

SUCCESSFUL EXPERIENCES

& LESSONS LEARNT



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Documentation of public efforts for sustainable peace in our country that has suffered serious threats from the armed conflict for more than a decade has become more essential today. It has also felt necessary to identify the main actors of the peace process at grass root level and praise them for their good efforts. At present the country is passing through the critical period of post conflict, some organisations have become involved in the campaigns of building sustainable peace and in the process of conflict transformation with full dedication, commitment and will. I have found the Institute of Human Rights Communication, Nepal (IHRICON) as one such organisation that works as the chief actor for **Successful Experiences and Lessons Learnt**.

While going through the book titled "**Successful Experiences and Lessons Learnt**" the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR)-1325 has helped towards making women participate in the peace building process and it is found that successful efforts have been made towards implementing UNSCR-1325 at the village level. It is clear that the program on "Women Empowerment for Human Rights and Sustainable Peace" implemented with the support of Canadian Cooperation Office (CCO) has provided an exemplary assistance for sustainable peace. I would like to congratulate all the village women, civil society, CCO and the family of IHRICON who have been involved in this excellent work.

I am hopeful that the restructuring of new Nepal should be initiated from the village level. While going through the text it is found that the program implemented in the 30 VDCs of Kailali, Dang, Gorkha and Sindhuli has directly empowered more than one thousand women and promoted sustainable peace by involving them in income generating schemes. We can hope that the illustration of these successes will become the source of encouragement for the citizens of other village areas in particular the people having same economic and psychological condition. In fact the book "**Successful Experiences and Lessons Learnt**" reflects the amount of motivation that the program has provided for change.

I heartily congratulate IHRICON for the greater scope of success, experience and learning and for the promotion of women's participation and empowerment for sustainable peace. I am hopeful that all of us will realize that the success of "**Successful Experiences and Lessons Learnt**" is assisting within the scope of empowerment of women who represents more than fifty percent of the country's population. Once again I congratulate all for practical implementation of "**Successful Experiences and Lessons Learnt**."

Subash Chandra Nimbang

Speaker

Interim Parliament

Outstanding success of local women

Women Empowerment for Human Rights and Sustainable Peace is one of the program from which the Institute of Human Rights Communication; Nepal (IHRICON) can rightly feel satisfied by conducting the program. IHRICON feels a sense of pride and prestige towards the achievements of the programs which have been implemented in thirty Village Development Committees (VDCs) of Kailali, Dang, Gorkha and Sindhuli districts thereby empowering more than one thousand women and also significantly increase their income generation.

The program has covered ten VDCs each from Kailali and Dang and five VDCs each from Sindhuli and Gorkha respectively. The Canadian Cooperation Office (CCO) has decided to replicate its investment for the implementation of the program in additional areas of Kailali and Dang. I am confident that the CCO has been influenced by the changes seen in local women due to the program and decided to re-implement the program.

Along with this project, IHRICON for the first time got an opportunity to introduce the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 in Nepal for its practical implementation which was adopted in 2000. During that time the Resolution 1325 was remained as an issue of darkness among the right based activists and the NGOs at central level. No one noticed about it at that time. The voice for the participation of women in the peace process has started rising at the time Kathmandu was still in a dream. The community peace volunteers and the member of the peace group have started advocating at the village level for the participation of women in the peace process. It has become a historical event for Nepal and a matter of prestige for IHRICON.

Meanwhile it has been seen that other NGOs and the Agencies involved in the social welfare activities too have initiated similar activities in the neighboring villages and the districts after being influenced by the program. The women who had no or little knowledge about their rights during the initiation of the program have now become able to understand the politics from village level to central level and the result is that the women are involved in district level politics and developmental works. After four years of our regular efforts the situation has changed that women previously trained and worked as peace volunteers are established as leaders at district level. The women involved in the peace group are even recommended as successful candidates for the parliament.

This program has become meaningful towards making the women informed about different aspects of human rights whose knowledge has been lacking behind due to various reasons thereby involving the women at the grass-root level in the peace groups. The changes seen in women in the context of awareness on their rights and public advocacy can be measured easily. This program has also helped in making the social and economic status of women high. Specially, this program has been implemented since Bhadra 2060 B.S with the objective of promoting these qualities among women.

The village women have not taken this project to be continued only with the support of donor agencies. They have taken this project as a vital campaign. Therefore, they have increased the collected amount in the district to more than ten lakhs from the principal fund which has been running for the economic development. Now it is not necessary to invite the village peace volunteer for their participation to raise their voice on the subject matter of human rights violation taking place in the village and district level. The women have started to come to the street lifting their fist from the villages spontaneously. They have become able not only to manage and understand the financial aspects of the budget allocated for village women but also became able to adopt suitable professions and analyse its future impact. The success stories included in this book have highlighted the above facts.

I am convinced that this book is a complete document in itself. It has highlighted the past status of village women and the changes that has appeared in them through the program. In most of the stories the actors themselves have spoken while in some of the stories the observation and the evaluation of others are also included. I am confident that the details expressed in the book "**Successful Experiences and Lessons Learnt.**" should equally suit people having simple learning background as well as those having higher education and makes a good reading to all.

The exemplary success appeared in local women was possible only through the support rendered by the office of Local Development Facility (LDF) under Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). I would like to highly appreciate the support of the Director of CIDA Dr. Prabin Mahanandhar and the Coordinator of LDF Dr. Ramji Neupane and other members to enable us to reach to this level.

Similarly, the support provided by Krishna Raj Shrestha of Sindhuli, Bisheswore Katel of Gorkha, Susil Gautam of Dang and Chitra Paneru of Kailali is appreciated and highly remembered towards making the program a success in the local level. The change which appeared in the local women was not possible without the continuous effort received from the coordinators and the peace motivators China Lama, Sanu Maya Basnet, Sarada Sharma and Menaka Suwar. Likewise the commitments of the peace volunteers and the members of Women Peace Group will always be appreciated. Without their readiness to participate in the program the success could not be achieved only through our efforts.

The support of the Project Coordinator and the Executive Director of IHRICON Mr. Kapil Kafley at central level is even more appreciative. Likewise, I have found that all the working staffs of IHRICON at central office including Meena Sharma, Sarada Koirala, Anita Bista, Khadak Aslami, Sunita Tiwari and Kharga Oli have fully supported to make the program a success. I would like to extend great appreciation to Mr. Hari Khanal and Pukar Gyawali for their laborious work to translate the "**Successful Experiences and Lessons Learnt.**" from Nepali to English.

It would not have been possible to bring "**Successful Experiences and Lessons Learnt.**" to this stage if the editors of the English version Mr. John MacAulay and Padam Pokhrel and the editor of the Nepali version Mr. Kapil Kafle had not provided their knowledge, skill and time.

Sobha Gautam
Chairman

Sharing learning: a need for today

It is said in the famous Sanskrit Manuscript called "HITOPADESH" that 'knowledge cannot be theft by a robber, need not be divided among the brothers like wealth and property. It increases as we continue to share, that is why knowledge is said to be the most important wealth.' Life is a series of learning. We live our life through successful practice that we learnt from the behaviors and lessons from our failures. This is the reality of a successful life. To bring this reality into practice it is necessary to share knowledge and skills among the public. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Institute of Human Rights Communication, Nepal (IHRICON) for fulfilling the same necessity by publishing the book "**Successful Experiences and Lessons Learnt.**"

I have gone through more than fifty successful stories of village women included in this text. Through field visits, I have met some of these brave and courageous women in their own communities to have field level experience on their work and accomplishments. I have been waiting for a long to see these illustrations of success to come in documented form and to become available for general citizens. My interior motive is now fulfilled along with the publication of this book. In these successful practices there are resources of learning for the readers. The women of other villages too can learn a lot from the collected practices of the village women like what the child learn more from the peer than learning from an elderly people. They also feel this as their own story. It is anticipated that the text "**Successful Experiences and Lessons Learnt.**" can fulfill the necessity lacked by press media towards empowering women.

The text published by the IHRICON with the support of the Local Development Facility (LDF) under the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) is a complete document in itself, an encouraging document written by the village women about themselves. This book has clearly shown the situation of women at the time when the program was initiated and the stage they have attained by now. In fact the book has highlighted about the implementation part of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 and the importance of women's participation in the peace process. Therefore, the book not only encourage the village women at this sensitive stage of post conflict but it also benefits law-makers of the country, Donor Agencies, Non Governmental Organisations and all the related stakeholders.

This book will become equally useful to learn about the situation of village women and represent them geographically. More than one thousand women from thirty Village Development Committees (VDCs) of Kailali, Dang, Gorkha and Sindhuli have directly or indirectly spoken their feelings in this book. Their achievements of empowerment and income-generation are documented. This kind of document will definitely be useful for the decision-makers to take appropriate decisions. IHRICON is indebted for developing such a useful document.

I wish IHRICON for more successes in the days to come!

Dr. Ramji Neupane
LDF Coordinator
Canadian Cooperation Office
Lazimpat, Kathmandu.

GREETINGS

I am very glad to know that the Institute of Human Rights Communication, Nepal (IHRICON) has been actively involved in the areas of women participation in the peace building process during and after the conflict as per the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 for the first time in Nepal.

The support of the Nepalese women who have closely experienced the conflict is more significant in the process of peace building. I wish for the success of National Conference on "**Role of Local Women in Peace Building**" going to be held in the presence of local women from the program implemented districts by IHRICON.

While going through the stories, it is felt that the book titled "**Successful Experiences and Lessons Learnt.**" will definitely become the source of references for other village women and the esteemed readers. It is also expected that the book will serve as a supportive document in the areas of peace building process.

I express my greetings to IHRICON for the complete success of organizational future action plan.

Ram Chandra Poudel
Minister
Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction

DEDICATED TO

All the Women of Nepal
Committed to Sustainable Peace and Human Rights,
Who take care of their families, bearing children (the nation's future) in their
arms, vision in their eyes, and the country on their shoulders,
with the resolve to break feudalistic barriers and constraints of the
discriminatory social policies and rule.

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Gorkha



Project completed but activities are still ongoing

Bisheshore Katel

The project titled "**Women Empowerment for Human Rights and Sustainable Peace**" implemented in five Village Development Committees of Gorkha district including Tapley, Finam, Makaisingh, Mirkot and Shreenathkot have drawn maximum attention of the district level women leaders after four years of continuous effort. The project was successful towards preparing women leaders at the district level. The women involved in the Women Peace Groups are even recommended for members of the parliament as successful candidates.

The project was successful in making the people better informed on different aspects of human rights by making the grassroots women work together in groups who were previously lacking behind due to several reasons. The changes seen in the women regarding their rights and public hearings can be measured easily. The project also helped towards improving the economic and the social status of the women involved.

The project was implemented in the district since mid-August 2003 especially, for the dual purpose of promoting capacities such as raising their awareness and promoting their economic status. The project is targeted to rural women with the view to incorporate the mostly backward areas of the society. The project has highlighted the economic, social, political, cultural aspects.

The project was started in the village with the intention of including the women of marginalized sectors and the stakeholders as targeted groups. Whenever we talk about the rights it will be automatically linked with the individual's economic, social, political, and cultural practices. We have started the sustainable and planned project after we were mentally prepared to reach both the insignificant and the critical part of all these aspects.

The program was implemented through skills. In order to provide the human rights education to the women at grassroots level we have decided to initiate communication program on Women Empowerment for Human Rights and Sustainable Peace.

Programme objectives:

1. Make the social status of women high and promote women rights as human rights,
2. Eliminate the barriers and make women established in the field of economic, social and political areas.
3. Conduct women empowerment campaigns to raise their voice againsts social discrimination and injustice,
4. Initiate campaigns againsts women and girls trafficking,
5. Provide necessary guidance to the women on skill-oriented professions.

Phase-wise Activities

Implementation Phase:

Phase-I

Formation of District Committees/Institutions

- Selection of wards of the VDC as per the objective of the program
- Selection of Female Human Rights Volunteers from the VDC
- Provide training to the selected human rights volunteers of the VDC
- Conducting a Baseline Survey
- Orientation on program objectives
- Formation of Women Peace Groups.

Phase-II

Program Implementation

Program in groups and village level:

- Provide training to five persons from each group
- Conducting regular meetings

- Training to the volunteers on saving and money investment
- Group interactions on the importance of saving and collection of 25 percent of the seed money that the group should manage
- Provide loans to the members of the group collected as seed money
- Orientation to volunteers on Journalism
- Provide news boards to all the five VDCs for the publication of wall magazines
- Organise interactions with the concerned agencies related to the program
- Organise discussions and interaction on the interest of the group and technology
- Money investment and management
- Monthly deposit and management

Program as Social Campaign:

Based on our experience we knew that the issues like women rights, women's empowerment were not entertained by this uneducated and backward society, hence we tried to take this project as part of social revolution. The following activities were conducted as part of our program:

:

Campaign against liquor:

- Campaign againsts torturing of wives after taking liquor,
- Campaign againsts polygamy,
- Campaign againsts child discrimination.

Program as Public Awareness:

In the course of making social revolution more effective and solving the challenges, the public awareness campaign was also carried out at the same time in which the following activities were also performed that are closely related to the spirit of the main objectives of the program.

- Public awareness on human rights and sustainable peace,
- Awareness on women rights and women empowerment,
- Awareness on impact of conflict and the victims of conflict,
- Awareness on the role of women and women groups on conflict, violence and peace,
- Group awareness on economic, social and political movement,
- Awareness among womens of the villages on economic, social and political movement,
- Initiation of discussions and interactions on local issues of public interest,
- Awareness on compulsory education to the children,
- Trainings and interactions on prevention of natural calamities, enviornment protection and the importance of forest conservation.
- Training on issues such as child and mother care, HIV/AIDs, women related disease, control and treatment of TB.
- Awareness training on importance of organizing participatory inter-school competitions among school students on the topics such as education, health, enviornment etc.

Campaign through Press Media:

There are nemurus problems among women encircled by the traditional practices. The initiation of wall magazine has become the means to highlight these issues and attract sympathy from others. Through this program the women have started sharing their joys and sorrows by establishing communication groups of women. The wall magazine titled 'Women's Voice for Human Rights and Sustainable Peace' was initiated with the purpose of disseminating the messages on Women Empowerment for Human Rights and Suatainable Peace and create public opinion by involving the local women. Each copy of the wall paper has been pasted/hung on the wall of targeted VDC buildings, and buildings of women development centers, buildings of sub-health posts and public buildings, areas nearby schools and the offices of the Women Peace Groups.

Programs in District Level:

Program as Social revolution:

Several activities conducted in the district as well as in the in the villages of rural areas. The district level programs are being organised by involving the women from the villages. The programs such as a peace day march or rally, bell ringing campaign as part of raising awareness, as interactions or consultative workshops are being regularly conducted to mark international labour day, world human rights day, constitution day, childrens' day, labours' day, world population day etc. The activities are being conducted under the single leadership of this organization and sometimes under joint venture if the objectives are common. Apart from this the organisation is also conducting several other activities such as folk song competition, street dramas etc in the district to disseminate the message of peace in every villages.

Program as human rights groups:

At first the program was initiated with the aim of improving human rights situations to pave ways for sustainable peace, and in this regard the Institute of Human Rights Communication, Nepal (IHRICON) has successfully presented itself as a committed and a responsible group for human rights and communication, despite several undesirable circumstances in the district. Though the time frame for the project of the donor, Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) has already been finished, the women groups in five VDCs of the districts are still equally active for human rights and sustainable peace. In other words we can say that the program has gained its sustainability.

Records of Women Peace Volenters; Gorkha

Number of project implemented VDCs	05
Members of community peace volenters	142
Number of household	130
Seed Money collect by by community	Rs.35,000/-
Seed Money provided by IHRICON	Rs.1,15,000/-
Interest and Saving	Rs. 2,22,000/-
Total Saving	Rs. 3,72,000/-
Present Investment	Rs. 3,64,000/-

Areas of Investment

1.	Family management (education and health)	20%
2.	Goat rearing	17%
3.	Buffalo rearing	9%
4.	Pig rearing	3%
5.	Poultry farming	4%
6.	Vegetable production	16%
7.	Banana farming	3%
8.	Running of hotels and small shops	6%
9.	Cutting and Tailoring	4%
10.	International Employment	18%

Acheivement by number of beneficiaries:

1.	People with good achievements:	35
a.	Vegetable production (Tomato)	08
b.	Buffalo rearing	11
c.	Goat rearing	10
d.	Poultry farming	02
e.	International Employment	04
2.	People with little achievement	98
3.	People with bad achievement	09
4.	Leadership from local politics to Central level	03
5.	Leadership from VDCs to District level	05
6.	Development of VDC level political leadership	15
7.	Outsiders influenced and following profession	04

Tremendous rise in profit

Pampha Khatri

The members of Women Peace Group, Finam have named themselves as creative women. In 2060 B.S they have received a donation of rupees 23 thousand from Institute of Human Rights Communication, Nepal (IHRICON) and made a sum of 30 thousand seed money by adding seven thousand to it. With the same amount the women have started goat and buffalo rearing, poultry farming etc. and the amount has increased to rupees more than one lakh.

The women of three different wards from Finam VDC, whose financial status was very poor, are actively involved in this kind of creative work. The Women Peace Group, Finam is strengthening their group by saving an amount of more than 1 lakh 50 thousand till date. The group became victorious by providing profit oriented opportunities to the members of their working areas in ward number 4, 7 and 9 of Finam VDC.

The women of Finam have got the skills of economic progress from IHRICON. In mid-august 2007, IHRICON has organized training in Dang. After the training, IHRICON with the help of Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) provided an amount of rupees 23 thousand to the members of Women Peace Group. The seed money was increased to 30 thousand by adding 7 thousand from the group members. The amount was then borrowed by the members of the group as loans for income generation. They have also continued to deposit an amount of rupees 100 each per month from the members of the peace group. They have also made the policy mechanism themselves so that the loan will be returned to the group within the period of six month from the date the loan is released.

The members of the Women Peace Group take loan at the rate of 12 percent interest for income generation activities. No one has become the defaulters of the policy.

The women of Finam have given top priority to animal rearing. Considering the areas of investment the major amount was invested in poultry farming, goat and buffalo rearing that has potentiality of enough fodders, grazing land and accessible market. By recognising the potentiality the group was also provided with training on animal rearing.

The group conducts its monthly meeting on the fifth day of every month. The principal sum and the interest will be submitted on the same day as per the specified provision. The meeting will decide to provide loan for second time from the collected to the needy person for the promotion of income generation works. The group also deposits the balance amount in the locally operated National Commercial Bank.

Changes in the occupation:

The farmers of Finam were not been able to make enough profits till B.S. 2060 as they follow the traditional method of cattle farming with local animals. Rearing animal was part of their daily life. After the implementation of the program, the women have started rearing goats as their profession and the production increased thereby. The occupation of cattle rearing has now become main source of income for those members of Women Peace Group. The other women also seek technical assistance and suggestions knowing that the animals are the main sources of income. They also know that the number of animals will increase by leaps and bounds under proper care. In this way the occupation of rearing animals by the women of Gorkha district has become cost-effective.

Change in economic status:

Comparing to the past the economic condition of Finam has become more competitive. The practice of seeking loan from the landlords to run their family has totally stopped. The members of the group have now become able to return loans to the landlords and have successfully got back their mortgaged land from the landlords. The other people of their locality have now started believing in them. Now the members of Women Peace Group can get the loan easily from the person who has denied them in the past considering their economic condition. The members of the group have now become able to send their sons and daughters abroad for employment.

Empowerment:

The women of Finam have not only improved their economic condition, they are also empowered in other areas. They have become able to share their joys and sorrows openly and confidently. They have built up their capacities to face the challenges of the life. The group has collected funds by playing Dewsi–Bhailo during Tihar festival and with that amount they have bought a stretcher for the purpose of carrying patients to hospitals and distributed emergency lights. The women have bought musical instruments like Madal, Jhurma etc. as entertainment materials for the women of the village during different occasions (events). This has also helped them to minimize the discrimination againsts women in the society. The group has made their social profile high and respectable.

Developmental work:

The role of members of the Women Peace Group in the areas of construction of school building and reconstruction of taps and water supply tanks to provide safe drinking water to the villagers became useful and productive. The group has committed to mobilise human resource, propose village development plan, and make budget allocation and maximum utilisation of the allocated budget. In addition the members of the group are also working collectively to raise awareness on sanitation and conservation of forest. They say the cash circulating in their hands made them confident and the behaviour of other people towards them has changed.

Junu Gurung stood as an example

Sanu Maya Basnet

One can reach to pleasant upland after walking straight up about three hours distance from Battar. On top of the upland there is a small tea shop. We can get food items and other commodities in the shop that can be used in our daily life. The shop is running properly. We have found many reasons behind the well running of the shop. Among these one of the reasons was the confident and cheerful style of the owner of the tea shop.

The writer (Peace Volunteer) had got the opportunity to receive a warm welcome from the same cheerful women. She is the member of Women Peace Group, Makaisingh and a rights activist on women empowerment for human rights and communication. Every one would like to get her detailed introduction once they comes to know her economic improvements by running a tea shop and the confidence that she has gained. She stood as an example for women empowerment. She is living happily after gaining divorce of her husband who didn't recognize gender equity and respect his life partner at all. Junu was born in 2033 B.S. and got married in 2053 B.S., but her marital life didn't continue with her husband for a longer period.

The result of investment of loan:

Ms. Junu, who is also looking after her elderly mother took a loan of rupees five thousand from the Women Peace Group. She started a small business with the amount. The scope of business increased due to her confidence and commitment. She didn't face difficulties in returning loan and the interest to the Women Peace Group in a specified time. The other friends from the group also agreed to provide loan to Junu for another time as she has kept good reputation in the group. She continued to increase the scope of her business by receiving loan from the Women Peace Group as per her requirements. As a result she has become successful to keep herself happy and provide support to her elderly mother along with running a shop and a hotel.

In this regard she speaks to the writer as "I have worked with full commitment and confidence, I wouldn't be able to handle the money like this if the Women Peace Group wouldn't have trusted on me by identifying my condition. People become able to speak about their rights when they become financially sound. My monthly income is quite good; the program has helped a lot towards improving my economic condition."

She says that she has experienced lots of injustices in the past due to lack of confidence and reserved nature while speaking in public. She had agreed that she still have to work hard to bring changes in her

though the group has done a lot to get her rid of from these kinds of habits. "The habit of my inconfidence has gone while sharing my opinion to others after I joined the group; I hope that I can identify what is right and what is wrong" she says.

Junu is doing more than what she tells. She can even decide justice and injustice, take actions againsts the culprit and extend congratulation to those who has done good things. She happily says, "These are the achievements that I have gained from this group". The knowledge, skills and economic reforms are her achievements.

'We had no idea about our position in our backward society. We had paid no attention on it before. I have joined the group as per the request made by the volunteer friends of Women Peace Group and came to know many benefits of joining the group,' she explains. Her judgement was that awarness was increased in her as she got opportunity to talk about human rights and raise her voice about discrimination againsts women.

The provision of a loan was the first thing that has attracted Junu to join the group. She was encouraged as it has said the group will conduct all the management of seed money for providing loan to the group members. Her attention was caught by this provision. She cheerfully expresses, 'after hearing all the works that is to be executed by the Women Peace Group, I thought the program would also come for the poor people like me and now the days are open for us.'

'Our economic condition was so bad before the peace group started to work. There were no resources for income generation. It was difficult to meet hand and mouth with the products cultivated in the land available. We had to borrow cash from the landlord and had to pay high interest againsts it. It was difficult to pay back the loan and the interest with the money collected through goats and buffalo rearing' she tells.

A lot of changes took place comparing to the past; self confidence and motivation is increased. Her observation was that it has empowered women as they got chance to learn politics. She has become happy as she has got an opportunity to learn community journalism and good governance.

As Junu informed, she gives some information on constituent assembly, democratic republic and inclusiveness to those who visits her shop. She also participates in interactions and discussions that take place in the village.

People affiliated to all political parties like CPN (UML), CPN (Maoist), Nepali Congress etc. visits Junu's shop and discusses about different issues. She also takes part in it and it has increased awareness in her. Junu believes that the Women Peace Group had made changes in her life. She informs all the women in the village that women empowerment is possible only through balanced economy and skill development.

Children in college, husband in Qatar...

Bisheshore Katel

The appearance of Ujeli Ramtel is as cheerful as her name. Generally, we may think that why she is cheerful as a simple housewife? She has to work everything such as cooking, washing, collecting of fodder for the cattle and firewood for cooking purpose, working in the field and so on. Everybody would like to know about why she is so happy though she has to work from dawn to dusk.

The awareness in Ujeli Ramtel is as high as her name and appearance. She tells that she became mentally aware after she joined the Women Peace Group. Before, she had no knowledge about human rights, women rights, child rights and other international conventions relating to these rights. But now she has gained much information about it and she can explain many things to others. She is actively involved to create awareness on democracy, a system of governance by the elected representative and the development. She has been informing the women in the village about the rights and duties of the citizens, but the people believe in whatever the elders of the society say is always right.

If someone assumes that Ujeli is a literate woman and can inform to others on such issues is not the fact. Born in 2023 B.S Ms. Ujeli, a mother of one son and two daughters was never enrolled in the school. Her husband is also illiterate like her. She hasn't got the chance to reach near the books due to poverty of her father and her husband. The discrimination againsts the people of low cast in the society have deprived her from education. She was victimized due to social discrimination and was searching suitable opportunity in the past years. Meanwhile she became involved in the Women Peace Group established for women empowerment for human rights and sustainable peace initiated by IHRICON. She understood that there were human rights violations including discriminations between different cast, system of untouchables etc. after she got training from IHRICON. After receiving support from IHRICON she has actively involved in fulfilling her desires. She has been always trying to eliminate social discriminations.

She is happy to know about the reasons of discrimination and raise voice againsts it. She says, '-It was very difficult to solve family problems'. Her economic condition was poor and her voice was always neglected in the society. People used to get loan from the so called higher class people only after several attempts and forced to pay high interest against it.

Meanwhile the peace volunteer Pampha Khatri visited Ujeli's house. She told to Ujeli that the women together can work in the group as peace volunteers, establish a trust to deposit the amount for economic improvements, can take loan for income generation at cheaper rate of interest by joining the Women Peace Group and can utilize the group as a suitable forum to share about human rights and support each other. By hearing all about from Pampha Khatri Ujeli was encouraged to join the Women Peace Group.

Ujeli's husband is now working as a labourer in Qatar. Her son is studying IEd in Gorkha Campus. Her elder daughter is studying in class VII and the younger daughter is studying in class V. She says that their social status is improved and they got rid of from the economic problems.

She has the practice of monthly deposit after joining the group. Now she can get loan at cheaper rate of interest. In the beginning she took a loan of rupees four thousand from the Women Peace Group and bought a heifer buffalo. She sold it at rupees 14 thousand after one year and again bought another heifer. But this time she didn't sell it to anyone as she wants to carry the business of selling milk. Now the same heifer is matured into a milking one. She can sell that at rupees 25 thousand if she desires. With the profit earned from the loan and borrowing additional loan from the Women Peace Group she sent her husband to Qatar for employment. Now her economic condition is improved. She is aware that her husband is working abroad and the children are studying. 'I am very happy with this group. It has brought changes in my life which cannot be forgotten forever' she speaks happily.

Kamal Kumari reclaims her land successfully

Kamal Kumari Khatri is a popular woman of ward no 4 of Finam Village Development Committee (VDC), was born in a simple farmer family. The economic condition of Kamal Kumari has not improved even after her marriage. She had mortgaged her land due to her economic condition for the welfare of her children.

Kamala was born in 2012 B.S in a Bhuje family and got married at a young age to a local Mr. Bhakta Bahadur Khatri after she fell in love with him. She had the behaviour of making self-decision though she was young. However, she was not been able to provide education to her children as she was not aware and her economic condition was too bad. She informed that they didn't get financial support as the society was not in favour of inter-cast marriage. Both husband and wife have studied only adult education and they have been engaged in cultivating land as farmers.

It was not easy for them to meet their hands and mouths due to their poor economic condition. They couldn't provide proper and enough education to their children. Among two daughters one has left school from class six and the other left from class seven. In order to run their family they had to borrow loan from the landlord and for that they had to mortgage their land, Kamala explains.

The problem increased day by day in Kamala's life during those days. One day Kamala came to know that Pampha is going to form a women group in Finam. Kamala was also asked to join and she agreed accordingly as she was told that those involved in the Women Peace Group would get skills and economic benefit. "In that time I was also victimised by the conflict. Maoist used to come to my house and eat all the food that we prepare for our family with difficulty; they did not think whether we had enough to manage ourselves. We had nothing to say to them. Two days later, the security personels including army and police came to my house. They have threatened my family at gun point alleging that we have given shelter to the Maoist. They searched our house and scattered the entire paddy and other food grains everywhere. Our condition was so terrible due to such repeated actions of the security forces. I was totally unaware about human rights and women rights. I liked the concept of forming Women Peace Group. I thought that I will be getting many benefits by staying together with other women such as knowledge and opportunity.

According to her she achieved more than what she had thought before. She knew women group as life blood. She also realised that this would help her to eliminate poverty. She got the chance to know many things about rights after she joined the Women Peace Group. She was encouraged and became active once she came to know about how the profit could be made through profession and return loan in time. She explains that during the regular meetings of the Women Peace Group she came to know many things regarding forest and environment conservation and women groups, mother and child care, girls trafficking. She became successful towards making good profit through this program.

In the beginning she took a loan of rupees 5 thousand from the women Peace Group at an interest rate of 12 percent. She bought a heifer buffalo with that amount and sold it on rupees eighteen thousand after one year thereby making a profit of twelve thousand. She again bought another heifer with the profit. She kept that heifer till it became a milking one and sold it at rupees twenty one thousand. She explains- 'I had bought another heifer buffalo of the best breed. People bid twenty five thousand for the buffalo. Now I am trying to get back the mortgaged land from the landlord by adding a loan of ten thousand to it from the Women Peace Group.'

Now it has become easy to run her family. She doesn't have to beg for small amount. She is hopeful that the Women Peace Group will continue its support in future too.

Pawan Kumari as a model vegetable producer

This year, Pawan Kumar has made a profit of rupees 45 thousand from tomato cultivation which she started with a loan of rupees 3 thousand for vegetable cultivation borrowed from the Women Peace Group.

Pawan Kumari was born in 2040 B.S in Makaisingh. She couldn't continue her education above class six due to her poor economic condition. Now she has no interest to study though she is not married. Firstly, she doesn't have leisure time due to her busy work schedule and secondly her interest has died out. 'I am literate and I can read and write and it is enough for a simple farmer. I have the knowledge of farming: good quality seeds and pesticides' Pawan Kumari explains.

Before, she didn't have knowledge about the Women Peace Group and its working procedure. She got involved in the Women Peace Group after she was informed about its positive aspect and collective ideas. She was familiar with those women who encouraged her to join the group.

Today she has realised that there occurred a drastic change in her life. She does not hesitate while talking about her rights. "Before I didn't know that there are rights" she says. She came to know the importance of forest conservation after she joined the group. She knew about how to manage the work of collecting firewoods and fodder for the cattle. She came to know the cause of fire. She knew many things like living a healthy life and taking care of mother and child, prevention and protection from different diseases.

She has now become a successful vegetable producer. The society has started to hear her opinion and gives certain roles to play. Politics and other human rights issues have now become the subjects of her concern.

It was difficult for her to find even a small amount before she joined the Women Peace Group. People did not believe her by thinking that women do not have any kind of income generation. However, by seeing her success in the economy people have now started believing her in economic transactions. Her income was nil before, but now it has jumped to rupees 45 thousand annually.

"I have never heard about human rights before. The interest of people for democracy and constituent assembly is increasing everywhere day by day and I also feel same. Before I had the practice of avoidance from the meeting and go to complete my own work, but now I am more interested for participating in such meetings and gatherings and I came to know different issues. I think they may wrongly decide on the issues if I do not attend the meeting. This is an interesting area where people want to know more about the current issues."

Her village is located in one of the most remote hilly areas. We cannot see big plots of cultivating (wet and dry) land. A little can be achieved by applying maximum amount of work and energy because of the terrain. One can achieve more products if he/she has the idea to cultivate crops and vegetables that suits the soil of that area. She has the knowledge about the scope of Himalayan cultivation.

Makaisingh village is situated just across the river Trisuli of Prithvi Highway. After crossing the Trisuli river through suspension-bridge and climbing up the steep hill we can reach to the working area of the Women Peace Group. Most women of the peace group have now engaged in vegetable cultivation, two of them have been working as shopkeeper and hoteliers.

Pawan Kumari says, "I have become able to earn at least 35 hundred rupees per month to run my family after being involved in the group. I think nothing is impossible if we keep on working. I came to know that we have rights and ability and we should not remain as victim while exercising our rights. I got all these by involving myself in the Women Peace Group.

Diary of Ati Maya

It was with personal uncertainty that I have received a training offer when I was simply staying home after completion of Intermediate Level. The training was supposed to be organized in Gorkha District on good governance, human rights, women rights, constituent assembly and journalism. Only women candidates were supposed to participate the training. The issue of constituent assembly election had become a subject of discussion every where during that time. I participated in that training which was organized in 2061 B.S. It was a golden opportunity for me which became a stepping stone for change in my life.

I was so curious to know about training and the issues that can be discussed in the training as I had never participated such training before. The social workers from Dang, Kailali and Sindhuli also participated in the training. I got the opportunity to introduce myself and share our experience to each other.

I have learnt important things from the training. I realised the constituent assembly election was for the formation of new Nepal and is necessary for establishing good governance and peace in the country. It is also learnt that the proportionate inclusion of women, scheduled caste and dalits in the constituent assembly election should be made and women should be necessarily involved in the process of peace building.

The training has provided knowledge and skill to the participants such as how to make ourselves self-reliant and live a successful life. The training has made me aware that one should be able to fight for and use his/her rights for a successful life.

We should continue our struggle as long as we live. We get success in any work if we perform it with positive attitude as 'where there is a will there is a way'. The ability of making self decision cannot be developed unless we become self reliant. It was an opportunity for me to know that trainings are necessary in our life.

The training was organised by the Institute of Human Rights Communication, Nepal (IHRICON). After the training a village Women Peace Group was established. It is easier to work effectively and achieve good result while we work in the group. I have got an opportunity to teach others after I joined the group.

Journalism is an area where maximum knowledge and skill obtained from the training are utilised. Publication of a monthly wall magazine was collectively initiated by the members of the Women Peace Group after the training. The wall magazine includes day to day happenings, incidents, natural calamities, success stories, developmental activities etc. I got more knowledge about the importance of community based wall magazine as I have been involved regularly for its publication.

Before the training neither there was any idea nor any interest about it in me. Self- confidence was increased in me only because of the training. I was a girl of having general academic quality, but today I became able to impart knowledge and skill to the citizens about the issue of national importance. I realised that a drastic change has appeared in me. The episode of changes that was started from the training has now reached to the stage of professional practice. I thought to give something new to the community as part of my contribution. I had a desire to contribute to my society in one corner of my heart. I deeply felt that I must do something for the welfare of the society and the community.

I am so happy that a great change took place in me. The credit goes to IHRICON. There are probabilities to live successful life. People become narrow minded due to lack of knowledge and skills. No one can say that the scope of self-reliant and leadership in women cannot be developed if women are provided with opportunities.

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Radhika sends her husband abroad for employment

I am Radhika Baniya of Tapley VDC under Gorkha district. I was born in 2038 B.S. I got married in 2052 B.S. My father and mother are from ward no 6 of Prithvi Narayan Municipality. My husband is Thaman Singh Baniya. My husband has studied up to SLC level while I studied only up to standard seven. We have two sons and they are studying in class II. My husband works as labourer in Qatar, Saudi Arabia.

Bhuwan Kumari Baniya has told me that it will be worth while to join the village Women Peace Group. I felt happy by hearing from her and agreed to join the group. I had no knowledge of any external matters before I joined this group. I was encouraged in the beginning as I was asked many things on the subject of rights during the 'Baseline Survey.'

I came to know that the courage of eliminating the anti-social elements and the activities existing in the society could be developed by working together. Before I was not allowed to go for out door work without prior permission, and there were no self decision power in me. But my family has been strongly supporting to go for out door activities after I joined the group. My self-decision power and economic growth has improved after joining the Women Peace Group. Now it is not necessary for me to approach the landlords for loans.

I got opportunity to participate in the trainings on human rights and women rights after the formation of the Women Peace Group. It has become easy to run household activities. Now I become able to create public awareness to eliminate anti-social activities and promote human rights and women rights.

In the beginning the organizations has provided a sum of 30 thousand rupees to the members of the Women Peace Group as a loan at the rate of 12 percent interest for cattle farming. From the total amount of rupees 23 thousand was provided by the organisation and the remaining rupees 7 thousand was deposited by the Women Peace Group as seed money. I have also taken a loan of rupees 2 thousand for goat rearing. Now I become able to send my husband to Qatar, Saudi Arabia for employment with a loan from the Women Peace Group. What would have been fate if I had to send my husband with a loan from the landlords at a high interest rate?

I am confident that all the women of Tapley VDC are so happy with the activities of this group. The economic and the social development of local women had become possible only because of this group. The society used to treat women as "ignorant and innocent", but now the attitude of the society towards women has changed. There is no doubt that this change has occurred due to increased in the income generation activities of women and their ability to speak in front of the community. I would like to extend lots of thanks to the Institute of Human Rights Communication, Nepal (IHRICON) for making women able to think and decide about their rights.

The Communist Party of Nepal (CPN-Maoist) inquired about the formation of the group during the period of conflict. "We will not allow the group to function if it is formed with the assistance of America", they said. However they did not stop us from working after they come to know that we are functioning with the help of Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).

The situation during the formation of Women Peace Group was so harassing. We were not allowed to speak. Women and children were mostly affected by the conflict. The Maoist used to come to our house and ask for food and threatened us. They said that they would take public action against us if we do not provide food for them. On the other hand the security personel used to come and threatened us by alledging that we have provided food and shelter to the Maoist combatants. They used to beat us by saying "aren't you the person providing food and shelter to the Maoist?"

The Women Peace Group which was growing up during such difficult situation has extended lots of support for promoting and empowering women. We became united for the utilisation of the fund. The issue of human rights and women rights will be discussed in the regular meeting which keeps us always informed. "We are not alone" is a kind of sense that has developed among us.

Women became secure from suppression

Beli Shrestha

The women of Makaisingh VDC under Gorkha district are not fully escaped even today from the culture of traditional practice. The women of the village hesitate despite a drastic change that science and technology has brought. The culture of negative attitude towards daughters while they go away from home; they are termed as vociferous (talkative) when the daughter try to answer their queries; keeping daughter or girls (female) within certain periphery from the time of their birth till death is still existed. However, the degree of such attitude is minimised and the women society are now experiencing change after the women are engaged in the Women Peace Group of Makai Singh. They have started working for human rights, management, good governance and economic empowerment. The women have started raising their voice against anti-social elements and activities.

The members of the Women Peace Group have now become aware that the women continue to suffer suppression and discrimination till the time they become self-reliant. They have understood the fact that it would not be possible to stop anti-social and traditional culture through primitive attitude and thinking. Had there been no restriction in educating women and making them aware about their rights, the social change would have been fully achieved in Makai Singh VDC.

Anyway, the Women Peace Group has opened the eyes of women though the number of such women is limited. The Women Peace Group has started solving the economic problems of village women by collecting 30 thousand as seed money in the beginning. Till now the peace group has saved a sum of sixty five thousand. The women have learnt how to generate income through economic activities of domestic nature. They proved that they have become self-reliant through such economic activities. The women of Peace Group have been generating their income by taking loan from the group on rotation basis at an interest rate of 12 percent.

Similarly, if we look from the context of social perspective the condition of women has changed. The behaviour of using liquor daily and quarreling and sometime attempt to torture wives by the husbands has also changed. The character of Ram Bahadur Nepali of the same VDC has also changed into a simple citizen who had tortured his wife several times to death. The change we see in Ram Bahadur was possible by putting pressure on him through Women Peace Group thereby making him aware not to treat his wife inhumanely. "Now I am running my family with the same amount of money that I used to spend for liquor before", Ram Bahadur said.

Likewise, there is another example which can be taken as an encouragement. This is the fact about Gori Maya Thapa. The mother of two children from monger community whose husband lives outside Nepal for the last ten years was become pregnant as she was raped by the younger brother of her father-in-law. He was arrested from Mangal Bazar, Kathmandu with the help of Women Peace Group and action was taken against him for his crime. He was then pressurised by the Women Peace Group to accept the victim as his wife. Now she is being looked after by him and his acceptance has been taken as an example by the Women Peace Group and praise for the same.

There are also other examples that have helped to make women empowered in many ways. From these examples the standard of the women can be judged easily. In addition the distance that is to be covered by the women can be imagined from the examples.

Peace group made our program a success

Bhuwan Kumari Baniya

The local women of Taple VDC under Gorkha district has been appreciating about what I have done for the society. The women friends ask me many questions about my past and present. I don't like to give more importance about my family background. I need not have to explain things that took place before 2052 B.S. while talking about social matters.

I was involved in the Women Peace Group which was formed on 15th of Bhadra 2052 B.S involving women who were victimised due to domestic violence. The group was formed with the purpose of raising awareness among women. Five women including myself were the founding members and I was made the leader of the group. The Women Peace Group raised awareness among the women and supported them by providing loans for income generation activities. The office of the women development branch, Gorkha was influenced and implemented the program by forming ten different Women Peace Groups. After this, on 15th Marga 2055 B.S Millan Maihla Saving and Credit Co-operative Limited was established where some of the members of the Women Peace Group were also involved. I tried to work as much as I can for the fulfillment of responsibility as a chairperson of the Co-operative. It was easy to speak but difficult to perform the task. The work of the cooperative has increased gradually. Due to lack of training it was rather more difficult to work. The co-operative oriented women have got the opportunity to participate in the training from 26th Chaitra 2057 B.S. to 6th Baisak 2058 B.S organised by institution of the community.

The women of Palpa, Ruphendehi, Shyenja, Kaski and Gorkha districts have participated in the training on 'Basic Accounting.' The women without formal education like me got the priority to utilise the knowledge and skills learnt from the training. Before 2057 B.S. community people used to insult such women by using insulting language as "Oh such women are also running the cooperative institution!" But, today they point out me as an example to the friends of other women groups and tell them to achieve progress like the chairperson of that group. I have never thought that I will become able to run the work of such a cooperative limited effectively, but now I am managing all the works like book keeping, maintaining of ledger books, voucher and bank accounts myself. In the beginning the members of the cooperative limited used to get worried to deposit even a small amount of rupees 25 thousand, but after knowing all about it they have started depositing up to one lakh as savings.

At the time when I was busy towards promoting awareness, I got an opportunity to participate in a training organised in Ghorai, Dang District. We were at the risk of death, violence and bombing, but I got chance to meet with the friends of Dang, Kailali, Sindhuli, Rolpa and Gorkha Districts during the training organised by Institute of Human Rights Communication, Nepal (IHRICON). In the training I got the chance to learn skills and I was assigned the responsibility of establishing Human Rights Communication Peace Group to empower women.

After the training I gathered the women of Taple VDC-6 and established a Women Peace Group for Human Rights on 21st Bhadra. At first we collected a sum of rupees 30 thousand as seed money that included a donation of 23 thousand from IHRICON and rupees 7 thousand was deposited by the member of the Women Peace Group. The money was provided as loan to the members of the Women Peace Group for goat rearing and other kinds of income generating activities. Apart from it we continued to deposit monthly saving. Various activities were launched for promoting awareness. In the beginning rupees five per person was deposited monthly which is increased to rupees 50. Different activities such as training on goat rearing, interaction with different members of community forest cooperatives and discussions were held. Publication of wall magazine, solving the problems of domestic violence against women and other issues including division of parental property (Ansa Banda) were some of the activities conducted by the Women Peace Group. However, due to the conflict situation of the country most of the activities could not be continue. The training which was conducted from 24-29 Chaitra 2063 B.S provided the skills on journalism and other areas related to the state party.

I am hopeful that this program will be continued in the days ahead. The Women Peace Group has become able to collect a sum of rupees 70 thousand though they collect a small amount on monthly basis. The fund management activity has helped to create and promote awareness among women.

Change in awareness and economic status

Subarna Roka regrets that she did not get chance to study in her childhood. Later she came to know that learning and teaching are very important parts of a life. But as she understood the fact, it has become too late to go to school.

Though she was illiterate she wanted to make her children literate. But due to her poor economic condition she was forced to discontinue her daughter's education. Another daughter had to leave school after class four. Now she has only one son studying in class six. She is confident to support education of her son as he desires. Subarna Roka was born in 2020 B.S. in Taple VDC. She was married to Chudamoni Roka at the age of fifteen. Both of them were unknown of school education.

Due to poor economic condition from an early age she has to confine herself in household activities, such as collecting firewood and fodder for the cattle. She didn't have other skills and there were no option of income generating. Therefore, due to lack of income source life has become miserable. The credit has crossed the limit of interest. Still then she was eager to learn and know the techniques of reading and writing through adult education. At the same time she was requested to join Women Peace Group for Human Rights and Communication by Bhuwan Kumari Baniya. In the beginning 50 women were selected for a 'Baseline Survey' during which they were asked on economic status of women and level of awareness within their family.

She was very glad to know about it. Before this she had no knowledge about Human Rights and Women Rights. Moreover people living in remote areas with poor economic conditions have no knowledge of Human Rights related issues. She was requested to serve under this group to improve the economic status and raise awareness among innocent women.

Before joining the group discrimination against women such as husband beating their wife, forcing of daughter in-laws to work always were some of the common practice of the society. She came to know that such discriminations are domestic violence and voice should be raised to eliminate it. She says, "I was completely unknown about Women Rights before I joined the Women Peace Group. I used to get afraid to raise my voice on any issues such as domestic violence or violation of human rights. There was no source of income". She further says, "This program has brought a drastic change in my life. Before, I had to take loans at high interest rate from the landlords. By now, I have paid back all the loans, educated my son. I need not have to take loans from the landlords. Now it has become easy for me to manage all the household expenses."

According to Subarna Roka she has taken a loan of rupees 2000 with an interest rate of 12 percent from Women Peace Group for goat rearing for the first time. The loan taken by her was from the collected money of rupees 30,000 out of which 23 thousand was provided by Institute of Human Rights Communication, Nepal (IHRICON) as seed money and rupees 7,000 deposited from the members of the Women Peace Group. She has sold the goat for rupees 12,000 by now. I have easily run the family and continued to deposit the money. I have five goats now.

If we look from the context of awareness, she is quite forward. She is also involved in the program of village development. Earlier she was holding household responsibilities only and had no idea beyond the four corners of the house. She came to know that building a society and its atmosphere depends on coordination of one another. She says, "We are capable of raising our voice for proper supply of water and electricity, construction of roads, human rights and women rights and fight against inhumane activities such as domestic violence, allegation of witch-craft. We could reach to the women society like us who are limited within the household activities.

During the time of conflict we continued our work in spite of Maoist threats and challenges. We had to call a meeting fearing that the Maoist may take the collected fund. Army and police used to become the target of Maoist ambush. They used to beat the villagers telling them that they are providing food and shelter to the Maoist. We have become the victim of conflict. She says, "Now the peace has prevailed and we need to work hard for the election of the constituent assembly."

Sign of change in Sreenath-kot

Bishnu Nepali

If we look at the situation of Shreethan-Kot of Gorkha District before and after Ashoj, 2060 B.S some differences can be seen clearly. This date has proved as the baseline for change.

After involving in the Women Peace Group the sign of behavioural improvements has been seen among the women. A great change has been found in village women after they started monthly collection and saving and holding of meetings on Human Rights at regular intervals.

In the beginning it was difficult to collect cash for saving. The monthly saving and the cash collected in turn have been provided as loan to the members of the group on different topics. Due to this the women of that area have got opportunity to progress their economic conditions. Before the formation of Women Peace Group the village women have no or little awareness. The proof was the domestic violence on women and their silent tolerance.

Women were compelled to remain within household activities before the formation of Women Peace Group. They were not able to express their feelings. They know and hear little about Human Rights and Women Rights. They were not sensitive about the education of their children. They have confined themselves only in household activities. However, a drastic change in many things has been found in them after they join the Women Peace Group. They have even developed the feeling of involving themselves in developing their village. They have understood many things relating to human rights including "Children's education is our responsibility." Women become more active against activities relating to violation of human rights and women rights and make the women society of the village aware to protect women rights. After the formation of Women Peace Group the attitude of man towards women has also changed.

IHRICON opened door of opportunity for me

Bishnu Nepali (the writer herself) wants to be the example of change herself by the Women Peace Group. I was born in the family of backward ethnic class and could not establish my identity in the society. I had to make my living by any means. It was so difficult for the children to get education as the society could not understand its value. In spite of several obstacles I manage to get the opportunity to study as I used to dream.

In the course of time in Chaitra 2063 B.S I got the opportunity to take part in a week long training provided by Institute of Human Rights Communication, Nepal (IHRICON). During the training period I got chance to learn in more details on the issues like Human Rights, Women Rights, Constitutional Assembly, Good Governance and Journalism and become more confident to explain to other women of the community.

I got the opportunity to serve women society of our community being myself involved in the Women Peace Group as a social activist for the purpose of providing knowledge on constituent assembly and make them able to express their feelings, fight for their rights. Before, I did not have courage to express my problems in the society. Now I have developed my courage to express my view in the group on women rights and women empowerment and even constituent assembly.

Today our society has gone through the process of metamorphosis. I am proud of myself working in the Women Peace Group. If I was not given this opportunity by IHRICON, I could not develop my personality like this and I would not be able to develop my courage to bring change in the society. The Women Peace Group of IHRICON has opened the door of opportunity for those who were in the dark corner due to lack of knowledge, awareness and education. I am hopeful that every backward women of the village are made aware by the Women Peace Group, IHRICON in the days to come.

Pride of Ratna Kumari as farmer

Ratna Kumari once had a hard time in finding a way to earn a living now shows means of earning to others. With the income of 40 thousand plus in the past years from tomato farming, she becomes a popular and influential figure in the society. A situation is created that she tells about good things to the society and in turn the society hears what she says.

Economic empowerment has been clearly noticed in her after she has involved in the Women Peace Group that works on women empowerment for human rights and sustainable peace which was established in 2060 B.S. She realised the organisation's plea for "Economic Reforms for Sustainable Peace and Human Rights." As a result she has become a professional woman of the society.

Having born in 2030 B.S in the remote area of Bhumli Chowk VDC of Gorkha District, Ratna Kumari got married in 2046 B.S to Topman Gurung. She studied up to grade five with difficulty but her husband crossed PCL (Proficiency Certificate Level) and working as a teacher. His income made easier for them to support their children's education. The first son passed SLC and the other two daughter are reading in grade eight and six respectively. She says, "I was forced to depend on my husband and other members of the family as I had no single pie in my hand." Having known that economic power influences other rights she wishes to earn some for herself too."

Meanwhile, Beli Shrestha has conducted a 'Baseline Survey' in our village to form a group for human rights and women empowerment. I was inspired and motivated to be involved in the group by the questions that she asked during the survey. She says, "I was completely ignorant about the topic of human rights and women rights before. I made up my mind to join this organisation by knowing that it is a place of learning knowledge and skills about human rights and can take loan for income generation"

Initially she took a loan of rupees three thousand and started kitchen gardening (growing of vegetables). As an income generating organisation she also got training from the group. A radical change has occurred in her life within one year after selling the production of tomato in rupees fourty thousand. Inspired by this achievement she started cultivating seasonal vegetables. The family has also supported in her mission too. The support from every corner made me a successful producer of Vegetable. She says, "I am proud of being a successful professional farmer." Involvement of Women Peace Group not only brings changes in economic reform but also improved the health of mother and child, veterinary; ways of farming etc helped her to progress as an exemplary woman.

During the armed conflict her husband Mr. Top Man Gurung was inhumanely beaten by the armed group. He did not find a place to lodge a writ to prove his innocence. He was depressed by this action. The success of his wife was the only remedy to come out of mental depression. But during that time women were more affected by the conflict in comparison to the male. The load of firewood and the fodder were also searched at that time. Nothing was certain during that time. It was insecure to stay even as a guest in the nights, the police and army used to ask to appear as plaintiff alleging us by saying that we are the supporter of Maoist. Now the situation has changed. There will be a tremendous progress provided the peace prevails and they can work freely.

Change in Hasta Kumari

Born in 2009 B.S Hasta Kumari hails from her maternal hometown, Prithvi Narayan Municipality. She has two sons and one daughter. Because of the poor condition of her house one of her son had to stop his study from class eight while her daughter studied only up to class six. She is sad that she had engaged the children in the domestic works instead of sending them to school for education due to the economic condition. Without the source of income it was difficult to manage the household activities, says Hasta Kumari. She is hopeful that her entry to the Women Peace Group has widened the source of earning in her family. The story of her success goes like this: With a loan of rupees two thousand from the Women Peace Group she brought an adult goat. The goat died after delivery. The kid was grown up and sold at 4 thousand. Now I have a heifer buffalo. After the delivery the buffalo would fetch 22-25 thousand. In addition, I have reared goats too. The help from the Women Peace Group improved my collapsed business.

My entry to the Women Peace Group helps me to exchange my joys and pains, says Hasta Kumari. The system of extending helping hands at the time of difficulties energised and inspired to work in social sector. The members of Women Peace Group are ahead in terms of human rights, women empowerment and awareness issues. The peace group helps in the developmental works in the village. The dream of development will come into reality provided the Women Peace Group extends support to other villages with the same objectives.

Pabitra Became Professional

Born in 2030 B.S., Kot-Dara village of Palungtar VDC, Pabitra Pariyar was married to Khus Bahadur Pariyar of Mirkot-5 in 2046 B.S. She has two sons. Her husband does tailoring. Both of them are illiterate. Poverty and social status deprives Pabitra from education against her desire.

She tells her story of sufferings after her marriage like this: Being a member of Pariyar family by birth we were suppressed by others by saying that we make our living from yearly wages (Bali) through the profession of tailoring. We had no lands for cultivation. We were confined to manage our meals by bringing paddy and maizes from the society provided that we made them happy by sewing their clothes. Along with the urbanization, the traditional fashion of tailoring clothes disappeared. Western culture and fashion captured the market (extend far and wide). To adapt with the modern tailoring her husband Khus Bahadur went to Kathmandu. On the other side Pabitra was alone with small children at home. She became a daily wage worker and takes her children where she goes for work. It was difficult to keep the pot boiling. She became the victim of harsh words from the landlord for asking loan on high interest.

Meanwhile, Asmita Thapa advised her to join the Women Peace Group that brought joys in her life. She liked the objectives of raising awareness and promoting economic status of women. She was totally ignorant of human rights, women rights etc, before joining the Women Peace Group. She was determined to join the Women Peace Group for getting a loan at cheaper interest rate and to be a professional to raise the economic status. Before involving the Women Peace Group she was afraid of speaking in front of a mass and tolerates silently the harsh words of so called high class society. She used to hesitate to speak out when she was cheated in wages for labour. She had no knowledge about rights of herself. It became a habit of her to tolerate any degree of humiliation.

She has now started to work as professional after she was supported by the Women Peace Group. She is highly encouraged to work in the group. She says, "The members of the Women Peace Group always love me."

She also tells that all the women have helped her when she faces difficulties. She got opportunities in various interactions. She also speaks out about her sufferings in such interactions like other forwarded women. She got sympathy from all corners. Her husband also returned home after learning techniques of modern tailoring. The couple has started carrying the profession of tailoring by investing an amount of five thousand in the beginning in a rented room after returning her husband from Kathmandu. Gradually, she also got experienced in tailoring. Their profession of tailoring is properly running by now and their income has also increased. The Women Peace Group has brought a good change in her life.

Struggle of Meena Basnet

We can reach to a small village after walking straight up one hour distance in the hilly area by crossing a suspension bridge. This is the working area of Mirkot Women Peace Group. There are many women who have progressed a lot, but the progress achieved by Meena Basnet makes a good story that need to go through it.

There is a small house like a cow shed. There is a wooden ladder to go upstairs which is surrounded by the pieces of bamboo materials for running poultry farm. There are around 200 chickens in her poultry farm. In the ground floor there lies a kitchen at one corner and a sleeping bed and other materials at other corner. Meena lives in the same house. Meena who is forced to live a difficult life has expressed that she is so glad and encouraged to run her poultry farm. She says, "I have a poultry farm in the upstairs where I kept around 200 chickens to run the business. I have also planted banana in my land which makes the meeting of hand and mouth possible." Meena had never expected such days will come in her life as she expressed. She was born in a village called Madanpur under Nawalparasi District in 2028 B.S. She got married to Sidhi Singh Basnet of Birdi in 2050 B.S. They have two sons.

She expresses her sufferings after she got married as: "I was born in a poor family, I didn't get chance to study. My parents couldn't give dawry; neither there was the chance to get married in a rich family. The family size was so big. There were four couples of her brother and sister in-laws. No one was employed. We could earn living without working as labourer. It was difficult to manage such a big family. We have started living separately from our father and mother in-laws. We faced difficulties to manage meals in the morning and evening. It was become like a dream to eat good and precious food and wear new and standard clothes even during festivals. I got scolded while I went to ask loan from the landlords, they used to say that our property is too less to re-pay back the loan to them.

During that time conflict between the state party and the Maoist increased and reached the climax. The developmental works were fully stopped. Her husband used to go to Delhi and Mombay of India every now and then to get a job. She was staying alone with the children. Maoist cadres used to come every night in the village and eat their meals. On the other hand armed police force and army used to come during the day. The security situation was so disappointing during those days. I was compelled to face difficulties of managing meals for my children and forced to wait for the arrival of my husband thinking that he will bring something with him and that could be used to help in running the family.

During that time Asmita Thapa has called her and explained all about Women Peace Group. Asmita forwarded a striking proposal to her about joining the Women Peace Group. Meena Basnet became so glad to hear all about the proposal. The proposal contained the provision of providing some amount as seed money and carrying the activities of saving and making of women self-reliant by providing loan in the cheaper rate of interest. Besides, she also liked the work of conducting awareness activities by the Women Peace Group. I have decided to join the group by thinking that I will be able to speak about issues taking place in the society after getting knowledge on Human Rights and Women Rights and that the running of household activities will become easier by taking loan from the peace group.

Meena Basnet's husband was away from home for employment and she was thinking that she must do some business as she always lacks money. During that time the proposal of joining the group has become as the saying goes "the deity is at the door at the time of difficulty" for Meena Basnet. She says, "After joining this group we became able to speak and exchange our joys and sorrows among each other."

In the beginning she has taken a loan of rupees one thousand and five hundred and started goat rearing. She was encouraged to do other works too. "My husband also came back and started staying at home after he came to know about the areas of income generation," -Meena says. After this the couple has started poultry farming by investing an amount of rupees ten thousand out of which six thousand was collected by selling goat and remaining four thousand was received as loan from the Women Peace Group. She says that they have used the top floor of their two storied house as poultry farm due to lack of money to construct a farm separately and started poultry farming with two hundred chickens.

Excluding the expenses we earned a net profit of rupees fourteen thousand. The loan is also paid back with the amount we have earned. I still continue poultry farming. We have also planted 200 seedling of banana by taking a loan of another ten thousand rupees. The business of banana farming and goat rearing is improving and the poultry farming has already provided us good earnings.

She disclosed the fact that the Women Peace Group has brought the peace in her life. "There was no peace at that time while staying half stomach. Why do peace prevail while staying separately from husband and couldn't send the children to school," she says.

The couple felt glad of not being scolded any more by the landlord who believes that the Women Peace Group has given new life to them. They are happy of being respected by the neighbours and recognised their commitment and courage by them. They are experiencing a kind of relief of being able to say, "We are sending our children to the school and running our family without difficulties." Meena Basnet expresses her gratitude to IHRICON which has raised not only the economic status but has also raised the over all social status of women.

Women Peace Group in social struggle

Ishori Dhakal is working as the coordinator of Women Peace Group of Sreenath-Kot. Born in Lakuribot VDC in 2044 B.S she got married while she was a student. Her study was deteriorated after her marriage. However, she struggled with her in-laws to continue her study and passed SLC in 2047 B.S staying with her parents. Her name was shortlisted by the education commission in 2051 B.S after she gave written interview for government service. But she says that the names of few women candidates were shortlisted after verbal interview in which her name was not included there was no one to support her. Presently she is having one son and two daughters.

Ishori expresses her experience like this: I have participated the training on women empowerment for human rights and sustainable peace organised in Dang District by Institute of Human Rights Communication, Nepal (IHRICON) on 17th Bhadra 2060 upon the request made by the co-ordinator Mrs. Kalpana Dhakal. The words like human rights and sustainable peace has brought relief in me at the time when general women were experiencing fear and insecurity due to the presence of Maoist in the village. The Women Peace Group has come up in the beginning and informed about the organisation and the purpose of the program and about the support that the organisation can render. The Maoist had passed various comments against the program. But the intellectuals, the teachers, the students and the farmers have strongly supported to speed up the program by solving all the disputes. Finally, we became able to establish a Women Peace Group to fulfill the objective of women empowerment for human rights and sustainable peace.

Rights and Income Generation:

The program has brought happiness among the literate and the illiterate women circle that have been searching ways for peace living in a backward and remote area. Apart from it we have received an amount of rupees 23 thousand from IHRICON as part of support. We made a total of 30 thousand by adding an amount of 7 thousand and invested among 21 members of the Women Peace Group. We have built up the habit of monthly saving. We have invested the money provided by the organisation in the area of goat rearing to increase our income generation and the group has obtained a good profit from the profession. Now we need not have to go and work in the field of others for buying pens and notebooks for our children nor have to beg for buying bangles and sindur (vermillion). We have been able to give suggestions to the males not to violate women rights by erasing the habit of suppression out of their mind.

Social Change:

I Mrs. Ishori Dhakal also got the opportunity to take part in the program once the Institute of Human Rights Communication; Nepal (IHRICON) began the implementation of the program on women empowerment for human rights and sustainable peace in Shreethan-Kot. After knowing the objective of the program and its benefit to women, the Women Peace Group has become prepared to carry social awareness campaign against domestic violence on women. The campaign like banning of gambling, temperance of alcohol was initiated. The campaign was successful towards banning gambling and

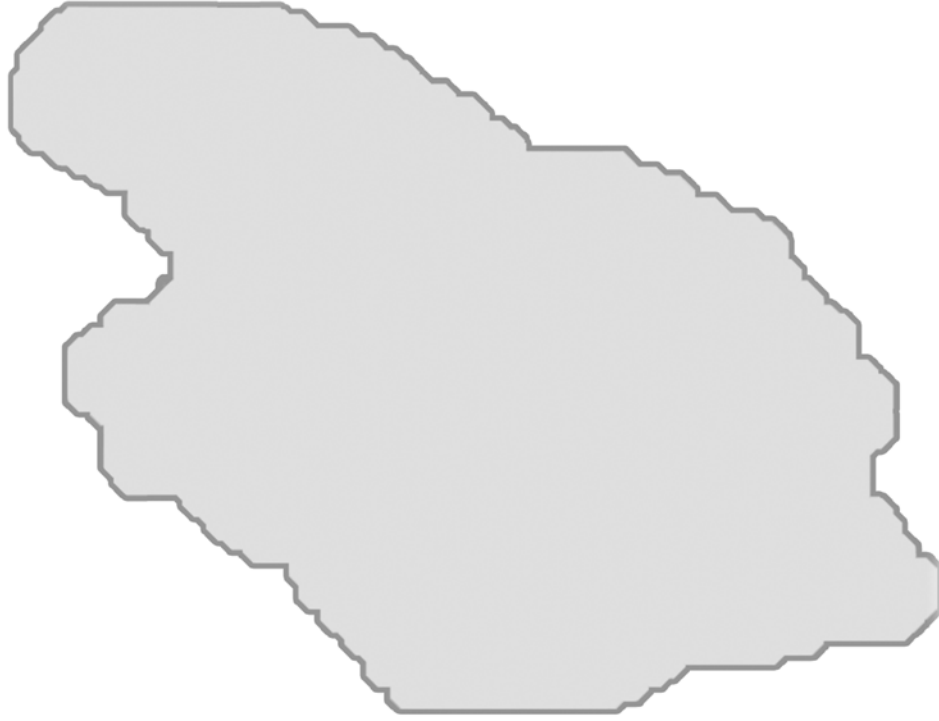
minimizing the social and the domestic violence against women. I am so happy with our success. Requests were made not to prevent children from their rights within the members of our group and parents outside the Women Peace Group. Campaign rallies against selling and taking of local alcohol in the public areas is also initiated. The campaign has helped to minimise the sale and use of alcohol in public places.

In the initiation of the program titled 'women empowerment for human rights and sustainable peace', the voice have been heard like "women are being isolated. And some of the forwarded women are making other womem fool by forgetting their household activities; they are trying to teach about unnecessary things to others etc." But due to our collective approach we became able to continue our work by marginalising such voices. We have taken all the risks cautiously though we were passing through serious threats of armed conflict during that time. The Women Peace Group have politely suggested not to fight each other and try to give justice to the victims and advocate for the protection of human rights and live within the periphery of human rights norms and principles. We became able to point out the faults existed in the village through journalism.

Indicators of change:

This program has helped to protect the women who were victimised due to domestic violence. The program has encouraged a lot towards raising social awarness against domestic violence on women. The disabled women have become able to speak their sufferings in the public. Women are always suppressed and discriminated in our society. But our daughters and the sisters in the village have started showing their courage as examples towards abolishing domestic violence. The program of the Women Peace Group like saving and depositing has shown the ways of promoting economic saving and income generation. The women of the village has taken this program as successful ways of rising the own wealth. Through this program the women of the backward class too have started goat rearing and poultry farming etc. Now it has become one of the main sources of income generation. The improvement of their economic condition has made women empowered and representation in the society has become more important. The practice of inviting us as representatives of Women Peace Group and allowing us to speak our voice in all the programs organised in our village areas has been started.

Dang



Shaving, Income and Awareness

Basanta Dangri

Sometime ago we used to suffer a difficult situations when we wished to take a loan. Our economic condition forced us to visit the money lenders and get the loan at high rate of interest. We had to approach the money lenders for several times to get loan from them. We used to feel that taking loan from them made all our self-esteem crushed into dust.

The high interest rates and harsh loan conditions degraded our life style instead of leading it to perfection. But, the program implemented by the Institute of Human Rights Communication, Nepal (IHRICON) on 'Women Empowerment for Human Rights and Sustainable Peace has protected the women involved in the Women Peace Group of Urhari, Dang from such problems.

We not only got opportunities to solve trifle disputes within the societies, but also aware the people about the constitution, constituent assembly and other human rights related issues. We have been providing loans through the Women Peace Group at cheaper interest rate to the people for income generating activities to solve their economic problems. The loans have been provided for animal rearing, small scale business and agriculture.

IHRICON has provided a loan of rupees 23 thousands as seed money to the women involved in the Women Peace Group with the objective of increasing economic status of women. This has indeed, added excitement and enthusiasm to the women member of the peace group.

"It was very difficult for me to deposit a nominal amount in the beginning. I had the habit of giving the collected amount to my children without realising the cause" shares Puspa Dangri, a member of the Women Peace Group of Dang, Urhari.

It was Sharawan 2063 B.S, when a sister volunteer visited me and suggested to involve a Women Peace Group. "We can develop the practice of saving and we need not ask loan from the money lenders any more and develop unity among ourselves," she further suggested. Then I was convinced and involved in the Women Peace Group." says Puspa

Puspa further added, "With the motive of starting goat rearing I took a loan rupees 3000 at an interest rate of 12 percent. I then sold a goat for rupees 2500 after 6 month. I was able to pay back the entire amount to the Women Peace Group that I have earned by selling goats and vegetables. I was even successful to save 2-3 hundred rupees. In the beginning I started goat rearing with a single goat, today I have one more goat with two kids.

Within a year of being involved in Women Peace Group, I am happy to experience a dramatic change in my life. What I feel is that if we choose a good business, we can easily solve the household problems and even become able to save money for the education of our children."

Puspa says-" After I got involved in the Women Peace Group I have got opportunities to participate in discussion, meetings and seminars. My family members too have started supporting me for various outdoor activities.

Now I am proud of my work and aspect a bright future in the family. I am respected in my family and society. People have started considering me as an exemplary person and taking it as an opportunity I would like to suggest other women too to involve in income generating activities to become empowered and self-reliant. (*Dangri is a volunteer of Women Peace Group, Urhari*)

Peace group made Radha a successful woman

Ayushma Sharma

The tireless effort of the Institute of Human Rights Communication, Nepal (IHRICON) and Women Peace Group working in the area of "Women Empowerment for Human Rights and Sustainable Peace" has helped 35 years old Radha Lamsal, a member of Women Peace Group to protect her from domestic violence.

It was on Bhadra 2063 B.S a lean and thin woman with disheveled hair, torn clothes, bleeding mouth stood in front of me with full of tears in her eyes. This was not the story of a film or a dream. In fact, it was a dreadful incident that happened to none other than the member of Women Peace Group, Radha Lamsal.

Almost 2 o'clock at night Radha was knocking at my door. When I opened the door I saw her crying. Her drunkard husband had thrown out all the household goods and had beaten her inhumanly. She has lost her two teeth. He didn't even spare her children. Now it became apparent to me why there was blood in her mouth?

This was not the first time that Radha was inhumanly beaten by her drunkard husband. It has become like a daily routine in her life. Radha had been enduring such oppression from her husband for many years. Her economic condition was weak. Consequently, her children could neither study properly nor enough food to eat. Her husband used to throw prepared meal in anger. Her house had really turned into a hell.

Radha approached me and asked me for help after it has crossed the limit of tolerance. Next day all the member of Women Peace Group along with Radha went to her house. Her husband Mr. Narayan Lamsal was in deep sleep. We woke him up and tried to convince him. But the story turned out to be more appalling. Instead of getting improved he had beaten up Radha more mercilessly. We have even punished him for his inhuman act towards his wife and the children. However, he did not change his habit of taking alcohol and continue to beat his wife and children.

Radha was disheartened and she felt that there is no alternative then to leave her husband. But we continued to suggest him to improve his habit and to create harmony within his family members. Later we threatened him by saying that he will be put behind the bars if he continues such acts. We made him sign a document stated - "I shall never drink and repeat such acts again". We further pressurized him to write his misconducts in the News Papers to make him surer of avoiding such habits. After our continuous pressure he slowly gave up his drinking habit and we became successful in our mission.

Narayan realized his mistakes and apologized to Radha for the excuse after he stopped the habit of dinking alcohol. Then their children got a peaceful environment to live in. Both started to discuss positively to solve their problems. Narayan had good skills on cycle's maintenance. Therefore, he decided to start a cycle workshop with a loan from the Women Peace Group. Now he has started getting a good profit from his business. Radha also took a loan to start goat rearing. The couples who even didn't have five rupees to spend have become able to handle 2-3 thousand at any time.

They have also built a small but beautiful house with 5 rooms. The lifestyle of their entire family has changed drastically. They have got new life to live. They have given up the character of quarreling among them. They started to live a healthy and respectful life. All the villagers of Narayanpur are amazed and happy to see such a positive changes in Radha's life.

Radha's has not only got rid of domestic violence and economic problems but also has developed the quality of leadership. She is now capable of participating in discussion programs, training and became confident to express her feelings. I had visited Radha's house in Sharawan 2064 B.S to invite her in the meeting. There I saw Radha and her husband preparing meal together and their children studying peacefully. My happiness knew no limits. Radha shares everything about her family. Consequently, her family has become more aware. Radha's life has taught us an important lesson that nothing is impossible if we take work with positive attitude.

"Institute of Human Rights Communication, Nepal (IHRICON) and the Women Peace Group gave us a new life. We will be always grateful to IHRICON and the peace group" says Radha and Narayan Lamsal. (*Sharma is working as peace volunteer of the village*)

Economic change in Pyari

Ayushma Sharma

Pyari Chudhary is a member of the Women Peace Group run by IHRICON. Her economic improvement and her personality development have become possible only with the help of the Women Peace Group.

In the month of Bhadra 2060 B.S I had met with Pyari in her house. She was washing black burned utensils in stuff Sun. Besides there was a pile of dirty clothes left for washing. Other members (in-laws) of Pyari were enjoying, talking with each other. When I proposed Pyari to join the Women Peace Group she said, "I feel afraid of my family." Later we talked about this matter with her family.

Taking permission from her family Pyari came to the Women Peace Group next day. Fear and shyness was apparent in her face. She could not even enter the room. Upon our request she entered with her bowing head. Pyari was so shy and afraid while giving her introduction. She could not even speak out her name clearly.

As the days went on passing Pyari stopped being shy and afraid. She wished to take a loan to start some occupation. She took a loan of rupees 5000 and started pig rearing and vegetables cultivation and made a good profit. Now Pyari and her family are overwhelmed with happiness.

Pyari didn't have even five rupees. But now she is always keeps about rupees 1000-1200 with her. She had to plead with her husband for small things to buy but now the situation has changed. When her husbands sometimes ask her for financial help she gives the money with pride. Before she had to say "wait for your father" if her children ask money to buy a notebook. But now she easily gives 10 rupees or more to her children to buy a notebook.

Pyari has now become the loved one in her family. Every one in her family praises her. She has gained respect from her family as well as from the society. Pyari has not only improved her economic condition but also developed her leadership quality. Too shy to speak Pyari has now become capable to express joys and feeling in public. Pyari seems to be always enthusiastic to take part in all the programs organised in the village. Pyari is now capable to answer without fail if anyone asks question related to human rights. She has become able to solve any quarrels or tussles within the village itself. She teaches everything she has learnt to her family members and makes them aware on different issues.

The Women Peace Group had not only helped Pyari to improve her economic condition but also helped her to develop her personality. Now Pyari is not only loved by her family members but the confidence that has developed in her became an influencing example in Narayanpur village. We can learn from Pyari that women can do everything as well.

Pihali freed from violence

Ayushma Sharma

The Women Peace Group run by the Institute of Human Rights Communication, Nepal (IHRICON) and the Women Empowerment Program for Sustainable Peace, Narayanpur has helped Pihali to get free from co wife.

One day, all the members of the peace group discussing on the issue of human rights. At the very moment a Pihali with her unmanaged hair and eyes full of fears, had arrived pleading for justice. She told that her husband used to scold her with abusive words and beat her mercilessly. It had already become a long time that her husband had been threatening her. She used to tolerate everything patiently, but that day she lost the capacity to bear and came to us seeking some help. Her husband never spoke up for her even if Pihali tried to talk. He never talked politely. Not only that, he used to threaten her to bring a second wife. After Pihali came to us for help we rushed to her husband and tried to convince him. We threatened to sue him for bringing a second wife and publish about it in the newspaper too. After this Pihali's husband promised never to bring a second wife and asked to be excused for his misbehavior.

Then onwards her husband Kabi Ram has never misbehaved Pihali and has forgotten about bringing a second wife. These days Kabi Ram is as a guard a bank in Tulsipur. They are sending their children to the school. In this way their life is running smoothly like a happy ending to a dreadful story. Pihali is happy to see her husband's pleasant behavior. Pihali helps her husband in his every work.

"The Women Peace Group has enlightened me. I was trying to jump into a ditch. The Women Peace Group has given me a new life by stopping from going towards it" admits Kabi Ram who was supposed to marry a step-wife. Pihali always praises the Women Peace Group too.

In this way peace committee was successful to give a new life to Pihali as well as her family. Had Pihali sat doing nothing and just bearing the appalling behavior her husband already would have brought second wife? Pihali freed herself from a co-wife as she raised voice for her right in a timely manner. Initiatives by the Women Peace Group has not only helped Pihali, but also has saved her marital life from a dreadful mishap.

Peace group gave justice to Phursi Devi

Rama Pokhrel

About 35 years ago, a local of Murga VDC of Gulmi district Phursi Devi married to a guy from Puthan district was unaware about the dishonor and sufferings that she would face.

As soon as she got married her husband went Ganganagar for searching employment. At holidays husband used to bring at least something for her. She started working as a pleasant daughter in-law. Every time her husband used to bring something for her and for the family members. The couple was so good and used to share their sorrows and joys sitting together. Her husband used to send money and other materials through other villagers if he didn't get time to come to his home.

Having been crossed about 50 springs, Phursi Devi shares her story with the members of the Women Peace Group. As days passed by she had already become mother of five children's. The neighbors either used to come to her house to handover the letter and the other things send by her husband or tell her to come and collect it from their house. She used to go to the house of the villager to get letters and other materials send by her husband. But other started looking at her with negative thoughts. She says, "I was not aware of the attitude of the society. Not only had the villagers but the members of my family too become negative towards me."

Even while visiting the neighbors, the villagers became skeptical towards me. "They have alleged us that we have established immoral relationship. I was alone and nobody came to support or listen to me. One day, I was mercilessly thrown in shed of the same neighbor, who was accused of having immoral relationship with me. I cried, shouted whole night but all in vain" she says.

On the next day I went to different personage of the village seeking justice. But they suggested filing the case in the court against my family members taking help from my maternal family. I couldn't even breast feed my child. I was in great misery and decided to go to my maternal village. Different things started

playing in my mind like "What kind of society is this? A male can go abroad alone to earn money but I as a woman was expelled from my house for just talking with the neighbors." I even thought that I do not have reasons to live. I do not have anyone to live for. I attempt to jump into the river for many times but as it said-"No one can die before their death".

She further says-" my sudden visit to my maternal home brought many chaotic situations. They asked why? How? When? And many more but I was unable to answer all about it. Only the tears continue to fell off from my eyes. I got little sigh of relief as I was suggested by my parents during my stay in the maternal home. I thought the suggestions of the village personage were right. The condition made me to fight legally in the court against my family. At that I did not have clothes to wear. I went to the court with my brother to lodge a petition against my family with lots of pains and sorrows. I have started lodging the petition from the District Court then to Appellate Court. Finally I reached to the High Court and won the case after twelve years of my struggle. She further says- "While I was in my maternal home I was even compelled to endure pinching words from brother and sister in-law. I have attempted to commit suicide for several times but the feeling of success saved me."

The time went on. Her family member had migrated from Pyuthan to Dang. Knowing this Phursi went Dang to get love of her children and for legal rights. But it was not too easy as she had thought. Neither her children accepted her as mother with love nor her family members agreed to provide property as her legal right."

She says, "The infants were taught wrong things against me. My husband had married a second wife in my absence. The infants were taught that she is their real mother." She added that on the other side the legal decision was limited only in the paper form, it was not implemented practically."

She started visiting the women of the village sharing her pain and sorrow. One day she entered into the house of her husband house with the help of neighbors but she couldn't get her rights. She became frustrated as no one talked with her. Her husband has also decided not to come to his house due to her presence. No one was there to take care of her at the time of misery and illness.

She is in the position of staying separately from her family with her rights. But no one was there to speak for her. She moved forward to fight for her rights with the help of the Women Peace Group. The Women Peace Group started pressurizing her family with the support of the villagers, representative of political parities and intellectuals. Her family was compelled to provide her with the property after a deliberate discussion. The family of Phrusi Devi agreed to provide her four Khathas of land, one house, clothes, utensils and an amount of one thousand rupees on a monthly basis. Presently she is living independently. She says- "Now I having a legal paper of my landed property in my land and the entire Women Peace Group is with me.

Presently, Phrusi Devi emerged as a popular woman who used to get bad workings from her family as lazy, prostituted and cruel. She is very delighted with the Women Peace Group. She is also working as the member of the group. She took a loan from the Women Peace Group to start goat rearing. Today she has become an example of a capable and courageous woman for the entire society. Living in Manpur-9 Ramailo VDC Phursi Devi has become self reliant and forthright women. All these changes came to Phursi's life through women empowerment program for human rights and sustainable peace. *(Pokhrel is a volunteer of village peace group, Manpur, Dang)*

Gomati improved her economic status

Mana Subedi

People who recognised 30 years old Gomati in the past cannot identify her today. Before she was quite black but was so beautiful. Her only weakness was that she was illiterate. Generally she used to enjoy with a circle of friends. She was married at an early age when she was 17 years old as she was unaware about the importance of her life.

Her husband was an ethnic Madhesi who was also a carpenter by profession. He not only worked as a carpenter but also practiced witchcraft to heal people. Everyone liked him in the society. She started adopting herself with her husband as a second wife. It was her compulsion to care for the children of another wife as well. It was really a challenging job to manage the livelihood from the daily wages of her husband alone.

From the age point of view, she was entering into the adolescence and already had become a mother. But when Gomati had become mother of three children she faced a mammoth catastrophe. Her husband fell ill all of a sudden. Different people talked differently. Some said he was cursed by the god while the other said he was troubled by ghost. The village intellectual advised to take him hospital and they did so as well. But unfortunately he died.

Gomati was born to a so-called backward class family of Dang, Manpur V.D.C-9. Living in a small hut near her birth place her life really turned into sorrow. Some economic help from the neighbors used to give relief to wounds. She had a great tension about providing quality education to her children's which she had always dreamed of. Her days passed just by crying. How could those innocent children understand the agony of their mother? They could only ask for food and their lost father. Gomati says it was my children that kept me alive. Their voice saved me from committing suicide.

Gomati, who has to live as a widow at such a young age always had to face misery and pain in her life. She could hardly manage nutrition to her children and herself. It was indeed a challenging job to Gomati to manage livelihood just by her daily wages.

Everybody took care for her but; no one is there in her sadness. Other organizations that visited to the village and the so-called personage couldn't provide help for Gomati. Instead of helping her they made several excuses to escape. "No one can die before their death no matter how much one tries," says Gomati. Her days were simply passing by with full of misery.

It was in the month of Shrawan 2063 B.S the Institute of Human Rights Communication; Nepal (IHRICON) took an initiative of establishing a Women Peace Group under Manpur VDC of Dang district. The main objective of the formation of the Peace group was to invest rupees 23000 provided by IHRICON as seed money and the monthly deposit of the members of the peace group in order to improve the economic condition of women. Gomati was also involved in the peace group. Her economic condition was so appalling. The members of the Women Peace Group pressurized the group to provide loan to Gomati. Finally, the group provided loan to her. She started the business of running a shop. Now the persons who were aware of her economic condition come to her shop to buy goods and help her.

Gomati was not satisfied only by running a shop. Gomati started selling green vegetables in different villages after her elder daughter became able to handle the responsibility of running the shop. Almost all the women of the village who knew about her and the members of the Women Peace Group helped Gomati a lot. Slowly and steadily she started making a good profit and paid back the loan taken from the Women Peace Group. She is now sending her children to a near by school for education. She regrets today for not studying at proper time. *(Subedi is the president of village peace committee, Manpur, Dang)*

Women empowerment

The women, who lost their husband either in armed conflict or in natural calamity or who belong to poor family background have engaged themselves to various activities. They have also developed the capability to express their ideas, feeling, and views in the public assemblies, meetings or in discussions. This is the change that has been seen in the conflict affected area under Laximipur Village Development Committee (VDC) of Dang district. The program on women empowerment for human sustainable peace implemented by the Institute of Human Rights Communication, Nepal through Women Peace Group has helped to work for this change.

On 18th of Mangsir 2059 B.S a group of 9 people from Tharu community were killed by the security forces when they were on the way to Pindia to take part in a local festival of Tharu community. Four women had lost their husband in this incident. The women empowerment program has been creating new aspiration to the same conflict affected widows namely: Phiru Chaudary, Primila Chaudary and Janaka Chaudary and other women.

According to the provision of the program policy the women from poor family background (women from the ethnic Tharu community) and the conflict affected women have been taking loans to start different occupations and improve their economic condition. After the death of her husband Janaka has taken a loan under the women empowerment program and started the occupation of pig rearing. "It is well enough for our livelihood and for the education of my children from the occupation of pig rearing and farming," says Janaka. She wants to consistently move on with this occupation. "This program has given inspiration to helpless women like us" shares Janaka being inspired by the program.

Due to their negative attitude most of the women didn't gave their concern active concern towards the program it the beginning, but now the number of members of the Women Peace Group under the same program has reached to twenty-two from seven. The number of women wishing to involve in the program is also increased. These women now don't think themselves feeble and lonely. "We are not alone; we are doing our occupation collectively. We all have been exercising our rights" they all express in single voice.

The women involved under this program got the opportunity to express their ideas and thoughts during the discussions and meeting and it has developed their quality of expression. Usually, the women of having little skills of writing and reading also discuss regularly to make their occupation a success.

Women empowerment program has always been inspiring women to express their pain. As a result they have manifested their problems and pains to a reporter (journalist) from local radio station. "We used to feel afraid to share our pain; the Institute of Human Rights Communication, Nepal has indeed given us inspiration to share our feelings. Why should we fear to share our problems" says Pramila Chudhary a local of Laxmipur VDC-6, being happy for expressing her pain. The number of such conflict affected and helpless women have been increasing in the monthly discussion program. These women also express their misery and pain through poems and songs.

Sapana Malla a local of Beluwa Tribhvan Municipality-3 is pretty delighted to learn about women rights and the current situation through the efforts of women empowerment program. She shares -"The Women Peace Group has become a lesson learning place and pain sharing platform to people like us who no nothing." 'Although few steps have been taken to help conflict affected and helpless women, still more is left to be done" expresses Sapana.

The pain of the victim of conflict who lost their loved ones can never be cured. But the program on women empowerment has become successful towards minimizing the problems created by the conflict; the feeling of inferiority, economical problems and domestic humiliation. This has given the conflict affected women the feeling of freedom and self-esteem.

They are committed for establishing peace in the society though they themselves are the victim of conflict. They not only pray that the pain they bore may not be faced by any other Nepalese but, they are also optimistic that the sustainable peace will prevail through constitutional assembly.

Phiru became self-reliant

Sapana Sharma

Instead of reprimanding to their fate women can easily run their house hold if they do some sort of income oriented activities even in the absence of males. Phiru Chaudhry, a local of Laxmipur-3 Beluwa has practically proved this. Phiru, who was tied up in a love marriage six years ago, could not study further from grade six though she wished to study. Their livelihood was managed by her husband's income. Even though they didn't have plenty of property they were living their life happily. But her happiness didn't last long. On 18th Mangshir, 2059 B.S a group of nine youths were shot dead including the husband of Phiru Choudary by the by the security forces when they were gathered in the village for Pencia (local festival). "I felt like committing suicide at that moment but since I was pregnant I had to live for the child" lamented Phiru. After her husband demise, Phiru was helpless. Her in-laws alleged her as a husband killer. No one was there to help me" says Phiru.

In 2060 B.S. a Women Peace Group was formed under the program on women empowerment for human rights and sustainable peace implemented by the Institute of Human Rights Communication (IHRICON). Women who wished to carry income oriented activity get involved in the Women Peace Group. We met Phiru when we were in the process of forming a women group and suggested her to involve in the group. At that time she used to stay lonely, speak little and rarely visit outsiders. Phiru agreed to join the group after knowing that many women were involved and get the opportunity to learn many things. She used to submit her monthly deposit for two-three month.

But later neither she brought the monthly deposit nor visited the Women Peace Group. We the members went to ask her about the cause of not visiting the group. Being worried she said ' I don't have any income source, its difficult for me to generate monthly income. Therefore I couldn't send the money.' What she said was true. How can a woman bring money without any income source? Moreover, she was pregnant and didn't have a husband to support her family economically. We suggested her to take a loan from the women group to start a new occupation. "No one can give me money every time." Today I am alone but when my child comes to this earth, my responsibility increases. Therefore I have to take a loan from the Women group" thought Phiru.

In 2061 B.S Phiru took rupees 2000 as loan from the Women Peace Group. She started the occupation of goat rearing. In fact she really did a good job of rearing goats. After six months two goats gave birth to four kids. Each of which she sold to rupees 1500 and earned 6 thousand rupees. From this income Phiru paid the entire loan and started savings. "My involvement in the Women Peace Group has taught me a lot about human rights, women rights and other women and income-oriented issues. I got opportunity to improve my economic condition to some extent."

Before joining the Women Peace Group she did not get even an advance of hundred rupees on returnable basis from others. But now she does not face the scarcity of four-five hundred after she started her occupation taking loan more often from the Women Peace Group. She has admitted her son in a private run English Medium School. Phiru used to feel afraid to give her introduction before. But she has started to express her ideas, views and logics more freely. Now it is not difficult for her to participate in discussion, meeting, seminar and interaction programs.

The society and her family members have changed their perspective towards Phiru. Now her in-laws do not stop her from participating in trainings and other meetings who would not even allow her for outdoor activity earlier. "We cannot do anything if we move back thinking that being women we cannot earn our livelihood." Involving ourselves in such a group we can learn to be independent and self-reliant." Phiru expressed that the other women should also involve in the income oriented activities and become self-reliant like her.

Phiru lost her husband when she was 19 years old. She had struggled a lot after the demise of her husband but now she is able to stand on her own feet. She becomes an example for other women who blame their fate and endure all the oppressive behaviors imposed by male. Phiru urges (IHRICON) to initiate such program even in other remote areas of Nepal. (*Sharma is peace volunteer of Laximur V.D.C*)

From stammering to confidence

Basanta Dangri

"What is impossible if we try?" says Tulsa Dangri, a local of Dang, Urahari and a member of Women Peace Group. Tulsa is the Treasurer of the Women Peace Group.

She says-"I not only used to feel afraid to speak few words but also used to feel fear and shy in front of the respected persons before I joined the Women Peace Group. In 2063 B.S a local village peace volunteer came to my house and shares her idea of forming a women group. She explained that by forming a group we could make savings and get rid of from paying high interest rate to the money lender. She also said that we can exchange our skills to each other. I was influenced by her idea I got involved in the Women Peace Group.

Remembering the past incident Tulsa says-"One day an interactive awareness program on constituent assembly was organized in our village. For the first time in my life I was invited in the stage to speak few words. My heart beat increased to almost double as soon as I heard my name. My hands and legs started trembling. I ought to go by hook or by crook. I turned pale due to fear and shyness when I saw other members and the guests looking at me. I could hardly give my introduction.

The program was going on. The Peace Motivator Ms. Sharada Sharma also addressed the program. I liked her speech very much. I continued to hear her words and I started fantasizing about developing my skills to express my views before the audience like her.

I asked myself, "Was Sharada so expressive from before? She also might have felt difficulties while speaking before? These thoughts added energy within me. And I slowly started to put forward my ideas, thoughts and logic in the Women Peace Group. I was invited in another interaction program as a speaker. This time I spoke with less fare as I made my self stronger than before. At least I introduced myself and spoke few words about the constitution."

Sharing her experience she further says, "The second program opened ways of some changes in my life. I started continued to take part in other interactions, meetings and drama etc. Now I can give my introduction without hesitation. The trembling voice has now got into confidence. Now I do not hesitate to answer several quarries such as: What is constitution and constitutional assembly? How can we stop gender violence? And I can freely express my before elders. Now I do not tremble and feel afraid as before. At least I got a bit chance and I am proud of myself.

Tulasa Dagi who used feel shy in the past is now encourages by the family and the society as she became able to put forward her views before few elders and respected persons. She also shares her experiences and shows ways to others towards making their mind strong and become able to express their opinion. (*Dangi is general member of women peace committee of Urahari V.D.C*)

Rural women joined together for income generation

Sharada Sharma

The Women Peace Groups formed under the women empowerment program for human rights and sustainable peace in Dang with the support of Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) has played a vital role in women's income generation. The trend of talking loan from saving fund and to start small scale business to be self reliant has increased.

Tara D.C. of Dang, Halwar V.D.C-4 is an example of such women. Tara who had started her business with rupees 2000 now has taken loan from the peace committee increasing her business worth 20,000 rupees.

Tara shares her experiences of being a shopkeeper. "Before I started the business I didn't have even a penny. Every time I was in scarcity. But now not only I have managed household expenses but also for educational fees for my children."

46 years Tara is a woman who not only thinks for herself but also for the society. Along with running her business Tara also inspires other women of her village to do income generating works. She says- "To bring women in the forefront economic self-reliance is a major factor."

Similarly, 34 years Santa Sharma of same village had started her business of running a shop with rupees 1000. In the process of running business her increasing zeal towards the business made her take an additional loan of seven thousand from the fund of Women Peace Group to expand her business into a grocery shop in Tulslipur Bazar. Shanta shares, "At the time when I was unemployed and was unable to find any income sources I took some loan from the Women Peace Group to start a business." After she felt that business would give her good profit she shifted her business to the town area with the motive to expand her business and provide better education to her children. "We women better try to be dependant on husband, live in scarcity and depression but never try to do something for ourselves. This is a discouraging nature in common women," Shares Santa. For some years even I became victim of this nature. But after I involved myself in the income generating activity I am satisfied." Santa says.

Giving the example of her life Santa says that the women should be given the opportunity from village to the state level to make all the women economically competent and self-reliant.

44 years old Sabita is a local woman of Naraynpur V.D.C-1. Her husband has been running a shop in a local market since 15-16 years. But Sabita never dared to sell anything from her own shop. Three years ago I involved myself in the Women Peace Group and had taken some loan. I invested the amount to increase my husband's business. After I did so I felt possessive towards the shop and confidence had increased a lot within me. She shares- "If we can stand with our income we feel different feeling of self-confidence." She has increased her self-confidence after she invested a loan of ten thousand taken from the Women Peace Group though she didn't dare to help in the business of her husband before. She further adds- "Now a days I have started to run the business whole day after I finish my household activities in the morning. Sharing her experience Sabita says- "Working along with husband provides him support and our economical scope also get increased. I have been able to withdraw some amount at the time of need. Now I don't have to ask my husband for 8-10 rupees as I needed to ask before." Sabita have already returned the loan that she has taken to invest for running the shop but she oftenly takes loan while in time of need and pays back within time. Her husband is equally pleased with Sabita's work.

38 years old Indira Rajauray of the same place has also started the business of running a shop taking some loan from the Women Peace Group. Her husband also has been running a Photo Studio at the same place. But due to lack of technical knowledge her husband has not been able to work efficiently. They are not able to start the studio separately due to less economical reach. Indira who always was confined to household activities, now has started the profession of running a shop in the town of Narayanpur taking a loan of rupees 10 thousand from the Women Peace Group. She has been carrying out the process of taking loan and paying back consistently. She says, "It was difficult to manage our livelihood only from my husband's income before. But after I started the business the income source of my family has increased along with my economic scope."

Similarly, 54 years Kumari Basnet of Tari Gaun V.D.C has an experience of earning some money after she got involved in the Women Peace Group. Kumari who had taken a loan of rupees 5 thousand and started running a grocery shop at her home says- "Along with household activities I make a profit of rupees 40-50 by selling goods of worth rupees 1 to 2 hundred daily. This has increased the income of my family which happiness in my family. Kumari delightedly explains about the changes in the life of women come due to economic reasons- "As collection of drops makes an ocean, collective efforts of women certainly bring some changes."

Support from peace committee to get citizenship

Urmila Nepali Jhingai of Manpur V.D.C who married as a second wife to Nim Bahadur Nepali of same place has got citizenship card with the initiatives and cleverness of Women Peace Group, Manpur after 5 years of her marriage.

According to Urmila, her husband treated her with good behavior for two months. When Urmila got pregnant Nim Bahadur started awful behavior like beating, throwing her clothes, starving her to death and so on. After the oppression of her husband she had no other options than to go around the village and live with her parents where she delivered her child.

At the assurance of her husband Urmila came back to him after one year of the birth of her first child. Urmila says, "After two months I became pregnant again and his ill treatment repeated." These harsh behavior of Nim Bahadur compelled Urmila to take refuge in her parent's home again with a baby in her lap and other in her womb.

When the second baby was born the villagers requested to Nim Bahadur to bring his wife back home. But then he refused to admit Urmila as his wife and asked Urmila prove herself as his wife. When Urmila reported all this incidents to the Women Peace Group and requested for help to get citizenship and marriage certificate. The Peace Group took an initiative and succeeded in bringing the certificate from the office of Chief District Officer (CDO). Meanwhile, son of Nim Bahadur from first wife had submitted the citizenship card of his father to the secretary of VDC to get his citizenship card. Having known this Women Peace Group has secured the proof through the office of the VDC by asking him to bring another copy of the citizenship of his father informing that the first copy had been spoiled. On 13th Falgun 2063 B.S the Women Peace Group became successful to provide citizenship to Urmila by submitting the documents of proof before census team along with her after the group found the photocopy of Nim Bahadur's citizenship card.

In this way the mother of two children Ms. Urmila succeeded to hold her citizenship from the name of her husband after a long struggle due to which she has been able to stay in her husband's house. Presently she is staying in her own house caretaking the children and earning livelihood from different works in village though her husband has left her and went to Nepaljung for a job. Courage has developed in Urmila after getting a strong base of citizenship.

Affected women towards income generation

Sharda Sharma

Janka Chaudhary has been increasing her source of income after she got involved in the Women Peace Group. She took some loan from the Women Peace Group formed under the program "Women Empowerment for Human Rights and Sustainable Peace and started the occupation of pig rearing.

Janaki says, "the Women Peace Group has not only become a great support for the helpless women like us but also a way to generate source of income."

Janaki had to face agony in her life after a group of 9 youth from the ethnic Tharu community were shot dead at Beluwa under Laxmipur VDC-4 by the army men including her husband her husband on 18th Mangsir 2059 B.S. When her husband was killed she was 4 months pregnant. With full of tears, Janka says- "Recently married, pregnancy and poverty on the other side, these situations really made me frustrated." Meanwhile the Women Peace Group was formed by the Institute of Human Rights Communication, Nepal and I also got involved into it. It became the only reason for me to live more."

22 years Phiru Chaudhary of Laxmipur V.D.C.-3 Beluwa had same agony, same pain and same economic problem. Phiru had also taken a loan of rupees 2200 from the Women Peace Group for the 1st time to start goat rearing. She continued the profession of goat rearing. These days Phiru manages expenses for her children's education and nominal expenditure through the income she earned from goat rearing. Phiru says- "After I started earning some amount from my income and shared it with my family members I have been getting love and affection from them. My husband was killed in 2059 B.S by the state party. At that time I was pregnant. Meantime I was slowly being hated by the family members. I become burden for them. But such situation got improved after I started earning. "

Similarly, 24 years Sunita Chaudhary from same place is also a conflict affected women. She also has agony of losing husband in one hand and economic problem on the other. Sunita, who had become burden to her family due to these problems, believes the Women Peace Group is only a basis for her to live. She says, "The Women Peace Group has become life donor and a suitable platform to share our agony"

Sunita who has been engaged in pig rearing by taking a loan of rupees 10 thousand has also started goat rearing. Sunita says this has given a lot of relief to her family members. She continues taking loan from the group and returns on time. After she became the member of the Women Peace Group she also influenced wife of her brother in-law, Kamala Chudhary to become involved in the group.

Armed conflict also crushed the life of 23 years Pramila Chaudhry, a local from the same place. At the time when she was disheartened and frustrated the Institute of Human Rights Communication, Nepal (IHRICON) formed a Women Peace Group that has brought the ray of hope and aspiration in her life.

Pramila, a mother of a daughter took loan form the Women Peace Group to start goat rearing. When she started earning some amount form the occupation her in laws behaved very pleasantly. Pramila says-" I have started goat rearing from the loan. I am also educating my children from the earning and meet the expenses of my in-laws.

I also give some amount to the family members taking loan from Women Peace Group at the time of need. After my involvement in the group I am satisfied with my family members.

On 18th Mangsir 2059 a group of 9 farmers were killed at Beluwa under Laxmipur VDC. After the incident he Women Peace Group was formed and the mobilization of saving was initiated under the program on Women Empowerment for Human Rights and Sustainable Peace. This has encouraged the helpless women who became the victim of conflict towards income generation. The IHRICON with the financial support of Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) showed courage to come with its first program in the VDC during such situation when no other organisation dared to visit and implement the program in Laxmipur, Beluwa,

Search for support at mid-night

Sharda Sharma

Eighteen years before, 16 years old Pokchi of Manpur married to a local Ramu Pariyar. She was neither interested in studies nor in the basic things. The couple dedicated their life to each other assuring to live and die together happily. For some years the couple remained very happy. But the happiness of Pokchi didn't last long. Within less than one year, Pokchi was pregnant and gave birth to a child. Now the responsibility bringing of the child increased. After about 14 months she gave birth to another child. And become a mother of two children. Ramu slowly started to remain away from the responsibilities taking care of children thinking it was the job of his wife. After working whole day, Ramu started enjoying eating food alone and stopped to bring the income. Selfish feeling started emerging in him.

Ramu thought that an individual is all in all in his youth. He left his wife Pokchi and had an affair with a 15-16 years old girl of the same village. Later, he eloped with the same girl and started to live in Nepalgunj. Ramu had left his home for the sake of earning more money by working in the transport sector. Pokchi was betrayed by her husband but she thought he was busy and loaded with work.

Pokchi is very disheartened to know that all those assurance and promises of Ramu was farce. The questions of educating children, earning livelihood and sharing agony were left behind in the life of Pokchi. She reproached the life of a woman. She could do nothing except cursing Ramu as selfish and a betrayer. Now the problem of children's education and nourishment upset Pokchi.

Pokchi says, "society also hates those women who are alone, feeble and economically poor." The relatives also rebuke Pokchi saying this and that.

Not only that but her brother in-law also started harassing her finding her alone and feeble. "I always have to endure the harsh words from other even if I wished to work caring nothing. Brother in law often comes and quarrels with me even in a trifle matter and doesn't mind to beat me.

In the month of Ashar 2064, Pokchi returned home after a day long work in the field. She fed her children and ate the leftover. Meantime, her brother in law came drunk and knocked the door. Being at risk of opening the door Pokchi did not react. But he broke into the house. He scolded Pokchi with abusive words blaming her for not opening the door. Pokchi also tried to defend by scolding him. Her children started crying in fear. But he did not stop shouting. He dragged Pokchi out and beat her bitterly till she bled. The drunkard went at last.

Pokchi felt crying more when she saw her children, "why cannot a woman get justice when she is beaten without a reason?" she thought. "Who shall say about the injustice that I am enduring? Where shall I go? Whom shall I say? How shall I say?" she asked herself. The bleeding wound was giving her the burning sensation on one side while she was enduring the agony of her heart on the other, she grew impatient.

If I go to so-called personage of the village, they may get angry instead. When she was thinking about the person to share her agony, Women Peace Group instantly struck into her mind. She had heard about the group run by the IHRICON. She had also heard that the group was a kind of support to the helpless women. People used to say the group would help to provide justice to women who were deprived of their human rights and justice. With rugged heart, Pokchi decided to share her agony with a volunteer of the Women Peace Group Ms. Rama. "How shall I go to her home at this time of night? If not how much should I endure this pain? "Questioned Pokchi and decided to visit Rama aspiring to get some help from the Group.

Pokchi reached Rama's house with her two children. "What if she gets angry if I wake her at this time of night? Everyone is asleep" Pokchi spent almost 10 minutes outside Rama's house. But for how long shall I stay here outside? Thinking this Pokchi knocked the door. "Who is at the door? Some one questioned. "Sister, it's me. Please open the door!" when Rama heard Pokchi's shaking and sobbing voice, she opened.

Pokchi was suffering more when they reached Rama's living room. Pokchi who had come to share her agony, felt crying more when she reached near to Rama. She felt she got a place to share her suffering.

Pokchi recounted all the misbehavior of her brother in law in answer to Rama's question, 'What happened?' Pokchi, made Rama to think a lot when she said she had no one to share her pain. For the justice of women like these, The Women Peace Group should take initiatives as far as possible.

The next day all the members of the group gathered to raise voice against the injustice faced by Pokchi. There was discussion for long time. The so-called personage of the village were also consulted. When both Pokchi and her brother in-law were inquired her brother in-laws was convicted. He was made to apologize and never misbehave with her instead respect and honor her.

The secretary of Women Peace Group, Ms. Binita Janidar of Mampur says after solving Pokchi's problem, belief of the villagers toward the group has increased. The trifle dispute as well as the pending problems has solved.

After this incident, Pokchi's brother in-law has never dared to oppress her. Pokchi has also gained timeless self confidence and faith.

Hira freed from domestic violence

Babita poudel

Hira was married to Jaggu Choudary a local of Rajhena under Dang Tribhuvan Municipality-7, 13 years ago. She was affluent in love and affection even though her life was not economically strong. Hira being the daughter in law of a low income family had to work day and night. Marital life of Hira and Jaggu was full of affection and love.

But the lifecycle started showing another direction. After about three years of her marriage, Hira gave birth to a girl child. With the child's birth Jaggu and his parents were delighted. In 2057 B.S Hira was pregnant again. This time too she gave birth to a girl child. The family was unhappy but there was no any negative thought although. Unfortunately, their marital life started to degrade when the third baby was a girl child. Jaggu who used to love his wife before now has a drastic change his behavior. He started to oppress Hira. She says-" I endured all his misbehavior just to save our marital life".

But one day Jaggu had done something that Hira never thought of. He brought a second wife which made Hira face more oppressions, she became physically feeble. Jaggu didn't care for his own children. There was a problem for their livelihood before. But now the problems of being thrashed and starved became the inseparable part of her life. "Nobody is there to listen to my sufferings; my parent's home is too far away. What could my parents have done even if they knew about my pain?"

Hira made many requests. She tried to forget every events of the past and proposed her husband and co-wife to live together in cooperation. But they didn't listen to her. Scolding with abusive words and beating became common to Hira. The atrocity grew greater when Jaggu was drunk. Hira didn't see any alternatives than to endure the pain silently

About a year ago with the help of Canadian Cooperation Office (CCO), the Women Peace Group was formed under the initiatives of the Institute of human rights communication, Nepal (IHRICON) in her village. The President of group along with other members visited Hira to invite her to join the group. Hira was afraid, "I don't dare to join," says Hira.

There after Hira started to participate in various interaction programs held in the village. One day an awareness interaction program was organised on domestic violence. The issues like "What is domestic violence? Why should we raise voice against it? etc many were discussed in the interaction program. Sushil Gautam, Sharada Sharma, Goma Mahara and the president of Women Peace Group were also present. Hira felt like speaking about the oppression she had been enduring for long. But thinking she would be tortured more, she didn't speak up. On the other hand the torture of Jaggu and his second wife was being unbearable day by day.

"Now I have to speak out about my sufferings, neighbours also know about it, nothing is going to happen if I remained mum" thought Hira. Meditating a lot Hira spoke out sufferings. The group immediately took initiatives. It tried to convince Jaggu many times but in vain. "He behaved well for 2/4 days but continued

his behavior later" says Bharati Gautam, president of the group. One day we all the members of the committee tried to convince him, but it was futile.

At last we threatened to punish him legally. Only then Jaggu took things seriously." Sharada Khanal, the vice president of the group says. One day the entire members of the group told Jaggu to improve his habit or else the consequence would be bad, also we made him sign a paper that clearly states he should never misbehave and end all the oppressions. There after every thing is normal.

"I know my old happiness will never return but at least I got rid of regular scolding and violence. The member of Women Peace Group have helped me a lot to end my agony" with a smiling face Hira says - "Enduring pain never ends the problem" I have learnt this thing in my life and wish other women to understand too. (*Poudel is the secretary of the Women Peace Group, Rajhena VDC*)

Change for self-reliance

Kunta Bhandari

In the presence of strong self confidence and determination, women can make everything possible. This is the voice of women who are involved in the Women Peace Group, Halwar and started doing income-generating activities.

Among these women 33 years old Basanta Rijal of Halwar-4, Banhori is the member of the Group since its establishment. 'I used to grow vegetable before but after I took a loan from the group I started cultivating vegetable as my profession.

It had become very easy for me to cultivate off seasonal crops due to the accessible and affordable loan. I had to plead with others to get a small amount of loan before. But now the problem is solved, said Basanta. Basanta, who was making a profit from off seasonal corns, now has profited 22 thousand rupees from 10 quintals of potatoes.

Not only this, she has abolished the primitive practice that women should not plough the fields. People had the misconception that the consequence would be drought.

"Villagers gossiped about my works in fields. But I didn't care and continued with my works. Instead of pleading with other men to plough the field, I have been ploughing it myself"

Like males, we also have two hands and feet. What's the difference between us? She further adds- "what on earth is there that women can't do?" Remembering the behavior of her neighbors when Basanta asked for a loan, she says- "before the neighbors would hesitate to give a little amount, but now they easily help me to do business worth up to 50 thousand happily."

Another woman who brought revolution to improve her economic situation taking a loan from the group is Radhika Adhikari, a local of the same place. She says-" After being involved in the group, not only my economic situation has improved but also curiosity for the social and the political affairs and capacity to present thoughts has increased a lot.

Radhika, who had taken a loan to start goat rearing, profited with 30 thousands till today. She said that she has produced a goat weighing up to 60 kilograms.

"Not only Basanta and Radhika but 35 members of the peace group have started running business for income generation taking loans from the group" says Uma Budhathoki, president of Women Peace Group, Halwar. Moreover the members of the group have become capable of expressing their ideas, thoughts and also teach other about human rights and women rights. The members of Halwar peace group have become examples of self reliance socially and economically. (***Bhandari is the peace volunteer of Halwar V.D.C***)

Uma from nobody to somebody

Kunta Bhandari

The member of Halwar Women Peace Group has become an example to prove that the opportunity and providing suitable environment to women increases the capability of leadership and self confidence. 28 years old Uma Bhuda who has been working as president of Women Peace Group Halwar is a woman to prove this example. She was the founding member of the group which was formed in 2060 B.S. In the interaction program held in Magsir 2060, Uma could not even give her introduction to the participants. She was trembling due to shyness and fear. She said that the opportunity to participate in a four day long training held by IHRICON for the women empowerment has developed the capability and self-confidence in women. After participating the training Uma has come to light as an active member.

The training on human rights, women rights and women empowerment has helped to develop the curiosity about the issues related to women. She has improved a lot in regular interaction and discussion programs. Her improvement in a short span of time has made other women and family member astonished. Her husband is delighted to see his wife leading the society. Consequently, their marital life has become pleasant. Her husband, who also served as an Indian Army says-" I am so delighted to know her service towards society. Please keep on doing such praise worthy works" These words from my husband has always become a source of inspiration to me" says Uma.

Mother of a child, Uma has got the responsibility as a chief of the National Life Insurance Company after she increased her capability of leadership and self-confidence. Uma remains busy all the time due her household activities, officials' duty and the responsibility in the peace group. Uma was unanimously nominated as president of the peace group in Jestha 2063 B.S.

Iswori Sharma, former president of the group couldn't give enough time, since then Uma has been working as the pioneer in every program. While Uma was giving a speech in front of 150 participants in a program on 'constitution assembly and system of election' every one remained stunned.

Many women were influenced by the changes in the life and activities of Uma after being involved in the peace group. The proof is the willingness of women to get involved in the group. Among these women, Durga Bhattari was nominated as the member of group as per the requirement.

The women members of the group share their knowledge about the constitution, constitutional assembly, peace and so on with other. They have also become curious socially due to participation in various interaction programs.

Voice against increased injustice

Shanta Sharma

The women of Dang Saudiyar, who couldn't dare to speak against the injustice at the beginning, now have become capable to fight against it. The condition of women of Saudiyar was feeble and appalling. Not only one but 14 members of the group had to spend their whole day in household activities. They had the misconception that women shouldn't express their views and opinion of so-called personage of the family should be respected no matter what ever they said. They should arrive home within a given time ever if they went shopping. They even didn't know how to speak. Even if they tried to share what they knew, they were prohibited. Lack of education is the reason for their appalling situation. Only a few members of the group have education till SLC. But even the ones who had completed their SLC had to assume as if they were uneducated. But is my life limited only to household jobs? Is gender being the cause for our incapability?, Do women always have to live serving men?, Is birth of a girl child a curse ? These questions troubled me a lot.

In 2055 B.S I got married right after my SLC. I guess I couldn't continue my education because I was transformed from daughter to daughter in-law. My desire and ambition couldn't be fulfilled due to the responsibility towards by children and household chores. Though I completed my SLC with good marks, my desire to study further and to enlighten my life by good deeds were simply buried. Then I felt nothing would happen even if I had studied.

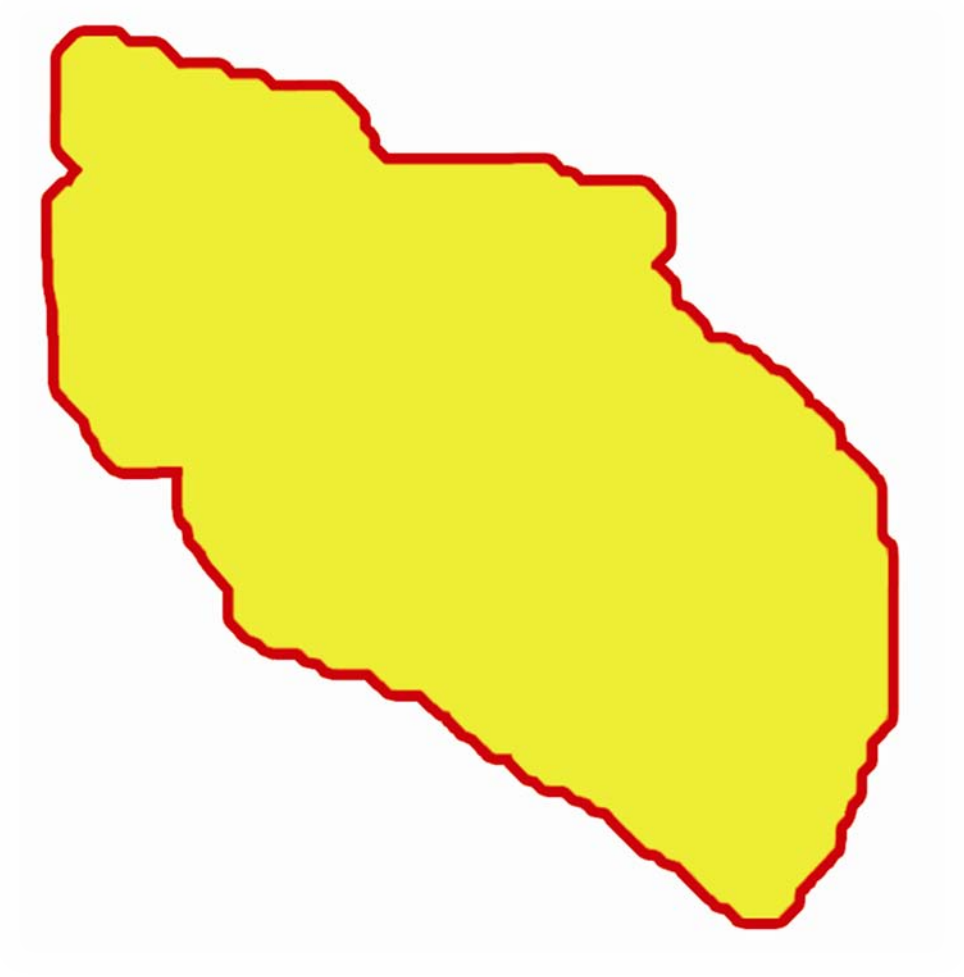
My life was moving on with these thoughts. But on 20th Shrawan 2063 B.S the field coordinator of Women Empowerment Program on human rights and sustainable peace, Sushil Gautum and the Peace Motivator, Sharada Sharma came to Saudiyar-2. Gathering about 23-24 women of the village, they taught us about human rights, women rights other issues like how can women be active in various activities besides their household chores and so on. These things brought great impact on us. We all 22 women formed a group and conducts monthly basis. Every time we sat for the meetings and passed some rules and discussed the things that Sushil Gautum and Sharada Sharma taught us. We were not able to discuss on nominal matters at the beginning, now can manifest different ideas on the constitution. We have started providing loan at low interest rate from the collected amount. Taking the loan, some have started goat rearing, other poultry farming, and buffalo rearing and even vegetable cultivation to earn their livelihood.

The zeal and zest that we had before at the time of schooling were evaporating. But such feelings have arisen again after being involved in the group. Now I at least have the feelings of doing something. The members of the group also feel same. To prove that other member of the group feel the same, we can take an instance of Durga. The way that she improved her economic situation, has become a subject of inspiration to all of us. Durga was in great misery with no income source and five children to feed. She could hardly manage her livelihood. There was economic misery on one side and lack of working tendency on the other. Her husband as well as her family members would do nothing. She was only the one who managed the food her family member but they never saw her with good point of view. They never wished for her goodness.

One day, when her son felt ill, she asked a loan of about 3 hundred from the village money lender. But no one helped her. She had no other option than to remember almighty god. She was living her life with full of misery and agony. Instead of smiles and happiness, in her face misery and agony would be apparent.

On 20th Shrawan 2063 B.S we formed a Women Peace Group consisting of about 24 members including Durga. The group started to provide loan to the members at an affordable interest rate from monthly collection. Taking a loan of 10,000 Durga bought a buffalo. She started selling 5 liters milk daily at the nearest local market. She earned a good profit by selling the milk. Her economic condition slowly got improved. Now she could easily earn her livelihood. Surprisingly, now she became the most loved one in her family. Moreover, she is sending her children to a Boarding School for their better education. She says-"Before no one helped me when my child was ill. Now I need not have to ask money with anyone, instead I give loan to the affected people in the village. Remembering the past misery, I am proud with the Women Peace Group. I was so frustrated with my life, but the inspiration given by the Women Peace Group has helped me to become an esteemed woman in the society. (**Sharma** is treasurer of peace group, Saudiya V.D.C)

Kailali



From housewife to a successful leader

Sharada Rokay

I am Sarada Rokaya. I am the eldest daughter in-law of a big joint family. We are fifteen members in my family. There are three couples of younger brother in-laws and sister in-laws, father and mother in-laws, husband and four children in my family. Our main occupation is farming. Now I am a woman leader of my society, but a few years ago I used to be busy mainly on my household chores such as cooking, feeding of animals and taking care of children.

Gradually, I became aware of one thing. I feel I should also involve myself in social programs and I should not keep myself involved only in household chores. In 2054 B.S, I got membership of one of the political party as a woman representative. At first I was not supported by my husband to work in the political parties. Gradually, his mind changed and as a result I won in the election of 2054 B.S from my society. That was my first step to work outside.

I tried to become involved in social activities more than household chores from then onwards. In 2060 B.S the Women Peace Group was formed by the Institute of Human Rights Communication, Nepal (IHRICON) in Malakheti VDC, ward number 4 to work towards sustainable peace and human rights. I too become involved in the Women Peace Group. I got the chance to learn more about human rights, and women rights being involved in the Women Peace Group. This has encouraged me to work as a social activist.

We started working actively in the village. The village people started to believe in us more. We started solving simple tussles, disputes and other problems in the village itself. We could show that if a woman gets the chance they are not less than a man. Then onwards the village men started to call us in each and every activity. At first it was quite challenging for us. We had to support their decisions in the beginning and our decision and suggestions were not considered. That gradually got changed; they started to recognize our comments and suggestions too.

By seeing my activeness the people nominated me as the president of Jeewan Jyoti Mahila Development Co-operative Limited (JJMDCL). I sanctioned the budget for the program related to reproductive health, child health and gender equality; we raised the voice for equity in wages irrespective of sex. That made me popular in the village and society. Before I was known by the name of my husband, but now I am known by my own name.

I started getting support, help and encouragement from my family members too. Now I am nominated as a member of Malakheti-Godawori Road Construction Committee. I am supervising the overall construction work.

The women of my society who used to be involved only in the household chores have followed my foot steps. The Women Peace Group helped me and the other women of our society to raise their economic and the social standards. Many women have started businesses by taking loans from the Women Peace Group. I too have taken rupees 500/- from the Women Peace Group and started poultry farming. At first I bought 200 chickens. I sold the chickens after they are grown up for rupees 16,000/-. I paid back the loan of rupees 500 and rupees 30 as interest to the Women Peace Group and I used the rest of the money for my household expenses. Before I used to be dependent on my husband in all the activities but, now the situation has changed and I have started managing myself.

The Women Peace Group and the IHRICON that works for women empowerment for sustainable peace and human rights has helped to improve the living status of village women. The credit goes to the Women Peace Group for such a useful assistance. I got chance to learn about women rights through the Women Peace Group. The Women Peace Group has proved that women can equally execute political and social activities the same as men.

Banana farming raised living standard

Menaka Swar

A drastic change has occurred in the life of Mrs. Kunti Malla of Khamaura Village under Malakheti VDC 4. Her family which was not even in a position to provide sustenance for her children has now been slowly improving their economic condition and becoming rich. She has earned much from banana farming. She has also been able to send her children to school for education. She is known in the village as a successful banana producer.

This change in her family has not come easily. Her continuous hard work, positive thinking towards life and the support of the Women Peace Group through IHRICON has made her able to reach up to this level.

The family of Kunti Malla was very poor a few years before. Their family used to borrow loan for educating their children and even for their household expenses. No one used to willingly provide loan to them. Kunti Malla and her family were always hated by the people. Sometimes she used to be so sad of not being able to buy educational materials for her children and not to see a doctor for treatment. She never lost her hope and got involved in Women Peace Group after it was established in 2060 B.S. She was pleased to know that Women Peace Group will also help for improving the economic standard of women. "To overcome the problem I joined the group with the hope of starting a small business by taking loan"

She took loan of rupees 5,000/- from the Women Peace Group to start banana farming. Out of this she used rupees 2,500/- for seedlings, rupees 900/- for manure and rest for insecticides and pesticides. At first she planted banana seedlings in an area of three Kattha. She was helped by her husband in her endeavors. She sold bananas of rupees 30,000 in the first year itself. She was encouraged and thought of purchasing bananas at low cost from neighbours and sells it at a higher rate in the market. She started doing the business of buying and the selling of bananas. Through banana farming she could easily pay back the loan to the Women Peace Group. Then onwards she extended banana farming to five Katthas. She was able to sell the bananas for rupees 50,000 to a business man of Achham. In this way her business improved. She is being praised by neighbours who used to hate her before.

"I have no problems comparing to my previous status. Before, I used to take loan from the landlords. Now I have started providing loan to others too." Remembering the help provided by Institute of Human Rights Communication, Nepal (IHRICON) she says, "If there is a will there is a way."

Women and income generating scheme

Ishowari Rawal

There are twelve members in the family of Mrs. Indra Deuba of Khamaura under MalaKheti-4 consisting three daughters, husband and her father and mother in-laws. She is the youngest daughter in-law of her family. They have only 15 Katthas of land. It was difficult for Indra Deuba to run her family as it was too big to manage. It was rather difficult to educate her children. But now she has no such problems. According to her there came a dramatic change in her life after the establishment of the Women Peace Group in the village. She was unaware about the group and its activities during its establishment in 2060 B.S. She joined the group after she was informed about the group the activities by the women of her village. She was told that she would be provided small amount of loan in running a business to raise the economic status of her family and she would also learn about women rights.

At first she took a loan of rupees 2,000 after joining the Women Peace Group. Her mother in-law also borrowed a sum of rupees 2,000 from Shreejana Jyoti Multi Purpose Co-operatives. They jointly cultivated wheat in 15 Katthas of land. They also leased the land of Hari Lal Awasti of Malakheti VDC- for potato farming. According to her they earned good earnings by growing potatoes.

At first she stored 10 quintals of potato seeds in cold storage. According to her she sold it for rupees 20,000. She kept rupees 10,000, herself and hand over the remaining to the owner of the land. After returning the loan to the landlords she is still profited with rupees 6000 and 10 quintals of potatoes.

Her economic condition has improved by leaps and bounds. Sharing her past experience she says, 'My husband was in India for employment. At that time my daughter was ill, I had no money. I requested my father and mother in-laws to provide money for her treatment but they refused. Again I knocked the doors of neighbors, they too denied. At last one of the neighbors gave me rupees 200 when I assured him to pay back his money along with interest as soon my husband sends money from India.

I treated my daughter with the same. Now I do not have to face such situations, I become more independent now in comparison to past. She has already paid back the loan that she took from the Women Peace Group. "I am able to save an amount of rupees 21,000 from potato farming. This has become possible for me only through the support of Women Peace Group" she says.

Sit Rani earns a good profit from pig rearing

Hari Priya Paneru

Sit Rani of Shreepur VDC has no leisure time after she started pig rearing. She becomes busy from dawn to dusk looking after the pigs. She does the household chores during her spare time.

Pig rearing has become her main source of income. She meets her household expenses from the income that she earned by selling the pigs. She did not have thoughts of rearing pigs when she was fully involved only in farming. It was very difficult to run her family through the profession of farming only. She used to get into troubles by thinking about ways of running her family.

She got involved in the Women Peace Group after it was formed in Sreepur VDC. She took a loan of rupees 6000 having decided to do pig rearing. At first she bought two piglets to start with the business. She says, "One pig gives birth to eight piglets at a birth, it is fine enough for me as I have been earning a good profit."

Sit Rani says that she earns a sum of rupees 1000 by selling piglets. She paid the loan back by selling piglets. By seeing her earning other also started following her profession. She says that her economic status improved after being involved in the Women Peace Group.

Success of Radhika in potato farming

Ishori Rawal/Sarada Rokaya

There are ten members in the family of Radhika Thagunna. Her house is in Malakheti VDC 4. She has three daughters, five sons and husband. She was economically poor. Her family couldn't run only with the cultivated land of 10 Katthas. She became involved in the Women Peace Group which was formed in 2060 B.S, resulted into a drastic economic change.

She has joined the group after she came to know that the Women Peace Group provides loan for uplifting the economic status of village women and took a loan of rupees 5,000. She purchased seeds of potatoes weighing two hundred and fifty kilograms out of that money. She purchased insecticides of rupees 1000 then started potato farming. The loan taken from the Women Peace Group has become a boon for her life. She sold fourteen quintals of potatoes in the first year and earned a sum of rupees twenty thousand. She has paid back the loan to the Women Peace Group. She grew potatoes in eight Katthas of land in 2062 B.S. She sold potatoes to the businessman of Geta VDC for an amount of rupees 54,000 and again leased the land of 20 Katthas from her neighbour in 2063 B.S for extending potato farming. In this way Radhika earned good amount. She says that she has got support and encouragement from the Women Peace Group. "Had the Women Peace Group shown no way to me, then my family would have been helpless" she sighed. She is in tears remembering one of the previous incidents that she has borrowed money from her daughter to re-pay the debt of rupees fifty to a neighbor. But by now there has been a drastic change in the family of Radhika. "I need not have to spread my hands any more to others for our livelihood instead I have started extending my support to others," she proudly speaks.

Lilapati emerged as a model woman

Menaka Suwar

We may become surprised by the change in the economic status of Lilapati. People who used to make fun of her have now started praising her. Her family status was very poor up to five-six years ago. Nobody used to believe her. It was very difficult for Lilapati to support her four children. Her life became rather difficult as she got married at an early age.

However, there came a dramatic change in her life. She got involved in the Women Peace Group of Khamaura under Malakheti VDC 4 of Kailali district which is run by Institute of Human Rights Communication, Nepal (IHRICON) shed light in her life.

As soon as she got involved in the peace group, she asked a loan of rupees 20,000 for banana farming. Considering her economic status other women too pressurised the group to provide loans to her. Being landless due to armed conflict, she leased the land belonging to a primary school of Malakheti for rupees 11000 and started banana farming. As saying goes, "where there is a will there is a way."

She was helped by her husband too. They started working round the clock in their farm. She says, "The product was ready within a year and I sold it for rupees one lakh and forty thousand to a businessman of Attariya. I have returned the loan to the Women Peace Group. I saved rupees one lakh and purchased three Katthas of land out of that money in 2061 B.S. I too bought a pair of oxen. Now my life has become some what successful. I have never thought that I would be in this position before. Nothing is impossible if we think positively." She further adds " My life would have remained as dark if IHRICON had not have supported me."

She says that the living condition of other women also changed only because of IHRICON. She is popular through out the village. The elder people have started saying that women should be like Lilapati and lead other women of the village as she does. If somebody wants suggestion to overcome the existing problems she is frequently sought for advice.

She has even helped two orphans of the village. She works enthusiastically for women rights as social activists. She says that her personality has improved after joining the Women Peace Group.

An experience of a new life

I have never imagined that the change would come in my life. I have started a new life because of the program implemented by the Institute of Human Rights Communication, Nepal (IHRICON). I have started speaking in front of a big mass. I am able to learn something about women rights and my economic status has also improved a lot.

The above statement is of Tara Khatri of Malakheti VDC ward number 2. There has been a great success in her life after she involved in the activities on "Women Empowerment for Human Rights and Sustainable Peace.

Recalling the past she shares her story like this: "I was blamed for not delivering a son and all used to hate me. I was in dilemma. My family members even ignored me during lactating period and faced lots of trouble." Gradually, a change came in the attitude of her family. They have started keeping sons and daughters in the equal footings. She says that the attitude of her family is changed because of IHRICON.

Previously, the condition forced her to live a pessimistic life, but she seems to be happy and optimistic. Her pessimism is changed into encouragement. She says, "I will never loose my hopes in my life. Instead I will devote myself towards the betterment of my family and the society." People who used to hate her in the past have started praising her.

She was totally involved only in the household chores up to four years. She used to be afraid of her family and the society for outdoor works. But she has become the leader of the society now. She inspires others to do good works and advocates for women rights strongly. She never hesitates to speak with the male folk, instead she is consulted for the suggestions.

She says that she has come to this position after meeting the District coordinator of IHRICON, Ms. Menaka Suwar who has inspired and suggested her to involve in the Women Peace Group. "At first I was not even supported by my family members" she says. But looking at her good deeds and fame the family members too started supporting her.

She got an opportunity to take part a nine day training on Publication of Wall Magazine in 2063 B.S. She says that the training has further encouraged her to involve in the social activities. She has the hope of more achievements in her life. *(Based on the conversation with Tara Khatri)*

Happiness showers in Babita's life

Babita Sapkota used to hesitate to involve in the mass two years before. It was difficult for her to speak in front of others. She used to hide or cover her face to a stranger. It all has become a history; instead she openly faces the mass and communicates too. It is the contribution of IHRICON.

She formed the Women Peace Group with the help of IHRICON. She also participated the training related to human rights organised by IHRICON in 2063 B.S. This brought a ray of hope in her life

Sharing her experience Babita says, "I met with Chitra Paneru, the District Advisor of IHRICON. I became aware about the formation of Women Peace Group after I spoke to her. I have inferior complex few years ago. I used to think what can I do? But, now I am confident that any thing can be done if there is will."

At present Babita seems to be aware of human rights and women rights and started teaching other women of the village of the same. She can openly speak on women related issues with male folk. But she has experienced difficulties to reach up to this position.

She says, 'some people even said me that I have started working against the society, but I did not bother about what they said. Their allegation became an extra advantage for me to continue advocacy on women rights.'

"To bring change in the life of women, the mind of men should be changed at first." Babita further says- "Man considers woman only as a housewife. Women should not be considered as a machine to produce children."

Babita says "The unity among women in the village has increased after the formation of Women Peace Group. Women are not going to be suppressed any more if man tries to continue suppressing them. The awareness rate has increase among women. They are aware of their rights, women have started solving the simple disputes and misunderstanding themselves." Babita plays significant roles of mediator in such activities. *(Based on the conversation with Babita Sapkota)*

Leadership in Janaki

Ishori Rawal/ Sarada Rokaya

Janaki Choudary of Malakheta VDC ward number 4 under Kailali District was born to a Kamayia (landless) family. She could not go to school because of poverty. She was married at an early age. Thereafter, she faced lots of trouble in her life. Her marriage was fixed on her birthday as per the culture of Tharu society. There has been a gradual change in this practice but Janaki became the victim of the culture.

Since her parents have been staying in the house of landlord her daily duty was to wash dishes, clothes and look after cattle of the landlord. Janaki says "The children of landlord used to go school, but I was involved in the household chores. I too used to dream of going school but it was in vain."

Janaki's family was poverty stricken and it was difficult to manage her family. Sometimes they were even bound to sleep empty stomach. She says, "I fell sad of not been able to go to school. There was no happiness in me." Her condition was worsening.

"My father used to work whole day to re-pay the loan of landlord. I used to request him to send me to the school. But he used to reply me by saying that he cannot support for that" Janaki expresses her feeling sadly.

She had thought that her difficulties would decrease after the Kamayas were declared freed in 2057 B.S. But it was only a dream for her. It became rather difficult to lead her life after the birth of two children.

She knew that the Women Peace Group was established. She joined the group in 2060 B.S with expectation and high hope of doing something better.

She became the leader of the Women Peace Group. She started actively participating in all the programs. She became more aware about various issues. She got a job of a volunteer in one of the Children Literary Centre of Malakheti VDC-4. She earns monthly rupees 1000 from the centre supported by World Vision. This improved her economic condition gradually.

"I got all these opportunities after joining the Women Peace Group" Janaki says "In the beginning I used to hesitate to speak in public. I used to keep all my feeling within me. Now I have become able to share my feeling before the society and I hope for doing something good..." Janaki has become popular and the community has started praising her.

A journey of thousand miles begins with a step

Tara Khatri/Ameli Choudary

The economic status of Resha Choudary of Geta village under Geta VDC 2 of Kailali District has improved. There are no more difficulties in managing food and clothes. She has sent her children to school. Resha who used to take loan from other has turned the table. She says that it is the result of Women Peace Group.

Many problems occurred in the life of Resha when her husband married another wife in 2058 B.S without consent. This has not only crop up the disputes, but also jeopardizes her economic condition.

Resha says that her husband tried to expel her from home after the second marriage. Not being able to tolerate the frequent tussles she decided to live separately and started working as a labour carrying her child on her back.

Resha involved in Women Peace Group with its inception in Bhadra, 2060 B.S. The Women Peace Group which was formed with the help of IHRICON became the backbone of her life. She took loan of rupees 2000 from the Women Peace Group for goat rearing. At first she brought a goat which delivered two kids. She sold the goat after the kids were brought and the sum helped to meet both the ends. Goat rearing became the main source of income for Resha.

She brought more goats when her earning increased. She also paid back the loan that she borrowed from the Women Peace Group. She took additional loan of rupees 5000 from the group in Jestha, 2063 B.S. Besides goat rearing she started a small shop nearby her home which doubled her income.

Her husband who had expelled her from home is also surprised by her earnings. Other people of the village too express surprise on her improvements. she stands as the symbol of hard work in the village.

Kitchen gardening: A source of income generation

Hari Priya Paneru

There was a problem of hand to mouth in the six member family of Rasapati Choudary for years. Now the economic status of her family has improved because of her hard labor and commitment.

She has never thought of the positive result. She says "I worked hard and the Institute of Human Rights Communication; Nepal (IHRICON) helped me."

The Women Peace Group formed in ward no. 4 of Shreepur VDC in 2060 B.S. brought new hope in the life of Rasapati Choudary. The 19 founding member did the job of collecting monthly saving, providing monthly loans. The Women Peace Group has also trained the women how to use the loan productively. She also took part in that training.

She decided to start kitchen gardening in her land after the training. She took a loan of rupees five thousand from the group in the beginning. She started working in the garden round the clock. She also started selling of vegetables in the market and her earning increased. She used the income in household expenses and in the education of her children.

Rasapati says, "IHRICON" has provided training to me and I have practically utilised the skills and the knowledge." Now the Kitchen gardening has become the main source of her income. She has paid back all the loans that she took from the Women Peace Group. This has become a lesson for others. She hopes to improve her economy further through kitchen gardening.

Hari Priya became the leader of society

Hari Priya has not only become the leader of the society but has also become the source of inspiration to many people. Born in Guleria-Mauaphata under Kanchanpur District in 2041 B.S. she became the volunteer of Women Peace Group run by IHRICON in Shreepur VDC-4, Lalpur of Kailali District.

She had to shoulder the responsibilities of the family after the demise of her father at the young age. She didn't get the chance to attain the school despite her desire. Fortunately she joined school at the age of 13 in grade one helped by her brother. She was laughed at for her age and grade. "Many used to laugh at me. They used to tell that studying only in class I at an adult age. I used to be very sad because of this, but I went on ignoring their argument" she says.

She got chances to learn free of cost from class six to ten. She passed SLC in 2062 B.S. She also got chance to work in the social organisation, Maiti Nepal. She was compelled to hear bad words while working against women and girls trafficking.

I was happy to get the chance to work in Maiti Nepal, but I had no confidence to speak freely. I felt that there is lack of leadership quality in me. I used to be afraid of speaking in front of the mass. But there came drastic change after I joined the Women Peace Group in 2061 B.S that works for human rights and sustainable peace. My confidence increased, Hari Priya says IHRICON is indebted for my improvement.

Besides her study she also worked in the Women Peace Group. She started participating in each and every social activity. Now she has become the leader of the village itself.

She also plays vital role in solving quarrels, disputes and raising awareness in the village frequently. She says that the work of providing educational materials to the poor and the competitive students of the conflict affected hit area of Saileshowri Secondary School was carried out by the Institute of Human Rights Communication; Nepal (IHRICON) under her initiation. "Wearer knows where the shoe pinches" says Hari Priya. She would be happy to be involved in the social activities.

"Women are also not less than men. They can perform any kind of work, but they should be provided with the opportunities" Hari Priya says. *(Based on the conversation with Hari Priya Paneru)*

Pabitra and the Women Peace Group

Initially, Pabitra Sapkota was unaware about women rights, but she had heard about it. Now she has started advocating others about women Rights. A great change has occurred in her life. Pabitra Sapkota of Masuriya VDC 5, Pipaldara of Kailali District has become a social leader.

She got chance to learn about women rights after joining the Women Peace Group run by the Institute of Human Rights Communication; Nepal (IHRICON). She was nominated as the president of the group because of her leadership quality. The Women Peace Group has made me aware and improved my economic condition, Pabitra says.

In the beginning she took a loan of rupees 6000 to start with a small shop. She paid back the loan within one year and saved rupees 5000. She also installed a CDMA telephone in her small shop. The villagers became happy as there were no telephones before this. Her business multiplied day by day and she is out of her family problem.

She says that she was known to the people only through the name of her husband, but now I am known by my own name. She said, 'this is my achievement.' She wants to be independent unlike others. According to her women must stand on their own feet. *(Based on the conversation with **Pabitra Sapkota**)*

Peace group made Amrita bold and confident

Amrita knows the misery of being a woman when women were neglected and the names of men were articulated in the program which was conducted on during one of the Teej Festivals in Chaumala of Kailali District.

She became sadder when only men were respected and provided with the seats in the program. She thought this is only because of being women. She expressed this feeling in the stage and pointed out that this has happened only because of gender biasness. The male participants became surprised by her remarks. This is the first time that Amrita has ever spoken in the mass.

She says the Women Peace Group made her bold and confident. Previously she used to hesitate to speak in front of a mass. She overcame her habit of hesitation after being involved in the Women Peace Group. She is invited as women representative in all the programs such as conference, seminars and given a place in the program as well.

At present Amrita seems to be busy in social activities. She encourages other women to involve in such activities. She is no more neglected in the village. She gets cooperation of all women to fight against domestic violence and all forms of discriminations against women. The member of Women Peace Group requests and asks the male society not to treat women as second class citizens. The Women Peace Group has become able to make all women able to speak against women injustice including Amrita. *(Based on the conversation with **Amrita**)*

Khagisara regained love from her family

Pabitra Sapkota/Babita Sapkota

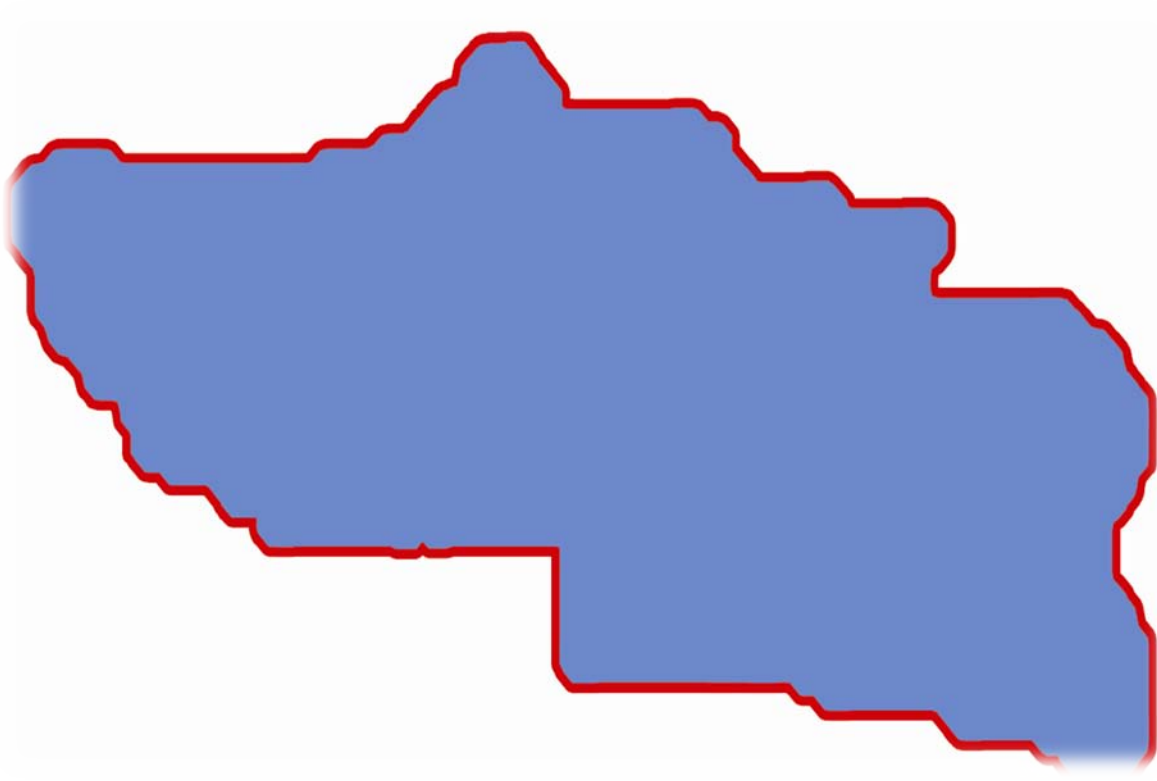
The birth of a daughter was a curse for Khagishora and she was treated as criminal in her family. She came to Kailali from Dailekh after not being able to tolerate the bad words of her family 15 years ago.

"I had come empty handed to Kailali in the beginning, but I am happy to overcome the scarcity of my life now" Khagishora says. She shares the story of her achievement and success in this way, "I first got involved in the Women Peace Group which works on women empowerment for human rights and sustainable peace. The friends of Women Peace Group made me involved as a member of the group. They have also helped me considering my problems.

At first I took a loan of rupees 7,000 from the Women Peace Group. From that amount I bought two goats. My income increased with the kids delivered by the goats. I sold the young goats and paid back the loans to the Women Peace Group and saved some amount out of that. I started kitchen gardening along with goat rearing. I started selling tomato, cauliflower, potatoes and green sag in the local market. I also earned more by doing kitchen gardening including the production of potatoes in an area of five katthas. My earning increased to 30,000 with in one year. I purchased two katthas of land with that amount.

I thought that my poverty has gone. If we desire all will support to overcome the problem she said. She is successful to stand on her own feet and her family too has started showing their love towards her. In this way she became successful to regain love of her family.

Sindhuli



Model Village of Sindhuli

China Lama

It has been five years since the Peace Group was formed in five villages of Sindhuli district. Around two hundred members are involved in this group which was established under Women Empowerment Program for Human Rights and Sustainable Peace. The project which was initiated since Bhadra 2060 B.S is still running with full dedication as it was in the initial period. The encouragement among the members of peace group has never decreased. The member of the group has become able to hold their identity from village to district level through this program. It has become necessary for them to participate in the program at village level. Their busy schedule is increased. Leadership capacity has developed. I feel it as an empowerment.

Background:

Sindhuli district is among one which has the scope of geographical diversity. The neighboring districts of Sindhuli are Udaypur, Ramechhap, Kavrey, Makwanpur, Sarlai, Mahothari, Dhanusa and Siraha. The main source of income of the district is agriculture which is also holding enough natural resources like rivers, forests and hills. No single industry is established so far. But, Sindhuli is one of the heaviest rain falling districts of Nepal. Therefore, it bears loss of property and human kind in land slides and floods during summer seasons due to heavy rain. On 1st Falgun 2052 B.S the natives of this district were forced to undergo another big trouble that had been passing difficult life for several times. That day was the day of starting of the armed struggle and conflict which was declared from Sindhuligadi of Sindhuli district. Along with the conflict, a serious of gross suppression and human rights violation began. The people of Sindhuli have experienced difficulties that they have never thought. Laps of hundreds of women were emptied, and sindur (vermillion) of thousands of wives were wiped and love and affection of the parents of thousands of children were threatened.

The human resources engaged in the agricultural areas were driven out of their villages because of which agricultural production was decreased. The economy of this district that depends upon agriculture turned at risk. The locals were compelled to go outside Nepal and search jobs for their livelihood. This has made the villages as a place of living for children and older people only and series of human rights violation took place. Women were raped, children became victims of malnutrition. Due to this difficulties faced by the general people of country, the concept of changing the existing socio-political structure into new Nepal felt necessary. Women and children were mostly affected by the conflict. Therefore, the Institute of Human Rights Communication, Nepal (IHRICON) have initiated the program in this district by analyzing that the workshops and the seminars organized at national level will have no impact unless the awareness is raised from villages itself in relation to women and children.

Saving Management Process:

The Institute of Human Rights Communication, Nepal has conducted campaign for women empowerment by forming women groups in five Village Development Committees (VDCs) in the district and donated an amount of 23,000/- in 2060 B.S to each of the groups to make women economically self-reliant. The amount was provided to the women groups of Belghari, Sithauli, Solpathana, Bhadrakali and Mahadevstan of the district through IHRICON, Sindhuli branch office. In addition to the money provided by IHRICON the group has also decided to deposit a sum of rupees 7,000/- as seed money and collect monthly deposit. To some extent, this program has helped towards making the members of the groups self-reliant.

The Economic Status of Women Peace Group:

SL No	Miscellaneous Income	Program Area	Total Grants	Collected Amount	Total Amount	Monthly Saving/ Interest	Grand Total as of now
1	Bhadrakali	2,300	23,000	7,000	3,000	52,150	84,450
2	Belghari	600	23,000	7,000	3,000	54,550	85,150
3	Mahadevstan	500	23,000	7,000	3,000	35,132	65,632
4	Sithauli	2,000	23,000	7,000	3,000	40,330	72,330
5	Solpathana	1,600	23,000	7,000	3,000	48,933	80,533
Total		7,000	11,5,000	35,000	15,000	2,31095	3,88,095

Loan Investment Process

- a. The meeting of the group is conducted every month and the loan will be invested as per the decision of the meeting and the need of the members.
- b. The highest amount of loan is invested for cattle rearing, business and small scale industries and skilled-oriented activities respectively.
- c. It has been found that the members of the Women Peace Group has been properly generating the income by doing satisfactory production through the profession buffalo rearing, goat rearing, pig rearing and poultry farming under the scheme of cattle farming by taking loans from the group.
- d. Some of the members of the group have taken skill-oriented trainings by taking loans from the group and increased their skills. They have been earning about 5000/- to 8000/- per month. Their neighbors are also influenced by their income-oriented professions.

Income-Generating Activities:

1. Sithauli, Dakaha and Bhadrakali VDCs have become successful towards reflecting the collective commitment, demonstrating unity and dedication; generating incomes and to teach others. The villages have become highly successful in farming and production of cash crops.

2. The profession of fishery in Sithauli and Dakaha has become successful towards supporting collective efforts of the groups for income oriented activities.
3. The members of the Peace Group of Bhadrakali; Nimbuatar has become self-reliant by doing the profession of business and industrial activities to promote the sources of income and improve economic conditions.
4. Apart from income generation they have been conducting other activities to make the members aware within and outside the group by organizing series of activities relating to human rights and women rights.
5. Awareness has been increased by conducting regular interactive and discussion activities on different subject matters such as constituent assembly, domestic violence, women rights etc.
6. Campaign against domestic violence by conducting door to door activities for providing justice to the victims has been organized within the group and the community.
7. The group has given the priority to the activities of women rights protection by conducting reproductive health education to minimize child and mother mortality rate. Along with regular awareness campaigns the education programs on HIV and AIDS have been organized regularly to protect innocent women of the society from deadly diseases like AIDS.
8. Among the income resources of the group the ratio of ginger production as cash crop has increased. The group has been making a good profit by producing ginger as their professional business. The skill is also followed by the neighboring villages of Sindhuli. Now, the production of ginger is extended in many places as the main source of income throughout the district.

Determination of not being a victim of gender discrimination

Sarmila Pakhrim

I am Sarmila Pakhrim, a member of the Women Peace Group of Mahadevstan, Sindhuli. I would like to note down all the details on how I grew up and experienced gender discrimination in the beginning; the decision I took to join the Women Peace Group as a member with the objective of Women Empowerment for Human Rights and Sustainable Peace and the changes that have come into my life.

I was born in 2039 B.S in Chowkitar of ward number 2 under Mahadevstan of Sindhuli District. My father is Mr. Bir Bahadur and my Mother is Mrs. Maiti Devi. I am their second daughter. There are six members in my family including my father, mother and three sisters. I got primary education from the school in my own village. Economically our family was very poor. My father married a step mother alleging that my Mother could not deliver a son and went to Kathmandu when I was studying in class five. After sometime she became mentally weak and fell down the cliff and became physically disable. This might have happened due to her previous sufferings. No one was there to provide solidarity and economic support to my family during that time. I was always disturbed due to the incident that took place in front of me when I was small.

My mind was always been stricken on how we could stay safely in a society that discriminates children like us and become mature to overcome these challenges. After completing primary education I have started studying in Shree Samkhershore Secondary School that takes two hours from my village. Forgetting the humiliating behavior of my father, I have started studying. But the amount of workload and the economic burden shouldn't be forgotten. Beside all these challenges I passed School Leaving Certificate examination in 2059 B.S.

However, I didn't get the opportunity to go for higher study. I went here and there seeking economic help, but in vain. In 2060 B.S Mahadevstan VDC was also selected as an extended area of work by the Institute of Human Rights Communication, Nepal (IHRICON). I got the opportunity to involve in the Women Peace Group which was formed under the active initiation of Peace Volunteer Ms. Salmo Maya Goley. I was assigned the post of finance secretary. I got the chance to participate in the trainings and workshops after I joined the group. This has encouraged me to work in the area of human rights and get the opportunity of higher study. I was provided scholarship by IHRICON and Technical Training Centre, Sindhuli. I couldn't score above 2nd division marks as I also had to shoulder work loads of household activities in addition to my study.

After completing class twelve I was again actively involved in the Women Peace Group. However, my mind was always diverted on how I could pursue my education. I was interested to study CMA and started to mobilise resource for the same purpose. I thought to deposit my regular saving and obtain an additional loan from the Women Peace Group. My proposal was accepted and approved by the members of the Women Peace Group. I have stated studying CMA from 2062 B.S onwards after receiving loan from the Women Peace Group. After fifteen months of my hardship the CMA course was completed. I scored 72.44 percentages in the examination. Now I am very happy for the success of my study.

There are two factors that made me happy like this, one is the Women Peace Group and the other is my hardship. I would like to request all the sisters (women) to become involved in the Women Peace Group, deposit savings and discuss on various topics to bring awareness. From the economic support from the Women Peace Group I was encouraged for regular saving and other skill oriented and income generating activities. Similarly, I have changed my behavior by keeping in mind all issues about violence and gender discrimination that I have experienced in my childhood. If women want to escape from violence they must become self reliant. The organisation like Women Peace Group is one of the strong bases for this. I have committed to be more active in my life to bring changes by eliminating the unwanted evils, anti-social and diehard culture against women and develop the society into a new formation. It is the responsibility of all of us to eliminate all kinds of gender-based violence. The village and the society should be made aware for the change.

Presently, I am working as a peace volunteer of IHRICON, Sindhuli. I got the opportunity to study five VDCs of Sindhuli during a Psycho-Social Research in Ashad, 2064 B.S. Now I am actively involved to provide primary health service in the village itself. I am also giving time for the activities of the Women Peace Group. Once again I would like to reiterate my commitment to continue my involvement to combat anti-social activities and work for the protection of women rights.

Gender discrimination is not a barrier for me

Bhadra Lama

Science and Technology has brought a drastic change in the area of modern development, but the superstitions and ill culture still exists in the society. In this context we find the situation of women most shocking one.

Bhadra Lama was born in 2043 B.S as the eldest daughter of her father Mr. Nir Bahadur and mother Mrs. Tilak Kumari in ward number 7 of Balajor VDC under Sindhuli District. Having been born into a family of a simple farmer in one of the remote areas, Bhadra has been living her difficult life from her childhood. She has also faced the fortune of having a step-mother like other women. Gender-based violence penetrated in her family too. Having the status little up from other general women, her mother had also faced the challenges of a second wife of her husband. Bhadra's mother was also working as temporary teacher in one of the primary schools. In fact it would be enough to judge by looking at Bhadra's family about how the women are given injustice and suppressed by the society.

However, in the later days there were no tussles between her two mothers after her brother was born. The affection and the manners that Bhadra Kumari and her brother received from their family clearly indicate that the society gives more importance to a son than a daughter. She got her initial education from a local school in the village and later she was admitted to Secondary School in Majwa Dovan. She passed class eight from the same school. Due to many reasons she was again admitted in Jana Sewa Secondary School, Karjana of Shiraha District and passed SLC. Despite her physical, social and economic problems she continued her study. After this she returned to her district and admitted for CMA course in the Technical Training Centre, Sindhuli. She is still studying there.

Reading newspapers, writing stories, poems, drama are her hobbies. But she couldn't tell other about her creations in meetings and gatherings before she joined the Women Peace Group. Her legs used to start shaking while standing in front of a meeting and her tongue couldn't function well while speaking in front of the mass. She never forgets a similar incident that took place while reciting her poem during one of the women's day celebration. Later on 23rd Chaitra, 2063 B.S she got an opportunity to participate in the training on "Human Rights, Women Rights, Good Governance, Constituent Assembly and Basic Journalism" organized by the Institute of Human Rights Communication,

Nepal (IHRICON). After attending that training a radical change took place in the area of her personal development and her speaking capability.

She has also got a five day training on 'Gender Research' organized by IHRICON in Sindhuli and has done a four month research on the impact of women and children in and around Maoist cantonment. The research work has built confidence in her and encouraged her to involve in the field of social services. It has also added power and energy within her to go ahead as per the situation. She explains that she will continuously fight against anti-social elements and unwanted culture existing in the society for the protection of human rights and women rights in the days to come.

Peace group for my survival

China Lama

I am China Lama. By going through the above topic one may think that "China thinks she is popular in the district?" My only motive to say this is to just clarify that people know me as the district coordinator of Women Peace Group to whom I am known.

The unbiased attitude of my father among sons and daughters and positive thinking of my family has worked as a strong background to introduce myself in this way. I would like to explain all about it as I feel that this adds motivation to all the esteemed readers. To begin with I start from my childhood. I was born in ward number 2 under Okhrey VDC of Ramechhap District on 22nd Srawan 2034 B.S. My father used to work as government servant while my mother worked as housewife.

I was born in a highly remote area and admitted in the school in the same village at the age of seven. Due to the social culture of giving less priority in educating the girls, only four girls including myself were admitted in the school during that time. After completing my primary education from there, I was admitted in Gauri Sankhar Secondary School in Ramechhap District for secondary level education. I have completed my higher secondary level education from the same school.

My father was positive towards providing equal education to his daughters and sons though the society could not give priority in educating girls during that time. My father didn't discriminate between son and daughter. But the culture depriving education for girls was deeply rooted into the mind of our grand-fathers. I now have the concept of eliminating the existing attitude of humiliation. I am actively involved for the same, but I could not reach to the level as I wished due to lack of proper guidance.

In fact the ten plus two level education that I have achieved was not was not enough to get the opportunity of employment immediately. On the other side my father had the problem of hypertension, and there were no health workers in our village. People used to take the patients to the witch-craft and they die without reasons. During that time my father told me to study CMA and I was admitted in the Technical Training Center,

Sindhuli. After fifteen months of regular study I have successfully completed CMA course. I was 23 years old at that time. I was married as per our ethnic culture in a village called Kusumtar under Bhadrakali VDC, ward number 4 of Sindhuli. My family was a little higher above the traditional thinking. They too have the attitude to allow their daughter in-law to continue education if she desires. So then I admitted myself in Sindhuli Campus for further study.

After the political change that took place in 2046 B.S, the Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) formed and started working in the field of human rights in the country. Materialistic facilities and the political rights are not enough for the people but their human rights should be guaranteed. I also got the opportunity to work with the Institute of Human Rights Communication, Nepal (IHRICON) since Bhadra 2060 B.S. Before that I had limited knowledge about human rights. I had no confidence to talk in public and it was the situation that I couldn't speak a word in the open meeting. My confidence was built up through trainings and workshops. Now I become able to talk or speak about human rights, child rights and women rights in the group discussions.

If we look from the view point of human rights the situation of women is still in worsening stage in Nepal. Women are still treated as second class citizens in our male dominated society. I got chance to know all about it from the training, workshop and group discussion conducted by IHRICON. It encouraged me to work in this field. It is not enough for women by simply giving their rights. The government should protect the rights of Women, Dalits, Janajatis, and Adhivasis who were deprived of their rights by the state party. It is the responsibility of the state to protect their rights. It is necessary to involve women in all the process to guarantee their political, cultural, civil, social and economic rights to combat all forms of gender-based discrimination against women to provide peace and security. This is also the demand of the general public and I have become involved in this campaign by knowing all about it.

It is not enough for women simply to understand their rights and responsibilities, their economic condition should also be improved. Therefore, along with the establishment of IHRICON, Sindhuli I have been conducting the programs by forming Women Peace Groups in five VDCs for the achievement of women in economy and empowerment. I am working as a Program Coordinator of Sindhuli District for the same organisation. My simple life is economically supported by IHRICON and I get the opportunity to introduce myself as a social activist.

First women to pass SLC from Dalit Community

Bal Kumari Pariyar

I am Bal Kumari Pariyar, who has passed SLC prior to other women of our community. My mind mostly concentrates on discrimination upon me by the society simply considering me as Dalit. I have set up my mind to contribute for the welfare of Dalit community.

You may think that 'who is this female advocating for Dalit community? Therefore, I begin with my introduction. I was born in Solpa Thana VDC 4 of Sindhuli on 12th Mangsir, 2042 B.S. Being born in a remote Dalit family I have started suffering economic constraint since from my childhood.

Though we were economically, socially and culturally backward, my parents admitted me in Fikal Secondary School. To support my family I used to bring fodder for the cattle before I go to school in the morning and help my mother in the evening after school. As the days went on I reached up to class eight. By this time the problem was increased in my family. My elder sister felt ill and the situation was enforcing me to leave the school, but it had never discouraged me. I passed my SLC exams from the same School in 2060 B.S. The school family including my parents and the society became so happy when I passed SLC as a Dalit student from a rural village like Solpa Thana. During same year I got chance to participate in the workshop conducted by the Institute of Human Rights Communication, Nepal (IHRICON) in Dang. A Women Peace Group was also formed in Solpa Thana VDC of Sindhuli with the objective of making practical use of acquired knowledge and skills. I was nominated as the secretary of the Women Peace Group. As per the agreement between IHRICON and Technical Training Centre I got an opportunity to undergo a twelve month training course on "Mother and Child Care Assistant" in 2061 B.S. I stood first in the training.

As I continued to carry the activities of the Women Peace Group along with my study, the members of the Women Peace Group have also initiated the publication of monthly Wall Magazine. I also got chance to write and publish poems and articles for Wall Magazine. My first poem in my life goes like this:

We also have thoughts like yours,
Dalits emerge as Devkota if chances are given.
God hasn't forbidden Dalits anywhere,
Nature shows that all are equally treated.
But! Why do you humiliate us as under privileged?
We also follow cultures like yours,
Why you pray Khukuri, but humiliate Kami?
Why don't you understand spirit and sorrow of Dalit?

By recognising the activities of Women Peace Group as the necessity of our society, I have decided to study CMA. There were difficulties to complete CMA study for women like me who belongs to an economically backward family. But I have decided to take a loan from the Women Peace Group. The group has also accepted my proposal and as per my decision I have again come to the district to start CMA course from Bhadra 2062 B.S. onwards. During my stay in the district I have attended the meetings of civil society, women groups and played a significant role in the 19 days Jana Andolan II (People's Movement) of 2063 B.S. As a result of my struggle and hard work I passed the CMA exams in the same year securing 76.77 percentages.

My future aim is to help the people having disability and work as a social volunteer. At present I am working as a peace volunteer of IHRICON, in the VDC of Solpa Thana, Sindhuli. Apart from it, I am also helping the patients of my village by providing primary health care. The culture of untouchable and discrimination still exists in the society. Why are there discriminations like 'not taking of food by the people of superior class if it is prepared by the people of Dalit community, and the culture of segregation even in the public gatherings?' "The dog eats human stools and the same dog goes to the kitchen of Brahmin Family, but do you think that Dalit has taken stools like that of dogs?" Dogs are respected, but the human being of our community is discriminated, why? These are the unanswered questions we find everywhere in the villages and I have decided to commit myself to get proper answer to it.

The Women Peace Group has helped me as per the demand of the hour and the society as a whole, and I have become able to challenge those who humiliate, suppress and discriminate against Dalits in the village. I have been working to teach and make the women society aware that the violence against women, child suppression, rape etc. will be stopped only through collective struggle of the women society.

Last but not the least; I would like to extend my thanks to all the members of my beloved family including my father and mother, my society, the Women Peace Group, school family, IHRICON, Technical Training Center and all the intellectuals who have supported and guided me to reach to this level.