



Empowered Women in Local Governance in Nepal

In Nepal, deeply ingrained traditional gender roles have historically restricted women's participation in politics. However, a group of resilient women has defied these norms to emerge as influential leaders in their respective municipalities. This case study was conducted by Centre for Women's Awareness and Development (CWAD), Lead Learning Partner of Nepal under the "Strengthening Networks of Women on Humanitarian Action" (SNEHA) project supported by CARE USA within the "Women's Voice and Leadership in Humanitarian Settings" (WHS) project. The case study highlights the exceptional contributions, particularly in disaster management, humanitarian crises, and women's empowerment, of these local government leaders who are important stakeholders in a project aimed at increasing the representation of the unique needs and priorities of women and girls in humanitarian settings. This transformation is envisioned through meaningful engagement and representation of local women-led organizations in humanitarian decision-making at the country level, while working in consultation with local government leaders and learning from their experiences.

Ms. Bhagwati Chaudhary's journey began as a student activist and continued through teaching and politics. She returned to her village post-peace process, establishing a school and actively engaging in politics. Her commitment to the community shines during natural disasters, particularly floods, where she prioritizes the

needs of women from the Chaudhary community (among the indigenous Tharu community of Nepal). Her election as Vice-Chair of Kailari Rural Municipality, Kailali district in 2022 solidified her dedication to gender-specific disaster management and household welfare during crises.



"I continued my political beliefs and activism after getting married, proving that commitment to a cause can coexist with family life."

- Ms. Bhagwati Chaudhary

Born into a Dalit family, **Ms. Raju Tiruwa** initiated her political journey through women's groups and awareness programs on women's rights. Her resolute dedication to gender issues propelled her to the



role of Deputy Mayor of Bhajani Municipality, Kailali district where she effectively manages disaster relief efforts. During a flood in 2023, her municipality not only provided relief but also prioritized the unique needs of women, including pregnant and menstruating women, under her leadership.

Ms. Pima Kumari Woli Khadka embarked on her social service journey via health education, establishing a women's savings and cooperative organization. During the COVID-19 pandemic, her organization offered crucial services to virus-affected patients, reflecting her commitment to community well-being. As Vice-Chair of Dangisaran Rural Municipality, Dang district, she champions women's rights and actively supports disaster management and humanitarian relief, with a specific focus on women's needs during crises.



Ms. Sarada Kumari Chaudhary's early involvement in women's groups and her role as a facilitator in adult education laid the foundation for her political career. As Vice-Chair of Gadawa Rural Municipality, Dang district, she efficiently manages the judicial committee, resolving cases related to domestic violence and disputes. Her leadership prioritizes disaster management and humanitarian relief, with Sarada's unwavering commitment to addressing women's specific needs during crises.



Shri Dhanpati Devi Yadav's life experiences, including early marriage and domestic violence, fueled her dedication to women's rights. Following a divorce, she worked as a health worker, established savings and cooperative organizations, and became a paralegal



to support women victims of violence. Elected as Vice-Chair of Rajpur Rural Municipality, Dang district for the second time, she addresses domestic violence cases and actively participates in disaster management, giving prominence to women's needs in her municipality.

"I divorced my husband at the age of 24 and went to my parent's home, studied and worked as a self-employed worker, showing that it's never too late to pursue education and independence."

- Shri Dhanpati Devi Yadav

These women, hailing from diverse backgrounds and experiences, have defied societal norms and emerged as influential leaders in Nepal's local governance. Their unwavering commitment, varied experiences, and dynamic leadership have not only advanced gender-sensitive disaster management and humanitarian relief but have also significantly contributed to women's empowerment at the grassroots level. Their stories stand as an inspiration, showcasing the transformative power of determined individuals in fostering inclusive and resilient communities. These women are guiding lights for the SNEHA project and the women leaders involved in it, exemplifying that women can shatter barriers and lead the way towards a more equitable and disaster-resilient future.

"I succeeded entering politics, despite traditional norms that kept women inside the house, showing that determination and supportive families can break down barriers."



- Ms. Priyanka Kumari Singh, Vice-chair, Sumarimai Rural Municipality, Rupandehi District
