



## Mitrataa - Rouse Update

November 2019

As the students return to school after a month's holiday for the Dashain and Tihar festivals, we are happy to update you on the projects supported by Rouse this year.

### **Micro-entrepreneurs Platform Program - Connecting Skills (and Products) with Markets**

This project has hit a few hurdles. Several of the women in the Bhaktapur Entrepreneurs Group had to leave the group due to family reasons. It is often difficult for women entrepreneurs in Nepal to balance the expectations of their husbands and in-laws and their other home obligations with a business. The husbands and mothers-in-law are happy for the women to do some knitting or other small tasks as long as it doesn't impact their work in the home. Unfortunately, as businesses grow and orders are placed with deadlines and customer expectations on timely delivery of orders, pressure is placed on the women to stop the business. We have done a lot of brainstorming with the women and continued with orders with long lead-times and catering of traditional Newari feasts for visiting groups but the online platform has been a challenge to launch.

Our project in Saptari teaching women Mithila art skills and setting up a business with the group was very successful in terms of the skills but the business side again has been a challenge, partly due to the husbands and mothers-in-law not wanting the women involved in businesses but also a mistrust between the women themselves when it came to the business management.

This is a real challenge – there are a lot of women in Nepal being driven into running microbusinesses to provide for their families but without support and a reduction in their home duties (which are extremely demanding in Nepal with most daughters-in-law expected to do all home duties for the extended family, often involving fetching water, washing all clothes by hand, farming, cooking often over a single wooden fire as well as childcare and other responsibilities). In our experience, the majority of microbusinesses in Nepal are making a loss and resulting in debts on top of family pressure.



This is why is why many organisations and groups fall back into the traditional mould of taking responsibility for getting and managing orders and just outsourcing some of the production to individual women. This isn't a sustainable solution. As the next generation finishes college, we are starting to see some changes so we have a workshop planned with a group of recent business studies graduates to brainstorm social enterprises and their role, to share ideas and skills. We also have a group of Australian university students arriving in January and we will be running a 2 day social enterprise workshop in



collaboration with a university in Nepal. We are exploring how best to harness this generation's skills and passion for change.

We have learned a lot from this project. Although the original objective hasn't been achieved directly, the increase in skills and confidence of the women, the strong social support of the resulting networks (particularly in terms of addressing domestic violence and social isolation/depression), and our understanding of the issues facing women in this changing society, have all been more successful than anticipated. Mitrataa is an organisation which works from the bottom up – we are guided by the communities we support. This project is a great example of that – we trial a solution to the issues, working with the communities. We listen and learn and adjust accordingly.

As we explore more options, we will keep you updated of the progress and lessons learned.

## Financial Literacy

Our Financial Literacy Team, Kal Bahadur and Sunimaya, have run mini Maths Olympics Competitions for all of our students in class batches. These have been really successful and we have seen a real change in the children's attitude towards maths as a result. For the class 10 students who have their SEE exams in April, the Maths Olympics changed the way their study – they now give each other regular fun quizzes and challenges and we have seen an increase not only in their confidence, but in their results as well.



We used the annual Panauti Jatra, a 3 day chariot festival, to teach budgeting to our local students. Each of the students was given Rs 500 (around A\$6.50) to spend at the festival market. They had to buy at least one practical/useful item that they need and the rest of the money could be spent however they chose but they had to plan carefully and make sure they got everything they wanted within their budget. Then they had to come back and show us the calculations for what they bought, the total they spent, and how much money they had remaining. For some of the students, they had never had money to spend themselves before and they had so much fun choosing things. They didn't even realise they were practising maths at the same time!



We have also been setting random Maths Stories Competitions for the students with prizes. These Stories are a way for the students to get to know more about their favourite brands, music, movies using maths. Here's an example using a famous Nepali brand of instant noodles, Wai Wai:

1. Instant noodles were first created in Japan in 1958. How many years ago was this?
2. Wai Wai Noodles were first introduced in Nepal 35 years ago. In which year were they introduced?
3. Now there are many brands of instant noodles in Nepal but Wai Wai remains the favourite. Every day, four million packets of instant noodles are consumed in Nepal. How can we write this amount using numbers?
4. How many packets of instant noodles are consumed in Nepal every hour?
5. How many packets of instant noodles are consumed in Nepal every minute?
6. How many packets of instant noodles are consumed in Nepal every month?
7. How many packets of instant noodles are consumed in Nepal every year?
8. If the population of Nepal is approximately 30 million people, approximately how many packets of instant noodles does each Nepali person consume each year?
9. If a packet of instant noodles costs 15 rupees, how much approximately does each Nepali spend on instant noodles each year?
10. Wai Wai has a market share in Nepal of 45%. This means that of the whole market for instant noodles in Nepal (for all different brands), 45% of instant noodles purchased are Wai Wai brand. Draw a pie chart showing the market share of Wai Wai noodles and the remaining share of the market as "Other brands".



These have been really successful with the students, bringing maths to life for them.

Kal Bahadur has continued to work with some Australian maths teachers to develop materials for building the base skills of our students. These are being shared with our partner schools for use with their students.

Bec prepared a workshop for the Rato Bangola International Education Conference in Nepal on Demystifying Maths for Students. Building on that, we have a teacher training workshop with around 15 Nepali maths teachers which will be run in December



in conjunction with 7 Australian Bachelor of Education students. These workshops will be rolled out to our other partner schools next year.

The team has done a fantastic job of coming up with creative ways to bring maths to life and overcome the fear in the students. We have seen a substantial change this year in the confidence levels and results of our students.

As Sudip, a class 6 student, recently noted: "I used to think I wasn't good at maths and so I always failed. Now I know that maths can be fun and useful and so I practise more. And now I'm good at it!" It's feedback like that which gives us energy to go on!

Thank you so much for your support this year. We look forward to updating you again in 2020!

With gratitude, Bec, Nimu and the Mitrataa team.

