

BE ARTSY

2018 PROJECT IMPACT EVALUATION.

RATO BALTIN PROJECT



DESCRIPTION

In West Nepal, the lack of safe sanitary options often results in health problems and school absenteeism. Menstruation is a topic touched by embarrassment, insecurity, and degrading traditions for women like chhaupadi.

Chhaupadi is characterised by the banishment of women during menstruation from their usual residence, due to supposed 'impurity'. It has been criticised for violating the basic human rights of women, and for associated physical and mental health impacts. Despite having been outlawed and criminalised, it continues to exist.

The **Rato Baltin Project** run by the NGO **be artsy** is a Menstrual Health Management (MHM) and sexual education program that aims to eradicate this practice. The Project includes girls, boys, women and their communities in its design. At *be artsy*, we believe that education is the only way to change these deeply held beliefs.

The project has a four-tiered approach:

1. Workshop which provide sex education to both male and female teenagers in local schools of targeted communities
2. Hygiene education delivered through workshops to all women in targeted communities
3. Menstrual cups and training provided to volunteer girls attending school and young women in targeted communities
4. Participatory photography workshops utilised to showcase how girls and women feel about chhaupadi and their periods, and what they would like to change about the experience

An important component of the Rato Baltin project is the distribution of a healthy and environmentally friendly solution to MHM in rural areas of Nepal: menstrual cups. **Ruby Cup**, a UK based company, are the manufacturers and donors of this life changing, medical grade silicone menstrual cup of the same name.

In 2018, we visited once remote villages to distribute menstrual cups and conduct hygiene and sexual education training. We also revisited villages to check in on those who have already received training and a cup to see what (if anything) has changed, and evaluate the results of the program.

We showed the Film **MIRA** to all communities during the second trip. MIRA is a motivation film aimed at inspiring girls in remote villages.

We have already distributed more than **601 menstrual cups** to school girls in remote villages. Each girl received a cup and training in how to use it. They are also given a metal bucket (baltin) to prepare clean water, and have somewhere to boil the cup.

INTENDED USE OF THE EVALUATION

The intended use of the Project evaluation is to measure any changes in the lives of individual participants and communities targeted in the program, and assist in reaching new project donors for *be artsy* to achieve its aims in:

- Educating women, girls, boys and communities on sex, biology and HMH practices
- Reducing school absenteeism of girls in targeted remote communities of West Nepal
- Providing girls and women with tools to facilitate menstrual dignity
- Achieving long term sustainability of the program

FOCUS OF THE EVALUATION

The principal focus of the evaluation is to address the question of:

What changes have occurred around the practice of chhaupadi in the lives of girls and communities after the implementation our program?

To ensure the program is based on best practice methodology and lessons learnt, the evaluation also aims to address the questions of:

1. How culturally accepted and sustained is the use of menstrual cups in the targeted remote communities of West Nepal?
2. What (if any) aspects of our program can be improved in design and/or implementation?

DATA SOURCES AND METHODOLOGY

Throughout the 2018 project implementation period, we have conducted monthly telephone follow-up calls with the volunteer menstrual cup users, as well as we hired two mentors (old users) that conducted follow ups personally.

The *be artsy* Staff Nurses and volunteers travelled to the targeted communities twice in 2018 to conduct face-to-face follow-ups with the girls, in order to measure how implementation of the cup is progressing. During these trips, girls completed surveys about changes they have experiences around chhaupadi since our first visit, and initial use of the Ruby Cup. Informal conversations with community members were also used to discern impressions of the use of menstrual cups and the impact of the workshop training and education.

Girls that participated in the survey are users of the donated menstrual cups. However, **our program has delivered workshop training, film screenings, and education training to more than 3.580 people in 2018**, across five villages: Basti, Kunti Bandali, JanaliBandali, Kalagaun, and Oligaun

The results

CHHAUPADI:

Similar to what was found last year, of the girls that wanted to speak about their experience of the chhaupadi practice, only 60% were cups users. Of respondent Ruby Cup users, only 14% of girls reported no change in their experience of the chhaupadi tradition after our program. 92% of Ruby Cup users experienced some changes. However, it must not be minimised that 40% of girls did not want to talk about, and did not answer, the question.

Like last year, some girls reported changes concerning access to food. Indeed, some girls reported they are now allowed to eat vegetables, some can eat fruits, and some can drink milk. A number of girls reported that after participating in our workshops, their mothers allowed them to have a warm blanket in the chhaugot (hut). Many others also reported that they now sleep inside the house, but in a separate

room or space to other members of their family. A few girls reported that since the workshop trainings they are no longer required to participate in the exclusionary practices of chhaupadi, including being able to cook food.

Girls communicated that because they no longer bleed outside of the body when using the cup, everything is cleaner, and both their families and themselves feel more self-confident. They attend school during their cycle, reducing their absenteeism, and actively try to help other girls in things related with menstruation.

This year a lot of girls explained to us that they do not tell anybody when they are menstruating, and so no longer practice chhaupadi.

Girls that did not report changes related to chhaupadi have seen their lives improve in other areas.

Most of the girls answered that they can stay at home after using the cups, since no one knows that they are on their period as they don't have to wash their bloodied clothes. They are happy because they can go to school without worrying about the blood leakage. Some girls still practice chaupadi during their periods, but now they feel clean and safe.

MENSTRUAL CUPS:

Ruby Cup donated 250 cups for the Spring project, while we paid for 71 cups for young women. Of the **321 cups distributed** between April and June 2018 to girls in Achcham, **250 were confirmed as users at the end of November**, while **23** were confirmed as non-users. We were unable to personally contact **48** girls, but on their last follow-up call over the phone they reported they were still using their cups. Some of these girls have gotten married and now reside in India.

“After I used menstruation cups, I feel myself so clean and also the surroundings” ~ Radhika Bhandari, JanaliBandali

REASONS FOR USING THE CUP:

- No fear of staining clothes
- No feeling that they are menstruating
- They do not have to worry about drying rags
- They do not feel self-conscious of having a bad smell

- It is easier to attend school as they do not need to carry any pads or replacement materials, nor hide any rubbish
- Nobody knows they are menstruating, so they can engage in regular activities such as touching tap water
- They feel cleaner than when using traditional methods

REASONS FOR NOT USING THE CUP:

- They are pregnant, but after the baby's birth they want to begin using it again
- Some reported slight pain/feelings of discomfort
- Some were scared

EMERGENT MYTHS:

- There were worse results in a village with concrete buildings than in others with less developed infrastructure. While we initially investigated whether anyone had been spreading misinformation or myths about the cups, as we experienced last year, the girls themselves reported feeling scared of them. 13 users gave the cup back during their follow ups.

What the girls think about our program:

All girls feel more comfortable with their bodies after our workshop. They understand the biological processes and reasoning for what is happening, and many feel that they are now able to help other girls understand.

Most of the girls considered their participation in the program to have been a positive experience, and that their lives have changed for the better in using the cup.

In response to the question of "What would you change about Rato Baltin?", most girls communicated that they would not change anything. Girls also rated the workshops on a scale of 0 - 10, with 0 being bad and 10 being excellent. Respondents rated the workshops with an average score of 9.

BUDGET EVALUATION:

Description	Estimate Cost	Total Cost
Salaries - Local staff	Rs 462.000	Rs 588.576
Supplies and workshop resources + cups for women	Rs 340.650	Rs 589.934,84
Utilities, bureaucracy + food and accommodation	Rs 660.060	Rs 822.951,5
Transportation	Rs 290.000	Rs 323.450
Total NPR	Rs 1.753.250	Rs 2.324.912,34
Total Euro	15.246 €	€18.306,39
General expenses – 10% of total Euro	1524 €	€1830
Grand Total	16.770 €	€ 20.136,39
	Exchange Rate: 1 Euro = 115 NPR (Rs)	Exchange Rate: 1 Euro = 127 NPR (Rs)

The 2018 budget exceeded the initial proposed expenditure by 3366,39 Euros. With a stronger than expected Euro - NPR exchange rate, which had been estimated based on the year previous, we exchanged at a rate of 127 in place of 115. If the exchange rate had stayed at 115, we would have instead exceeded the budget by 6000€ or more!

There were four reasons for exceeding the budget to such an extent:

1 - In the first trip, we had seen the need for two nurses in place of one. Moreover, the school groups we were interacting with were large and quite difficult to manage at our then capacity. We therefore hired two older cup users as local mentors to assist the nurses.

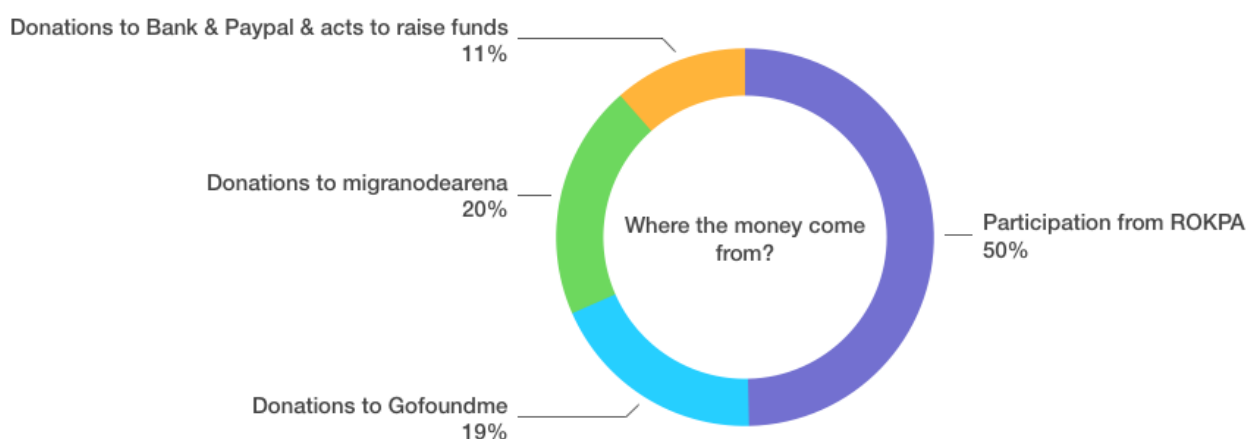
2 - The September follow up trip was more expensive than foreseen. As we showcased a film in the villages, we had to buy fruits, sweets, and tea (in some case 'iogurg' to make banana lassi) for the communities, so that they would come to see the film and participate happily after not being present for so long.

3 - When we saw that the Kathmandu nurses did not want to go back to Achham, no matter how much we had been paying, we decided to invest in a special training for six new Achhami trainers and six

mentors. A menstrual therapist travelled from Spain to teach a more open minded way of seeing menstruation to the new trainers.

4 - We spent more than we wanted to in official paperwork and administration in Nepal, due to the requirements of the Social Welfare Council (SJW) laws and guarantees.

Where did the budget come from? :



50% of our Project funding came from our partner **ROKPA International**. The rest came from **our Associates and private donors**.

Ruby Cup gave us 250 Cups for the Spring Project, and 150 more in August to do an earlier training to female teachers and nurses in the 2019 villages. The cost of these cups on the European market would be **10.080 €**.

The three main partners of this project have been collaborating similarly. Next year, Ruby Cup will donate 3000 menstrual cups. On the European market, the **2019 donation from Ruby Cup** would be **81.000€**.

Discussion and plan for the future

The results of the evaluation lead us to the conclusion that the Project is working well. Findings from the survey reveal our initial idea that the cups can break the taboos surrounding menstruation and chhaupadi were correct. However, our evaluation of the program also illustrates a need to implement some changes in the future.

We have seen the need to design a workshop component aimed at the men in targeted communities, in order to holistically disseminate MHM knowledge and education. We could not do a men's group, but we had several conversations with groups of men in every village. We will pursue the implementation of a men's group workshop to be delivered in 2019.

This year we have seen the need to stay longer and to arrive in more places quicker. When we were working within a village, a girl was found dead in another village one hour away. A few days later, a girl was gang raped in a Chhaupadi hut.

To fight against Chhaupadi is to fight against a wall, beliefs are beliefs. But if the girls are 'clean' by the use of the cup, and our presence there is more frequent and recurrent, little by little it will change.

The new villages we were in this year were really hard. Educated people trying to hide that they practice chhaupadi, alongside the death of the girl in a chhaupadi hut only one hour from where we were in a village we had on the list for next year, were really heartbreaking moments for us.

The cup has a great acceptance rate and as always we have a waiting list. This has led us to take the next step: speaking first with the local government of Mangalsen, and with the staff of the Nepalese Government.

Everyone likes our perseverance, good practices, and innovation in the Project: We routinely receive feedback to expand the Project, which we are willing to do, alongside hiring more Achhami staff. This year we had two KTM staff nurses and two Achhami mentors, but we want to expand our presence there by five to seven.

We have consistently had an issue where the nurses we hire from KTM do not want to return to Achham after one trip. The life we have there is so hard, and the travel to villages so long, dangerous, and tiring. In September we had a training of six new trainers, three coordinators, and three new mentors from Achham. A menstrual therapist travelled from Spain to train the future trainers in a more open minded way to see menstruation. Some of the new trainers are women that have been working against chhaupadi for a long time.

Next year the Project is going to grow. We will try to arrive in more municipalities at the same time, but we will only work with Achhami women.

This year, *be artsy* expanded its cup donation to include young women, who did not attend school. Next year, Ruby Cup have agreed to donate cups for more of these young women.

We experienced how difficult it is to work correctly with the Nepali Government and the SWC. Getting the Projects approved cost us a lot more money that we had initially calculated.

Although the 2018 Project was successful thanks to the hard work of *be artsy* volunteers, staff, and President Clara Garcia Ortes, present in Nepal for nine months of the year, it is necessary to consider other options to ensure effectiveness and accountability. We have been working to establish a strong mentor team in Achham, that can help in future years of the project. Furthermore, next year we want to work with an Achhami NGO. Through these measures, the Project can be more efficiently managed and we can feel confident that trainers from every municipality can take care of their menstrual cup users and continue chhaupadi awareness year-round.

IN CONCLUSION

The Government of Nepal and its political leadership are making efforts to end chhaupadi. On some local radios you can hear awareness adverts against chhaupadi.

In August of 2018, chhaupadi was criminalised, punishing those forcing women to adhere to chhaupadi-mandated exile while menstruating with a fine of 3,000 Nepalese rupees or three months jail-time. But not one case has been processed as yet.

The practice of chhaupadi is strongly embedded in social norms and cultural practices. However, its outlawing is a significant step forward in the right direction on the political level, and represents a developing social change in opinion. Combined with programs such as Rato Baltin that address education on the local grassroots level in remote areas where the practice is still prevalent, we believe that there is significant potential for change into the future.