



First group of Leadership for Change trainees upon completion of training
Photo Credit: Hamro Samman

FROM SURVIVORS TO COUNTER- TRAFFICKING CHAMPIONS IN NEPAL

Shanti Pokharel is a survivor of domestic violence. *“My husband would beat me every day. To get away from him, I had to leave my son and daughter in Nepal and go to a foreign country to work. After ten years, I came back to Nepal for good and started a new life with my son and daughter,”* Shanti said. She remembered that, at the time, she lacked the confidence to discuss her problems or seek help to change her circumstances.

Fulmaya Chumi is a trafficking survivor. She was once shy and uncomfortable when expressing her opinion, but she has developed a renewed sense of confidence and is now connecting with a wider network of people. Today, she is actively engaged in livelihood support and employment generation activities for vulnerable women and youth in her rural municipality.

Today, Shanti, too feels like a different person: she is more self-assured and involved in her community, and she feels that she could be a community leader. She is supporting employment generation activities in her

community and participates in her rural municipality's COVID-19 response.

Learning to Lead

Shanti and Fulmaya are two of 59 trainees in the Leadership for Change training organized by the Hamro Samman project in coordination with its local partner, Swatantrata Abhiyan Nepal. Hamro Samman is funded by USAID and UK aid and implemented by Winrock International.

The training has inspired both women to see the leaders in themselves, and it has equipped them with the tools they need to become change-makers in their communities. Although they are already active in their communities, they are preparing action plans to support future counter trafficking efforts. They plan to raise awareness of trafficking risks, and to engage with local government, clubs, committees and other groups and individuals to address issues important for their communities.

The Leadership for Change training empowers survivors and vulnerable individuals by helping them to identify, cultivate and celebrate their potential. It arms survivors with the knowledge and skills to become champions of counter-trafficking in their families and communities. The training emphasizes the importance of strengthening survivors' own voices, which enables them to become effective advocates for community-based change. In doing so, trainees push for the

development and enforcement of policies, services, and other interventions to thwart trafficking and break the cycle of entrapment and misery it engenders.

“The training has made a big difference. The training has developed my confidence and public speaking ability and my networking skills,” shared Fulmaya.



Leadership for Change participant Shanti Pokharel supervising community cleaning activities. Photo provided by Shanti Pokharel herself.

Leadership into Action

Shanti is currently engaged in the Prime Minister Employment Program as a supervisor for community cleaning and road construction activities in the Khajura Rural Municipality in Banke district of Province 5. COVID-19 has increased the vulnerability of many people who are already at risk. To help the government’s response to the crisis, Shanti collected data on people in dire need of food or other assistance, and provided referrals for support to the municipality. She was involved in the distribution of relief supplies to 35 women by the Rural Municipality, and now hopes to use micro-grants offered by the Hamro Samman project to further help vulnerable people in her community.

Fulmaya also has sought new opportunities to serve her community. She joined a committee responsible for the selection and implementation of a 10-day vocational (hair dressing) training to 17 young men from vulnerable families organized by Janajati Association Committee with financial support from the Manahari Rural Municipality in Makwanpur district of Bagmati Province. She is now involved in an alternative livelihoods program, that supports women from families that were formerly financially dependent

on selling illicit home-brewed alcohol. The activity works with all-women 5-member groups in 4 wards and provides each member with 2 goats. Each of these members will have to provide one kid bred from the goats to another woman from among the vulnerable families, and the member herself can continue to increase the number of her herd and use the goats as a source of livelihood.

Fulmaya said she is proud that she can already see small changes from her efforts in collaboration with local stakeholders. *“Two of the boys who attended the hair dressing training plan to set up their own barber shops and even train more youths from their community,”* she said, adding that she believes that income generation opportunities and awareness activities can reduce the risk of trafficking.

Elevating Survivor Voices

The leadership training assisted participants to evaluate risks and identify local resources to support their ideas and efforts to raise awareness, inform policy changes, and amplify advocacy. As active members of their communities, survivors like Shanti and Fulmaya are better able to identify suspicious activities possibly linked to trafficking, and to speak up by reporting suspected cases to relevant authorities.

“COLLECTIVE EFFORT IS NEEDED FOR BIG CHANGES, BUT ONE PERSON CAN START THE JOURNEY TO COLLECTIVE EFFORT.”

– Shanti Pokharel, Leadership for Change Trainee

With their new leadership and networking skills, new “CTIP Champions” like Shanti and Fulmaya are now more knowledgeable and capable of executing action plans to combat human trafficking in their communities. They are already exploring opportunities to further support at-risk community members with resources provided supported by Hamro Samman micro-grants.

With eyes on the future, trainees also hope to become involved in Committees for Controlling Human Trafficking at various levels of the government to ensure that survivor voices are included in counter-trafficking interventions and policies.