

Stories from Our Beneficiaries during Different Stages of Sow against Covid-19 Response and Recovery project 2021-2022

1. Krishna Kumari Bhan

70 years old Krishna Kumari Bhan lives with alone in Bhandari tole, Okhareni of Barhabishe Municipality. She has a son, who lives far from house to earn. She is old and do not have much of the fertile land to grow crops and earn. She works on her fields despite her old age and the produce is sometimes not enough for a year. She basically is a farmer and always have been, she also has 5 goats of her own.



When Krishna Kumari Bhan heard of our project about livelihood sustainment and agricultural empowerment, she voluntarily came to our staffs to put her name on the list. When our staffs told her about the age and questioned if she could do the hard work now, she said, “I am certainly old, but confident that I can grow these vegetables in my kitchen garden and sell them. It will help me financially. I don’t like taking money from my son and I want to make my own money as long as I can.”

She was hopeful that this project will do well in her life and she will learn new things. She was not worried about harvesting and selling the vegetables, because she knows that VMFs will collect her produce and sell them in the market in optimum price. She was happy to receive seeds and watering cans from us and is ready to grow healthy vegetables on her yard. All she want to be is independent regardless of the age.

2. Susmita Shrestha



Susmita Shrestha is a 19 year's old married woman and a school dropout. She opted for early marriage and live in a family of 5 with her husband and in-laws. Susmita had always dreamt of an independent life, where she would earn for herself, but life took a deviation, and there she is married and managing a family.

Our project with agricultural support to the beneficiaries have raise a new hope in Susmita Shrestha. She is dreaming to become independent again. While speaking with our team she said, “After getting married I had left all the dreams behind. I wanted to study and get a job and earn, but this project will teach me to earn in my own. I will make my own money and support my family and husband. I won’t even have to worry of selling the vegetables. And the trainings I will receive will teach me more about this field. My way of reaching my dream may have changed but I am definitely going to get there.”

Susmita was meticulously listening and taking notes during the training session and was happy to receive seeds and watering can.

3. Pitamdhari Basnet

Pitamdhari Basnet is a 35 years old young man, who has completely devoted his life to agriculture. He grows seasonal vegetables and earns to provide for his family. He dropped out of the school at an early age of 14 and started to follow the path of his father, who was also a farmer. His motivation and enthusiasm towards the development of agriculture and wish to develop agriculture apart from the traditional way is amazing. He also teaches the community people on how to grow different vegetables and encourages them to grow their own vegetables and sell the extra.



Pitamdhari Basnet have been selected as one of our Village Model Farmer and is elated to be a part of this project. While exchanging a conversation with our team he said, “As I am understanding life and difficulties, I feel that I shouldn’t have left school. I would have learned more and may be would have been successful. Now as you people have arrived here with this project, I will get an opportunity to learn new things. With the tunnel you’ll be providing, all of us will be benefitted with healthy saplings of the vegetables and I will help my group of farmers as much I will be able to. We can move the mountain if we will to do so, thus if everyone will try to develop agriculture and grow their own vegetables we won’t have to buy stale vegetables in high price. We will be healthy and also earn from the excess.”

Pitamdhari Basnet will lead group 3 of farmers from Okhareni, Barhabise. He has already been provided with the tunnel construction materials.

4. Mira B.K. (Small Farmer from Group 1)

48 years old Mira B.K. is a heart patient from 11 years. She lives in Karthali Sindhupalchowk with her 4 sons and husband and is one of our beneficiaries. They have been struggling with poverty for many years now. Mira also suffers from poor mental health, and is constantly worried about how to feed and look after her family. Her husband has no work to earn, and she is also not able to carry out heavy works to earn money for the family.



“I am feeble and not able to work and earn. My husband is job less. Because of this reason, my eldest son dropped out of his school regardless of his wish to study, and now is working as a wage worker in construction sites. He wants to feed us and fulfil our needs, but it’s not enough. He sacrificed his dreams for us, and wants his brothers to study. I am depressed and also have suicidal thoughts at times. I don’t see any reason to live if I cannot give my family enough to eat and tend after them. With the seeds you gave, we were able to produce some vegetables. We sold them and earned some money. That has given me a glimpse of hope that organizations like yours are out there to help poor like us. After a long time I felt that we can also do something. I

also attended sessions of psychosocial counseling, the sisters are very nice and listened to my sufferings carefully. I'm happy that I got someone that listen to a person like me. I hope you help my family and people like us to develop a sustainable income generating environment. I wish you people could help children like my sons to study and become educated. But, thank you very much for changing our lives, even though the change is small, I can actually feel a difference.” told Mira Kumari B.K.

5. Krishna Bahadur Sunar (Small Farmer from Group 2)

65 years old Krishna Bahadur Sunar is the husband of one of our beneficiaries, Tila Kumari B.K. He lives with his wife and a granddaughter in Okhareni, Sindhupalchowk. Life has always been full of obstacles and difficulties for the B.K. family as they belong to the lower caste population group of Nepal. Besides, they struggle with poverty, and have taken land on lease to work on. They used to have a small section of land under their ownership, but it had to be sold for the treatment of Tila Kumari B.K., who is a chronic kidney patient.



While talking to one of our team, Krishna Sunar told, “We do not have any adult in the house to earn and look after us. All three of us are dependent after one another. We do not have our own land, and have rented a land to grow crops and vegetables. Anything we earn from that land has to be divided between us and the owner, which leave us with very little earning. My wife has a chronic disease. I sold all our lands, and treated her from the money we got, but I know she don't have many years to live. The land would not give us enough grains when we used to sow crops. But the seeds of radish and mustard you gave us were amazing. We had never seen such good radish and mustard green in our lives. The radish were sweet, white as snow and as long as my arms. We ate some, gifted some to our relatives and sold the remaining vegetables. That gave us quite a good earning, which will sustain us for at least 3 months. Thank you for your help. We are very happy with the produce.

We are getting old with each passing day and the energy to work is fading. I would also like to ask for some more help. It would be nice if you implement some programmes focusing on elderly people like us.”

6. Sangita Bhandari (Small Farmer from Group 3)

47 years old Sangita Bhandari is a farmer by profession. She lives with her husband in Okhareni, Sindhupalchowk and has 7 members in her family. Her family solely depends upon agriculture for living. The earning from the agricultural products and crops is barely enough for the joint family.



Furthermore, their fields were left barren during the pandemic and lockdown, as markets were shut, and they couldn't get any seeds and other products. "Last year was really hard for us. We couldn't get any seeds, manure, and fertilizers from the market. We had to leave our land barren for almost a year. We also own some cattle and sell their milk at the market, but it was also not possible during the lockdown. We were depressed, and stressed on how to continue with our daily expenses. The project has been a huge help for us during the aftermath of the pandemic. We grew vegetables and started selling them at the market, which revived our hope and energy. The produce was very good, and shopkeepers wanted our vegetables. We being a villagers there is a tradition of gifting whatever you have during festivals, and we gifted radish and mustard green. I hope you continue supporting us in upcoming years through tunnels and agricultural cooperative. I also attended the psychosocial counseling service, and it was very helpful in reducing my stress." told Sangita Bhandari.

7. Laxmi Shrestha (Small Farmer from Group 5)

Homemaker Laxmi Shrestha is the resident of Palati Sindhupalchowk, where she resides with 6 family members. Her husband is a construction worker. She works in fields and looks after her home. Previous to receiving training and agricultural support from our team, Laxmi Shrestha have faced many problems while growing vegetables. Most of the time, plant dies and she could't plant anything during winter season. Now after the first harvest of Radish and Mustard Green, Laxmi is encouraged to plant vegetables commercially.



While asking her about the experience she said, "We do not have big farming land and I used to grow little amount of vegetables for our consumption, which most of the time would not give good production. But, after the training I could grow big radish and mustard green. The vegetables were also tasty. I gifted them to our relatives too, and now they are asking me for seeds. I sold some as well and could make some money, which I have saved for now. Thank you for those

seeds, we are very happy to be a part of this project. Water is very scarce now in this area. So, I once told the sir and madam from the organization about our problem. They taught me to solve the problem of water for vegetables by making a 'plastic water pond'. I have now been using water from that pond to my other plants. The cost was covered by the income I made by selling the vegetables. Thank you for that advice also. I didn't know we can store water like that and use it later. "

8. Bunu Sharki (Small Farmer from Group 5)

Mother of four children Bunu Shari is 43 years old. She lives in Palati with her husband, father-in-law and her children. The eldest of the children is disable by birth, and cannot take care of himself. He has to be fed and looked after constantly by one of the member of the family. Her other three children are daughters and are currently studying. Her husband is a wage worker, and she looks after her goats.



Talking to our teams, she said, "We are dealing with poverty for many years. We do not have much land, and our earning do not even last for a month. My children cannot even attend good school and my old father-in-law do not get nutritious food to eat throughout the month. My eldest son is not well, and I have asked for help from many people till now. No one has helped us. I asked a renowned person of the village to try to get a scholarship for my daughter to study, but they also didn't do anything. I was hoping to sell some radish and mustard green earlier, but all of the plants were destroyed by a bull from my neighbor. We did eat some of them, but could not sell. I have stored some of the radish and mustard green for later. I wish this project will help my son and my old father. I am also hoping to produce the next batch of vegetable in good amount, sell it and make some money for my children."

9. Uma Bhandari

Resident of Barhabise-4, Okhareni, Sindhupalchowk, Uma Bhandari is a single mother taking care of her two sons and her mother-in-law. Her husband left the house 3 years ago, and is to be found nowhere. He has not contacted them since then, and the family has turned miserable. It is very difficult for them to earn their living. Uma Bhandari has to worry daily to put food on the plate of her family members.

The elder son is 16 years old and the younger is 11 years old. Both have joined a local public school and elder one is in grade 10 this year. For most of the students, getting into grade 10 is a new step towards their future. It is when children officially start planning for their pathway towards their aim. But for Uma's elder son getting into grade 10 is not as significant as for others. His young mind wander for opportunity to work and earn some money to feed his family, rather than thinking what will he study in grade 11. It's not



his will to skip education and work, but the irresponsibility of his father and misery of his mother has compelled him to do so.

The household of Uma is fairly dependent on the daily earning of her and elder son. The land they owned was mortgaged for the treatment of her husband, and they cannot use it. She has no way to clear the debt. Everything they consume has to be bought. The market price is soaring, they have no other choice than feel hopeless. She has not been able to build her house that was destroyed by earthquake in 2015. They live in a cottage made up of tin and it's the only property they own.

She decided to rent a small piece of land and grow the vegetable seeds she received from VCN in support of Sowers Action. She is diligently growing the vegetables and is hoping to sell them once they are ready to harvest.

While talking to her she said, "Your support has given me a new hope towards life and I am excited to work now. I went to the orientation you had given. Listening to the things that were said, I thought I can do this. I also heard about the market linkage and the income I might be able to generate from this opportunity. I am thinking of putting my son back to school and it will be easier for me to run my household also. I have already started harvesting the vegetables and selling them. I take them to Barhabise bazar and have sold 28.8 Kg of Radish and 26 bunches (4.5 Kg approx.) of mustard green. I have earned NPR. 1,815 from the vegetables from my first selling. I

am looking forward to earn more."

Uma is happy that now she will earn some money by herself rather than working as a labor. She wants her children to study and get a better life. May be then they will be able to build a house and live happily. For now, she is focused on growing Broad Leaves Mustard Green and Radish.

10. Devi Basnet (VMF- Group 4)

One of our VMF, Devi Basnet is a 50 year old woman residing in Palati, Sindhupalchowk. She is a farmer by profession and has been engaged in agriculture for a long time now. After her husband's accident during earthquake 2015, the responsibility of all 6 members of her family has come upon her. She is the sole bread winner for her family.

When asked about her experience through this project, she said, "I am delighted to be selected as a VMF. After my husband's accident, he has not been able to work and earn. He was hit by two big stones during the quake. I have received the seeds and had planted them. The growing vegetables were destroyed by the rain. We needed to sow them again. So, they are still growing. It will take some time for me to harvest them. Farming is our traditional occupation, but I could learn the modern ways of farming from your training. I believe that agriculture can upgrade our economic status, and I want to thank you for helping us do that."



She has been provided with the nursery tunnel to grow saplings of vegetables for the next phase of the project. She was happy to be chosen as a VMF and is committed to fulfil the role of leading the farmers of her group.

11. Vagwati Sarki

Resident of Barhabise-4, Sano Palati, Sindhupalchowk, Vagwati Sarki, a 63 year old women is living alone in her parents' home after her husband left her. She has to work herself for living. Her financial condition is weak. She earn her living by livestock rearing and farming. The produce last season was only two baskets of maize. It's all she has this year. She is not able to meet her own demand of enough food and clothing.

Vagwati Sarki Said "I am living alone and there are not any other members who can contribute financially. My husband left me and now I am living in my parents' house. I depend on myself for earning. In case if I am sick, there will be no food on my plate. I have to work hard for food. My financial condition is weak. I rarely afford eating meat once in two months. I have a small plot of field, where I produce some grains, but this year all I could harvest was two baskets of maize. You can imagine, what might have been my condition. I cannot work as labor anymore, as I am becoming old.



Because of low grain produce this year, I decided to get involved into your program of vegetable farming. I got seeds and watering cans from the training program. I learned how to properly sow the seeds and take care of them. They have grown better now. And they will be ready to harvest in few weeks of time. I am hoping to earn some money and save it for my expenses. I will be able to have nutritious food during this winter and probably will buy a warm cloth for this season of cold. There are many people like me needing help. However, I am happy that I got to take part in this program."

Vagwati Sarki is working to reduce the pain of low production of maize and increase her income through vegetable farming.

12. Pitamdhari Basnet (VMF- Group 3)

Pitamdhari Basnet is a 35 years old young man, who has completely devoted his life to agriculture. He grows seasonal vegetables and earns to provide for his family. He dropped out of the school at an early age of 14 and started to follow the path of his father, who was also a farmer. His motivation and enthusiasm towards the development of agriculture and wish to develop agriculture apart from the traditional way is amazing. He also teaches the community people on how to grow different vegetables and encourages them to grow their own vegetables and sell the extra.

Pitamdhari Basnet is one of our Village Model Farmer and is elated to be a part of this project. While exchanging a conversation with our team he said, “As I am understanding life and difficulties, I feel that I shouldn’t have left school. I would have learned more and may be would have been successful. Now as you people have arrived here with this project, I will get an opportunity to learn new things. With the tunnel you have provided, all of us will be benefitted with healthy saplings of the vegetables and I will help my group of farmers as much I will be able to. We can move the mountain if we will to do so, thus if everyone will try to develop agriculture and grow their own vegetables we won’t have to buy stale vegetables in high price. We will be healthy and also earn from the excess.”



Pitamdhari Basnet is leading group 3 of farmers from Okhareni, Barhabise. His nursery tunnel is ready to produce the saplings for next phase of the project. He has started harvesting the vegetables and selling them in the market. He has earned NPR. 3,125 by selling 125 Kg of Radish and NPR. 4,500 by selling 300 bunches of Mustard Green (50 Kg approx.) till now.

13. Shanta Maya Tamang

Santa Maya Tamang is an elderly woman living with her husband, Bir Bahadur Tamang in a small house in Barhabise, Sindhupalchowk. She and her husband do not have a child therefore, making it difficult for them financially. They do not have any other family members to depend on. They can no longer work to earn a living and sustain themselves unlike when they were younger. They do receive senior allowance but it is not enough as they have to make several payments and also the market rate has increased highly for basic necessities. In the name of economic asset, they just have a small house, a small field and two goats. With no source of income, they feed themselves from the little production that comes from the field.

Therefore, with the hope of financial income, Santa Maya took part in our project. She is determined of being capable of growing vegetables at this age also. Her growing vegetables were destroyed by the October rain. Heavy rainfall for 4 days straight proved to be detrimental towards their hard work.



Shanta Maya said, “Though the vegetables were destroyed, we have planted the vegetables again, with the help of our VMF. We will not stop working. I cannot sit back and lament over what has already happened. The replanted vegetables are looking nice till now. We’ll protect and harvest this lot for sure.”

14. Mahendra Karki (VMF- Group 1)

Mahendra Karki, a resident of Karthali, Barhabishe is a farmer. He earns his living especially by tomato and vegetables farming. He also runs a small store for selling groceries and vegetables. His economic status was normal before Covid. But after lockdown he couldn't run his store properly. His income declined. He was looking for some kind of revival for his earning. That was when he got to know about our project.



Mahendra karki said, "I was devastated when pandemic stopped my business. I am from a middle class family, and loss of income was a huge setback for us. But, participating in your program has given me the confidence to restart my store. There won't be shortage of vegetables to sell now, and we will be able to grow more and better vegetables. I got seeds and watering cans from the training program. I learned how to properly sow the seeds and take care of them. I knew some of the techniques beforehand, but this training has polished them. Now when I think about Covid and its impact, I kind of feel good also. I wouldn't have got the opportunity to participate in this project, if everything was normal. I hear people saying good things about the project and can see they are happy too."

Mahendra Karki has been selected as our VMF from Karthali. He is leading group 1. He has an idea on how to sell vegetables in market, and is keen to learn more.

Stories of our Beneficiaries after Psychological Counselling

1. Anusha B.K.

21 years old, Anusha B.K is one of the beneficiaries of our project. She is in group 1 from Karthali, in the farmers' group. She is a permanent resident of Karthali, Sindhupalchowk and lives in the family of 4. She has been married for 4 years now, and has a 3- years old daughter. Her mother-in-law is constantly ill, and the family is financially weak. Additionally, she has been worried for years because of her husband's carefree nature, as he is reluctant to take the responsibility of the family.

While talking to Anusha she said, "I used to work for others and earn earlier. My earnings were the only money that came to our house, but when lockdown happened my earning stopped. My



husband never cares for our family. He used to drink and make scene earlier, but that has now stopped thankfully. We barely had anything to eat during the lockdown. I was not in the position to buy even the seeds of the vegetables. I was very happy when you gave us the seeds of radish and mustard green. I learned to make good use of time through this project. Surprisingly, my husband also helped me while growing the vegetables. We were able to sell some vegetables and earn as well. We have now received the onion saplings, and working on that as well. They have grown quite well after we used the fertilizers you provided us with. I have also received the hermetic bags. I have no idea, how to thank you people. You have come to our life and gave a beam of hope. Moreover, the psychosocial counseling I received helped me to reduce my mental problems. I got a chance to pour my feelings and express them to my friends and neighbors. I am feeling much better now.”

Anusha is now happy to become able to grow vegetables and earn through them. She thanked our donors for this precious support and wishes for the continuation of this project.

2. Hira Devi Bhandari

Hira Devi Bhandari is a 65 years old woman, living in Barhabishe- 02, Sindhupalchowk. She lives with her husband and her 2 grandchildren. Their household income is fairly low as there is no active member in the family to earn. She lost her daughter 5 years ago and her son doesn't look after the family: he has left the house. Hira Devi has been dealing with a broken family and poverty at the same time for years. This has taken a toll on her mental health, as well as they cannot afford good food and clothes throughout the year.



“Losing a child is never easy for parents, and when you are weighed down with responsibilities and poverty, life is very difficult. My husband and I, both are heading towards old age, I am already 65. Both of us are not capable of working much.

Despite the weakness, we still work as day laborers. Earnings as wage worker is not enough for our family and we have children. They study in government school, so it is not necessary to pay their fees, however they don't get good to eat and nice to wear because of our economic condition. It was even more difficult for us to live through the lockdown and pandemic. There were no works and our way of earning was completely shut down and we were panicking. The help from Sowers Action and Volunteer Corps Nepal arrived to us when we were much in need of it. It came as a gleam of hope to us, and after receiving food support, we got to know about this project about vegetable farming. We signed up our name for the participation and received different kinds of seeds, saplings, watering can, hermetic bags and organic fertilizer. Along with that, we were trained on how to grow, harvest and market our vegetables. My husband and I sowed the vegetables as we were taught. Our children looked after the vegetables when we were away for work. All of us worked hard and it payed off. We were able to sell the Radishes and

Mustard Greens in the market and earn a good amount of money. As we did not have to invest at the beginning, every penny we earned was profit and we are very happy that we took part in this project. Now we have planted onions and started to sell them also. We are getting good price for the onions. Every product we received (Seeds of Radish and Mustard Green, Watering cans, saplings of onion, hermetic bags and fertilizer) was of good quality and none of them disappointed us. This project has strengthened our will to continue vegetable farming, and I wish it would continue for coming years also for people like us. Thank you very much”- Hira Devi Bhandari.

3. Samjhana Bhandari

45 years old Samjhana Bhandari do not have clear vision in her eyes. Her one eye is damaged and another one is also not completely healthy. She lives in Barhabishe municipality, Sindhupalchowk with her family. There are 6 members in her family and they lack economically. Despite her disability, she took part in this project and helped her family earn some money through vegetable farming.

It was me who insisted my family to take part in this project no one in my family has a proper job: my husband and son works as laborers in construction sites and my daughter-in-law looks after the house and our goats. Whatever we earn has never been enough for all of us. And when the government decided to impose lockdown all over the country, my husband and son lost their jobs. There was also no market for the goats and there was no way to earn money. During the second lockdown, when I heard about this project, I immediately talked to my family and told them that this would be a good chance for us to learn about vegetable farming, and thus we gave our names and received seeds, trainings and other support. The radish and mustard green turned out to be excellent and we were able to sell them and earn. The onions are also good now and we have started consuming them. I helped the family in looking after the plants, watering and weeding them. It was a good way to pass my time, otherwise I would have to sit at home all day long.



I used to feel lonely at times due to my eye sight. I could not go to work with my neighbors and I would barely leave the house. Through psychosocial counseling, I got people to listen to me and my feelings which were buried inside me all these years. I took part both in individual and group counseling and I am in a better place mentally now. I got to learn a lot through this project: for this I want to thank Sowers Action and Volunteers Corps Nepal sincerely.”- Samjhana Bhandari.

4. Parbati Raut

One of our 6 Village Model Farmer, Parbati Raut is a farmer by profession for a long time now. She is 40 years old and lives in Okhareni, Barhabishe with her family. Her husband works on construction field. Parbati Raut used to grow vegetables traditionally and sell them in the market, and because she was experienced in farming and marketing of vegetables, she was chosen as a VMF to lead the farmers from Group 2.



In conversation with Parbati Raut, she said, "I always wanted to earn by myself and not depend on my husband or family for money. That's why I switched to vegetable farming from being a housewife only, as I had a lot of spare time in my hand. I usually followed traditional farming, as my parents did. I used to earn some money from vegetables before lockdown. When lockdown happened, my husband's work in construction had stopped and there was no market for the vegetables as everything was shutdown. We were in dilemma about which step to take, as our source of income no longer existed. During second lockdown, I heard about this project and wanted to participate in it. They chose me as a VMF because of my previous experience. Through this project, I learned the technical ways of growing Radish, Mustard Green and Onions. Other than that we were provided with seeds, hermetic bags, watering cans, organic fertilizer, nursery tunnel and pesticide sprayer. The harvest of radish and mustard green was very good and instead of selling them I donated them for our Guthi (a cultural group). I grew the saplings of onions and distributed to other farmers from group 2. Earlier I used to farm for myself and my family only, but with the help of this project other farmers are also connected with me. I have started selling the leaves of onion and soon the bulbs will be big and mature enough to be harvested. I am very glad that I was a part of this project, and I will continue to help other farmers in coming days also. Thank you very much.