

The decade-long Maoist insurgency has destabilized Nepal's peace – taking 13,000 lives from among civilians, insurgents, and the army. While the conflict has abated, many families have lost their male heads of household, leading to economic hardship in a culture where men have been the primary breadwinners. Women are stepping forward to become the new breadwinners, working hard but often lacking the skills and resources they need to provide for their families. Our project will focus on helping these women gain new skills and establish a reliable source of income for their families, lessening the economic hardships created by this war.

Project Outline

Project Coordinators: Suman Gautam '10 and Annada Rajbhandary '10

Goal: To help women of families affected by the war become economically independent. By mutually working together, these women – whose families have fought on both sides of the conflict – can share their misfortune and uplift their conditions, which will help to foster genuine and long-term peace.

Project Period: 4 weeks

Project Location: The program will be conducted in Chitwan district, 110 miles away from Kathmandu, Nepal. About 104 incidents occurred in Chitwan both from insurgents and government during insurgency period leaving many families affected.

Objective:

The project is comprised of two parts. The first part focuses on income generating trainings, and the second part establishes a credit-based fund that will help the women start their own businesses.

I) The trainings will include animal husbandry and cotton weaving.

- a) **Cotton Weaving** – The women will be trained to make threads out of cotton. The project will provide them with cotton weaving machines. Experts from a cotton weaving factory will provide a week-long training to the women. We will also arrange a meeting between the manager of the factory and local women. The cotton factory will provide raw cotton to the women and later buy woven threads from them. This way woman can have an easy access to the market and start their own cotton weaving business.
- b) **Animal Husbandry** – The locals will be trained to raise domestic animals like goats, buffalo, and cows in technical and affordable way. Experts from the district agriculture office of Chitwan will provide the training. The women can then begin a business of animal products. Since meat and milk products have high demand, animal raising can be a good source of money.

II) Fund Establishing: Our project will work on establishing a credit-based fund that women who participate in the training can access. After the women have been trained, they can apply to the fund for a micro-loan that will help them start their own businesses. This part of the project will concentrate on supporting women financially. While they are being trained in cotton weaving and animal husbandry, the women will also be taught how to manage, repay, and circulate credit funds efficiently.

Plans:

- Step 1: Meeting with the trainers at the Chitwan District Red Cross. (Day 1)
- Step 2: Orientation program- This program will be conducted in the village itself. We will conduct door-to-door publicity, explaining the benefit of the project and requesting local women to join the training program. (Day 2-4)
- Step 3: Skill-based trainings on animal keeping, and cotton weaving. (Day 6-20)
- Step 4: Establishing the credit-based fund (Day 16)
- Step 5: Training women to manage and circulate the fund. (Day 16-24)
- Step 6: The Chitwan District Red Cross will take over the project and replicate it elsewhere and monitor the credit-based fund in the long term. (Day 26)

Feasibility:

Our project is focused on low-cost businesses and trainings that will be very effective in Nepal. \$10,000 is a very big sum of money in Nepal, which can be used cost effectively to execute this project. The Chitwan District Red Cross has provided a lot of advice to us about this project, including helping us develop a realistic budget, and has helped us make contact with the trainers and others who will take part in the trainings. The political situation has greatly improved, as the insurgents and the Government have agreed to work together to establish peace. Therefore, the improved security of the country will also help make the project viable.

Expected Outcome:

By the end of the project, we expect about 35 women of different families to be trained. They will know about savings, repayment, and funding. They will work for themselves to start a business. Moreover, we expect additional women to join in future training cycles run by the Chitwan District Red Cross after seeing the successful outcome for their friends and neighbors. In the long run, we expect this project to help uplift the insurgency-hit economy of Nepal.