



STORIES of HOPE

NEPAL

Women Living with HIV Come Together



Chhiring Doka Sherpa, President of Sneha Samaj, is paving the way for HIV-positive women in Nepal with support from the Emergency Plan.

"I had never been a leader in class or college, but I have become a leader among HIV-positive women in Nepal," states Chhiring Doka Sherpa, President of Sneha Samaj.



Over the past few years, Asia has experienced some of the steepest increases in the number of women living with HIV/AIDS. Latest estimates show some 2.4 million adult women and an estimated 180,000 children were living with HIV/AIDS in Asia at the end of 2005. In Nepal, an estimated 16,000 women over the age of 14 were living with HIV/AIDS in 2005.¹ Through network strengthening and leadership capacity development, the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (Emergency Plan/PEPFAR) works across the region to fight HIV/AIDS by empowering HIV-positive women to participate in policy and program decisions that affect their lives and health.

In 2004, in response to the growing HIV/AIDS epidemic and with support from the Emergency Plan, a group of 15 Nepalese women founded Sneha Samaj, the first support group for women and children living with and affected by HIV/AIDS in Nepal. Sneha Samaj means "community for love and affection."

Sneha Samaj now has more than 30 members and continues to grow. "We feel so united these days," says Anar, a Sneha Samaj member. "We want to do so much for all the women who are HIV-positive. Whenever our friends are ill these days, we look after them, and they also look after us. Sneha Samaj has turned us into caring women."

The organization recently received start-up money to open a shop as an income-generating endeavor. With the funds, they purchased six sewing machines, sewing tables, racks, irons, lights and scissors. The shop employs seven women. Profits from the sale of products go toward Sneha Samaj's treatment and care programs. In the future, with continued PEPFAR support through the POLICY Project, the organization anticipates becoming a strong advocate for issues related to women and children affected by the epidemic.

¹ UNAIDS, Report on the Global AIDS Epidemic, 2006.

The U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief

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