

A Mother's Dedication: Impact on Nutrition and Community Health



Photo: MDI Nepal/Raghubir Thapa

Chandra Kumari, a resident of Tripurasundari Municipality, Ward No. 9, Chugaun, Dolpa, in Nepal's Karnali Province, is a hardworking mother juggling family responsibilities and household chores. She is the mother of three children, including her youngest, eight-month-old Sibani. Despite her demanding routine, Chandra Kumari actively participates in health training, counseling sessions, and health mothers' group (HMG) meetings.

During her third pregnancy, Chandra Kumari enrolled in the MCHN programme in Tripurasundari. The programme focuses on improving nutrition during the critical first 1,000 days of life. It educates mothers and caregivers on essential childcare practices and provides nutritious, fortified food to pregnant and breastfeeding women and young children. Through the programme's training and counseling, she learned about the benefits of breastfeeding not just for the child, but also for the mother. She now shares this knowledge with her neighbors, emphasizing key topics such as the "3 Es" of breastfeeding (Early initiation, exclusive and extended), personal hygiene, and child nutrition.

Chandra Kumari's daughter, Sibani, was born with a weight of 3000 gms. She attributes this to the healthy eating habits and medication received during pregnancy. However, a month ago, Sibani fell ill with diarrhea, suffering for three to four days. Concerned, Chandra Kumari sought medical help at the nearest health facility. While the diarrhea was controlled with treatment, the illness had already taken a toll on Sibani's health. When MCHN staffs conducted the home visit, he noticed that the child appeared weak and had lost weight. The mid-upper arm circumference (MUAC) was at 110 mm only.

Realizing the severity of the situation, the staff counseled Chandra Kumari on adopting healthy behaviors, ensuring safe drinking water, and increasing breastfeeding frequency. He also referred Sibani to the outpatient therapeutic care (OTC) center for treatment. The MCHN team began continuous follow-up to support Sibani's recovery.

During the follow up visit, MCHN staff, along with Health Post Incharge, provided additional counseling on feeding practices, hygiene, and sanitation. Chandra Kumari took their advice seriously, increasing breastfeeding frequency, maintained the proper hygiene, and ensured the continued use of zinc tablets as prescribed. As a result, Sibani's health improved with continued RUTF feeding; within a week, her diarrhea stopped, her MUAC reached 125 mm, and her weight rose to 5.5 kg.

Chandra Kumari was overjoyed to see her daughter's health improving. *"I am incredibly grateful to the MCHN programme for their support during my child's illness. I was extremely worried, but the home visits and guidance gave me hope. This support will never be forgotten,"* she shares.

Beyond her own experience, Chandra Kumari is now an advocate for child health and nutrition in her community. She actively shares what she has learned with other women, emphasizing the importance of good nutrition, breastfeeding, hygiene, and sanitation. Her journey stands as a testament to the life-changing impact of mother and child health programmes, ensuring that no child suffers from preventable malnutrition.

A large metal tray is filled with various fresh ingredients. In the center, there are green leafy vegetables, a bunch of green onions, two carrots, a banana, and a whole yellow lemon. Surrounding these are several small metal bowls containing different types of lentils and beans: yellow lentils, green lentils, black beans, and white lentils. A larger bowl in the foreground contains five brown eggs. To the right of the tray is a clear glass bottle with a red cap, likely containing cooking oil. The tray is placed on a light-colored floor, with a patterned rug visible in the background.

**From Farm to
Table: Cooking
Demonstrations to
support Mother and
Child Health**

Photo: MDI Nepal/Raghubir Thapa

Nestled in the remote Himalayas, Dolpa District remains one of Nepal's most mystical and isolated regions. Its rugged landscapes, breathtaking mountains, and ancient culture make it a hidden gem for travelers. But beyond its scenic beauty, Dolpa is also home to a unique culinary heritage preserved for centuries.

On a crisp autumn morning, the people of Majhaphal under Thulibheri Municipality, Dolpa gathered in the village square for a special event—a cooking demonstration focused on using locally grown crops. A local mothers' group organized the event to promote sustainable agriculture and showcase the benefits of nutritious and healthy, homegrown ingredients.

The demonstration was led by Himali Rokaya, a Female community health volunteer, and the Nutrition supervisor of the MCHN programme, Bisnuchandra Budha, of Dolpa's nutritious dishes using native crops. She stood before a small crowd, her warm smile reflecting a lifetime of culinary wisdom. The first dish on the menu was 'Posilo Lito', a staple of the region made from roasted soybean, Mize, and barley flour. With swift, practiced hands, she fried the flour with oil and cooked it smoothly after she added the cow's milk to the pan, finally, she made healthy, nutritious Posilo jaulo for children under 24 months.

As the dishes neared completion, the audience was invited to taste the freshly prepared delicacies. The warmth of the Poshilo Jaulo brought an undeniable sense of nostalgia to the older attendees while introducing the younger generation to the importance of consuming locally grown crops.

The cooking demonstration was more than just a showcase of food—it was a celebration of sustainable agriculture, tradition, and the bond that food creates among communities. As the event concluded, the people of Dolpa left with a renewed appreciation for their local produce and a commitment to preserving their agricultural heritage.

Since the demonstration, there have been noticeable behavior changes among the community. Local mothers and caregivers have shown increased interest in incorporating more locally grown, nutritious ingredients into their children's diets. There has been a gradual rise in the consumption of traditional foods like Posilo Jaulo, which is rich in nutrients, and an improvement in dietary diversity. Additionally, the cooking demonstrations sparked conversations about the benefits of incorporating these foods into daily meals, leading to a greater focus on healthy, sustainable eating practices.

With the sun setting behind the majestic Himalayan peaks, the flavors of Dolpa lingered in the hearts of those who had gathered, a reminder that food is not just sustenance; it is a key to cultural identity and environmental sustainability.

Radio Messages Transform Mountain Villages



Photo: SAPPROS Nepal/Ain Bahadur Sawat

In the remote highlands of Adanchuli Rural Municipality, Shreenagar FM 102 MHz serves as a vital lifeline, reaching over 25,000 listeners across South Humla, North Mugu, and North Bajura. Among its dedicated audience is Shobha Budha of Palsha village, a mother of a 20-month-old baby, who has found invaluable guidance in the station's health broadcasts.

Before the introduction of radio Public Service Announcements (PSAs), many women like Shobha struggled to keep track of the MCHN clinic schedules. Household responsibilities often kept them too busy to remember critical healthcare dates, resulting in missed immunizations and nutrition interventions. Female Community Health Volunteers (FCHVs) and health workers attempted to inform them, but the information often faded amid daily chores.

The situation changed when the MCHN programme introduced targeted health messaging through Shreenagar FM. Now, Shobha never misses a clinic day. The radio serves as a timely reminder, broadcasting clear, easy-to-understand health messages in the local dialect. *"It has been a game changer," Shobha shares. "The messages*

ensure we never forget important clinic dates, and we've become more aware of maternal and child health."

The impact extends beyond her household. Across the region, families are more conscious of the importance of nutrition, regular antenatal checkups, and immunizations. The messages reinforce critical information, serving as constant reminders about the essential care needed for mothers and young children. *"At times, these messages can be lifesaving," Shobha adds. "They have transformed how we approach health and nutrition in our community."*

The success of Shreenagar FM radio messaging highlights the powerful role of mass communication in bridging healthcare gaps in Nepal's hard-to-reach areas. With continued efforts, the radio messaging can ensure that vital health information reaches every household, improving maternal and child health outcomes across remote mountain villages.



**Empowering
Communities: The
Impact of MCHN
Programs on Maternal
and Child Health**

Photo: SAPPROS Nepal/Umesh Saud

Birsana Shahi, a dedicated Female Community Health Volunteer (FCHV) in Kharpu village of Kharpunath Rural Municipality-5, Humla district, recalls the dire state of maternal and child health services before the MCHN programme was introduced. Many women and children lacked access to essential healthcare, leading to high risks of maternal and infant mortality.

Birsana Shahi has been serving as a Female Community Health Volunteer (FCHV) in her community for the past five years. After completing a nine-day basic training, she became more confident in delivering health services. Aware that volunteerism offers no budget or remuneration, she recognized the need for proper support and guidance to carry out her responsibilities effectively. Determined to make a difference, Biršana began working closely with the MCHN team, who engaged with her during the Health Mother's Group (HMG) meeting, community engagement, and home visits. These activities elevated her confidence and supported her in conducting monthly activities to promote positive behaviors related to safe motherhood, child health, family planning, and other various health-related areas. As she became familiar with her roles and responsibilities, the community people also began appreciating her work. Biršana grew more confident when she received an additional nine days of training.

With the rejuvenated energy, Biršana was able to carry out her roles and responsibilities more independently. She became more effective in engaging with community members, and her data became more robust and reliable as she updated it on a monthly basis. She has properly listed the names of children under five years of age, which has helped maintain the immunization records and ensure that no child is left behind. Biršana ensures that all the mothers get Antenatal Care (ANC) and Postnatal Care (PNC) services as per protocol. She reported that in her working area, there are 100% institutional deliveries and there are no cases of malnutrition except some congenital cases. Through home visits and engagement in the mothers' group meetings, she raised awareness about the importance of antenatal care (ANC), postnatal care (PNC), and child growth monitoring. Today, due to her efforts, all women in her ward regularly receive ANC and PNC checkups, and every child is monitored regularly.

Her efforts and dedication to enhance the health and nutrition status of mother and child were well recognized. Kharpunath Health Post, the Office of Rural Municipal Executive, together with the Health Services Office (HSO) has recognized her contributions and felicitated her with a certificate of appreciation. Biršana credits the MCHN programme for equipping her with the tools and knowledge to empower her community and save lives.



Transforming Lives: The Role of Community Health Workers in Reducing Maternal and Child Mortality through MCHN Clinics

Photo: SAPPROS Nepal/Ain Bahadur Sawat

Hari Kanya Nepali, a seasoned FCHV in Chhayanath Rara Municipality, has spent decades serving her community. She remembers a time when preventable diseases like diarrhea claimed the lives of many children and adults. This was because of a lack of health education and a lack of water for maintaining health, sanitation, and hygiene.

Before 2014, there were lots of cases of diarrhea and dysentery. When some projects were supported with water supply for the Ruga village, the MCHN programme began mobilizing FCHVs for health education and counselling. A dedicated MCHN clinic was conducted in Ruga village, where intensive counselling sessions were conducted; house visits, community visits were made for years to make things change, and Hari Kanya has made her significant contribution to the survival of mothers and children of the golden thousand days. She further thanks the MCHN programme, as she envisions a brighter future for mothers and children in her ward.

Hari Kanya is well aware of Maternal Infant Young Child Nutrition (MIYCN) and Infant Young Child Feeding (IYCF) since she needs to provide counselling on nutrition as per the MCHN programme's mandate. She received training on the Recipe Book and organized

cooking demonstrations in her ward with the support of MCHN staff. She has been making home visits and community visits every month as the MCHN program requires her to make the visits to improve the growth monitoring of the children below two years of age, Antenatal Care (ANC), Postnatal Care (PNC), and other maternal health and child health-related services. Through her work with the MCHN team, Hari Kanya ensures that pregnant women receive timely Antenatal Care (ANC) and Postnatal Care (PNC) checkups and that children are regularly monitored for growth. She has also been trained in preparing nutritious meals using locally available ingredients, equipping mothers with the skills to prevent malnutrition sustainably.

Hari Kanya feels proud today that in her ward, there are almost no malnourished children in her working area and for this, she has worked a lot by making frequent home visits for counselling, the Mid Upper Arm Circumference (MUAC) screening program. making individual and group counselling. Her dedication has helped reduce maternal and child mortality in her community. She is proud to be a change agent, empowering women with knowledge and skills that will benefit future generations.

A Health Worker's Journey: Recognizing the MCHN Program's Impact in a Remote Community

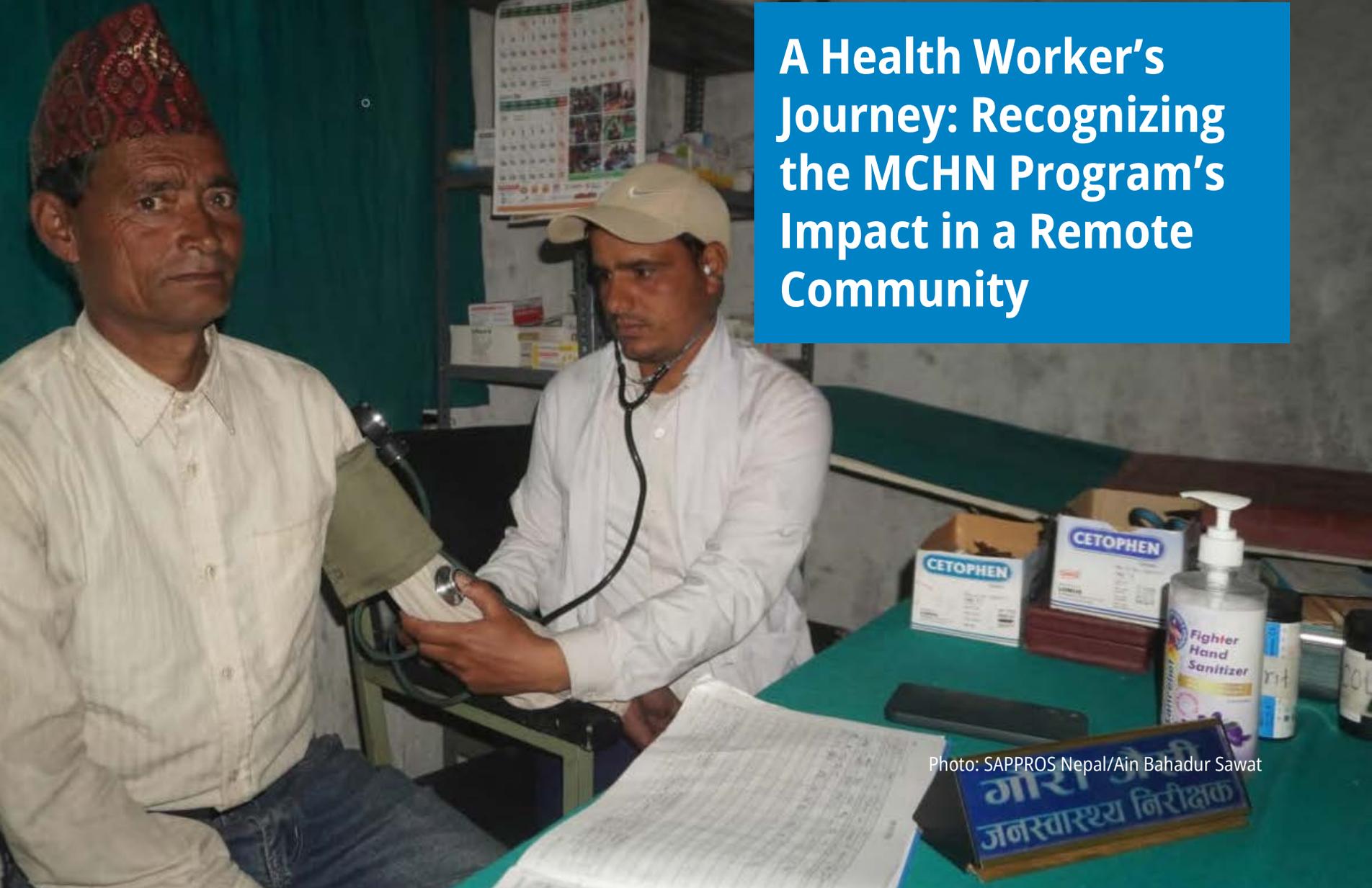


Photo: SAPPROS Nepal/Ain Bahadur Sawat

Gauri Jaishi, the in-charge of Dhainkot Health Post in Soru Rural Municipality-10, Mugu district, vividly remembers his first days at the health post. The facility was in a dire state with its roof leaking, stone-stacked walls absorbing moisture, and a lack of basic security, which made it difficult to safeguard essential medical supplies. The gaps in healthcare were glaring, with mothers receiving inconsistent care during pregnancy and children missing critical growth monitoring.

Mr Jaishi was appointed to the health post in January 2018, and there was only an office assistant serving in the health facility. He felt helpless where there were no staff to support in the service and program. When he was introduced to the MCHN program for clinic days, things started changing. With support from MCHN staff, Gauri and his team received additional human resources, which included the storekeeper and a Paramedic, and commodities from the district medical store of DHO Mugu that addressed the frequent stock-outs of vaccines, syringes, and essential medicines. The impact was immediate, and previously missed immunizations were caught up during the MCHN clinic days, and for the first time, 100% of the children under his jurisdiction received their vaccinations on time.

As the health post had no sanctioned staff, it was very difficult for him to reach every village during immunization clinics, rural ultrasound camps, and health and nutrition awareness activities. In such a

situation MCHN technical support team proved to be highly effective as the programme included activities that engage mothers' groups and FCHVs. Mr Jaishi has better access to the community people when MCHN team used to make community and household visits; he used these opportunities to spread out the information regarding regular growth monitoring dates, Ante-Natal and Post Natal check-up clinics, and other health services to better serve the people within the area where his health post serves.

Beyond immunization, the programme helped in screening and treating malnourished children while also training health workers and Female Community Health Volunteers (FCHVs) on key maternal and child health issues. There has been problem of frequent staff turnover in Dhainkot Health Post for and such a situation MCHN staff is a huge help as make home visits, engage FCHVs and Mother's Groups which has increased the access of the community people to the health services; and more importantly the health messages can reach to the PLW/Gs and caretakers of the pregnant/breastfeeding women and children below two years of age. The monthly provision of Fortified Blended Food under the MCHN programme attracted all the beneficiaries to the health post. *"The MCHN programme didn't just support our community, it saved lives," Gauri reflects.* His hope is for continued support to ensure these gains are sustained and expanded.

Reviving Hope: How the MCHN Program Breathed Life into a Decade-Long Abandoned Health Facility



Photo: SAPPROS Nepal/Ain Bahadur Sawat

Jima Health Post in Mugu lay abandoned for over a decade due to Nepal's insurgency period. Without staff, medicine, or even basic infrastructure, the health post had become a neglected ruin. However, everything changed when the MCHN programme was introduced in 2014. The health post was located at an eccentric location in a village named Bumcha, so this was not accessible to the majority of the population that this facility was meant to serve. The lack of health workers and lack of service in the health post led to abandonment, due to which the safety of the health facility was compromised. When the health facility was not in use, physical infrastructure deteriorated, due to which the commodities and recording, and reporting tools were also destroyed. There were only immunization clinics till 2014. When the MCHN programme began its service, some local inhabitants were determined to revitalize the long-abandoned health post. Among them were Prem Bahadur Bista and Rajendra Bumi, who served as Health Facility Operational Management Committee (HFOMC) members. The MCHN programme had supported with commodities like weighing machines, otoscopes,

Blood Pressure (BP) machines, stethoscopes, shields, etc. These commodities were meant to support clinic days during growth monitoring, antenatal care, and postnatal care. The commodities supported by MCHN were stored in a private house in Sipa, which was shifted to an extra building of a school.

MCHN Programme stepped in, initially offering services from a rented room provided by a local resident. Slowly, healthcare services reintroduced immunizations, and growth monitoring and maternal health checkups became regular occurrences. As demand grew, additional support from other organizations led to the construction of a new facility, which is now the busiest health post in Soru Rural Municipality.

The revival of Jima Health Post exemplifies to the power of sustained intervention and community-driven healthcare. Residents who once had to travel long distances for basic medical care now have access to essential health services in their own village.



**Improved
Services, Healthier
Communities: The
Impact of the MCHN
Programme**

Photo: SAPPROS Nepal/Ain Bahadur Sawat

For over a decade, Takka Bahadur Malla has been at the forefront of healthcare improvements in Pina Health Post, Chhayanath Rara Municipality-7, Mugu, serving as the chairperson of the Health Facility Operation Management Committee (HFOMC). He witnessed the transformation that took place since the MCHN programme was implemented in 2014/15. Before the programme, the health post struggled with inadequate infrastructure, a lack of basic amenities, and frequent shortages of medical supplies. However, with support from the MCHN team, the facility received much-needed resources. The programme provided an integrated approach, ensuring that pregnant and breastfeeding women, as well as children under two of age, received essential care.

Mr Malla laments how he lost his first child in the 1970s when his son could not get vaccinated. He remembers there were no health services for the mothers and children in his village. To ensure the survival of his second child, he had travelled as far as Jumla on foot so that his wife could get at least antenatal service from Jumla hospital. After he realized the importance of essential health services, he was determined to bring the health services to his village. He feels nostalgic when the health post was initiated in a rented room, then a two-room single-storied earthen structure was constructed for the institution. He recalls how a lack of knowledge used to cost the lives of children and women from diarrhea, dysentery, and seasonal diseases; but as time passed with his contribution, the mortality and morbidity began to drop as health services were available within

their village. Mr Malla vividly recalls when the MCHN Programme was implemented in 2014/15. He exclaims, *“Such a large number of women and children with their caretaker began to flock to the health post during MCHN clinic days, and the health service was given to children below two years of age and pregnant and lactating mothers”*. He felt like his dream had come true when a health education session was conducted all the people of his village and nearby villages began to get health services and were more educated with the support of the MCHN team. Today, Mr Takka said, even to date, he went to the health post and he found all the children are getting vaccinated on time as per schedule, there were regular ante-natal and post-natal check-ups, and all the mothers deliver their children in a birthing center. He proudly expressed his satisfaction that death due to malnutrition was seldom a case except for some unavoidable factors. There were rarely any children suffering from severe acute malnutrition in his village.

Today, Pina Health Post stands as a model institution in the Municipality and in the district, with improved staffing, enhanced infrastructure, and better service delivery. Despite progress, challenges such as poverty and low agricultural productivity still hinder optimal nutritional outcomes. Mr Malla hoped for continued support from MCHN and other development partners to sustain, improve, and expand the health services that have significantly improved his community's well-being.



Nurturing Health in the Himalayas: Strengthening Care for Mothers and Children

Photo: SAPPROS Nepal/Umesh Saud

Bali Raj Shahi, the Health Section Chief in Kharpunath Rural Municipality, Humla, has seen the transformation brought under the MCHN programme. Initially posted as a Health Assistant and later as a health post in-charge, he faced significant challenges in delivering maternal and child healthcare services in this remote district.

Before the programme's implementation, many mothers missed essential antenatal checkups (ANC) and postnatal checkups (PNC), and child growth monitoring was inconsistent. Supply chain issues frequently hindered immunization efforts, leaving many children unvaccinated. However, with MCHN intervention, these gaps were addressed. Mr Shahi is a dedicated health worker who has a very high ambition to perform in the sector of health services. He has been setting ambitious targets to become the best-performing rural municipality in Humla, and he has always sought to set an example in the entire Karnali Province and in the entire nation. Mr Shahi made the best use of health workers and available resources with his leadership qualities, for which the MCHN programme became very helpful as he trained the health workers on HMIS and DHIS2 to strengthen the information system so that an evidence-based program becomes possible. Similarly, he made the best use of MCHN's support during periodic reviews in which each health programs were assessed with a detailed analysis of each and every indicator. He owned the activity of the programme on routine data quality assessment (RDQA) and onsite coaching on HMIS and DHIS2 due to which the recording and reporting improved. On the other hand, he made best use of the MCHN programme's community outreach as the technical assistant

team fully engaged the Female Community Health Volunteers (FCHV) and Mothers' Groups in every community from which the flow of health service to all the beneficiaries was ensured through regular meeting in health facility level and rural municipality level. One of the ambitious goals he had set was to provide growth monitoring to the children below 23 months which was well achieved, the annual performance of 2023/2024 depicts Kharpunath Rural Municipality has average visit of 23 times among the children below two years due to this Kharpunath Rural Municipality has the highest number of average visit not only in Humla but in the entire Karnali Province. Mr Baliraj Shahi has been inspirational not only to the colleagues in his working area but also to the adjoining rural municipalities; due to which Humla district has performed very well in service related to Nutrition during a province-level review. *Mr Shahi says, "The MCHN programme not only improved service delivery but also helped track and reach children who had missed vaccinations, ensuring timely immunization".*

Over nearly a decade, the program has strengthened key health indicators in Kharpunath, particularly in nutrition, safe motherhood, and family planning. Through the early identification of malnutrition and high-risk pregnancies, many lives have been saved. However, challenges remain as poverty continues to be a major barrier to adequate nutrition. Bali Raj Shahi hopes that MCHN will continue its support, ensuring that critical health and nutrition services reach every mother and child in the rural municipality.



**Empowering Local
Health Leaders:
Mr. Kshatra Bahadur
Khatri's Journey in
Strengthening Mother
and Child Health**

Photo: MDI Nepal/ Navaraj Rawal

Since 2014, the Mother and Child Health and Nutrition (MCHN) programme has been transforming the health landscape of Jumla district. Operating across 30 health facilities across each municipality and seven rural municipalities, the programme has delivered transformative support to pregnant women, breastfeeding mothers practicing exclusive breastfeeding, and children aged 6 to 23 months. Through increased nutritional awareness, promotion of locally available foods, and improved access to healthcare services, it has notably enhanced the health and well-being of both mothers and children.

One of the programme's greatest successes is its contribution to building the capacity of frontline health workers, including Female Community Health Volunteers (FCHVs) and government employees. Mr. Kshatra Bahadur Khatri, a Senior Auxiliary Health Worker (Sr. AHW) and Health Facility in charge in Guthichaur Rural Municipality, stands as a shining example of how technical support can empower local health leaders.

For years, Mr. Khatri had been dedicated to serving his community, but he had never received formal training on the Health Management Information System (HMIS) and District Health Information System-2 (DHIS-2), two crucial tools for tracking and reporting health-related data. Without proper training, he struggled with entering and managing nutritional data, often facing errors in reporting.

Everything changed when the MCHN programme, in collaboration with the Government of Nepal and the World Food Programme (WFP), provided district-level HMIS/DHIS-2 training to strengthen the

capacity of health workers. Motivated to improve his skills, Mr. Khatri actively participated in the training, gaining hands-on experience in recording reports on HMIS 9.3, entering data accurately into DHIS-2, and analyzing key nutritional indicators.

Following the training, the programme team provided ongoing onsite coaching, helping health workers like Mr. Khatri strengthen their skills and gain confidence in managing data. He can now independently prepare accurate reports, correct errors, and track key nutrition indicators. Reflecting on his journey, Mr. Khatri shares:

“Before the training, I struggled with HMIS/DHIS-2 reporting and often made errors. Thanks to the MCHN Programme, I can now independently manage data entry and report verification, making my work easier and improving data accuracy. I’m truly grateful for this opportunity.”

Today, Mr. Khatri is not only managing health data effectively but also supporting his colleagues in improving data accuracy and strengthening mother and child health services in his community. His success story exemplifies how technical training and capacity-building efforts under the MCHN programme are empowering frontline health workers to drive sustainable improvements in healthcare.

Through initiatives like these, the MCHN programme continues to foster a skilled, knowledgeable, and self-reliant health workforce, ensuring that mothers and children in Jumla receive the best possible care.



Sustaining Hope: A Rural Municipality's Call to Continue the MCHN Programme

Photo: SAPPROS Nepal/Ain Bahadur Sawat

Chhiring Kyapne Lama, chairperson of Mugum Karmarong Rural Municipality, has long advocated for improved healthcare in his community. Before the MCHN program, access to maternal and child health services was extremely limited, resulting in preventable deaths and widespread malnutrition.

Mugum Karmarong RM was the most disadvantaged area of Mugu. During the winter months, most health workers would leave their workstations, resulting in the disruption of essential maternal and child health services. Those who remained behind often suffered from shortages of basic commodities and the limited services available at health facilities.

Since the introduction of the Maternal, Child Health, and Nutrition (MCHN) programme, the health landscape in Mugum Karmarong has significantly improved. Women now receive regular checkups, children are immunized on schedule, and communities have become more aware of nutrition and hygiene practices. However, Lama emphasizes that continued support is crucial to sustain these achievements. He hopes that the MCHN programme will further expand its reach through ongoing technical support, ensuring that every mother and child in the region receives the care they deserve.



Mother feeding her child during MCHN monitoring in Khandachakra municipality, Kalikot. Photo: WFP/Amrit Gurung



A mother comforts her child during cooking demonstration at Bama Health Post of Mugu district. Photo: SAPPROS Nepal/Iswor Malla



For more information:

UN World Food Programme

Ekantakuna Road, Bhanimandal,
P.O. Box 107, Lalitpur, Nepal Tel: 977-1-5268607