



IMPACT STORY

It takes time to become successful but if you try, you definitely will one day

Chini Maya Negi from Manikhel, Mahankal Rural Municipality in the Lalitpur District, Nepal, is 45 years old and used to be a dedicated housewife. She struggled through the worst economic state of her family, caring for a paralyzed brother in law and a husband doing nothing. The family was facing difficulty in running the day to day life and deep down in loan. The insurgency of 1996 brought additional difficulties to her family. Due to this, her husband Buddha Bahadur Negi left for Saudi Arabia for employment. Chini Maya's challenges did not end here. After a few months her husband fell ill and came back; then the family was left again with very limited income.

Today Chini Maya walks a different path, treading down the hard path full of challenges; she has established herself as a role model in her community. Currently, she and her husband run an oil factory and a paper production company. In parallel, they run two minor companies: On the waste of the oil company they grow mushrooms and in a greenhouse made out of plastic a variety of herbs.

Chini Maya's new life

In 1995, Chini Maya initiated a savings group with women neighbors under her own leadership. The group of 28 women started to save small amounts of money monthly, which after a while allowed them to buy essential goods and help each other. Coming together as a group also strengthened them to take action against prejudices in a male-dominated society. Saving money has turned out to be a winning choice. The savings group still running even after 24 long years with Chini Maya as its chairperson. The group also started to work against

gender-based violence, taking action against the perpetrators. She even provided space to the victimized women in her home even while she herself was in a difficult time.

People called for her help if any men misbehaved with the wife. With her group, she provided a solution. She has a leadership attitude and speaks against injustice in society since I know her. The family members and society used to talk behind our backs. However, I was always with her because I know she was not doing anything wrong. After I came back to Nepal we decided to work here in Nepal, we support each other then and now, and we are here now - Buddha Bahadur Negi (Husband of Chini Maya Negi).

In 2019, Chini Maya participated in a training on enterprise and business management as part of the project “Strengthening the Capacity of the Energy Sector to Deliver Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Results”. During the training she learnt more about the positive aspects of registering the paper production company to her name instead of her husband’s. Once finished the training, she acquired a Permanent Account Number (unique identification number issued to all taxpayers) and in coordination with the EUCCommunity Rural Electric Entity (CREE) in her community, she obtained a grid connection for her two major enterprises.

Alongside the new opportunities and the acquired skills, Chini Maya said that the training has helped build her confidence to scale up her business. She however, feels that she needs to learn more aspects of running a business, particularly about accounting systems, maintaining and checking the quality of her products, how to tap into new markets, how to access loans and deal with difficulties in the loan acquisition process, and how to deal with brokers killing the market.

Future plans

With the support of the trainers and mentors of the project, she now has access to electricity and a loan at a reasonable interest rate. Chini Maya plans to buy necessary machineries for processing and improving the quality of her oil and increase the paper production. This step forward will enable her to create new job opportunities in her community. Around 90 women and 10 men are already involved in the collection of the herbs and she plans to engage more employees within her paper company. She is interested in adopting efficient energy systems in this business as well to access new market opportunities.

Social Perspectives

Chini Maya has become a true inspiration to other women in her community. Nowadays, people come to her to ask for advice. She says that women are left behind because of their own poor mentality. They fear about what the community, family and neighbors say-worrying for nothing. However, changes are taking place at a slow pace. *“While I visit women’s groups, I find women talking about business and career. Before they just used to talk about other people. It takes time to become successful but if you try you definitely will one day”* said Chini Maya.