



INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2022 - STORY FEATURE SERIES

Women Mason in Retrofitting - Breaking the Stereotype

As per Nepal's 15th Five Year Periodic Plan published by the National planning Commission, women's labor force participation stands at 26.3 % which is less than half of that of men. Among the 54,000 trained masons in Nepal, only 10% are women and they too remain mostly unemployed. There is a perception in the society that women are not to indulge in technical work due to social norms and values. To help break such stereotype, USAID's Tayar Nepal helped trained women as masons on retrofitting.



Ms. Basanta B.K SMC now earns higher wages after receiving masonry trainings provided by Tayar Nepal's grantee, NSET. Photo credit: NSET for USAID.

Basanta B.K. from ward no. 13, Ghorahi Sub-metropolitan City is one of the trainees. She has been working as a daily wage earner for the past three years, but she struggled to support her six-member family on her daily wages of just NRs. 500 (USD 4.17). When Basanta heard about on-the-job training for masons in her ward through USAID's Tayar Nepal, she hoped this would be the chance she needed to learn new skills and build her career. Since masonry is considered a "man's job," Basanta had doubts. However, when she got selected, she recalls, "I was very excited and ready to take on this new challenge."

"Women always get called out for trying to undertake what is called a "man's job," but I believe in breaking these barriers. Trainings like this, which are more gender inclusive, have helped raise our confidence and qualifications to find better jobs with better pay," says Basanta.

The training taught women workers, like Basanta, advanced masonry techniques, particularly on seismic retrofitting. *"I used to be afraid of scaling buildings and using scaffolding, but I can now easily measure, bind, and lay out scaffoldings on my own,"* says Basanta. Typically, technical skills, like mixing concrete, laying bricks, and plastering were done by male workers, but masonry training, like this, opened doors for many women workers, who are now more qualified for technically challenging jobs and can earn as much as their male counterparts.

She says, *"In the future, I want to become a successful construction worker and work with other women masons."*

This is part of USAID's Tayar Nepal's International Women's Day 2022 - Gender Equality today for Sustainable Tomorrow-Story Feature Series. We are honoring and celebrating the success stories of women who are leading and contributing to various roles for disaster risk reduction and management thus helping build safer communities