

DAVIS Community Shower in Kalikot District, Nepal
Led by Soniya Sanam Tamang || Wartburg College || UWC Thailand '19
04/01/2022 - 08/30/2022

Cultural Context and Challenge:

Nepal, a small country that lies between India and Tibet (China) is decorated with diverse groups of people, religions, ethnicity, languages, festivities, and tradition. However, there are deeply rooted taboos that haunt girls and women on a daily basis, Chhaupadi Pratha is one of them. Chhaupadi Pratha is a taboo where girls and women are abandoned in a menstrual hut or cow shed throughout their menstrual cycle. This blind belief is heavily practiced in the far-western region of Nepal, in the Kalikot district. Poverty, illiteracy, and gender inequality have also reigned for centuries in this region. Being on a menstrual cycle, a natural biological cycle that is vital in girls' and women's mental and reproductive health, is considered impure and a sinful act that brings misfortune to the family and livestock. Kalikot district is situated at an elevation of 738m to 4790m from the sea level where the average temperature fluctuates between 12.6 to 2.2 degrees Celsius (55 to 36 degrees Fahrenheit). Due to high elevation; the water temperature drops down making it extremely difficult to take a shower for girls and women.

Access to a safe, and hygienic space for menstruating girls and women is the subject of Human Rights. The report, *Supporting the Rights of Girls and Women through Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) in the East Asia and Pacific Region*, by United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) outlines the challenges, opportunities, and progression of Human Rights through Menstrual Hygiene Management. According to this report, the consideration of Menstrual Hygiene Management leads to improved psychological health, better educational outcomes, improved sexual and reproductive health, and enhanced dignity throughout the lives of girls and women. His Holiness the Dalai Lama once said, "Peace does not mean an absence of conflicts; differences will always be there. Peace means solving these differences through peaceful means; through dialogues, education, knowledge; and through humane ways." Understanding societal and cultural context is important to understand the issues that are rooted in villages like Mahawai and providing basic human rights through humanitarian actions will preserve and strengthen human relationships and erase societal issues such as Chhaupadi, allowing girls and women to develop to their fullest potential.

Project Description:

DAVIS Community Shower is a community-run project by and for girls and women of Mahawai Rural Municipality. This intended community shower will be sustained through solar panels to warm the water for women to shower and stay hygienic. The shower house will have three to four shower sections where women can take showers privately and wash their reusable menstrual pads without any fear of being seen. Even though, a girl or a woman might have a menstrual pad or reusable pad to soak their menstrual blood, the fear of judgment and taboo in the society creates a challenge for them to stay hygienic. Currently, girls and women in the community either have to go to a shared community tap early in the morning or late in the evening to wash their menstruation pads and bodies if they can even tolerate ice-cold water due to dropping temperature in high elevation. Therefore, providing a safe space to allow them to wash their bodies with a warm shower will help practice good menstrual hygiene management skills which ultimately leads to increased self-esteem, especially for young girls.

Project Objectives and Targeted Outcomes:

The main objective of this project is to help girls and women become confident with who they are and embrace their monthly natural cycle without fear of judgment from others. Providing a warm, safe, and secure facility is one way we can work to accomplish this objective. Another objective of this project is to bring more awareness around good menstrual hygiene management practices and improve the perspectives of menstruation among residents of the village. This project will partner with the Oda Foundation to run a session that will educate girls and women about good menstrual health management practices. In addition to my short-term goals of providing education and building a safe and secure facility for healthy menstruation practices, the long-term goal for this project is to help address negative connotations around menstruation and to help normalize menstrual health practices within the village.

Partnership Relationships:

- **Oda Foundation:** Karan Singh, co-founder of Oda Foundation, is a local resident of Mahawai Rural Municipality. I met him through an Alum of UWC who had worked as a CEO within the organization.
- **Engineers from Mahawai Rural Municipality:** Prakash Shahi and Nabin Shahi are working with the local government to ensure the architecture of the building meets governmental guidelines.
- **Contractor:** Bir Bahadur Singh who will be constructing the facility and installing solar panels.

Project Timeline:

Prior to departure in April, I will be focusing on collaborating with local engineers, Prakash Shahi and Nabin Shahi, to finalize the structure of the facility and sign an electronic contract with a local contractor, Bir Bahadur Singh. Additionally, I will contact suppliers for the facility, such as solar panels, plumbing materials, lights, etc. with the help of Karan Singh, co-founder of a partnering organization.

- June Week 1: Confirm plans with contractors, engineers, and partners.
- June Week 2: Confirm supplies, order any final supplies.
- June Week 3: Organize supplies in a secure location with the help of Karan Singh, Oda Foundation. Begin construction of facility.
- June Week 4- July Week 3: Construction of facility.
- July Week 4: Construction completed, inspect, and prepare facility for usage.
- August Week 1- Week 4: Promote usage of facility through education sessions. Train women how to utilize facility, and document usage.

Project's Impact and Sustainability:

The project is sustainable, especially because the estimated life of solar panels lasts from 25-30+ years. This will allow the community to utilize the solar panels without any issues for many years after installation. DAVIS Community Shower will allow women to stay safe and healthy, physically and mentally. Research has shown that good hygiene and safety correlate with one another. The Oda Foundation, a partner organization working on site, will be a great resource for the continuation of this project and it's service to the targeted audiences. The Oda Foundation will take responsibility for the facility when I depart after the completion of my project. However, after my departure, I will also work remotely with the organization to ensure the project progresses in the village.

Women's rights have often been compromised and even neglected in developing countries all around the world. When one faces hardship their own rights become secondary options, especially for women. Menstruation taboos like, Chhaupadi Pratha, have made women not only think; but believe, that having menstruation is sinful. Teaching girls and women, through the implementation of this project, about menstruation and menstrual hygiene practices will keep them healthy and allow access to safe and secure resources for their basic human rights. Promoting human rights is the first step in peacebuilding and this project can make a positive impact on today's young girls and will help create a more accepting environment for the women of tomorrow in the Kalikot District.

Reference:

Supporting the Rights of Girls and Women through Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) in the East Asia and Pacific Region, UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office, February 2016.
<http://learning.outchin.com/6thile/files/MHM1.pdf>

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 Project Name: DAVIS Community Shower
 School: Wartburg College

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Projects for Peace grant: \$ 10,000.00
 Additional Funding, if any: \$ -
Total funding available: \$ 10,000.00

TOTAL FUNDS REMAINING:
 \$ -

TOTAL EXPENDITURES:
 \$ 10,000.00

Student Expenses					Project Expenses							
Travel (Including Airfare)	Lodging	Communications	Food (Biweekly)	Miscellaneous	Non-Student Travel and Lodging	Direct Equipment and Supplies	Description of Supplies	Marketing and Event Support	Staffing Costs	Description of Staffing costs	Miscellaneous	Description of Miscellaneous
\$1,500.00		\$12.50	\$37.50	\$75.00	\$0.00	\$1,400.00	Solar Panel and Installation cost	\$0.00	\$170.00	Plumbing labor cost	\$420.00	Transportation of Supply
		\$12.50	\$37.50	\$75.00		\$3,500.00	Building of the facility				\$420.00	Emergency costs
		\$12.50	\$37.50	\$75.00		\$850.00	Land					
		\$12.50	\$37.50	\$75.00		\$420.00	Water tanks					
						\$400.00	Lights, wires, etc.					
						\$420.00	Plumbing materials					
Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total		Total	Total		Total	
\$ 1,500.00	\$ -	\$ 50.00	\$ 150.00	\$ 300.00	\$ -	\$ 6,990.00		\$ -	\$ 170.00		\$ 840.00	

Total Student Expenses: \$ 2,000.00

Total Project Expenses: \$ 8,000.00