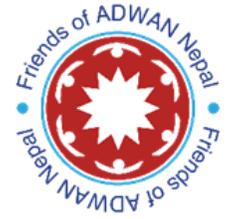


Friends of ADWAN Nepal

2017 Newsletter



ADWAN Completes Most Ambitious Project to Date

This summer ADWAN completed its largest, longest project to date (from December 2014 to July 2017), serving more than 1,700 Dalit women (including the disabled) in Gorkha and Siraha Districts. Funded by the European Union (EU), the project provided training programs in livelihood, entrepreneurial, and advocacy skills in consultation with the women.

Based on the various interests and aptitudes of the women, the trainings covered a wide and diverse range of skills: bamboo craft making (e.g., stools, baskets); fruit and vegetable cultivation (e.g., mushrooms, chilies, eggplants); animal husbandry (e.g., pigs, goats, chickens); flower

growing; incense and candle making; laundry detergent making; and jewelry making. In addition, ADWAN instructed women who were already proficient in these skills on training others.

ADWAN also provided entrepreneurial skill trainings to those women interested in starting or improving their micro-enterprises. They trained nearly 500 Dalit women in the skills necessary to start a business and more than 700 micro-business owners received counseling and mentoring in financial matters. And to help establish and expand their micro-enterprises, ADWAN connected more than 600 women to financial institutions offering affordable loans and individu-

als looking to make an investment.

The women also learned how to advocate for themselves to the Village Development Committee (VDC), the governing body of local villages. This training included raising awareness about funds earmarked for Dalits and women by the national government and the various strategies for voicing concerns at public meetings. After a group of women learned they can attend these meetings to request funds for projects, they successfully advocated for NR 250,000 (\$2,500) from the VDC to build a dome for mushroom growing.

Although success stories from the trainings abound, Gyanu Maya Sunar's experience illustrates the transformative nature of ADWAN's work and the link between the three trainings. Here is her story:

Prior to learning about ADWAN training workshops, Gyanu purchased 200 chicks (with a loan from ADWAN's Microloan Program) in hopes of realizing her longtime dream of running a poultry farm. Unfortunately, the challenges, both financial and agricultural, in raising this particular species of broiler chicken (known for their meat) proved overwhelming at times. This is when Gyanu heard about ADWAN's training workshops.

Once Gyanu learned how to raise broiler chickens, the training on entrepreneurial skills taught her how to run a successful business, skills like how to track profits, how to market her wares, and how to conduct a market analysis for particular locales. This education helped Gyanu to significantly improve her business model.

Now all the villagers come to Gyanu's home in Gorkha District or her stall in the Manakamana city center to buy her chickens. With her poultry business booming, she was able to quit her exhausting day laborer job to focus on her chickens full time. Gyanu has earned NR 50,000 (\$500) since she bought the chicks three months ago. She previously would have had to work for at least eight months to earn what she made in three. (Nepal's minimum daily wage is NR 228, roughly \$2). Gyanu can now even pay for her children's school supplies and new clothes.

With her financial success and newfound confidence, Gyanu has expanded her small poultry farm into a large business. After receiving the advocacy training, Gyanu attended the annual budgetary planning meeting where she demanded that the VDC honor her rights with a loan of NR 100,000 (\$1,000) to buy 1,300 broiler chicks. The VDC ultimately denied her request based on their budgetary constraints but encouraged her to apply again next year when there may be more funds available.

Although the VDC denied Gyanu's first request for funds, the fact that Gyanu was able to make such a request illustrates how Dalit women are beginning to assert their rights and voice their concerns. With the support of ADWAN, Gyanu is now a successful, courageous businesswoman with the skill and training to raise a difficult species of chicken, run a thriving business, and advocate to a local government.

ADWAN's trainings impacted the lives of more than 1,700 women who, like Gyanu, can now provide for their families and perform work that gives them a sense of pride and genuine fulfillment. Beyond the concrete impact for the women, this project also improved the lives of their children, transformed their local communities, and contributed to the national economy of Nepal.



The Livelihood Training that Changed Sumitra's Life

Sumitra BK of Dhungagade, Gorkha District, shares her transformational experience from toiling as a day laborer in other people's fields to now growing her own chilies on her neighbor's parcel. Like most Dalits in Nepal, Sumitra doesn't own any land and must therefore work on borrowed land to grow her crops. In fact, she actually has more access to land than the majority of Dalits. Although 4 out of 5 Nepalis live in rural areas, only 10% of Dalits own land while landowners make up 76% of the population. Given the scope of the inequality in land ownership, it is difficult for any Dalit, particularly women, to successfully grow crops for profit. With the help of ADWAN's livelihood training, Sumitra was able to grow 200-300 chili plants, far exceeding the norm of 50-150 plants that most women are able to raise.

The Karuna Trust, a British charitable foundation, and Friends of ADWAN Nepal proudly sponsored this yearlong pilot project for 140 Dalit and other marginalized women affected by the 2015 earthquake. In this project women learned how to grow produce (e.g., chilies, mushrooms, radishes, beans, ginger) that would more efficiently apply their labor and maximize their investment. In addition, all of the women attended



workshops on women's rights that raised their awareness about their civil and collective rights.

ADWAN successfully completed the pilot project in October. Moved by ADWAN's dramatic results and strong leadership, the Karuna Trust and FAN are in final negotiations to fund a four-year scaled-up version of the project for 600 women in two regions of Chitwan District. (Chitwan is part of the Terai region, the poorest region of Nepal.) This version of the project will not only teach the women livelihood skills, but help them make connections with merchants, provide them with small starter loans, and bring their products to the marketplace.



Board Members

Bishnu Maya Pariyar

Founder

Bishnu founded ADWAN in 1998 and Friends of ADWAN Nepal in 2015. She currently serves on the United Nations (UN) Commission on the Status of Women (CSW).

Joan Goldmann

President & Sponsorship Coordinator

Joan has been empowering Nepali Dalit women and children for the past decade. She is a psychotherapist in private practice.

Daryl Caggiano

Secretary & Communications Director

Since 2009, Daryl has done communications for many international NGOs. She is currently pursuing a Master's in Nonprofit Management.

Thomas Thuene

Treasurer

Prior to serving on the board of FAN, Thomas served as treasurer and board member at the German Saturday School Boston. He is a partner at QORM, an international Quality Management consultancy for life science companies.

William "Bill" Fisher

Bill is Professor of International Development and Social Change, Associate Provost, and Dean of Graduate Studies at Clark University.

Namita Kiran-Thuene

Namita grew up in Nepal and uses her knowledge of Nepali language and culture to act as FAN's liaison to ADWAN. She currently teaches third grade for Boston Public Schools.

Partners, Advisors, & Volunteers

Volunteers: Laura Haughey, Prabin Kanel, Jung Lee, Colleen Mullaney, Prakash Pariyar, Gary Simon, Pradeep Thapa, Tracy Ware

Advisors: Kevin Baird, Jessica Bethoney, Amy Gray, Carolyn Jacoby, Pradeep Thapa, Tracy Ware

Partners: Sharing Resources, Inc.

Special thanks to the Florence and Richard Koplw Charitable Foundation for their generous support!

We would also like to thank Friends of Nepal for their continuing support of the Ambitious Girls Fund!

And last but not least, we are immensely grateful for the generosity of the Karuna Trust!

2017 Financials

Banking Summary
- Year To Date

1/1/2017 through
11/23/2017

| Category | 1/1/2017- 11/23/2017 |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------|
| INCOME | |
| Donation Payment | \$33,716.00 |
| Donation Payment: Sponsorship | \$10,070.00 |
| TOTAL Donation Payment | \$43,786.00 |
| Karuna Trust | \$(7,932.60) |
| TOTAL INCOME | \$35,853.40 |
| EXPENSES | |
| Advertising (Business) | \$424.98 |
| Conferences | \$2,685.00 |
| Fees & Charges | \$180.00 |
| Fees & Charges: Bank Fee | \$89.70 |
| TOTAL Fees & Charges | \$269.70 |
| Membership | \$150.00 |
| Misc. | \$211.00 |
| Misc.: Hiring Cost | \$220.00 |
| Misc.: Puja's Expense | \$849.40 |
| TOTAL Misc. | \$1,280.40 |
| Office Expenses (Business) | \$106.00 |
| Office Expenses (Business): Nepal | \$3,760.00 |
| TOTAL Office Expenses (Business) | \$3,866.00 |
| Project | |
| Project: Roof Community | \$760.00 |
| TOTAL Project | \$760.00 |
| Salaries | |
| Salaries: Nepal | \$18,435.00 |
| TOTAL Salaries | \$18,435.00 |
| Sponsorship | \$12,418.00 |
| Technology | \$9.95 |
| Travel (Business) | \$500.00 |
| TOTAL EXPENSES | \$40,799.03 |
| OVERALL TOTAL | \$(4,945.63) |

Abhisek's Moving Letter to His Sponsor

Bishnu established the Sponsorship Program with a dream that Dalit children could enjoy better lives. This emotional letter from Abhisek Pariyar to his American sponsor demonstrates the importance of this program, especially in the wake of the earthquake:

Namaskar,

Myself I am Abhisek Pariyar and I live in Bakreswori, Manakamana. I am studying in grade 9 and I have to face many difficulties for the education. My parents have become old and they have problem in working in field. There is no fixed source of income in the house. It is hard to manage expenses of my education. All because of your sponsor money, I am able to continue my education and go to school. I was scared when I did not receive the sponsorship this year. I became very sad when other student received the sponsorship. Later when I got call from ADWAN office about my sponsorship also, I was so happy that I could continue my study.

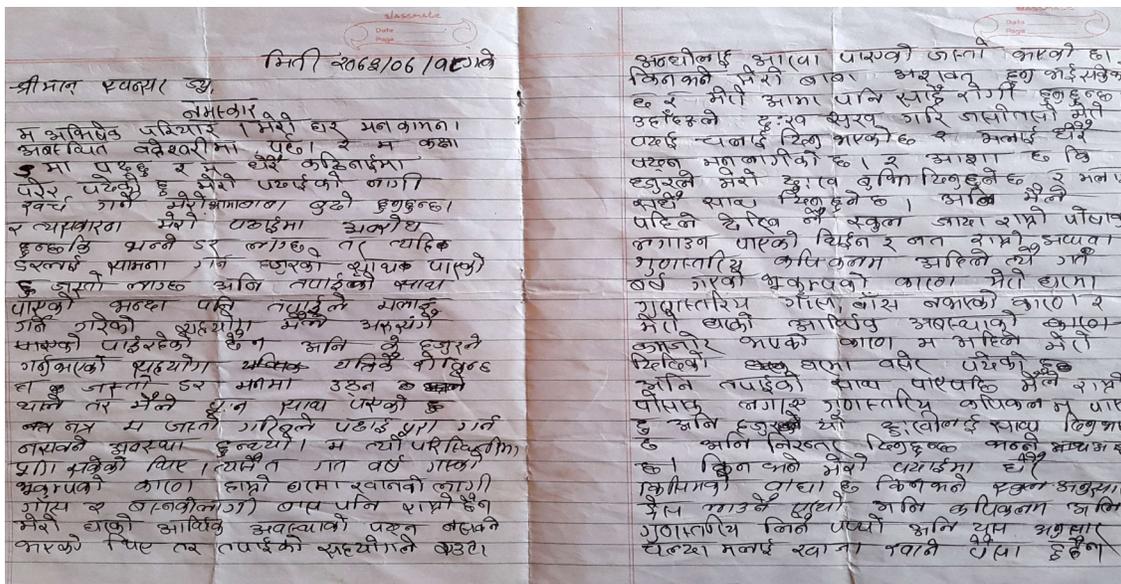


In 2015, my house was destroyed from earthquake and we had no place to live and nothing to eat. We faced from so many difficulties and after months we were back to our normal life. Your sponsorship that I received was like getting an eye to a blind person. I am very thankful for the help from my bottom of the heart. My father is a handicap and mother has so many health issues. I hope you will always continue my sponsorship. From your help and support, I will purchase books, stationeries and winter dress for school. We are having winter in Nepal.

I will study more hard and will always go to school. I want a bright future for myself and help my parents.

Yours Sincerely,

Abhisek Pariyar



A Tribute to Fieldworker Rita Pariyar

Rita Pariyar, age 42, of Bakreswori, Gorkha District passed away this past May. She tirelessly served ADWAN since the founding of its Women's Groups in 2000, first working as a volunteer and then assuming the role of a fieldworker in 2002. Rita started ten women's groups in the Gorkha villages of Manakamana, Bakrang, and Taksar and served in an advisory role in many others.

Rita's leadership qualities and devotion to the cause of ADWAN were most evident in her role as the founder and president of the Bakreswori Women's Group. As the president of the group, she inspired others to contribute to the welfare of the community and to challenge all forms of social injustice. For example, Rita initiated a boycott of all local restaurants that required Dalits to wash their own dishes after a meal, leading to a change in policy for most establishments.

As the sixth child of eleven, Rita grew up in a poor Dalit family in Taklung, Gorkha. Like many girls in rural Nepal, she dropped out of school after fourth grade and got married at age fourteen. Early marriage and lack of education often signal the start of an impoverished life, but Rita's character, determination, and supportive husband enabled her to overcome hardships and to become a significant leader in her community.

The Gorkha earthquake of 2015 destroyed Rita's home; but she nevertheless helped others. She immediately joined ADWAN's emergency relief distribution team and sought out other organizations providing emergency aid to her community. Rita made sure that aid agencies didn't overlook poor Dalit communities unaccustomed to advocating for their needs even in a time of crisis. Her relief work included building temporary shelters and constructing Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) stations and toilets.



Rita's leadership and commitment soon became well known among Gorkha residents; and in 2017 a major Nepali political party tapped her to run as one of the Dalit women candidates for local government. Just two weeks before her passing she officially announced her candidacy and attended an important political meeting before being hospitalized in Kathmandu. On Election Day, Rita lost by only 10 votes.

Relatives, neighbors, friends, elected leaders, and community leaders from all castes attended the traditional tenth day of ritual fasting in honor of Rita's life and achievements. They stood together for a moment of tribute and put red *tika* powder and flowers on her picture. Members of the Bakreswori Women's Group said, "Rita was our light and now she's gone."

Rita is survived by Jit Bahadur Pariyar, husband of 28 years, her three daughters (ages 23, 20, and 15), son (age 18), grandson (four months old), and granddaughter (three months old). The Bakreswori Women's Group and all of us at ADWAN and FAN want to convey our condolences to Rita's family and to celebrate the legacy of this passionate, courageous change-maker.

Ambitious Girls Fund Helps Sunita Improve Her Community

Sunita Thapa of Taklung, Gorkha District, possesses an uncommon charisma and energy that speaks to her drive and ambition. Like most Dalit girls in her village, she grew up expecting very little - an arranged marriage at a young age, lack of access to education, and without the training to practically improve the conditions in her community. This could have easily been the story of Sunita's life, but she had other aspirations for herself and her community.

Sunita always had an interest in health care and medicine. Although serious illness never affected her own family, Sunita noticed that the sick villagers in her community, particularly the women, did not receive proper medical attention, either because of the long distance to a provider or because of the prohibitive costs. Since families in rural Nepal tend to privilege the health care of men, they are less inclined to pay for the treatment of women. Understandably, Sunita felt helpless until she decided to become a Community Medical Assistant (CMA).

With this goal in mind, Sunita diligently studied and prepared to take the School Leaving Certificate (SLC) exam that is required to graduate from high school (roughly 18% of Nepalese students pass the exam). When she saw her passing score posted on the school bulletin board, her feelings of elation and joy were tempered by her anxieties in regard to her father's concerns. As traditional farmers who did not have access to modern technologies, Sunita's parents depended heavily on the labor of their children to sustain their business. So even though Sunita managed to pass the SLC exam and could now pursue her dream of becoming a CMA, her father told her to return to the farm and end her educational career.

Fortunately, ADWAN awarded Sunita an Ambitious Girls Fund scholarship of \$150 a year, providing enough financial support to Sunita's family to allow her to attend 10+2 (the equivalent of 11th and 12th grades in Nepal). 10+2 is comparable to an associate's degree program in the United States and must be completed prior to entering college. While Nepalis must complete 10+2 in order to matriculate at college, many Da-



lits in rural areas do not have access to 10+2 programs and are consequently unable to attend college. In the case of Sunita, she would not have been able to afford the cost of tuition and room and board if it were not for the assistance of the Ambitious Girls Fund.

Sunita studied public health in her 10+2 program and has since entered college to pursue her dream of becoming a CMA. Emboldened by her success and ongoing commitment to helping her community, Sunita became a social mobilizer for the Local Governance and Community Development Program (LGCDP) in Gorkha District. In this role, Sunita helps villagers obtain birth and death certificates, enabling them to vote, access government programs, and give and receive inheritances (usually of property). Possessing good writing skills (only 66% of Nepalis are literate), she also writes recommendations for Gorkha residents who need assistance with their job or school applications.

Now 25, Sunita continues to work as a social mobilizer while studying for the Bachelor's degree in Public Health on a part-time basis, expecting to graduate in 2019. Embodying courage, determination, and intelligence, Sunita is already giving back to her community as a role model for other village girls who dare to dream of a better outcome for themselves and their fellow villagers. An ADWAN scholarship of just \$150 made the difference between subsistence living on a farm and a professional career!

Friends of Nepal (FoN) will be providing AGF scholarships to 20 women for the next two years.