

## **Case Study 2: Musahar woman advancement with light of education and consciousness through training**

There were many movements in the past in the country to establish rights of the marginalized and poor community. With the political change came a radical change in the state structure and Centralized resources were handed over to local bodies. However, the state still lags far behind in the areas of gender equality and social inclusion of marginalized communities. Musahar women from the marginalized indigenous and Dalit communities of Terai Madhes are further marginalized in terms of gender equality.



Due to caste discrimination and patriarchal society, the leadership ability of Musahar women are not appreciated by the so-called upper castes as well as male members of the society. They are also excluded from the mainstream of the development due to illiteracy, ignorance and lack of consciousness and are deprived from state's services due to lack of access to state resources. In this regard, South Asia Partnership Nepal (SAP-Nepal) with the support of UNDEF, has implemented "Strengthening gender-responsive local governance in Nepal" project in four municipalities (Haripur, Chandranagar, Barhathwa and Basbariya) of Sarlahi district of Madesh Province for the upliftment of the Musahar community.

Under this program, 30 Musahar women of the municipality were trained as mobile trainers. After the training, 32 Musahar Women Empowerment Forums (WoMEF) were formed in all four target municipalities with the support of SAP-Nepal. A training program on women empowerment and gender responsive local budget was conducted for 483 Musahar women of 32 WOMEF groups in four municipalities. Earlier, these Musahar women were not affiliated with any groups and did not participate in any programs and were confined to their household chores. In this training, these Musahar women were found to be actively engaged and eager to learn. In the training, majority of the women were not confident to standup and introduce themselves which reflects on how backward the Musahar community is in terms of education and consciousness. Most of the women who participated in the training said that they do not recognize or know the names of the chairperson of their respective wards and municipalities. They also did not know about the services that are provided by the local government bodies such as women and children, health, agriculture departments of the municipalities. During the training, the Musahar women learned to introduce themselves by saying their name, address and name of the group. The Musahar women were also informed about local government plans and budget by the government resource person in the training. Speaking at the budget demystifying training provided to Musahar women, Sita Majhi, Dalit ward member, said that the training has helped in enhancing leadership capacity of Musahar women along with increasing accountability of the government and other local stakeholders.