Dignity Pack Distribution in Far West, Nepal October, 2017



Coordination with:

1. The Leprosy Mission Nepal



2. International Nepal Fellowship



Reported By: Ms. Pushpa Gurung Nepal Liaison Officer WAR

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List of Abbreviations

• WAR We All Rotate Ltd. Australia

• TLMN The Leprosy Mission Nepal

• INF International Nepal Fellowship

• NGO Non Governmental Organization

• VDC Village District Committee

• KTM Kathmandu

• KEP Nepalgunj

• DHI Dhangadhi

• CM Community Mobilizer

• TEL Telephone Number

1. Introduction

About We All Rotate. Ltd. Australia (WAR)

WAR is an Australia based charity organization working in Nepal following the devastating earth quake in April 2015. The philosophy behind WAR is, a consciousness that we are all rotating on this one planet, closing the gap on geological and cultural differences. To stand in the gap on behalf of those individuals who are unable to stand for themselves. To provide critical projects, mentoring and opportunities in the impoverished and often neglected remote rural areas of Nepal to support the development of education, student welfare and care for at risk children, vulnerable families and in need communities through the on-going development of localized business initiatives and community based projects. Some of War's projects to date include providing emergency aid directly after the earthquakes to the areas of Sindupalchowk and Dolkha. Distributing Women's Hygiene Packs in various regions of Nepal and also, providing education sponsorships to students whose families are financially critical in Kathmandu and Lalitpur district. Organizing and running art classes in KTM schools using an international artist etc.

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About The Leprosy Mission Nepal (TLMN)

The Leprosy Mission (TLM) is a UK based international non government organization started its work in Nepal from 1957 with establishment of *Anandaban* Hospital in Lele, the southern part of Lalitpur. However, from 2005 TLM Nepal has been working as independent NGO in partnership with TLM international and the Government of Nepal to provide specialist tertiary care and technical support for leprosy control programs. It also undertakes internationally recognized

research into leprosy and implements disability inclusive community development programs through its own activities and strategic partnership.

TLM Nepal mainly focuses in working with and for people affected by leprosy. Its development interventions focuses in the areas of health, capacity building, education, sustainable livelihoods, community development, advocacy and research working towards equity and inclusion of people affected by leprosy and disability in the development process.

The contact office/person of TLMN, KTM

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The contact office/person of TLMN, DHI

Sundeep Magar

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Address: Dhangadi, Kailali

About International Nepal Fellowship (INF)

Since its inception in 1952, INF has been working to eradicate leprosy and rehabilitate those affected by the disease. Due to a gradual decrease in reported cases of leprosy, in 2010 the Nepal Ministry of Health announced that leprosy had been eliminated. This means that for every 10,000 people in Nepal, there is less than one affected by leprosy. The Nepal Government also formally recognized INF's significant contributions towards combating leprosy.

Leprosy is a disease; however, that predominantly affects the poorest and most vulnerable. Unfortunately, for that population in Nepal, leprosy continues to be a significant issue.

INF's work in leprosy therefore continues, supporting those still being diagnosed in various regions of Nepal.

INF been supporting partner of TLM and working together in different regions and part of the country.

The contact office/person of INF

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2. Participants Name List

S.No.	Participants Name	Designation	Organization	
1.	Steven Beatty	CEO	WAR	
2.	Pushpa Gurung	Nepal Liaison Officer	WAR	
3.	Jade Mckenzie	Volunteer	WAR	
4.	Priyanka Shrestha	Volunteer	WAR	
5.	Nirmala Budha Magar	Hospital In-Charge	INF, Nepalgunj	
6.	Sundeep Magar	LIVE Manager	TLM, Dhangadi	
7.	Birendra Rawal	Community Mobilizer	TLM, Bajura	
8.	Laxmi Jaisi	Community Mobilizer	TLM, Bajura	

3. Program Schedule

Date	Program Schedule		
23rd Oct. 2017 Monday	 Flight to Nepalgunj (KEP) at 10:20 am Distribution Program starts with INF Team at : 1:00 pm in ABC Residential School, Nepalgunj, Banke 		
24 th Oct. 2017 Tuesday	Dhangadi - Nepalgunj (5 hours jeep ride)		
25 th Oct. 2017 Wednesday	Distribution program – Sugarkhal, kailali at 02:30 pm		
26 th Oct.2017 Thursday	DHI to Bajura (7 hours jeep ride)		
27 th Oct. 2017 Friday	 Distribution program – Barabish at 12:30 pm (After distribution program, Barabish to Gudukhati – 4 hours walk) 		
28 th Oct. 2017 Saturday	 Distribution program – Gudukhati at 11:30 am Gudukhati – Kuldevmandu (3 hours walking) where was another distribution program at 3:00 pm 		
29th Oct. 2017 Sunday	 Distribution program Kailashmandu at 12:30 pm One night stayed in Dipayal, Doti 		
30 th Oct. 2017 Monday	Bajura to DHI		
31st Oct. 2017 Tuesday	Flight back to KTM from KEP		

4. Objectives

- 1. To distribute 650 dignity packs in the far west of Nepal (Nepalgunj, Dhangadi and Bajura) where unfortunately women of that region still practiced *Chhaupadi*.
- 2. To raise the awareness about *Chhaupadi*, personal hygiene during menstruation for they have very little knowledge about hygiene and how to look after their body during the period.
- 3. To observe the group of women committee's participation in such program and their role in the society.
- 4. To empower women through the dignity pack which also contained empowering quotes about being a woman and what they can do.
- 5. Also to make the environment comfortable for them to talk and discuss about menstruation freely and openly in the society.
- 6. Spreading news about new law implemented by Nepal Government regarding the *Chhaupadi* system.

5. Distribution Program Details

23rd Oct. 2017, Nepalgunj, Banke

• The first day of our 9 days project starts with first flight from KTM to KEP where Ms. Nirmala Budha Magar, Hospital In-charge, INF was there as a host to pick us up from the airport. During October Nepalgunj heat somehow was endurable. After we settled ourselves in the hotel we head to our distribution program location that was in the ABC Residential School. It was just the time after Tihar so school has just resumed their normal schooling days which cause very minimum number of students. With 35 no. of participants we started our program, instructed them about the pads, hygiene and discussed about the period and how they are treated during the period. In the program we also included the boys' student because we wanted them to know what young girls go through during their adolescence age so that they are aware and will be open about it.

We targeted 200 students in the school as because of minimum participants we handed over rest of the packs to Ms. Nirmala Budha Magar. She conducted dignity pack distribution program later the week in the same school. (Please refer to annex 3.)

After the program we head back to our Hotel Siddhartha View and rest for a night.



WAR team









24th Oct. 2017, Dhangadhi, Kailali

Second day of our project we left Nepalgunj around 9:30 am for Dhangadhi. It was nearly 5 and half hours ride as we drove through beautiful Bardiya National Park, Bombai Bridge where we had a sight of crocodiles, turtles and Nepal's longest bridge Karnali Bridge on the way.

25th Oct. 2017, Sugarkhal, Kailali

It was our first distribution program in Kailali district; it took us four and half hour to get there as road situation was pretty bad. The participants of Sugarkhal were all presented and all ready for us. After a heart welcoming and introduction we start our program by distributing packs to each woman and instructed them thoroughly. During the program we discussed about bad accidents and murder happened during practicing the *Chhaupadi* where some of the girls were killed by suffocation of smoke, snake bites or raped. It was very important to make them understand about the consequences of staying in dirty cow sheds or small hut by giving them an example of what had happened in past. The total number of participants was 100 and all women of Sugarkhal community were very interactive and open about their opinions regarding the dreadful *Chhaupadi* system.

After completion of the program WAR and TLM jointly contributed for small snacks to the participants and headed back to the hotel.





Community of Sugarkhal

Community of Sugarkhal





Community of Sugarkhal

26th Oct. 2017, Sanphe, Bajura

On the fourth day we left Dhangadhi at 8:00 am to Sanphe, Bajura. It was uphill jeep ride for 9 hours straight, luckily road was pretty good. We made there at 5:00 pm: Mr. Laxmi Jaisi, C.M. from TLM was waiting for us to guide us through for next 5 days.

27th Oct. 2017, Barabish - Gudukhati

Chhaupadi was outlawed by the Supreme Court of Nepal in 2005, but the tradition has been slow to change. In 2017, Nepal passed a law punishing people who force women into exile during menstruating with up to three months in jail or a fine of 3,000 Nepalese rupees.

Bajura District is one of the seventy-five districts of Nepal. Martadi as its district headquarters, it has 1 municipality and 24 VDCs. The livelihood of more than 80% of the district population depends on agriculture farming, mainly small scale livestock. And male member of families go to India for the employment. The average literacy rate is about 32%. Although accessibility to Bajura is very poor, this is improving rapidly. The Government strategy is mainly focused on the connection of VDC headquarters with all-weather motor able roads in villages. The small health centers in many VDCs are without proper health assistance. So, people seeking emergency health assistance have to travel a long distance to the district headquarters or Kathmandu or end up dying because of lack of treatment. Many people still believe in *Dhami* and *Jhakri* (witch doctor) and do not always seek medicine or go to the hospital for the treatment. They still practiced *chhaupadi* and believe that women on period are "untouchable or impure". They are not allowed to enter the house, eat dairy products or touch the water tap stations.

• Leaving Sanphe behind we move forward to Barabish even though it was short jeep ride, road was not comfortable at all. We started our program with 77 numbers of participants all excited about the gifts they were receiving and comfortable to discuss about menstruation. It was great to hear very position responds and suggestions.

As there was a little language barrier, Mr. Laxmi Jaisi, ended the program with helpful speech regarding the changing the tradition of *Chhaupadi* and personal hygiene during the period.

As soon as program was concluded we had to say our goodbyes and move to Gudhukhati. From where there was no possible jeep ride road, so we had to warm ourselves for 4 hours uphill walking. Mr. Birendra Rawal, C.M. TLM joined us during the program and walked with us to the next stop. We had 5 porters to carry the packs and some of the stuffs with us. As we reached Gudukhati at 5:00 pm it has already started to get colder, at the end of the day we were very exhausted so we called it a night and rest.



Women's Group of Barabish

28th Oct. 2017, Gudukhati – Kuldevmandu – Bame

• This time of year was harvesting time so getting participants altogether in the venue was bit hard and also to get there; women were coming from different VDCs walking for 2-3 hours. Finally after the wait we started our program at 12:30 pm with 85numbers of participants. We carried out the program as same as the other day, Mr. Steven Beatty and our volunteer from Australia Ms. Jade Mckenzie helped us in distributing packs, Ms. Priyanka Shrestha, Volunteer instructed them how to use pads and aware them about the hygiene. In each VDC the health post personnel was also presented so at the end of the program they also added up about ending the taboo, growing new mindsets to change the society.

Gudukhati is situated in upper region and about time of harsh winter so we also distributed handmade Australian Beanies. It was very great to see the shy, happy and scared faces of the kids.

Without wasting any minute along with 3 porters, TLM and WAR team; we walk towards Kuldevmandu as we had designed another distribution program at 3:00 pm. It was down the steps to get it took us 2 and half hours.

Despite of exhaustion from walking, all of us still had saved some enthusiasm for the program. There was 45 participants all gathered up in circle for us. As soon as we reached there we start our program without any delay. Although participants were very responsive and attentive, there was one participant who was staying far from the group and when asked she stated, she is not allowed to stay together. The reason was she had a child and it was just 4 days. It came as a bit of a surprise during the program since we are talking about leaving these malicious tradition and prejudice of "impure or untouchable" concept and yet there was a woman who was outcaste and was forced to stay in the cowshed after giving birth. Ms. Pushpa Gurung, Nepal Liaison Officer, WAR stepped in and asked participants what we just talked about and what did they learn. What are the roles of woman and how the society takes turn for change? Replies were, "after raising the voice, helping each other and saying no to this system anymore". Exactly the moment they realized it was wrong to keep her out of group and the change can start right now. The program was very productive while they learned their lesson at the same time with good set of an example.

It was already 4:30 pm, rain was heading our way. We finished our program and move to Bame, to stop there for a night.



Recipients of beanies in Gudukhati

Women of Gudukhati



Women of Gudukhati

Women of Gudukhati





Women of Kuldevmandu

Women of Kuldevmandu

29th Oct. 2017, Kailashmandu

• Last day for distribution and also the hardest one. Our hiking started at 6:30 am from Bame that took us 4 hours to reach at the top of the Kailashmandu hill. After a small break of lunch and beautiful view from the top of the hill, we started our program there. Same thing happened in Kailashmandu too, there was a woman who stayed farther from the group because she was on her period and the venue where we had our program was actually a big community plot alongside with the small temple. Unfortunately, we couldn't convince her to stay within the group as she was scared of something happening to her if God's get angry. The distribution and awareness program among 75 participants of women's group was successful. They were very joyful and positive after the program and havepromised to take actions to against staying in cowshed during the period.

The WAR and TLM team fulfilled the program with clear instructions and positive message throughout the VDC of Kailashmandu.

The distribution of dignity pack was accomplished for this year. We head back to Bame, took a rest, had a meeting with TLM team and departed our own ways after that. We head back to Dipayal, Doti and stayed there for a night.





View from Kalishmandu

Community of Kalishmandu





Community of Kalishmandu

Community of Kalishmandu



Community of Kalishmandu

30th Oct. 2017, Dipayal - Dhangadi

With the feeling of achievement we head back to Dhangadi in the jeep traveling for 6 hours.
 Coming from cold and hilly region back to flat plain terai region, the weather was very lovely. We stayed in Hotel Devotee, Dhangadi for a night.

31st Oct. 2017, Dhangadi – Nepalgunj – Kathmandu

• The final day of the project, drove back to Nepalgunj from DHI to catch a flight back to Kathmandu.

7. Findings

- 1. Most of the committee was open for interaction and discussion about the menstruation and personal health.
- 2. In Nepalgunj, girls said they are allowed to stay at their home and do normal things like any other day except to get inside the kitchen and temples. And will also encourage and educate their society about this.
- 3. In Dhangadhi women's group were from 3 different communities where they told us they have eliminated *Chhaupadi* but still they have to stay in cow shed little bit far from the home for 5 days until they finish their period which is still dangerous and they are exposed with open germs and infections from livestock and not protected from drunken men.
- 4. They are not allowed to touch/go to water station/taps but they are obligated to do the other entire household and field works.
- 5. They use house made unsafe rags during their period and need to walk 4-5 hours to get to shops/pharmacy to buy medical sanitary pads.
- 6. All of the groups loved the dignity packs and some of them commented about the packs:
 - It has buttons on it which is very clever and very thoughtful.
 - Pads and bag of the packs is very bright, colorful and beautiful.
 - Pads are very soft and don't even look like sanitary pads which they can comfortably put it out in the sun.

8. Outcome

- 1. Different part of the far west's women group got well instructions, awareness and was motivated and empowered.
- 2. They were very motivated and determined to put this issue and discuss more among the group in their next group discussion meeting.

- 3. Old women who were presented in the program point out they will be teaching their daughters and daughters in law and will not let them stay in cow sheds anymore.
- 4. Men in the discussion also mentioned they will stop letting their woman to practiced *chauppadi*, they can take shower everyday and stay inside the house but can stay away from temples and kitchen. Initially that is somehow good action towards change.
- 5. They realize woman on their periods and woman after giving birth to a child needs especial care, nutritious and healthy food. And avoiding dairy products is just absurd and a myth. They should take care of their body during the time of period more than ever and avoid as much as hard field works.
- 6. With the quotes included on packs they were empowered to know their power, strength and role in the community.
- 7. They are more conscious about health, cleaning their body, using the pads in the right way and encouraging fellow woman about the reusable sanitary cotton pads than the medical sanitary pads. As it is also very environment friendly.
- 8. They agreed they will follow their tradition and will not rule against going to temples or kitchen but will raise their voice against staying in huts or cowsheds.
- 9. They were very aware of maintaining hygiene and not sharing pads with others, talking freely about periods with others.
- 10. Strengthened ties with INF and TLMN

9. Recommendations

- 1. Need of skill development on use and producing sanitary pads here in Interviewee communities.
- 2. Dignity packs like this should be out in the market so they can buy them easily.
- 3. Far west region would appreciate if the program like this is conducted more often.
- 4. Support to uplift the economic condition of the people of Bajura through providing skilled development trainings and sustainability plan should be implemented.
- 5. Schools can spare there particular budget for this kind of project so it is highly recommended to produce dignity packs here in Nepal.

Dignity pack distribution designed in Far West of Nepal — Nepalgunj, Dhangadi and Bajura successfully accomplished. WAR is very thankful to all the team members who worked hard to make this project successful and to volunteers for their active participation. We are also grateful to amazing team and host of The Leprosy Mission Nepal and International Nepal Fellowship for their help, hospitality and work. It was a great team work, project and big step of change for the people of Far West.

10. Interview with the Local Woman of Kailashmandu

In Kailashmandu, we get to take short interview with one woman who was on her period and was staying in Chhaupadi hut. Below is the overview on context of the interview.

- ➤ WAR Namaste didi (elder sister), we are from WAR. We work on women empowerment, awareness on menstruation, women's hygiene and distribute dignity packs in remote areas of Nepal. We would like to take short interview with you, if you're okay and comfortable with it. Is that fine with you? Interviewee Yeah, sure. What is it about?
- ➤ WAR We wanted to know if you still practice *Chhaupadi*? Interviewee *No!* We don't practice it anymore.
- ➤ WAR Is that the truth? Because we can see you are away from home in this hut. Interviewee Well, this village is free from chhau pratha (tradition) already.

(As she was very reserved about sharing her story we convinced her, we are there just to interact with her and mean no harm. After convincing her and telling her more about WAR's work she started to feel comfortable to share.)

- **▶** WAR- Do you still practice *Chhaupadi*?
- ➤ Interviewee Yes! All of the women from this village do.
- ➤ WAR Okay. For how long do you have to stay in this hut?
- Interviewee Around 5-6 days of menstruation period. Until we get to take shower on the 5^{th} day of our period we are not allowed to enter the house.
- > WAR How many of you stay in this hut? Is this only for your family woman's member or other woman from your neighbourhood also gets to stay here?
- Interviewee Usually, two to three of us in our period. And yeah, neighbours can also stay in this same hut.
- **WAR How long have you been practicing this chhau pratha?**
- Interviewee This is been ongoing tradition from our forefathers. We don't know exactly when. We been practicing this since we were about the age and so did my mother, my grandmother and so on.
- **▶** WAR Do you like this practice?
- Interviewee No! I don't. I hate it. We get much stigmatized and feel vulnerable.
- > WAR So, why don't you stop practicing it?
- Interviewee I wish we could! But my family or this society won't let me, especially my mother-in-law who give me pressure of following this tradition relating with the superstitious beliefs, Gods getting angry, not a getting good result in harvest or one of our family member or me will get bad illness etc. Also it is very hard to change the settled narrow mentality of society.
- ➤ WAR Okay. What are the difficulties you have to face while you're staying here?
- Interviewee Well, there's a lot. We are very scared of snakes crawling up in the dark, drunken guys as there is no good locking system in the hut and it's far from home no one can hear if we shout for help, it's a very small space and we have to cook, sleep sometimes there is 3-4 woman on period we feel suffocated. In addition, in winter

season it gets very cold, no good thick warm blankets or mattress to battle the harsh weather.

- ➤ WAR Yeah, do you also take your child with you in the hut?
- ➤ Interviewee Yes, since, she's very small and I have to breastfeed her. So, she stays with me while I am on my period.
- > WAR So, will you make her follow the same *chhau* practice when she grows?
- Interviewee -Yes, I might as it's a part of our culture. But I really don't want to.
- ➤ WAR Then you don't want her to suffer like you and other woman do?
- ➤ Interviewee Of course not! No mother wants her child to suffer, but what can we do? When we are living in the society we have to follow the rules and tradition. We are obligated to do so.
- ➤ WAR Indeed, we understand it's hard to do that all at once. It's a slow process which takes lot of time and lot of courage to step up and you know what, it can start from each one of you. Say No, give them plenty of strong reasons why it should be stopped.
- ➤ Interviewee *Yeah*, *I guess so*.
- ➤ WAR We are sorry to hear that you have to go all through this. But you are a brave, strong woman, and the power lies just within you. When you have community meetings you can share how you and other women feel about this. How unsafe, risky, unhygienic and mostly how cruel it is to a woman. You can do it. You are more capable and powerful than you think.
- Interviewee Yes, you are right. I will do it and talk to other woman in the society, it has to change. If it's not for me then it will be great change for my daughter or the next generation. Thank you for good reasoning.
- ➤ WAR You're very welcome. And never forget you are very courageous and brave woman. Thank you very much for sharing your story with us.



WAR CEO Steve investigating Chhaupadi Hut

Inside chhaupadi Hut



11. Financial Report

	Expenses Report of Dignity Pack Distribut	tion in Far Wes	st, Nepal	
S.No.	List	Details	Amount NPR	Amount AUD
Α	Australia			
	Freight MELB - KTM		100,100	\$1,300.00
В	In Kathmandu			
1	Flight			
а	Round trip for Nepali (4800 per person) x 2	4800 pp	19,200	\$249.35
b	Round Trip for Foreigner (\$238) (steve)		24,797	\$322.04
2	Custom Clearance	-	32,000	\$415.58
3	Transportation Customes - Yeti Airlines	-	1,500	\$19.48
4	Cargo Flight (to Nepalgunj)	-	14,580	\$189.35
5	Taxi (Airport to Apartment)	-	600	\$7.79
С	Out in the field			
1	Transportation 4x4 Jeep			
а	Nepalgunj - Dhangadhi (24th Oct. 2017)	-	8,500	\$110.39
b	Dhangadhi - Sugarkhal (25th Oct. 2017)	-	6,000	\$77.92
С	Dhangadhi - Bajura (26th - 30th Oct. 2017)	5 days × 9,400	47,000	\$610.39
d	Dhangadhi - Nepalgunj (31st Oct. 2017)	-	6,500	\$84.42
2	Lodging			
а	Nepalgunj (Hotel Siddhartha View)	1 night	3,990	\$51.82
b	Dhangadhi (Hotel Devotee)	3 nights	19,640	\$255.06
С	Local home stay at Bajura	4 nights	4,800	\$62.34
3	Food	9 days	20,000	\$259.74
4	Porters			
а	Barabish - Gudukhati (27th Oct. 2017)	1 day	3,000	\$38.96
b	Gudukhati - Kuldevmandu (28th Oct. 2017)	1 day	2,500	\$32.47
С	Bamka - Kailashmandu (29th Oct. 2017) via Donkey	1 day	1,500	\$19.48
5	Others (incl. snacks in distribution prog., sleeping bags, meds for trek etc.)		15,000	\$194.81
	Total Amount		331,207	\$4,301.39

Currency rates based on position at the time of 77 NRP to 1 AUD

Note: 5 (others) . we provided food to 100 women in Sugarkhal, Kailali