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Plan's initiatives to abolish *Kamalari*

(Servitude Girls) tradition

urgent need to abolish

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Krishna Ghimire, Sponsorship and Grants Support Manager

Plan Nepal



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Who are *Kamalaris* ?

- *Tharu* (indigenous ethnic communities) girls, work at others house in contractual basis as servitudes.
- Girls children as small as 7 are found working as *Kamalari*. 11-14 year girls are preferred.
- Estimated figure of *Kamalaris*- 25000 to 30000.
- *Kamalari* has become a tradition mostly in Dang and other 4 districts of western plains of Nepal.
- The parents of *Kamalris* generally receive meager annual remuneration.
- The trade off is done in Mid-January every year in the New Year of *Tharus*.
- They are deprived of their basic rights.

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Cultural and historical background of *Kamalari* tradition

- Vehicular transportation and expanded market facilities increased the number of *Kamalaris* in 1960s.
- The government bureaucrats working in these districts were employing *Kamlaris*.
- When the bureaucrats shifted to other districts they took the *Kamalaris* also with them.
- The *Tharus* perceived it as an obligation to send their daughters to the landlords.
- The parents were happy to see the girls learning perceived civilised behaviours .

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Where they live



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Root causes of *Kamalari* tradition

- Poverty (economic poverty, landlessness,
- Lack of awareness (low or no voice)
- Conservative feelings (cultural taboos)
- Gender discrimination- son better than daughter
- Lack of economic opportunity/no access for financial and social services
- Lack of education
- Feudal system



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Who is promoting *Kamalari* tradition?

- The families consider it as a grounded culture.
- Landlords, bureaucrats, local merchants, parents of *Kamlaris*, relatives of *Kamlaris*, head of the village, brokers/middle man (both from *Tharu* community and other castes.
- Weak reinforcement of law.
- Weak monitoring and follow-up by the government.

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Laws are in practice but not fully implemented for *Kamalari*

- Nepalese law do not allow the hiring of any child below 14 of age. 36 hours per week.
- Violators of these provisions are subject to a cash fine and or imprisonment.
- The law also prohibits any child between 14 and 16 years old from working in hazardous conditions.
- Supreme court of Nepal has given a verdict to abolish the practices immediately.
- Government has assured to abolish the *Kamalris tradition* with rehabilitation package.

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Plan's initiative

- Kamalari Abolition Project (KAP) since 2005
- The goal of the project: Goal : Basic rights of children in Dang district are ensured through abolition of the *Kamalari* practices and enlarging opportunities for their over all development

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Three components of the KAP

Awareness raising:

- To prevent and protect girls from practice of Kamalari through advocacy, awareness, rescue and recovery to ensure their basic child rights.

Education support:

- To support rescued Kamalari girls for enrolment, retention and completion of at least primary education.

Livelihood programs:

- To support participating families in increasing their capabilities to afford education, food, habitat, health and well-being of their children.

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Awareness raising/advocacy activities

- Rescued 1717 *Kamalari* girls.
- Declared Dang district as *Kamalari* free on 14 January 2009.
- Carried out 300 Behavioural Change Communication sessions in 100 groups, 2681 girls and 2278 leaders, farmers participated.
- 50 child clubs are conducting their regular meeting and publishing wall magazines.
- Common Forum active



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Awareness raising/advocacy activities ctd..

- Conducted 1 event of Journalism Training to girls' groups
29 girls participated.
- Completed 10 events of interaction with *Kamalari* parents,
400 participants including 265 females & 135 males
participated.
- One event of Training of Trainers on Psychosocial
Counselling (7 days) to Child Protection Centre, Girls
Groups was completed. 24 participants attended.
- Eight events of Rights of Child training to Child club and
girls group representatives where as 193 (137 girls)
participated.

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Awareness raising/advocacy activities ctd..

- There are 10 Village level & 1 valley level girls group in
Deukhuri. Aluminium Box distributed for 10 village level
girls group for their monthly meeting.
- 2 legal aids provided to a sexually exploited *Kamalari* girl
for property rights & kinship relationship. The case was
decided in favour of the survivor.
- Lobby and advocacy by the partner through press
conference in coordination with concerned stakeholders to
implement the verdict of Supreme Court.

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Awareness raising/ advocacy



Education support

- 1114 are continuing education out of rescued and reintegrated 1717 *Kamalaris*.
- 73 life skill classes operated, 1743 adolescent girls were graduated.
- Ten new classes are running where 250 adolescent girls are participating.
- Running alternative education program to address the gap to start the formal education.
- Bridging courses

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Education support



Livelihood

- Family members of *Kamalari* girls have been organised in farmers' groups for sustaining their livelihoods. Provided support on vegetable production and compost making. Integrated Pest Management, group management and making model farms etc.
- 1570 family receiving livelihood support for their income raising (out of 1900 *Kamalari*s).
- Provided Irrigation scheme support to 33 farmers groups.
- Established two vegetable collection centres.
- A village level production apex body has been formed.



Livelihood ctd...

- Established a collection centre called "Lawajuni Collection Centre" to promote the products like bamboo handcraft, incense produced from the ex-Kamalari girls and also for their market linkage.
- Skill development trainings were given to 34 ex-Kamalari girls.



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Livelihood



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Project approach

The project is being implemented in partnership with a local organisation, Society Welfare Action Nepal.

- **Integrated:** The project is involved not just with *Kamalari* themselves, but also with the families of rescued *Kamalari* and with anyone in the *Tharu* community who might send their girls to work.
- **Partnership:** All possible partners, including government agencies and existing community- based organisations, are involved in all stages of the project, from planning to implementation.
- **Complementary approach:** The project avoids duplicating the work of other organisations working in the same area and on the same issue.
- **Exit and resource sharing:** The project involves primary stakeholders in resource sharing once they become capable of sharing the cost.
- **Networking and advocacy:** The project forms various forums at community, district and national levels to advocate together against the practice.

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Project's major impact

- Hiring of *Kamalaris* has reduced/wide spread mass awareness.
- Improvement in educational status of the rescued *Kamalari* through formal and informal education.
- The tradition of sending girls to work as *Kamalari* and discrimination between boys and girls being reduced gradually.
- Families are producing vegetable commercially and for self consumption.
- Farmers have started the integrated pest and nutrient management practice on their farm for sustainable soil nutrient management and pest control.

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Impact continued.....

- Female farmers are found to more empower due to involving women in income generation activities.
- Some ex-*kamalari* girls, who have received skill development trainings, are empowered to become economically independent.
- Hotel Owners Association of Dang district issued a circular to all the hotels in the district, instructing not to keep *Kamalari*.
- Increase earning by ex-*Kamalari* girls through skill training from tailoring profession and running hotels through kind support of their parents and other members in the family.

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Impact continued

- Common forum of rescued *Kamalris* active for lobby and advocacy.
- Seven political parties of the district made commitment and issued circulation within their party organization, for not keeping *Kamalari*.
- Ensured commitment from government.

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Then....what are the current issues ?

- Ensure basic rights of children – survival, development, participation, and protection.
- Discrimination in providing remuneration.
- Unsecure and unhealthy lives and exploitation.
- Laws are not reinforced and followed up.
- Educational/economic opportunities.
- There are no programmes in other districts.
- Tracing of *Kamalaris* in far off distance difficult.

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Project visits

- Nepalese Media
- Foundation Team members and Plan Germany
- German Media People



Servitude of sort: Kamalaris tell tales of woe

From Pukhari Acharya
DEUKHURI (Dhunga), Jan. 11:
Karna Choudhary, 18, resident of
Mangarhin of Deukhuri, was sold
away for Rs.2,500 for a year two
years ago by her parents. She then
worked as a slave in a house in Dang
where she was sold on a contract
basis.
She had to work for almost 18 hours
each day. The chores given to her
included dishwashing, cooking and
looking after children.
"I used to be beaten, tortured and
scolded by my master, who used to
give me food of inferior quality."
She was freed from servitude last
year when the contract between her
parents and the master was over. But
she had to face several serious

challenges as her parents died within
the gap of a month. Following her
parents' death, she had to shoulder
the burden of looking after her
siblings.
Her relatives said her parental
property, except for the house, she
was given for Rs.25,000 and doesn't
still know the real worth of the
property and for how much it was
sold. "The money is about to run
out and I am managing my household
expenses and supporting the
education of my sister and brother,"
she said.
"I could not join school although I
was offered help by an NGO as I
had to take the responsibility of my
brother and sister," she said.
Choudhary said that she had been

trying to make up for her household
expenses by sewing clothes. "I earn
Rs. 1,500 every month now."
She is not the only girl who had to
bear the brunt of servitude referred
to as 'Kamalaris' in west Nepal. There
are many other girls who are
compelled to live a miserable life
because of the Kamalaris tradition.
According to the tradition the Tharu
girls are sent to landlord's house to
work as domestics. 'Maha' is a
festival when girls in real family
when the contract is made between
the family of the child and
employer.
Thousands of young girls from the
family of the ex-Kamalaris work as
Kamalaris or bonded labour on annual
contract during the Maha festival.

Girls as old as six or seven are sent
to work as Kamalaris and their term is
renewed every Maha. They are the
girls of Kamalaris who are kept by
employers up to the age of 13 or 16.
Kishora Choudhary, the chairman of
Society Welfare Action Nepal
(SWAN), an NGO managed by
Tharu community at Lamaha, Dang
said there were still about 1,000
Kamalaris in Dang.
He said that the SWAN funded by
Plan Nepal, has rescued about 1,000
Kamalaris girls. Among them 779 have
been provided scholarship 188 are
being provided informal education
and 21 are being given skill-based
training.
SWAN has launched a project to
save 500 girls.



This Photo
Rescued Kamalaris in western district of Dang busy sewing clothes.

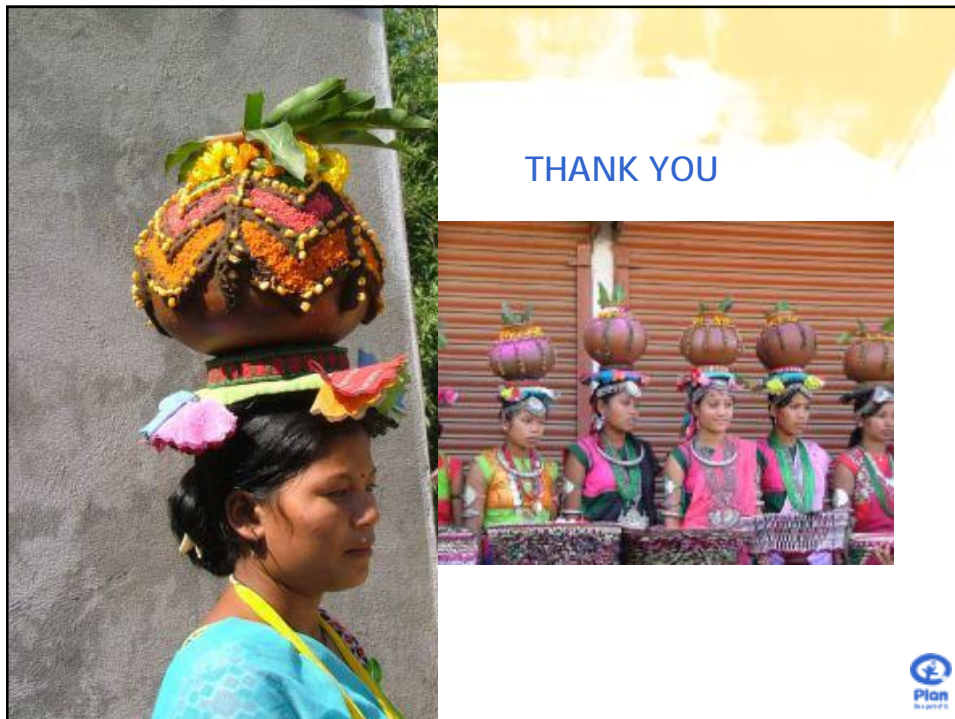
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Challenges

- Poverty (HH size 5.6), raising awareness in *Kamlari* families (due to literacy), changing mind sets of landlords, social transformations.
- Limited market and employment opportunities, creating and retaining learned skill and knowledge to promote economic opportunities.
- Continuation of education support to *Kamlari* children and retaining the process (as this practices prevail in five districts).
- Finding alternative way for promoting leasehold vegetable farming for semi commercial farming.
- Politics in transition, weak law and order situation.

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THANK YOU

