Bhunti Sada is member of a Dalit Women Groups (DWG) in Chandralalpur Village Development Committee (VDC), Siraha district. The group was formed and facilitated by Feminist Dalit Organization in partnership with WaterAid Nepal. The main objective of

Loud and continuous applause echoed when Bhunti Sada, 28 was announced for accepting token of honor for her outstanding performance during campaign for Open Defecation Free (ODF) at Chandralalpur Village Development Committee (VDC), Siraha district.

In the ceremony arranged for Declaration of ODF village, Bhunti Sada recalled: "Some of the community people rebuked me while trying to motivate them to build toilets, explaining them of its benefits. They refused to hear me, and many times mocked me. People were aggressive and claimed that 'it was none of business'. But I did not give up. My unwavering efforts to create a healthy and better living for my people has changed their mind set and today there is toilet in every household and people are using it. Today, they even thank me for the changed sanitation scenario of the village."

Bhunti Sada is member of a Dalit Women Groups (DWG) in Chandralalpur VDC. The group was formed and facilitated by Feminist Dalit Organization in partnership with WaterAid Nepal. The main objective of

STORIES OF CHANGE

Lead for Open Defecation Zone

Bhunti Sada holding Token of Honor.

Bhunti Sada (third from right) with Puja Dalit women’s group; Chandralalpur, Dharampur VDC
forming this group was to organize Dalit Women to protect and promote WASH rights for Dalit and marginalized community.

FEDO has facilitated in formation of forty such groups in Siraha district which comprise 15 Dalit women. This group meets on monthly basis to share, socialize and collect some amount for group savings. These women share their experiences, become aware about sanitation and hygiene, get trainings for leadership development.

Bhunti sada is now also renowned as prominent Dalit right solicitor and WASH activist.

She shared her experience: “ODF campaign was crucial in Dalit community as they share good proportion of village population. Before we started our campaign, less than five percent Dalit family had toilet, now all of them have it and are also using it.”

According to her, Dalit people were reluctant to construct toilet citing lack of resources and money. She further explained: “I realized that most of them did not lack resources to construct toilet, rather they lacked will power and interest. I worked to raise the will of community people to ensure Open Defecation free village. For this, I led community campaigns and door to door visit and convinced community women to become key actors in motivating their family head to construct a toilet.”
Bulanit Mahara recalls, "I cannot believe few years back I was 'nobody', a puppet to my family." She is 24 years old; married, a full-time family care taker of her two sons, husband and her in-laws. She was able to complete her education up to SLC, right after which she got married. She had profound interest in pursuing further study but her parents forced her into marriage as a result got stuck with a life of a 'house-wife'. She had no freedom to decide what she wanted to do. She neither got any opportunity to pursue her education nor was permitted to participate in function, event, trainings or work for extra income in the family.

But her life changed after FEDO intervened. We went to Siraha Municipality ward no.3 to organize Dalit women to orient them on WASH rights and maintain their sanitation and hygiene. After series of interaction and convincing the community, we were able to form a group of 20 Dalit women; Bulanti Mahara was also able to join the group—Maa Bhagwati Dalit Women's Group.

Mahara has shown great interest and progress after right after few months of participation in the group. She had keen enthusiasm to bring change in her life as well as her family and community. To fuel her enthusiasm, FEDO started to provide her with platform where she can acquire orientation regarding WASH rights and capacity enhancement trainings for economic empowerment. As a result of which, she has not only understood about the importance of WASH but also is able to earn money.
She says, "My house and surrounding remains clean as I am aware and conscious of my health and hygiene. I am not careless anymore. I teach my children and others too to maintain cleanliness so that we remain healthy and don't fall sick." She further adds, "I feel independent to have income of my own. I can buy my own necessary things without having any discussions at home. My kids are happy and that is what matters to me the most."

Today, Mahara is a very active woman, happy and successful in her own ways. She speaks without any fear or hesitation and her members look up to her. She has inspired many other women to learn to make bangle and add a source of income. She says, "I enjoy teaching other women as we share and connect. It gives us a feeling of togetherness and that we have each other's support."

FEDO with WaterAid Nepal, has been working in Siraha, to raise Dalit Women’s awareness level on WASH and WASH rights. Siraha is the first district of Province 2 to become Open Defecation Free Zone.

Presenting IEC materials that illustrates sanitation and hygiene.
Laxmi Nepali is 36 years old. She has two children: one nine-year-old girl and another 11-year-old boy. Her husband works as a wage laborer in Birendranagar, Surkhet. She got married when she was only 15 years old. At that age, she was only able to complete 5th grade despite her enthusiasm to get through school leaving certificate. Laxmi is a housewife; who works very hard to take care of her family and rearing pigs for a source of income. She had confined herself within the household chores, social interaction and gathering was not something that she was comfortable with. There were many formal/informal women's groups in her community, but she was not keen to join the group as she thought it was no beneficial.

But as we-FEDO approached her, and explained the benefits of being organized in a group she was convinced and quickly agreed to become one of the member of the group. She got involved in Himali Dalit women group, currently is working/serving as President of the group. She organized monthly meetings; actively participates in sharing, communicating and socializing. She also participates in various trainings that relates to the human rights situation of Dalit women, the problems faced by them, the issues that are prevalent; the bottlenecks that obstruct in achieving justice and the ways to overcome it.
She says "Violence against women in my community is very prominent. At many times, women are afraid to come forward with their cases and get justice, other times they lack access and money to get their respective cases registered in the respective department. The jumbled and confusing procedures to get cases registered frustrates women and they tend to withdraw themselves from getting justice. This has happened many times. Dalit women are economically poor, they do not have enough money to eat a healthy meal; and to add on it suffer from violence against them. When they seek for justice, they are not able to gain it for they do not have money to even start their proceedings by registering their cases. Even if they have the money, due to the lethargic discriminatory system women are often silenced."

"To overcome this situation and get justice we are saving some amount of money from the members of or group as 'Justice Fund'. This fund is used in emergency, for victims seeking justice. This saving has been very useful for us, as Dalit women will be able to access for justice services. We also have formed ‘District level response mechanism group.’ This group helps pressurize and advocate with the legal aid service providers to provide justice to the women.”

"I am very glad that I am a member and have had the opportunity to participate in various trainings and activities that has educated me and that I am able to educate other women. I can speak confidently and I feel am more aware and empowered. I can participate and freely communicate in meetings where people with power are present such as in ward as well as District level response mechanism. Women are also unified, and have a sense of ownership and solidarity to fight against violence and discrimination. We now feel that we am powerful too."

**District level response mechanism group consists of members from women cell, Dalit civil society organization, District Court, Bar association, Para-legal committee, Human rights institutions community based stakeholders and women and children office.**

**Meeting with District level response mechanism group, Surkhet**