DAVIS Community Shower in Kalikot District, Nepal

Led by Soniya Sanam Tamang || Wartburg College || UWC Thailand ‘19

Summary:

The main objective of the DAVIS Community shower was to help girls and women become confident with who they are and embrace their monthly cycle with dignity by providing them with a safe and secure menstrual health resource. The other objective was to raise more awareness through the facility about menstruation health about menstrual hygiene management practices. This project partnered with the local ward president to further its sustainable service to the local villagers. Due to monsoon weather and local festivals, the project has been delayed more than expected.

Project Description & Reflection:

Many girls and women face problems during menstruation whether it is abdominal cramps or heavy bleeding. In addition to bodily pain, menstrual taboos like Chhaupadi Pratha, make it impossible for women and girls to succeed economically and socially. It is much harder in a rural village of Mahawai village of Kalikot District which is located in the western region of Nepal which is barely connected with roads. Located in a challenging geographical area, the girls and women of the village were more vulnerable to this issue. The local organization, the Oda Foundation, was a great resource and a partner organization who helped this project throughout and still helping supervise the construction site. This local organization were more useful to help integrate the local government bodies for more sustainable development collaboration to uplift the village and reduce the practice of Chhaupadi Pratha.

DAVIS Community Shower intends to provide a safe and secure space for girls and women to practice Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM). While in the short term, this project strives to help girls and women to practice MHM with dignity and pride. One major underlying factor that made a great challenge during execution was the sensitivity of the topic. The sensitivity of the topic makes it more difficult to openly have conversations with villagers, thus more creative initiative like DAVIS Community Shower aims to help create a positive environment for girls and women alongside with men to have an open conversation about menstruation through provided means of Menstrual Health resources.

Adaptive challenges in any community of the world are hard yet possible to solve with patience, continuous challenging work, and collaboration. More importantly, working with an adaptive challenge like Chhaupadi Pratha asks people who practice it to let go of some of their values which have a particularly important impact on their social identity. This is the main lesson learned from this project, which is to have an open mind and flexibility in terms of the implementation of the project. In order to make this project a success, collaborating with villagers in terms of their expectations of this facility was important because they will be responsible in terms of utilizing and sustaining the facility. Mahawai village is tied strongly with their faith in deities, culture, and traditions. Thus, one of the challenges that arose was their festive season which slowed down the construction of the facility. Another challenge was weather and geography. Summer is a season of monsoon in South Asia. The heavy continuous rainfall not only stopped the construction countless times, but the landslide caused by the heavy rainfall blocked the road that connects the inventory drop-off destination. These three main challenges of weather, geography, and festive season have slowed down the construction progress. The project is being monitored virtually through emails and group chat until its completion.

There is more work that needs to be done in order to eliminate social taboos like Chhaupadi Pratha which stops girls and women from achieving full potential. Peace begins then when girls and women are given the same opportunities as men, without any societal restriction. Thus, a woman trying to uplift other groups of women is the beginning of peace establishment. It is Malala who once said, “There was a time when women activists asked men to stand up for their rights, but this time we will do it by ourselves.” Hence, this project has become an enlightening and challenging experience that motivated me to act more in the future in order to help the helpless.
**Personal Statement:**

DAVIS Community Shower is not only a facility for girls and women of Mahawai village but a signal of hope for change to create an equal and equitable society for girls and women as much as it is for boys and men.