



Still We Rise

*Portraits of Courage and Everyday
Resistance*

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Still We Rise: Portraits of Courage and Everyday Resistance

A collection of Photo stories by Blind Youth Association Nepal (BYAN) in collaboration with CBM

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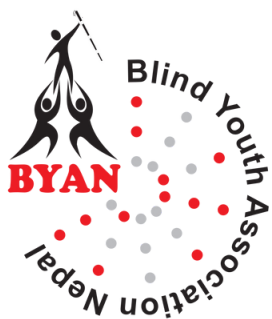
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Acknowledgement

Persons with disabilities have long faced exclusion and underestimation, particularly in creative fields like photography. Society often assumes that individuals who are blind or visually impaired cannot tell stories through images. This photostorytelling initiative by BYAN challenges that misconception and highlights the power, creativity, and voices of persons with diverse disabilities.

On behalf of the Blind Youth Association Nepal (BYAN), I extend my sincere gratitude to the CBM Global Disability Inclusion Nepal and UK teams for making this unique and empowering project possible. Your support has opened new doors for inclusive expression and representation.

Special thanks to Mr. Kishor Sharma for his excellent guidance and facilitation. His mentorship was instrumental in building the confidence and skills of our participants.

Our participants, through both virtual and in-person training, have beautifully captured the lived realities of persons with disabilities. This book is a proud testament to their strength, creativity, and dedication.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to this inspiring journey.

Ramchandra Gaihre

President

Blind Youth Association Nepal (BYAN)





The House of Courage: The Story of Sita Kumari

Ranjita Sah

In Mahagadhimai Municipality-10 of Bara district, in Nepal's Madhesh Province, lives a strong and passionate woman named Sita Kumari. Born with a physical disability, Sita has spent most of her life alongside her mother, even though she has three brothers. A few years ago, her mother passed away. Since then, Sita has been living alone.

The house she currently lives in is not legally hers. It lacks basic infrastructure—there are no proper windows, no drainage, no running tap water, and no proper toilet. During the rainy season, the roof leaks, making her living conditions even more difficult and unsafe.

Sita has no stable source of income. Her only financial support is the social security allowance she receives, which barely covers her daily meals. Without access to clean drinking water and a toilet at home, everyday life becomes even more challenging, she shares.

Due to her physical condition, she cannot manage most household chores on her own. To help with essential tasks like cleaning, organizing clothes, and cooking, she has hired a woman on a daily wage basis. This support is essential for her to maintain her daily life with some degree of comfort.

Living alone, Sita often spends her days sitting at the roadside nearby, chatting with passing children, elderly neighbors, or simply watching life unfold around her. Sometimes she sings, sometimes she laughs and plays with children, finding joy in small, shared moments.

“Those who have no one, have God,” she says with a quiet smile. Sita believes that everyone suffers in different ways—some from poverty, others from loneliness, illness, or social exclusion. However, she also believes that it is the spirit of community—of being there for one another—that truly matters during times of hardship.



The Path of Peace: Chandra Bahadur's Inspiring Journey

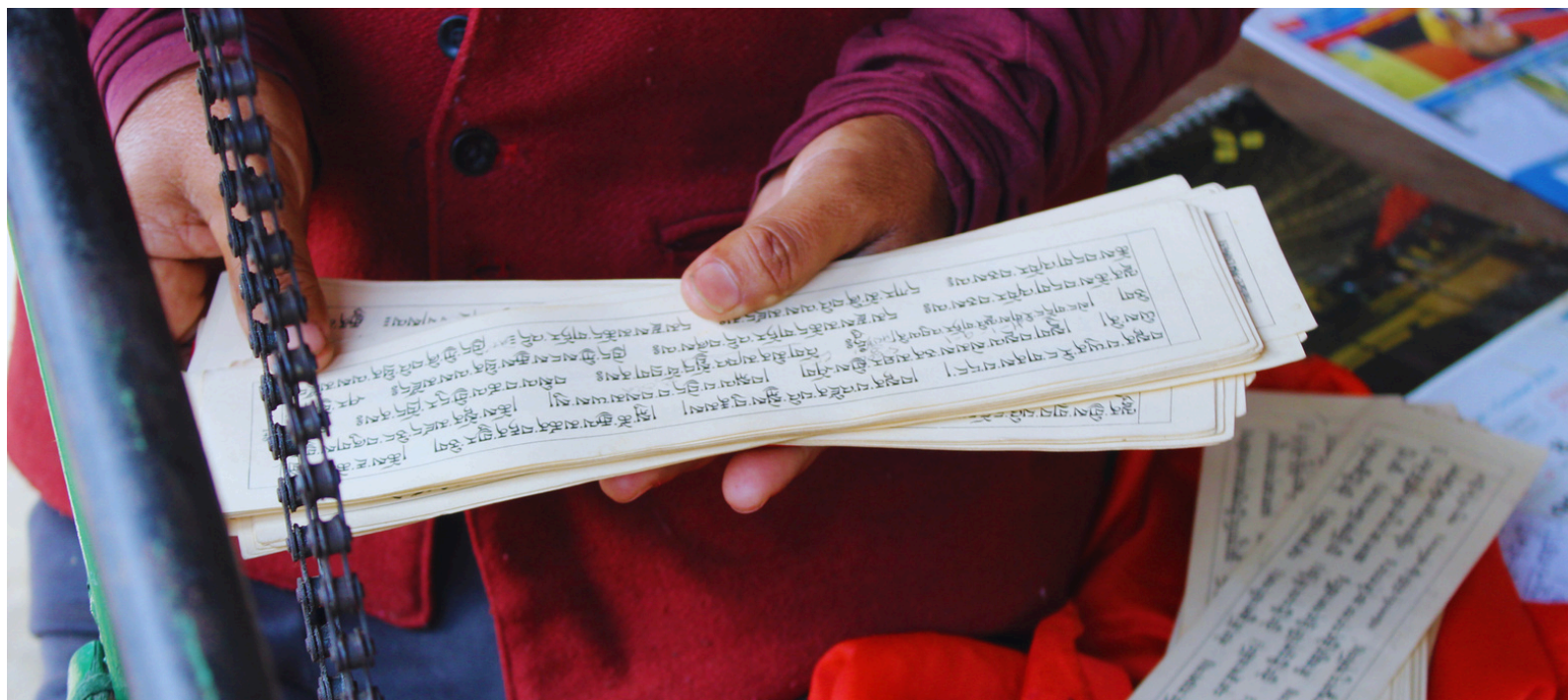
Jyoti Kumari Jha



Chandra Bahadur Waiba, a resident of Rajghatta in Jitpur Simara Sub-Metropolitan City-14, is not only a revered Buddhist priest but also a strong and unwavering advocate for the rights of persons with disabilities. Born with a physical disability, Chandra Bahadur faced immense challenges in his early years due to a lack of support and accessibility. Yet, it was through these very struggles that he found inner strength, emerging not only as a spiritual guide but as a source of hope and inspiration for others.

He visits homes in the local Buddhist community to lead rituals, chant mantras, and conduct traditional ceremonies. Through regular prayers, meditations, and teachings at the nearby monastery, he keeps the wisdom of the Buddha alive in his community. "Dharma brings peace," he says. "It shows the right path and gives hope in life."

But Chandra Bahadur's identity goes far beyond that of a religious leader—he is also a deeply devoted and empathetic father. His teenage daughter lives with an intellectual disability, and he works tirelessly to ensure she has access to education, independence, and a life of dignity. He coordinates with government offices to secure the services and support she needs.





Yet his advocacy doesn't stop with his daughter—he raises his voice for the rights of all persons with disabilities in his community. “All I want,” he says, “is for my daughter to have the same opportunities as everyone else, to build her own identity.”

His dedication and determination are driving meaningful change in the community. Through his quiet yet persistent efforts, he is reshaping perceptions around disability and guiding society toward a more inclusive and compassionate future.

“I’ve overcome many obstacles in life,” Chandra Bahadur reflects. “But they made me stronger. Now, I only hope that no one else has to go through the pain I once did.”



A Journey in a Wheelchair: Steps Toward Self-Reliance

Matrika Adhikari

Dudhkali Karki spent her childhood in the hilly village of Chaukune Rural Municipality in Surkhet district. The terrain was steep and unforgiving—much like the path her life would take. Born with a physical disability, she never got the chance to run, play, or attend school like other children in her village. But even when her body limited her movements, her mind clung tightly to one unwavering dream—the dream of education.

At the age of 14, Dudhkali was taken to INF Hospital in Birendranagar for treatment. After six months of care, the hospital provided her with a wheelchair. That wheelchair became more than just a mobility aid—it was the first real step toward her independence.

At 15, she enrolled in the local public school for the first time. There was no ramp, no accessible infrastructure to support her needs, but she persevered. She completed Grade 5, overcoming daily physical and social obstacles just to get to class. Each difficult day only made her resolve stronger. Determined to continue her education, Dudhkali moved to Krishna Sanskrit and General Secondary School in Ward 7 of Birendranagar Municipality. She is currently studying in Grade 11 with Nepali as her major subject. “I dream of using modern technology to brighten my future,” she says with quiet determination.





Alongside her formal education, she is also building practical skills. After completing a three-month basic computer training course at Sahara Institute, she is now enrolled in a six-month diploma program.

She cooks for herself, goes to school, and learns computer skills—all on her own. In every step she takes, you can see the quiet but fierce ambition of someone determined to carve her own path. Her daily life is a testament to the belief that with education and skills, she can become fully self-reliant.

Dudhkali's story is not only about living with a disability—it is a powerful reminder of the possibilities that emerge when dignity, education, and perseverance come together. Her journey reflects not just resilience, but the right to dream and the courage to chase those dreams, one determined step at a time.



Keshab Rokka: A Story of Resilience and Determination

Lasta Maharjan

Keshab Rokka is a Deaf man who has lived with a physical disability in his leg since birth. Born in Lalitpur, he now lives in Basdhari with his mother, wife, and daughter—a life grounded in determination, love, and quiet resistance.

Growing up in a family of eight, communication was one of Keshab's biggest challenges. His family relied on natural domestic signs but never learned Nepali Sign Language. This created a gap that made him feel emotionally distant, even within his own home. Over time, his two brothers married and moved out, shrinking his immediate support system further.



In 2053 B.S., Keshab enrolled at the Central Secondary School for the Deaf in Naxal, Kathmandu. He stayed in the hostel, returning home only during major festivals and school breaks. Away from home, he found a sense of belonging among peers who could communicate with him. He completed both his SLC and higher secondary education there.

Keshab lost his father at a very young age and remembers little about him. His childhood was marked by solitude—there were no other Deaf friends nearby, and without access to the internet, connection felt out of reach. Though he longed to meet people and experience the world beyond his home, his leg pain and the lack of accessible infrastructure held him back.

Whenever he could, he traveled by bus to Lagankhel, where movement was a bit easier. Still, barriers remained. Public spaces were rarely accessible, and most people didn't understand sign language. This made even small interactions exhausting, reinforcing his sense of exclusion.

His journey toward economic independence began when Building Strong Families (BSF) supported him in starting a small goat farm. He learned about BSF through a friend and later met with their team in Dhaphakhel, Ward 24 of Lalitpur Metropolitan City. The organization provided him with four goats, and Keshab poured his energy into caring for them. Eventually, they gave birth to three kids.

To help pay for his daughter's education, Keshab sold a male goat. But the transaction was not easy—communicating with buyers who didn't understand sign language was a constant challenge. He relied on natural gestures, which sometimes worked, but not always. Each of these encounters reminded him of the everyday obstacles he faces simply because the world hasn't learned to listen differently.

His family is his anchor. His wife supports the household by working on the farm. Together, they shoulder the responsibilities of daily life. Determined to secure a better future for their daughter, Keshab wrote to the municipality requesting educational support. His request was denied. Still, he did not give up. He continues to advocate, writing letters, seeking help—holding onto hope with unwavering resolve.

Keshab dreams of expanding his goat farm into a thriving business. He also plans to start a poultry farm, hoping to strengthen his family's financial stability and open up new possibilities for his daughter's future. These aren't just dreams; they are steps he is already taking toward a future he refuses to let slip away.

Though often left out of the conversations around him, Keshab speaks powerfully—in gestures, in actions, and in unshakable resilience. His story is not just about surviving adversity; it is about building a life with purpose and pride. And if we learn to truly listen—not just with our ears, but with intention and empathy—we'll understand what Keshab has been telling us all along: inclusion is not a favor, it is a right. And dignity, like his, needs no translation.



Love, Silence, and Companionship: The Story of Mandika

Anuska Maharjan

Thirty-seven-year-old Mandika Khadgi lives in Lalitpur and is a woman with an intellectual disability. Though she cannot speak, her gestures and radiant smile speak volumes. Deprived of formal education, Mandika lives each day alongside her mother, who cares for her with deep affection. She needs support with daily activities—eating, personal hygiene, and moving around—but her presence and dignity remain ever intact, with her mother lovingly by her side.

Mandika recently turned thirty-seven. A fall not long ago caused her to lose a few teeth, which brought discomfort, but it couldn't dim the brightness of her smile. Her face still carries the same warmth and glow, a reflection of her spirit that endures.

She spends most of her time in her room or on a small balcony at home. When she needs to go outside, family members accompany her. For Mandika, home is more than a place—it is a source of warmth, safety, and belonging. Her closest companion is her dog, Coco, who rarely leaves her side, offering constant comfort, security, and connection.

Mandika's mother, a former health volunteer, now devotes herself fully to her daughter's care. At this stage in life, she is also battling cancer. Despite the exhaustion and the physical toll of treatment, it is her love for Mandika that gives her strength. Every morning, she lovingly feeds her daughter—not out of pity or sacrifice, but as a natural expression of the deep bond they share as mother and daughter.

Sometimes, tears well up in her mother's eyes—not as a sign of weakness, but as a quiet testament to the emotional weight of this journey. A mother has the power to read her child's emotions without words. In their world, a language beyond speech deepens their connection.

Each day, Mandika starts with a small pill. It supports her body, but perhaps even more, it gives her courage—a quiet signal of hope and the strength to face the world.

Lately, her mother shows more signs of fatigue and pain. Yet in between treatments and daily care, she softly says, "I still want to spend many more moments with you." In that simple wish lives a universe of love, hope, and the preciousness of time.

Mandika's days may not follow a strict routine. At times, she throws clothes or money off the balcony. Occasionally, she's left alone at home. But she is never truly alone. Within her world lives a powerful rhythm of affection, connection, and quiet resilience. Her smile, her inner strength, and the unwavering companionship around her create a world that can inspire us all—a world where silence holds stories, and companionship becomes its most powerful language.





Shreeram's Bright Vision

Shibendra Yadav

Born in a village in Sarlahi, Shreeram Yadav has been full blind since birth. Yet, his outlook on life has always been clear—resilient, determined, and hopeful. Today, he is pursuing his second year of undergraduate studies at Thakur Ram Multiple Campus in Birgunj, where he also lives in the student hostel.

Every morning, Shreeram begins his day independently—cleaning, cooking, and studying. He uses Braille to read and supplements his learning by accessing digital materials through his smartphone. Keeping pace with technology, he is moving forward with confidence and purpose. “Braille is not just our language,” he says, “it is our identity. Its preservation and promotion are our responsibility.”

But Shreeram is more than a hardworking student—he has a deep understanding of social issues and speaks openly about them. From advocating for accessible banking services and road safety to calling for inclusive public infrastructure, his voice is clear and compelling. He reflects, “Being denied services because of blindness is not just the failure of the state—it’s an injustice sustained by our collective silence.”

With unwavering positivity, Shreeram remains hopeful about social transformation.



Classmates who once distanced themselves from him now study, eat, and laugh with him as close friends. A passionate cricket lover, he occasionally joins his friends on the field—batting, bowling, and fielding with equal enthusiasm. “We’re not claiming we can do everything,” he says, “but the assumption that we can’t must end.”

In conversation with his friend Shibendra, Shreeram often repeats a powerful line: “It’s no longer enough to ask for our rights—we need to be at the table where decisions are made.”

Shreeram’s story echoes the voices of thousands of blind and individuals with disabilities across the country—voices not asking for sympathy, but demanding equal opportunities and meaningful participation in the decisions that shape their lives.





Brave Madan: A Life That Keeps Moving Forward

Dharmaraj Rawal

Born in October 1995 in the then Taranga-4 of Surkhet district, Madan Karki is now 29 years old. He comes from a humble farming family. His family includes his mother, father, sister, younger brother, and a younger sister. Agriculture was the main source of income, and his father also worked as a skilled carpenter.

Madan's childhood was like that of many boys growing up in rural Nepal—he would go to school, help his parents with household chores, and spend the rest of his time playing with friends. One ordinary day, after returning from school and dropping off his bag, he climbed a jamun tree to pick some fruit. But in a tragic twist of fate, he slipped and fell, striking a rock hard on his back. That single moment changed his life forever.

After the fall, Madan lost movement in the lower half of his body. His family was plunged into grief, his education came to a halt, and days turned into nights filled with medical visits and desperate remedies. When local herbal and home treatments failed to help, the family brought him to Bir Hospital in Kathmandu after a month. But by then, it was too late—doctors diagnosed him with a spinal cord injury, which had already reached an irreversible stage.

But Madan didn't stop there. Instead of giving in, he began to ask himself: How do I make the rest of my life meaningful? That question became his strength.

After receiving primary treatment and rehabilitation, he returned home. However, the lack of accessible infrastructure and the remoteness of his village made living there difficult. So, on the 8th of Ashoj, 2065 B.S., Madan relocated and re-enrolled in school at Dhodekhali. That marked the restart of his academic journey—one he pursued with renewed determination. Today, he holds a master's degree.

Madan is now skilled in operating computers and laptops. He earns money by investing in IPOs and the stock market, covering his personal expenses, while his family continues to rely on goat and buffalo farming for income.

A passionate disability rights advocate, Madan serves as the president of the Spinal Injury Association in Surkhet. He also works to raise awareness about sexual and reproductive health rights among persons with disabilities. With financial support from CBM and through BYAN Surkhet's 'Action for Change' project, he completed a four-day peer educator training and now shares vital SRHR information with others in his community.

Madan is equally active in sports. He regularly participates in wheelchair basketball, table tennis, and cricket—proving that movement isn't just physical, but a matter of spirit. Now, he is preparing for the Public Service Commission exams, aspiring to enter government service and continue creating change from within the system.





She Is an Inspiration in Herself

Bishnu Maya Danuwar

In her own words, life with all its light and trials goes like this:

"Life is a blend of steep paths and level roads.
Even in pain, there's a mission to move forward.
Let dreams be veiled by clouds—it's okay.
Struggle long enough, and you'll find the light."

These lines were penned by Aitimai Tamang—a strong, confident, and creative young woman who was born blind. She is originally from Dhusikot, Ward 3 of Balephi Rural Municipality in Sindhupalchok district. Growing up, Aitimai faced a childhood filled with hardship. Her family had limited awareness about disability, and economic struggles made things even harder. But she embraced these challenges with inner strength and unwavering willpower.

Crossing difficult geographical terrains and navigating through social barriers, she made it to the district headquarters and completed her SLC. She now lives independently in Chyamasingh, Bhaktapur, and is in the fourth year of her Bachelor's degree at Khwopa College.

For nearly six years, Aitimai has lived in the city alone. Embracing the many facets of life, she has continued to move forward without relying on anyone. Each day, she faces challenges: navigating unfamiliar roads, dealing with strangers, and feeling the weight of solitude. Yet, she says, “I’ve learned to be my own source of courage.”

Her daily life is rich and diverse. She attends college, writes poetry and verses, studies, participates in programs, and when time allows, finds peace walking around Kamalpokhari. On campus, she enjoys spending time with friends, sharing her experiences, and learning from theirs.

She says, “My closest companion is my white cane.” This cane has become her symbol of independence and mobility.

Aitimai has always had a deep love for learning. Drawn to literature, she dreamt of becoming a government school teacher from a young age. And today, she’s living that dream. She passed the competitive Teacher Service Commission exam and now teaches at the primary level at Shree Saraswati Secondary School in Chauri Deurali Rural Municipality, Ward 4, in Kavrepalanchok district.

For Aitimai Tamang, confidence is her greatest strength. She believes: “With courage and hard work, there is nothing you cannot achieve.”



Inner Strength Amidst Barriers: The Story of Tika Maya Madan Rokaya

Twenty-two-year-old Tika Maya Tamang is currently pursuing her undergraduate studies in Kathmandu. She is a person with visual disability. Born into a low-income family in a rural village of Udayapur, Tika Maya is now carving her own path, navigating life with courage, resilience, and unwavering self-belief.

Since childhood, she lacked the love and support one would expect from family—her disability often met with indifference rather than care. Coming from an economically fragile background, she has had to continuously struggle even for her daily expenses. With no financial support from home, Tika Maya walks the streets of Kathmandu selling incense sticks to cover her living and education costs. Some days she earns enough, other days she doesn't—but she has never allowed instability to defeat her.

Tika Maya is not just surviving—she is self-reliant. She cooks, washes, shops, and studies—all on her own. Despite the long days, physical exhaustion, and constant scarcity, she remains committed to her education. Even when faced with hardship and neglect, she refuses to compromise on her learning and continues to move forward.

Every day brings a new challenge. Yet Tika Maya holds tightly to her dreams. Despite social exclusion, economic insecurity, and the unpredictability of her income, she pushes ahead, driven by the hope of a brighter future.







Her story is not just one of personal struggle—it is a powerful testament to inner strength, independence, and the refusal to let barriers define one's path.

“Obstacles can break, opportunities can be created, and with relentless effort, the impossible becomes possible.” Tika Maya's journey is a living, breathing reminder of just that.

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Writers And Photographers



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