

Women and Development

Progress Report

December 2011

DEAR SUPPORTER,

Namaste! Greetings from Nepal!

First, I would like to thank you for your tremendous support which has been of great help in building better lives for the poor Badi and Freed-Kamaiya communities.

Badi people are considered as an 'untouchable' caste by the other caste groups in the Hindu caste hierarchy system. They are discriminated against because many of them became involved in the sex trade because of their poverty.

The Freed-Kamaiya people are former bonded-labourers. They worked for generations to pay the debts that they owed to their feudal landlords. They were freed by the government in July 2000.

This year we were able to get identity cards for 725 Badi people. After a series of rallies and protests the government finally gave these poor Badi people identity cards which will help them to avail of support from the government. The government has promised more than 6,000 Badi people that they will construct houses and provide cultivable lands for them. The identity cards will help the Badi people to avail of all these facilities from the government. The rest of the Badi people are in the process of receiving the Badi identity card.

We also worked with the Freed-Kamaiya children to make education free for them. We helped the children to prepare a memorandum to be submitted to the

Ministry of Education office demanding free education for Freed-Kamaiya children. As a result, the education ministry conducted meetings with the various school management committees and identified 6 schools for providing free education for Freed-Kamaiya children up to class 12. Also, the Freed-Kamaiya children filed a petition with the Ministry of Education requesting them to release adequate funds for the scholarships that it promised for all Freed-Kamaiya students.

Community Support Group (CSG) and Radha Krishna Tharu Janasewa Kendra

(RKJS) are our two local partners with whom we work to help the poor Badi and Freed-Kamaiya communities.

I hope you will enjoy reading more about our work and the success stories in this report that will help you to understand how your support has helped to make our people happier.

Yours sincerely,



Ms Archana Sharma
Fundraising and Sponsorship Manger
ActionAid Nepal



"Five years ago I migrated to India along with my family in search of work, and for five long years I did not go to school. I am so grateful to ActionAid who helped me to rejoin school after I came back. I am also involved in a children's group and I am very happy to be with my friends in that group and talk about developing our community through education," says a 16 year old girl named Anita Nepali - (at the back in the red t-shirt) with her friends from the children's group.

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Pawan makes the Badi community proud

"It is the CSG hostel for Badi children that provided me with the opportunity to prove that it is not only children from affluent families who can study well, but also children from poor families can study well," says 15 year old Pawan Nepali with his head held high when he topped class 8's final examination.

Pawan is staying in the hostel established for poor Badi children to keep them safe from the sex trade and to provide them with the opportunity to study.

Pawan adds: "Although I was safe in the hostel and getting basic education for free, I always worried

that one day my father would not be able to pay my school fees and I would not be able to stay in school. If it wasn't for the free education scheme brought with the help of ActionAid, I would have dropped out of school and I would have never had the opportunity to prove my talent."

Pawan's father Pancha Badi was working as a tailor and also as a night watchman but he was still struggling to pay the school expenses. Now, he is very happy as he has been relieved of the financial burden of educating his three children. He says: "I am very happy with my son's progress. He has made me proud."

Pawan adds: "ActionAid also taught me to work in a group with other children. I am currently a member of a children's group named *Pragatishil Child Club*. I actively participate in various activities conducted by our group and help the communities to learn about the importance of

education, sanitation and children's rights. I feel proud to be associated with ActionAid. Thank you ActionAid for creating such a wonderful learning environment for us."

The school principal, Mr Chandra Ram Chaudhary, couldn't say enough good words about Pawan: "He is a very disciplined and hard working student. I wish him success all his life."



Pawan with his mother, sister, grandfather and father

Happy to go to school, even at the age of 30

"I feel that education is so important. I am very happy to go to school again. With my education I am planning to find a good job or become self employed, but I will not do manual labour again and restrain my abilities to excel in life," says 30 year old Jay Bahadur Tharu.

These days Jay is busy learning new things with his teachers and friends. He is happy to learn new things and also to share his knowledge with all of his friends. It is a daily scene now in the morning in Machhagadh village to see Jay and his friends heading towards the school on their bicycles.

Jay is going to school now in class 11. Jay says: "After 14 years, I am going back to school. My life in search of good work never ended. I travelled to India so many times but I never got a



Jay prepares to go home after school

good job. While I was in my village, I attended the daily meetings where people talked about the importance of education. I really felt that my education was just not good enough to get me a good job. I then approached RKJS and I was so happy to have

received their support in joining class 11. I feel that I have started a new path which will lead to my brighter future.” To further encourage and support Jay in his studies ActionAid provided him with a school uniform and enough books for a year’s study.

Jay adds further: “Although my friends are much younger than me, I am not uncomfortable to go to school with them. Instead, I feel proud to have done something that can be taken as an example in my village. Thank you ActionAid for all your kind support.”

My children will continue with their higher education

“I have a daughter studying in class 12, a son in class 10 and another daughter in class 8.” There was a glow and a smile on Manpati’s face when she was sharing this with us.

Manpati recalls her past: “I had never even dreamt that I would be able to educate all my children to this level. When I used to see other people’s children going to school, I used to wonder how it would feel to see all my children going to school.” She adds: “Now it seems like I am dreaming and all my sad days are gone when I see my lovely children holding books in their hands and going to school.”

Manpati continues: “I used to participate in the meetings organised by ActionAid where I learned so many things about our rights to a livelihood, women’s rights, the right to education and many others. In the meetings every day, I realised that it was our lack of education that led our ancestors to become bonded labourers, and remained so for generations. This realisation gave me the determination to give all my children higher education.”

Manpati adds: “For higher education I needed more money. So, I thought of starting pig rearing and vegetable farming businesses. I shared this plan with ActionAid and I was provided with a loan of NRs 5000 (€50). I started both the businesses together and



Manpati’s smile says it all – Happy Manpati with her three children

within a year, I started earning money. I have repaid the loan and now I am earning NRs 5000 (€50) a month by selling piglets and vegetables.”

With the help of ActionAid, Manpati and her friends from her village have started an agricultural cooperative society. The cooperative society helps farmers to organise their produce for selling. It also provides loans to people who want to be farmers. Manpati and her friends have also opened up a savings and credit group to create a

support system within the group. She is the president of this group.

Manpati’s final words were: “ActionAid has provided lots of opportunities for me, my children and our community. I have travelled a long way from being a housewife to being president of the savings group. I don’t struggle any more to buy school uniforms and stationery for all my children. I feel that I am able to secure their bright future. My heartfelt thanks to ActionAid for all their kind support.”

How your money has been spent

- We have conducted a school enrolment campaign which has helped 631 Badi and Freed-Kamaiya children to be admitted to various schools.
- After lobbying the government, the District Public Health office conducted a free health camp for the Badi people of *Jamunaghari* village. 15 Badi children and 20 Badi women received a free health check up. They also received free medicine and received a two hour information session on HIV/AIDS.
- An orientation on the legal provisions on domestic violence against women was provided to 61 Badi women and 328 Freed-Kamaiya women. The women have begun to file cases relating to domestic violence incidents and their pleas have been dealt with justice. Recently, a woman filed a case against her husband for neglecting her after their marriage and the

woman was able to receive NRs 30,000 (€300) as compensation.

- Lobbying with the District Development Office helped to release a grant of NRs 210,000 (€2,100) for the scholarships of 42 Badi children. Similarly, a grant of NRs 250,000 was received recently which is to be invested in providing

vocational training to Badi women.

- We were able to remove the age limit of '60' for the widows to claim the widow's allowance from the government. Various rallies and protests were conducted to pressurise the government to follow the verdict given by the Supreme Court to remove the age limit.



Children getting ready for the rally to demand free education for Badi children



Women protesting in front of the District Administration Office demanding that they abide by the verdict of the court to remove the age limit to receive the widows allowance

Future plans

- Pressurise the government to provide free education up to higher secondary level (till class 12) that is promised for Badi children by lobbying at ministry level.
- We will work to develop the management skills of the cooperative society to enable the

people of the community to run the cooperative on their own, making them independent.

- Work more with women to involve them in income-earning activities like vegetable farming, cattle rearing, running small teashops etc. to help them improve their status in society.
- We will work to engage the government with the programmes that we have initiated in the various communities. In this way, we will be able to link our programmes with the government giving those programmes better sustainability.