



Literacy and Livelihoods for 441 Nepali Women

The Challenge:

Many minority language communities in Nepal are excluded from access to resources, including education. This results in poverty and low educational achievement. Women from these communities face additional challenges because of gender discrimination. Barely one quarter of Nepali women can read and write. Illiteracy cuts these women off from access to resources and information that could help them improve their lives and the lives of their families.



This situation leaves them vulnerable to exploitation. In the case of the Tharu community, economically deprived households often feel they have no option other than to place their daughters aged between 8-14 into bonded labor with landlords in order to secure food for the rest of the family. These girls are vulnerable to physical, emotional and sexual exploitation in addition to being denied an opportunity to attend school.

Poverty and exclusion leads to low academic achievement and early dropout, contributing to an ongoing cycle of poverty and minimal involvement in community activities that could create lasting positive change.



Project Goals:

The goal of this project is to enable Tharu and Limbu women to improve their lives and the lives of their families, through livelihoods activities and literacy classes. The project, located in both the eastern hills and western plains of Nepal, will have 441 direct beneficiaries who participate in literacy classes and livelihoods training. The positive effects of the project will spread far beyond that, to participants' family members, neighbors, and communities. Community groups provide the opportunity to work together for positive change.



Livelihoods

Women play a crucial role in deciding how to use family income. Access to income through sustainable livelihood activities ensures that women can contribute to their household basic needs such as nutrition, health and education. Effective women- and family-based livelihood

activities such as these enable Nepal to reach the first Millennium Development Goal of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger. This project will improve livelihoods through forming community groups, providing training and startup materials for commercial vegetable production and goat raising, exposure visits to successful community groups, and advocacy training. We build on local skills, using local resources and selling to local markets for sustainable improvements in family income.

Literacy

Literacy gives women access to information and resources that help them change their lives, and the lives of their families. Our literacy classes begin in the language that class participants speak most comfortably, and transition to the national language, Nepali – an approach supported by current research that eliminates the language barrier that contributed have kept these women from staying in school earlier in life. Classes use reading materials related to women's lives, such as health, farming, education, and the political system.



About Language Development Center Nepal:



Language Development Center-Nepal (LDC-Nepal) was established as a NGO by the staff of the INGO Enterprise Development International after completing its five-year agreement with Nepal's Social Welfare Council.

Registration as an NGO in January 2008 enabled staff to continue to partner with the Tharu and Limbu communities, and expand to work with other communities such as Tamang and Lowa (Upper Mustang) on capacity-building activities.

These activities help community members, especially women, gain the skills to initiate sustainable livelihoods and transitional functional literacy projects, leading to effective engagement with the wider community.

