

1. Changed Life: A success story of a former combatant of Dang district

Among seven daughters, Basanti (name changed) Chaudhary is a third girl and used to work in a nearby market. Her parent's desire for a son (after 5 daughters) had resulted 7 daughters in her family. Unfortunately, the son happened to be blind. Hence, Basanti is from a family who were already poor and with a lot of grief.

As the time passed, Basanti came in contact with the Maoists local militia. Her relationship with them deepened and continued until she suddenly vanished from the village. Nobody knew about her whereabouts. Her family distressed whether she was trafficked to Bombay by traffickers or abducted somewhere. The incident occurred during 2004.

About 3/4 months later, it was rumored in the village that she had joined the Maoists and had become district area commander. Her father frightened hearing about Basanti and he started thinking how he could save his daughter's life. Basanti, a young girl came in contact with someone and she became pregnant. As every women wants their baby's safe delivery, Basanti too wanted for it and decided to leave the militias. She wanted to come back to her parent's home. Again her parents were upset thinking about Basanti's life. Other militia came there several times to take her back, but she continued refusing. She had a very hard time with them. After all, they too were her friends and women, so finally she was able to convince them and started to stay with her parents. But, by that time, security forces (SF) started keeping their eyes on Basanti. One day, while she was visiting Tulsipur, a nearby town, she was caught by the SF. Her parents panicked thinking that she had risk from both the sides. If she spoke anything about her past life and other militia, that would be too dangerous for her. Then, her family contacted immediately to Jana Chetana Sarokaar Manch (JCSM), a NGO working with conflict affected communities under support of Local Development Facility (LDF). They appealed for Basanti's release. JCSM contacted International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC) and informed about her case. Then ICRC facilitated JCSM to release Basanti and keep her in a rehabilitation centre. NGO people had several meetings with the Chief District Officer (CDO) and finally she was released. Immediately, she was sent to a rehabilitation centre of ABC Nepal (another NGO) at Kathmandu. After 5/6 months, she gave birth to a boy child and named Shanta Bahadur Roka. She stayed there for about 6 months. As she can not stay there for her whole life, she returned back to Dang.

Her father was sad to see his unmarried daughter with a baby. Even though, she started living with her family. By the time, JCSM was implementing various income generation activities and literacy classes under support of LDF. So, Basanti has started bee keeping and other vegetable production activities after involved in the trainings. She is also attending literacy class in the evening. She is also a member of Village Peace Group where group members conduct several peace initiatives like peace rally. Her child is also provided a monthly support from JCSM. In spite of everything, her husband has not appeared in the village yet.

2. Peace committee able to release security personnel in Kanchanpur district

This was an incident of Kanchanpur district, Pipalmadi VDC, ward no. 9, Khajuwa Tole. In 28 December 2004 (2061/9/13 B.S) Mr. Nanda Singh Bohora, age 22, son of Mr. Nar Bahadur Bohora was returned to his home after joining to Teghari Army Barrack, Atariya, Kailali district as a army cadet. While returning back to the barrack for training, the Maoists abducted him from Krishnapur VDC, ward no. 2, Bani Tole. His abduction case was discussed in Elder Peace Group's meeting. Slowly, this incident spread in the whole village. This incident caused terror in his family and the village.

Then, Informal Sector Service Centre (INSEC) Peace Campaign initiated for release of Nanda Singh Bohora. Elder Peace group started to pressurize the local Maoists for his release. INSEC was with them to facilitate the process. Due to frequent pressure, finally the Maoists released Mr. Bohora at Jogbuda of Dadeldhura district (different than the abducted district) in the presence of INSEC people. He was then hand over to his father, Mr. Nar Bahadur Bohora.

Release of Nanda Bohora has ended the terror of the village. This incident has changed the perception of general people towards INSEC and Peace Group members of the village. They have started to see INSEC and the Peace Group members as a centre of hopes and trust.

INSEC is a leading human rights organization working in Human Rights sectors for the last 15 years and it has a good credibility in the country.

3. Changed Life, a case study of CPG member: Jyotsna Budhathoki, Chailahi VDC, Dang

Jyotsna Budhathoki is one of the conflict victims in Dang district. She was born in Bela VDC in B.S. 2036 (A.D. 1980) and studied up to grade 9. At the age of 20, she got married with Shusil Budhathoki of Satbaria VDC. After 3 years of their conjugal life, suddenly her dream shattered and she was buried into a desert of sorrows. The explosion of a powerful bomb detonated by an unknown group took her family's life away including her husband, 2 years old daughter and mother in law. Soon, another disaster happened in her life when her father in law threw her out of the home. She had to live in her parental home. In such circumstances, she came across with Women Development Section of Dang where she knew about LDF supported LIDER program "*Self Employment program for Conflict Management*" that is supporting victims of the conflict. "After that I attended a seminar in Chailahi conducted by LIDER and I was selected as a treasurer of the executive committee of a Community Peace Group (CPG)," She said. Then, ToT on Conflict Management and Leadership Development training was organized for all executive members. Training helped to increase her level of confidence and she learnt about conflict, its effects, mitigating measures, quality leadership and women's empowerment.

Jyotsna then participated in knitting training where she learned to make sweater, trouser, gloves and caps of various design. Now a group of women are managing a knitting store with the financial support of LIDER provided by the LDF sub-project in Lamahi market. Each of them has started to earn Rs. 2,000 per month in average. It has eased the daily lives of Jyotsna and her child. She is also able to provide good education to him. She uttered, "I want to see my son successful with good education, and I am thankful to this support for showing me a right way in a right time".

4. Protecting development space: A Successful initiation by local community of Ramechhap

Jagaran Nepal (JN), a local executing agency, has been implementing a project called "Conflict affected Women Support" project in 3 VDCs of Ramechhap district out of total 55 VDCs since November 2004 under Local Development Facility. Among Khimti, Naagdaha and Tilpung VDCs, Tilpung is a highly conflict affected VDC. In the particular VDC, the Maoists had killed 5 general people in one event. Similarly, 5 other local people were also killed by the government action in different events. Being the most affected village, certainly women and children of the village were highly affected by the present conflict. Therefore, this specific VDC was selected as one of the project area.

Women Peace Group formation was one of the first activities of the project. Before JN entered, the Maoist had burned the Women Development Office, a government owned office, and all its activities were closed down. Likewise, Swiss supported Tilpung Dhobi Road Project was not able to continue. All government and non government organizations were unable to run their activities due to the Maoists threat. In such a situation, JN entered into the village and was able to form 2 Women Jagaran Peace Groups by organizing a meeting. In the group, conflict victims and conflict affected by both the warring parties' women were included. These groups continued their monthly meetings for 2 months. But, after their second meetings, the Maoists pressurized all group members to resign from their groups. They also sent the message of abduction of Jagaran staff through local women if they did not leave the village. Due to this threat, the group had to stop their regular monthly meeting for 2 months. Then, JN tried several times to talk about the issue and continue their project activities. Then, JN thought to discontinue their program only after organizing a mass meeting and explaining locals about the real situation. During the period, several attempts were made with central as well as local leaders, but did not work. Finally, a large group meeting was organized and everything was clarified to local communities. Unexpectedly, certain group members requested JN to wait until they try to talk with the Maoists from their side on the issue. Especially, Tilpung Saraswoti Women Peace Group member actively involved to initiate the talk process. By the time, JN oriented them a little bit on how to pose their arguments during the discussion (like why do they want to stop the project? Any clarification needed about the project? Bad reputation about the NGO and NGO staff?)

The group members pressurized the local Maoists frequently. Due to their continued pressure and discussion, finally the Maoists allowed JN to continue their project without putting them (the Maoists) in trouble. From then onward, project activities are going on smoothly without their disturbances.

This incident has been taken as a successful initiation by local communities to protect their own development space. Villagers have started to consider it as a break-through in the whole Ramechhap district, not only in the Tilpung VDC. If local women can unify and show their solidarity for a good purpose, they can be successful.

5. Improved livelihood through income generation activities

Ms. Lila Devi Singh, age 34 now residing in Khamaura, ward # 4 of Malakheti VDC of Kailali district, has tremendously improved her livelihood through the Local Development Facility (LDF) supported sub-project entitled "*Women's Empowerment for Sustainable Peace and Human Rights in Nepal*" and managed by Institute of Human Rights Communication (IHRICON). She is a member of Community Peace Group (CPG). Lila Devi and her husband, Mr. Indra Bahadur Singh with their four children, were migrated from hills of Doti district, Juraili in 1998. They were landless without any hopes and dreams. Since then, they were residing in other's land in *Adhiya* system (providing half of the production to the owner). They used to work as a porter and labour. Indra Bahadur was an orphan and uneducated boy when she got married to him. Their life was miserable before joining the group.

She became a member of CPG in Malakheti VDC in 2003. Being a member, she got loan with a minimal interest 12 % as compared to existing interest rate of 24-36 % in the village. With the loan received, she started goat raising activity. Now, they have raised a number of goats. They have started earning good income by selling these goats. She had already paid back the loan. Later, other group members helped her providing group loan, Rs. 2,000 from 5 members realizing her condition. With the huge 10,000 amount, they have started banana farming in 1.5 *bigha* (1 hectare) VDC's land since last March 2004. The land was leased for Rs. 10,500 per year. The family is confident that they can repay their loan once they will harvest the bananas. Their children are also getting good education. Their three children, two sons (Om Bahadur Singh-class 6 and Dinesh Bahadur Singh-class 4) and one daughter (Laxmi Kumari Singh- class 2) are happily attending nearby government school. The sad part is that the eldest son, Netra Bahadur Singh (19 yrs.) had migrated to India by himself. Recently they have bought 4 *Kattha* (0.13 hectare) of land to make a home. It costs Rs. 34,000 per *Kattha*. They have borrowed loan from neighbors. She said "*we are collecting timbers and other required materials to construct our own house after this winter season*". Hence, a landless and uneducated family finally improved their livelihood through a small support.

Beside their economic improvement, as a CPG member, her level of awareness has also increased. She has started to learn about women rights and human rights, wall magazines etc. She is involved in resolving local level problems, domestic violence. Menaka Swar, district coordinator for Kailali district said, "Earlier, Lila Devi used to hesitate to tell her name, now she comes forward to resolve local problems". Hence Lila Devi's case shows how a small support if utilized properly could bring a tremendous change in ones life. Sincerity, commitment, and belief are the foremost factors to achieve success.

6. Life is possible now; a case study of Sita Maya Moktan, Chitwan

Sita Maya Moktan, residing in Korak VDC ward no. 7 of Chitwan district has now self-belief that she can live with her children. Before, she was only limited to household chores. Her husband used to work as a labour in the village. In July 2003, her husband was killed by the security forces in a fake encounter. He was innocent. She was stunned by the news of her husband's killing. "How can I feed these four children and myself without my husband?" She burst out into tears. Later, she knew about District Peace Building Group (DPBG) formed in the village with the help of Jwala Mukhi Club (JMC) Chitwan.



DPGB supported her children for schooling. Her children got admission in the school and received school uniform, copies and pencils. These days, her children attend school with full of enthusiasm.

In order to raise her income, Sita Maya was provided two goats by the group. These days she is busy taking care of these goats. She expressed her happiness "DPBG has changed my life tremendously; I would not have lived, if the peace building group would not have supported me in right time. Now I am confident that I can live my life happily."



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