



Overcoming Hardships: From Community Leaders to Champions of Change during Humanitarian Crisis

In diverse corners of Nepal, fifteen groups of extraordinary women leaders were selected by Women's Rehabilitation Centre (WOREC) 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 leaders were selected from seven districts, each with a distinctive journey marked by resilience and unwavering dedication to advancing women's rights in their communities. This case study was conducted by Centre for Women's Awareness and Development (CWAD) to highlight and document six of the organizations' learnings from the various interventions by WOREC, including a 7-day Feminist Mentoring Training (FMT), a self-care session, intergenerational dialogues, and many more. These women have not only surmounted personal challenges but evolved into catalysts for positive transformation.

Kalsi Chaudhary, the 35-year-old secretary of Kailari Rural Municipality's Women-Led Organization (WLO), embodies empowerment and resilience. Her journey began with training in leadership development, legal awareness, and climate change. Kalsi initiated Chaudhary women's groups and Dalit women's groups, fostering women's empowerment through cooperative societies, savings, credit initiatives, and small businesses. She also emerged as a leader in disaster management and risk reduction, guiding women's groups during

floods, fires, and hurricanes, providing vital social services. Her commitment led her to join the Women's Human Rights Defenders Network, where she conducts awareness programs on violence against women. The FMT enhanced her skills and knowledge in feminist principles, women's rights, and addressing women's specific needs during disasters.

"By uniting, learning, and advocating, we can make a difference, ensuring that no woman faces violence and thrives with her rights protected."
 - Kalsi Chaudhary

Bhagwati Thapa, president of Bhimdatta Municipality's WLO, embarked on her journey in 1998 advocating for women's participation and equality. Extensive training in gender equality, inclusiveness, women's rights, and violence against women transformed her into an advocate and trainer. She actively engaged in disaster management and risk reduction programs, enhancing her knowledge through Needs Nepal, a national NGO. After completing the FMT, she amplified her efforts, lobbying for women's representation in disaster



management committees and organizing humanitarian crisis and risk reduction training.

Dhansara Chand, from Dodhara Chandni municipality's WLO, initiated her journey as a volunteer women's health worker in 1995. She served in women's reproductive health, safe abortion, infant health, and vaccination services. Concurrently, she became a Red Cross committee member, actively participating in humanitarian crises and relief distribution. Her efforts extended to income generation programs and awareness campaigns for gender equality and women's rights, supported by the municipality. After the FMT, she aims to coordinate with the municipality and the Red Cross to ensure women's well-being during crises.

"I've dedicated my life to understand that, through education, collaboration, and activism, we can ensure that no woman is left behind."
- Dhansara Chand

Nirma Chaudhary

assumed the presidency of Tulsipur Sub-Metropolitan City's (TSuMC) WLO in 2007. Her organization's focus on capacity building, awareness, and advocacy for women's rights led to opportunities for collaboration with community members and the municipality. Elected as a ward member of TSuMC ward 4 in 2017, Nirma played a pivotal role in securing budgets for women's capacity building and income generation programs. She actively participated in relief distribution during flood seasons. Nirma's feminist training heightened her awareness of women's specific needs during humanitarian crises, reinforcing her commitment to address them.



From Tikapur Municipality's WLO, **Asha Kumari Chaudhary's** journey began with capacity-building and women's rights training by WOREC while she was still in school. Despite enduring the trauma of losing family members during the Maoist conflict, she found solace and healing through mental health counseling programs. She excelled in self-defense, employment-related training, and legal rights. Completing her

education up to the 12th grade, she actively participated in distributing relief in flood-prone Wards. Asha now aims to ensure relief packages consider women's specific needs during future distributions.

"After suffering from mental stress and trauma due to the Maoist conflict, a mental health counseling training helped recover, showing that resilience is possible even after severe challenges."
- Asha Kumari Chaudhary

Dangisaran Rural Municipality's WLO's president, **Bodhani Chaudhary's** life took a challenging turn when she became a victim of domestic violence after an early marriage at 18. However, her resilience shone through as she assumed the presidency of a women's group in 2007, launching a campaign against violence and conducting awareness programs on women's rights. Her journey led to a joint organization with WOREC, focusing on income generation and training programs for women's economic empowerment. After the FMT, Bodhani plans to coordinate with the municipality for relief distribution during humanitarian crises, prioritizing women's specific needs.

"From a place of personal struggle, I found my strength and purpose. It's not just about survival; it's about thriving with women's leadership."
- Bodhani Chaudhary

These remarkable women leaders have transcended personal hardships, armed themselves with knowledge, and embraced their roles as champions of women's rights in their communities. Their dedication, resilience, and commitment to addressing women's specific needs during disasters and humanitarian crises serve as beacons of hope and empowerment for women everywhere. Their stories illustrate the transformative power of determined individuals in fostering inclusive and resilient communities. These women are guiding lights, exemplifying that women can shatter barriers and lead the way toward a more equitable and disaster-resilient future. The SNEHA project is honored to be working with them.