**

These stories are collected from the districts where Oxfam is working to create a just society without poverty; a society in which all women and men live a life of dignity, enjoy their rights and assume their responsibilities as active citizens of Nepal.

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February 2020

# OXFAM IN NEPAL



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# I FEEL PROUD TO BE PART OF RESILIENT COMMUNITY

Anju Kumari, 44, resides in Hanumannagar Kankalini municipality of Saptari district in Nepal. Having survived by two sons and one daughter, Anju remembers hard times she has passed through to make the ends meet. Belonging to the poor family with limited daily wages, she sometimes had no food grains or money to buy food for her family. Due to her situation, she is also not able to shift from the basin area in Koshi river which sees an annual disaster caused by flood.

Monsoon flood in Koshi river, the biggest river of Nepal, has affected the community settlement for many years. Every year, flood disaster results in the loss of livelihood of community people and their assets. Looking back at the human casualty report of 2015 – 2017 received from District Disaster Management Committee (DDMC) in Saptari, nine people have lost their lives and thousands of others have become displaced. Among many adversely impacted people, Anju and her family were the ones too.

To enhance capacity and build resilience of community people like Anju, Koshi Victim Society (KVS), a local organization situated in Saptari, and Oxfam have been implementing a Disaster Risk Reduction and Humanitarian Preparedness Programme in the same municipality that Anju comes from, since 2008. The programme supports the local government to make communities resilient to disasters through risk identification, preparedness, joint risk management and mitigation. The programme also supports the vulnerable community with raised hand pump and toilet, rubber boat for emergency rescue, safe house



Photo credit: Dilli Prasad Upadhyaya/Oxfam in Nepal

for emergency shelter, connecting vulnerable people with co-operatives for livelihood, forecast based information dissemination and connecting them with local government's emergency information mechanism to get immediate assistance. Besides the program conducts individual capacity building trainings for the community people like Anju, such as, on First Aid, Search and Rescue, Early Warning System for locally organized task forces to enable them to support people needing quick and emergency help during disaster.

Moreover, the programme has supported the local government with updated monsoon preparedness plan, improved forecast-based community early warning system, trained and ready-to-move task forces and responsive functional clusters tested through simulations to take swift action against seasonal disasters.

District and local level emergency stockpile consisting of search and rescue materials and first-aid items are kept standby for emergency purpose linking with disaster preparedness and response plan.

To enhance water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), communities living in river basin including Anju are introduced to improved hygiene and sanitation activities in close coordination with local government. "During the monsoon flood, I have actively participated to raise awareness on WASH related activities such as demonstration on hand washing before taking food and after defecation," says Anju. She has also demonstrated the method of water purification like boiling, filtration and chlorination to her communities.

While the activities impacting communities at larger scale were being implemented, Anju and her family were in need of financial support to start a business and to be self-reliant. As such, Anju became the shareholder member of the cooperative after knowing about it from Women

**"I have actively participated to raise awareness on WASH related activities such as demonstration on hand washing before taking food and after defecation."**

Empower Center (WEC). WEC has become an effective platform for women through which they become organized, raise their voices on issues concerning them and get empowered to deal with those issues.

The women organized through WEC have also registered their group as a cooperative, started saving and are receiving the loans from their own cooperatives and doing business. Cooperative has formalized financial training, record keeping, business plan and cooperatives budget management, etc. empowering the members to learn new things. As such, Anju as a shareholder of the cooperative, has received Nepali rupees five thousand as a loan and started the small business of portable retail shop in a two-wheel cart. "So far, I have been able to earn two thousand rupees every day by selling biscuits, chocolates to the students during their break," Anju shared happily. She has been able to significantly increase her retail shop by receiving and returning loans on time and has been able to fulfill educational need of her children too.

As a result of the programme implemented in her community, Anju feels better prepared to cope with monsoon consequences. Now she has savings, go bag, raised handpump, solar light, mobile, easy livelihood and understanding of surrounding risks. Anju has developed a strong determination to live life happily.



Photo credit: Dilli Prasad Upadhyaya/Oxfam in Nepal

# A DOORWAY TO SUSTAINABLE LIVING

**T**haman Singh, 44, from Dhikura, Arghakhachi district lives in a joint family of ten members whose main source of income has been agriculture. Thaman, who had attained some traditional carpentry skills could not get satisfactory income due to a lack of advance training in carpentry.

Minkala, Thaman's wife had joined Ganga Jamuna Women Agricultural Cooperative as a member, opening doors to benefits like loans, trainings and business development skills from the cooperatives. There were around twenty-five Women's Groups in Dhikura where women learned about saving and credit skills and agri-based farming technologies. These

groups were formed with support from Forum for People's Awareness (FOPA), Oxfam in Nepal's local partner. Eventually, these groups were turned into cooperatives to directly link them with economic sector. Later, Oxfam in Nepal's Building Economic Resilience project supported in establishing cooperatives as a business hub.

Being a part of cooperative, Thaman got an opportunity to participate in nine-day long modern bee-hive construction training. Along with other 11 participants, Thaman learned about bee-hive construction technique, suitable tree species for bee-hive construction, major potential disease for bees and its preventative measures, honey-bees colony



Photo credit: Sofila Vaidya/Oxfam in Nepal





Photo credit: Sofila Vaidya/Oxfam in Nepal

transfer technique etc. It was a golden opportunity for him to get new and advanced skill. His hard-work and dedication also landed him the first position in the training. "My carpentry skills needed an update. Thankfully, the construction training was very helpful for me and it has bought changes in my life by further sharpening my skills," says Thaman.

According to him, the training gave him an idea to start an enterprise of modern bee-hive construction. Thaman, with support from this family, started the enterprise with the investment of NPR 85,000 that has earned him NPR 264,000 in the short duration of eight months. Now, the demand of modern bee-hive is increasing day by day from his surrounding communities including Bhumikasthan, Sitaganga, Sandhikharka municipality. To scale it up as a formal enterprise, Thaman registered it as a 'New Modern Bee-Hive furniture Industry' under Small and Cottage Industry category.

In his industry, Thaman and his 67 years old father are fully engaged in manufacturing bee-hives. To meet the increasing demand,

**"I am confident that I can fulfill the need of my community of modern bee-hives through this industry."**

he has employed two persons as assistants in manufacturing of bee-hives. Thaman has a plan to make 2,500 bee-hives per year and to make profit of 300,000 from the business annually. For this, he is seeking the demand of bee-hives rigorously. He has also called back his two sons who were working abroad and has put a plan to expand his business.

He is also seeking loan to invest in his industry. Recently, with the support of the project, he has applied for the loan of NPR 600,000 in a low interest rate of 6% annually from Agriculture Development Bank. After receiving the loan, he plans to establish saw-mill at his industry for cutting wood and running the industry in sustainable manner. "I am confident that I can



fulfill the need of my community of modern bee-hives through this industry,” Thaman says confidently.

Though Arghakhanchi district is popular for bee farming, lack of bee-hives has made it difficult to promote the farming. Now, after receiving advanced training, community people are very happy to be able to construct bee-hives at their own area, without having to seek it from nearby districts.

In the land of farmers where majority of community people practice on and off farm businesses, Building Economic Resilience project has supported to improve livelihoods and food security of community people. It also strengthens cooperatives for promoting viable businesses, and to increase access of seasonal migrant families on safer remittance service and utilizing those remittance in productive sector.



Photo credit: Sofila Vaidya/Oxfam in Nepal

# COMMUNITY LED INTEGRATED SETTLEMENT RECONSTRUCTION

We would all have been living in a small one-room house with burden of loans, if we had not receive the support,” said Khil Bahadur Tamang, the chairperson of Thakle Integrated and Model Settlement Committee in Sindhupalchok district. He is now leading the reconstruction of the settlement in his community. Thakle was one of the communities severely affected by the devastating earthquake of 2015. Many lives were lost, and many houses were destroyed. Thakle, located in Melamchi municipality in Sindhupalchowk district was amongst the worst affected areas as per the Post Disaster Needs Assessment carried out by the Government of Nepal.

The indigenous Tamang community lost their homes and were traumatized by the earthquake. Being financially weak and vulnerable, they had no choice but to constantly seek support from the local and district level governments to revive their lives again. Building their homes, access to clean drinking water and revitalizing their livelihoods were major challenges for them.

Despite the obstacles, 31 earthquake affected households joined hands and formed ‘Thakle Integrated and Model Settlement Committee’ to lead their own construction process with support of Oxfam in Nepal. With their strong



Photo credit: Sudin Pradhan/Oxfam in Nepal



dedication, the community has already constructed water reservoirs as well as debris clearance and preliminary land levelling works from the fund set-up from their first government grant of NPR 50,000.

Living under the temporary shelters for four years, Oxfam along with its local partner Mahila Aatma Nirbharta Kendra (MANK) supported the community to build disaster resilient and environment friendly houses in a planned way. The houses are of same design and with same size which is a part of a broader concept of an integrated settlement. The locals were at the forefront of the community-led designing and construction of houses in the settlement. "Oxfam and we sat together to come up with the design where an attic space will be constructed to store food grains or for guests during the festivals," said Khil Bahadur. Khil has been deeply involved in designing the integrated settlement and is always in constant discourse with the supporting organizations to come up with the convenient settlement design for his fellow community people. Each 31 houses

**"We would all have been living in a small one-room house with burden of loans, if we had not received the support,"**

have four rooms at the ground floor along with a common toilet and an attic space at the top floor.

Till date, affected community living in a temporary shelter nearby their old houses had little hope of building their lives. However, Oxfam's housing support not only helped build their homes but also brought them together in a planned settlement with improved physical infrastructures such as roads, retaining walls, electricity and drainages. Oxfam's increased impact is also evident through its one program approach supporting housing, livelihood, water, sanitation and hygiene components,



Photo credit: Sudin Pradhan/Oxfam in Nepal



complemented with the roofing of houses as well as skills development in the sector. Local people gained valuable skills during the process of constructing houses that is useful even after the completion of the construction.

Bricks used for construction are locally made. Community people are trained on using the machines to produce bricks and, the skills they have got will remain with them for further economic empowerment. They have already sold around 3,500 bricks at 15 rupees per brick labor cost for the construction in nearby communities. The money generated by selling the bricks are contributed in the fund generation of settlement development committee.

The houses were built with the total investment

of NPR 12,73,90,440 from Oxfam through local partner, whereas community contribution in terms of local materials and labor was equivalent to around NPR 1,07,46,975. National Reconstruction Authority (NRA) allocated a total budget of NPR 93,00,000 for the construction of physical infrastructures. "Committee has speed up construction process with the plan to complete and shift the communities in their new houses before monsoon," says Khil Bahadur. All 31 households are planning to shift to their new homes once all the construction activities conclude and will be followed by a grand inauguration. The integrated settlement, according to Tamang, could also attract national and international tourists in the future, as they are planning to run homestays, a means of livelihood and cultural preservation for locals.



Photo credit: Sudin Pradhan/Oxfam in Nepal

# A SHIFT IN A MINDSET AGAINST HARMFUL SOCIAL NORMS

**J**ora Singh was working in India before joining Nepali politics. Due to the lack of schools in his village, he could not pursue study and educate himself. Luckily, while working in India, he got an opportunity to learn and has also been able to write a sign instead of using his finger prints for signature. Now, an elected ward member of Aathbis Municipality in Dailekh, Jora has many plans to contribute for a change in his community. However, social norms and cultural beliefs firmly embedded in his mind throughout his life was yet to be changed.

After holding the position in the ward office, many people met him daily for his support. Women of the Community Discussion Centre (CDC) also met Jora to explore ideas on minimising the use of alcohol and violence caused by its use in their community.

CDCs are forums for women and girls to initiate discussion on social issues, ill practices,

social injustice and seek possible solutions to overcome them. They share their experiences on Child, Early and Forced marriages (CEFM) as well as Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWGs) and learn from each other. Oxfam in Nepal through its Creating Spaces (CS) project has been applying the CDC approach at the community level that has been effective in community mobilization and transformative leadership of women and girls and supportive towards educating women and girls from the community and providing life skills for them. Through the discussion method, the participants and facilitator discuss and educate themselves on various issues like women and girls' rights, harmful norms, violence against women and girls, negative consequences of early marriage, etc. On the other hand, life skill approach encourages young girls to enrol in schools, so they are well informed about the negativity of child, early and forced marriage and violence against women and girls.



Photo credit: Aarati Sharma/Oxfam in Nepal



Jora, who had a patriarchal mindset, insisted that women are accountable for what was happening at their community. He stressed that it was women who were weak, resulting in domination by men in the communities. Apparently, he was not ready to understand that it was not easy for the women to break the existing social norms.

Social norms in Dailekh and other hilly districts of Nepal forbids women and girls to use dairy products during their menstruations. They are not allowed to eat any other nutritious food during the period. Once a heated discussion led women from CDC to challenge Jora and urge him to start the practice of giving dairy products to his wife, daughter and other women and girls in his family, if he really thinks that it was happening because of women. The women also asked him to send his wife to CDC.

After few days of the discussion, he did what the women asked him to do; Jora started sending his wife to the CDC. He also started

**“I realised that we have to be the change, if we want to see the change.”**

supporting CDC and other initiatives in the area. “After the discussion, I realised that we have to be the change, if we want to see the change. So, I started giving dairy products to my wife and daughter during their menstruation,” said Jora. Because of his supportive actions, the CDC acknowledged his contribution for a change in the community and felicitated him as the community champion.

There are about 45 Community Discussion Centres in Dailekh where women discuss many gender-related harmful social norms and come up with plan for solutions. CDC has empowered women to speak for what is wrong and has also supported them in changing mindsets of those who believe in harmful social norms.



Photo credit: Aarati Sharma/Oxfam in Nepal



# TRANSFORMATION FROM VULNERABLE TO A CONFIDENT WOMAN

**M**anakamana, 45, a single mother of three, was traumatised and depressed as she had no financial support to take care of her three children. A resident of Raptisonari rural municipality in Banke, she works hard to take care of her two daughters and one son. She was married at the age of 15 to a young man who was barely capable of starting a family life with her. The man whom she was married to, used to earn very little which he spent in alcohol and gambling. The sole responsibility of household was on the shoulders of Manakamana.

Sympathizing on her condition, a community school called Bhuwa Bhawani Secondary

School, appointed her husband as an office assistant. Unfortunately, he died of jaundice right after joining the school job.

Mankamana was a regular participant of Community Discussion Centres where women from the community could initiate discussion on social issues, ill practices, social injustice and possible solutions to overcome them. She represented poor and marginalised group. CDC as a platform of learning focussed in two aspect; education and life skills. Oxfam in Nepal through its Creating Spaces (CS) project has been applying the approach of CDC for effective community mobilisation and transformative leadership of women and girls.



Photo credit: Aarati Sharma/Oxfam in Nepal

She was a very active member of Laligurans CDC. However, after her husband's death, she struggled a lot to take care of herself and her children. Her situation got a little bit better when the school offered her elder daughter, aged 21, with the job that her husband was appointed to. In CDC, after participating in 'Leaking Pot' (PRA tool) analysis, she got ideas on balancing her family's income and expenditure. Manakamana and her daughter then started saving income and ran a small vendor of mineral water and mouth freshener in her community.

"Registering our Laligurans CDC as the agriculture group in the District Agriculture Office benefitted me with seeds of mushroom which is now contributing my family as the additional financial resource," said Manakamana, who now feels financially stable. Nowadays, CDCs are formally identified group that operates through District Agriculture Office which allows CDC members to get seeds free of cost and to get training opportunities if needed.

Meanwhile, she got an opportunity to participate in a Start and Invest Your Business (SIYB) training provided by CS project which

**"CDC is not just a CDC for me, it has changed my life and made me confident, all financially, morally and emotionally."**

focusses on entrepreneurship and business development. Now, she is confident to further improve her financial condition and could provide better education for her children. Though her elder daughter is married now, Manakamana still feels confident due to the moral support received from her CDC friends. After the SIYB training, she is getting seed money of NPR 5,000 from SAC. She wants to invest it in her small business and wants to make it bigger by adding other products.

"CDC is not just a CDC for me, it has changed my life and made me confident, financially, morally and emotionally. I will always respect my CDC friends for always supporting me," says Manakamana, happily.



Photo credit: Aarati Sharma/Oxfam in Nepal



# BRINGING WATER TO THE COMMUNITY – DETERMINATION AND SUCCESS

**B**ahadure Women Empowerment Centre formed at Parashuram Municipality of Dadeldhura district has played a lead role in solving the main problem that is scarcity of drinking water at Ghatteplot village. Ghatteplot village lies in between Rangun and Mahakali rivers. Ironically, the communities living in the river basin struggled to have access to safe drinking water. Formation of the group has led to solving many issues and this has been by far an important concern from the community people. They were facing the problem of water since many years, compelling them to drink water from Rangun river, an open source of water in Dadeldhura.

Thirty members of the Women Empowerment Center (WEC) identified various issues and dealt with high priority in their regular WEC meetings. This issue of water was discussed many times as it concerned the survival and health of people. Drinking water directly from Rangun river had high chances of transferring communicable diseases.

The women themselves discussed about deep-water boring which was considered less expensive and manageable by the community. As such, they decided to lobby with the local government at ward office for the budget allocation. Meanwhile, they also requested



Photo credit: Kamal Rawal/RUWDUC



Rural Women's Development and Unity Centre (RUWDUC), local partner organization for Oxfam in Nepal who are supporting to implementing the Transboundary Rivers of South Asia (TROSA) project at Dadeldhura, for necessary management of the meeting. During the lobby meeting at ward office, the members of WEC brought to the ward chairperson's attention that the unsafe drinking water has unhealthy consequences and it must be resolved. In response, he promised to request the municipality office for solving the problem.

Women Empowerment Centre formed through TROSA project carried the main objective of increased participation and influencing by women in trans-boundary water governance, policies and processes. "After my marriage I came to this village 12 years ago. I have seen people drinking dirty water directly from Rangun as there is no other option. Many delivered

**"The determination has amplified women's profile and influence in dialogues and decision-making on water management and water infrastructures."**

speeches focusing on addressing the drinking water problems and expressed commitments to provide clean drinking water to us, but to no avail yet. The leaders changed but our problem remained the same," said Khageswori Hamal, a Vice Chairperson of Bahadure Women Empowerment Centre. There was four WEC running in Dadeldhura and each is working to



Photo credit: Kamal Rawal/RUWDUC



identify and solve key issues concerning their lives and communities.

The members of Bahadure WEC did not stop their advocacy campaign as they were the ones who were facing problems related to drinking water. They planned to directly lobby with the Parshuram Municipality and submitted a demand letter to the Mayor of Parshuram in the presence of the Deputy Mayor and the members of the municipality. After the regular coordination and follow up, the municipality allocated three lakhs twenty-five thousand Nepali rupees for deep-water boring. Apparently, the committee was formed, budget was allocated, proper study was carried out and the deep-water boring was done.

Women are very happy seeing the clean drinking water coming out from the land now. Their time has been saved and they can directly have access to safe water. They are now able to give

time in income generation activity and other works. Most importantly, they do not have to face the problem of communicable diseases any longer.

Achieving this with their own willpower, they decided to further request ward office and Agriculture Section at Parshuram Municipality to provide electricity at convenient rates which is four times cheaper than normal electricity price. As a result, they have been able to use the water boring in low price. Now, the Bahadure WEC meetings have decided to collect fund and lobby with the local government for the sustainability of deep-water boring. The fund can be used for maintenance and distribution of water lines at Ghatteplot. This successful lobbying and advocacy have set an example for other communities as well. Their determination has amplified women's profile and influence in dialogues and decision-making on water management and water infrastructures.



Photo credit: Kamal Rawal/RUWDUC

# BRINGING WATER HOME

I feel very proud to have contributed in solving one of the main issues of our village – safe access to water,” says Kalpana, 41, a resident and Village Maintenance Worker (VMW) at Chyangli, Dhading. Kalpana, a mother of three, has been an active community member who is always hands-on and ready to provide support whenever needed.

Earlier, communities in Chyangli had been deprived of proper water supply for many years. People, especially women, had to walk an hour to fetch one bucket of water for their daily survival. “This has been the situation as far as I can remember,” says Kalpana. Their daily routine would revolve around when and how to fetch water easily through nearest water stream.

After the introduction of the Purnima project by Oxfam in Dhading, community people were happy, knowing that they will soon have access

to water. They were also eager to contribute and support in different ways possible in constructing the supply system. Many took part in the village maintenance training provided by Purnima project. Kalpana, a member of mother’s group also took part in the training and came out as a village maintenance worker. As an only female in the team of four, Kalpana has dedicatedly contributed to construct 115 water taps through Chyangli Water Supply System project. Thanks to the Purnima project, people are getting direct access to water at their homes and no longer have to walk hours to fetch water for their daily needs.

A Water Users Committee (WUC) has been formed, and Kalpana, as a village maintenance worker, handles the smooth supply of water at household level. The committee played key role in coordinating the construction of water infrastructure including taps while also



Photo credit: Sofila Vaidya/Oxfam in Nepal





Photo credit: Sofila Vaidya/Oxfam in Nepal

introducing “One Home, One Toilet and One Home, One Drying Rack” awareness campaign in their community. After the supply of water, to minimize the risk of unhealthy water consumption, regular monitoring and inspection of the water is done by the committee members regularly. They use chlorine for water purification, make sure the sedimentation tank is executing well, and oversee water infrastructures and pipelines are protected well, among others.

Through the project, around 24 water supply systems have been built in Dhading, directly benefiting 16,945 community people. In Chyangli alone, 115 water taps in each household plus one school and one community building are providing safe and direct access to water. Three water tanks consisting of 50,000 liters of water have been built. These are directly connected to the household taps.

Construction of water systems are managed by water users committee and technical support is provided by Oxfam and its partners. After the approval of design and estimate of the water supply system, MoU is done between water users committee, local government and Oxfam’s partners. Agreement with water users committee is complete between water users

committee and Oxfam partners with clear role and responsibilities. Non-local materials are purchased through the local partners and fund is transferred to WUC for other work such as procurement of local materials and for other skills. Certain construction activities such as excavation of pipeline, collection of local materials is ensured through the community contribution.

Having water taps at their compounds has saved time and energy, encouraging them to utilize their time in other productive activities. Majority of households have connected the waste water to their kitchen garden. And, they can contribute more time in farming and other household chores, especially utilizing time with their children. Kalpana’s husband has also been very supportive towards her. He supports her in household chores.

**“I feel very proud to have contributed in solving one of the main issues of our village – safe access to water.”**



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