

## The Social Warriors

[A report from project visit to Nepal, Nov 2013 by Krit Sharma]



**Figure 1-** Local Village Representatives on action to bring girls in school

### Summary of the report:

Nepal Village Foundation (NVF) has been promoting girls' education project since 2009 in rural villages of Nepal (Bhagawatpur). Due to lack of resources and capacity in our partner organisation (Hamro Samaj Nepal), we have been unable to accelerate our project activities. The recent project visit turned out to be very productive and the capacity is also improving. These improvements indicate that the project activities should be taken to the next level to make a greater impact on the community. What was the experience from the visit, what actions were taken, why and how things will move forward? These all are highlighted in this report. The project activities have expanded to three village panchayats now, and over ninety girls who are in most need of an education will be supported. Until now, we have been supporting only twenty five girls from one village panchayat.

Our target is to bring every child into regular schooling from the villages over the next three years. There are twelve small villages in the three village panchayats and to ensure that target is achieved, we have a local village representative in each village. The representative will monitor pupils in their village closely and report to the project assistant who has been

hired recently. The project assistant will monitor attendance of all students from school attendance record as well and make regular visits to the villages where necessary. The project assistant will also report to NVF on regular basis which will enable NVF to see what is happening from the UK. School teachers are also supportive because more pupils means a greater income for their schools. But school's infrastructures are in dire need of repair and need some investment. Figure 4 and 5 gives some ideas about condition of schools in the villages.

### **The Project:**

Nepal Village Foundation (NVF) supports Girls' Education Project in Nepal and 'Hamro Samaj Nepal' (HSN) is our partner organisation to implement the project. Recently, a project visit was made by Krit Sharma to monitor progress of the project. This report provides a comprehensive works details of the visit.

Just to recap, our mission is to improve the wellbeing of poor and Dalit people in rural Nepal by enabling access to education and learning, and the aim of Girls' education project is to improve female literacy in rural villages of Nepal. To achieve this aim, NVF has been providing full support to twenty five girls in most need of an education from poor and Dalit families in Bhagawatpur Village Panchayat.

This project visit was for twelve days. Twenty five families whose daughters are in the education scheme and five schools were visited. We also consulted with interested people from two new village panchayats (Mahadeva and Dhikuli) where we are extending the project activities. The visit and consultation were very productive.



**Figure 2- Family Visit**

**The visit was productive the following strengths and opportunities were noticed;**

- The team of HSN is still motivated and they want to learn and do more for their community
- People in the villages are aware about the project and they see it, as a good project
- Similarly, more and more people are showing an interest in the project
- School teachers are supportive and keen to work with us to bring all children in regular schooling including of girls
- Nepalese government is also bringing more initiatives to promote education for all
- As the boys' demand in the community rises for an educated wife, parents are being forced to educate their daughters
- The community is slowly realising importance of educating girls

**Despite the visit being productive, and some interesting strengths and opportunities noticed, the following issues still exists;**

- Girls in the scheme were not being monitored properly on regular basis
- HSN is still struggling to make a good use of collected school attendance records of the girls in the scheme
- Use of the resources can be improved and more girls can be benefited from the same available resources
- Project activities are not progressing enough to make a greater impact on the community, in order to achieve our desired aims and objectives
- Reporting skills in the group is progressing but still, it is not satisfactory
- People in the villages are still unaware as to who will benefit from the resources and benefiting criteria
- There is lack of skilled outreach workers in villages to implement project activities effectively and efficiently
- School attendance of all students including the girls in the scheme is poor and teachers absent is also high
- School dropout rate, mainly in teenage girls, is high
- Culture of dowry is major factor to hinder girls' educational achievement



**In order to make further progress towards achieving the aims and objectives, to make implementation process more effective, and to make a good use of resources the following action has been taken;**

- Recruitment of a full time staff member (Project Assistant)
- The project activities extended to further two village panchayats
- Identification of local village representatives from the new and old village panchayats
- The support package will be extended to ninety girls over the next three months
- A five days capacity development training to the local village representatives on monitoring pupil's school attendance, particularly of girls and possible ways to raise awareness and persuade parents towards educational attainment of their children
- A two days capacity development training to trustees of HSN on establishing an effective system to run the organisation and to implement project activities
- Improve, design & develop various strategies & forms for monitoring, assessment, decision-making & taking further actions to achieve the project aims & objectives
- Discussion with trustees of HSN for a stronger, effective and sustainable partnership

**Analysis and recommendation:**

Recruitment of a fulltime project assistant: As mentioned above that there are some problems in implementation of the project activities, the recruitment of a fulltime Project Assistant was necessary in this context. The project assistant will manage all aspects of implementation of the project. This includes collecting necessary data on regular basis, reporting to us, monitor the project, carry out general administration tasks and more importantly, develop plan of action periodically from the collected data to achieve desired results. Finding a part-time Project Assistant to manage the project activities in just one village panchayat was difficult and employing a fulltime one doesn't give value to money. This is one of the reasons to expand the project activities in other two village panchayats and three village panchayats is manageable by one full-time staff. This will expand the project activities in a wider area more effectively and professionally, hence a greater impact on the community. It is also to be noted that the project assistant is a young married woman who lives in nearby the village and her name is Sunita Mandal. She had to compete against six men to win the job and she is very happy.

The local village representatives: In the three village panchayats (Bhagawatpur, Mahadeva and Dhikuli), there are twelve small villages and we have a Local Village Representative

(LVR) in each small village. The LVRs have received a five days training on how to monitor pupils who are not attending school regularly or not attending at all. They are the first point of contact for the village, and will work closely with the project assistant. Their first task is to ensure that all children in the village go to school regularly. Project assistant will collect school attendance record of all children on regular basis and if the record shows that attendance is less than 80% of any child then their LVR will be informed to keep a close eye on the child until it improves. Family Visit will also be made if necessary by both the project assistant and LVRs. Close monitoring by LVR and project assistant will ensure a regular schooling and fewer drop out rates which is major among teen age girls.

I found the Local Village Representatives motivated and excited to carry out their duties they learnt in the training. So, I asked one of the female representatives, 'What would you say to parents who do not send their daughters to school?' She replied, 'When I step into their compound, their house will shake. I will give them no option other than agreeing with me to send their daughter to school regularly.' I was shocked by her answer and that is why I call them 'The Social Warriors'. I strongly believe that having local representatives in each small village and by providing training to them, is an effective strategy to bring more girls into school.



Figure 3- A photo from the 5 days Training of Local Village Representatives

Partnership with schools and teachers: Whatever we do at family level to ensure a regular schooling of all children, and if the school environment, and regular present of teachers are not there, then this will not work. Many consultations with school teachers have been taken place to ensure that we have their support in the project. All the consultations with teachers

have been productive and they are showing their full support. One of the reasons the teachers support us is: more pupils in their school means greater revenue and more benefits from the government. However, the infrastructure of the school is in desperate need of repair, and regular attendance of teachers also can be problematic. The figure 4 and 5 will give you some ideas about condition of schools in the villages. NVF is not in a position to provide any support to improve infrastructures in our current situation. However, the school environment and regular attendance of teachers can be improved through various mechanisms. We are asking support from the parents, and also putting pressure on, to the Ministry of District Education to get their support. Plus, a regular visit to school by the project assistant gives some ideas about the attendance of teachers. Hopefully, this strategy will improve things at some point in the near future. Currently, obtaining school attendance records of pupils from schools is vital information for us because it helps us to develop a plan of action and this should be seen as a step forward.

**Figure 4-** School children are sitting on a dusty and dirty



**Figure 5-** Condition of toilets in a school



Hamro Samaj Nepal- the partner organisation: The newly recruited Project Assistant will report to the central committee of Hamro Samaj Nepal (HSN). The committee does consist of some members who are not educated and do not have the capacity to manage project workers. So we organised a two day Capacity Development Workshop that enabled the members to take charge and direct the organisation professionally. Every month the project assistant will present a report to the committee on activities carried out and any problems experienced during the month, together have any action for the next month. The training was particularly focused on these actions that enabled them to analyse the report and make judgements. Also their responsibilities were increased towards strengthening the partnership between the two organisations. Every 1<sup>st</sup> Saturday of the month, a Central Committee Meeting will take place and feedback from the meeting will be forwarded to NVF to monitor their progress. Figure 6 shows the committee on business.



Figure 6- The 1<sup>st</sup> Central Committee meeting after the training

External supportive factors: Nepalese government's new initiatives to promote education for all, and boy's demand for an educated wife in the community, will force parents to educate their daughters, and this is a positive supporting factor to the project. Particularly, the boys' demand will develop an increased level of pressure on parents to educate their daughters. The government's initiative - free education for all, will decrease our cost per girl in respect of the schooling fees. However the culture of dowry which is a major and serious factor to hinder girls' educational attainment requires a consideration in the near future.

Girls' education scheme- support package: There wasn't any proper solid plan or strategy for providing the support to girls in the scheme, so during this visit we developed a slightly

different support package to address actual need of girls, and the process of selection criteria for new girls. We noticed every girl who is not attending school doesn't need a same level of support. On that basis, now there are five different support packages available.

Package1 provides the complete support package that we are currently providing (uniform, stationary, shoes, sandals, school bag, books and any school fees) to those who are extremely poor.

Package-2 provides exactly same as Package1 but excluding of uniform to those who are being able to afford clothing and is not extreme poor.

Package 3 provides stationary only to those who are slightly well off but unable to afford stationary.

Package 4 provides tuition classes only to those who are behind in their class and starting schooling very late, and feel embarrassed to sit with youngsters in the classroom. In every small village, we are looking for a volunteer who can provide tuition classes with a small fee or free for the purpose.

Package 5 provides awareness raising, through family visits to those who are well off but not sending their daughters to school. In this way, we can extend our support to more girls with similar resources.

Girl's selection process is also slightly improved. The improved selection process required family inspection at two stages. Stage one- If anyone is making a request for the support or anyone is advocating on someone's behalf then a Local village representative will assess the family from their existing knowledge and if she/he sees that a support is necessary then it will be passed on to Project Assistant who makes a formal visit to assess the family situation in detail according to the criteria developed recently. If the family qualify for the support then one of the five support packages will be offered on basis of the criteria set above.

Finally, I received some complaints from a Dalit family during the family visit about discrimination in classroom. Students from a higher caste do not allow touching or sitting on same bench as Dalit students. I assume, this behaviour of the students must be noted by teacher but they do not take any action. Because of the law in the country, any teacher caught discriminating Dalit students will be disciplined. The issue is very sensitive and it demotivates Dalit children to go to school. We had some serious conversations with teachers on this issue, visited classroom in couple of schools and tried to settle the issue



with students as well. We have also instructed all HSN associated people to keep a close eye on this issue so hopefully this issue will be minimised.

### Financial implications to run the project, major outputs and fundraising

Figure-7: Photo of girls in the scheme



**Budgeting:** Employing a full time project assistant, expanding the project activates two more village panchayats, and extending our support package to ninety girls will definitely require more resources. Currently, Nepal Village Foundation is the sole funder of Hamro Samaj Nepal. This means we bear organisational development and running cost as well. So, now our annual budgeting to support the work in Nepal would be as follows. The budgeting is only for Nepal based project expenses. However in the UK, NVF is run and managed by board of trustees on volunteering basis so UK based expenses are very small.

Organisational development and office running in Nepal-	-----	£240.00
Project Assistant yearly salary-	-----	£600.00
Local Village Representative (Outreach workers) -	-----	£730.00
Support to 90 girls' in the scheme-	-----	£1750.00
Consultation with stakeholders-	-----	£150.00

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**Total yearly we need to send to Nepal -** ----- **£3470.00**

Major output: At least two local businesses in the villages will benefit from our work and their children will not need our support in schooling. The project will create at least twelve part-time and one full-time job in the community. Ninety girls who are in most need of an education will receive direct support through the girls' education scheme. The project will be able to bring all school age children in regular schooling by the end of 2015 in the three village panchayats. School dropout rate will be minimised significantly through close monitoring by Local Village Representatives and project assistant. Spending £3470 in the community's local economy yearly is a significant amount and it will create much more business opportunities indirectly. Capacity of the partner organisation will be improved and it will be able to attract more funders in the near future.

Fundraising: We are progressing well in all aspects and our income is also growing each year hence we are being able to support more girls in school. So thank you for all your support. However now, we are at the stage where more money is needed to make a greater impact on the community. So if you are able to spare small amount for a good cause then please set up a direct debit. The details to set up a standing order from your bank;

Bank name- The Cooperative Bank

Account name- Nepal Village Foundation, UK

Account number- 65 30 37 97

Sort code- 08- 92 -99

Bank address- P. O. Box 250, Delf House, Southway, Skelmersdale, WN8 6WT

Nepal Village Foundation official address- 178 Rotherhithe New Road, London, SE16 2AP

Or follow the link to set up a direct debit online through Charity Aid Foundation. The link will guide you step by step. [Direct Debit Set Up for Nepal Village Foundation](https://cafdonate.cafonline.org/donatesteps.aspx?beneficiarycampaignid=1238)

If the link doesn't work copy and paste the link in your internet web address bar

<https://cafdonate.cafonline.org/donatesteps.aspx?beneficiarycampaignid=1238>

Guidance to money value in Nepal:

£5.00 a month will keep a girl in school for the whole year, providing all the support

£10.00 a month will pay wages of three Local Village Representatives for a year

£20.00 a month covers organisational development and entire office running cost in Nepal

£30.00 a month will provide tuition classes to up to fifteen students in Nepal

£50.00 a month will pay wages of a project assistant in Nepal



## End of the report

If you have any question or comment about the report then please forward to;  
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