I'm proving women’s lives through access to information in Nepal

Nepal is one of the world’s poorest countries, still overcoming the effects of the decade long civil war. Although progress has been made and elections were held recently in 2013, the country remains politically unstable. Local elections have not been held since 1997 and therefore it is often difficult to hold authorities accountable.

CAHURAST, a Nepal NGO, is working with communities and authorities to build integrity and ensure an open and accountable society. They monitor budgets and development projects to ensure they are spent and delivered effectively.

In Nepal, 10% of the municipal / Village Development Committee (VDC) budget is allocated to women’s projects. Unfortunately, this entitlement often does not reach women as intended. Before training and awareness raising activities provided by CAHURAST, many local women in Dhading villages were unaware of this entitlement.
With CAHURAST’s training and support, two female monitors in Sankosh accessed local budget documents in Dhading, analysed the budgets, and discovered that 300,000NPR (nearly 2,000 GBP) that should have been allocated for women’s projects was never disbursed.

The monitors met with the local authorities, who at first did not listen to them and told them there was a budget freeze and no budget available for these activities. The women persisted, returning to the local authorities offices again and again but the authorities avoided them.

Eventually the Local Development Officer met with the women, discussed the situation and agreed to resolve the problem. The Local Development Officer then allocated two thirds of the budget (200,000NPR) from the District Development Committee (DDC) budget to training for local women in the form of sewing classes. Eighteen women received training for three months.

The women are using their new skills in their homes and some are earning money through their new skills. They are also sharing their skills with family and friends so they too can benefit from the sewing classes.

Before training by CAHURAST, these monitors were not aware of their rights in terms of accessing budget information and holding the government accountable. Without access to the budget documents, the women would not have known about their entitlements.

Thanks to the assistance from CAHURAST and Integrity Action, communities in the Dhading and Gorkha districts of Nepal are now much better informed about their rights, and much more able to demand improvements in planning and service delivery. More importantly, because of these new skills women in these communities are now earning money for themselves and their families.

Integrity Action has worked with the Campaign for Human Rights and Social Accountability (CAHURAST) since 2010 when they began their Community Integrity Building work. They empower citizens and engage with government and other key stakeholders to improve infrastructure, services and local governance for citizens in Dhading and Gorkha Districts. CAHURAST has trained 57 community monitors who actively monitor budgets and development projects in two districts of Nepal affecting more than 50,000 people.