

COMMUNICATION – IMPACT STORIES JULY 2018

The journey to closing Nepal's wage gap

Pushpa Hamal, 41 from Dailekh is a Special Maintenance Group (SMG) member with Rural Access Programme (RAP). She has been the chairperson for the group for the last one year. She is also a member of the community mothers group (Aama Samuha), the women's group (Mahila Samuha) and the agriculture Group (Krishi Samuha). And is the mother of three sons, Bhupendra, Laxman and Prakash Shahi. Her husband migrated to Saudi Arabia two and half years ago in search of work.

In the last year, Pushpa has helped maintain and build a number retaining walls (dry stone as well as gabion walls) and stone soling works in critical sections of the road.

Special Maintenance Group members like the one that Pushpa leads, are responsible for localised road repairs targeting access bottlenecks at critical sections and complimenting routine and recurrent activities.

Their input is critical in building and maintaining the thousands of kilometres of climate-resilient roads that RAP has worked on since 1999, that help connect remote communities to markets, health care facilities and schools.

The UK funded Programme provides jobs in road maintenance and construction to individuals from the poorest households. Many of them are earning an income for the first time. While selecting workers, marginalised and disadvantaged groups are prioritised and the workforce is required to be 33% women.



Pushpa's Group has 8 male and 12 female members. All group members are being paid on 'equal wage on equal work' basis adopted by the programme since the beginning. However, sometimes female members use to face grumble of male members against the wage payment system adopted by the programme. On behalf of females, Pushpa has taken lead to defend women's rights for equal pay and convince other male members of the group.

With the income that Pushpa has earned as a group member and chair, she has been able to send her sons to school, two are attending private boarding schools, and she hopes this will serve them well in the future. She is also able to save some money for emergency situations.

Pushpa's strong stance on the issue and leadership has inspired other female SMG members and local women to demand equal pay.

[Bikash ko Bato interviewed Pushpa on International Women's Day that we can use here]

Over 3,500 women are working with RAP in a wide variety of roles, from the staff working at RAP's offices in Kathmandu, to store keepers, graduate engineers, *Hamri Didis*, Road Building Group & Road Maintenance Group members, social mobilisers and more.

In a country where opportunities for women are limited, RAP is providing both income-generating opportunities and enabling women's empowerment.



Pushpa being recognised for her contribution to breaking social norms at event in Kathmandu on International Women's Day 2018.