



Aawaaj - *Breaking the Silence*

Working and Building Resilience - Inspiring Stories



2019 February



Foreword of President

Over the years since developing the Aawaaj which is already 20 years, I have been heartened to see the steady successes of our program in holistic way. I have also continued to learn about the challenges that children, youth, families, women and girls face. The power of the collective efforts , which was so strongly demonstrated every time community (women, men, parents, teachers, children and youth) came together to practice solidarity with targeted marginalized women, youth, families and children .

Aawaaj is one of the most significant sources of support for children and women ensuring justice for marginalized children and women at grassroots level. Aawaaj has been continued for groups working toward the goal of every child, woman and girl being strong, safe, powerful, and heard. As an organization there are great challenges to meet the increasing demand with given limited resources. We seek commitment to ensure that program results will be sustained as much as possible.

"We are hardworking and determined, will make it and that's the bottom line. At the root of resilience we focus active listening & empathic responding to take responsibility for our progress and outcome. The first step is to building resilience is to make responsible for communities that we are working with. The essence of responsibility is the acceptance of the consequences — good and bad — of our actions." We all are doing struggle to achieve better lives of children and women and at some points. However, through learning about ourselves and realizing what we can and cannot manage, we are able to manage and move on to make the most of life happier.

It is the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, threats or significant sources of stress. These stories are collected by Aawaaj team based on stories from actual community experiences to share others about community resilience.

It is crucial to acknowledge and be grateful to all those voices, courage, and collective efforts for these inspiring stories. I am looking forward for all of your positive response and support to make this Aawaaj successful. Thanks for all international, national and local partners, individuals, volunteers, dedicated executive board members, staff, and general members .

With warm wishes and much appreciation,

Irada Gautam , Executive President

Aawaaj

“Kesang is actively participating”

Kesang Bhote, aged 11 years, was born in Sankhuasabha district of eastern Nepal. She is one of the seven daughters, her parents had while expecting a son. They had a son however, in their eighth attempt, which naturally led to the older daughters being neglected. Her parents could not provide support for the huge family so Kesang left for Kathmandu with her aunt. Her aunt agreed to keep Kesang with her and send her to school. In exchange, she had to work at her aunt's as a domestic worker without any salary or incentives other than two meals a day, admission at a government school and a roof over her head.

Kesang is in the fifth grade now at Kapan Baluddar school. She is good in her studies and attends school regularly. She says she will really miss CFS since this is her last year there. She has made a lot of friends and learned a lot of things, academic and others. However, continuity of all this is entirely dependent on her aunt's goodwill which might not last forever since she is also a low wage worker in a carpet factory with her own family to take care of. She has a better life now as compared to her previous one but there is an uncertainty looming over her future although she might not realize it herself being a kid.

In the beginning when she approached to CFS, Kesang Sherpa looked worried, used to hesitate to study and rarely speak. But when CFS started to run in her school, she continued her study to complete her desire with the help of Aawaaj and now she is very open to talk. Nowadays, Kesang says that she is feeling comfortable to study about health and sanitation along with interacting with friends and facilitator after joining at CFS. Her behavioral activities are being developed like doing regular homework, respect to the elders and love to the younger. Now Kesang is actively participating in extra-curricular activities.

“Youth Entrepreneur Namrata Nepali”

Namrata Nepali was born in 2053 BS on a marginalized family of Panchapuri Municipality ward no 6, Surkhet. Her parents are Bailu Nepali (father) and Maina Nepali (mother). She had to leave her studies early because of her large family size and minimal income to support them. She realized that she should learn some skills and start a business instead of staying at home doing nothing. After engaging in a local social organization, she got a chance to join a training course for sewing and cutting. She fell up a form for Rs. 500, took the class and started working from her home while still involved with the youth organization which ran those classes. Her friends recommended her for the youth entrepreneurship program conducted by AAWAAJ. She wanted to do an advanced course as she had already completed the basics. She was able to join the advanced course after she received a grant of Rs 20,000 from AAWAAJ. There she had a chance to learn different new designs which later enabled her to open up her own boutique. She now earns Rs 500 on average per day. She uses that money for her siblings' education and household expenses. She also employs two more women in her boutique. She says she wants to see her business grow bigger in the future. She is also really grateful towards AAWAAJ for bringing this change in her life and believes that she will be able to lead a better and prosperous life now. She now has a share on co-operative where she also keeps her savings. She says that although she is not educated, she is confident that she can have a decent life through her business. She urges the youth not to go abroad for money but do something in their own country instead. She wishes good luck for AAWAAJ and hopes that the organization keep up the good work and helps people like her to better their lives.

“Brahmans only performs marriages after reviewing citizenship, birth registration or educational record”

Born on 2nd poush, 2010 B.S at Ranukhana-5 of Dailekh's Dullu, Lok Prasad Upadhaya was married at the age of 8 as per the then Hindu culture. He now however has already realized that his marriage at such a young age was a wrongful deed. 64 years old Mr. Upadhaya is also the father of seven children. Mr. Upadhaya is popular as an influential ritual advocate as well as a teacher in Vedh Vidhyashram (school for Vedha) of Dailekh, Dullu. Till date, Mr. Upadhaya has performed hundreds of rituals and also has performed hundreds of child marriage ceremonies. Not so caring about child marriage earlier, he now is strongly against it and opposes the idea of child marriage.

Mr. Upadhaya now persuades others against child marriage even among his colleagues. He acknowledges the fact that he could not educate his children properly due to his own early marriage while facing low economy and high number of children. Now he believes that early marriage is a great sin in today's circumstances. He says: *“I didn't used to believe child marriage is wrong earlier and I couldn't speak openly about it. However, due to Aawaaj's campaign against child marriage, I can speak against these matters freely. Social mobilizers Mr. Narayan Upadhaya and Mr. Padam Hamal meet me regularly and provide me with more knowledge due*

to which it gives me more energy to work against these issues.” He now helps people get married only after reviewing their citizenship, birth registration or educational records. Due to his personal effort, he has stopped three child marriages in last three months and also suggests his fellow Brahmins to do so.

Many cases get filed against child marriage in Dailekh district, however the practice of child marriage is still prevalent. The marriages stopped by Mr. Upadhaya still has happened anyhow in some cases. Nevertheless, he still follows-up his cases regularly. In the work domain of Aawaaj, many representatives from various organizations or group (such as Bhai Samuha, Yuva Samuha, Kishor/Kishori Samuha, Board Baal Samrakchhan Samiti, Association of People affected by Early Child Marriage, children of Child Service Centre, Nepal police, Teachers, Brahmins, Local Intellectuals and Public representatives) are also actively involved in the campaign against ECM.

Although ECM is being social as well as legal offence, it is accepted by most people in the society which has created a great challenge to eradicate it. It is possible to eradicate ECM completely only if the entire society is aware about its adverse effects. Mr. Upadhaya’s work is influential, respectful as well as inspiring. If all of us make effort against ECM as much as Mr. Upadhaya then the society free from ECM is not so far.

“I will remember this opportunity throughout my life”

I am Manisha Bam, younger daughter of my parents. I feel lucky that I am also selected in a child-friendly space which support education and develop resilience of children in Budhanikhanta, Nepal. I am now studying in grade five at Shree Baluddar higher secondary. I am originally from Khotang district, eastern part of Nepal. Now I live with my parents in Kapan Milan chock, Kathmandu. My parents sell vegetable and fruits in push cart. I like CFS very much as it encourage to learn, provide free tuition for me , provide snacks and give space to express our interest / views. It develops our habit to do school homework. I am interested in both study and extra activity that is singing, dancing, playing, drawing and many more activities that has been done at CFS. My aim in life is to become good dancer. Due to my school performance and family status, AAWAAJ and school teacher selected me at CFS.

Since I joined in CFS, I enjoyed every activity in CFS and respect my friends. Being in CFS is one of the golden opportunities in my life and for other friends as well. So CFS is like my home where I learn new things every day, do my homework regularly, play with my friend and get love and care from teachers. My teachers and guardian say this opportunity has changed me a lot. When I first came to CFS, I had lack of confidence to face outsider, seniors but when I started in CFS, my confidence level grew and today I can talk freely and openly without any hesitation. This opportunity has shaped us to be disciplined, friendly and competitive. I love all the extra activities and I am interested in participating in many programs like singing, dancing, debate competition etc. After being in CFS, I have learned many new things like social norms and values along with good touch, bad touch and things regarding social awareness. So CFS is fun for learning, sharing, caring and I want to thank AAWAAJ for providing such opportunity to all children like me.

“Sued case against child sexual abuser”

Anjali (name changed) is 9 years old girl. She studies in 5th grade. Due to low economic condition, her father went to India to work and earn money. She lives at home with her grandfather, mother and little brother. In the name of property, they own 5 kattha {unit of land measurement, 1 kattha is equivalent to 338.63 m² (3,645 ft²)} land nearby a river. Her mother works as wage laborer. Anjali’s mother went to buy groceries at 25th November, 2018 to the market of village. Anjali was playing with her friends. In the absence of her mother, a 30-year-old adult named Bhim Bahadur Khatri called her with the excuse of drinking water. She went running to the man to serve water. The man tried to misbehave by showing the greed of giving Rs.50. When she denied, he forcefully tore her clothes and she cried screaming loudly. Her playmates and little brother came running as they heard her screaming. The man ran away when others arrived. Seeing the condition, Suman (name changed) took her to Jamuni Police Station. Police immediately contacted Aawaaj when they saw this case. Aawaaj’s psychosocial counselor and social mobilizer studied in detail about the event and referred the case to area police office of MainaPokhari. On the 26th, Aawaaj along with the co-ordination of police filed a case for attempted rape. Anjali was traumatized by the experience. She was scared to be alone, had trouble sleeping and didn’t want to speak with anyone.

The staffs casually used to give her positive motivations saying things like “you are very good in studies, you are really brave”. She was also provided with legal helps whereas her family was also provided with psychosocial counselling. Gradually, some changes began in her behavior and she started going to school, attempting exams. Anjali’s mother is afraid because the perpetrators were

pressuring them to dismiss the case. Her mother also expressed her deep grief and sadness during her counselling. Aawaaj assured her that it would help her fight the case and see stopped feeling grieving eventually.

“An attempt to rape” case has already been registered in district court. Aawaaj has also arranged transportation to and from the court for Anjali’s case. It is also meeting her periodically and providing her with proper psychological counselling and also has been coordinating with her school to facilitate her education. Her stationaries are being provided with the cooperation from OREC Nepal. She is gradually forgetting the inhuman incident that she went through. She is focusing in her studies lately. She is now in normal condition and is happy.

This sort of incidents often occurs against girls in Bardiya district which go unfiled or unreported mostly. Even if the cases come out, they are generally suppressed within the community. While many get stuck in-between even while going through legal processes. Even in such an inhuman and atrocious crime, many has tried to made the case hostile and yet the organization has cooperated with all the bodies and went through the legal process to provide Anjali the justice she deserves.

“Ghanshyam become exemplary entrepreneur after returning from India”

Getting higher education, unemployed at young age, increasing higher responsibilities of family management and due to the lack of proper income source, the numbers of youngsters are increasing rapidly for the foreign employment. To go to India to cover for their family expenditures is not a strange thing in contemporary Nepalese society. Like Ghanashyam Shahi, aged 29 years, from Panchapuri municipality 06, whose life was being spent in the same way. He had passed class 12 and stayed in India for 5 year as daily wages worker. It was not his intention to go there but it was an obligation for him because of the lack of proper income and the responsibilities towards his family members, one son and one daughter.

He was dissatisfied with his daily low-income cost, misbehaviors of the local citizens to Nepalese and felt guilty because he could not give any contribution to Nepal by being Nepali. He faced so many ups and downs in life and finally returned to Nepal and decided to become an entrepreneur and started to engage in social service. First, he started to bound with society development young group and worked there as leader. After that, his confidence and entrepreneurship developed well and he understood market policy, demand and supply, utilization of raw material, uses of personal skill and daily income activities.

After all of this, he started a chicken poultry farm. And with his collaborative and coordinative mind, he got Rs 20 thousand as grant from AAWAAJ and managed his poultry farm well. In the beginning, he had only 150 chickens but he now has more than 600 chickens. He is very happy and satisfied being with his family. “We can become successful if we understand the business and grab the opportunity on time,” he added.



He has reregistered his farm as GAURAB poultry farm and started fresh house where he sells 20 kg of chicken daily and sends his chickens in Birendranagar and so many other local places. Now, he earns more than 1 lakh and 50 thousand monthly and keeps his all account record clearly. Before, it was very difficult to afford proper education for his children and his expenditure. But today, he saves money in young group of society and cooperative by separating his expenditures. Now he says, “*we do not need to go foreign countries for the employment*” and tells other to be entrepreneurs in our country because we can be successful here as well. He says, he owes it to the kind hands of his family, society and AAWAAJ for this successful life.

“Our family is sincerely touched by the Aawaaj’s support”

I, am 11 years old and I was born in Kavre district. I study in the 5th grade. I am the 3rd and youngest child of my father and mother. My family moved to Kathmandu looking for better opportunities and better education for me and my siblings. My father went to Malaysia to work so that he could provide for our family since the income in Nepal was low and it was difficult to sustain in expensive city area. My mother used to get sick frequently and my father used to send us money for her treatment as well as our education and other expenses. But after few years, my father had to come back because of his medical condition. He has a skin disease which is undiagnosed yet.



After he returned, he started working as a construction labor in Kathmandu to support the family. My mother used to work as a construction labor too when she was able but now, she is mostly sick and cannot work at all. All the three of us study in Bal Uddhar Higher Secondary School, Kapan and I am also a pupil at CFS run by Aawaaj.

One day I was at a bonfire with the neighbors nearby our rented room. While trying to pour some gasoline into the fire to ignite it, my nylon trousers accidentally caught fire and started burning. I couldn't take it off in time and ran for help. My father came and poured water on me eventually but it was too late. My left foot was burnt badly and I had to be rushed to the emergency room of 'Kanti Children Hospital'. I had to undergo multiple skin grafts surgery since most of my left foot caught the fire and burnt deeply. I had to stay at the hospital's burn ward for 2 months. It got difficult for my parents to pay the hospital's bill without going to work and staying with me.

While I was on the hospital, my teachers from CFS came to visit me and talked to my father. Knowing our economic and psychological situation, Aawaaj supported me and my parents financially (Rs. 10,000) on 1st week of February 2019 and through counselling to deal with it. Our family is sincerely touched by the Aawaaj's support and concern in such time of need. We are really thankful.

“Thankful to Aawaaj for providing such precious opportunity to me”

Sabina Ansari is 13 years and she studies in 5th grade. She lives in Kapan with her parents. She is a Muslim girl in Nepal which is a Hindu majority country. Her mother works as a tailor and father is very old and is affected by tuberculosis. She is smart in study and likes to participate in extra activities as well. Facilitators have noticed better performance after joining CFS.

Sabina said; “I am the new student at CFS. Actually, I did not know what CFS is and I didn't even know what we will do here. But one day my class teacher informed us about it and I finally got chance join CFS. All of my confusions have been cleared. I cannot explain how much we are benefiting and this experience has been very fruitful to us as well. It is not only the study at CFS, but lots of fun and games, extra activities are also there. I am very happy to be in CFS, where we do our homework regularly and learn new extra activities every day. My teachers and ma'ams are very friendly. They always inspire us to be good people in the future. Every day we learn something new, which is exciting and important to us. My teachers always help me in study. Nowadays, I have a habit of studying and doing homework on time. I am very pleased and thankful towards Aawaaj for providing such precious opportunity to me.”

“Problem solved when problem shared”

Dhanmaya Thapa (name changed) residing on Murmuri of Babiyachour-1, Surkhet is currently 39 years of age. Her husband busy in agriculture which is their source of income. Conforming herself that her economic status is medium, Dhanmaya has 2 sons and a daughter. Her daughter is already married. Since around 5 years ago, she says to have severe pain in her lower abdomen. She was unable to share the problem to anyone regarding her own family due to the fear of social judgements, possibility of polygamy and losing respect from everyone. When the pain was intolerable, she says to have told her husband about it. And eventually, she got information about Aawaaj through the brother of her husband Bimal Thapa (name changed) who informed her about the organizational helpline “1098”. Through helpline service, her appointment for abdomen checkup was made for Tuesday in mid-western central hospital of Surkhet and the check-up was done on appointed date. She was admitted immediately when it was discovered that she had nearby chance of 3rd degree uterine prolapse. At 11 a.m. of Thursday, she had a successful surgery. She had difficulty urinating for some time after the surgery, but she didn't hesitate at all to share her problem and now she informs that she is completely healthy and normal. She feels grateful to her family and the organization for getting the new life. She is able to perform all day to day domestic activities like before.

“I understand the value of life”

I am 22 years old and my changed name is Ritu B.K. I am the first child of father Hasta B.K. and mother Kaushila B.K. My parents have four daughters including me. My father runs a store. My childhood passed without any difficulty. I passed high school with support, affection and love from my parents. Since my interest was to study health, I went to pursue it. During the period, I met a friend from Dailekh in hostel and we shared the room as we were very close. A man who was relative of my friend came to visit her in our room and later we were introduced. We became face book friends and used to chat. I talked to him for 3 years and met once in a while. Later we decided to get married and I ran away with him. We got married at his house. After a week of our marriage, his wife returned from her parents' along with a son and only then, I realized that he was already married. I couldn't handle my stress and anxiety after knowing all this and I tried attempting suicide. I couldn't think of anything besides suicide and always used to plan the ways to attempt it. When my neighbor helped me contact Aawaaj, I got Psychosocial counseling service after which I finally realized that I was not guilty, I should live, I should do good. I could understand the value of life due to which I still am alive. I am able to fight with the struggles today. If I had not taking counselling from Aawaaj, I would not be alive. I would like to suggest everyone to get Psychosocial help if you constantly think negatively, if you are scared or tensed a lot and we should get help when necessary rather than panicking and getting scared.

“CFS Becoming Popular”

In Dailekh district, Combatting Early/Forced Child Marriage project is conducted for the last 5 months by Aawaaj with the support of ECPAT Luxembourg. Three Child Friendly Spaces are functioning to provide quality education and to protect child rights as well as to eradicate child marriage. CFS are conducted targeting to marginalized and backward communities in Dullu Municipality ward number 4, 5 and 10.



The popularity of CFS is increasing after the changes observed among children from CFS. *“The popularity and demand are increasing. Children started going school regularly, became attentive in study and cleanliness, obey the teachers and their educational standard is upgraded.”* said, Mr. Khem Bahadur Khadka, Principal of Shree Nepal Rastriya Primary School.

With the initiation of local committee, **Sahara** CFS is functioning. Mr. Prem Bahadur Thapa, chairperson of ward no 5, told that, *“ward plays a significant role to ensure child right in communities, mobilizing and identifying economic resources.”*

In CFS basically teaches about health, development of good habit, creative activities, musical activities (drama, poem, song, dance, art) child right, child marriage, domestic violence, child sexual abuse and other social issues. Further-more, it is conducting discussion program with children and their guardian, day program, competition program between CFS and children of CFS and support in performing home work.

“Her Health is Improving Now”

Residing in one of the most rural areas of Surkhet, Chaukunej V.D.C, ward no. 9, Veri Chhal, 70 years old Maagli B.K. is the mother of 6 children. She is the oldest member of her family. She says she fell behind in her life due to illiteracy. She says she had been having problems in her lower abdominal parts since last 4 years. When conducted a stall in Chaukunej, ward no.9, Paal Bazaar, she said she heard about uterine prolapse problem in women through the loudspeaker. She says she knew about this problem for the first time ever. She faced great deal of obstacles due to unawareness of the problem and because of the shame and fear she didn't get treatment for her condition. Usually, she had difficulty even to perform daily household activities. After meeting with a social mobilizer she learned about her problem in detail and decided to go for her checkup in government health clinic. Although the professionals put the silicon ring pessary and gave her medicines, her problem of health couldn't improve much because the ring kept falling down. In a free uterus screening campaign organized by Aawaaj, she found out that she had cancer at her uterus and her uterus had fallen to 2nd degree uterine prolapse. According to the advice of doctor, she put the ring pessary back and got prescribed for medicines. She also knew about Kegel exercises (of pelvis uterus) and nutrition to keep the problem in check. Her health is improving now. She is able to

perform household works easily. Due to poverty, she was not able to get further treatment. She was very happy to get information about these issues from Aawaaj which helped her a lot in her treatment. She also wants to persuade other women facing similar problems to go and get medical assistance in health clinics.

A girl was raped while walking on the road by a stranger. She did not tell about this to anybody and got sick. Her father was working as a laborer in India (Delhi). She went there for treatment. Her father beat her because he was angry that she got pregnant. She started to work as a maid in a house. Her employer told her to leave the house when he found out that she was pregnant. She started to do the same work in another person's house. When her new employer also found out about her pregnancy he gave her wage for one and a half months and told her to leave. She then came back to Nepal from Delhi alone. She went to the police to her find the father of the child. She was constantly criticized by her neighbors and relatives because she has been staying at her parent's home and has an illegitimate daughter. She has attempted suicide a few times and said she didn't want to stay in her village anymore. She had to leave her village. After she left, she started working as a construction labor in Kavre district. There she fell in love with a co-worker after working together for two months. They then got married and bought a house at Surkhet. After a while, her in-laws and her husband started physically assaulting her. They used to pour boiled water down her legs, they cut her left hand's vein with a tounge and she still has the scar. They also poked her left ear with a steel skewer and the wound is still fresh. Finally, they too kicked her out of their house. She went to the local police and they arranged her transportation and sent her back to Surkhet District Police Headquarters. She stayed at the police headquarter for 6 days and was finally placed under national women commission's care.

“Happiness and Family Relationship has maintained via Mediation”

Living in Surkhet district, 32 years old Jamuna Chunara (name changed) was married at the age of 15 years with the guy she loved, who also used to live nearby her village. Her husband was a businessman. She became mother, one year after their marriage. After 3 or 4 months of having first child, the family started facing stress. Her husband started drinking alcohol and beating her. Her husband started having fights and conflicts over small matters such as food not being prepared on time, not preparing delicious food, not cleaning around etc. while he stopped helping himself but rather beat her. And when asked why does he do so, he complained further about her behaviors and didn't care for his child at all. In the hope of her husband being understanding someday, she waited and tolerated him for a year but the problem started getting even bigger and she shared her situation to her parents. Her parents and family tried to convince but they too failed. She later came to Aawaaj when one of her neighbors suggested her. Aawaaj called her husband too and had discussions with both of them, playing the role of mediator. The mediation helped in the relationship of the couple and now they are living happily along with the 2nd child.

“Daughters are not safe from the Protectors themselves”

Resident of Panchapuri municipality of Surkhet district, Dil Bahadur B.K.'s daughter is 11 years old. Her mother left when she was 6 months old and married another man due to her father's drug abusing habits and living in India every now and then. Due to this, she had been living with her uncle and grandfather's protection. In this way, her childhood passed with her uncle and grandfather and she gradually started growing up. Her father married again in 2070 B.S. and kept her with her step-mother but she couldn't stay with her step-mother due to her cruel attitude and she used to live at different relatives' like at father's sister, cousins, grandparents, mother etc. Sita used to study in 3rd grade but was irregular in class. She used to work for others helping them washing dishes, collecting woods, etc. She used to stay at the house of whoever provided her with food and bed. In 2074/7/4, her stepmother was gone to her maternal house. In the festive occasion, Sita went to her grandfather's while her grandfather himself went to his sister's to put on tika as per the culture. As grandfather didn't return till late, she slept at attic and at around 9 p.m. or so, her uncle came home drunk and attempted rape and threatened to kill her if she tells anyone. Sita spent entire night crying and started isolating herself, while for 3 days she couldn't even walk around properly and talk with anyone. When her friend Rita asked her the reason of being scared all the time, she shared everything to her with the promise to not tell anyone else. Rita shared it with her mother. Everyone knew about the incident, people gathered, scolded and advised the guy and left him with the word to not repeat it. The issue dissolved within the village in no time while Sita's days started passing just like before.

When the school started, this incident was discussed and at 2nd Mangsir, after around 1 month, the issue came through child helpline service through some students. Sita was rescued by Aawaaj with the help of Police and was kept at emergency rehabilitation center for counselling whereas the abuser was put in police custody. In such a difficult situation, her protectors

themselves didn't helped her but rather blamed and accused her of lying. Even after 2 months period, nobody from her family wanted to come in contact.

When she was provided with safe environment, counselling and psychological services, medical treatments, clothes in the rehabilitation Centre, she became able to talk freely and stopped getting scared like before. She started paying attention to her cleanliness, started looking happier and sharing her plans and ideas whereas she also realized that she went through an atrocious event and she became capable to openly argue that those who commit such atrocity against anyone should be punished in court as well. Sita was transferred to shelter home for long stay as her family themselves were guilty and she is continuing her study. Recently, the district court made the decision in her favor and the perpetrator was sentenced to jail for 6 years.

“Want to be independent and be able to sustain her life by herself”

Alina's father works in Nepal army and her mother weaves fabric (Dhaka) at home. She fell in love with a classmate while studying on 10th grade. They got married on Ashad of 2074. Alina's parents suggested her not to get married with the boy as he was upper class (Thakuri) and she would suffer from the relationship. But Alina insisted as she could not leave the boy. Alina slowly became accustomed to her new life and household work. So, she couldn't continue her study. It was hard for her to bear the family responsibilities at such young age. Her in-laws started verbally abusing her and her family bringing the topic of caste since Alina was perceived to be from lower class family. Her husband also started taking his family sides and abuses her verbally and physically so it became really hard for her to stay at house. Although she got abused and mistreated, her husband used drugs, alcohol and physically assaulted her and stopped caring about her, she was hanging on to her relationship. Her husband then planned on going to India for work and told her to stay at her maternal home till then. She agreed and went to her parents' home. When her husband returned back from India, he didn't contact her. Moreover, his family told her not to return back and that their relationship was over. She arrived at Safe house of Aawaaj through the police after her parents reported in police. She received legal consultation, counseling, shelter service and realized that getting married in early age is wrong decision for anyone to make. Since she had the skill of weaving fabric (Dhaka), she decided to continue it as her business and at the same time continue her study. Aawaaj economically helped her to start and continue her own business. She now stays at home, weaves and also studies. She says that she will focus her work, her studies together, be independent and be able to sustain her life by herself. She feels thankful to the organization for helping her in the time of need and bringing her life back in order.

“Program helped me in solving my problem”

55 years old Santakumari Subedi (name changed) from Badaiyataal village, Saabik Kalika V.D.C of Bardiya district shares that she had been facing the problem of uterus prolapsed since last past 5 years. Due to the prolapsed uterus, she could not easily sit or walk around along with severe difficulty in going toilet. Due to the condition, she also had the problem of rashes in thighs and wound in uterus. Although she had all these problems, she was completely unaware of treatment. She had the perception that if anyone knows about her condition, it will be shameful in family and society, they'd lose the respect due to this condition and therefore, she kept it secret from everyone suffering from the constant pain. When she attained one of the awareness programs launched by Aawaaj about uterine prolapse; its causes, stages, symptoms and treatments, she gained the confidence to get a medical checkup. She was diagnosed in one of the free health check-up campaign provided by Aawaaj in 2075/9/4 in health clinic nearby her ward. She was diagnosed with 3rd stage uterine prolapse. She was referred to Kohalpur Medical College from the district health office for free surgery. She started getting better physically after the operation. Being able to perform daily activities easily and have a normal healthy life. She sends her regards to the program and the organization.

“Have a desire to be an artist when I get older”

Laxmi Sunar is 11 years old girl from Birendra Nagar Municipality, Ward no. 2, studying in Sagarmatha Child Service Centre. She is studying in the 5th grade of Jagan Nath Devi lower secondary school. She has 6 members in her family. Her father works as a wage-laborer and her mother also helps in his work. Both of them are illiterate. Since nobody in her family could write/read, it was really hard for her to do her homework. She used to get punished in her school because she could not complete her homework or assignments, due to which she didn't like going to school. And during that time, she joined Child Service Centre where it became easier for her to complete her HomeWorks. As she started doing her homework regularly, she regularly started going to school as well. She could pass all her subjects and even get impressive result on her finals. Besides studying, she is passionate about dancing. In a dance competition held at her school, she was ranked in 2nd position and got copies and pen as a prize. Simple and polite Laxmi, adores and loves everyone in her class. With friendly natural and attitude against violence, Laxmi says she dreams of becoming an artist someday.

“Hard working Mr. Dil Bahadur” I was born in 2042 B.S to my father Ramey Regami and mother Ramba Regami. I am 32 years old. I live in Panchapuri Municipality, ward no. 5, west Surkhet.

My childhood was spent in household work and cattle herding so I could not get a chance to study.

My time was spent on economic and social struggles for my family. I mother died when I was 5 years old and my father remarried. I missed my mother’s affection when I was young. When I was 16 years old, I ran away from home and went to India to look for work. I got a job as a cook in a



company. I spent almost 8 years working in India and coming back to Nepal in holidays. I got married when I was 19 years old. When I came back, I started working as a freelance laborer for earning. After I had kids, I had more economic responsibilities. I then started working in construction. I worked as a construction labor for 5 years yet it was still hard for me to cover my daily expenses. When Aawaaj wanted to form a youth group in our society I also joined the discussion. I heard that the youth can start a business with small investment in the society. I also learned that I was more likely to succeed if I had a skill or training before starting a



business from which I was highly intrigued. We had a discussion about the demand in local market and the possibilities for business, and I also started thinking about these topics. Later, the organization gave a 3 days training to local youth for increasing productivity and I also took part in the program. I learned about local market demand, local resources and identification of youth interest and how a business can be successful even with a minimal investment if we are aware about those factors. I became much more informed and confident. On the last day of the training, everybody shared their business ideas and reasons with each other. I told them that I wanted to grow seasonal and unseasonal vegetables. The organization gave me Rs. 5000 and with coordination from the ward office I got Rs. 25,000. I bought a hand tractor for ploughing with that money. I managed an additional Rs. 72,000 and started a commercial vegetable farm. Now I grow cauliflower, potato, chilli, beans, cabbage etc and am also planning to grow tomatoes in the tunnel. I make Rs.12000 to 15000 monthly by selling seasonal and unseasonal vegetables. I also plough others field using power tiller, from which I make about Rs.20000 per month in season. My family has supported a lot as well. I use the earning to support my children’s education and cover my household expenses. I want to expand this business in future. I would also like to advise other youth in the society to engage in these types of businesses and would like Aawaaj to review my business from time to time and advise me on how to make it better. I would like to thank Aawaaj for this opportunity.

“Campaign adding new energy to my life”

Among the rural districts of Nepal, Bardiya district is seen to be lagging behind in resources, equipment and overall development. 48 years old, minimally literate Radha Bhujuwa is a mother of 6 daughters and owns a small tea shop in Badhaiya Taal V.D.C ward no. 7. While on different discussions held on Rajapur during homevisits, she says that she suspected she might have a uterine prolapse problem but did not come forward to talk about it because of shame and fear for 5 years. She was under a lot of stress since she had never heard about this kind of problem from anyone and didn't know where to go for treatment. When Aawaaj organized a campaign for women's uterus screening in her area, she came and got a checkup where she found out that she had 2nd degree uterine prolapse. She then used a silicon ring pessary on the advice of health care professional. She now talks to other women who have similar problems about her experience and how she had to suffer because of her family's weak economy. She says that women should not be shy while sharing about those kinds of problems and they should be aware that they can be treated if diagnosed in time which prevents further complications. She also advises other women to go to the local government clinics to get checkups. After using the ring she has gone to the clinic twice for follow up and she says her health has been steady getting better. She has also been easier for her to do household works. Her husband and daughters also help and support her on their tea-shop. She says she feels like she got a new life after the treatment. She is grateful to Aawaaj for providing awareness and also to Kanura sherchan for economic support. And she wants to spend her life in social work and helping women who have similar problems.

“Currently, I am profiting at the rate of 15000 to 20000 rupees per month”

I, Tikaram Bhandari, was born in Panchapuri Municipality, Ward no. 4, Baraiche, Surkhet. I studied only upto the 8th grade because of weak social income and status of my family. I joined APF on 2063 B.S. and worked as an APF officer for 8 years. Later my friends advised me to apply for a job of security guard abroad and told that the pay is so much better. So, I left my job and went to Qatar to look for a new job. I couldn't adjust to climate and culture and couldn't find a job I wanted. So, I returned to Nepal after a year. I had no job then and had 3 kids to look after. My troubles started increasing. When Aawaaj was holding a discussion with



the youth in my community about income generating activities and how the youths would play a significant role in social transformation, I also joined the group. I then became member of communities' social improvement youth group and began to attempt meeting regularly, speak about youth issues, participated in various trainings, which increased my confidence. I was selected for a youth entrepreneurship program and attended 3 days entrepreneurship development training. After the training I decided to farm goats. I also took a skill development training course on how to farm goats where I learned about different breeds of goats, diseases, treatments, fodder, etc. the organization gave me Rs. 20000 for startup. I bought goats with that money and started selling meat. I saw that it yielded profit. Currently, I have 10 goats and am generating good income. I am getting more and more interested in this business. I am thinking about registering my firm and farming goats commercially. I plan on selling at least one goat per month. Currently, I am profiting at the rate of 15000 to 20000 rupees per month.

“Lots of incidents happened against children in our society but keep secret”

Anjali (changed name) is 9-year-old girl. She is a tribal child from economically weak family and now she is studying in class 5. She has 5 family members. His father went India for daily wages labor work and her mother also do daily wages work in village. She has been living in her small house. In the name of their property is only 5 acre and it has not registered yet. On November , 2018, *Anjali's* mother went to the market to buy household materials (oil, salt). When mother was not at home, *Anjali* was playing with her friends. At that time *Bhim Bahadur Khatri*, 30, call her to drink water at 2 o'clock in the afternoon. She left the game and ran to give water for Mr Khatri. Suddenly, he showed 50 rupees and tried to mistreat with her. When she denied, he forcefully began to open her clothes and she cried loudly. Her friends and brothers heard her screaming voice and headed to there, then the person ran away.

Ram (changed name) brought her to the *Jamuni* police station to register FIR. *Jamuni's* police took the details information and communicated with *Aawaaj* for the further support to victims. After received and detail information about the incident, the psychologist and the social mobilizer of *Aawaaj* sent the case to Area Police Office and finally on 26th November Nepal Police registered the rape case with the support of *Aawaaj*. Girl used to afraid to live alone, even to keep sleep at night, and talk to anyone. She received counseling session and informal meeting too. Apart from this, the psychological and legal counseling was given to her and her family as well. After certain time, some changes occurred in her life and she started to go school. She said that her parents get continuous threaten by perpetrator and she was scared about it and as her mother was getting depressed too. They were extremely worried all about it.

One of the counseling session, counselors shared that *Aawaaj* support the case on behalf of *Anjali* and her mother started roll down tears, started to cry and did not speak any words. Next day; she told that “police asked her 5 thousands for this cases and she only gave 3 thousands and 2 thousand is still remain to pay and told I do not have that money now and, how I can fight with the cases” – After listening to her, counselor became amazed, why the police asked for money. After a short time, *Aawaaj* asked to her mother by which police man asked you to give money, she told that she knows the person.

Aawaaj asked directly to police why the money was taken on this case? The police replied that, the money was taken for photocopy and for legal process. Then we told police to provide the expenses bills by next day, where and how much was paid. But they could not respond on it and we told to police, “If you do not return money, we would be obliged to call press conference about it.” After that around ten minutes the police called *Anjali's* mother and returned thousand rupees, and the remained money returned on 22nd December.

The Rape case has been already registered in District Court and *Aawaaj* has been helping in emergency support as well as legal counseling and legal process. We are visiting *Anjali* time to time, and listening to her, providing emotional support, psychological counseling and also coordinating with the school for well facilitation on behalf of *Anjali's* education. In addition, others study materials is also provided.

Nowadays, she has become positive with all and is paying attention to her studies. As well as she seems fresh and happy now. There are a lot of incidents against children in our society but usually these types of cases use to keep secret and when it comes out, they try to adjust in the community and hence such cases forcefully dismisses in legal processing, even in court with the use of power and money. Trusting *Aawaaj* is increasing in the community when police returned the money. Along with our addition and responsibility is increased. The case is still going for legal proceedings and we have promise to provide justice to the girl at any cost.

“Child marriage stopped through consultation”

Samit (name changed) studies in 11th grade. He is youngest son in family. He lives in *Jamuni* of *Bardiya* district. He went to see the program of *Teej* (festival) nearby his home. He met a girl on that spot. She was *Samita* (name changed) studying in 10th grade. She was recently 16 years of age. There were other friends along with them.

They stayed together throughout the program and then they fell in love. Their parents also agreed and called them at their home. *Samit* and *Samita* where not regretful about their marriage whereas their parents and entire family were also happy. A social mobilizer from *Aawaaj* found out about this and went for a home visit. He noticed immediately that it was a child marriage. The social mobilizer convinced them and also got help for them from a psychological counsellor. After the parents were made aware that child marriage is a legal offence, they realized their mistake and brought the couple to the office from their hiding. Both of them were counselled separately and together as well. They were informed about the legal consequences of child marriage. Although they hesitated at first, they eventually realized their mistake. *Samita* went back to her home and decided to study for her prosperous future. She was taken to her home. She is regularly attending school these days. *Samita* too attends school regularly these days and helps his parents with their household work as well. He talks about the adverse effects of child marriage with his friends. They are both happy because their life was saved from getting ruined through child marriage.

Few stories from Shelter support program and child helpline

-*Rampura Kathayat* (name changed), a woman from *Kalikot* who was victim of domestic violence says: “I thought I would jump in the *Karnali* river and kill myself before I came *Aawaaj* . Now, I feel at *Aawaaj* than my own house. I feel as safe as my parent’s home.”

-*Rama Chaudhary* (name changed) from *latikoili, Surkhet* says: “me and my daughter used to live under constant fear when we were at my house. Here at *Aawaaj*; my daughter is able to sleep peacefully at night. This place is safer than my house. Now I have a hope that someday I can do something.”

-Junu Sahi (name changed) from latikoili Surkhet says: "In my house , my step-mother always used to beat me and did not give me any food. I get to eat and play in this shelter. I don't ever wanna go back to my step-mother and I will always come back to Aawaaj."

-Maya Nepali from Dehradun says: "we used to live in Dehradun and my husband passed away. His family did not give me anything because I had a daughter and told me to leave the house. Under these circumstances, Aawaaj has done me a great favour. I had nowhere to go and Aawaaj not only gave me a shelter and food, it also provided me legal support. I am really grateful and I will never forget this organization."

-3 years old Alina, when arrived through helpline, handed back to her parents with the help of radio broadcast and police service. 13 years old Laxmi Thapa with listening and hearing disability, found and handed over to guardians.

-Victim of child marriage - Sarada Sarki, successfully returned back from kailali with the co-ordination of kailali police force

- when informed through child helpline Bhisma B.K, lost and found, reunited back to the family

-A boy who was developing bad habits was brought to the shelter home by his father for counselling. He was provided with proper counseling, sports materials, school uniform etc and he was rehabilitated back to his family after providing counselling to the family as well.

-16 years old girl was raped in chhau goth (menstrual shelter). She and the baby girl born from the incident were both disowned, unaccepted by family and they were also the victims of domestic violence from their own family members. She came and asked for justice in the safe house. She was provided with legal aid and was referred to nutrition rehabilitation center Surkhet.

I love to dance

Hello, Greetings! My name is *Rachana Tharu*. I read in class 4 (four). My school's name is Shri Janata lower secondary school. Our child friendly space's name is the *Kopila Child Friendly Spaces*. There are 12 members in my family including, mother, father, sister, uncle, aunt and grandparents. Our family is dependent on traditional farming. I began to study at the *Kopila Child Friendly Spaces* from *Baisakh 2075* (May 2018). I feel comfortable being a member of *Kopila Child Friendly Spaces* and feel very happy as well. My mother is supporting me to attend at *Kopila CFS* to read and learn. I have been able to study regularly and learn new things. I am able to share with people/friends what I know. Respected sir/madam from *Aawaaj, Ecpat Luxembourg*, and community and ward office member visit in the CFS center. They have been giving us new ideas, skills and knowledge as well. Their sessions and speeches changed my behavior. It will be supportive for me to become a good person in the future. There are various activities in each week in the CFS. I'm getting a chance to show my talent. I have been receiving pens and copies and awards. I am getting opportunities to show my talent at the day celebrations of the *Kopila CFS* and in events of school as well. In future, I want to become a good artist. Indeed, I love to dance, and I am a good dancer as well.

The children who used to reach school rarely, started to go to school regularly

Krish Karki, 12 years, studying in Class 7, with 4 family members; he is the eldest son of the house. *Krish* has been living in *Madheshi* community. Education is less of a priority in the community. He used to go to school, rarely. Most of the time he used to play with his school drop-out friends nearby his house. He used to take less part in extra activities in the school, spoke less at home and at school as well.

Based on the recommendations of the local community's people and after filling the form, he became a member of the *Chetansil Child Friendly Space* due to his poor family's situation as well as being poor in education. Initially, he did not show interest in reading. He did not openly join with friends and not involve in extra activities.

Later, by the time, he started to share and rejoice with his friends. Facilitators motivated him to take part in drawing, singing songs, story-telling, and poem competition in various days celebration as well. He actively participated in each activity. He gained the knowledge on good and bad habits, rights of children, discipline and about violence. He started talking about what he learned at home, family and school. He got love and care from his companions and teachers. He was happy to see all that.

Now, he has been changing his habit and behavior. He is a cheerful and disciplined child in the community and child friendly Space.

Nowadays, his teachers are so happy due to his regular attendance at the school and sessions as well as he communicate well with the teachers with respect and love.

“My community started to believe me and the menstruating girls stay at their own clean room instead of a chhau goth”

I (Siddha Lohar) was born in Santriveni VDC as a middle child of father Dangali Lohar. I started living in Panchal Jharana VDC Kalikot district after marriage. Although I had completed high my views and opinions in front of others because I was born family. In a community meeting seeking local resource person selected by the community on 2073 BS. I was really nervous madam from AAWAAJ. She explained everything to me with a some confidence seeing that she was also a woman, just like various meetings and trainings in the organization, I became started speaking about what I’ve learned. I also started to share *Kareshabari samuha, Aama samuha, Kishori samuha* etc. I spoke about menstrual hygiene, reproductive health issues, and benefits of regular health checkup during pregnancy, caring of mothers after childbirth, benefits of a kitchen garden etc. I don’t feel awkward talking about all those things now.



mother Goma Lohar and ward no. 5, Bajhkot in school, I could not express and raised in a Dalit for AAWAAJ, I got and shaking when I met happy face and I gained me. After I attended more confident and I what I have learned with

When I was menstruating, I refused to stay on *chhau goth* (menstruation shed) and insisted on staying at home. My mother in law did not agree and said gods would get angry if I do so. I explained to her that it was cold in the shed and my hands and feet would ache. Also, there would be a risk of a venomous insect or snake biting me, the shed was dirty so I might get infections or get sick. So I’d rather stay in a safe and clean place during this period because it would be healthy. I would be considered a hypocrite if I tell others to do so as a local resource person, and I myself live in a shed during my menstruation. My mother in law finally agreed and let me stay inside the house. I started with myself and I spread this message to the girls and women in my area. My community started to believe in me and the menstruating girls started to stay at their own clean rooms instead of a chhau goth.

I have regular discussions about cleanliness, reproductive health, benefits of constructing kitchen garden, *juthelno, chaang* etc with various local social organizations like *Aama smuha* and *Kishori samuha*.

In 2075 Mangsir, among 5 volunteer pairs and 6 local resource persons that were selected to work in Panachal Jharana VDC, I was awarded as the best for conducting regular group meetings, mobilizing the group, working for the elimination of *chhaupadi* system in the society, promoting regular health checkups for pregnant women and advising them to have delivery in the clinic. My confidence has increased a lot by this and it has become easy for me to do my work now.

“Ward chairperson are played vital role to convince not to send daughter in law in shed during menstruation or delivery “

Born in Raskot municipality ward number 1 Biuri, Sakula Sajyal has passed 12th grade. She got married and moved to Panchal Jharana VDC ward number 8 Chheprekhet in Kalikot. When she was 18 years old did marriage. Two years after her marriage at the age of 20, she got pregnant. She says she went to the health clinic for her checkup only once during her pregnancy but did not get a chance to take iron pills or eat nutritious food. When her water broke, she was taken to a shed and the buffalo living there was tied outside. She delivered her baby there, a girl child.

She had to live there after delivery. She had to cook and clean herself. She also had to carry water by herself to the shed. She was forbidden to eat salt, dairy, fish or vegetables for nine days after delivery. Her hands, feet and face were swollen because of the cold in the shed. She could not eat properly because of the smell and neither of them slept properly. Her mother in law called a traditional healer for consultation who said all of this was happening because of a witch. They followed all the rituals as instructed by the healer but the mother’s health was still not improving. After 9 days, she took a bath and started to stay at her own room. Her health finally started to improve.

When AAWAAJ was in her village to form *Aama Samuha* (mother’s group), she also became a member. The group met regularly and discussed about reproductive health, cleanliness, pregnancy tests and postpartum care, nutrition and women rights. She is 22 years old now. She got pregnant for the second time. This time she went for regular checkups in the clinic four times. Her family took her to the clinic for delivery and bought the mother and the newborn back home.

She was made to stay in the shed again by her family. AAWAAJ staff found out about this while they were on a field visit. The staff tried to convince the family to get her out of the shed but her old mother in law insisted otherwise and said that the gods would get angry. The staff then sought help from local leaders and teachers to convince her but it did not work. When the ward chair told her

that if she keeps on insisting that the new mother should be kept on the shed, two of her family member's old age pension would be stopped by the ward. She finally agreed to bring the new mother out of the shed to her home. She was relocated to her room on the presence of the whole society and everybody else also agreed on keeping the postpartum mothers in the house after the delivery from that day on. The organization also gave her a crate of eggs for proper nutrition and thanked everyone.