

Profile Story: Budhi Kami, Bajura, Poultry Farming

Poultry-farming has become a vital source of income to support



My husband's family served as bonded labourers for three generations to repay their loan. It started with my husband's grandfather and ended with my husband. My husband had to work rigorously every day for little or no payment. At times, he had to carry out heavy-duty tasks without any rest, such as ploughing the master's land. The actual value of their work was much higher than the debt owed. However, they continued to struggle financially to survive. After being freed, we were no longer dependent on the former master.

While my husband went to work, I did the household chores and took care of the children. I also looked after the chickens while my mother-in-law recorded the income and expenses from poultry farming. At that time, we used traditional poultry rearing methods. The chickens grazed in the backyard without fences. This style of farming helped the chicks to grow faster and healthier. However, my neighbours always complained about how our chickens were destroying their farms and gardens.

I knew that poultry farming could be a profitable business. Local chicken eggs and meat are tasty and nutritious, thus are high in demand. It is also less prone to diseases and sold at higher prices. This is why I had always wanted to learn commercial poultry rearing techniques. Luckily, I got the opportunity to participate in the poultry training organized by the International Labour Organization (ILO). It would not have been possible without the support of my husband. He believed that enhancing our skills in poultry farming would improve our livelihood and ensure our independence. Because of our caste, we seldom receive opportunities to learn and advance in life. To him, it was a perfect opportunity for me to prove myself.



My knowledge about poultry was limited to domestic farming, using traditional techniques. However, during the training, I acquired techniques to improve the way we were working. It has been a year since I participated in the training program. I received 15 chicks after the training. I could sell most of them and reinvested the income to buy 40 chicks. I sold the half and kept the rest. As instructed by the trainer, I have raised the remaining chicks in a

large coop within a fenced area. I feed them timely and clean their coop regularly. Since the chickens are vulnerable to different diseases and flu, they have to be vaccinated. The trainer taught us how and when to vaccinate the chickens. I managed to keep all the chickens that I have raised after the training healthy.

So far, I have invested \$500 in the poultry-farming business and made a \$250 profit. I sell chicken meat and eggs to the villagers and in the nearby market. The demand for my chickens is high. Therefore, I am planning to develop the business by adding 200 chicks to my farm. Our income will be sufficient to support the investment. Fortunately, I will not have to take out any loans! Poultry-farming has become a vital source of income to support my family.

Profile Story: Chandra Lohar, Kanchanpur, Motorbike repairing

Embracing livelihood opportunities!



I always wanted to pursue a career in a technical field. However, due to my low grades at school, I gave up on my dream of becoming an engineer. I felt that there were very few opportunities for unskilled and uneducated people in Nepal. Therefore, I decided to go to work in India. There I worked in a hotel for two months. It was during this time that my uncle informed me about a motorbike repairing training opportunity in Nepal and encouraged me to participate. After all, motorbike repairing also includes engineering techniques. It was my dream coming true, but in a different way.

It was a new world to me, I had never ridden motorbikes before, only bicycles. During the training, I learnt how to ride a motorbike, I learnt its technical parts and how it operates. The training lasted six months. First, I took a 52-day long motorbike repairing training organized by the Rastriya Haliya Mukthi Samaj (RHMSU), in cooperation with the International Labour Organization (ILO). We learnt how to build, repair and ensure maintenance of a motorbike. The training was free and the organization supplied all of the necessary training accessories during the training program. At the end, we received a certificate.

After the training, I worked at a motorbike workshop for five months. My salary was \$34, which was not enough to cover my rent, food and other personal expenses. I was discouraged by the pay scale so did not stay there for long.



Then the pandemic started in Nepal. The government imposed a nationwide lockdown to curtail the transmission of the COVID-19 virus. During the initial phase of the lockdown, I seldom worked. Then I worked as daily wage labourer but deep inside, I was not happy with this job. So I decided to join another motorbike repair workshop. It has been five months since I started the new job. In addition to the salary, the owner provides accommodation and meals. Every month I remit the earnings home to support household expenses and pay the loan interest.

Now I am satisfied with my work, but I am eager to learn more. Hence, I am planning to take the level 2 training to understand the different functions of motorbike engines. This way, I will be able to obtain a higher position and income and to open my own motorbike workshop. I am glad that I decided to take this training. I have prospects for the future and I can remain working in my country.

Profile Story: Dhan Singh Kami, Bajur, Mason

Training for income enhancement!!



Living in dire poverty, I struggled to get even one meal a day. Sadly, to pay off my debt at an exorbitant interest rate, I was trapped as a bonded labourer for six years. Despite the hard work, the owner paid me in-kind and not in cash. I cannot express the depth of pain that I endured during this time.

In 2008, the Government of Nepal introduced the Freed Haliya Rehabilitation Program to abolish the Haliya system of bonded labour and cancel all debts. This brought a ray of hope to many Haliyas. Under this program, we received a compensation amount of \$2,735 to build a house. After being freed, I decided to participate in the 52 days masonry training program in the village.

During the training, I learnt about the design and planning aspects for building a house. This included knowing the right location, construction materials and their usage while building the house. Further, the trainer explained to us about different construction tools and how to use them. The training was very informative and useful. Over time, I have gained experience in masonry. To date, I have built five houses. Today, I can proudly say that I am a perfect mason.

Working as a labourer, I made very little income. However, as a mason, it is different. My payment depends on the number of construction contracts. During the peak of the COVID-19 crisis, I had difficulty finding new contracts. We had a nationwide lockdown that restricted the



movement of people between the villages. Also, people were cautious and limited interaction with workers. I am hopeful that things will be better, and I will be able to work again as usual.

I am satisfied with my work. I believe that if you are skilled, you can succeed in your home country. Also, I can transfer my skills to my children and my friends. In the future, I want to enhance my carpentry skills and undertake carpentry training to work both as a mason and carpenter. Working as both a mason and a carpenter will help increase my earnings and living condition.

Rejoicing the tailoring profession



My name is Dhanasa, I am 30 years old and this is my tailoring shop. Tailoring was never our family business. I am a business pioneer, proud of my profession.

My Background

My family are Bishowkarmas, who are usually known for making utensils. However, my parents and in-laws were both employed as bonded labourers. They had to plough the field, plant seeds, harvest and store products for the landowner in exchange for a few food grains.

My husband only attended primary school: he had to quit school to work in the fields as well. Since the income from farming was not sufficient, we would often go to bed hungry. My husband travelled to India in the hope of finding better employment. After he left, I had to take responsibility for the family. I had to take care of the buffalo, collect grasses and work on the field. I worked in the neighbour's fields as daily wage labour. The earning was not enough. Some people paid me cash while others gave me millet grains for my hardship. It was not easy to find a job in the city areas.

My journey to the training

My father-in-law encouraged me to enroll in the tailoring training to become self-reliant, and my husband was also supportive. Initially, I doubted my ability to finish and pass the training. However, once I used the sewing machine and experienced my own abilities, I knew that I could do it.

When I completed level 1 and level 2 training, I opened a tailoring shop. It would not have been possible without the support of my husband, as he invested his savings and took a loan from the villagers so that we could open the shop.

The training has enhanced my measurement and writing skills, which I'm using every day at my shop. Now, I know how to use a measuring tape, identify the units and use the calculator for conversions and keep records of payments. I take the measurements of the clients and draft them on brown paper, then I cut and sew the material. So far, my customers are content with my work. I sew maxi dresses, shirts, blouses, underskirts, long tops, trousers and also sell ready-made garments.



Building confidence

The training has been the best decision of my life. It has made me confident and independent. Before, I had to rely on other people for work. Today, I own my own tailoring shop. It is a respectful profession and my friends and neighbours' appreciate my work. I am also respected and recognized in my community. Many people come to visit my shop, especially women. My customer network has also reached the neighbouring villages.

This profession has also helped me grow both emotionally and financially. The income is enough to support my children's education, cover any household expenses and pay the interest of the loan amount. Additionally, I manage to save a small amount of my earnings. Every month I deposit the savings in the local women's cooperative. In future, I want to expand the tailoring shop and add more items.

I am proud to be a female tailor. Previously, only men were employed in the tailoring business. Women were marginalized and forced to stay at home to do household chores. However, things are different now. Women are also gaining equal opportunities as men.

My work has become an inspiration for other women in the village who asked me to train them. At present, I am training a girl. If these women also receive the training, they will become independent and confident like me.

Profile story: Kiran Lawad, Kanchanpur, Beautician

The beauty of happiness!



Kiran Lawad's parents worked as bonded labourers in Nepal. Thanks to a professional training, she fulfilled her childhood dream and learnt the skills to become a beautician. Now she goes to college in the morning, attends a beauty parlour training at a private institute and works for a beauty parlour simultaneously. In the future, Kiran hopes to run her own beauty parlour.

I live in Satyawati village of Bhimdatta Municipality, Kanchanpur of Sudurpackhim Province. My father worked as a bonded labourer and my mother assisted him. After paying off his debt, my father was a free man. He worked hard to support the family and send me and my siblings to school. Without their support and dedication, it would have been impossible for me to succeed.

Since I was a child, I have always been interested in make-up and hairdressing. I was highly impressed by the charisma of those women with beautiful dresses and subtle make-up. I always dreamt of becoming like them and wondered about those who helped them look like this.. Being curious and determined, I started learning basic skills, such as threading, hairdo, facial, waxing and oil massage. I practised at home with my mother and aunt, and in the neighbourhood. Everyone appreciated my work and encouraged me to continue. However, to become a certified beautician and open a salon, I needed to undertake a professional training.

Fortunately, I got the opportunity to participate in the beauty parlour training organized by the Rashtriya Haliya Mukti Samaj (RHMS) in cooperation with the International Labour

Organization (ILO). We were 25 women to receive the six week basic training. I learnt different techniques such as threading, facial cleansing, manicures and pedicures.



Three years later, I was selected to follow the two month advanced training. Only ten of us got selected! I learned additional skills including bridal beautifying, hair -styling, colouring and highlighting techniques.

After the training, I started working in a beauty salon while continuing going to college. I provide beautician services at the salon and directly, at my place or in my clients' home. I manage cream, lipsticks and make up items when I'm going to a customer's home and charge a fee from them accordingly.

During the wedding season, I enjoy beautifying brides. For me, this is a very proud moment. This is also profitable: I charge each bride \$50. I already prepared two brides. They appreciated my work so I start getting more clients in the village.

On average, I make \$75 a month but it can rise up to \$125 during the wedding season. I also learnt during the training to keep records of my income and expenses. This year my net income was \$840. I could spent money for my college uniform, my food and to repair my bicycle. I could also buy medicines, a saree for my mother and a few clothes for myself. Now that I am independent, I pay my tuition fees and other college expenses. My mother thinks that I am a responsible daughter. She always tells me how proud she feels to watch me study and work at the same time. Her affection and support have always encouraged me to pursue more. Usually, girls at my age are married and have children. But I decided to focus on my education and career first, with my parents support. I am hopeful that my example will encourage many young girls to become vocal and courageous.

Profile Story: Mayaram Chaudhary, Kanchanpur, Plumber

Road to happiness!



I am a happy man with a sound job and a supporting family. I never thought that I would ever experience this moment.

It has been long since my father passed away. He used to work as a bonded labourer. While doing so, he had to plough the fields, plant grains, vegetables and work for long hours. He was only paid in-kind, seldom receiving payments in cash. Despite the hardship and the overtime, my father never complained. His life was wasted serving others as bonded labourer.

When my father passed away, my brother decided to go his own way, so I had to return home from India, where I was working in India as a messenger at a company. Since I did not have any skills, it was hard for me to find job in Nepal. One day, I came across the information about the training on plumbing. I decided to join the training to learn something new in hope of a better livelihood.

I learnt different kinds of plumbing during the training. Now I know how to install and repair the pipelines anywhere in a house.

After finishing the training, two years ago, I started working as a plumber: I stayed one year with my boss, but he was keeping most of my earnings so I decided to quit. I worked a few months as an independent plumber but I realized it would be difficult to grow on my own. So



I decided to work with a friend. We shared the tasks between us and used the plumbing materials from his shop.

In two years, I have earned \$3,375 from plumbing and it has been one year and a half that I started saving money. Every month I save \$42 in the local cooperative. It has helped me significantly. I use this saving to support the household and my personal expenses. I was able to buy a

home, a motorcycle and pay the school admission fees for my daughters.

This training has been a blessing. Without this training, I would not be a successful person. Before, I was only working in the fields as a labourer. The earnings were not enough to support my family. After the training, I have become independent and buoyant. I will continue working in this profession and when possible, I will expand this business. In the future, I would like to open a hardware shop and employ people. But for this, I know I need to continue learning as technologies keep changing.

Walking down the road to success!



Every time I hear my parents' story, it gives me the chills. They were bonded labourers. They would plough the land for several hours under scorching heat, without proper rest and with only one meal a day, of either corn or millet. Sometimes my father would faint but he had to continue working, irrespective of his health condition. They worked overtime, but nobody kept a record of their working hours. The owner would pay them whatever he liked, either in cash or in-kind. My parents were poor, landless and without skills so they had no alternative. So they parents never dared to speak out against this treatment. Thankfully, things have changed now. It has now been several years since they have been living in freedom.

Since childhood, I have been fascinated with mobile phones. I used to spend hours watching my cousin repair watches, mobile phones and radios. Out of curiosity, I often would take mobile phones apart to try and understand how they were built. After finishing high school, I went to India to find a job. Although the pay was better than in Nepal, there was no potential for growth.

As I was home for holidays, I found out about the mobile repairing training program and I immediately registered. After passing the Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training (CTEVT) exam at the end of the training, I received a certificate. With the certificate, I feel more confident and people trust my skills and ability. This is why I decided to stay in Nepal and open a mobile repairing shop.



I took a loan out of \$4,170 to start the business. It has been two years since I opened the shop. My parents are proud and encourage me to stay focused and determined. At my shop, people can buy, repair, and exchange mobile phones. I also sell electric goods and provide photocopy services.

My monthly income is between \$125-\$210. I could earn more if only there was no power cut, but this is sufficient to sustain my family. Before, nobody knew me, and now, everybody in the village recognizes me and acknowledges my abilities. I feel respected and honoured. All of this has only been possible because I took the training. Without the training, it would have been hard for people to trust me. I am glad that I decided to take the training.

Profile Story: Pushpa Lohar, Kanchanpur, House painter

Breaking the social taboo!



I never imagined that I would one day become a house painter. When the Rastriya Haliya Mukthi Samaj organized the training on house painting for freed bonded labourers, the women in the village were excited to participate. Almost all of us were unemployed or working as daily wage labourers, working hard to break stones into fine pebbles. But today my life is amazing, I am the contractor, hiring others to work for me! This training turned out to be the gateway to live a dignified life.

During the 52 days of training, I learnt how to paint houses. All of the participants that completed the training are currently employed. After the training, I recruited some of the other female participants from the training and created a house painting business. I handle all the painting contracts personally.

While working as a daily wage labourer, I had to do whatever my manager asked me to do without complaining and for little pay. In comparison, I treat my employees with respect and care. They receive a decent pay, \$6.70 a day. The contract amount itself depends on the size of the building. To date I have painted five houses and I have received positive feedback from my clients about my work.

My living condition has definitely improved. Before the training, I had taken a loan of \$838 to buy a piece of land. Shortly after the training I managed to clear my debt using the income I



had earned from house painting: Now, I am debt-free! In addition, I can now afford to send my daughter to a private school and can I can still save \$14 every month.

Since I have started working as a painter, I no longer have to ask my husband for money for household expenses. He supports my decision, encourages my work and also helps with the household chores while I am at work. I am blessed to have such a wonderful husband. If I continue to receive contracts, I want to open a paint shop with my husband to increase our income.

Beyond my personal situation, this training also contributed to change things in our community. Before, only men would undertake construction and house painting jobs, while women were limited to household chores. As a consequence, people would view house painting as a man's job. However, after the training, we have been able to overcome this stereotype to a certain extent. After seeing our working style and dedication, the villagers believe in our ability as women to paint houses. We have also become a source of encouragement for other women in the village. Seeing myself as a role model to other women makes me proud and happy.