

The Freed Kamlari Development Forum

An amazing transformation is happening in Nepal. Vulnerable girls who were rescued from the Kamlari system of child slavery are now free — and they're becoming powerful young women who are leading the way to a better life for themselves and their communities.

The *Freed Kamlari Development Forum* (FKDF) is a Nepalese nonprofit organization of former Kamlari girls created and supported by the *Nepal Youth Foundation* (NYF), a U.S. based nonprofit that works to provide what should be every child's birthright: freedom, health, shelter and education.

Founded in 2010 and headquartered in Nepalgunj, the FKDF now has five local chapters with a total of 1,375 members working on a variety of projects in their home communities in Western Nepal.

The work of the FKDF is focused on:

Rescues An estimated 250-400 girls are still trapped in Kamlari slavery. FKDF works in collaboration with local government officials and the police to locate and rescue the remaining Kamlaris. These final rescues are challenging, since most Kamlaris still being held are believed to be in the homes of prominent people in business and government.

Peer Counseling Every girl who served as a Kamlari has suffered traumatic loss and abuse during their childhood. With training and supervision from the staff of NYF's *Ankur Counseling Center*, FKDF peer counselors provide emotional support for former Kamlaris, along with a referral service for those who need more help. There are now 50 FKDF peer counselors and five assistant counselors conducting 145 monthly support groups with 2,025 participants.

Business Cooperatives To make a better life for themselves and their community, FKDF members are supporting each other in building their own businesses — a key to stimulating the grass roots economic develop that will ensure the Kamlari practice can never take hold again.

There are now 37 FKDF business co-ops in Western Nepal with over 2,600 members. Many of the members have participated in NYF's *Vocational Education and Career Counseling* program to learn specialized skills that they now use in their own businesses.

NYF provided \$30,000 to start the co-op loan fund, which FKDF members administer, and more than 750 young women have successfully launched their own businesses. To date, co-op members have already reinvested \$40,000 back into the co-op loan fund.

Children's and Women's Rights FKDF members champion the rights of children and women in their communities in Western Nepal. For example, FKDF members educate girls and their families that child marriage is against the law, and encourage girls to stay in school or vocational training. Street plays and interactive programs are used to raise awareness on themes like child labor, and the anti-kamlari activities are publicized through local FM radio.

Advocacy FKDF members speak out for the rights of former Kamlaris in public forums and in negotiations with government officials. A priority issue is the continuing problem of slow and inadequate payment of government scholarship grants owed to the former Kamlari.