

REFRAMING THE WORLD



be artsy: Participatory Photography for Positive Social Change in West Nepal

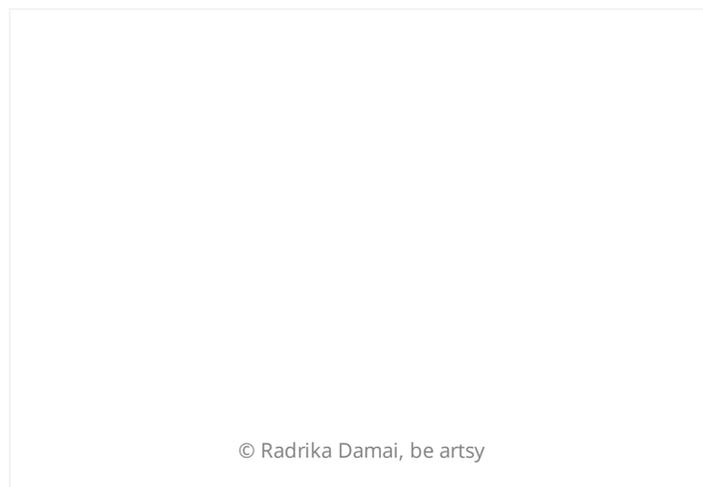
Kristy Davies, Projects Assistant at be artsy, an NGO supporting communities through the arts, writes for PhotoVoice on their participatory photography project in Nepal. Through their own photographs, girls and women

share their thoughts on menstruation and the tradition of 'chhaupadi', a practice that demands women be separated from their homes during their period.

Photography has a way of opening people's eyes. It can enable a person to reflect on their life, their context, and the lives of those around them and across the globe. A photo can express what someone understands the world to be, and stimulate discussion about what has been captured. For us at [be artsy](#), this component of photography is critical to our work with girls, women, and communities in remote villages of West Nepal.

[be artsy](#) is a small not-for-profit from Barcelona working in Nepal. We use art and participatory photography to empower communities, with a special focus on women's issues.

Women in West Nepal face many challenges based on their biological womanhood, and the natural cycle of menstruation. They have limited access to toilet facilities, management tools such as pads and tampons, clean water, and information about what their period is. This results in young girls missing school, experiencing shame and humiliation, and psycho-sexual exploitation. Furthermore, the lack of knowledge and information about menstruation contributes to the ongoing tradition of 'chhaupadi', where girls and women are considered 'unclean' while menstruating and ostracised from their homes and communities.



Although outlawed under Nepali law, the practice calls for women and girls to stay in cowsheds or makeshift huts while menstruating. This leads to injuries and health

issues from animal attacks to smoke inhalation, as well as instances of rape and death. As part of the Rato Baltin project, our workshops, while focusing on hygiene, menstrual and sex education, use participatory photography to stimulate discussion and reflect on the practice.

Change cannot be led from outside: it must come from the community members themselves, to challenge deep rooted beliefs and promote positive social change. *be artsy* volunteers and local nurses conducting the program never outright mention the practice of chhaupadi, or encourage participants to record their experiences of it. Quite simply, it emerges in the photographs on its own.



Girls are given cameras to take home, record their lives, and what they do and do not like about menstruating. It asks girls to think about what they would change about their experiences, if they could. Their photographs are then displayed in town centres, so that the entire community can reflect on and discuss what they are shown. We believe honest discussion and education, facilitated through photography, is key to social change.

Some months after, we return to villages to see the girls again and analyse if anything has changed since our first visit. Through photography walks with the girls, we see if the images we were first shown are different or remain the same. Organising a community screening and exhibition using instax (poloroid) photos, everyone in the village is again involved in discussion and reflection.

We hope to hold larger exhibitions in Nepal and Europe to shine a light on and increase awareness of chhaupadi.

Any funds raised from the photos will be returned to the girls in the form of something they need, like shoes, books or clothes.



This is just one area of our approach: we also incorporate direct methods such as disseminating menstrual cups to girls. While chhaupadi is still practiced, girls using the cup can access safer hygiene management and feel confident attending school. Increasing the number of cups and hygiene kits is a critical issue for *be artsy* volunteers.

Currently, the *be artsy* team is revisiting villages in Achcham, Kalikot and expanding into two new villages. Chhaupadi may not disappear quickly, but we will continue to work tirelessly in pursuit of improving the lives of girls and women in West Nepal who suffer because of something as natural as their periods.

To find out more about be artsy please visit: www.beartsy.org or follow them on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#). If you would like to learn more about how you can support their work please [click here](#).

Share Post:



Ten Questions with... Jillian Edelstein

How Photography Helped me: Cheney Orr



ABOUT POST AUTHOR

Tom

LEAVE A REPLY

You must be [logged in](#) to post a comment.

@photovoice on Twitter



RT [@nlcbf](#): Calling all leaving teams and workers. Could you take 5 minutes to complete this survey to help [@PhotoVoice](#) develop exciting res... [22 hours ago](#)



RT [@DrSteveMarshall](#): Really pleased to attend this workshop today: practical, relevant and inspiring. Highly recommended. Check website for... [9 days ago](#)



Thanks for coming Steve, we're really glad you enjoyed it! <https://t.co/jFYjPBjFgW> [9 days ago](#)

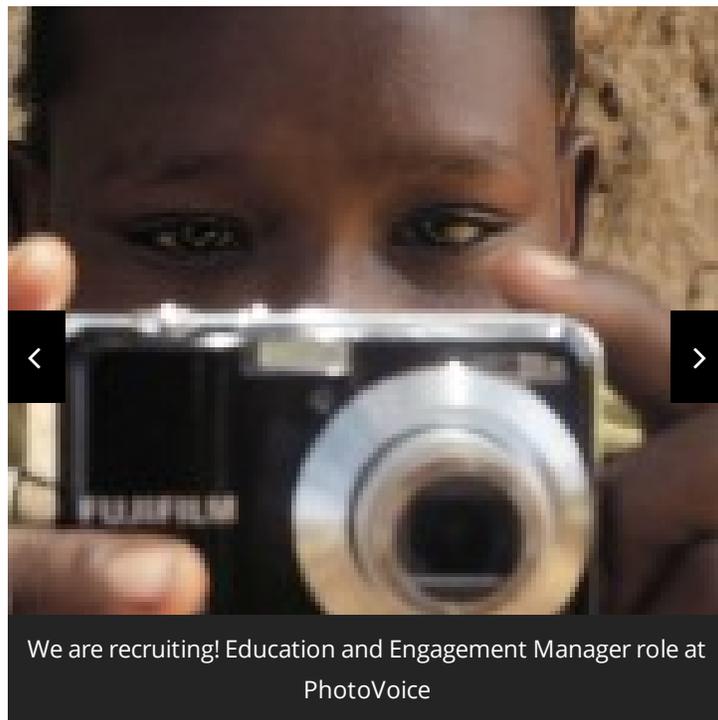


Want to learn how to run a participatory photography workshop? There are a final couple of places available on our... <https://t.co/gPUg0g1UQI> [11 days ago](#)



RT [@UncertainStates](#): - London Stockists - Future issues of Uncertain States will now be stocked by the wonderful [@PhotoVoice](#). If you are... [12 days ago](#)

Latest News and Blogs



Subscribe to our Newsletter

Email *

SUBSCRIBE!

Contact Information

✉ info@photovoice.org

🏠 PhotoVoice, 45 Turner Street, London. E1 2AU

☎ +44 (0) 333 011 7781

Charity Number: 1096598

VAT Number: 264 0236 28

- > [Contact Us](#)

- > [Photo Credits](#)

- > [Internet Privacy and Cookies Policy](#)

- > [FAQs](#)

- > [Press Enquiries](#)

Member Login

USERNAME

PASSWORD

Remember me

LOGIN

[Forgot Password?](#)

[Join Us](#)

Search

Type keywords...

