

RAP brings financial boon for women road workers

Satyarupa Karki, 35, is a road building group member in Mugu, one of the remotest and most underdeveloped areas of Nepal. Since March 2014 she has worked on the construction of a 23km stretch of the local road network being built under the Rural Access Programme (RAP).

Satyarupa's work digging the track and carrying stones to the construction site will connect remote communities to essential services. And, for the first time, she is receiving a wage.

"Previously I had to depend on my husband for as little as five rupees. But now I have been able to earn money on my own and also save some of it."

The mother of five is making wise use of her wages.

"We spent the money on our kids' education and to meet our household expenses. We have small saving groups that RAP has formed. Each of the group members deposits 10% of his or her pay as personal saving. RAP provides equal pay to men and women workers. Other employers used to pay us less, compared to men."



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.

Satyarupa believes RAP has brought positive changes in the lives of Mugu women through economic empowerment.

"After RAP came to our village, we have grown as confident as men. There is development taking place in our place. Our financial is improved. This all has been possible due to RAP."

Incomes from RAP enable households to purchase basic goods, enrol children in school and save for the future. And now they have easier and quicker access to the district headquarter.

"Earlier, we were only limited to farm works and household chores. We could not to go out of our houses freely. We used to feel uneasy even to have eye contact with men, let alone talk to them. But after RAP came in, we have learnt basic rural road construction skills, how to raise our voice among the mass and leadership skills. Now we have the confidence to speak and share views in mass gatherings freely and openly. Previously I used to have a tough time even introducing myself."

Members of road building groups receive training on group management and leadership, conflict management, first aid, on the job training, seasonal and off seasonal vegetable production and there is an opportunity for members to serve as group chairperson or treasurer, important roles and the chance to build leadership skills.

"Now we have the courage to fight for our rights and also have better chances of getting a job"

Group members are more aware of donor and Government development activities and how to raise their voice against possible corruption, optimum utilization of available resources and promoting opportunities for women.