

Nepal

Case study

Helping children affected by armed conflict in Nepal

Aditya, now 24, lives in Nepal. Her family could not afford to send her to school. At 13 years old she was sent to work in the landlord's house as a bonded labourer. "I wanted to go to school to see my friends. However, I never went to school. I had work from early in the morning to late night every day. I hated working," said Aditya.

"I still remember the day when a big group of strangers came to our village. They talked about a cultural program. I got excited about it. My village friends requested me to join them to attend the program and I did. I still wonder if that was the right decision. During the program, I was brainstormed completely by the speech of Maoist leaders about fighting for freedom of people. I had started thinking that I won't have to work as bonded labour and my painful days are gone. Before the program was over, I had already decided to follow the path of freedom.

"I served for three years as a militia of the Maoist Party.

"My daily life changed completely after that day. All my 'friends' changed into 'comrades'. I was given a different name by the party and we used to call each other by this code name. During my three years, I travelled to other districts to finish the enemies.

"My major responsibilities were washing clothes, cleaning, carrying firewood, spying and messenger. There was one more responsibility which I didn't like at all and I don't want to remember. I was raped every night by different commanders. I still remember the day when I was raped the first time. I was raped three times that night. I started feeling that all the things being said about freedom were fake. I wanted to escape from them but didn't get chance.

"We used to stay in the jungle and at night we used to block the highway, cut down trees and plant bombs and ambush. Young kids were involved in these types of work and I was always there. One day we were obstructing a highway by cutting down a tree, gathering stones and planting an electric ambush. Suddenly, we were fired upon. We didn't get time to think anything. There was crossfire. I didn't have any weapon and I was shot on my left arm and stomach.

"I was not unconscious; my friends took care of me. We ran away from there. I cried a lot after hearing that three friends were dead. We moved to another district and I received treatment. After three months, my health condition improved a bit. I asked for home leave and came home. I never went back to the militia.



Aditya has returned home and is now accepted by her community

Photo: Save the Children

“It was difficult at home. My family was not supportive, I was not accepted by the society because of my past and my friends didn’t want to be with me. I had nightmares of days I was raped, I screamed in my sleep, I wet my bed and I was scared of strangers.”

Through Save the Children’s ‘Reintegration of Children/ Youth formerly Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups and Children Affected by Armed Conflict in Nepal’ program, funded by AusAID, Aditya was provided with physiological support and help to generate her own income. She attended three-months of sewing training and was provided with a sewing machine. She has now opened a tailor shop with her friend, and is now earning income for herself.

Save the Children is also running activities in the community to help them understand the situation of children like Aditya. These activities are helping to turnaround the negative perceptions in the community and helping them to accept these children and young people back into society.

The rehabilitation and reintegration of children formerly associated with armed forces and armed groups (CAAFAG) is an integral component of stabilising Nepal and implementing the peace agreement. The process of reintegration presents opportunities for these children to attain normality in their lives, and establishes systems of protection and support. Without this they are at further risk of being re-victimised through re-recruitment into armed groups, trafficking, migration, social stigmatisation and gender based violence, amongst many other serious child protection concerns.

Save the Children has supported more than 25,500 children affected by armed conflict since 2006.

“My psychosocial problems have gone now. I am well accepted by my family and friends. I have started earning some money. The support from Save the Children has given me inspiration to live. Now, I want to get married and live a happy family life,” said Aditya.