

CHANGE STORIES

Prayatna Project



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Terre des hommes

Helping children worldwide.



The data collection for these Change Stories was conducted through May 2026. Therefore, the context, findings, and reflections presented refer only to the period up to that date. Any interventions or changes that occurred after this period are not reflected in this collection.

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PROJECT BACKGROUND

Shanti Foundation is a women-led non-profit organization founded and led by survivors of sex trafficking who are living with HIV. The Foundation envisions a world free from stigma and discrimination, where survivors of human trafficking and women, youth, and children infected and affected by HIV and AIDS can lead lives of dignity, equity, productivity, and freedom. Through community leadership, Shanti Foundation has worked for over a decade in partnership with the Government of Nepal at the federal, provincial, and local levels, law enforcement agencies, survivor networks, donor agencies, civil society organizations, the private sector, and other stakeholders engaged in anti-trafficking, migration, and HIV response efforts.

Shanti Foundation implemented the Prayatna Project in partnership with Terre des Hommes, with funding from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), and in collaboration with

Kathmandu Metropolitan City from May 2025 to May 2026. The project aimed to prevent exploitation and promote the safety, rights, and well-being of vulnerable populations through community-led initiatives, integrated support services, and advocacy for gender and social justice. The project placed particular emphasis on girls and LGBTQIA+ individuals engaged in, or seeking employment opportunities within, the entertainment and hospitality sector, while also contributing to the development and implementation of policies aimed at improving working conditions in the sector.

The project incorporated both advocacy and service delivery components and engaged a wide range of stakeholders, including local governments, Employment Service Centers (ESCs), Migration Resource Centers (MRCs), workers, community members, employers, civil society organizations working on LGBTQIA+ rights and the entertainment and hospitality sector, law enforcement agencies, and other relevant stakeholders.

Table of Contents

1. Creating a safe space for All	1
2. Living as my True Self	5
3. Choosing Hope, Choosing Courage	9
4. Collaborative Effort for change	11
5. Leading with Pride	14
6. Finding Strength Through Support	16
7. A New Beginning Every Day	18
8. Before It Was Too Late	21
9. Finding Safety, Restoring Hope	23
10. More Than a Job	25
11. Owning My Identity	27

Creating a Safe Space for All

Reena (name changed) was born and raised in Kavrepalanchok district. As she entered her teenage, she began struggling with confusion regarding her gender identity and sexual attraction. At times, she felt attracted to men, while at other times she was attracted to women, which created confusion. However, there was no one with whom she could openly discuss these feelings, and it was very difficult for her to share such confusion with family members, friends, or relatives. Nepali society still remains largely conservative regarding discussions on gender identity and sexuality, as many people continue to perceive such identities as unnatural.

Curious to better understand herself, Reena started exploring different gender identities and sexual orientations. She recalled hearing news about a gay marriage in Nepal and began relating her own feelings to same-sex relationships, particularly because of her attraction toward women. At the age of 15, she



started identifying herself as a lesbian, but that identity still did not fully satisfy her feelings. Over time, she also felt that her interests and identity were closer to that of a transman. During this period, she actively searched online to better understand her identity and looked for organizations working in the area of gender and sexual minority rights issues. Finally, she got an opportunity to associate with Blue Diamond Society where she better understood about the LGBTQIA+ community and right during the Pride Month in Kathmandu and also went to Butwal in 2021, and interacted with community members then she identified her as bisexual person.

In 2022, she took challenge and came out with her gender identity publicly. As expected, she received both negative and positive responses from different people. She also informed her parents about gender identity, and convinced them. Although some relatives still tell her, “You are a daughter and should behave like a woman,” Reena firmly responds, “I cannot live

according to their expectations. I want to be who I truly am, and I feel proud of my gender identity.”

Reena started participating in the programs of the Shanti Foundation through her acquaintance with Anu, who works with the organization. Reena has always been eager to learn new things, and her involvement with the Shanti Foundation provided her with valuable opportunities to expand her knowledge and understanding. While working at the foundation for about three months, she gained deeper insights into issues such as HIV/AIDS, human trafficking, foreign employment, and the challenges faced by people working in the entertainment and hospitality sectors. Through her experience, she also came to realize that sexual and gender minority communities are particularly vulnerable to HIV/AIDS and various forms of social and economic exploitation.

She has not only played an important role in expanding her own knowledge and

understanding of these issues, but has also actively contributed to educating and sensitizing community members. Through the organization's outreach and awareness programs, many participants, particularly belonging the queer community, have gained a better understanding of HIV/AIDS and have become more informed and cautious about related health and social issues.

There has been a significant improvement in the organization's internal understanding of issues related to gender and sexual minorities. Most members of the organization now better understand the depth and seriousness of these issues, which has helped create an environment where gender and sexual minority individuals can feel respected and safe. She shared, "We openly discuss issues and misconceptions related to this community that were previously unclear. I am happy to have contributed to helping the organization better understand and explain issues concerning gender and sexual

minorities, and to support the process of internal transformation toward greater inclusion and acceptance."

Reena has played an important role in connecting gender and sexual minority individuals with the organization. She shared, "If community members are not connected with people from their own community, they may not feel comfortable participating in such programs. Having representation from within the community creates a more trusting and supportive environment." As a result, many gender and sexual minority individuals have had opportunities to participate in the organization's discussions, consultations, awareness programs, and other activities, helping them better understand their rights and experiences. Reena has been playing an effective facilitation and coordination role in this process.

One particular incident strongly reflects the positive impact of her work and continues to motivate her. She met a transman through social media who was experiencing severe emotional

distress. Due to rejection from family and society, being constantly forced to conform to a female identity, and pressure to get married, the individual repeatedly contemplated suicide. Through continuous counseling, emotional support, and encouragement, Reena helped create a safe and supportive space at Shanti Foundation, where he could openly express feelings and experiences. Reena invited him to participate in a group counseling session organized by the Shanti Foundation. For the first day, he didn't speak and share feelings, with continuous encouragement and support from Reena, he gradually began to open up. By the second day of counseling, he was able to express the feelings and struggles he had been carrying within himself for a long time. The counseling process had a positive impact on his mental and emotional well-being. Since then, his participation in public programs and discussions has gradually increased, and he has become more confident in expressing himself openly. Most importantly, his suicidal thoughts

have significantly decreased, reflecting the importance and effectiveness of psychosocial counseling and community support.

Reena says, "Through this project, many people including gender and sexual minorities, workers in entertainment and hospitality sectors, and individuals interested in foreign employment have been made more aware of their rights, safety, and related challenges. I consider this a meaningful achievement."

Living as My True Self

Anu is happy to be recognized as a 'transman'. From around the age of 14, Anu began to feel that the gender assigned to him at birth did not reflect who he truly was. He experienced a deep sense of discomfort and confusion, while also feeling attracted to girls. For many years, he struggled with questions about his identity and faced significant emotional challenges in trying to understand himself.

After completing his higher secondary education (+2) in 2022, Anu happened to see a pride rally taking place on the streets of Kathmandu. He felt an unexpected sense of connection with the people carrying colorful flags and decided to join the rally. As he traveled to the rally with his friends, they asked him about his gender identity, but at that time, Anu himself was still unsure.



As Anu continued searching for answers about his identity, he participated in community orientation programs and connected with others who shared similar experiences. Through these interactions, he gradually came to understand that he was a trans man. While this realization brought him

a sense of clarity and self-understanding, publicly embracing his identity remained a difficult journey.

One day, while discussing a news report about same-sex marriage, Anu's sister asked him, "Are you also part of this community?" This conversation gave Anu the opportunity to share his identity with her. He told his sister that he was part of the queer community, and to his relief, she accepted him wholeheartedly. She encouraged him to "live as who you truly are," giving Anu the confidence to begin openly embracing his identity.

Anu publicly embraced his identity through a poetry show where he performed a poem that explored the experiences of trans women along with often-overlooked realities of trans men. Listening to his poem and hearing him speak about his experiences also helped his parents better understand and accept his journey.

"I am motivated by the love and acceptance I have received," Anu says. "It inspires me to continue advocating for the rights and dignity of the queer community."

Drawing on his own experiences as a trans man, he worked to strengthen the organization's engagement with queer communities and create safer and more inclusive spaces, particularly for individuals working in the entertainment and hospitality sectors.

Expressing his happiness at being able to play a role in educating the organization's team about the queer community and making it queer-friendly, he says, "Many of my non-queer colleagues within the organization have developed a deeper understanding of queer

issues and become more empathetic and confident in engaging with and advocating for the queer community. This transformation, both personal and institutional, is something we achieved together.” Now, people from the queer community are more easily able to engage in the organization’s consultations, discussions, and other activities, and they are able to discuss their issues safely, which is a significant achievement of this project.

Not only this, some people in the queer community have been helped to overcome their identity dilemmas, and the number of people raising their agenda for a respected identity has also increased. According to Anu, counseling services have been provided to people who have suffered humiliation, violence, and discrimination due to their queer identity and have reached depression. Some have had the opportunity to safely share their pain and experiences, while unemployed members of the queer community have



gained increased access to skill-based training programs, such as barista training. The project is also supporting employment opportunities in coordination with the Kathmandu Metropolitan City Employment Service Center.

Anu also represented Shanti Foundation in a national dialogue organized by the then Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens, advocating for the recognition of queer survivors of trafficking as victims of trafficking.

Anu's advocacy journey has continued to grow beyond organizational boundaries. He had the opportunity to serve as the British Embassy's Development Director for a Day, during which he spoke at the UN-organized event "Digital Violence Against Women and Girls" in Nepal. Drawing on his own experiences and advocacy, he called for greater recognition of and action against digital violence affecting queer individuals.

Today, Anu continues to advance his commitment to social justice as a Communication Associate at a queer-led organization. His journey from navigating his own identity to becoming a confident advocate for queer and marginalized communities reflects his determination, resilience, and belief in creating a more inclusive and equitable society.

Choosing Hope, Choosing Courage

At just 19 years old, Garima (name changed) had already experienced more hardship than many face in a lifetime. Having lost her mother during childhood, she grew up separated from her father and under the care of her grandparents in rural Nepal. Instead of finding safety and protection, she experienced abuse from close family members and struggled for years without receiving the support and understanding she needed.

Later, after moving to Kathmandu, Garima struggled to find the care and support she needed and dropped out of school while studying in Grade 10. After leaving her family home and moving in with her sister, she experienced abuse once again from her sister's husband. These repeated experiences of violence and neglect deeply affected her sense of safety, trust, and self-worth.

Seven months later, while still navigating the challenges in her life, Garima got married. However,



another life-changing challenge soon followed. During a routine health check-up, both she and her husband were diagnosed with HIV. The diagnosis left her devastated. She withdrew from others, struggled with overwhelming fear and anxiety, and gradually began to lose hope for the future.

“I felt like I was the only person in the world going through such pain,” Garima recalls.

For nearly three years, Garima rarely left her room and found it difficult to speak to others. However, things gradually began to change when her sister-in-law connected her to the Prayatna Project, where she started participating in psychosocial counseling and group healing sessions.

“I learned that the founder of the organization had experienced struggles similar to my own. Listening to her story, hearing the experiences of others, and receiving counseling support gave me hope,” Garima recalls. “It felt like coming out of the darkness.”

Gradually, Garima began to rebuild her confidence. She learned to express her emotions, manage her anxiety, and advocate for herself.

Reflecting on her progress, the counselor at Shanti Foundation shares, “There was a time when Garima was unwilling to speak to anyone and rarely left her room. Today, she communicates openly with others, and she has even resumed her studies by returning to college to continue her +2 education. She dreams of pursuing her career as a tattoo artist.”

Collaborative Effort for Change

Kathmandu Metropolitan City

As Employment Coordinator at Kathmandu Metropolitan City (KMC), Rashmi Rai has witnessed firsthand the challenges faced by thousands of workers engaged in Kathmandu's entertainment and hospitality sector. Following the government's decision to allow hotels and restaurants to operate around the clock, many workers have faced increasingly difficult working conditions, including long working hours, inadequate rest, lack of transportation after late-night shifts, and limited social protection.

According to Rashmi, workers in the entertainment and hospitality sector, particularly women and members of the queer community, often face additional challenges such as stigma, discrimination, harassment, and violence. "Many workers experience difficulties not only in their workplaces but also while returning home late at night," she explains. "Ensuring their safety, dignity, and access to services is an important responsibility of the state."

Kathmandu Metropolitan City had already been working to address these concerns through its Social Development Department. However, Rashmi believes that the collaboration with Prayatna

Project helped strengthen these efforts by bringing new perspectives and deeper engagement with communities that had often remained invisible within government systems.

“We have been closely monitoring the situation of workers in the entertainment and hospitality sector,” Rashmi says. “Through this collaboration, we have been able to better understand their challenges and explore practical solutions.”

One of the most significant aspects of the collaboration, according to Rashmi, was the placement of a counselor from the queer community within Kathmandu Metropolitan City for two days each week. This initiative not only provided direct support to service recipients but also created an important opportunity for government officials to better understand the experiences, concerns, and barriers faced by queer communities.

“The presence of a representative from the queer community within our office has had a very positive impact,” Rashmi reflects. “It has helped create a more accessible and inclusive environment and made it easier for queer service recipients to seek information, counseling, and support.”

Through this initiative, a total of 50 individuals including 37 members of the LGBTQIA+ community received counseling, information, and referral services. Many of these individuals had never previously accessed services at Kathmandu Metropolitan City. Some were enrolled in the labor bank, while others received skills training, employment support, and referrals to additional services.

Beyond direct service delivery, Rashmi highlights the importance of collaborative advocacy and policy development. In partnership with Prayatna Project, Kathmandu Metropolitan City developed

an informational booklet for workers, employers, and policymakers in the entertainment and hospitality sector. The resource aims to increase awareness of labor rights, encourage responsible employment practices, and promote social protection and workplace safety.

Looking ahead, Rashmi is particularly encouraged by Kathmandu Metropolitan City's efforts to establish an official LGBTQIA+ Community Help Desk. Building on the success of the existing informal support mechanism, the new initiative aims to create a structured and sustainable platform for ensuring that the voices and concerns of queer communities are heard within local government systems.

Reflecting on the partnership, Rashmi says, "This experience has shown us that when communities are represented and their voices are heard, local governments can become more responsive, inclusive, and effective."



Leading with Pride

Dinesh does not see himself as any different from many other members of the queer community. Born in Rupandehi, he experienced discrimination and humiliation from an early age. During his school years, he was often teased by his peers for having a “feminine” voice, leaving him feeling isolated and misunderstood.

In Grade 8, Dinesh began questioning his identity. Through conversations with members of the queer community and his own journey of self-discovery, he gradually came to understand and embrace his identity as a gay man. In 2024, he participated in the Mr. Gay Nepal competition and received the Best Walk Award. The experience gave him greater confidence to publicly embrace and share his identity.

During his high school years, Dinesh also studied law and had the opportunity to intern at a ward office. Later, he moved to Kathmandu to pursue his undergraduate studies in social work. Alongside his studies, he worked with organizations supporting LGBTQIA+ communities.

Dinesh joined Shanti Foundation as a Drop-In Center (DIC) Operator, where he provided counseling and referral services, and served as a key link between queer communities and public institutions. Through Shanti Foundation’s collaboration with Kathmandu Metropolitan City (KMC), he also worked two days each week within the metropolitan office, providing information, counseling, and support services to members of the queer community.

“Queer people often come to us carrying experiences of rejection, discrimination, and deep emotional distress,” Dinesh says. “Being able to listen to them, rebuild their confidence, and help them regain hope is one of the most

meaningful parts of my work.”

Dinesh believes that one of the most significant outcomes of the collaboration has been the growing understanding and acceptance of queer issues within local government. Through ongoing dialogue and engagement, government officials have become more aware of the challenges faced by queer communities and more committed to creating inclusive services.

“I have seen a real change in attitudes,” Dinesh reflects. “Staff members not only understand the issues faced by the queer community more deeply, but they also take them seriously and want to find solutions.”

Dinesh recalls supporting a bisexual woman who was struggling after a divorce and facing significant emotional and financial hardship. Through counseling and coordination with Kathmandu Metropolitan City, he encouraged her to participate in a

vocational training program. She later secured employment as a receptionist at a gym, allowing her to rebuild her confidence and sustain her livelihood.

Reflecting on his journey, Dinesh believes that representation and trust are essential for creating meaningful change. “Many members of the queer community have never felt comfortable approaching government institutions,” he says. “When they see someone who understands their experiences, they feel safer seeking support. I believe we have made important progress, and I am hopeful that we can continue building more inclusive systems and opportunities in the future.”



Finding Strength Through Support

At the age of 22, Priyanka (name changed) left her home in Gorkha and moved to Kathmandu with hopes of pursuing higher education and building a better future. Like many young people who migrate to the city, she soon discovered that balancing education, work, and survival was far more difficult than she had imagined.

To support herself, Priyanka took jobs wherever opportunities were available. After completing her high school education, she worked at a burger house, but left due to labor exploitation and inhumane treatment. Hoping for better opportunities, she found employment at a restaurant, only to face further exploitation and psychological stress.

“I had to accept work that was not necessarily my choice, simply to survive,” Priyanka recalls.

During this difficult period, Priyanka came into contact with the Prayatna Project through its outreach program while working in the restaurant sector. Through the project's Drop-In Center, she began participating in group counseling and psychosocial support sessions.

“The stories, experiences, and struggles shared by others gave me hope,” she says.

Gradually, Priyanka learned practical strategies for staying safe in the workplace and managing stress and emotional challenges. In addition to psychosocial support, she gained important knowledge about safe migration and the risks of labor exploitation. She learned about migration procedures, required documentation, and how to identify and avoid fraudulent practices.

Through Shanti Foundation's collaboration with Kathmandu Metropolitan City, Priyanka also had the opportunity to participate in barista training, enabling her to develop new professional skills and expand her employment opportunities.

Today, Priyanka is moving forward with greater confidence and hope. While continuing to build her professional skills, she also continues to pursue her dream of becoming a singer, believing that with the right support and opportunities, a better future is possible.

A New Beginning Every Day

Born in Khalanga, Jumla, Roshani (name changed) grew up witnessing her family's constant search for better opportunities. Her parents moved between Jumla and Surkhet several times in pursuit of improved livelihoods, and Roshani completed her secondary education in Surkhet.

Like many young people in Nepal, Roshani dreamed of pursuing higher education and building a better future in Kathmandu. Since her sister and brother were already living in the capital, she did not face many difficulties in making the move. After arriving in Kathmandu, she continued her studies while also working to support herself. In 2020, she enrolled in a Bachelor of Business Studies (BBS) program.

However, due to her family's difficult financial situation, Roshani decided to seek employment abroad. After completing the necessary procedures, she migrated to Cyprus with hopes of earning a better income and supporting her future aspirations.

"My dream was the same as many others who go abroad, to improve my life and support my family," Roshani recalls.

Initially, she worked in a household, but the income was insufficient. Hoping to earn more, she left and began working at a hotel. However, after leaving her original employment arrangement, she became undocumented. After working at the hotel

for several months, immigration authorities conducted an inspection, and Roshani was arrested. She spent two months in prison before returning to Nepal in September 2024.

Looking back, Roshani says that her migration journey did not unfold as she had hoped. “If I had known then what I know now, I probably would not have been trapped,” she says.

After returning to Nepal, Roshani found employment in a hotel in Kathmandu. Despite working 12 to 15 hours a day, she received very low wages and often faced delays in payment. The difficult circumstances affected her mental well-being and left her feeling overwhelmed and uncertain about her future.

During this period, a family acquaintance connected her to Shanti Foundation. Through the Prayatna Project’s group counseling sessions, Roshani gradually began to rebuild her confidence.

“At first, I felt uncomfortable speaking about my experiences,” she says. “But as I listened to others and shared my own story, I began to feel safe. We became friends, and my confidence grew significantly.”

Through safe migration orientation programs, Roshani gained important knowledge about migration



procedures, documentation requirements, and the risks of fraud and exploitation. She believes that access to this information earlier could have changed her experience abroad.

After connecting with Shanti Foundation, Roshani also learned about opportunities for skills training through Kathmandu Metropolitan City. She now plans to undertake barista training to strengthen her professional skills.

Although her first migration journey ended in disappointment, Roshani has not given up on her dreams. She hopes to work abroad again in the future through safer and more informed pathways and eventually return to Nepal to establish her own café business.

“I still have dreams,” Roshani says. “This time, I want to move forward with knowledge, skills, and confidence.”

Before It Was Too Late

Mahesh (name changed), a member of the the queer community, came to Kathmandu from eastern Nepal in search of better opportunities. Growing up in a low-income family, he viewed foreign employment as a pathway toward economic independence and a better future.

With this hope, Mahesh applied for employment in Cyprus through a manpower agency. Like many aspiring migrant workers, he believed that foreign employment would help improve his financial situation and support his family. However, things did not go as planned.

An agent and a manpower agency made false promises and encouraged him to pursue overseas employment. Even after eight months, the agency neither provided a clear update on his



departure nor formally rejected his application. The prolonged uncertainty caused significant emotional distress and increased pressure from both work and family responsibilities.

During this difficult period, Mahesh confided in his friend Reena (name changed), who was working with Shanti Foundation and is also a member of the queer community. Through this connection, he had the opportunity to participate in a safer migration orientation program.

Reflecting on the experience, Mahesh says, “While attending the orientation, I felt as though I had suddenly woken up from a deep sleep. As the facilitators explained how people are deceived and how we can protect ourselves from fraud, my eyes were opened.”

By that time, Mahesh had already paid approximately NPR 60,000 to the agent and manpower agency. Later, the agency demanded an additional NPR 220,000 to process his migration. Through the orientation, he realized that the documents prepared by the agency were fraudulent and that he had become a victim of deception.

Immediately after participating in the orientation, Mahesh visited the manpower agency and demanded the return of his documents and the money he had paid. Although he was able to recover his documents, he is still pursuing the return of his money.

Reflecting on his experience, Mahesh says, “I now understand the importance of verifying information and knowing our rights. I plan to pursue legal action to recover my money and hope that others can learn from my experience and avoid similar situations.”

Finding Safety, Restoring Hope

Simran (name changed), a 15-year-old student studying in Grade 8, lives with her single mother, who works in the entertainment and hospitality sector while managing life with a physical disability. Despite facing economic and social challenges, mother and daughter had worked hard to build a stable and hopeful life together.

Their lives changed dramatically when Simran was raped by a neighbor. Despite the significant barriers she faced as a single mother with a disability, Simran's mother demonstrated remarkable courage by seeking justice and ensuring that the case was formally reported.

Although Simran attempted to continue her education, the traumatic experience had a profound impact on her mental health. She struggled with fear and anxiety, difficulty concentrating on her studies, sleep disturbances, and episodes of intense emotional overwhelm. At times, she expressed thoughts of self-harm and a loss of hope for the future.

Fortunately, Simran's mother was already connected to Shanti Foundation's Prayatna Project and was aware of the available psychosocial support services. Through the project, Simran received individual counseling in a safe and supportive environment, where she gradually began expressing her fears, emotions, and concerns. With continued psychosocial support, she slowly regained confidence, improved emotional regulation, and began reconnecting with her daily life and education.

As Simran began to recover emotionally and re-engage with her studies, a serious safety concern

emerged when the perpetrator escaped from the juvenile correction center during the Gen Z protest-related unrest, posing a direct threat to her safety. Following this development, she stopped attending school due to fear and insecurity.

Recognizing the urgency of the situation, the Prayatna Project team and Shanti Foundation leadership immediately coordinated with the National Child Rights Council (NCRC), holding multiple discussions and consultations to ensure her protection. Through this timely joint response, immediate safety measures were put in place.



Simran was safely relocated to a protective environment where she could continue her education in a secure setting, alongside ongoing psychosocial counseling and legal support. She has since resumed her studies near the shelter, with continued support from both the shelter system and NCRC in her ongoing legal process.

Simran's journey reflects the resilience of a young girl who, despite adversity, was able to restore stability and hope through timely coordinated protection, and compassionate care.

More Than a Job

Asmita Giri (name changed), a 24-year-old woman from Kathmandu, holds a Bachelor's degree in Business Statistics and had a strong interest in starting her own business. However, limited financial resources and lack of family support made it difficult for her to pursue her aspirations, leading her to seek employment for survival while continuing her studies.

She eventually began working in a cabin restaurant, where she remained for two years. Over time, she experienced workplace challenges, including irregular wages, unpaid overtime, delayed salary payments, and repeated verbal abuse. The difficult working conditions created significant stress and anxiety, but due to limited alternatives, she continued working to sustain herself.

During this period, she was informed about the services provided by Shanti Foundation in coordination with the Kathmandu Metropolitan City (KMC) Employment Service Center. Encouraged



by this information, she reached out to the Shanti Foundation team and accessed support through the help desk at the Metropolitan City.

Following this, the Shanti Foundation team, in coordination with the KMC Employment Service Center, supported her to enroll in the Labour Bank and apply for job opportunities. She later received news that she had been selected for an interview and eventually secured a position as a Communication Officer at a private mobile phone showroom.

Reflecting on her journey, Asmita shares, “The support I received helped me overcome my anxiety and find a dignified job opportunity. It was one of the happiest moments in my life.”

Owning My Identity

Bibek (name changed), a 23-year-old gay man from an Indigenous community in Bhaktapur, has been passionate about dance since childhood. He later pursued work as a dancer in the film industry while continuing his Bachelor's degree studies. However, due to a non-supportive family environment, he was unable to openly share his gender identity at home or in his workplace.



Although he built his career in dance with dedication, Bibek faced repeated bullying, humiliation, and discrimination due to his gender expression. Within the workplace, he also experienced harassment and unsafe working conditions, including incidents of unwanted physical contact. Over time, these experiences significantly affected his confidence and emotional well-being. With limited job security, lack of family support, and few queer-inclusive opportunities, he began to reconsider his future in the dance profession.

On August 2025, Bibek participated in an outreach activity organized by Shanti Foundation, where he was introduced to available psychosocial support and counseling services. Through these sessions,

he received emotional support to process his experiences of stress and trauma, while also rebuilding his self-confidence.

He was further encouraged through discussions on the history, struggles, and advocacy efforts of gender and sexual minority communities. These interactions helped him strengthen his understanding of his identity and feel more empowered to stand up against discrimination.

Bibek also accessed opportunities for skills development and guidance on more inclusive employment pathways. He shares, “I received opportunities to participate in training programs, along with guidance on employment options in more respectful and inclusive environments.”

Today, Bibek identifies confidently as a gay man and continues to advocate for dignity and respect within his personal and professional life. He has begun to challenge discrimination and speak up against humiliation based on gender identity and sexual orientation.

Bibek’s journey highlights the importance of safe and inclusive work environments, alongside timely support services that help individuals regain confidence and pursue their aspirations with dignity.



Marching in solidarity against trafficking in persons, 2025



Honored with the National Award for Contribution to Anti-Trafficking by the Ministry of Women, Children, Gender and Sexual Minorities, and Social Security, 2025



Validation meeting with the Acting Mayor of Kathmandu Metropolitan City on the review of existing policy frameworks and services

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