

JOURNEY WITH JUMLA

WOMEN MAKING CHANGE

ISSUE 03 2021

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Journey with Jumla connects Australians with communities in Jumla, Nepal, as they work with INF towards 'life in all its fullness'.

By supporting the people of Kanakasundari in prayer and finance [\$25 per month], you will also take your own learning journey, joining us for an inside view of community development.



Leader of Sagarmatha SHG as she prepares to go to a monthly meeting. Through SHG group meetings women grow in confidence and skill.

“नपत्याउने खोलाले बगाउँछ”

Napatyaune kholale bagauchha says a Nepali expression: “It’s the underestimated river that floods.” Despite the many challenges and barriers they face, women are a powerful, if often underestimated, the force for positive social change.

Life is not easy for anyone in Kanakasundari Rural Municipality, Jumla, but for women there are extra challenges. Most women even from a young age and during pregnancies do the hard physical work of tending fields and farm animals; they collect firewood, fodder and water every day and do all the household cooking and cleaning. Men are often absent from communities seeking seasonal work for days, weeks, even months, at a time.

Yet deeply ingrained cultural practices and social norms work together to force women into inferior positions to men. Women and girls are generally the last to eat in a family and the first to experience hunger and the impacts of poor nutrition. Early marriage, still common in this part of Nepal, removes educational opportunities for girls and exposes them to the health risks of early pregnancy. Because these marriages are often unregistered, the women and any children from the marriage may also miss out on government support programs relating to pregnancy and childbirth.

In Jumla, women and girls may even be isolated from the family home’s safety during menstruation, a practice known as chhaupadi. Traditional beliefs hold that a menstruating woman can cause illness or misfortune to people she comes into contact with or even bring a curse upon crops or certain foods. Psychologically damaging and physically dangerous, this isolation period has led to illness, injury and even death for women banished to small sheds, huts or even caves, isolated from the community.

Yet women are acting as agents of change, challenging harmful practices and working for equality. INF Nepal works to support and facilitate women through its gender-focused community program in Jumla. Through Self-Help Groups [SHGs], women receive training and education on issues such as child marriage, chhaupadi and domestic violence. The groups provide economic empowerment through small loans and training to improve household nutrition and income.

Just as importantly, these SHGs allow women to work together to identify and overcome the barriers they face. Because when women’s lives are improved, everyone is better off.

KANAKASUNDARI RURAL MUNICIPALITY



JUMLA DISTRICT



ABOUT KANAKASUNDARI RURAL MUNICIPALITY

Population: 13,200 [2011 Census] **Religions:** Hinduism, Buddhism & Christianity **Elevation:** 2400-3000m



68%

68% of the population have food sufficiency for less than 6 months of each year



98%

98% of households rely on seasonal migration for income



9%

Almost 9% of people have a disability [compared to the national rate of 2%]



50%

50% of households lack safe drinking water

PROJECT AIMS	ACHIEVED SO FAR	PROJECT ACTIVITIES
Help more than 1,500 people lift themselves out of extreme poverty	1,300 people with increased income through farm improvements or new home-based enterprises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SHG monthly savings of NPR 1,000,000 [AUD13,000] Training on business development, improved farming techniques and animal husbandry 9 district business networks established for better market access
Increase number of households with adequate annual food consumption from 9% to 30%	17% of households report adequate food consumption over the past year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training on improved and climate resilient agriculture, kitchen gardening, composting and organic pesticide 32% of SHGs members using greenhouses to improve productivity [9 extremely poor families provided with direct support to construct greenhouses]
Reduce below 5% deaths of mothers, newborns and children under 5	Zero maternal deaths and 3 newborn/infant deaths from 390 deliveries [0.7%]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training and support to women for pre-natal check-ups and assisted deliveries Training and support to Health Facility Management Committees to improve services, infrastructure and accountability Training to Female Community Health Volunteers
Ensure that more than 50% of children with disabilities attend school	97 of 103 children with disabilities regularly attending school [94%]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awareness raising on disability inclusion Training and support to School Management Committees to improve accessibility and inclusion Support to extremely poor families to meet education related expenses
Double the no. of people accessing clean drinking water [40% -> 80%]	51% of households have access to piped drinking water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 59 schemes developed and supported by SHGs to install tap stands and piped water supply
Other project highlights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SHGs constructed or repaired 8 irrigation channels, providing irrigation to the crops of 150 households 61 communities reducing plastic waste and environmental pollution through waste separation and disposal Improved or new infrastructure [check dam, water drainage systems, wooden bridges] in 15 locations 21 communities implementing disaster risk assessments and action plans 75 Gender Focal Persons trained and supporting awareness raising and action against chhaupadi, child marriage and domestic violence 	

RESPONDING TO COVID

In response to the nation-wide lockdown implemented by the Government of Nepal, INF Nepal's programs in Jumla, and elsewhere, were suspended for a period of three months in 2020. When programs resumed in July, INF Nepal responded to the COVID pandemic by raising awareness, ensuring social distancing and hand hygiene in community meetings, and by providing medical and other supplies to community and government facilities.

Every SHG was provided with large water drums and soap for hand-washing and groups now meet in reduced numbers and outdoor

spaces to allow for proper social distancing. Each SHG was also given printed material with information about COVID and how to reduce its spread for use in the group and to share with the community.

INF Nepal also supported the Rural Municipality to respond to COVID, by providing equipment and resources to establish isolation centres for COVID patients:

- Surgical masks
- N95 masks
- Hand sanitizer and soap
- 16 medical beds and all linen and fittings

EMPOWERED WOMEN

Yekmaya Neupane is a mother, a farmer, a domestic violence survivor and a human rights defender in Kanakasundari Rural Municipality.

Whenever incidences of domestic violence or overuse of alcohol, early child marriage and social discrimination against women occurs, people – especially women – come to Yekmaya. In her own life, she experienced the consequences of polygamous marriage and suffered violence and abuse from her husband, before finally leaving the marriage, her son in her arms.

Supported and trained by INF Nepal, Yekmaya is now the Gender Focal Person for her SHG and in her community. She wants to ensure that other women have the information, awareness and confidence that she lacked as a younger woman. More than just supporting them personally, though, she wants to help women work together to challenge beliefs and practices that marginalise women and put them at risk of violence and abuse.

Through her training and advocacy, SHG members, in coordination with local authorities, have confronted domestic abusers with demands to change. They often begin this process with a desire for change and reconciliation within the family

and group. But in cases of serious violence or where change and reconciliation don't seem possible, they have referred cases to the local courts.

The group members use street dramas and rallies to shine a spotlight on issues like domestic violence and child marriage. They know that women and men, from every level of society, need to be involved in making change. Early or child marriage, the abuse of alcohol, and discrimination or violence against women still continue, but their efforts are already reducing the number of cases and changing people's attitudes.

Her work as Gender Focal Person has also changed Yekmaya.

“My confidence has grown. I feel proud to work for my community and women but the motive behind my work is to prevent violence and stop discrimination against women.”



Yekmaya Neupane



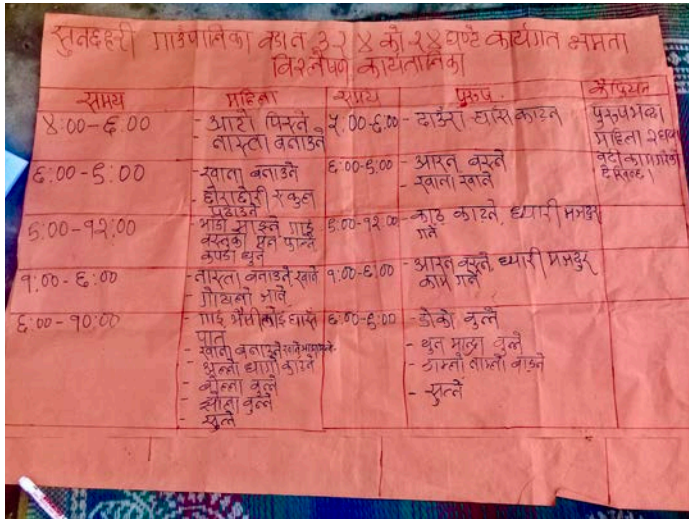
SHG members' discussion on workload according to gender in one of the SHGs in Kanakasundari RM

FAMILIES IN JUMLA

Reflections and Resources for Families and Children

To help people understand social attitudes about men and women and identify areas of discrimination or injustice, INF Nepal's SHGs use different tools. One simple tool that always sparks vigorous discussion is a gender workload analysis.

- Who does what jobs or chores in your house? Are the chores and the amount of time they take shared equally or is it different for boys and girls?



The Gender Workload Analysis pictured comes from an INF Australia supported project in nearby Rolpa District. Gender workload and perceptions are likely to be similar but may vary in Jumla.

Have a look at the photo of the gender workload analysis. From left to right the columns are:

1. Time
2. Women's Tasks
3. Time
4. Men's Tasks
5. Summary

Without knowing Nepali numbers, can you see any difference in the times listed for women's tasks and men's tasks? What do you think this difference might be and why? [Hint: the final summary reads "Women work two hours longer each day than men do."]

- Which of these lists of tasks do you think belongs to men and which to women? Why do you think this is the case? What does this say about the lives of women and men in Nepal?

Grinding flour	Gathering firewood
Preparing morning snack	Cutting fodder
Preparing main morning meal	Working iron
Sending children to school	Eating breakfast
Collecting and composting cow dung	Chopping wood
Washing clothes	Day labouring
Preparing and eating afternoon snack	Making baskets
Shepherding animals	Making mats
Feeding cows and buffalos	Making ropes
Preparing and eating main evening meal	Sleep
Spinning yarn	
Weaving bags	
Sleep	

Do a workload analysis for your own family. Why are the tasks shared the way they are? Is everyone helping out as much as they can? Could or should anything change?

Pray for the women of Kanakasundari as they seek to support each other, help their families, and improve lives for all women and girls in their communities.

Will you join us to Journey with Jumla, in prayer and finance [\$25 per month]?

For all Journey with Jumla supporters, INF will share regular email and online reports, as well as interactive and other experiential events, bringing you the inside story of community development work.

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INF Australia receives support from the Australian Government through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program [ANCP]. We are also a signatory to the ACFID Code of Conduct demonstrating high standards of transparency, accountability and governance.



A Christian mission serving the physical and spiritual needs of Nepali people

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