

BUILDING ON BLOCKS FOR A HEALTHIER COMMUNITY

The Thaplung Women, Children's and Community Health Project, Nepal. 2nd – 17th March 2024



In 2021, The Rotary Club of Timaru was the leading financial supporter (matched by a District Grant) along with five other Rotary Clubs from Australia and the Rotary Club of Kathmandu for the construction of the Rotary Community Health Unit in Thaplung Nepal. This was led by Raj from The Rotary club of Kathmandu.

This connection, along with the one that Julie has developed with Raj in 2018 has led to the proposal of the development of a small grass roots Project with a maternal, child and community health lenses, building on the actual foundation blocks for this community that we have helped to establish with the completion of the Health Unit in 2022.

45% of Nepal's population live below the poverty line and **50%** of children under 3 suffer with abnormalities. **27%** of the population have access to adequate sanitation and **30%** to safe drinking water. In Nepal, a woman dies in labour every **4 hours** and a baby, every **15 minutes**. Many of these deaths are preventable.



Photo: Thaplung Health Unit

Thaplung is a very remote and rural community in the west 385 kms from Kathmandu. There is no flight access and can only be reached by jeep and walking. The village has a population of at least 500.

The main hospital is accessed by driving 5 hours, and at least 2 hours to any birthing assistance.

The village Health Unit is also now seeing people from the neighbouring villages seeking health assistance. (Benefiting at least 1000 people per year since its existence). It is staffed by a nurse and an auxiliary health worker with occasional medical assistance when it can happen, and they see 10-15 people per day.

Some aims of the Community Health Unit that are pertinent to this Project are:

- To provide direct access to the public health system for the entire community.
- Offer appropriate health focused services and programmes that inform and impact local health planning.
- Provide education to the community and improve health seeking behaviours that provide basic and emergency care, emotional support, and personal wellbeing incentives.
- Provide health related education towards the prevention of maternal and child deaths and facilitate childbirth education.
- Saving the lives of those in the local community.

The Project will address the maternal and child deaths, educate the community regarding pregnancy health and welfare of the woman and their unborn babies, put in guidelines for safe pregnancy care, and address the emergencies that the woman and health workers face every day whilst birthing in such a remote location. It is also envisaged that one day would be for community education that includes hygiene measures and cardiac arrest.

This will help address the huge gap in health service for this remote community.

AIM: To provide a grass root, experiential hands-on, rural and remote, maternity health and wellbeing programme that will use effective tools and decision-making processes related to best clinical practice to improve out comes for this whole community and the neighbouring village populations.

It is about empowering this community by building blocks on their existing resources to allow them to hope, dream and grow as a community.

HOW: Two experienced expert NZ Midwives/Midwifery Educators; Julie Dockrill (RNComp, PG Dip Mid, PG Cert (Adult ED)) and Tina Hewitt (RM, BA(Hons), DipHE (Mid), PG Cert (Clin Teach), MMid) will develop a program to inform both health workers and the women of the community ways to ensure how best outcomes can be achieved in their own community. They will be assisted by another Rotarian, Jess Hewitson for project management/logistics and media promotion of the project.

The teaching will take place over a period of 3-4 days having a true community focus.

Topics proposed to be included:

- Normal pregnancy care for optimal outcomes for mothers and babies.
- Pregnancy schedules for check-ups.
- What is abnormal and when should the woman be sent for assistance in pregnancy.
- Normal birth process.
- Birthing emergencies and what can they do to save lives (maternal and neonatal).
- New-born, maternal and adult resuscitation.
- Community health hand and sanitization hygiene.

Teaching can only be done between 1000 and 1600 hrs as the villagers have commitments with stock and families.

Teaching will be in a rural community centre.

There is no accommodation at the village where the health hut is, and travel is required by jeep 45 mins each way each day.

Teaching is given to women, skilled birth attendants and village leaders, also including health professionals, if possible other community members for general health training.

Approximately 30-40 participants per day.

RESOURCES: Midwives will develop flip charts and posters to be used for mostly visual learning. Some translation will be required (Raj will be able to find a translator). We will use a doll, pelvis, and placenta. Much hands-on practical experiences as well.

If we can secure enough funding, we will look at adding to the needs of the community. They need a laptop, another bed and sheets for the clinic, an examination table, AED that instructs in Nepalese, doppler monitor, pulse oximeters, CPR mannequins.



Photo: The bed in the Health Unit currently.

EVALUATION: This will be in the form of a simple sheet with responses to a few questions given to the participants. Also, comparison or even the beginning of a statistical collection for maternal and neonatal mortality and morbidity for this area.

TWO QUOTES THAT UNDERPIN THIS PROPOSED PROJECT:

I can do things you cannot. You can do things I cannot. Together we can do great things.

Mother Teresa

AND

Education is for improving the lives of others and leaving your community and world better than you found it.

Marion Wright-Elderman.

SEVEN WOMEN NEPAL

Although we are not asking for any funding for this part of our time in Nepal, we will be reconnecting with Seven Women Nepal while in Kathmandu as we see this an important cultural experience that aligns with our project.

After completing the cultural emersion tour in 2018, Julie has realized the value of this incredible tour and has been able to use it to enhance the understanding women's health and the impact this has on their appalling outcomes in Nepal. This is one of the driving factors behind the Thaplung Project.

The Project and the desire to help others to achieve outcomes that are driven by empowerment over deprivation. We believe this is the way to change outcomes. For the whole team to be able to experience the culture at Seven Women and see the visible difference that empowerment can make will bring courage and hope to our building blocks project.

Information taken from the Seven Women website for background information:

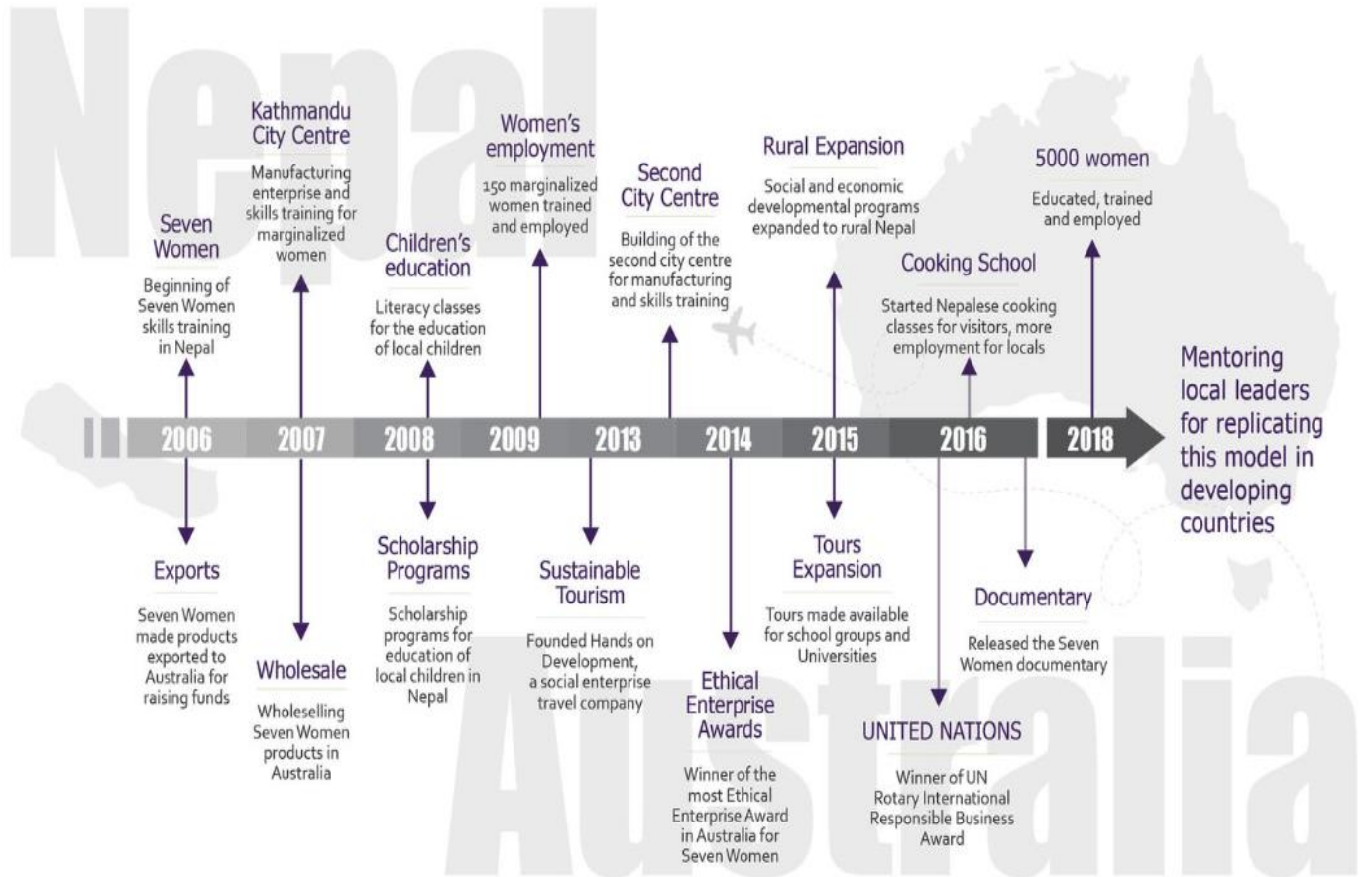
Only 47% of women in Nepal can read or write. Widespread gender discrimination means women are frequently deprived of education, employment opportunities, health care, income, and other basic rights. Those that are able to find employment often work longer hours without pay. Women also face alarming rates of domestic violence, trafficking and forced prostitution.

Seven Women teaches women how to become independent and self-sufficient. Educational classes, skills training and income generation programs have had a profound impact on women in Nepal. Women learn basic reading and writing skills, money management and self-care, as well as how to make goods that can be sold for income such as clothing, felt products, knitting embroidery.

Stephanie Woollard began Seven Women at the age of 22 after meeting seven disabled women working in a tin shed in Kathmandu. These seven women were struggling to make a living in the face of harsh discrimination. With her last \$200, Steph paid for a trainer to teach the women how to produce products for sale locally and abroad – and Seven Women was born.

Since 2006, Steph has built up the Seven Women team and launch an Australian arm for fundraising and sales channel for our ever-growing operation in Nepal. 12 years after meeting in a tin shed that started it all, thousands of women and children have been educated, trained, and employed by Seven Women. Seven Women is empowering Nepali women, transforming their lives and their communities.

Movie trailer about Seven Women: https://youtu.be/XSEKjQRyz_8



Footnote:

Steph has personally asked Julie to be the first New Zealand Ambassador for Seven Women but due to the current covid situation, this has not formally been put in place.