

PROJECT IMPACT EVALUATION

RATO BALTIN PROJECT 2019



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DESCRIPTION

In West Nepal, the lack of safe sanitary options often results in health problems, death and school absenteeism. Menstruation is a topic that evokes embarrassment and insecurity. It also leads to degrading traditions for women following Chhaupadi.

Chhaupadi is characterized by the banishment of women during the period of their menstruation from their usual residence, due to supposed 'impurity'. It has been criticized for violating the basic human rights of women and for the physical and mental health impacts it involves. Despite having been outlawed and criminalized, 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 contribute to the eradication of this menstrual practice in the far west, in Achham. The project is designed to focus on and include girls, boys, women and their communities. We at **be artsy** are convinced that education is the only way to change these deeply rooted beliefs. The project has a four-tiered approach:

1. A workshop which provides reproductive health education, sex education and sexual orientation to both male and female teenagers in local schools of targeted communities
2. Menstrual health 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 utilized to showcase how girls and women feel about Chhaupadi and their menstruation, and what they would like to change about the experience

An important component of the Rato Baltin project is the distribution of menstrual cups in Achham, a province in the far west of Nepal. The menstrual cup is a healthy and environmentally friendly solution to help manage menstrual health (MHM). Our donor **Ruby Cup** is a UK based company, which manufactures this life changing silicone menstrual cup of the same name.

In 2019, the project covered **18 remote villages in 4 Municipalities of Achham**, where menstrual cups were distributed and menstrual health management was conducted, as well as reproductive health education and sexual education training. The follow-up of the project being essential, the villages targeted in 2018 were revisited and there we were able to evaluate last year's program and observe the ongoing changes in 2019.

In the course of the project, we have already distributed **1467 menstrual cups** to school girls and young women in 18 remote villages. Each girl and woman received a cup and training on how to use it. They were also given a metal bucket (baltin) to store clean water and to be able to boil the cup, as well as a hand towel and soap for their convenience.

During the follow-up in November, the film **MIRA** was projected to all communities. **MIRA** is a motivational documentary that aims to inspire girls in remote villages. It portrays the life of the

Nepalese girl Mira Rai and how she was able to fulfill her dream of becoming an internationally renowned trail runner - by using the strength she acquired thanks to her childhood duties of climbing up and down mountains to get water. The documentary proposes to take her as an example and to show the girls that there is hope and more possibilities than they might think. However, it focuses on every person in the community, since every village has a strong network of solidarity, its own norms and values. These have to be addressed to reach the main aim of the documentary: to change people's perspectives of the girls, away from thinking of them as vulnerable and unable to carry out physical work. Instead, they should be encouraged to seek opportunities.

This documentary has helped many women and men to change their perspectives and to recognize the importance of equality and a strong mindset for every individual. This way, each person in the community can be empowered and become successful in what they are passionate about.

During the briefing session, women and men were amazed to see a girl using her childhood's hard work as a strength and being able to represent the country worldwide and this shows that support and hard work can change the lives of girls living in remote villages in many ways.

Our program has delivered workshop training, film screenings, and education training to more than 7829 direct beneficiaries in 2019, across 13 new villages: Patalkot, Srikot, Khalsen, Birku, Bannatoli, Jupu, Dhakari, Hichma, Dhungachalna, Toshi, Dhamali and Raniban + **5 old villages:** Janalai bhandali, oligaun, kalgaun, kunti bandali and Basti.

INTENDED USE OF THE EVALUATION

This project evaluation aims to measure any changes in the lives of individual participants and communities targeted in the program and reach new project donors for **be artsy** to achieve its objectives to:

- Educate women, girls, boys and communities about reproductive health, MHM and sex education.
- Introduce menstrual cups and their benefits to the people in power, such as faith keepers and local political representatives of the communities.
- Reduce school absenteeism of girls in targeted remote communities of West Nepal.
- Provide girls and women with the tools to facilitate menstrual dignity.
- Achieve the long-term sustainability of the program.

FOCUS OF THE EVALUATION

The main focus of the evaluation is to address the following question:

What changes have occurred in the lives of the girls and their communities in terms of the practice of Chhaupadi since the implementation of our program?

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

1. How culturally accepted and sustainable 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?
3. How can we focus on finding out in which season the menstrual cup users, students and women could be approached easily? (They spend a lot of time working in the fields)

DATA SOURCES AND METHODOLOGY

Throughout the 2019 project implementation period, a **face-to-face follow-up** was carried out **every two month** with the menstrual cup users and also with the help of local trainers, mentors and coordinators that are also cup users and received the training in 2018. Similarly, we did a follow-up of girls who are not using menstrual cups, to measure the difference between menstrual cup users and non-users and to see if the tradition of Chhaupadi can be changed only through education.

be artsy staff and its volunteers travelled to the targeted communities **twice** in 2019 to conduct interviews with the girls, in order to evaluate how the implementation of the cup is progressing. During these trips, the girls completed surveys about changes they have experiences around Chhaupadi since our first visit and the initial use of the Ruby Cup. Both formal and informal conversations with community members, local political representatives and faith keepers were conducted to get an impression of how the menstrual cups are used and which impact workshops, trainings and education programs are having.

THE RESULTS

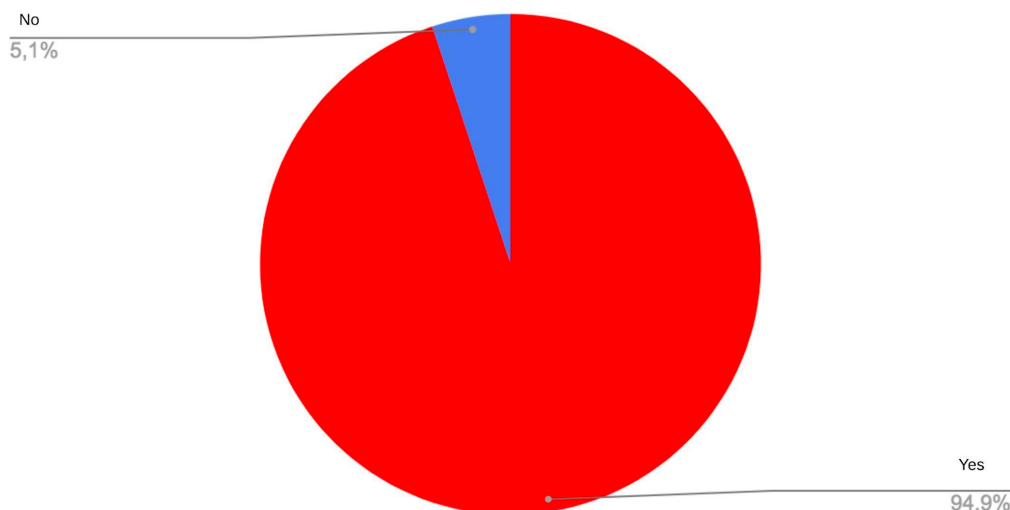
CHHAUPADI

Speaking about the **girls who received the cup this year**, the last follow-up shows that **96.46%** of them are progressively using the cup, even **6 months** after the training.

96 % of them would recommend it to other girls.

94% of the girls reported that they used to follow some kind of **menstrual restriction before using the menstrual cup**, and **after the training** and the implementation of the cups, but when asked whether the tradition has changed since then, **75%** of that girls have **reported changes in Chhaupadi Pratha** (tradition).

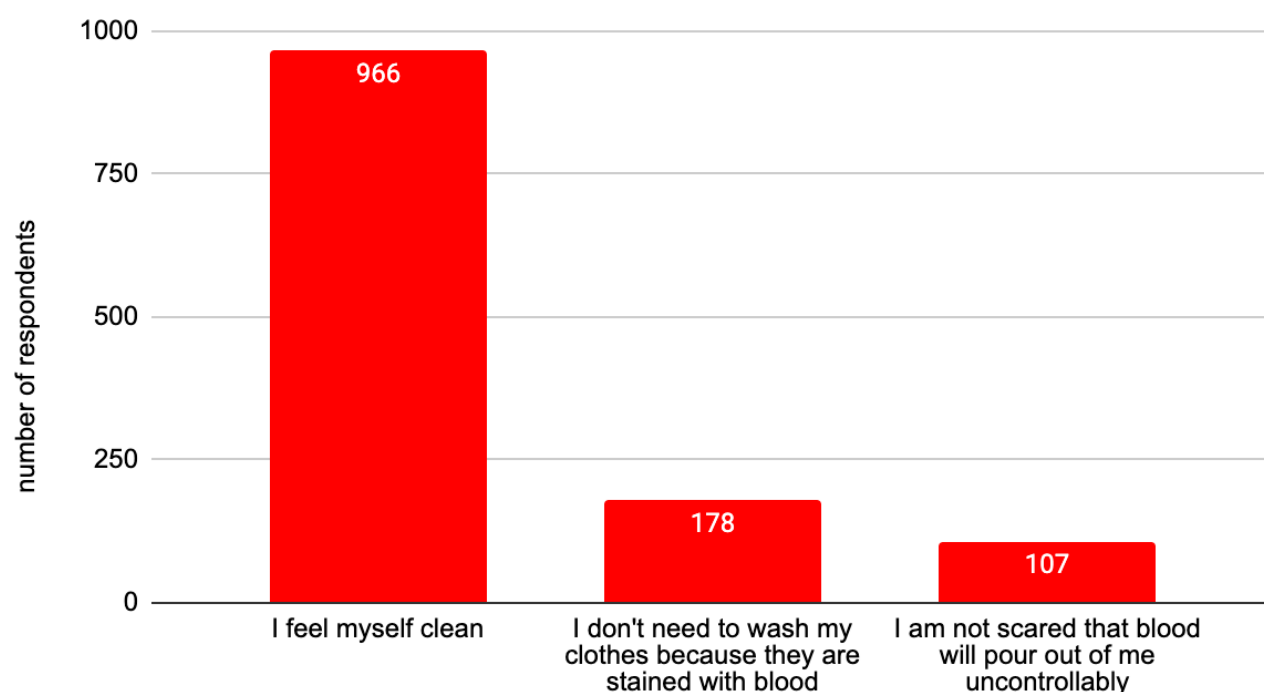
Did you follow some kind of menstrual restriction before using the cup?



75% of Ruby Cup users experienced some changes, including the following:

- Some girls reported changes concerning access to food: some of them 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).
- Most of the girls said that they no longer have to sleep outside when they are on their periods, since no one knows that they are bleeding. Some girls sleep in separate rooms and some still practice Chhaupadi but they now feel clean and safe.
- A few girls reported that since the workshops and trainings, they are no longer required to participate in the exclusionary practices of Chhaupadi and are now allowed to cook food.
- Some girls mentioned that now they are allowed to touch the animals at home.
- Some girls no longer hesitate to touch the water source.
- A few girls told us that they now visit the temple without any hesitation.
- A number of girls reported that they feel comfortable going to school even when they are having their periods, because thanks to the cups nobody can tell whether they are bleeding or not.
- They also feel that working is easier for them when using the cups.
- The girls that agreed to talk about their experience said that they feel much cleaner using the cups, since the blood is not leaving their bodies. These girls and their families are also feeling more self-confident.
- They don't need to wash their clothes because of blood stains, instead they feel clean and healthy.

What changes did the menstrual cup bring in your life?



However, also girls who do not use the menstrual cup have experienced changes since we started the menstrual health management training.

57% of those girls have been noticing changes during their menstruation periods. Just like the girls using the cup, they revealed that they have been able to :

1. Touch animals
2. Eat vegetables
3. Drink milk
4. Sleep in their bed inside house
5. Stay inside the house in a separate room
6. Touch water sources
7. Use a thick blanket in the hut

58% of them reported staying in a separate room inside the house, while **33%** still sleep in a separate hut and **6%** even sleep outside and don't have a hut.

MENSTRUAL CUPS

Ruby Cup donated 3000 cups for the Spring project. **1467 menstrual cups were distributed** between April and December 2019, **48 girls** who received them were confirmed as non-users at the end of the year. The acceptance rate for 2019 is 1419 out of 1467 (**97%**).

REASONS FOR USING THE CUP

- No fear of stained clothes
- Having the same physical freedom as when they are not menstruating
- Not having to worry about using rags (old rags are usually used as a menstrual pad)
- No longer feeling self-conscious about smelling bad
- 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 like pads and rags

REASONS FOR NOT USING THE CUP

- Some reported slight pain/feelings of discomfort
- Some were scared

Some misinformation and myths about the use of the cups have spread among girls and women. Some participants reported feeling scared of what they had heard from others.

The myths are the one listed below:

- False belief that the hymen will break when inserting the menstrual cup.
- False belief that the vagina will tear or be enlarged because of the insertion of the menstrual cup.

DIRECT IMPACTS ON THE COMMUNITY

Employment of local girls as coordinators, trainers and mentors in Achham :

1. Number of trainers : 5
2. Number of mentors : 14
3. Number of coordinators : 2

As employees of the Rato Baltin project, they earn a salary which makes them economically more independent. The experience they gain will make them leaders in their community and allow them to develop new skills which they will be able to use in the future.

BUDGET EVALUATION

Description	Estimate Cost	Total Cost
Salaries - Local staff	€ 12.632,00	€ 5.504,86
Salaries - Nepal headquarter office	€ 1.712,00	€ 1.629,42
Kathmandu office expenses	€ 2.016,00	€ 1.697,76
Supplies and workshop resources	€ 8361.10	€ 8.476,74
Utilities, bureaucracy, food and accommodation	€ 9.017,28	€ 6.496,63
Transportation	€ 1.899,20	€ 2.020,07
Expatriates trips, expenses, per diem (volunteers)	€ 8.960,00	€ 11.060,00
Material, TOT, travel and accommodation on the field in November	€ 2.972,80	€ 4.817,49
Financial expenses, legal advice, accounting and administration cost counterpart	€ 1.378,04	€ 1.041,00
Extra menstrual cups training for the old five villages	€ 224,00	–
External Evaluation - Monitoring	€ 200,00	–
Audit	€ 280,00	–
Education for development and awareness (in Nepal and Spain)	€ 660,00	€1.607,77
Sponsorship for girls from Mangalsen	–	€ 607,69
Identification project Nuwakot	–	€ 237,79
Total Euro	€ 50.312,42	€ 45.197,22
General expenses – 10% of total Euro	€ 5.031.24	€ 4.519.72
Grand Total	€ 55.343,66	€ 49.716,94

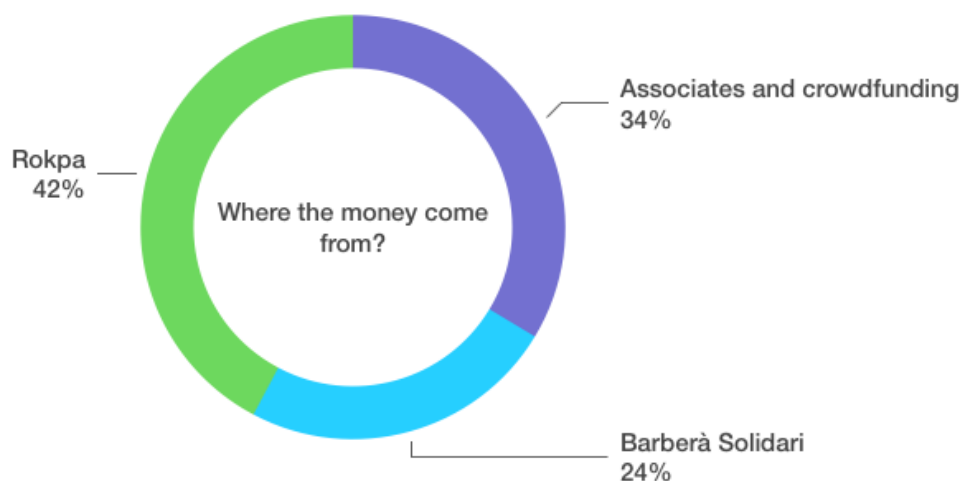
The final budget for 2019 was 5,626,72 Euros lower than the initially proposed expenditure. Actually, we had to lower our expenses because we didn't have enough resources. Instead of the planned monthly follow-ups, we could only conduct a follow-up every two months, for example. This way we spent less on salaries but were still able to evaluate the use of the menstrual cups in an effective and efficient manner. However, trainers and mentors were not able to work on the field every month and work as social mobilizers to help the girls and stop the tradition of Chhaupadi. We hope next year we will have sufficient funds for it.

We spent part of the year working in a smaller office to save money.

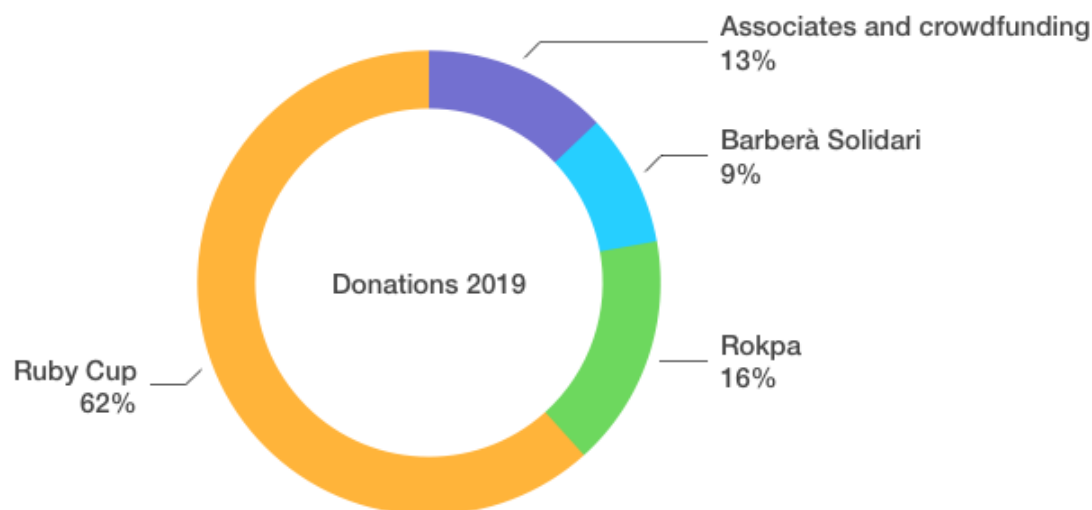
The external evaluation has not been done yet this year and the audit was paid for by our local partner NGO. The amount invested in the additional menstrual cup training has been added to the rest of the field expenses.

BUDGET SOURCES

42% of our project funding was provided by our partner **ROKPA International**, **24%** by **Barberà Solidària** and the rest was donated by **our associates, private donors and collected during our fundraising events in Spain**.



In 2019, Ruby Cup donated 3,000 menstrual cups. In the European market, this donation amount to €81.000. Considering this, the total 2019 donations lead to the allocation presented in the following diagram:



DISCUSSION AND PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

This year we have managed to maintain the presence of **4 different teams working on the field**. Thanks to the goodwill of the trainers, the follow-up of the project went well, and we were able to obtain a lot of feedback from the beneficiaries.

Findings from the survey reveal that our initial idea that the cups can break the taboos surrounding menstruation and Chhaupadi has turned out to be working. However, our evaluation of the program also illustrates the need to implement some changes in the future, like our continued presence on the field.

We have seen the need to design a workshop component aimed at boys, too, in order to holistically disseminate MHM knowledge and sex education. We will pursue the implementation of a group workshop for school boys to be delivered in 2020.

In every village we organized talks with representatives of the municipalities as well as spiritual and religious leaders.

Next **year the project is not going to be expanded to a lot of other villages**. Instead, we will focus on having people working on the field during the whole year. We will try to reach more women and help them to stop Chhaupadi by assisting and encouraging them with the help of the mentors and training

visits.

Our staff will be made up entirely of Achhami girls. We will employ at least 2 girls from each village to work as social mobilizer and assist the trainer once per month throughout the whole year.

We experienced how difficult it is to work correctly with the Nepalese Government and the SWC. Importing the Cups into the country was neither easy nor cheap. After a lot of struggling, our local partner NGO was able to achieve it, but only at the last minute.

Similarly, we had problems with the Sanfebagar municipality. The money for the Rato Baltin Project that was allocated by the Sanfebagar municipality mayor, was not used in the project by our Achhami counterpart Samabikas Nepal. **They have been working very poorly and on the day they exposed our team to Chhaupadi, we decided not to work with them anymore: They host our team in a place that followed Chhaupadi and they wanted us to sleep in Chhaugot (huts). We ended up staying in the School library and wanted to make a complaint to the police.** However, they told us it had to be done by Samabikas adviser Pashupati Kunwar or the Sanfebagar trainer Ganga but they didn't want to do it. At that point we told them that we were no longer willing to work with them. Actually, **it was the perfect moment to apply the law of 2018** (which states that anyone who obliges someone else to sleep outside or in a hut to follow Chhaupadi can be sued and will face a prison sentence), but the people of Samabika were not willing to do it.

When we told them this, they decided to keep the funds we had been given for the project for their own projects, and the mayor of the Sanfebagar municipality agreed.

Also, The Sanfebagar Municipality is now destroying Chhaugots - like Mangalsen did 10 years ago. This was not effective at all for the abolishment of Chhaupadi.

We witnessed all of this and realized that the political leaders and activists from that municipality don't consider education and awareness programs more important than destroying Chhaugots and let girls sleep on the field without anything.

Therefore, the Rato Baltin team called for a special meeting with all be artsy board members and the board members of our new Nepalese counterpart. We decided not to work in the Sanfebagar municipality as long as they don't agree to stop the destroying of Chhaugots. **We cannot work together if they don't think that our project is important.**

We have been taking care of all 2019 menstrual cup users in Sanfebagar, and we have done three follow-ups in the Sanfebagar municipality, but we will not go back there next year.

Nevertheless, the 2019 Project was successful thanks to the hard work of all *be artsy* volunteers, the Nepalese staff and President Clara Garcia Ortés, who work volunteer really hard from Spain and monitoring in Nepal. 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 the future years of the project.

In this sense, it is important to emphasize that the local **counterpart of 2020** is made up of women

committed to the project and that they can set up a **social enterprise**. Specifically, we are talking about three Nepalese Women that were working for our counterpart from Kathmandu, as staff, volunteers and interns during the 2019 project. One has a master's degree in International Cooperation, the second one a master's degree in Gender Studies and the third one has studied Business Administration and has her own menstrual cups business. They have been trained to work in such kind of projects and know how to gather funding from cooperation organizations from all over the world as well as from private entities. Furthermore, they have knowledge about generating their own capital.

In addition to that, we will continue having Achhami girls conduct the workshops on the field, and they will become team managers in the future.

By means of these measures, the project can be managed more efficiently, and we will be able to count on the trainers in each municipality, who will take care of their menstrual cup users and foster Chhaupadi awareness year-round.

CONCLUSION

The Government of Nepal and its political leadership are making efforts to end Chhaupadi.

In August 2018, Chhaupadi was criminalized and those who were forcing women to adhere to chhaupadi-mandated exile while menstruating were punished with a fine of 3,000 Nepalese rupees or three months in jail. After some girl died in late November 2019, charges have been pressed in one case, but we don't think that this is going to stop Chhaupadi.

The practice of Chhaupadi is strongly embedded in social norms and cultural practices. However, we believe, because that has been doing before, that destroying Chhaupadi is counterproductive and makes the girls be even more exposed.

We believe that programs such as Rato Baltin, that address education on the local grassroots level in remote areas where the practice is still prevalent, have significant potential to achieve future changes.

After the problems we had with our 2019 counterpart, Samabikas Nepal, and with the adviser Pashupati Kunwar, we realized that working in long terms projects is one of the main problems in Nepal. People are used to do one day program and don't keep working in the same issue month after month like the Rato Baltin do.

This was the first time in four years that we had this kind of problem, and we hope that it was also the last.

We know that the Nepalese government is working trying to improve the conditions in their country.