

Family of the Month: September 2026

BAHINI EDUCARE FOUNDATION • TANAHUN BRANCH (BEF II)



From Bare Survival to a Future, She Can Choose

Dhan Maya Damai and Her Daughters

Dhan Maya Damai, 54 Mother

Hansa Maya Damai, 26 Married daughter

Gau Maya Damai, 21 Married daughter

Chet Maya Damai, 21 Daughter, left school after Grade IX; now employed

Bishnu Maya, 17 Daughter, currently in Grade X

Dhan Maya joined the Educare Family Program in 2026 and is one of 26 families currently supported by our Tanahun Branch.

After Bahini Educare Foundation expanded into Tanahun, Dhan Maya's family became one of the newest households to come under our care. They are one of 26 families currently supported by our Tanahun Branch.



For decades, Dhan Maya has carried poverty, loss, caste discrimination and the enormous responsibility of raising her daughters alone. She has done whatever was necessary simply to keep her family alive. Today, through BEF's support and Sustainable Futures Initiative, that story is beginning to change. We are not only helping the family meet its immediate needs, but also creating pathways toward education, employment and income that could, in time, allow them to stand on their own.

A Childhood Lost to Poverty and Exclusion

Dhan Maya was born in Vimad, Tanahun, into a poor Dalit (low caste) family that survived through farming and daily-wage labour.

For generations, Dalit communities in Nepal were pushed to the margins of society and denied equal access to land, education, employment and public life. Nepal has made significant progress since, but the effects of that exclusion continue to shape opportunities, particularly in rural communities. Today, Dalits have the legal right to own land, but for families living in deep poverty, owning land remains far beyond their means.



Dhan Maya was the eldest of nine children, with six sisters and two brothers, and responsibility fell on her from an early age. There was barely enough money for food, let alone school. While other children were learning in classrooms, Dhan Maya cared for her younger siblings and worked in the fields.

Her childhood was not a time to dream about what she might become. It was a time to work, endure and learn how to survive.

A Marriage Marked by Loss

Her marriage was arranged to Dil Bahadur Pariyar, ten years her senior, as his second wife. They lived hand to mouth in a rented room in Vimad. He worked occasionally as a tailor, while Dhan Maya worked in the fields for whatever extra income, she could bring home.

Grief came early. Two of their children died in infancy, one after another. Rather than receiving comfort and support, Dhan Maya found herself carrying blame alongside her grief, as her husband's drinking worsened and he became increasingly violent and abusive.

He later took a third wife, a girl of just fifteen, and left the family. Soon this girl escaped his sexual violence and he returned to Dhan Maya. Child marriage remains an issue in Nepal even today, and this is why ***“The Prevention of Child Marriage, remains one of our core objectives”***.

Dhan Maya went on to give birth to eight daughters. **Only four survived.**

Her life became a continuous cycle of pregnancy, childbirth, loss, work and responsibility, with little opportunity to think about her own wellbeing. In 2015, her husband died of jaundice brought on by years of drinking. Dhan Maya was suddenly a widow and the sole provider for the daughters who depended upon her. A small government allowance for widows (around €20 per month) provided some help, but nowhere near enough to cover food, rent, healthcare, school fees and uniforms.

As a poor Dalit woman with no one else to support her, she worked from morning until night, yet could never make ends meet.

When Poverty Takes Away a Daughter's Childhood

As Dhan Maya struggled to hold her family together, the same poverty began shaping her daughters' futures. Two of her daughters, Hansa Maya and Gau Maya, could not continue their education beyond the elementary level. They were married young, not because the family believed they were ready for marriage, but because there were simply no other choices available. For Dhan Maya, marrying off a daughter meant one less mouth to feed, one less person to protect and one less responsibility to carry alone.

It was a decision born from poverty and desperation, not opportunity. The pattern could easily have continued.

Chet Maya, now 21, left school after Grade IX and took whatever small jobs she could find. Without further education or vocational skills, the work available to her was poorly paid and insecure. Her younger sister, Bishnu Maya, 17, was on the same path when BEF entered their lives.

We saw the danger clearly: another daughter was about to sacrifice her education because the family could not afford to keep her in school. Through counselling, encouragement and direct family support, we worked with Bishnu Maya and her mother to keep that door open.

Today, Bishnu Maya is in Grade X. For some families, that may seem like an ordinary fact. For Dhan Maya, it represents a break from a pattern that has already taken so much from her daughters.

When BEF Stepped In

Dhan Maya joined BEF in 2026 through our Tanahun Educare Family Program. Our first responsibility was to ease the immediate pressure on the household through food, healthcare, counselling and education support for Bishnu Maya. But assistance alone was never the goal.

Our objective is not to make families dependent on BEF. It is to help them reach the point where they no longer need us. That is the purpose of our Sustainable Futures Initiative.

Rather than waiting for families to find opportunities on their own, our team assesses each family's circumstances, discusses realistic options, provides counselling and motivation, and then offers practical support to help them pursue a genuine pathway toward income and self-reliance. Dhan Maya's family is now beginning that journey.



From Relief to a Sustainable Income

Through counselling and discussions with our team, BEF identified poultry farming as a livelihood Dhan Maya could manage alongside her responsibilities at home. We supported her to take that first step by providing:

- A purpose-built poultry shed
- Feed and veterinary supplies
- Giriraja chicks, a hardy breed well suited for meat production
- Orientation and ongoing technical guidance and follow-up

Dhan Maya is now running her poultry enterprise. It is still small, and it is still early. But for perhaps the first time in her life, she has an income-generating activity that belongs entirely to her. She is learning, managing and building something of her own.



Creating Opportunity for the Next Generation

Our approach to sustainability does not stop with the mother.

When we saw that Chet Maya's education had ended at Grade IX and that she had few realistic paths toward decent employment, our team counselled and encouraged her to consider vocational training. Through coordination with Pokhara Technical School, BEF supported her through a 65-day housekeeping training programme, which she completed successfully. She is now employed at a hotel in Pokhara, with free food and accommodation, earning NPR 12,000 a month.

For a young woman whose education was cut short by poverty, this is more than a job. It is a chance to make a decent living and reduce the pressure on her mother. Now she can build a future based on skills and confidence, rather than the limitations poverty once imposed upon her.



From Survival to Stability and Self-Sufficiency

This is what our Social Sustainable Futures Initiative is designed to achieve.

For Dhan Maya, sustainability means developing her poultry enterprise into a reliable source of income. For Chet Maya, it means turning vocational training into decent employment. For Bishnu Maya, it means the continuation of her education so that she has choices her sisters never had.

Three women, three different pathways, one family gradually moving from survival toward stability and security.

Thank You

To our donors and partners, thank you for making support like this possible. Your contribution does more than help a family meet its immediate needs. It helps create choices where poverty had taken them away.

Together, we can continue walking beside this family: protecting, caring, encouraging and guiding them out of the shadow that has been cast upon their ancestors for centuries.

It's simple.

It's simply BEF.

With sincere gratitude,

Surendra, Raymond & Team
Bahini Educare Foundation

