PLAN INTERNATIONAL

Until we are all equal

The Stories of Change
परिवर्तनका कथाहरु

About the Publication

This document presents a compilation of human interest stories showcasing the initiatives and impacts of Plan International Nepal's Girls Get Equal: Preventing Child, Early, and Forced Marriage project, implemented from 2020 to 2024.

The publication features observational narratives and interviews with key stakeholders and project participants. The project's primary goal is to reduce the prevalence of Child, Early, and Forced Marriages (CEFM) in Bardiya, Kalikot, and Jumla districts of Nepal. It employs a holistic approach to empower adolescent girls and boys to safeguard themselves and make informed decisions about their futures. This is achieved through targeted efforts in education, economic empowerment, life skills development, and improved understanding of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR).

In addition, the project supports families with daughters at high risk of CEFM by enhancing their income-generating capacities, thereby enabling them to avoid early marriages. It also tackles the underlying causes of CEFM by mobilising communities to embrace values that prioritise girls and encourage delayed marriages for both girls and boys.

The project has further advocated for strengthening and implementing laws and policies related to child protection. To date, the programme has benefitted over 34,822 children, adolescents, and youth, along with 112 schools and 88 communities. Inclusivity has remained central, with disability being systematically mainstreamed throughout the project's interventions.

All interviews with project participants and stakeholders were conducted in safe spaces, with full consent obtained. For minors, including students and Champions of Change, written consent was secured beforehand, and the interviews were conducted under the supervision of the project team and partner organisations.

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प्रकाशन बारे

यो दस्तावेजमा प्लान इन्टरनेसनल नेपालले २०२० देखि २०२४ सम्म कार्यान्वयन गरेको “गर्ल्स गेट इक्वल: बाल विवाह, छिटो विवाह र जबरजस्ती विवाह रोकथाम परियोजना” अन्तर्गत भएका पहलहरू र त्यसको प्रभावहरू समेटिएको कथा संग्रह प्रस्तुत गरिएको छ । यस प्रकाशनमा मुख्य रूपमा परियोजनाका सहभागीहरू र सरोकारवालासँग गरिएको अन्तर्वार्ता र अवलोकनात्मक विवरणहरू समावेश गरिएको छ । यो परियोजनाको प्राथमिक लक्ष्य बर्दिया, कालिकोट र जुम्ला जिल्लामा बाल विवाह, छिटो विवाह र जबरजस्ती विवाहका घटनाहरू न्यूनिकरण गर्नु हो ।

परियोजनाले किशोरकिशोरीहरूलाई आत्मसुरक्षाको सबालमा सक्षम बनाउँदै उनीहरूको सुखद भविष्यका लागि उचित निर्णय लिन सघाउन एकिकृत अवधारणा अख्तियार गरेको छ । यसका लागि शिक्षा, आर्थिक सशक्तिकरण, जीवनोपयोगी कौशल विकास र यौन तथा प्रजनन स्वास्थ्य अधिकारको विषयमा समुचित ज्ञान प्रवाह जस्ता रचनात्माक प्रयासहरुमार्फत उल्लेखित उदेश्य हाँसिल भएका छन् ।

यसका साथै, परियोजनाले बाल विवाहको उच्च जोखिममा रहेका किशोरीका परिवारको आयआर्जन क्षमता बढाउँदै उनीहरुलाइ बालविवाह हुनबाट जोगाउन सघाएको छ । परियोजनाले समुदायमा बाल विवाह, छिटो विवाह र जबरजस्ती विवाह हुनुका विविध कारणहरु पहिचान गरि त्यसको समाधानका लागि समुदायलाइ नै परिचालन गरि किशोरीलाइ प्राथमिकता दिने मूल्य मान्यतालाइ आँगाल्न समुदायलाइ प्रोत्साहन गर्दै उमेर पुगेपछि मात्रै विवाह गर्ने अभ्यास बसाल्न उल्लेख्य योगदान दिएको छ ।

परियोजनाले बाल संरक्षण सम्बन्धी नीति तथा कानुनलाई सुदृढ पार्न आवश्यक बहस तथा पैरवी गर्ने र त्यसको प्रभावकारी कार्यान्वयनमा पनि सघाएको छ । परियोजनाबाट हालसम्म ३४,८२२ भन्दा बढी बालबालिका, किशोरकिशोरी र युवाहरू, ११२ विद्यालय र ८८ समुदाय प्रत्यक्ष रुपमा लाभान्वित बनेका छन् । समावेशीकरणको मुद्धालाइ प्रमुख केन्द्रमा राखेर परियोजनाका विविध गतिविधिमार्फत अपाङ्गताको सवाललाई मूलप्रवाहीकरण गरिएको छ ।

परियोजनाका सहभागीहरू र सरोकारवालासँग गरिएको अन्तर्वार्ता पूर्व सहमति लिइ सुरक्षित स्थानमा सम्पन्न गरिएको हो । विद्यार्थीहरू र च्याम्पियन्स अफ चेन्ज सहित नाबालिगहरूको हकमा लिखित सहमति पहिले नै सुनिश्चित गरिएको र अन्तर्वार्ता परियोजना टोली तथा साझेदार संस्थाहरूको निगरानीमा सङ्कलन गरिएका हुन् ।

सर्वाधिकार:

© २०२४ ।
सबै सामग्री र तस्बिरहरू प्लान इन्टरनेसनल नेपालको एकल स्वामित्व हुन् र लिखित अनुमति बिना पुन:उत्पादन वा प्रकाशन गर्न पाइने छैन ।

Bali: A journey of courage and resilience

At a very young age, Bali from Bardiya became a bonded labourer (Kamlari) in her landlord's household. She does not recall her exact age at the time, but she remembers being in grade one at school, likely around six or seven years of age. In those early years, when she should have been enjoying her childhood in her mother's care, Bali was burdened with the heavy responsibility of serving her landlord. In exchange for Bali's labour, the landlord provided her family with a small piece of land to grow crops. Thus, from an early age, Bali became the lifeline of her family's survival.

The memories of those difficult nights still linger in Bali's mind. During that time, she missed her mother deeply. Yet, no matter how hard it was, she couldn't leave the landlord's house, as doing so would mean hunger and hardship for her family. Bali endured these struggles for almost seven years as a Kamlari.

Her challenges, however, did not end there. At just 13 years old, Bali was married. A few years later, she gave birth to a daughter, which only increased her responsibilities.

Now aged 31, Bali works as a tipper truck driver. Her daily routine involves transporting construction materials such as stones, gravel, and sand to locations in Nepalgunj, Kailali, and Bardiya. She learned about a driving training programme organised by Plan International Nepal and its partners under Girls Get Equal: Preventing Child, Early and Forced Marriage project, which aimed to address issues like child, early, and forced marriage. Bali completed a 45-day training course and successfully obtained her driving license. She initially drove smaller vehicles before progressing to tipper trucks.

Today, Bali is known as the *"Lady Tipper Driver"* in Bardiya and surrounding areas. She earns a monthly salary of NPR. 7,000, along with trip allowances ranging from NPR. 200 to 500, depending on the distance travelled. Since she began driving, her life has improved significantly. She can now provide for her family comfortably and no longer relies on her husband, who previously earned a modest income reading electricity meters. Bali takes great pride in her financial independence and the stability it has brought to her family.

Bali has a dream for her only daughter, who is currently studying electrical engineering. She hopes to see her daughter complete her education and secure a government job, becoming both independent and successful.

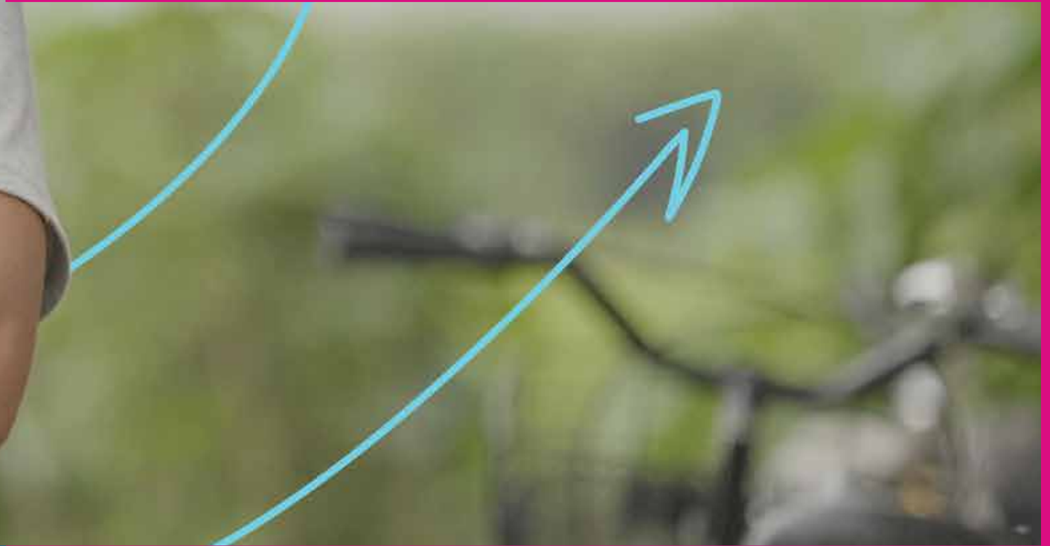
Bali's courage and determination have inspired many women in her community. Several have expressed a desire to follow in her footsteps and seek her support. Bali, in turn, hopes to empower other women in her community, encouraging them to take up similar skills and trades. If possible, she dreams of inspiring others to become courageous tipper drivers like herself.

> *It's not that women are incapable of doing what men can. With courage, anything is possible. Society is no longer the way it used to be; so much has changed for the better.*
>
> *- Bali*

हिम्मतवाली बाली

सानै उमेरमा जमिन्दारको घरमा कम्लरी बसेकी बर्दियाकी बालीलाई त्यसबेला आफु ठ्याक्कै कति उमेरको थिएँ भन्ने समेत सम्झना छैन । यति सम्झना छ, त्यसबेला उनी १ कक्षामा पढ्थिन् । उमेर त्यस्तै ६/७ वर्षको हुँदो हो भन्छिन् उनी । आमाको काखमा खेल्ने र रमाउने उमेरमा उनले जमिन्दारको सेवा गर्नुपर्ने गह्रुंगो जिम्मेवारी बहन गरिन् । बाली जमिन्दारको घरमा कम्लरी बसेपछि जमिन्दारले उनको परिवारलाई अन्न उब्जाउने थोरै जमिन उपलब्ध गराएको थियो । यस हिसाबले बाली आफ्नो परिवारको भोको पेट भर्ने आधार बनेकी थिईन्, कलिलै उमेरमा ।

कम्लरी बस्दा बिताएका कष्टपुर्ण रातहरु बालीलाई आज पनि झल्झली सम्झना आउँछ । त्यसबेला उनी सबैभन्दा बढि आमालाई सम्झिन्थिन् । तर जति कष्टप्रद भएपनि उनले जमिन्दारको घर छाड्न सक्दिनथिईन् । किनकी उनले कम्लरी बस्न छाडे उनको परिवारको भोको दैनिकी सुरु हुन्थ्यो । यसरी बाली करिब ७ वर्ष कम्लरी बसिन् । तर यतिमै बालीको संघर्ष र दुःखका दिनहरु रोकिदैनन् । १३ वर्षको कलिलो उमेरमै विवाह भयो । त्यसको केही वर्षमै छोरी जन्मिईन् । जिम्मेवारीको भारी झनै बढ्दै गयो ।



अहिले बाली ३१ वर्षकी भईन् । पेशा चाहीँ ट्रिपर ड्राइभर । कहिले नेपालगञ्ज, कहिले कैलाली त कहिले बर्दियाकै विभिन्न स्थानमा ढुंगा, गिट्टी, ग्राभलजस्ता निर्माण सामग्री ढुवानी गर्ने काममा उनको दैनिकी बितिरहेको छ । प्लान इन्टरनेसनल नेपाल र विभिन्न साझेदार संघसंस्थाहरुको साझेदारीमा कार्यान्वयन भएका बालविवाह, छिटो विवाह र जवर्जस्ती विवाह रोकथाम परियोजनाको पहलमा ड्राइभिङ तालिमको सूचना पाएपछि उनले ४५ दिनको तालिम पूरा गरिन् र सवारीचालक अनुमतिपत्र पनि लिन सफल भईन् ।

सुरुवातमा साना सवारी चलाएकी बालीले छोटो समयमै ट्रिपर चलाउन सुरु गरिन् । बर्दिया र आसपासका जिल्लामा उनी लेडी ट्रिपर ड्राईभर उपनामले परिचित छिन् । मासिक ७ हजार तलब बुझ्ने बालीले प्रत्येक ट्रिपको भत्ता पाउँछिन् । टाढाको यात्रा भए धेरै र नजिकैको यात्रा भए सोही अनुसारको दुई सय देखि पाँच सय रुपैयाँ सम्म भत्ता बुझ्छिन् । यसरी ट्रिपर चलाउन थालेदेखि उनको जीवन खुसी छाएको छ । परिवारको दैनिकी गुजार्न सहज बनेको छ । पहिले सानातिना पैसाका लागि पनि विद्युत प्राधिकरणमा मिटर रिडिङको काम गर्ने श्रीमान् माथि निर्भर बन्दै आएकी उनी अहिले आर्थिक रुपले आत्मनिर्भर बनेपछि आफैँमा गर्व महसुस गर्छिन् ।

उनको एउटा सपना छ, एक्ली छोरी जो अहिले ईलेक्ट्रिकल ईन्जिनियरिङ अध्ययनरत छिन्, उनलाई राम्रोसँग पढाउने र आत्मनिर्भर बनाउने । छोरीले पढाई पुरा गरेपछि सरकारी जागिरे भएको हेर्ने ईच्छा छ उनको ।

बालीको साहस र मेहनत उनको समुदायका थुप्रै महिलाहरुका लागि उत्प्रेरणा हो । धेरै महिलाहरुले बाली जस्तै कर्मशील बन्ने ईच्छा व्यक्त गर्छन् । त्यसका लागि सघाउन बालीलाई आग्रह गर्छन् । बालीको पनि चाहना छ, समुदायका अरु महिलाहरुले पनि आफुले जस्तै ईलम गरुन्, सम्भव भएसम्म आफु जस्तै हिम्मतवाली ट्रिपर ड्राइभर ।

> पुरुषले गर्ने काम महिलाले गर्नै नसक्ने भन्ने त होईन नि । हिम्मत चाहिँन्छ, जे पनि गर्न सकिन्छ । अब समाज पहिले जस्तो छैन, धेरै परिवर्तन भइसक्यो ।
>
> - बाली

Ending child marriage is a noble deed

Mr. Dharmendra, the founder and president of the Rukmani Radhakrishna Temple, is an honorable religious figure who has become an inspiration to his community. With a deep interest in astrology, Mr. Sharma has gained trust and respect in his community by running religious programmes across various media platforms. Through his influential role, he has made significant contributions to the fight against social harmful practices like child marriage.

After engaging in Plan International Nepal's Girls Get Equal: Preventing Child, Early and Forced Marriage project, Mr. Dharmendra began to realise the important role religious leaders could play in addressing child marriage. He explained, *"The training and discussions organised by Plan International Nepal made me aware, not only of the legal aspects but also of the social and psychological impacts of child marriage. It changed my perspective, allowing me to take an active role in preventing it."*

One of his most important contributions has been using his position as a religious leader to positively influence the practice of checking horoscopes before arranging child marriages. He would discourage families from proceeding with such marriages by citing unfavourable astrological signs and instead advise them to wait until the child reached the appropriate age for marriage. His efforts have helped prevent dozens of child marriages. *"Now, before checking the horoscope, I check the citizenship. If the person is underage, I immediately take action to stop the marriage. If my small efforts can save a child's life, then it feels like a noble deed"*, he says.

Under the support of Plan International Nepal, Mr. Sharma not only gained a deeper legal and ethical understanding of child marriage, but he also developed the ability to spread this message through religious programmes and prayers. At the end of his religious services, he encourages his followers to take a stand against child marriage. He firmly believes that this initiative has helped spread a positive message throughout the community.

Mr. Dharmendra has now turned his religious duties into a tool for social change. The influence of Plan International Nepal's projects has made him an important leader in the fight against harmful traditions like child marriage. This has only strengthened the powerful role that religious figures like Dharmendra can play in advocating for children's rights.

> *At first, I didn't give much thought to serious issues like child marriage. But later, the child rights initiatives by Plan International Nepal and other local organisations opened my eyes and made me more aware. These projects not only helped me understand the gravity of child marriage but also motivated me to take concrete action against it.*
>
> *- Mr. Dharmendra*

बालविवाह रोक्नु भनेको पुण्य कमाउनु हो

धर्मेन्द्र, रुक्मणी राधाकृष्ण मन्दिरका संस्थापक अध्यक्ष एवं पुजारी । जो धार्मिक आस्थामा आधारित समाजका लागि एक प्रेरणादायी पात्र हुन् । ज्योतिष कर्ममा गहिरो रुचि भएका धर्मेन्द्रले विभिन्न सञ्चार माध्यममा धार्मिक कार्यक्रम सञ्चालन गर्दै समाजमा आफ्नो विश्वसनीयता स्थापित गरेका छन् । यहि भूमिकाबाट बालबिबाह जस्ता कुरिती अन्त्य गर्न उनले महत्वपूर्ण योगदान पुर्याउँदै आएका छन् ।

प्लान इन्टरनेसनल नेपालको परियोजनामा सहभागी भएपछि धर्मेन्द्रले बालबिबाह रोकथामका लागि धार्मिक जगतको प्रभावकारी भूमिका बुझ्न थाले । उनी भन्छन्, "प्लान इन्टरनेसनल नेपालको तालिम र छलफलहरूले मलाई कानुनी पक्ष मात्र होइन, यसका सामाजिक र मनोवैज्ञानिक प्रभावहरूबारे पनि सचेत बनायो । यसले मेरो सोचमा परिवर्तन ल्यायो, जसले गर्दा म बालबिबाह रोक्न सक्रिय भूमिका खेल्न सक्षम भएँ ।"

धर्मेन्द्रको मुख्य योगदान भनेको उनीजस्तो धार्मिक अगुवाले बालबिबाह रोक्न चिना हेर्ने प्रक्रियालाई सकारात्मक रूपमा प्रयोग गर्नु हो । कम उमेरका बालबालिकाको विवाहको लागि चिना वा लगन हेराउन आउनेलाई उनले ग्रह राम्रो नभएको बहाना गर्दै पन्छाउने र उमेर पुगेपछि मात्र विवाह गर्न सुझाव दिने गरेका छन् । उनको यो प्रयासले दर्जनौं बालबिबाह रोक्न मद्दत गरेको छ । "अब चिना हेर्नुअघि म नागरिकता हेर्छु । यदि उमेर पुगेको छैन भने तुरुन्तै विवाह रोक्न पहल गर्छु । यो मेरो सानो प्रयासले बालबालिकाको जीवन बच्न सक्छ भने यो त पुण्य सरह हो," उनी भन्छन् ।

प्लान इन्टरनेसनल नेपालको सहयोगले धर्मेन्द्रलाई बालबिबाहबारे कानुनी र नैतिक चेतना मात्र दिएन, बरु धार्मिक कार्यक्रम र पूजा पाठमार्फत समाजमा यो सन्देश पुर्याउने क्षमता पनि दियो । मन्दिरमा आउने श्रद्धालुहरूसँग अन्तिममा उनले बालबिबाह रोक्नका लागि आग्रह गर्ने गरेका छन् । यस पहलले समाजमा सकारात्मक सन्देश फैलाउन सहयोग गरेको उनको विश्वास छ ।

धर्मेन्द्रले अब आफ्नो धार्मिक जिम्मेवारीलाई सामाजिक परिवर्तनका लागि एउटा उपकरण बनाएका छन् । प्लान इन्टरनेसनल नेपालको परियोजनाको प्रभावले उनलाई बालबिबाहजस्ता कुरितीविरुद्धको अभियानमा एक महत्त्वपूर्ण अगुवा बनाएको छ । यसले बालअधिकारको क्षेत्रमा उनीजस्तो धार्मिक अगुवाको प्रभावकारी भूमिकालाई अझ सशक्त बनाएको छ ।

> पहिला बालबिबाह जस्तो गम्भीर विषयमा मैले पनि गहिरो ध्यान दिएको थिइनँ । तर पछि प्लान इन्टरनेसनल नेपाल र अन्य स्थानीय संस्थाहरूले बालअधिकारका क्षेत्रमा सञ्चालन गरेका परियोजनाले मलाई सचेत बनायो, जागरुक बनायो । यसले बालबिबाहको गम्भीरताबारे बुझ्न मात्र होइन, यसको रोकथामका लागि ठोस कदम चाल्न प्रेरित गर्यो ।

> We start by collecting data, then assess the family circumstances of children and offer assistance in various ways. We create an environment for children who have dropped out of school to return to education. Alongside this, we work to raise awareness among local governments to address and resolve these issues.

Pramisha's promise

From a young age, Pramisha was troubled by the prevalent practice of child marriage in her village. Since she became aware of it, she noticed how this issue was affecting the entire community, and she was determined to make a change. She did everything she could to prevent it, striving to stop child marriages in her community. Now, as the president of the Rajapur Youth Women's Network in Bardiya, Pramisha plays an active role in social work. She has risen through the ranks of the network, first as co-secretary, then as secretary, and now as president.

Since becoming president last year, Pramisha's network has worked on issues such as child marriage, substance abuse, domestic violence, school dropouts, and the protection of children with disabilities. They run awareness campaigns, including street plays, rallies, and posting pamphlets to educate the community.

A key programme of the network is the *"Weekly Meeting on Child Marriage"*, which focuses on raising awareness with adolescents at risk of child marriage, as well as with parents and teachers. These discussions explore the reasons behind child marriage, how to prevent it, and its legal and social consequences.

Rajapur has a large Tharu community, and in this community, there is a respected position known as the ***"Badghar"***, a community leader who facilitates cooperation and support within the village. In their efforts to prevent child marriage, Pramisha and her team have worked closely with Badghars. Bringing together local authorities, Badghars, volunteers, and intellectuals has significantly contributed to reducing child marriages. Thanks to the ongoing efforts, no forced child marriages have taken place. However, there are still cases of young couples eloping, and when such marriages are discovered, the police and Badghars intervene to counsel the families and ensure the young couple is returned to their homes. Over the past two years, Pramisha and her network have helped prevent more than 15 child marriages.

Child marriage continues to be a significant challenge in Rajapur. In 2021, 48% of marriages were child marriages. This number dropped to 32% in 2022 and 2023. In Ward No. 3, 33% of marriages were child marriages in 2022, but the figure rose again to 38% in 2023. Pramisha remarks, *"When we focused our efforts on the areas with the highest rates of child marriage, we noticed an increase in other areas. Now, we will focus equally across all areas"*.

Having seen the suffering caused by child marriage in her community, Pramisha is committed to making her community free of this harmful practice. She is currently involved in a child marriage prevention campaign, run in partnership with Plan International Nepal and local organisations. Pramisha has pledged to continue her work, even after the project ends, remaining dedicated to addressing child marriage and other social issues.

प्रमिशाको प्रतिज्ञा

गाउँमा सानै उमेरमा बिहाह गर्ने चलनदेखि दिक्दार थिईन्, प्रमिशा थारु । उनले आफूले थाहा पाउँदादेखि नै उमेर नपुगी बिबाह गर्ने समस्याले सिंगो गाउँलाई नै प्रताडित बनाइरहेको देख्दै आइन् र, सम्भव भएसम्म यसलाई रोकथाम गर्ने प्रयत्न गरिन् । यसरी सामाजिक कार्यमा क्रियाशिल रहेकी उनी अहिले बर्दियास्थित राजापुर युवा महिला संजालकी अध्यक्षको रुपमा कार्यरत छिन् । उनी सञ्जालमा सहसचिव, सचिव हुँदै अध्यक्ष भएकी हुन् ।

गतवर्ष मंसीरदेखि अध्यक्ष रहेको प्रमिशाको सञ्जालले बालविवाह, लागु औषध, महिला हिंसा, बीचमा पढाई छोडेका (ड्रपआउट), अपाङ्गता बालबालिकाको सुरक्षाको लागि काम गर्दै आएको छ । जनचेतनामूलक सडक नाटक, र्‍याली, पर्चा पम्प्लेट टाँस्ने गतिविधि गर्छ ।

सञ्जालले गर्ने प्रभावकारी कार्यक्रममा "साताको भेटमा बालविवाहको कुरा" भन्ने रहेको छ । बालविवाहको जोखिममा रहेका किशोरी, अभिभावक र शिक्षकलाई राखेर अन्तरक्रिया गरिन्छ । अन्तरक्रियामा बालविवाह हुनुको कारण र रोकथामका उपायको चर्चा गरिन्छ । बालविवाहले हुने असर र कानुनी सजायका बारेमा पनि बेलिबिस्तार लगाइन्छ ।

राजापुरमा थारु समुदायको बाक्लो बसोबास रहेको छ । थारु समुदायमा "बडघर" भन्ने सम्मानित पद हुन्छ । बडघरकै अगुवाईमा गाउँमा सहयोग आदान प्रदान हुन्छन् । बालविवाह रोकथाममा बडघरलाई सँगै लिएर हिँडिएको छ । स्थानीय निकाय, बडघर, स्वयंसेविका, बुद्धिजीवी समेटेर जादा बालविवाह रोकथाममा ठूलो सघाउ पुगेको प्रमिशाको भनाई छ । बालविवाहविरुद्धको निरन्तरको कार्यक्रमले गर्दा मागेर बालविवाह भएका छैनन् । केटा र केटीको माया प्रेम बसेर भागी विवाह भइरहेका छन् । भागेर हुने बालविवाहलाई रोक्न सबै लागि परेका छन् । भागेर बालविवाह गरेको थाहा पाउने वित्तिकै प्रहरी, बडघर त्यो घरमा पुगेर सम्झाउँछन् । केटा र केटीलाई आ-आफ्नो घरमा पठाउँछन् । पछिल्लो दुई वर्षमा १५ वटा बढी बालविवाह रोकेको प्रमिशाको भनाई छ ।

राजापुरमा बालविवाह ठूलो समस्याको रुपमा रहेको छ । सन् २०२१ मा ४८ प्रतिशत बालविवाह थियो । सन् २०२२ र २०२३ मा ३२ प्रतिशतमा झरेको छ । वडा नं. ३ मा सन् २०२२ मा ३३ प्रतिशत बालविवाह थियो । सन् २०२३ मा ३८ प्रतिशत रहेको छ । सन् २०२२ मा भन्दा २०२३ मा अझ बढी देखिएको छ । प्रमिशा भन्छिन्, "बालविवाह भएका टोलहरुमा हामीले बढी फोकस गरेर कार्यक्रम गरिरहँदा अर्को टोलमा बालविवाह बढेको देखियो । अब सबैतिर उत्तिकै फोकस गरेर कार्यक्रम गर्छौं ।"

बालविवाहका कारण थुप्रै महिला दिदीबहिनीहरुको जीवन कष्टप्रद बनेको देखेकी उनी आफ्नो समुदायलाई बालविवाह मुक्त समुदाय बनाउने सन्दर्भमा प्रतिवद्ध छिन् । अहिले प्लान इन्टरनेसनल नेपाल र स्थानीय संघसँस्थाको साझेदारीमा कार्यान्वयन भएको बालविवाह न्युनिकरण अभियानमा जोडिएकी उनले परियोजनाको समाप्ती पश्चात पनि निरन्तर बालविवाह र अरु विविध सामाजिक समस्याहरुका विरुद्ध लागिरहने प्रतिज्ञा लिएकी छिन् ।

> यसरी काम गर्न सुरुमा हामी तथ्यांक संकलनको काम गर्छौं । त्यसपछि बालबालिकाको परिवारिक अवस्था बुझेर उहाँहरुलाई विभिन्न हिसाबले सहयोग गर्ने, विद्यालय बाहिर रहेका बालबालिकालाई विद्यालय जाने वातावरण तय गरिदिने काममा केन्द्रित हुन्छौं । यसका साथै सम्बन्धित स्थानीय सरकार वा निकायलाई ध्यानाकर्षण गराएर समाजमा रहेका समस्याहरु समाधानको लागि पैरवी गर्ने कार्य गर्छौं ।

Surya Kumari's dream

Surya Kumari from Bardiya had a childhood filled with struggles. Married at a young age, she faced numerous challenges in her life. Now, as a mother of four—two sons and two daughters—she has not let the hardships of life weaken her resolve. Determined to provide her children with a good education and sustain her family, she started a vegetable farming business.

According to Surya Kumari, she began her vegetable farming with a grant from various cooperative organisations. At first, it was not an easy task. With a grant of NPR. 20,000 she managed to buy materials such as tanks and tunnels to start her farming. When she made her first sale, earning NPR. 3,000 from vegetables, she felt immense joy, as it was the first time she had earned money from her farming. This success gave her more motivation to continue.

Now, her vegetable farming is flourishing. From each harvest, she earns around NPR. 10,000 which she uses to pay for her children's school fees, buy their stationery, and cover other daily expenses. Her husband, who suffers from diabetes, also relies on this income for his treatment.

Her journey, however, has not been without its challenges. In the beginning, financial difficulties caused her many problems. Yet, through hard work and self-confidence, she was able to make her farming business successful. If more land were available to her, she is eager to expand her farming. Earning money through her own efforts to support her family brings her great pride.

Surya Kumari's dream is to provide a bright future for her children. She says, *"I faced many difficulties after marrying at such a young age."* This experience has strengthened her determination not to let her children face the same struggles. She wants them to finish their education and only consider marriage when they are financially independent.

Her story is an inspiration to many women. Despite facing financial hardship and social customs, she chose to become self-reliant for the sake of her family. Her life proves that hard work and determination can bring about significant change.

Though Surya Kumari's life remains filled with challenges, she is happy. Her dream of providing a good education and a bright future for her children is becoming a reality. Her struggle and success have become an example to her community.

> "*This vegetable farming has been a great relief in managing our household.*
>
> *- Surya Kumari*"

सुर्य कुमारीको सपना

बर्दियाकी सुर्य कुमारीको बाल्यकाल संघर्षले भरिएको थियो । सानै उमेरमा विवाह बन्धनमा बाँधिएकी उनले आफ्नो जीवनमा धेरै चुनौतीहरूको सामना गरिन् । अहिले उनी चार सन्तानकी आमा हुन् । दुई छोरा र दुई छोरी उनकै साथमा छन् । तर, जीवनका कठिनाइले उनको अठोटलाई कमजोर बनाएको छैन । आफ्ना छोराछोरीलाई राम्रो शिक्षा दिन र परिवारको गुजारा चलाउन उनले व्यवसायिक तरकारी खेती सुरु गरेकी छन् ।

सुर्य कुमारीका अनुसार हाल गरिरहेको तरकारी खेती सुरु गर्न विभिन्न सहकारी संस्थाबाट अनुदान लिईएको थियो । सुरुमा यो काम सजिलो थिएन । २० हजार रुपैयाँ सहयोगमा ट्यांकी, टनेललगायतका सामग्री जुटाएर उनले खेती सुरु गरिन् । पहिलोपटक ३ हजार रुपैयाँ बराबरको तरकारी बिक्री गर्दा उनले असीम खुसी अनुभव गरिन् । जबकी यसअघि कहिल्यै पनि तरकारी खेतीबाट आफ्ना हातमा पैसा परेको थिएन । यस उपलब्धिले उनलाई थप उत्साह दियो ।

अहिले उनको तरकारी खेती राम्रोसँग फस्टाएको छ । एकपटकको उत्पादनबाट उनले करिब १० हजार रुपैयाँ कमाउने गर्छिन् । यो आम्दानीबाट उनी छोराछोरीको स्कुलको शुल्क तिर्ने, कापीकलम किन्नेसहित अन्य दैनिक खर्च पूरा गर्छिन् । उनका श्रीमान् सुगरका बिरामी भएकाले औषधोपचारको लागि पनि यही आम्दानी प्रयोग हुन्छ ।

सुर्य कुमारीको यो यात्रा सजिलो भने थिएन । संघर्षको सुरुवातमा उनलाई आर्थिक कठिनाइले धेरै समस्या पारे । तर, मेहनत र आत्मविश्वासका कारण उनले आफ्नो तरकारी खेतीलाई सफल बनाउन सकिन् । अब उनलाई थप जग्गा उपलब्ध भएमा त्यहाँ पनि तरकारी खेती विस्तार गर्ने उत्साह छ । यसरी आफैंले कमाएको पैसाले परिवार चलाउँदा उनलाई गर्व महसुस हुन्छ ।

सुर्य कुमारीको सपना भनेको आफ्ना छोराछोरीको उज्ज्वल भविष्य निर्माण गर्नु हो । "सानै उमेरमा विवाह गरेर मैले धेरै समस्या भोगें" उनी भन्छिन् । त्यसैले अब आफ्ना छोराछोरीलाई त्यो समस्यामा नपार्ने उनको अठोट छ । उनी चाहन्छिन् कि उनका छोराछोरीले राम्रोसँग पढाइ पूरा गरून् र आर्थिक रूपमा सक्षम भएपछि मात्र विवाहको बारेमा सोचून् ।

सुर्य कुमारीको संघर्षले उनीजस्ता धेरै महिलालाई प्रेरणा दिन सक्छ । आर्थिक समस्या र सामाजिक कुरितीहरूका बाबजुद पनि उनले आफ्नो परिवारको लागि आत्मनिर्भर बन्ने निर्णय लिइन् । मेहनत र इच्छाशक्तिले जीवनमा धेरै कुरा बदल्न सकिन्छ भन्ने उनको जीवनकथाले पुष्टि गरेको छ ।

अहिले सुर्य कुमारीको जीवन संघर्षमय भए पनि उनी खुसी छन् । छोराछोरीलाई राम्रो शिक्षा र उज्ज्वल भविष्य दिने उनको सपना यथार्थमा परिणत हुँदै छ । र, उनीजस्ता महिलाको संघर्ष र सफलताको कथा सिंगो समाजमा उदाहरणीय बनिरहेको छ ।

> "यो तरकारी खेतीले हाम्रो घर चलाउन ठूलो राहत दिएको छ ।
>
> - सुर्य कुमारी"

Reducing child marriage to 15%: Ward chairperson Bir Bahadur's vision

In Ward No. 9 of Badhaiyatal Rural Municipality, Bardiya, the prevalence of child marriage has seen a significant decline over the past two years. From a staggering 46% in 2022, it dropped to 23% in 2023. Despite these improvements, Ward No. 9 remains one of the most affected areas for child marriage within the municipality. This year, the ward aims to further reduce the prevalence to 15%.

The ward has allocated a budget of NPR. 50,000 to combat child marriage, focusing on awareness-raising activities such as street dramas and brochure distribution. Additionally, child protection committees, child rights committees, and youth networks have been established to support these efforts. The implementation of the Girls Get Equal: Preventing Child, Early and Forced Marriage project has brought meaningful changes in the community.

The ward has adopted unique strategies to prevent child marriage, including withholding timber from community forests for weddings involving underage couples and instructing the Badhghar (traditional community leaders) to avoid communal work at the homes of those facilitating child marriages. These measures have created a form of social exclusion for families engaging in the practice.

Chairperson Bir Bahadur explains that their initial approach involves preventing marriages before they occur. However, if child marriages take place, the ward works with families to send the underage couple back to their respective homes until they reach the legal age for marriage. In the past year alone, seven underage couples were sent back to their families under this arrangement.

Chairperson Bir Bahadur remains hopeful that the collaborative efforts between the ward, community, and supporting organizations will achieve the ambitious goal of reducing child marriage to 15% this year.

> *Organizations have utilized almost 50% of the ward's budget for child marriage prevention. This has made it easier for us to work effectively.*
>
> *- Ward chairperson Bir Bahadur*

यो वर्ष बालविवाह १५ प्रतिशतमा झार्छौं - वडाध्यक्ष वीरबहादुर थारु

बर्दिया जिल्लाको बढैयाताल गाउँपालिका वडा नं. ९ मा सन् २०२२ मा ४६ प्रतिशत बालविवाह थियो । सन् २०२३ मा २३ प्रतिशतमा झर्‍यो । गाउँपालिकामै वडा नं. ९ धेरै बालविवाह हुने वडामा पर्दछ । यो वर्ष १५ प्रतिशतमा झार्ने गरी वडाले काम गरिरहेको छ ।

बालविवाह रोकथामका लागि वडाले ५० हजार बजेट छुट्याएको छ । त्यो बजेटबाट बालविवाह विरुद्ध सडक नाटक, ब्रोसर वितरणजस्ता जनचेतनामूलक गतिविधि हुँदै आएको छ । वडामा बाल संरक्षण समिति, बाल अधिकार समिति, युवा सञ्जाल गठन गरिएको छ । यहाँ बालविवाह, छिटो विवाह र जबरजस्ती विवाह रोकथाम परियोजना कार्यान्वयनमा आएपछि अर्थपूर्ण परिवर्तन देखिएको हो ।

बालविवाह रोकथामका लागि वडाले अनेक उपाय अवलम्बन गरेको छ । जस्तो, बालविवाह भएको छ भने सामुदायिक वनबाट विवाहमा काठ दाउरा नदिने, बडघरमार्फत बालविवाह गर्नेको घरमा सामुहिक काममा नजाने गरिएको छ । एक हिसाबले भन्ने हो भने बालविवाह गर्ने परिवार सामाजिक बहिष्करणमा पर्ने गरेको छ । वडाध्यक्ष वीरबहादुरले शुरुमा बालविवाह हुन नदिने र भइहालेमा आपसी समझदारीमा उमेर नपुग्दासम्म आ-आफ्नो घरमा पठाउने गरिएको बताउँछन् । पछिल्लो एक वर्षमा मात्रै बालविवाह गरेका सात जोडीलाई आ-आफ्नै घर पठाइएको थियो ।

गरीब र विपन्न परिवारको बसोबास बढी भएकाले यहाँका अभिभावकलाई जिविकोपार्जनका लागि केही सहयोग गर्न सकेमा बालविवाह रोकथाममा टेवा पुग्ने वडाध्यक्ष वीरबहादुरको बुझाई छ । यो विषयलाई सम्बोधन गर्न परियोजनाले सघाइरहेको उहाँको भनाई छ । समुदायमा बालविवाह रोकथामका लागि परियोजनाले काम गरेपछि ठूलो परिवर्तन आएको वडाध्यक्ष वीरबहादुरको अनुभव छ । जनप्रनिधिले वडाको समग्र विकासलाई हेर्नु पर्ने भएकाले यस खालका अभियानमा उल्लेख्य समय दिन नसकेको तर परियोजनाले भने बालविवाह रोकथाममा प्रशंसानिय कार्य गरेकाले आफुहरुलाई पनि सहज भएको वडाध्यक्ष वीरबहादुरको भनाई छ ।

> संघ संस्थाले बालविवाह रोकथामका लागि वडाकै बजेटको ५० प्रतिशत जति खर्च गरिरहेका छन् । यसले हामीलाई काम गर्न सजिलो भएको छ ।
>
> - वडाध्यक्ष वीरबहादुर

A community united:
Combating child marriage through awareness, empowerment, and innovation

In Ward No. 7 of Badhaiyatal Rural Municipality, Bardiya, significant strides have been made in combating child marriage. Every Saturday, the ward conducts separate classes for boys and girls, focusing on the consequences of child marriage and the legal penalties associated with it. These sessions, conducted in two rooms managed by the ward office, also provide counseling on the physical and mental impacts of child marriage.

As a result of these initiatives, adolescents have become increasingly aware that child marriage is unacceptable. The ward has also organized awareness programs such as street dramas and parenting education. Committees and clubs—including a child protection committee, adolescent girls' clubs, child clubs, and youth clubs—are actively involved in conducting activities aimed at reducing child marriage. For example, the adolescent girls' club not only runs door-to-door campaigns against child marriage but also performs traditional Deusi-Bhailo songs during Tihar to spread awareness.

Ward Chairperson Radheshyam proudly states that 95% of the parents in his ward now understand the harmful consequences of child marriage and are committed to avoiding it.

This transformation, however, is not solely the result of the ward's efforts. Girls Get Equal: Preventing Child, Early and Forced Marriage project has played a significant role in bringing about these changes.

To discourage child marriage, the ward has implemented a policy of social exclusion. Families involved in child marriage are denied support from the Badghar (traditional community leader), who plays a pivotal role in organizing communal activities such as fairs, cooperative labor exchanges, and mutual aid. The community also refrains from attending celebratory feasts for child marriages, and firewood from community forests is withheld for such events. In the Tharu community, the lack of support from the Badhghar effectively isolates the household, creating a strong deterrent against child marriage.

In addition to these measures, the ward has introduced an innovative program called the "Daughter's Bank Account." Under this initiative, NPR. 2,500 is deposited into a girl's bank account at birth, which she can access for higher education in the future. The ward believes this program will encourage girls to pursue education continuously, reducing the risk of child marriage by empowering them with better opportunities.

Collaborating with the project has made our efforts much more effective.

-Chairperson Radheshyam

बालविवाह गर्न हुँदैन भनेर समुदायका ९५ प्रतिशत मानिसले बुझेका छन् : वडाध्यक्ष राधेश्याम

बर्दिया जिल्लाको बढैयाताल गाउँपालिका वडा नं. ७ मा प्रत्येक शनिबार किशोर र किशोरी कक्षा सञ्चालन हुन्छ । यसका लागि वडा कार्यालयले दुई वटा कोठा व्यवस्थापन गरेको छ । किशोर र किशोरीलाई छुट्टाछुट्टै कोठामा राखेर बालविवाह गर्दा हुने असर र कानूनी दण्डसजायका बारेमा जानकारी दिइन्छ । बालविवाह गर्दा हुने शारीरिक, मानसिक असरका बारेमा परामर्श दिने गरिन्छ ।

कक्षा सञ्चालनपछि किशोर किशोरीमा बालविवाह गर्नु हुँदैन भन्ने चेतना बढेको छ । योसँगै जनचेतनामूलक सडक नाटक, अभिभावक शिक्षाजस्ता कार्यक्रम सञ्चालन गरिएको छ । यहाँ बाल संरक्षण समिति, किशोरी क्लव, बाल क्लव र युवा क्लव गठन गरिएको छ । सबैले बालविवाह न्युनिकरणमा केन्द्रित कुनै न कुनै गतिविधि सञ्चालन गरिरहेका हुन्छन् । किशोरी क्लवले बालविवाहविरुद्ध घरदैलो कार्यक्रम मात्रै होइन, तिहारमा देउँसीभैलो खेल्ने गरेको छ । वडा कार्यालयले बालविवाह रोकथामका लागि प्रत्येक वर्ष एक लाख रुपैया छुट्याउने गरेको छ । वडाध्यक्ष राधेश्याम आफ्नो वडाका ९५ प्रतिशत अभिभावकले बालविवाह गर्न नहुने कुरा बुझेको बताउँछन् ।

वडामा यत्तिको परिवर्तन आउनुमा वडा कार्यालयको मात्रै योगदान छैन । बालविवाह, छिटो विवाह र जबरजस्ती विवाह रोकथाम परि योजनाको ठूलो साथ र सहयोग रहेको छ । वडाध्यक्षले परियोजना आएपछि समाजमा धेरै परिवर्तन आएको बताए ।

बालविवाह रोक्न सामाजिक बहिष्कारको नीति अपनाइएको छ । बालविवाह गरेकाको भतेर नखाने, बडघरले सहयोग नगर्ने र सामुदायिक वनबाट दाउरा नदिने गरिएको छ । थारु समुदायमा बडघरले सहयोग नगर्दा त्यो घर एक्लो हुने अवस्था हुन्छ । मेला, पर्म, सहयोग, आदान प्रदान सबै बडघरको चाँजोपाँजोमा हुन्छ ।

वडाले अर्को नयाँ काम गरेको छ । त्यो हो, "छोरी बैंक खाता" सञ्चालन । छोरी जन्मिने वित्तिकै उनको नाममा दुई हजार पाँच सय रुपैयाँ राखेर खाता खोलिदिने गरिएको छ । यो पैसा उनले उच्च शिक्षा अध्ययन गर्ने बेलामा निकाल्न पाउँछिन् । यसो गर्दा बालिकाको पढाई निरन्तर हुन्छ भने राम्रो शिक्षा लिएपछि बालविवाहमा फस्दैनन् भन्ने वडा कार्यालयको विश्वास छ ।।

परियोजनासँग मिलेर काम गर्दा प्रभावकारी भएको छ ।

- वडाध्यक्ष राधेश्याम

Breaking taboos: Sushila's efforts to ensure menstrual hygiene at school

In a school of Bardiya, menstruation used to mean missed classes for many students. If they were in school when their period started, they would go home, often losing valuable learning time. The lack of proper menstrual hygiene management posed a significant challenge for girls and their education.

Things have changed now, thanks to the tireless efforts of teacher Sushila. As the focal teacher for a menstrual hygiene management program run by Banke UNESCO Club, Sushila has introduced a transformative approach to tackle this issue. She provides menstrual health counseling and teaches students how to make reusable sanitary pads. These pads, stored at the school, are readily available for any student who needs them. Initially, students hesitated to ask for pads, seeking only Sushila's help. Today, they feel comfortable requesting them from any teacher.

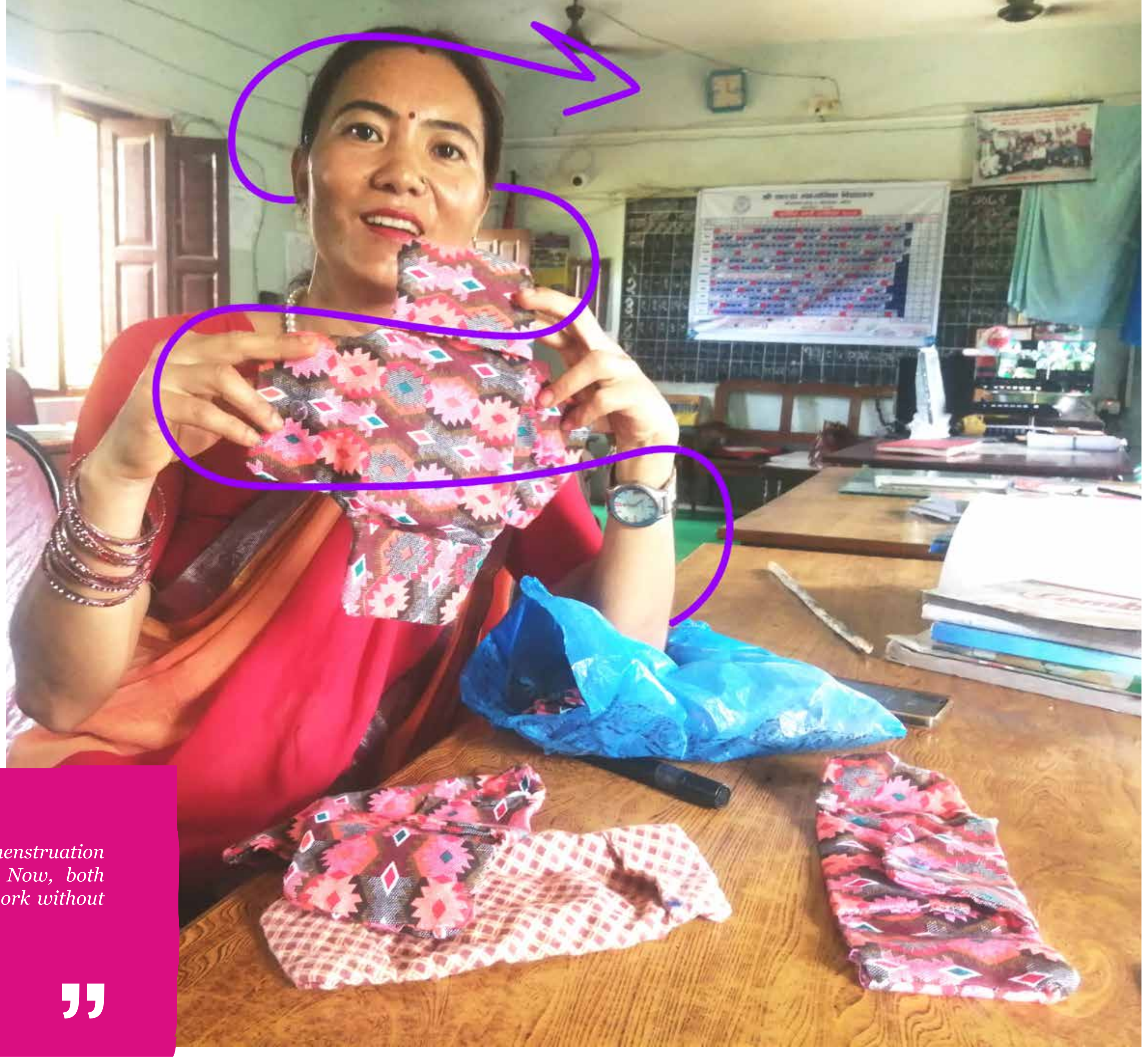
The school has also created a resting room equipped with heating facilities for students experiencing pain or discomfort during menstruation. These measures, combined with Sushila's counseling, have significantly reduced absenteeism among menstruating students.

Sushila's contribution extends beyond her school. She travels to other schools to teach students how to make reusable pads, promoting sustainability and entrepreneurial opportunities. Girls who learn the skill often make pads for personal use or as gifts for friends, fostering a sense of empowerment and independence.

The school has incorporated topics like menstrual hygiene, sexual and reproductive health, and child marriage prevention into extracurricular activities and classroom discussions. Sushila herself takes the initiative to address these issues whenever she has a free period or notices an empty classroom. Over time, this open dialogue has broken down the stigma around these topics. Once shy and embarrassed, students now engage freely and confidently in discussions about their health and rights.

Sushila's training in pad-making and broader sexual education enables her to go beyond the regular syllabus, equipping her students with knowledge and skills that extend far beyond the classroom. Her efforts have not only created a supportive environment for students at her school but have also inspired change in the wider community, proving that small, consistent actions can lead to profound societal transformation.

> *There were times when I struggled during menstruation because of the lack of proper facilities. Now, both teachers and students can focus on their work without any such worries.*
>
> *-Sushila*



स्कूलमा प्याड बनाउन सिकाउने शिक्षिका - सुशीला

बर्दियाको एक विद्यालयमा अधिकांश किशोरी महिनावारी हुँदा स्कूल आउँदैनथे । विद्यालय समयमा महिनावारी भएको खण्डमा उनीहरु घर जान्थे । यसरि महिनावारीको समयमा उनीहरुको पढाईमा प्रत्यक्ष असर परिरहेको थियो । सामान्यत: महिनावारी हुँदा पेट दुख्ने गर्दछ । प्याड व्यवस्थापन अर्को समस्या हुन्थ्यो ।

अहिले यो स्कूलमा महिनावारी हुँदा स्कूल नआउने र स्कूलमा रहँदा महिनावारी भइहालेमा घर जाने क्रम रोकिएको छ । स्कूलमा नै प्याड दिने व्यवस्था गरिएको छ । स्कूलमा महिनावारी हुँदा पेट, टाउको दु:खेमा बस्ने कोठा बनाइएको छ । त्यहाँ "हट"को व्यवस्था गरिएको छ ।

महिनावारी हुने छात्रालाई स्कूलमा परामर्श दिने गरिन्छ । त्यसका लागि शिक्षिका सुशीला खटिन्छिन् । बाँके युनेस्को क्लवले सञ्चालन गरेको महिनावारी स्वच्छता व्यवस्थापन सम्बन्धी कार्यक्रमको फो कलटिचर हुन् सुशीला । उनले विद्यार्थीलाई प्याड बनाउने तालिम दिन्छिन् । धोएर पुन: प्रयोग गर्न मिल्ने प्याड बनाउन सुशीलाले धेरै लाई सिकाइसकेकी छन् । प्याड स्कूलमा राखिएका छन् । पढिरहे को बेलामा कोही महिनावारी भएमा आएर लैजान्छन् । शुरुशुरुमा प्याड माग्न सुशीला मेडमलाई नै खोजिन्थ्यो । अहिले त्यस्तो परि स्थिति छैन । छात्राले सरहरुसँग पनि प्याड मागेर लैजाने गर्दछन् । विद्यालयमा महिनावारी स्वच्छता, बृहत्तर यौनिकता शिक्षा सञ्चालन गरिएपछि छात्रामा लाज मान्ने प्रवृत्ति हटेको छ ।

स्कूलमा बालविवाह, महिनावारी व्यवस्थापन, यौन तथा प्रजनन्का विषयमा कक्षा सञ्चालन हुन्छ । अतिरिक्त क्रियाकलापमा पनि यी विषयलाई समेटिन्छ । शिक्षिका सुशीलाले स्कूलमा विषयगत शिक्षक नआएर कक्षा खाली छ र आफ्नो पनि कक्षा छैन भने त्यस्तो बेलामा विषयगत शिक्षक नआएर खाली भएको कक्षामा गएर बालविवाह, महिनावारी व्यवस्थापन, यौन तथा प्रजनन्का बारेमा कक्षा दिने गरेकी छन् । वक्तृत्वकला, हाँजिरीजवाफमा यी विषयलाई समेटिन्छ । यौन र प्रजनन्सम्बन्धी कितावमा भएको टपिक्स पढाउँदा लाज मानेर रातोपिरो हुने छात्रा अहिले यी विषयमा खुलेर कुरा गर्ने भएका छन् ।

शिक्षिका सुशीलाले प्याड बनाउने तालिम र बृहत्तर यौनिकता शिक्षा तालिम लिएकी छन् । उनले आफूले तालिममा सिकेका कुरा विद्यार्थीलाई सिकाउने गर्छिन् । स्कूलमा आएर खुरुखुरु कितावको सिलेबस मात्रै पढाउने नभएर सुशीलाले महिनावारी स्वच्छता, व्यवस्थापन, यौन तथा प्रजनन्, यौन दुर्व्यवहार, बालविवाहका विषयमा पनि पढाउने गर्छिन् । सुशीलाले आफ्नो स्कूलमा मात्रै नभएर अर्को स्कूलमा गएर पनि प्याड बनाउन सिकाइरहन्छिन् । प्याड बनाउन सिकेका विद्यार्थीले आफ्नो लागि मात्रै नभएर व्यापारकै रुपमा अगाडि बढाउन सकिने कुरा गर्छन् । किशोरीहरुले आफुले बनाएको प्याड साथीलाई उपहार दिने गरेका छन् ।

> स्कूलमा प्याड बनाएर राख्ने र रेष्ट रुमको व्यवस्थापन भएपछि महिनावारी हुँदा स्कूल नआउने क्रम रोकिएको छ । महिनावारी हुँदा कुनै समस्या आएमा म आफैंले परामर्श दिन्छु । पहिला मलाई नै समस्या हुन्थ्यो । अहिले ढुक्क छ ।
>
> - सुशीला

A priest’s commitment: Preventing child marriage through awareness and responsibility

69-year-old priest Buddhi Raj from Bardiya, has taken an extraordinary step in combating child marriage. Once a priest who performed weddings without questioning the age of the bride and groom, Buddhi Raj now follows a different approach, ensuring that every union he sanctifies adheres to legal and ethical standards.

Before officiating a marriage, Buddhi Raj now verifies the bride and groom’s horoscopes, birth certificates, and citizenship documents. He cross-checks the dates mentioned in these documents to confirm their accuracy. “A horoscope never lies,” he explains, as the details recorded during its creation are based on the exact time and date of birth, leaving little room for manipulation.

Buddhi Raj refuses to solemnize marriages where either party is below 20 years of age. If approached by families with underage couples, he politely declines, explaining the consequences of child marriage. He educates them about the legal implications and the physical and mental harm such unions can cause. His refusal, coupled with his ability to communicate the seriousness of the issue, has deterred many families from proceeding with child marriages.

In one notable instance, a couple approached him to officiate their wedding. The groom was 23, but the bride claimed she would turn 20 in a few months. Buddhi Raj insisted on seeing her citizenship document to verify her claim. The bride had to request her family to send a photo of the document from her home in Surkhet. Only after the photo confirmed her age did Buddhi Raj proceed with the marriage, hours later than planned.

This transformation in Buddhi Raj’s approach stemmed from his involvement in the Girls Get Equal: Preventing Child, Early and Forced Marriage project. As the coordinator of a multi-religious network that includes Muslim, Buddhist, and Christian leaders, Buddhi Raj has worked tirelessly to raise awareness about the harm caused by child marriage. The network, formed four years ago, meets regularly to discuss strategies and participate in community activities advocating against child marriage.

Buddhi Raj’s leadership has inspired others in the community. He believes that 95% of parents now understand that child marriage is harmful and unlawful. The religious network he coordinates plays a pivotal role in this shift, delivering messages about the importance of education and the dangers of child marriage through sermons and community events.

Through his efforts and those of the religious network, there has been significant progress in reducing child marriages. Buddhi Raj’s story is a testament to how traditional figures can embrace change and lead communities toward a brighter, more informed future.

विवाह गराइदिँदा जन्मदर्ता र नागरिकता हेर्ने पुजारी बुद्धिराज

बर्दियाका ६९ वर्षीय बुद्धिराजले विगतमा विवाह गराउँदा दुलाह-दुलहीको उमेर सोध्दैनथे । ज्योतिष विद्या जानेका पुजारी बुद्धिराजले बोलाएको ठाउँमा गएर लगनगाँठो कसिदिन्थे ।

अहिले उनको विवाह गराइदिने शैली फेरिएको छ । विवाह गराउन बोलाएको ठाउँमा बुद्धिराज जान्छन् । केटा र केटीको चिना, जन्मदर्ता र नागरिकता हेर्छन् । चिनासँग जन्ममिति र नागरिकताको मिति रुजु गर्छन् । जन्मदर्ता र नागरिकतामा उमेर घटबढ गरेपनि चिनामा मिति ढाटिएको हुँदैन । चिना बनाउँदा साल, बारदेखि जन्मेको समयसमेत भन्नुपर्छ । आफ्ना सन्तानको चिना बनाउने अभिभावकले यो बेलामा केही ढाँटेका हुँदैनन् ।

पुजारी बुद्धिराजले २० वर्ष उमेर नपुगेकाको विवाहको लगनगाँठो जुराउँदैनन् । आफ्नो वडामा क्रियाशील अन्तरधार्मिक सञ्जालका संयोजकसमेत रहेका बुद्धिराजले विवाह गराउनका लागि बोलाउन आउँदा केटा र केटीको उमेर २० वर्ष पुगेको निश्चित भएपछि मात्रै लगनगाँठो जुराइदिने गरेका छन् । २० वर्ष नपुगेका केटा र केटी परेमा उनीहरुको लगन जुरेन भनिदिन्छन् । यो बालविवाह टार्ने उनको रणनीति हो । कतिपयलाई बास्तविकता बताइदिन्छन् । उमेर नपुगेकाले उमेर पुगेपछि मात्रै विवाह गर्न सल्लाह दिन्छन् । बालविवाह गर्ने र गराउनेमात्रै होइन, पुजारीसहित भतेर खानेसमेतलाई कारबाही हुने गरेको जानकारी दिन्छन् ।

आफूले उमेर पुगेन भनेर विवाह नगराइदिएको जोडी नेपालगन्जको बागेश्वरी मन्दिरमा पुगेको र त्यहाँ प्रहरीले नागरिकता हेरेर बालविवाह गर्न हुँदैन भनेर फिर्ता पठाइदिएको बुद्धिराजले सुनाए । एकपटक गाउँका एक जना युवाले सुर्खेतबाट केटी भगाएर ल्याएका रहेछन् । विवाह गराइदिन बुद्धिराजलाई बोलाए । उनी गए पनि, केटा २३ वर्षका थिए, त्यो उनलाई थाहा थियो । केटीको उमेर पक्का गर्नु पर्ने भयो । केटीसँग नागरिकता छ ? भनेर सोधे, उनले सुर्खेतमा रहेको बताइन् । घरमा कसैलाई भनेर नागरिकताको फोटो खिचेर पठाउन भने । घरमा विवाहको रौनक थियो । जग्गे बनाएर बसेका थिए । नागरिकता नहेर्दासम्म विवाहको प्रक्रिया अघि नबढाउने बुद्धिराजको भनाईले आपत पारिरहेको थियो । भन्न त केटीले असारमा २० वर्ष पुग्छु भनेकी थिइन् । बुद्धिराजले त्यसलाई पुष्टि गर्ने कागज हेर्न खोजिरहेका थिए । घटना गएको तिजताका (भदौं) को थियो । केटीले को-कोलाई भनेर नागरिकताको फोटो खिचेर पठाउन लगाइन् । मोबाइलमा नागरिकताको फोटो आउँदासम्म अपरान्हको ५ बजे बजिसकेको थियो । नागरिकता हेरेर किशोरीको उमेर पुगेको निश्चित भएपछि मात्र बुद्धिराजले विवाहको प्रक्रिया अघि बढाए।

बुद्धिराजमा उमेर पुगेपछि मात्रै विवाह गर्नुपर्छ भन्ने चेतना बालविवाह, छिटो विवाह र जबरजस्ती विवाह रोकथाम परियोजनामा जोडिएपछि आएको रहेछ । मुस्लिम, बौद्ध, इसाई धर्मका गुरुसम्मिलित धार्मिक सञ्जालका संयोजक रहेका बुद्धिराजले आफूमा मात्रै होइन, वडाकै ९५ प्रतिशत अभिभावकमा बालविवाह गर्नु हुँदैन भन्ने चेतना आएको बताए ।

बुद्धिराज संयोजक रहेको अन्तरधार्मिक सञ्जालको बेलाबेलामा बैठक बस्छ । बैठकमा बालविवाह रोकथामको विषयमा छलफल हुन्छ । चार वर्षअघि गठन गरिएको सञ्जालले बालविवाह रोकथाममा ठूलो भूमिका खेलेको छ । धार्मिक गुरुहरु बालविवाहविरुद्ध हुने हरेक गतिविधिमा सहभागी हुन्छन् । छोराछोरीलाई राम्रो शिक्षा दिनु पर्छ, बालविवाह गर्नु हुँदैन, बालविवाह गर्नु अपराध हो भन्ने कुरा धार्मिक गुरुहरुले बताउने गरेका छन् ।

> “अहिले उनको विवाह गराइदिने शैली फेरिएको छ । विवाह गराउन बोलाएको ठाउँमा बुद्धिराज जान्छन् । केटा र केटीको चिना, जन्मदर्ता र नागरिकता हेर्छन् । पुजारी बुद्धिराजले २० वर्ष उमेर नपुगेकाको विवाहको लगनगाँठो जुराउँदैनन् ।”

Hina: A tireless advocate against child marriage

In Bardiya, lies a small community of approximately 50 households of the Jaga community. Among them, women with higher education are a rarity. However, 24-year-old Hina stands as a remarkable exception. A resident of this community, Hina recently completed her fourth-year bachelor's degree examination from Bardiya Multiple Campus, Laxmana.

Hina's journey is not limited to her own education. She is determined to ensure that other girls in her community receive education as well. While her younger sister is in her third year of a bachelor's degree, her youngest sister studies in Grade 12, and her cousin in Grade 7, most other girls in the community have either dropped out or are not attending school at all.

The Jaga community still harbors traditional beliefs that hinder girls' education. Many families think, *"What's the use of educating daughters when they'll eventually marry and leave?"* Others fear that sending their daughters to school might lead them to fall in love with boys from other communities. Some believe that highly educated girls might struggle to find suitable grooms.

Despite these challenges, Hina has emerged as a role model. As a member of the Bansgadhi Youth Network, she actively works to prevent child marriage in her community. Child marriage was once a prevalent practice among the Jaga community, with some girls married off as young as 13, including Hina's own aunt. Though some families still attempt to arrange child marriages secretly, Hina's vigilance has significantly curtailed the practice.

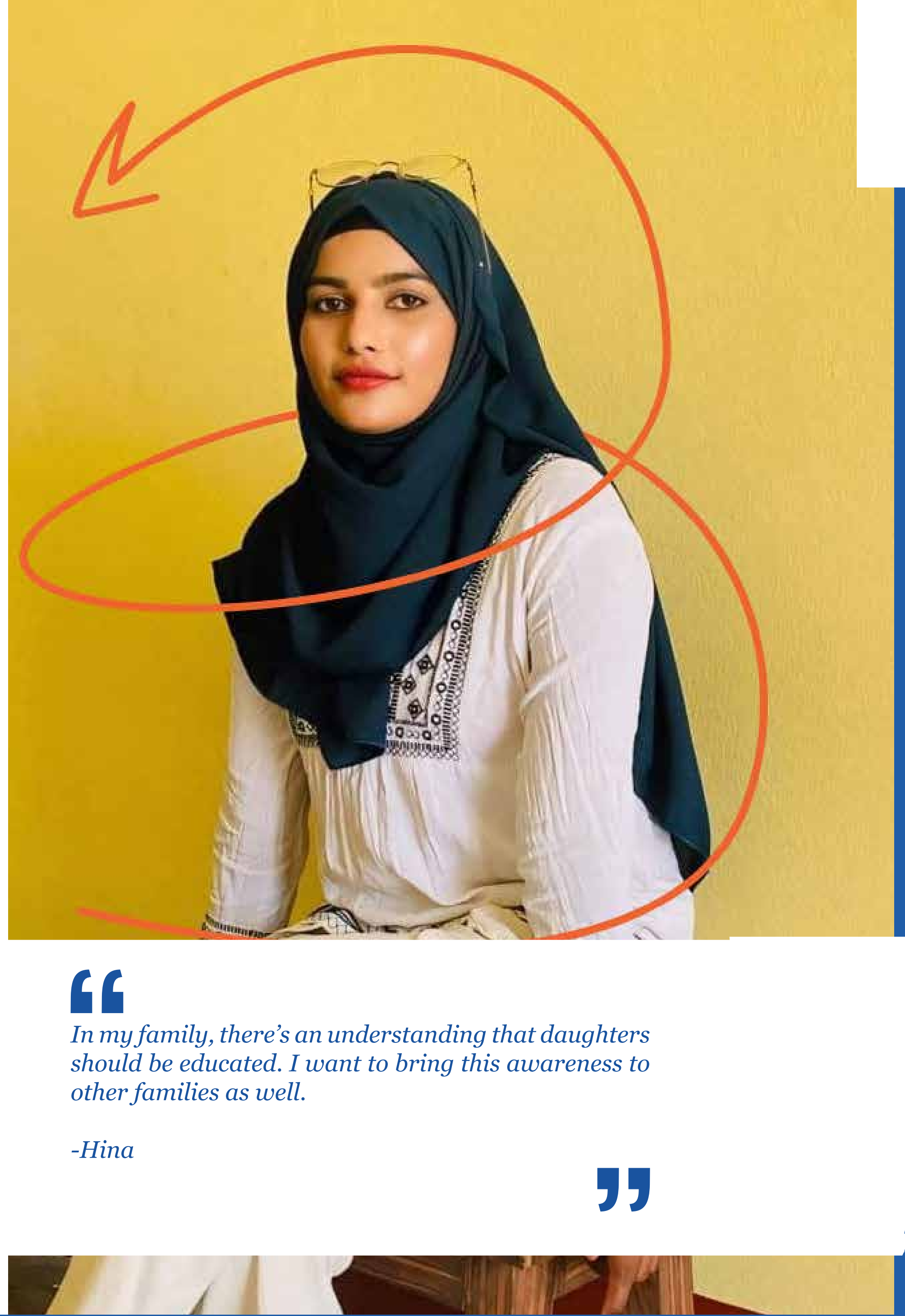
Her efforts have not been without resistance. Hina recounts how she has faced criticism and backlash for intervening. In one instance, she alerted the police about an impending child marriage, leading to its cancellation and the return of the wedding procession. "If the family had known I called the police, they would have confronted me," Hina shares.

With support from organizations like Banke UNESCO Club and BEE Group, the Bansgadhi Youth Network runs various awareness programs against child marriage. One such initiative, "Weekly Talks on Child Marriage," involves visiting different neighborhoods to hold discussions with 30 girls and parents at a time. These sessions cover the harmful impacts of child marriage and the legal consequences of the practice.

Hina also organizes street plays, festivals, and signature campaigns against child marriage. Going door to door, she has gathered commitments from 150 households, where residents pledge not to engage in or allow child marriage. These signed pledges are kept in three locations: the household, the municipal office, and Banke UNESCO Club.

Hina's advocacy extends beyond her own community. She is a fearless speaker, raising awareness about child marriage and the importance of girls' education. Many parents now aspire for their daughters to become like her.

Through her relentless efforts, Hina is breaking barriers and building a brighter future for the girls in her community and beyond.



In my family, there's an understanding that daughters should be educated. I want to bring this awareness to other families as well.

-Hina

बालविवाहविरुद्धको अभियन्ता हिना

बर्दियाको एउटा गाउँ, जहाँ करिब ५० घर जागा समुदायको बसोबास रहेको छ । यो समुदायमा उच्च शिक्षा हाँसिल गरेका छोरी नगन्य मात्रामा छन् । त्यहि समुदायकी २४ वर्षीया हिना उच्च शिक्षा हाँसिल गर्ने छोरीमा पर्छिन् । हिना बर्दिया मल्टिपल क्याम्पस, लक्ष्मणाबाट स्नातक चौथो वर्षको परीक्षा दिएर बसेकी छन् ।

हिना आफूले पढ्ने मात्रै होइन, आफ्नो समुदायका अरु छोरीले पनि पढ्नु पर्छ भन्ने अभियानमा छिन् । अहिले जागा समुदायबाट हिनाकी एउटा बहिनी स्नातक तेस्रो वर्ष, कान्छी बहिनी १२ कक्षा र फुपुको छोरी ७ कक्षामा पढिरहेका छन् । अरु छोरीहरु स्कूल गइरहेका छैनन् । गएकाले पनि छोडेका छन् ।

हिनाले सुनाइन्, छोरी पढाएर के हुन्छ र ? अर्काको घरमा जाने जात भन्ने सोचाई जागा समुदायमा रहेको छ । कतिपयलाई छोरीलाई पढ्न पठाउँदा अर्को समुदायका केटासँग माया प्रेम गरेर भागी विवाह गर्ने हो कि भन्ने डर छ । छोरीलाई धेरै पढाउँदा केटा पाउन मुश्किल हुन्छ भन्ने सोच भएका पनि छन् ।

जागा समुदायकी रोलमोडल हिना युवा सञ्जाल, बाँसगढीको सदस्य हुन् । उनी बालविवाह रोकथाममा पनि सक्रिय छिन् । उनी आफ्नै समुदायभित्र हुने बालविवाह रोकथाममा उनी लागिपरेकी छन् । जागा समुदायमा छोरीलाई सानैमा विवाह गरिदिने चलन थियो, अघिल्लो पुस्तासम्म । हिनाकै फुपुको १३ वर्षमा विवाह भएको थियो । अहिले पनि कतिपयले लुकिछिपी बालविवाह गर्ने प्रयास गर्छन् । हिनाको सक्रियताले बालविवाह रोकिएको छ । बालविवाह रोक्दा आफूले धेरै गाली खानु परेको हिनाको भोगाई छ । गत वर्षदेखि आफ्नो समुदायमा बालविवाह नभएको हिनाले बताइन् । एकपटक विवाह हुन थालेको बेला हिनाले प्रहरीलाई खबर गरिदिएपछि बालविवाह रोकिएछ, जन्ती फिर्ता गएछन् । "प्रहरीलाई मैले बोलाइदिएको भन्ने त्यो घरका मानिसले थाहा पाएको भए मसँग झगडा गर्न आउँथे," हिनाले भनिन् ।

बाँके युनेस्को क्लव, बी ग्रुपलगायतका संघ संस्थाको सहयोगमा युवा सञ्जाल, बाँसगढीले बालविवाहविरुद्ध विभिन्न कार्यक्रम गर्ने गरेको छ । "साताको भेटमा बालविवाहको कुरा" त्यहिमध्येको एउटा कार्यक्रम हो । यो कार्यक्रममा प्रत्येक टोलटोलमा गएर ३० जना किशोरी र अभिभावकलाई राखेर बालविवाह गर्दा हुने समस्या, कानूनी सजायका बारेमा छलफल गर्ने गरिन्छ । वडा नं. ८ मा हिना यस कार्यक्रममा खटिन्छिन् ।

अहिले कतिपय अभिभावक छोराछोरीको विवाह गर्ने बेलामा हिनासँग सोध्न आउँछन् । हिनाले नागरिकता मागेर उमेर हेर्छिन् । २० वर्ष पुग्न एक दिन बाँकी रहेछ भने पनि विवाह रोकिदिन्छिन् । कतिपयले आफ्ना छोरीलाई पनि हिनाजस्तै बनाउनु पर्छ भन्ने गर्छन् । बालविवाहविरुद्ध सडक नाटक, महोत्सवहरुमा बालविवाह नगर्ने र गर्न नदिन हस्ताक्षर अभियान चलाउने गर्छिन् । हिनाले "डोर टु डोर" गएर "बालविवाह गर्दिन र गर्न दिदैनौं " भन्ने प्रतिबद्धतामा हस्ताक्षर गराएकी छन् । उनले एक सय पचास घरमा गएर प्रतिबद्धतामा हस्ताक्षर गराएकी छन् । यसरी गरिएको हस्ताक्षर एउटा त्यही घरमा, अर्को नगरपालिका कार्यालय र तेस्रो कपी बाँके युनेस्को क्लवमा दिइएको छ । उनी जोडिएको सञ्जालले बालविवाहविरुद्ध फेसबुक अभियान चलाउने गरेको छ ।

निर्धक्क बोल्न र आफ्ना कुरा राख्न सक्ने हिनाले बालविवाह र बालिका शिक्षाका लागि आफ्नो समुदायमा मात्रै होइन, अरुमा पनि प्रभावकारी अभियान चलाइरहेकी छन् । आफ्नो घरपरिवारमा छोरीले पनि पढ्नु पर्छ भन्ने चेत रहेको र अरु परिवारमा पनि यस्तो चेत आउनु पर्छ भन्ने अभियानमा हिना लागिपरेकी छन् ।

हामीले टोलटोलमा गएर बालविवाह गर्दा हुने हानी र सजायका बारेमा बताउने गरेका छौं, कतिपय अभिभावकलाई बालविवाह गर्नु हुँदैन, गरेमा कारबाही हुन्छ भन्ने पनि थाहा रहेनछ, अहिले सचेत भएका छन् ।

- हिना

Deuda: Creative use of awareness expansion

A group of adolescent girls in Kalikot regularly performs Deuda songs and dances in their community. However, their performances are not limited to entertainment. This group has utilized Deuda songs and dances as a powerful medium to raise awareness against harmful social practices and discrepancies. They have transformed local folk tunes into awareness messages to drive their community toward change.

For instance, on the occasion of International Children's Day, the group performed Deuda songs in front of parents, teenagers, students, and local representatives. Their songs delivered rhythmic yet impactful messages against child marriage, gender discrimination, and other harmful practices.

♫ The uterus prolapses, Children will be at risk, the uterus prolapses... ♫

Such lines turned their melodies into powerful messages.

> *When we deliver awareness messages through the rhythm of songs, people understand them more quickly. That's why folk tunes like Deuda have become a weapon for us.*
>
> *– Satya*

Adolescent girls like Satya are traveling from village to village, raising awareness about the effects of child marriage. They are not only spreading messages through songs and dances but also expanding their campaign through door-to-door initiatives. They emphasize that child marriage significantly increases risks for both the individuals involved and their families, making it their primary focus.

However, until recently, these girls were unaware of such issues. They were also compelled to accept the traditional practices prevalent in their village. There seemed to be no alternative other than to conform to these societal norms. But after participating in the training organized by Plan International Nepal's Girls Get Equal: Preventing Child, Early and Forced Marriage project, they gained their first understanding of the nature of these issues and the myths surrounding them.

After the training, the girls began to unveil their confidence. They actively engaged in efforts to prevent child marriage and launched campaigns to bring out-of-school children back to school. They also conducted awareness programs in their villages against caste- and gender-based discrimination as well as the Chhaupadi practice (menstrual exile).

Satya's experience shows that these awareness efforts are already bringing visible signs of change in society. According to her, cases of child marriage have significantly decreased. Similarly, the practices of Chhaupadi and caste- and gender-based discrimination have also reduced.

This campaign for social change has not only impacted the community but also improved the personal capabilities of the adolescent girls. Satya proudly shared, "We have brought significant changes not only in our community but also in our own lives."

This initiative has not only signaled positive change in society but has also helped these girls realize their own potential. Their creative efforts to combine traditional Deuda tunes and dances with modern awareness messages are exemplary. Organizations like Plan International Nepal have further amplified their impact, achieving more effective results in this journey of social transformation.

देउडा : सिचेतना विस्तारको रचनात्मक प्रयोग

कालिकोटका किशोरीहरुको एउटा समूह, जो आफ्नो समुदायमा समयसमयमा देउडा गीत र नृत्य प्रस्तुत गर्छन् । तर, उनीहरूको प्रस्तुतिको उद्देश्य केवल मनोरञ्जनमा सिमित छैन । यो समूहले देउडा गीत र नृत्यलाई समाजमा विद्यमान कुरीति र विसङ्गतिहरूविरुद्ध चेतना जगाउने सशक्त माध्यमका रूपमा उपयोग गरिरहेको छ । उनीहरूले स्थानीय लोकभाकालाई सचेतनामूलक सन्देशमा ढालेर आफ्नो समुदायलाई परिवर्तनको बाटोमा अघि बढाउन प्रयास गरिरहेका छन् ।

जस्तो, अन्तराष्ट्रिय बाल दिवसको अवसरमा यो समूहले अभिभावक, किशोरकिशोरी, विद्यार्थी र स्थानीय जनप्रतिनिधिहरूको माझ देउडा गीत प्रस्तुत गर्यो । उनीहरूको गीतमा बालविवाह र यसको असर, लैङ्गिक भेदभाव, तथा अन्य कुरीतिहरूविरुद्धको सन्देश लयबद्ध रूपमा प्रस्तुत गरिन्छ ।

♫♫

कानुनले कस्दोछ, बालविवाह गर्यो भने कानुनले कस्दोछ...
पाठेघर खस्छ, बालबालिका जोखिममा हुन्छ, पाठेघर खस्छ....

जस्ता शब्दहरूले गीतको लयलाई गहिरो सन्देशमा परिणत गरेको छ । ♫♫

“

गीतको लयमार्फत जनचेतनामूलक कुरा गर्दा मान्छेले छिटो बुझ्छन् । त्यसैले देउडाजस्ता लोक भाका हाम्रो लागि हतियार बनेको छ ।

- सत्या

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सत्याजस्ता किशोरीहरू गाउँगाउँमा पुगेर बालविवाहको असरबारे चेतना फैलाइरहेका छन् । उनीहरूले मात्र गीत र नृत्यमार्फत नभई, घरदैलो अभियानमार्फत पनि आफ्नो अभियानलाई विस्तार गरेका छन् । बालविवाह गर्दा विवाह गर्ने व्यक्तिदेखि सिङ्गो परिवार समस्यामा पर्ने सम्भावना उच्च हुने भएकाले उनीहरूले यो विषयलाई प्राथमिकतामा राखेका छन् ।

तर, केही समयअघिसम्म यो समूहका सदस्यहरूसँग यस्ता समस्याहरूको ज्ञान थिएन । उनीहरू पनि गाउँमा चलिआएका परम्पराहरूलाई नचाहँदा नचाहँदै स्वीकृति दिन विवश थिए । समाजले स्वीकृत गरेका यस्ता कुरीतिहरूसँग सामञ्जस्य गर्नेभन्दा अन्य कुनै उपाय थिएन । तर, जब प्लान इन्टरनेसनल नेपालले बाल विवाह, छिटो विवाह र जबरजस्ती विवाह रोकथाम परियोजनाले तालिम आयोजना गर्‍यो, उनीहरूले पहिलो पटक समस्याको वास्तविकता बुझ्न पाए । यसका भ्रम र यथार्थ बुझ्न पाए ।

तालिमपछि किशोरीहरूले आफूभित्रको आत्मविश्वासलाई उजागर गर्न थाले । उनीहरू न केवल बालविवाह रोकथाममा सक्रिय भए, विद्यालय बाहिर रहेका बालबालिकालाई विद्यालयमा फर्काउन पनि अभियान चलाए । जातीय र लैङ्गिक भेदभाव तथा छाउपडी प्रथाका विरुद्ध गाउँघरमै चेतनामूलक कार्यक्रमहरू सञ्चालन गरे ।

सत्याको अनुभवले प्रस्ट पार्छ कि सचेतनाका यस्ता प्रयासहरूबाट समाजमा परिवर्तनको संकेत देखिन थालेको छ । उनकाअनुसार, बालविवाहका घटनाहरू उल्लेखनिय रूपमा घटेका छन् । छाउपडी प्रथा तथा जातीय र लैङ्गिक विभेदका घटनाहरूमा कमी आएको छ । सामाजिक परिवर्तनको यो अभियानले किशोरीहरूको व्यक्तिगत क्षमतामा समेत सुधार गरेको छ । सत्याले गर्वका साथ भनिन्, “हामीले हाम्रो समुदायमा मात्र होइन, आफ्नै जीवनमा पनि ठूलो परिवर्तन ल्याएका छौं ।”

यो अभियानले समाजमा सकारात्मक परिवर्तनको संकेत मात्र होइन, किशोरीहरूलाई पनि आफूभित्रको सम्भावना पहिचान गर्न मद्दत गरिरहेको छ । देउडा जस्तो परम्परागत भाका र नृत्यलाई आधुनिक चेतनामूलक सन्देशसँग जोडेका यी किशोरीहरूको प्रयास उदाहरणिय छ । समाज परिवर्तनको यो यात्रामा प्लान इन्टरनेसनल नेपालजस्ता संस्थाको योगदानले अझ प्रभावकारी परिणामहरू हाँसिल गरेको छ ।

17-year-old social activist Lalita

Seventeen-year-old Lalita from Kalikot is now recognized as a social activist in her community. However, this identity and responsibility didn't come easily. Until recently, Lalita's life was much like that of other girls in her village. She accepted the traditions and harmful practices prevalent in her community as normal. She lacked the courage to speak out against child marriage, caste-based discrimination, and the Chhaupadi practice (menstrual exile). Even speaking in front of people in her village made her nervous, and the lack of self-confidence made group discussions even harder for her.

The turning point in Lalita's life came when she joined the CoC (Champions of Change) class conducted with support from Plan International Nepal. According to her, the class not only taught her how to challenge harmful traditions and practices but also gave her a new perspective on her goals and capabilities in life. Through the CoC class, she gained valuable knowledge on sexual and reproductive health, menstrual hygiene, the use of contraceptives, and the sensitive aspects of adolescence.

Lalita says, *"If I hadn't had the opportunity to attend the CoC class, I would have fallen into the same trap of harmful traditions. Change wouldn't have been possible in our community."* She added that the class helped her distinguish between right and wrong, build self-confidence, and improve her behavior.

Lalita not only applied what she learned from the class to her own life but also shared it with her friends and community. She began organizing various awareness-raising activities in schools and communities to combat harmful traditional practices. From conducting rallies to organizing speech competitions and teaching peers through informal education, Lalita has been consistently active. She believes, *"Discussing personal issues openly among friends has proven to be very effective."*

Most importantly, the confidence she gained through the CoC class opened new doors for Lalita. She had the opportunity to take on the role of Deputy Mayor of Raskot Municipality for a day under the Girls Takeover program. This experience further boosted her self-assurance. *"This opportunity taught me that girls and women can successfully fulfill any role and responsibility,"* she said.

Lalita's efforts have brought noticeable changes in her community. Cases of child marriage have decreased, and harmful practices like Chhaupadi and caste-based discrimination have been significantly reduced. Lalita now visits households to educate families about the negative consequences of child marriage. Many community members are inspired by her dedication.

Lalita's journey has brought significant transformation not only within herself but also in her community. Today, Lalita is not just an inspiring figure in her village but is also committed to becoming a strong and responsible citizen in the future.

"

Such programs are essential in more places for social transformation. Change begins with us, but the support of organizations like Plan is crucial.

-Lalita

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plan-international.org/nepal

१७ वर्षिया सामाजिक अभियान्ता ललिता

उमेरले भर्खर १७ वर्ष मात्र पुगेकी कालिकोटकी ललिता अहिले आफ्नो समुदायमा सामाजिक अभियन्ताको रुपमा परिचित छिन् । तर, आजको यो परिचय र जिम्मेवारी सहजै प्राप्त भएको होइन । केही समयअघिसम्म ललिताको जीवन पनि अन्य गाउँका किशोरीहरूको जस्तै साधारण थियो । उनी आफ्नो समुदायमा प्रचलित परम्परा र कुरीतिहरूलाई स्वाभाविक मान्थिन् । बालविवाह, जातीय भेदभाव, र छाउपडी जस्ता गलत चलनहरू विरुद्ध बोल्ने हिम्मत उनीसँग थिएन । गाउँमा कसैको अगाडि बोल्नुपर्दा पनि डर लाग्ने र आत्मविश्वासको अभावका कारण सामूहिक रुपमा बोल्न झन् कठिन थियो ।

तर, ललिताको जीवनमा परिवर्तनको सुरुवात भयो, जब उनी प्लान इन्टरनेसनल नेपालको सहयोगमा सञ्चालित सिओसी (परिवर्तनको संवाहक) कक्षामा सहभागी भइन् । उनकाअनुसार सिओसी कक्षामा उनले समाजका गलत परम्परा र कुरीतिहरूलाई चिर्न सकिने उपाय मात्र सिकिनन्, आफ्नो जीवनको लक्ष्य र क्षमताबारे पनि नयाँ दृष्टिकोण पाइन् । सिओसी कक्षाको शिक्षा मार्फत उनले यौन तथा प्रजनन स्वास्थ्य, महिनावारी स्वच्छता, गर्भनिरोधक साधनको प्रयोग, र किशोरावस्थाका संवेदनशील पक्षहरूको बारेमा महत्वपूर्ण ज्ञान हासिल गरिन् ।

ललिता भन्छिन्, “यदि मैले सिओसीको कक्षामा सहभागी हुने अवसर नपाएको भए, म पनि यही कुरीतिको जालमा फस्ने थिएँ । हाम्रो समुदायमा परिवर्तन ल्याउन सकिँदैनथ्यो ।” उनले थपिन् कि सिओसी कक्षामा सहभागी भएपछि मात्र सही र गलत छुट्याउन सक्ने, आत्मविश्वास बढाउने र आफ्नो व्यवहारलाई सुधार गर्न सिक्न सकिन् ।

सिओसी कक्षामा सिकेका कुरा उनले आफ्नो जीवनमा मात्र होइन, आफ्ना साथीभाइ र समुदायमा पनि पुऱ्याइन् । ललिताले परम्परागत कुरीतिहरूको अन्त्यका लागि विद्यालय र समुदायमा विभिन्न सचेतनामूलक गतिविधिहरू सञ्चालन गर्न थालिन् । समय समयमा ऱ्याली निकाल्ने, वक्तृत्वकला प्रतियोगिता गर्ने, र दौँतरी शिक्षाको माध्यमबाट आफ्ना साथीसंगीलाई यस्ता महत्वपूर्ण विषयहरू बुझाउने काम उनले निरन्तर गरिरहेकी छन् । ललिताको अनुभवमा, “साथीभाइबीच सहज रूपमा व्यक्तिगत समस्याबारे कुरा गर्दा प्रभावकारी परिणाम देखिन्छ ।”

सबैभन्दा महत्वपूर्ण कुरा, सिओसी कक्षाको माध्यमबाट हाँसिल आत्मविश्वासले ललितालाई थप अवसरहरू पनि दिलायो । उनले गर्ल्स टेकओभर कार्यक्रमअन्तर्गत रास्कोट नगरपालिकाको उपप्रमुखको जिम्मेवारी एक दिनका लागि सम्हाल्ने मौका पाइन् । यसले ललितामा झन् आत्मविश्वास थप्यो । “यो अवसरले मलाई सिकायो कि किशोरी र महिलाहरूले पनि जुनसुकै भूमिका र जिम्मेवारी सफलतापूर्वक निभाउन सक्छन्,” उनले भनिन् ।

ललिताको सक्रियताले अहिले उनको समुदायमा ठूला परिवर्तनहरू ल्याएको देख्न सकिन्छ । बालविवाहका घटनाहरूमा कमी आएको छ, र छाउपडी प्रथा तथा जातीय विभेद जस्ता कुरीतिहरू न्यूनिकरण भएका छन् । ललिता अहिले गाउँघरमै पुगेर परिवारलाई बालविवाहका नकारात्मक असरहरूको बारेमा बुझाउँछिन् । समुदायका धेरै सदस्यहरू अहिले उनीबाट प्रभावित भएका छन् ।

ललिताको यो यात्राले उनीभित्र मात्र होइन, समुदायमा पनि ठूलो परिवर्तन ल्याएको छ । आज, ललिता आफ्नो समुदायको प्रेरणादायी पात्र मात्र होइन, भविष्यमा एक सशक्त र जिम्मेवार नागरिकका रूपमा स्थापित हुन कटिबद्ध छिन् ।

> “समाज परिवर्तनका लागि यस्ता कार्यक्रम अझ धेरै ठाउँमा आवश्यक छन् । परिवर्तनको सुरुवात हामीले आफैँबाट गर्नुपर्छ । बस् साथमा प्लान इन्टरनेसनल नेपाल जस्ता संस्था हुन आवश्यक छ ।
>
> – ललिता”

यसरी, ललिताको यात्रा समाजमा उदाहरणिय र प्रेरणादायी छ । सिओसी कक्षाबाट सुरु भएको यो यात्रा केवल उनको व्यक्तित्व सुधारमा सिमित रहेन, यसले समुदायलाई नै सही मार्गतर्फ अघि बढाउन महत्वपूर्ण योगदान दियो ।

Monika, one-day minister

Monika, a CoC graduate from Kalikot, once found it difficult to confidently introduce herself, a challenge she overcame after participating in the CoC classes directly supported by Plan International Nepal. Speaking in front of others in her village was always a challenge for her. Discussing issues like discrimination, child marriage, or other social evils seemed unimaginable. At that time, there was barely any sign of self-confidence or leadership qualities within her. However, the beginning of a transformation in her life came when she participated in the CoC.

In the CoC classes, she gained in-depth knowledge on topics such as child rights, girls' education, menstrual hygiene, and gender discrimination. The training and awareness-building activities in the CoC brought about a profound change not only in her thinking but also in her personality. Today, Monika is able to speak confidently about social issues and work towards finding solutions.

A pivotal moment in this transformation was when she had the opportunity to serve as the Social Development Minister of Karnali Province for a day under the Girls Takeover initiative. Monika recalls, "I sat in the Social Development Minister's chair. In front of me were senior ministry officials. I raised the issue of child marriage and presented the problems of our village. The Minister committed to addressing these issues." She believes this experience significantly boosted her confidence and strength.

Monika realized that a brief role like Girls Takeover sends a powerful message. She said, "This opportunity made me understand that both women and men can play any role if they are given equal opportunities". This experience has inspired Monika to take on a leadership role for society and the country in the future. However, she understands that such a role can only be achieved through continuous effort, learning, and experience.

CoC not only empowered Monika but also gave her the opportunity to represent Nepal on an international platform. At the Asia Pacific Forum on Social Development held in Thailand, she presented a paper on the impact of climate change on girls' education in Nepal. During this event, she not only shared her experiences but also had the chance to listen to the perspectives and suggestions of other participants.

Such opportunities have brought about a significant change in Monika's personality. Previously shy and reluctant to speak, she is now capable of leading social campaigns. The confidence she has gained has enabled her to facilitate and encourage the community to find solutions to local problems. The transformation from the 'silent Monika' to the 'active Monika' has been driven by her newfound self-assurance.

> *"Such projects not only impact the lives of adolescent girls but also have a long-term effect on society. Therefore, it is essential to provide such opportunities to girls across the country."*
>
> *-Monika*

एक दिने सामाजिक विकासमन्त्री बनेकी मोनिका

कालिकोटकी दीक्षित परिवर्तनका संवाहक मोनिका प्लान इन्टरनेसनल नेपालको प्रत्यक्ष सहयोगमा सञ्चालित सिओसी कक्षामा सहभागी हुनु अघि निर्धक्कले आफ्नो परिचय दिनसमेत सक्दिनथिन् । गाउँठाउँमा अरूको अगाडि बोल्नुपर्ने कुरा नै उनको लागि चुनौतिपूर्ण हुन्थ्यो । विभेद, बालविवाह, वा अन्य कुरीतिहरूको बारेमा बोल्ने त परैको कुरा भयो । यस्तो अवस्थामा उनीभित्र आत्मविश्वास र नेतृत्व क्षमताको झिनो संकेत पनि देखिँदैनथ्यो । तर, मोनिकाको जीवनमा परिवर्तनको सुरुवात भयो, जब उनी सिओसी कक्षामा सहभागी भइन् ।

सिओसी कक्षामा उनले बालअधिकार, किशोरीहरूको शिक्षा, महिनावारी स्वच्छता, र लैङ्गिक विभेद जस्ता विषयहरूमा गहन ज्ञान हाँसिल गरिन् । सिओसी कक्षाको प्रशिक्षण र सचेतनामूलक गतिविधिहरूले उनको सोचाइमा मात्र होइन, व्यक्तित्वमा पनि गहिरो परिवर्तन ल्यायो । अहिले, मोनिका निर्धक्कले सामाजिक समस्याहरूबारे बोल्न र तिनको समाधान खोज्न सक्षम भएकी छिन् ।

यस परिवर्तनको महत्वपूर्ण क्षण थियो, जब उनले गर्ल्स टेक ओभर अन्तर्गत एक दिनका लागि कर्णाली प्रदेशको सामाजिक विकासमन्त्रीको भूमिका निर्वाह गर्ने मौका पाइन् । मोनिका भन्छिन्," म सामाजिक विकासमन्त्रीको कुर्सीमा बसेको थिएँ । मेरो अगाडि मन्त्रालयका उच्चपदस्थ कर्मचारीहरू थिए । मैले बालविवाहको समस्या उठाएँ र हाम्रो गाउँका मुद्दाहरू राखेँ । मन्त्रीज्यूले ती समस्याहरू सम्बोधन गर्ने प्रतिवद्धता जनाउनुभयो । " उनले यो अनुभवले आफ्नो आत्मविश्वास र सामर्थ्यमा धेरै परिवर्तन ल्याएको बताइन् ।

गर्ल्स टेक ओभर जस्तो छोटो अवधिको भूमिकाले ठूलो सन्देश दिएको उनले महसुस गरिन् । "महिला पुरुष सबैले समान अवसर पाए जुनसुकै भूमिका निभाउन सक्छन् भन्ने कुरा मलाई यो अवसरले बुझ्यायो," मोनिकाले भनिन् । यो अनुभवले मोनिकालाई भविष्यमा समाज र देशका लागि नेतृत्वदायी भूमिका निर्वाह गर्ने प्रेरणा दिएको छ । तर, उनले यसका लागि निरन्तरको मेहनत, सिकाइ, र अनुभवले मात्रै सम्भव हुने भन्ने कुरा राम्रोसँग बुझेकी छिन् ।

सिओसी परियोजनाले मोनिकालाई मात्र होइन, अन्तराष्ट्रिय मञ्चमा नेपालको प्रतिनिधित्व गर्ने अवसरसमेत दिलायो । थाइल्याण्डमा सम्पन्न एसिया प्यासिफिक फोरम अन सोसल डेभलपमेन्टमा उनले नेपालमा जलवायु परिवर्तनको असरले किशोरीहरूको शिक्षामा पारेको प्रभावबारे कार्यपत्र प्रस्तुत गरिन् । यस क्रममा उनले आफ्ना अनुभवहरू बाँड्न मात्र होइन, अन्य सहभागीहरूको विचार र सुझावहरू सुन्ने अवसर पनि पाइन् ।

यस्ता अवसरले मोनिकाको व्यक्तित्वमा ठूलो परिवर्तन ल्याएको छ । पहिला केहि बोल्न पनि लजाउने उनी अहिले सामाजिक अभियानको नेतृत्व गर्न सक्षम भएकी छिन् । गाउँठाउँमा देखिने समस्याहरूको समाधानका लागि समुदायलाई सहजीकरण गर्ने र सम्झाउने उनीभित्रको आत्मविश्वासले नै उनलाई "नबोल्ने मोनिका" बाट "सक्रिय मोनिका" बनाएको छ ।

> "यस्ता परियोजनाले किशोरीहरूको जीवनमा मात्र होइन, समाजमा पनि दीर्घकालीन प्रभाव पार्छ । त्यसैले देशभर का किशोरीलाई यस्ता अवसर दिन आवश्यक छ ।"
>
> - मोनिका

The dream of Bipana

Bipana from Kalikot had never ventured far beyond the hustle of daily life and the hearth of her home. Due to financial struggles and limited opportunities, she had lost hope for a better future. She was always in a constant struggle to support her family, but without a clear source of income, she felt disheartened.

However, one day, she got the opportunity to participate in a five-day entrepreneurship training organized under Plan International Nepal's Girls Get Equal: Preventing Child, Early and Forced Marriage project. The training brought a significant change in her perspective. She learned how to start a business, make financial plans, and use investments effectively. With this newfound knowledge, she decided to open a grocery store in her own home.

After receiving material support equivalent to NPR. 25,000 from the project, she started her shop. Initially small, the store gradually grew. The income from the shop helped cover household expenses and contributed to her children's education. She also invested the profits in poultry farming. Today, she is earning well from both her grocery shop and poultry farming.

Not only has Bipana's financial situation changed, but her social outlook has also evolved. Once trapped in the traditional practice of child marriage, she now stands as a strong advocate against it. With the goal of providing her children with good education and making them self-reliant, she continues to work hard. *"The hardships I faced should not be experienced by my children,"* she says with determination.

She is moving forward with the aim of expanding her business and becoming a successful entrepreneur in the future.

Today, Bipana is not just financially empowered; she has become a role model in her community. Once unable to dream, she is now on the path to making those dreams come true. Her efforts and success have inspired many, and she has become a symbol of social transformation.

> *A small support from the project has given a big start to my life.*
>
> *-Bipana*

बिपनाको सपना

कालिकोटकी विपनाको जीवन मेलापात र घरको चुलोचौकाभन्दा पर कहिल्यै पुगेको थिएन । आर्थिक संकट र सिमित अवसरका कारण उनले भविष्यप्रतिको आशा नै गुमाइसकेकी थिइन् । आफ्नो परिवारको जिविका धान्न उनी सधैँ संघर्षमै थिइन्, तर आयआर्जनको कुनै स्पष्ट माध्यम नभएकाले निराश थिइन् ।

तर, एक दिन उनले प्लान इन्टरनेसनल नेपालको बाल विवाह, छिटो विवाह र जबरजस्ती विवाह रोकथाम परियो जना अन्तर्गत आयोजित पाँच दिने उद्यमशीलता तालिममा सहभागी हुने अवसर पाइन् । तालिमले उनको सोचमा ठूलो परिवर्तन ल्यायो । व्यवसाय कसरी सुरु गर्ने, आर्थिक योजना बनाउने र लगानीलाई सदुपयोग गर्ने ज्ञान उनले त्यहाँबाट हाँसिल गरिन् । त्यसपछि उनले आफ्नो घरमै किराना पसल खोल्ने निधो गरिन् ।

परियोजनाबाट २५ हजार रुपैयाँ बराबरको सामग्री सहयोग पाएपछि उनले आफ्नो पसल सञ्चालन गरिन् । सुरुवातमा सानो देखिएको यो पसल विस्तारै फस्टाउँदै गयो । पसलबाट आएको आम्दानीले घरखर्च र छोराछोरीको शिक्षामा सहयोग पुऱ्यायो । नाफाबाट संचित रकमलाई उनले कुखुरापालनमा लगानी गरिन् । अहिले किराना पसल र कुखुरापालन दुवै व्यवसायबाट राम्रो आम्दानी गरिरहेकी छिन् ।

विपनाको आर्थिक मात्रै होइन, सामाजिक सोचमा पनि धेरै परिवर्तन आएको छ । विगतमा बालविवाहजस्तो कुरीतिमा फसेकी उनी अहिले यसको सशक्त विरोधमा उभिएकी छिन् । आफ्ना छोराछोरीलाई राम्रो शिक्षा दिने र उनीहरूलाई आत्मनिर्भर बनाउने लक्ष्यसहित उनले काम गरिरहेकी छिन् । "मैले भोगेको कठिनाइ अब मेरा छोराछोरीले भोग्नुपर्दैन,"उनी अठोटका साथ भन्छिन् ।

आफ्नो व्यवसायलाई अझै विस्तार गर्ने र भविष्यमा सफल उद्यमी बन्ने लक्ष्य लिएर उनी अगाडि बढिरहेकी छिन् ।

आज विपना केवल आर्थिक रूपमा सबल बनेकी छैनन्, सामाजिक रूपमा पनि उदाहरणिय व्यक्तित्व बनिसकेकी छिन् । कहिल्यै आफ्नो सपनालाई देख्न नसक्ने विपना अहिले सपनालाई साकार पार्ने यात्रामा अघि बढिरहेकी छिन् । उनका प्रयास र सफलताले समुदायमा प्रेरणा फैलाएको छ, र विपना सामाजिक रूपान्तरणको प्रतीक बनिसकेकी छिन् ।

> परियोजनाको सानो सहयोगले मेरो जीवनमा ठूलो सुरुवात गर्यो ।
>
> - विपना

Commitment to prevent child marriage before loan disbursement

Badimalika Women's Agriculture Cooperative in Kalikot has taken a unique and effective initiative in preventing child marriage. The cooperative has made it mandatory for any individual requesting a loan to sign a commitment letter ensuring that no child marriage will take place in their family. Adopting such a policy has made a significant contribution to society. The cooperative's treasurer, Apeksha, said, *"The purpose of this policy is to prevent child marriage and bring about social change in the community. We have been driving this campaign with strong determination."*

The cooperative's efforts to prevent child marriage are not limited to loan disbursement alone; it has also played a crucial role in resolving issues related to child marriage. When news of a child marriage surfaces in a family, the cooperative's members immediately coordinate with local government authorities and the police to address the matter, effectively preventing such marriages from taking place.

By coordinating with local authorities and the police, the cooperative has made significant contributions in preventing child marriage incidents. Girls Get Equal: Preventing Child, Early and Forced Marriage project, supported by Plan International Nepal, has further strengthened this campaign in the village.

If a family is economically weak and at risk of child marriage, the cooperative provides them with loans as financial assistance. This helps poor families sustain their livelihoods, making it easier for their children to receive education. This step by the cooperative is freeing families from their recent hardships.

> "*We are helping children who have been involved in child marriage by encouraging them to continue their education. This step is an important part of our campaign. We will continue to move forward with it.*
>
> *-Apeksha*"

The cooperative's campaign has significantly helped bring about change in the community. It is not only solving the problem of child marriage but also raising social awareness in general. All members of the cooperative have supported this campaign and are motivated to solve the problems in their communities. By implementing this policy, Badimalika Women's Agricultural Cooperative has set a great example, which will inspire other communities as well. The cooperative's work increases the possibility of similar initiatives being developed in other areas in the future.

पहिले बालविवाह नगर्ने प्रतिवद्धता अनि मात्र ऋण प्रवाह

कालिकोटको रास्कोटमा रहेको बडिमालिका महिला कृषि सहकारीले बालविवाह रोकथाममा अनौठो र प्रभावकारी पहल गरेको छ । सहकारीले जब कुनै व्यक्ति ऋण माग्न आउँछ, त्यस बेलामा परिवारमा बालविवाह नगरिने प्रतिवद्धता पत्रमा हस्ताक्षर गराउनु अनिवार्य बनाएको छ । यस प्रकारको नीति अपनाउनु सहकारीका लागि समाजमा ठूलो योगदानको रूपमा देखा परेको छ । सहकारीकी कोषाध्यक्ष अपेक्षाले भनेकी छन्,
" यो नीति अपनाउनुको उद्देश्य बालविवाह रोक्न र समुदायमा सामाजिक परिवर्तन ल्याउनु हो । हामीले यस अभियानलाई दृढता साथ अघि बढाएका छौं ।"

सहकारीले बालविवाह रोकथामका लागि केवल ऋणमा मात्र सिमित नगरी, समस्याका समाधानका लागि पनि महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाएको छ । जब कुनै परिवार बालविवाह गर्दैछ भन्ने खबर थाहा पाइन्छ, सहकारीका पदाधिकारीहरू तुरुन्तै स्थानीय सरकार र प्रहरीसँग समन्वय गरेर सो विषयलाई समाधान गर्न लागि परेका छन् । बिबाह रोकथाम नै गराएका छन् ।

यसरी स्थानीय सरकार र प्रहरीसँग समन्वय गरेर सहकारीले बालविवाहका घटनाहरू रोक्न महत्वपूर्ण योगदान दिएको छ । प्लान इन्टरनेसनल नेपालको सहयोगमा सञ्चालन भइरहेको बालविवाह, छिटो विवाह र जबरजस्ती विवाह रोकथाम परियोजनाले गाउँमा यो अभियानलाई अझ प्रभावकारी बनाएको छ ।

यदि कुनै परिवारको आर्थिक अवस्था कमजोर छ र बालविवाहको जोखिम छ भने, सहकारी त्यस परिवारलाई ऋण प्रवाह गरेर आर्थिक सहायता पनि पुऱ्याउँछ । यसले गरिब परिवारलाई आफ्नो जिविका चलाउन सहयोग पुऱ्याउनेछ, जसको परिणामस्वरूप ती परिवारका छोराछोरीलाई शिक्षा प्राप्त गर्न सजिलो हुने छ । सहकारीको यो कदमले उनीहरूलाई भर्खरैको कठिनाइबाट मुक्त गरिरहेको छ ।

> "हामीले बालविवाह भएका किशोरकिशोरीलाई सम्झाएर पढ्नको लागि सहयोग गरिरहेका छौं । यो कदम हाम्रो अभियानको एउटा महत्वपूर्ण अङ्ग हो । हामी यसलाई निरन्तर अघि बढाउँछौं ।
>
> - अपेक्षा"

सहकारीको यो अभियानले समाजमा परिवर्तन ल्याउन ठूलो मद्दत गरेको छ । यसले न केवल बालविवाहको समस्या समाधान गरिरहेको छ, बरु समग्रमा सामाजिक चेतनामा पनि वृद्धि गरिरहेको छ । सहकारीका सबै सदस्यहरूले यस अभियानमा साथ दिएका छन् र आफ्ना समाजका समस्याहरूलाई समाधान गर्न उत्साहित भएका छन् । यो नीति लागू गरेर बडिमालिका महिला कृषि सहकारी ले राम्रो उदाहरण प्रस्तुत गरेको छ, जुन अन्य समुदायहरूको लागि पनि प्रेरणादायक बन्नेछ । यस सहकारीको कामले भविष्यमा अन्य ठाउँहरूमा पनि समान पहलहरूको विकास गर्ने सम्भावना बढाउँछ ।

Schools as change agents:
promoting girls' rights and community awareness

Tapendra, school principal from Kalikot, shares how the school has implemented special arrangements to safeguard both the health and education of students. He explains, *"We have established an MHM (Menstrual Hygiene Management) room in the school, where adolescent girls can comfortably rest during their menstruation."* With this facility in place, students can approach a focal teacher for assistance if they face any problems. Under the teacher's guidance, students can visit the MHM room to receive necessary first aid or other services.

Tapendra adds, "*Adolescent girls often experience discomfort during menstruation. For this, they can use hot bags for relief or access other required services.*" Such facilities have provided significant relief to students. Before the support from Plan International Nepal's Girls Get Equal: Preventing Child, Early and Forced Marriage project, the school did not have any such arrangements, which sometimes forced girls to leave school during menstruation. Now, students can easily access school and receive the necessary services.

Tapendra states that this change has had a positive impact on students' learning levels. He said, "Now, girls no longer miss school because of menstruation, which has also improved the learning outcomes."

According to Tapendra, the school's teachers have been educating students about comprehensive sexuality education and adolescent health. This initiative has helped both students and the wider community begin to openly discuss these topics. He adds, "*These days, students play an important role in spreading the knowledge they gain at school into the community, raising awareness,".*

As a result, traditional taboos are being challenged and controlled. Local NGO SAADA Nepal, with financial support from Plan International Nepal, have been working through schools to bring about community change.

Tapendra notes that these campaigns have recently helped bring about changes both at the school and in the village. Students are taking the knowledge they acquire at school to their homes, advocating for a school-friendly environment, particularly one that is friendly to adolescent girls. As a result, signs of transformation are beginning to appear in both the school and the community, with open discussions and debates on sexual education and other important topics having a positive impact on society.

किशोरीमैत्री विद्यालयका कथा

कालिकोटस्थित एक विद्यालयका प्रधानाध्यापक तपेन्द्रका अनुसार, विद्यालयमा विद्यार्थीहरूको स्वास्थ्य र शिक्षा दुवैको संरक्षणका लागि विशेष व्यवस्थापन गरिएको छ । उनले भने, “हामीले विद्यालयमा एक एमएचएम रुम अर्थात् महिनावारी कक्ष स्थापना गरेका छौँ, जहाँ किशोरीहरूले महिनावारीका समयमा सहजै विश्राम लिन सक्छन् ।” यस रुमको व्यवस्था गर्दा विद्यार्थीहरूले कुनै पनि समस्या आएमा आफूलाई सहज रुपमा फोकल शिक्षकसँग भेट्न सक्नेछन् । शिक्षकको सहजीकरणमा, विद्यार्थीले उक्त रुममा गएर आवश्यक प्राथमिक उपचार वा अन्य सेवा लिन सक्छन् ।

तपेन्द्र थप्छन्, “प्राय: किशोरीहरूलाई महिनावारीको समयमा असहजता महसुस हुन्छ । यसका लागि उनीहरूले हट ब्याग प्रयोग गरेर सेक्न सक्छन् या अन्य आवश्यक सेवा प्राप्त गर्न सक्छन् ।” यस्ता सुविधा विद्यार्थीहरूको लागि ठूलो राहत बनेका छन् । जबकी प्लान इन्टरनेसनल नेपालको सहयोगमा संचालित बालविवाह, छिटो विवाह र जबरजस्ती विवाह रोकथाम परियोजना अघि विद्यालयमा यस्ता कुनै सुविधा थिएन, जसको कारण किशोरीहरूले महिनावारीको समयमा विद्यालय छोड्नुपर्ने अवस्था सिर्जना हुन्थ्यो । अब भने, विद्यालयमा आउने र आवश्यक सेवा प्राप्त गर्ने मौका विद्यार्थीलाई सजिलो भएको छ ।

यस परिवर्तनले विद्यार्थीहरूको सिकाइ स्तरमा सकारात्मक प्रभाव पारेको तपेन्द्र बताउँछन् । “अब, किशोरीहरु महिनावारीका कारण विद्यालय अनुपस्थित हुँदैनन्, जसले गर्दा सिकाइको स्तर पनि सुधार भएको छ,” उनले भने ।

तपेन्द्रका अनुसार, विद्यालयका शिक्षकहरूले यौन शिक्षा र किशोरी स्वास्थ्यका बारेमा विद्यार्थीलाई बोध गराउने काम गरेका छन् । यसबाट विद्यार्थी र सिंगो समाजले यस्ता विषयहरूमा खुलेर कुरा गर्न थालिसकेका छन् ।

जसका कारण परम्परागत कुरीतिहरूलाई नियन्त्रण गर्न मद्दत पुगिरहेको छ । यसका लागि, प्लान इन्टरनेसनल नेपालको आर्थिक सहयोगमा स्थानीय एनजीओ सादा नेपालले स्कुलका माध्यमबाट समूदाय परिवर्तनको प्रयास गरिरहेका छन् ।

पछिल्लो समय, यस्ता अभियानले विद्यालय र गाउँमा परिवर्तन ल्याउन मद्दत पुऱ्याएको तपेन्द्र बताउँछन् । विद्यार्थीहरूले विद्यालयमा सिकेका कुराहरू घरघरमा लैजाने र विद्यालयमैत्री, विशेषगरी किशोरीमैत्री विद्यालयको माग उठाउने गरेका छन् । यसरी, विद्यालय र समुदायमा परि वर्तनका लक्षणहरु देखिन थालेका छन्, र यौन शिक्षा र अन्य महत्वपूर्ण विषयमा खुला बहस र विचारविमर्शले समाजमा सकारात्मक प्रभाव पारे को छ ।

“हिजोआज विद्यालयमा सिकेका कुराहरू समुदायमा फैलाउन, जनचेतना बढाउन विद्यार्थीहरूले महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका खेलेका छन्, ।

– तपेन्द्र”

Empowering change at
Community school

Under the leadership of Principle Tek Bahadur, there has been rigorously implementing a child protection policy in his school. The school follows a strict code of conduct for students during the teaching and learning process. Whenever a parent visits the school, they are required to adhere to a specific code of conduct, ensuring a respectful and safe environment for all.

Principal Tek Bahadur explains, *"We have paid special attention to child rights. To make this implementation easier, various organizations, with financial support from Plan International Nepal, have played a significant role."* The school has developed separate codes of conduct for teachers, parents, children, and visitors, which are communicated through various meetings to ensure everyone is informed and accountable.

With the support of Plan International Nepal, the school has institutionalized several initiatives to bring about improvements.

> *"The codes of conduct were developed with a focus on the roles of parents and teachers. Additionally, a comprehensive complaint hearing mechanism has been put in place, where the seven-member committee reviews complaints and works toward finding solutions."*
>
> *- Tek Bahadur*

A major improvement at the school is the establishment of a Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) room, which supports female students during their menstruation. The room provides a safe space for girls to rest and receive basic medical care, which has helped maintain regular attendance for female students during this time.

Plan International Nepal's support has also provided personal development opportunities for the school teachers. Female teachers, in particular, have played a critical role in addressing the physical and mental health issues of adolescent girls with empathy and support. Tek Bahadur says, "*We have started taking students' issues seriously, and female teachers have played an essential role in helping them talk openly about these issues and providing the necessary assistance."*

The school also practices comprehensive complaint hearing mechanism, where suggestion box is opened every 15 days. Complaints are recorded in detail and discussed in meetings, which has strengthened the understanding between teachers and parents. Tek Bahadur says, *"Collective efforts have helped improve the perspectives of both the school and the village."*

Through the support of Plan International Nepal, the school has not only brought about structural improvements but has also contributed significantly to the personal and professional development of teachers.

बाल संरक्षण प्रवर्द्धनमा विद्यालयको सक्रियता

कालिकोटको एक सामुदायिक विद्यालय, जहाँ बाल संरक्षण नीति पूर्ण रूपमा कार्यान्वयन हुदै आएको छ । विद्यालयमा बालबालिकालाई शिक्षण सिकाईको प्रक्रियामा आचारसंहिता पालना गराउने प्रक्रिया कडाइका साथ अनुसरण गरिन्छ । विद्यालयमा कुनै अभिभावकले विद्यालय प्रवेश गर्दा, उनीहरूले निश्चित आचारसंहिता पालना गर्नुपर्ने व्यवस्था बनाइएको छ ।

एक विद्यालयका प्रधानाध्यापक टेक बहादुर भन्छन्,“हामीले विशेषगरी बालअधिकारको कुरालाई धेरै ख्याल गरेका छौँ । यसको कार्यान्वयनलाई सहज बनाउन प्लान इन्टरनेसनल नेपालको आर्थिक सहयोगमा विभिन्न संघसंस्थाले ठूलो भूमिका खेल्दै आएका छन् ।” विद्यालयले बाल अधिकारको कडा पालना गर्ने प्रक्रियामा शिक्षक, अभिभावक, बालबालिका र आगन्तुक सबैका लागि छुट्टाछुट्टै आचारसंहिता तयार गरेको छ, जसलाई विभिन्न भेलाहरू मार्फत जानकारी गराइन्छ ।

प्लान इन्टरनेसनल नेपालको सहयोगमा सामुदायिक विद्यालयहरुमा सुधारका विभिन्न पहलहरूलाई संस्थागत गरिएको छ ।

> “अभिभावक र शिक्षकको भूमिकालाई ध्यानमा राखी आवश्यक आचारसंहिता तयार गरिएको छ । साथै, गुनासो सुनुवाइको व्यवस्था पनि गरिएको छ, जसमा सात सदस्यीय समितीले गुनासोहरूको अध्ययन गरेर समाधान निकाल्ने काम गर्छ ।
>
> - टेक बहादुर ”

विशेषगरी, विद्यालयमा महिनावारी कक्ष (एमएचएम रुम) पनि राखिएको छ, जसले छात्राहरुलाई महिनावारीको समयमा सहयोग पुर्याउँछ । छात्राहरुलाई आधारभूत उपचार सहित विश्राम लिनको लागि एक सुरक्षित स्थान उपलब्ध गराइएको छ । यस सुविधाको कारण छात्राहरूको विद्यालयमा उपस्थिती नियमित भएको छ ।

प्लान इन्टरनेसनल नेपालको सहयोगले विद्यालयका शिक्षिकाहरूलाई पनि व्यक्तिगत विकासको अवसर दिएको छ । महिला शिक्षकहरूको व्यवस्था विशेष रूपमा किशोरीहरूको मानसिक र शारीरिक समस्यामा सहानुभूति र सहयोग पुऱ्याउन महत्वपूर्ण बनेको छ । “हामीले विद्यार्थीहरूको समस्यालाई गम्भीरताका साथ लिन सुरु गरेका छौँ, र त्यस्तो विषयमा खुलेर कुरा गर्न र आवश्यक सहायता प्रदान गर्न महिला शिक्षकहरूले महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका खेल्न थालेका छन्,” विकले भने ।

विद्यालयमा रहेको गुनासो पेटिकालाई हरेक १५ दिनमा खोल्ने प्रचलन पनि रहेको छ । गुनासोका विषयमा माईन्युटमा रेकर्ड राखिन्छ र त्यसपछि बैठकमा छलफल गरिन्छ । यस प्रक्रियाले विद्यालयका शिक्षक र अभिभावकहरूको आपसी समझदारीमा वृद्धि गराएको छ । “सामूहिक प्रयासले विद्यालय र गाउँका दृष्टिकोणलाई सुधार्न मद्दत पुर्याएको छ,” विकले भने ।

यसरी प्लान इन्टरनेसनल नेपालको सहयोगले विद्यालयमा संरचनात्मक सुधार मात्र ल्याएको छैन, तर यसले शिक्षकहरूको व्यक्तिगत र व्यावसायिक विकासमा पनि ठूलो योगदान पुऱ्याएको छ ।

Janmadev:

A lifelong commitment to social change

Janmadev, a social activist and teacher from Raskot, Kalikot, has dedicated much of his life to education and social causes. He served in the teaching profession from 1979 to 2021, contributing significantly to the field of education. Although he formally retired from government service, his involvement in social campaigns has remained strong. Recently, he has been working as the Secretary of the Religious Network in Raskot Municipality, collaborating with Plan International Nepal.

During his time as a teacher, Janmadev witnessed the widespread issue of child marriage in his community and worked tirelessly to combat it. He took an active role in raising awareness, visiting villages, and engaging directly with the community. Even after retiring from his teaching career, Janmadev continued his fight against social evils like child marriage by participating in various organizations.

Janmadev gained further knowledge and insight into tackling child marriage by attending a training organized by Plan International Nepal. He shared, "This training gave me more confidence and a systematic approach to fighting against this social evil."

Another key aspect of Janmadev's life is his knowledge of astrology. Recognizing this expertise, Plan International Nepal appointed him as the Secretary of the Religious Network in Raskot Municipality. As a religious leader, he works against child marriage by advising those seeking astrology services to delay marriage. In addition, he has trained Dhami-Jhakris (local religious leaders) who now play an active role in reducing child marriage. This collective effort is making a significant impact in the fight against social evils like child marriage and untouchability in the community.

Janmadev acknowledges the vital role of Plan International Nepal's project in bringing about change in the village. He said,"This project has brought about change in the village, and the impact of child marriage and other social issues has decreased." Before the project started, the community accepted issues like child marriage as part of tradition, causing harm to adolescents.

However, with the support of Plan International Nepal, awareness grew among adolescents. Important topics like comprehensive sexuality education began to be openly discussed in schools. The youth began raising their voices against child marriage. As a result, there has been a notable reduction in child marriage and other social evils. Janmadev is confident that such practices will soon come to an end.

Janmadev's contribution to social change is widely admired.

> *The diplomatic initiatives of religious leaders can bring about positive change in these issues. It inspires others in the village to pursue change as well.*
>
> *- Janmadev*

सामाजिक परिवर्तनका लागि जन्मदेवको प्रतिज्ञा

जन्मदेव, कालिकोट रास्कोटका एक समाजसेवी र शिक्षक हुन् । उनले आफ्नो युवावय समय शिक्षण पेसामा बिताए, जहाँ ०३९ सालदेखि ०७८ सालसम्म शिक्षाको क्षेत्रमा योगदान दिएका छन् । औपचारिक रुपमा सरकारबाट अवकास पाएपनि उनी सामाजिक अभियानमा भने निरन्तर सक्रिय देखिन्छन् । पछिल्लो समय उनले प्लान इन्टरनेसनल नेपाल सँग जोडिएर रास्कोट नगरपालिकाको धार्मिक संजालमा सचिवको रूपमा काम गर्दैछन् ।

शिक्षकको रूपमा कार्यरत हुँदा उनले गाउँमा बालबिवाहको समस्या देखेका थिए र यसको न्यूनिकरणको लागि कडा संघर्ष गर्दै आएका थिए । जनचेतना फैलाउन उनी गाउँसमाजमा प्रत्यक्ष गएर सक्रिय रहे । शिक्षकको पेसाबाट अवकास पछि पनि उनले विभिन्न संस्थामा सहभागिता जनाउँदै बालबिवाह जस्ता सामाजिक कुरितीलाई अन्त्य गर्ने अभियानमा आफ्नो योगदान जारी राखे ।

प्लान इन्टरनेसनल नेपालको एउटा तालिममा सहभागी भएर उनले आफूलाई थप ज्ञान प्राप्त गरे र योजनाबद्ध तरिकाले कसरी बालबिवाहको विरुद्ध संघर्ष गर्ने भन्ने उपायहरु सिके । उनले भने,“यस तालिमले मलाई यो कुरितीविरुद्धको संघर्षमा अझ बढी आत्मविश्वास र योजनाबद्ध दृष्टिकोण दिएको छ ।”

जन्मदेवको अर्को प्रमुख विशेषता भनेको उनको ज्योतिष ज्ञान हो । यसलाई ध्यानमा राख्दै, प्लान इन्टरनेसनल नेपालले उनलाई रास्कोट नगरपालिकाको धार्मिक संजालको सचिव बनायो । उनले धार्मिक अगुवाका रूपमा बालबिवाहको बिरोधमा काम गर्दै चिना हेराउन आउनेलाई विवाह नगर्न अनुरोध गर्ने गरेका छन् । यसका अलावा, उनले धामी झाक्रीलाई पनि तालिम दिएको र अहिले समूहका सबै धार्मिक अगुवा बालबिवाह न्यूनिकरणमा भूमिका खेलिरहेका छन् । यसले गाउँमा बालबिवाह र छुवाछुत जस्ता कुरितीहरूका विरुद्ध संघर्ष गर्ने सामूहिक प्रयासमा महत्वपूर्ण योगदान पुर्याएको छ।

> “पण्डितहरूको कटनीतिक पहलले यस्ता समस्यामा सकारात्मक प्रभाव ल्याउन सक्छ । यसले गाउँका अन्य व्यक्तिहरूलाई पनि परिवर्तनको लागी प्रेरित गर्दछ ।
>
> - जन्मदेव”

गाउँमा परिवर्तन ल्याउन प्लान इन्टरनेसनल नेपालको परियोजनाको महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका रहेको जन्मदेव बताउँछन् । उनका अनुसार, “यस परियोजनाले गाउँमा परिवर्तन ल्याएको छ र बालबिवाह जस्ता कुरितीहरूको प्रभाव घटेको छ । ” परियोजना शुरु हुनुअघि गाउँमा बालबिवाह र अन्य सामाजिक समस्याहरूलाई गम्भीरता दिएर समाधान गर्ने अभ्यास थिएन । गाउँलेहरूले यी कुराहरु परम्पराको रूपमा स्वीकारेका थिए, जसले गर्दा विशेष गरि किशोर किशोरीहरू प्रभावित भइरहेका थिए ।

तर, जब प्लान इन्टरनेसनल नेपालको नेतृत्वमा परियोजना सञ्चालन भयो, तब किशोरकिशोरीहरु जागरुक हुन थाले । विद्यालयहरूमा यौन शिक्षा लगायतका महत्वपूर्ण विषयहरु खुलेर छलफल गरिन थाले । बालबिवाहको बिरुद्धमा युवा पिढीले पनि आवाज उठाउन थाले । यसका परिणामस्वरूप, बालबिवाह र अन्य सामाजिक कुरितीहरूमा महत्त्वपूर्ण कमी आएको छ र जन्मदेवलाई विश्वास छ कि यस्ता कुरितीहरु छिट्टै पूर्ण रूपमा समाप्त हुनेछन् ।

समाजिक परिवर्तनका लागि जन्मदेवको योगदान विशेष रुपमा सराहनीय छ ।

Dhankanya returns to school

Nowadays, 14-year-old Dhankanya from Jumla has experienced a significant turning point in her life. Since early childhood, Dhankanya has faced numerous challenges. Her mother passed away when she was young, and her father works as a labourer in India, far from the family. Her elder brother is also in India for work, which left the responsibility of managing the household to her sister-in-law, Magali.

As a result, Dhankanya's childhood was far from easy. Due to her family's financial difficulties and the burden of household chores, she was compelled to drop out of school. Her daily routine revolved around helping her sister-in-law with housework and caring for her brother's young children. Despite these challenges, her desire to return to school never waned.

Dropped out from school since four years, Dhankanya's future seemed uncertain. However, the "Girls Get Equal: Preventing Child, Early and Forced Marriage" project by Plan International Nepal gave her life a new purpose. The project team identified her and helped improve her family's financial situation by supporting a poultry farming business startup. With this assistance, her sister-in-law built a chicken coop and began raising local breed chickens. Although the business is still in its early stages and hasn't yet yielded significant income, however, it has brought new hope and confidence to the family. The belief that the business will flourish has infused Dhankanya's life with optimism.

Additionally, the project prioritised sending Dhankanya back to school. Alongside supporting the family's poultry farming venture, it provided educational materials to encourage her return to education. With the project's support and her family's encouragement, Dhankanya finally had the opportunity to fulfil her long-held dream.

Now, Dhankanya is enrolled in grade 4, giving her education a fresh start. She is overjoyed to be back in school and now dreams of working hard to secure a job in the future. Fully aware of the importance of education, she is determined to continue her studies further.

Dhankanya's life is now filled with happiness. The project's assistance has opened a path to financial stability for her family, and provided her the opportunity to continue her education. Her excitement at returning to school is evident. This transformation in Dhanakanya's life shows not only a better future for her but also reflects improvements in her family's circumstances. It demonstrates how even small efforts can bring significant changes in someone's life.

फेरि विद्यालय फर्किएकी धनकन्या

जुम्लाकी १४ वर्षिया धनकन्या सार्कीको जीवनले हिजोआज नयाँ मोड लिएको छ । धनकन्याले सानै उमेरदेखि विभिन्न समस्यासँग जुध्दै आइरहेकी छिन् । उनकी आमा सानै हुँदा बितिन् भने उनका बुबा परिवार बाट टाढा बसेर भारतमा मजदुरी गर्छन् । दाजु पनि रोजगारीकै लागि भारतमा रहेकाले घरको सम्पूर्ण जिम्मेवारी भाउजु माउलीले सम्हालिरहेकी थिइन् ।

यसरी हेर्दा धनकन्याको बाल्यकाल सहज भएन । कमजोर आर्थिक अवस्था र घरको चापका कारण उनले विद्यालय जान छोड्नुपर्यो । उनको दैनिकी भाउजुलाई घरधन्दामा सहयोग गर्ने र दाजुभाउजुका साना बच्चाको हेरचाहमा बित्न थाल्यो । यद्यपि, विद्यालय जाने धनकन्याको मनभित्रको इच्छा कहिल्यै मरेको थिएन ।

चार वर्षसम्म विद्यालय जान नपाएको अवस्थामा धनकन्याको जीवन अन्यौलपूर्ण बनेको थियो । यस्तो अवस्थामा प्लान इन्टरनेसनल नेपालको बालविवाह, छिटो विवाह र जबरजस्ती विवाह रोकथाम परियोजनाले उनको जीवनलाई नयाँ दिशा देखायो । परियोजनाले उनलाई पहिचान गरी परिवारको आर्थिक स्थिति सुधार गर्न कुखुरापालन व्यवसाय सुरु गर्न सहयोग गर्यो ।

भाउजुले परियोजनाको सहयोगमा कुखुराको खोर निर्माण गरिन् र स्थानीय जातका कुखुरा पालन सुरु गरिन् । यद्यपि, व्यवसाय भर्खरै सुरु भएकाले तत्काल ठूलो आर्थिक आम्दानी भने हुन सकेको छैन । तर, यसले परिवारमा एउटा नयाँ आशा र आत्मविश्वास जगाएको छ । भविष्यमा यस व्यवसायलाई विस्तार गरी राम्रो आम्दानी गर्न सकिने विश्वासले धनकन्याको जीवनमा सकारात्मक ऊर्जा ल्याएको स्पष्ट देख्न सकिन्छ ।

अर्कोतर्फ, परियोजनाले धनकन्यालाई विद्यालय फर्काउनेतर्फ विशेष ध्यान दियो । परिवारलाई कुखुरापालनमा सहयोगमात्रै होइन, धनकन्यालाई शैक्षिक सामग्रीसमेत उपलब्ध गराउँदै उनलाई पुन: विद्यालय जान प्रोत्साहित गर्यो । परियोजनाको सहयोग र परिवारको हौसलाले धनकन्याले फेरि आफ्नो अधुरो सपना पूरा गर्ने अवसर पाइन् ।

अहिले धनकन्या कक्षा ४ मा भर्ना भएर आफ्नो अध्ययनलाई नयाँ सुरुवात दिएकी छिन् । विद्यालय जान पाएकोमा उनी अत्यन्तै खुसी छिन् । अब उनी भविष्यमा राम्रो पढाई गरी जागिर खाने सपना देख्न थालेकी छिन् । अब भने पढाइको महत्त्वबारे आफूले झन स्पष्टसँग बुझ्न सकेको र यसलाई निरन्तरता दिन दृढ इच्छाशक्ति रहेको उनी बताउँछिन् ।

धनकन्याको जीवनमा अहिले खुसीका रंगहरु भरिएका छन् । परियोजनाको सहयोगले उनको परिवारलाई आर्थिकरूपमा बलियो बनाउने बाटो खुल्यो भने उनलाई आफ्नो औपचारिक शिक्षालाई निरन्तरता दिने अवसर मिल्यो । विद्यालयको वातावरणमा पुन: फर्कन पाएको उत्साह उनमा स्पष्ट देख्न सकिन्छ ।

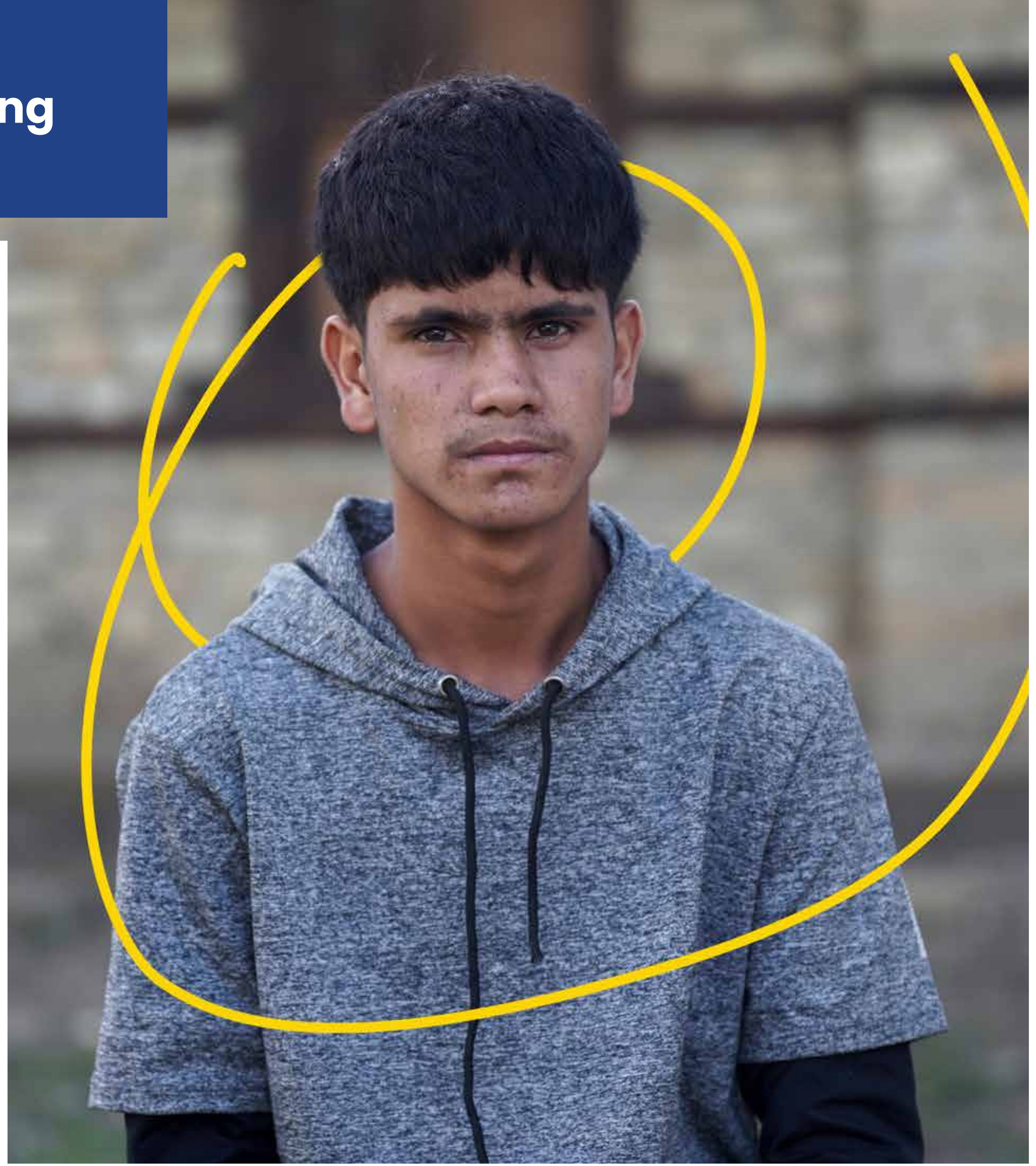
धनकन्याको जीवनको यो परिवर्तनले केवल उनको भविष्य मात्र होइन, सिंगो परिवारको अवस्थालाई सुधार गर्ने संकेत देखाएको छ । र, सानै प्रयासले पनि कसैको जीवनमा ठूलो परिवर्तन ल्याउन सक्ने रहेछ भन्ने सकिन्छ ।

Young teenagers embracing social responsibility

In Jumla, a group of teenagers, led by Nayan, has brought about significant changes in their village. They have come to understand that child marriage is not only illegal but also detrimental to society. Acting on this realisation, they are dedicated to preventing child, early, and forced marriage in their community. With a deep sense of responsibility towards their families and the community, Nayan and his friends are actively engaged in stopping child marriage through their group, Champions of Change (CoC).

Nayan's journey of transformation and his new sense of purpose were not straightforward. Growing up in a community where child marriage was considered a customary practice, altering their mindset was no small feat. The Plan International Nepal's Girls Get Equal: Preventing Child, Early and Forced Marriage project played a crucial role in bringing about this change. The project provided them with comprehensive knowledge about the legal and social implications of child marriage and its adverse effects on children's futures. This understanding reshaped their outlook and influenced their actions.

The group conducts various campaigns to prevent child marriage within their community. They visit households, raising awareness about the consequences of child marriage and educating locals on its harmful impact. If their efforts do not succeed in stopping a marriage, they are unafraid to seek legal assistance. Their swift actions, such as notifying the police, have become an inspiration to many in the village.



Nayan and his group do not limit their efforts to child marriage prevention. They also advocate for gender equality and openly address sensitive topics such as menstruation. They recognise the importance of supporting women during menstruation by ensuring they receive proper care, nutritious food, and emotional support. Their actions reflect this understanding, as they actively assist women during such times.

This shift in awareness and behaviour has brought positive change to the community. The knowledge gained from the Plan International Nepal's project, combined with their practical efforts, has resulted in a marked reduction in child marriage incidents. As Nayan mentions, their endeavours have significantly reduced such occurrences in recent times.

Today, Nayan and his group stand as role models in their community. Their efforts not only foster a culture of positive thinking but also inspire other young people to contribute to societal transformation. Their work is helping to eliminate harmful practices like child marriage, paving the way for a brighter future for children. This progress has strengthened the belief among these teenagers that their actions can bring about long-term improvements in the attitudes and traditions of their community.

सामाजिक जिम्मेवारी बहन गरिरहेका कलिला किशोरहरु

जुम्लाका किशोर नयन र उनको समूहले गाउँमा उल्लेखनिय परिवर्तन ल्याएका छन् । सानै उमेरमा विवाह गर्नु गैरकानुनी मात्र नभई समाजका लागि हानिकारक छ भन्ने बुझेर उनीहरु गाउँमा बालविवाह रोक्न लागिपरेका छन् । परिवार र समुदायप्रति गहिरो जिम्मेवारी बोधका साथ नयन र उनका साथीहरु सिओसी बोईज नामक समूहमार्फत बालविवाह रोकथाममा सक्रिय देखिन्छन् ।

नयनको जीवन र उद्देश्यमा आएको यो परिवर्तन यति सहज भने थिएन । पहिला बालविवाहलाई सामान्य परम्परा मान्ने समुदायमा हुर्किएका उनीहरुमा यस्तो सोच ल्याउन प्लान इन्टरनेसनल नेपालको बालविवाह, छिटो विवाह र जबरजस्ती विवाह रोकथाम परियोजनाले ठूलो भूमिका खेल्यो । परियोजनाले बालविवाहका कानुनी र सामाजिक पक्ष मात्र होइन, यसले बालबालिकाको भविष्यमा पार्ने नकारात्मक प्रभावबारे पनि उनीहरुलाई गहिरो ज्ञान प्रदान गऱ्यो । परियोजनाबाट सिकेका कुराले नयन र उनका साथीहरुको दृष्टिकोण मात्र बदलिएन, उनीहरुका गतिविधिमा पनि स्पष्ट परिवर्तन आयो ।

समूहले समुदायमा बालविवाह रोक्न विभिन्न अभियान सञ्चालन गर्दै आएको छ । उनीहरुले घरदैलो अभियान सञ्चालन गरेर बालविवाहको असर बारे स्थानीयलाई सचेत गराउने काम गर्छन् । यदि उनीहरुको पहलले बालविवाह रोक्न सम्भव भएन भने कानुनी सहयोग लिनसमेत पछि पर्दैनन् । प्रहरीलाई तत्काल खबर गरेर बालविवाह रोक्ने तिनको तत्परता समुदायमा धेरैलाई प्रेरणा दिने खालको छ ।

नयन र सिओसी समूहको प्रयास बालविवाह रोकथाममा मात्र सीमित छैन । उनीहरु महिला र पुरुषबीच समानताको वकालत गर्दै महिनावारीजस्ता संवेदनशील विषयलाई समेत खुलेर उठाउँछन् । महिनावारीका समयमा महिलालाई सहयोग गर्नुपर्ने, पोषणयुक्त खाना खुवाउनुपर्ने, र शारीरिक तथा मानसिक साथ सहयोग दिनुपर्ने कुरा उनीहरुले राम्रोसँग बुझेका छन् । जसलाई व्यवहारमा उतारेर महिलालाई हरेक काममा सहयोग गर्दै आइरहेका देखिन्छन्, उनीहरु ।

यो परिवर्तनको कारण उनीहरुको बुझाई र व्यवहारमा आएको जागरुकता हो । प्लान इन्टरनेसनल नेपालको परियोजनाले सिकाएको ज्ञान र त्यसलाई व्यवहारमा उतार्न गरेको अभ्यासले समुदायमा सकारात्मक प्रभाव पारेको देखिन्छ । नयनले भनेजस्तै, यिनै कारण पछिल्लो समय बालविवाहका घटनामा उल्लेखनीय कमी आएको छ ।

आज नयन र उनको समूह समाजमा उदाहरणिय बनेका छन् । उनीहरुको यो प्रयासले समुदायमा सकारात्मक सोचको विकास गर्नमात्र होइन, अन्य युवाहरुलाई पनि सामाजिक परिवर्तनका लागि अघि बढ्न प्रेरित गरेको छ । उनीहरुको प्रयासले बालविवाहजस्ता कुप्रथा हटाएर बालबालिकाको उज्ज्वल भविष्य निर्माण गर्न मद्दत गरिरहेको छ । यस्तो परिवर्तनले समुदायको सोचाइ र संस्कारमा दीर्घकालीन सुधार ल्याउने विश्वास स्वयंम यि किशोरहरुमा बढ्दै गएको छ ।

Kavita's joyful turnaround

through her shop business

Kavita from Jumla has become an example of an empowered woman in her village. The small grocery shop she operates in one corner of the village has now become the primary source of income for her family. Not only does she manage daily expenses through this shop, but she has also been able to save some money. Additionally, the sewing machine she keeps in the shop has strengthened her income further. Her skill in giving new style to old clothes has made her well-liked in the community.

However, Kavita's journey has not been easy. Previously, she had been earning a living through seasonal work, but health issues made physical labour increasingly difficult for her. Taking into account the challenges of seasonal work and the responsibilities of managing the household, she decided to start a small business. With the NPR. 3,000 saved from her seasonal work, Kavita was able to establish her shop, a proof of her determination and hard work.

The Plan International Nepal's "Girls Get Equal: Preventing Child, Early and Forced Marriage" project played a crucial role in her business journey. After attending the entrepreneurship training provided by the project, Kavita learned how to run her business in an organised manner. The training encouraged her to plan her business, manage income and expenses, and think commercially. Essentially, the project became her business mentor. Kavita was able to expand her small shop through the skills and financial support provided by the project.

Today, Kavita earns NPR. 20,000 a month from her shop, which far exceeds the earnings from her previous seasonal work. Becoming independent through her business has made Kavita feel empowered and strong.

> "*Running a shop is much easier than seasonal work, and it is also better for my health.*"
>
> *-Kavita*

Kavita's story highlights two significant social issues. Firstly, it shows how independent women can bring about positive changes in their families and communities. Secondly, it illustrates how child marriage negatively impacts a woman's health, education, and future. Kavita's struggles and success offer valuable lessons for young people.

She says, "We suffered, and I don't want future generations to go through the same." Now, she advises the young people in her community to avoid child marriage. Her story not only raises awareness about the potential risks of child marriage but also inspires women to pursue entrepreneurship.

Kavita's journey is not just about her personal success; it is also a commendable example of community transformation. It shows that when the right support is provided at the right time, any challenge can be turned into an opportunity. Kavita now wants to use the knowledge and opportunities she has received to contribute to her community, reflecting her deep sense of social responsibility.

पसल व्यवसायले फर्काएको कविताको खुशी

जुम्लाकी कविता आज गाउँमा आत्मनिर्भर महिलाको उदाहरण बनेकी छिन् । गाउँको एक कुनामा उनले सञ्चालन गरेको सानो किराना पसल अहिले उनको परिवारको मुख्य आम्दानीको स्रोत बनेको छ । यो पसलबाट उनले दैनिक खर्च व्यवस्थापन मात्र गरिरहेकी छैनन्, केही रकम बचत पनि गरिरहेकी छिन् । साथै, पसलमा राखिएको सिउने मेसिनले उनको आम्दानीलाई अझै बलियो बनाएको छ । स्थानीय ग्राहकका पुराना कपडामा नयाँपन दिने उनको सीपले उनलाई समुदायमा झनै रुचाइएको छ ।

तर, कविताको यो यात्रा सजिलो थिएन । पहिले मेलापात गरेर जीविका चलाउँदै आएकी कवितालाई स्वास्थ्यमा समस्या देखिएपछि शारीरिक श्रम गर्न गाह्रो हुन थाल्यो । मेलापातको कठिनाई र घरको जिम्मेवारीलाई मध्यनजर गर्दै उनले पसल व्यवसाय सुरु गर्ने निर्णय गरिन् । यसरी मेलापातबाट बचत गरेको जम्मा ३ हजार रुपैयाँले पसलको जग बसाल्न सक्नु कविताको दृढ इच्छाशक्ति र परिश्रमको उदाहरण हो ।

कविताको व्यवसायिक यात्रामा प्लान इन्टरनेसनल नेपालको बालविवाह, छिटो विवाह र जबरजस्ती विवाह रोकथाम परियोजना एउटा कोसेढुंगा सावित भयो । परियोजनाले सञ्चालन गरेको व्यवसायिक तालिममा सहभागी भएपछि कविताले व्यवसायलाई व्यवस्थित तरिकाले अघि बढाउन सिकिन् । तालिमले उनलाई व्यवसायिक योजना बनाउन, आम्दानी र खर्चको लेखाजोखा राख्न, र व्यवसायिक सोच निर्माण गर्न प्रेरित गर्यो । सारमा भन्दा, परियोजना उनको व्यवसायिक गुरु बन्यो । परियोजनाले दिएको सीप र आर्थिक सहयोगकै कारण उनको सानो पसल विस्तार हुनसक्यो ।

आज कविता आफ्नै पसलबाट मासिक २० हजार रुपैयाँ आम्दानी गरिरहेकी छिन् । यो आम्दानीले मेलापातबाट हुने कमाइलाई धेरै गुणाले उछिनिसकेको उनी बताउँछिन् । व्यवसायमार्फत आत्मनिर्भर बनेपछि कविताले आफैलाई सक्षम र सशक्त महसुस गर्न थालेकी छिन् ।

कविताको कथाले दुईवटा ठूला सामाजिक मुद्दाहरुलाई उजागर गर्छ । पहिलो, आत्मनिर्भर महिलाले परिवार र समाजमा सकारात्मक परिवर्तन ल्याउन सक्ने शक्ति राख्छिन् । दोस्रो, बालविवाहले महिलाको स्वास्थ्य, शिक्षा, र भविष्यमा कस्तो नकारात्मक असर पार्छ भन्ने कुरा कविताको अनुभवले प्रष्ट पार्छ । सानै उमेरमा विवाह भएपछि उनले गरेको संघर्ष र अहिले प्राप्त गरेको सफलता दुवैबाट युवा पुस्ताले धेरै कुरा सिक्न सक्छन् ।

> “ मेलापातभन्दा पसल व्यवसाय चलाउन धेरै सहज छ, र यो बाटो मेरो स्वास्थ्यका लागि पनि सही हो ।
>
> - कविता ”

कविता भन्छिन्, “हामीले आफूले त दुख पायौं, अबका पुस्ताले नपाऊन् भन्ने लाग्छ । “उनी अब छरछिमेकका किशोरकिशोरीलाई बालविवाह नगर्न सल्लाह दिन्छिन् । यद्यपि, उनका अनुभव र जीवनको कथाले समाजलाई बालविवाहको हानिका बारे सचेत बनाउने मात्र होइन, महिलाहरुका लागि उद्यमशीलताको प्रेरणा पनि दिन्छ ।

यो कथा केवल कविताको व्यक्तिगत सफलताको गाथा हो, तर समुदाय परिवर्तनको उज्यालो दृष्टान्त पनि हो । यसले देखाउँछ कि जब सही समयमा सही सहयोग उपलब्ध हुन्छ, हरेक चुनौतीलाई अवसरमा बदल्न सकिन्छ । कविता आज आफूले पाएको ज्ञान र अवसरलाई आफ्नो समुदायका लागि योगदान दिन चाहन्छिन् । यसले उनीभित्रको सामाजिक जिम्मेवारीको गहिराईलाई पनि प्रतिबिम्बित गर्छ ।

Shivalaxmi's entrepreneurial journey,

starting with two sheep

Shivalaxmi from Jumla has now begun to introduce herself as an entrepreneur. This was not a label that matched her life a few years ago. Without even basic knowledge of business, she is now self-reliant through her sheep farming venture. However, this journey was not an easy one, and it was never a path she had imagined for herself. The change began with the Plan International Nepal's Girls Get Equal: Preventing Child, Early and Forced Marriage project.

Some time ago, Shivalaxmi had the opportunity to take part in an entrepreneurship training organised by the project team. At first, she was not particularly interested in the training, but as she listened to the trainer, the potential of business began to shine through. For the first time, she realised that business could change the course of her life. However, when it came to deciding what kind of business to pursue, she remained uncertain for quite some time. At that point, her family had just two sheep. So, she decided to take the step of professionalising her parents' sheep farming business.

Through the project, Shivalaxmi received support in the form of a ram for her sheep farming. With this help, along with her own dedication, the business that started with just two sheep has now grown to 35. Shivalaxmi, who is currently pursuing her undergraduate studies, has been using the income from her sheep farming to support her education. Balancing her studies with running the business has been challenging, but her father has been a great help, supporting her with the care of the sheep. She says, *"With my father's assistance, I am able to manage both my studies and the business. Now, I feel confident to run a business wherever I go."*

Today, sheep farming is the main source of income for Shivalaxmi's family. The business has not only improved their standard of living but has also empowered Shivalaxmi to stand on her own independently. She is now working on organising the business more efficiently and expanding it further. At 21, Shivalaxmi has no intention of rushing into marriage. She wants to complete her education first and achieve professional success. Her plan is to marry only once she has secured financial independence.

Shivalaxmi's journey is truly inspiring. By breaking free from the traditional mindset of child marriage, she has made education and business her priorities.

> *I have decided to move forward, learning as I go. The Plan International Nepal's project has played an immense role in filling me with energy.*
>
> *- Shivalaxmi*

This story serves as an example of how life can change direction when opportunity and determination align. Shivalaxmi started with small steps and has now achieved great success. Her story is not only an inspiration to thousands of young people but also a strong example of self-reliance.

२ भेडाबाट सुरु भएको
शिवलक्ष्मीको उद्यमशील यात्रा

जुम्लाकी शिवलक्ष्मीले अहिले आफूलाई उद्यमीका रूपमा चिनाउन थालेकी छिन् । यो परिचय केहि वर्षअघि उनको जीवनसँग मेल खाने विषय थिएन । व्यवसायको सामान्य जानकारीसमेत नभएकी उनी आज भेडापालन व्यवसायबाट आत्मनिर्भर बनेकी छिन् । जबकी यो यात्रा उनको लागि सहज थिएन । न त उनले कहिल्यै यस्तो बाटो अपनाउने सोचेकी थिइन् । परिवर्तनको यो सुरुवात भने प्लान इन्टरनेसनल नेपालको बालविवाह, छिटो विवाह र जबरजस्ती विवाह रोकथाम परियोजनाबाट भएको थियो ।

केही समयअघि शिवलक्ष्मीले परियोजनाले आयोजना गरेको उद्यमशीलता सम्बन्धी तालिममा संलग्न हुने अवसर पाइन् । उनका अनुसार तालिमप्रति सुरुमा खासै रुचि नभए पनि जब प्रशिक्षकको कुरा सुन्न थालिन्, व्यवसायको सम्भावनाको उज्यालो चित्र देखिन थाल्यो । व्यवसायले आफ्नो जीवनको दिशा बदल्न सक्छ भन्ने पहिलो पटक त्यहीँ महसुस गरिन् । तर व्यवसाय के गर्ने भन्ने प्रश्नमा उनलाई धेरै समय अन्योल रह्यो । त्यसबेला उनको घरमा जम्मा दुईवटा भेडा थिए । त्यसैले उनले आफ्नो आमाबुबाले गुजारा चलाउनका लागि गर्दै आएको भेडापालनलाई व्यावसायिक रुपमा अगाडि बढाउने निर्णय गरिन् ।

शिवलक्ष्मीले परियोजनाबाट सहयोग स्वरुप भेडाको साँढे पनि पाइन् । यस्तै सहयोग र आफ्नै परिश्रमले जम्मा दुई भेडाबाट सुरु भएको यो व्यवसाय आज ३५ भेडासम्म पुगेको छ । स्नातक अध्ययन गरिरहेकी शिवलक्ष्मीले भेडापालनबाटै आफ्नो पढाइ खर्च जुटाएकी छिन् । अध्ययनसँगै व्यवसायलाई सँगै लैजानु चुनौतीपूर्ण नै हुन्छ । तर उनका बुबाले भेडाको हेरचाहमा साथ दिएर उनलाई ठूलो सहयोग गरे । उनी भन्छिन्, “मैले बुबाको साथ लिएर पढाइसँगै व्यवसाय अघि बढाइरहेकी छु । अब म जता गए पनि व्यवसाय गर्ने आत्मविश्वास छ ।”

आज शिवलक्ष्मीको परिवारको मुख्य आर्थिक स्रोत यही भेडापालन व्यवसाय हो । व्यवसायले परिवारको जीवनस्तर मात्र उकासेको छैन, शिवलक्ष्मीलाई आफ्नै खुट्टामा उभिन मद्दत गरेको छ । अहिले उनी भेडापालनलाई थप व्यवस्थित गर्दै व्यवसाय विस्तार गर्ने योजनामा छिन् । २१ वर्षकी शिवलक्ष्मीलाई विवाहको कुनै हतारो छैन । उनी पहिले पढाइ पूरा गरेर व्यवसायिक रुपमा सफल बन्न चाहन्छिन् । आर्थिक रुपमा बलियो भएपछि मात्र विवाह गर्ने उनको योजना छ ।

शिवलक्ष्मीको यो यात्रा प्रेरणादायक छ । उनले बालविवाहको परम्परागत सोचलाई तोड्दै अध्ययन र व्यवसायलाई प्राथमिकता दिइन् ।

> “मैले धेरै कुरा सिक्दै र गर्दै अगाडि बढ्ने सोच बनाएकी छु । यसरी म मा उर्जा भर्न प्लान इन्टरनेसनल नेपालको परियोजनाले पनि ठूलो भूमिका खेल्यो ।
>
> - शिवलक्ष्मी”

जब अवसर र इच्छाशक्ति मिल्छ, तब जीवनलाई नयाँ दिशा दिन सकिन्छ भन्ने उदाहरण यसमा छ । शिवलक्ष्मीले साना कदमबाट सुरु गरेर ठूलो सफलता हाँसिल गरेकी छिन् । जुन कथा लाखौँ युवाका लागि प्रेरणा मात्र होइन, आत्मनिर्भरताको बलियो उदाहरण पनि हो ।

Acknowledgement

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all our valued partners, key stakeholders, community members, School Management Committees, parents, and students who contributed to documenting the inspiring stories featured in this publication. Your invaluable support and active engagement have made it possible to capture the voices, experiences, and transformative journeys that exemplify the impact of Plan International Nepal's Girls Get Equal: Preventing Child, Early, and Forced Marriage project.

This document serves as a testament to the collective efforts in preventing Child, Early, and Forced Marriages (CEFM) and fostering a society where every child, especially girls, can thrive, exercise their rights, and build a future of their own choosing.

We deeply appreciate the willingness of individuals and communities to share their stories, which highlight the strides made towards change and the challenges overcome. Your openness and collaboration have not only provided evidence of the project's impact but also inspired us to continue our commitment to creating a gender-equal and inclusive society.

Thank you for your unwavering support in making this initiative a success and for being part of this shared journey towards equality and empowerment.

आभार

हामी सबै साझेदारहरू, प्रमुख सरोकारवाला, समुदायका सदस्यहरू, विद्यालय व्यवस्थापन समितिहरू, अभिभावकहरू र विद्यार्थीहरूलाई हार्दिक धन्यवाद व्यक्त गर्दछौं, जसले यस प्रकाशनमा समावेश गरिएका प्रेरणादायी कथाहरू दस्तावेजीकरण गर्न योगदान दिनुभएको छ । तपाईको अमूल्य सहयोग र सक्रिय सहभागिताले प्लान इन्टरनेसनल नेपालको "गर्ल्स गेट इक्वल: बाल विवाह, छिटो विवाह र जबरजस्ती विवाह रोकथाम परियोजना" को प्रभावकारितालाई प्रतिबिम्बित गर्ने आवाज, अनुभव र रुपान्तरणकारी यात्रालाई समेट्न सम्भव बनाएको छ ।

यो दस्तावेज बाल विवाह, छिटो विवाह र जबरजस्ती विवाह रोकथामका लागि भएका सामूहिक प्रयासको प्रमाण हो । यसले यस्तो समाज तयार गर्न प्रोत्साहन गरेको छ, जहाँ प्रत्येक बालबालिका, विशेषगरी बालिकाहरुको अधिकारको सम्मान हुने र आफ्नो रोजाइको भविष्य निर्माण गर्न सक्षम बन्ने वातावरण सिर्जना गर्न योगदान दिएको छ ।

हामी ती व्यक्तिहरू र समुदायलाई गहिरो कृतज्ञता व्यक्त गर्दछौं, जसले परिवर्तनको यात्रामा भएका प्रगतिहरू र चुनौतीहरूलाई उजागर गर्दै आफ्ना कथाहरू साझा गर्न तत्परता देखाउनुभयो । तपाईको खुलापन र सहकार्यले परियोजनाको प्रभावलाई प्रमाणित गर्नमात्र होइन, समानता र समावेशी समाज निर्माप्रतिको हाम्रो प्रतिबद्धतालाई थप प्रेरित गरेको ।

यस परियोजनालाई सफल बनाउन तपाईकै अडिग समर्थन र समानता तथा सशक्तिकरणतर्फको यो साझा यात्रामा सहभागी भएर योगदान पुर्याउनुभएकोमा हामी तपाईप्रति आभारी छौं ।

Until we are all equal

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