

PROJECTS IMPACT EVALUATION, 2021

RATO BALTIN UMBRELLA PROJECTS IN NEPAL



Submitted by: be artsy

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DESCRIPTION

RATO BALTIN

In West Nepal, the lack of safe sanitary options often results in health problems, school absenteeism, and even death. Menstruation is a topic that evokes embarrassment and insecurity. It also leads to degrading traditions for women, such as “Chhaupadi”. Chhaupadi is defined as 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 has. Despite having been outlawed and criminalized in Nepal, 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 Achham, a District in the far west of Nepal. The project is designed to focus on and include girls, boys, women and their communities. At *be artsy*, we are convinced that education is the only way to change these deeply rooted beliefs.

The project has a multitude of approaches:

1. A workshop that provides reproductive health education, sex education, and sexual health 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 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.

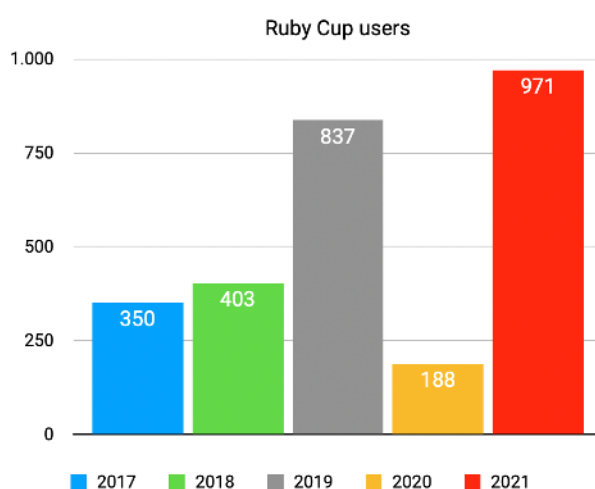
One of the most important components of the Rato Baltin project is the distribution of menstrual cups in Achham. The menstrual cup is a healthy and environmentally friendly solution to help manage menstrual health (MH). Our donor **Ruby Cup** is a UK based company, which manufactures this life-changing silicone menstrual cup, and they have a buy one give one project that is helping thousands of girls in Africa and Nepal.

In 2021, the project aimed to cover 19 remote villages in 3 Municipalities of Achham, where menstrual cups would have been distributed along with menstrual health management and sexual education workshops to be conducted.

But like in most countries, the Covid-19 pandemic affected our plans and the project couldn't be implemented as expected. Nepal had a deadly second wave from Covid-19, (during that time we worked to provide the emergency oxygen for Nepal), and the government shut down the country for more than 4 months.

Anyway, **we still worked in 16 of the 19 planned** remote villages, because **we changed our approach and adapted to the situation**. We started the year as planned, with 4 teams on the field, but when the lockdown came in May, we decided to keep only the best and more interested trainers, and we kept working with only one team. That team has been working the full year on the project. And when the lockdown finished, the trainers were able to keep going with the project.

Despite the situation in 2021, we were able to distribute 971 more cups to new users. Each girl and woman received a menstrual cup and training on how to use it. School girls were also given an aluminium bucket (baltin) to store clean water and to be able to boil the cup (to clean it). And all the users had a hand towel and soap for their convenience, plus a Nepali instruction book and pen to write. **From the start in 2017 to the end of 2021, 2,749 people have used a menstrual cup through our program.**



This year, due to the pandemic, trainers, and helpers had to face challenges to complete the three-month follow-up, and the 6-month follow-up could not be conducted physically, instead done by phone.

Also, we started to give **menstrual cup training to frontliners** working against Covid-19 in Lalitpur , Patan Hospital. Frontliners were very excited for using the cups and were really thankful for conducting this project.

HAPPY WOMEN TRAINING CENTRE

With an index value of gender inequality of 0.476, Nepal places 115th of 162 countries. Gender inequality has always been an endemic problem in the country. Literacy rates for men and women differ 17.7% according to the 2011 national census. Women also suffer from more sexual violence instances than men.

The gender pay gap has been for a long time a critical aspect of gender inequality. This issue is even more crucial in countries such as Nepal, where there are significant differences between men and women on an educational level. Women in rural areas have difficulties finding steady jobs even when their educational level is high, compared to urban men and women. Moreover, regular women workers in rural areas face an enormous pay gap due to the effects of gender-based discrimination.

Nepal's census of 2011 records 218,040 widows, or 4.6% of its female population. Almost half of the women in Nepal are subjected to some type of violence during their lives. Among widows, such figure rises to 78%.

Many women are also abandoned by their husbands, who move abroad to work and never come back. In Nepal, widows are subjected to forced evictions and often lose their land and possessions at the hands of their husband's family. After their husbands' death, widows are left homeless and are isolated and marginalized by their community. Such loss of financial safety may have wide-ranging implications and is frequently accompanied by physical violence and intimidation.

Another issue being dealt with from *be artsy* is the empowerment of disadvantaged women in relation to their dignity and educational rights.

Be artsy has been working to make a bigger impact on the lives of women in Achham by empowering disadvantaged women in relation to their dignity and educational rights. We have partnered with Dr. Swee Chen Yap on a part of the project to set up a social enterprise and establish the **Happy Women Training Centre in Achham**. This will help women and young girls who are not in school to earn a living, and at the same time make the Rato Baltin Project more sustainable in having an impact.

This project aims to achieve some of the UN's sustainable development goals (SDGs), such as "reducing inequality" and "decent work and economic growth," through "teaching women to fish instead of giving them fish." Learning new skills, and being able to have a job or even create their own business and finally break with poverty and gender inequality.

OXYGEN FOR NEPAL

The second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic plunged Nepal into a deadly health crisis. Existent health infrastructures were insufficient to cater to the increasing number of infections, and many patients were turned down from hospital treatment. Demands for essential medical equipment and infrastructures such as oxygen cylinders, hospital beds, ventilators along with safety gear could not be met due to their lack of availability. This supply-demand gap created a massive health catastrophe and led to many avoidable deaths.

It was at that moment when the collaborative financing Oxygen for Nepal came to be. Thanks to individual donors, and the economic and supportive contributions of the NGOs “Amics del Nepal”, “Petit Món”, “Muntanya viva”, “Camina Nepal” and some more, we made €18,000 for that projects.

With the money from the Oxygen for Nepal initiative could we help more than **1700** people in 8 districts.

The support received from be artsy has been utilized for procurement and distribution of oxygen cylinders of 10 litres and 40 litres capacity, oxygen regulators for both 10 litres and 40 litres cylinders, safety kits including PPE, masks, gloves, oximeters, and thermometers.

Along with the safety amenities, the fund was also used for distribution of food rations for flood affected communities and other vulnerable groups deprived of their daily income due to the pandemic.

The assistance was provided to rural municipalities, health centres and isolation centres of eight districts along with frontline workers such as the security forces and waste workers and other vulnerable communities of people.

EDUFEM

For the girls studying under the project EDUFEM, it has been a complicated year. The 2020/2021 course was between the first and the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic has been keeping college and universities closed most of the year. One of the girls that was here from the beginning was waiting for the University to open, but then she got married and left to India. Her small sister could finish class 11, and 3 girls (kamala, Manisha and Sangita) could finish class 12.

For the course 2021/2022 we have 3 girls in the university with sponsors (kamala, Manisha and Rabina), and 1 girl in class 12 without sponsors.

BENEFICIARIES

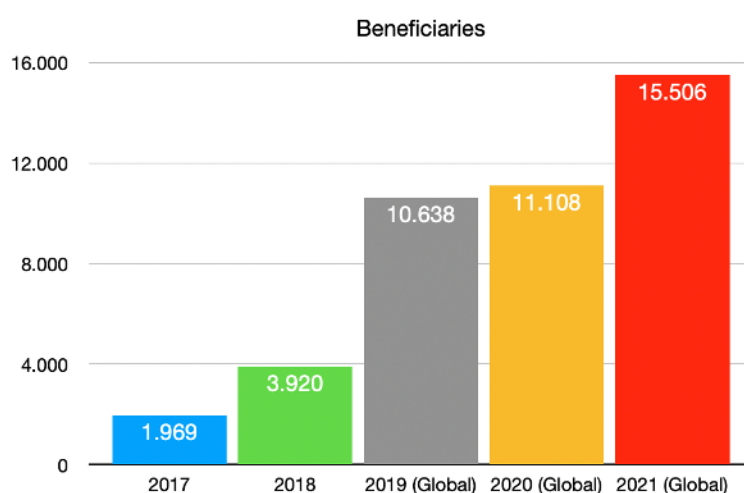
In 2021, a total of 11,812 direct beneficiaries in Nepal attended our workshops. We also had 3,694 beneficiaries from other areas in the world. **The total number of direct beneficiaries for the year 2021 was 15,506.**

Indirect beneficiaries usually can be found by multiplying that number to 5, corresponding to the average Nepali family. Thus, there are around $11,812 \times 5 = 50,060$ indirect beneficiaries from our work in Nepal.

Beneficiaries List by Training/Program:

–Training and educating boys and girls in sex and menstrual hygiene in new schools : 828 students

- Training and educating in sex and menstrual health for girls: 1086 girls
- Training and educating in sex education for boys : 879 girls
- Training and educating in sex and menstrual health for women: 972 women
- Masks, Soaps, and Covid-19 awareness: 3,354 people attending our Trainings
- Menstrual cup training for girls: 480 girls
- Menstrual cup training for women (till 45 years Old) : 491 women
- Women attending our trainings who had snacks: 972 women
- People in Kathmandu who used the masks and soap: 1,000 elderly people and children
- Women in remote Basti and Bara for Green fingers: 176 women
- Women Trained in Happy Women Training Center: 29 women
- Business training to promote local business: 20 people
- Food relief 125 families: 625 people
- Oxygen 4 Nepal beneficiaries during second wave: 1,737 people
- Masks sewn during 2021: 10,925 masks
- Pads sewn during 2021: 175 pads (2 inner + outer + bags)
- Cotton bags for menstrual cup sewn during 2021:1900 bags
- EDUFEM: 4 Teenagers - 3 girls in class 12 and 1girl in class 11.



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 to 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 long-term sustainability of the program.
- Achieve economic independence and lift widows out of extreme poverty.

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 what are the best skills for women who are widowed and how to help them to achieve economic independence?

DATA SOURCES AND METHODOLOGY

Throughout the 2021 project implementation period, a **face-to-face follow-up** couldn't be carried out **every two months** with the menstrual cup users and was therefore completed through phone.

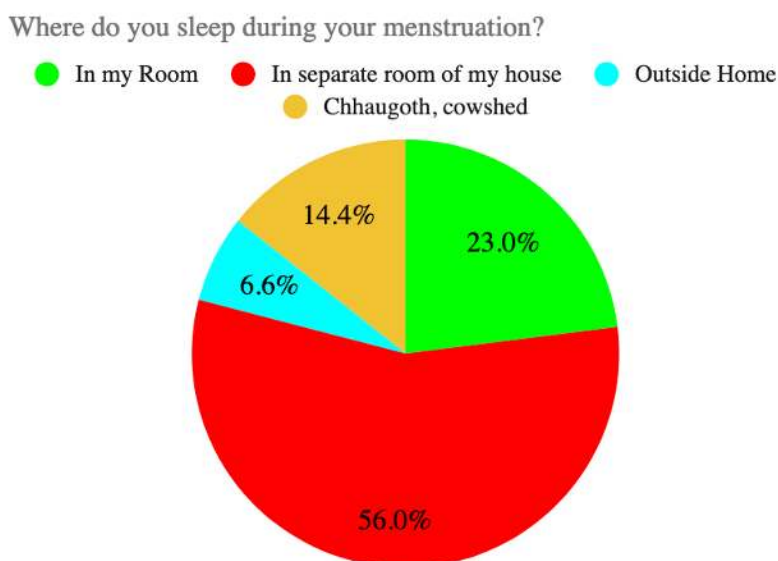
Before the Lockdown and once the lockdown was eased, *be artsy* local staff in Achham travelled to targeted communities for the new menstrual cup training, and they followed all the safety measures. Unfortunately this year we had to avoid contact as much as possible, so conversations with community members, local political representatives and faith keepers were not conducted.

THE RESULTS

CHHAUPADI

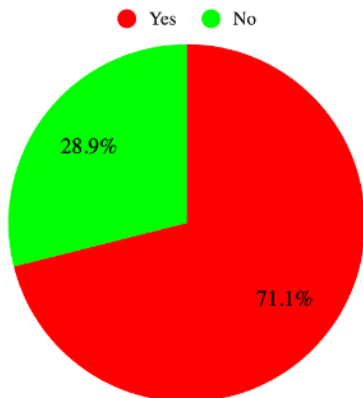
To avoid physical contact because of Covid-19, we were not able to facilitate in-person questionnaires for many of the menstrual cup training sessions. But in the ones we did (439 questionnaires of the 971 participating individuals), we could see how the Chhaupadi tradition and the menstruation knowledge were in the communities. Every year there are more girls sleeping in the house in a separate room instead of an outside, unsafe house. There are cases, however, where the separate room is near animals and without proper hygienic measures.

From the girls that answered our questionnaire, 23% responded that they sleep in their own room during the menstruation, whereas 56% of girls responded that they sleep in a separate room inside the house. 14.4% explained that they are still sleeping in the Chhaugot. But, what is even more dangerous is that 6.6% of the girls responded that they sleep outside the house when they menstruate even if they don't have Chhaugot. So, these girls sleep anywhere outside the house, without any protection. Despite this, the results show that the situation has improved from 6 years ago when we started.

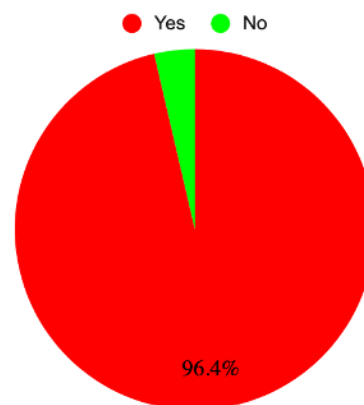


When we asked, "is there menstrual restriction in your family?," 70% of the girls said yes. And to the question, "Would you like to change that menstrual restriction," 96.4% said yes.

Is there menstrual restriction in your family?



Would you like to change the menstrual restrictions?



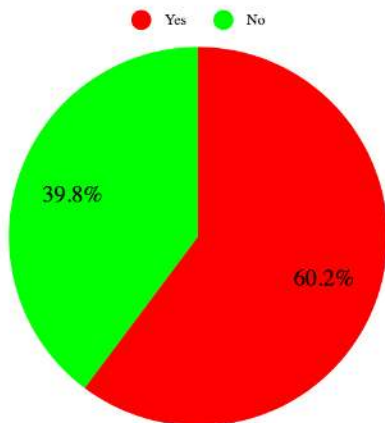
MENSTRUAL EDUCATION

Another problem that we are trying to solve with our project is also reflected in that questionnaire that we do before the menstrual cup training. We asked girls what they knew about menstruation, and what they knew about it before having a period for the first time.

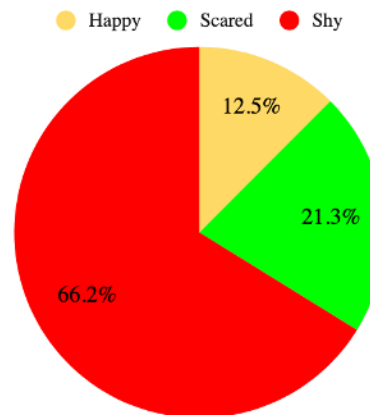
To the question, "Did you know about menstruation before you had a period?," most said no. Also, we saw that many feel shy and scared.

That is why projects such as the Rato Baltin are so important. Girls should know what is menstruation in advance and be positively prepared for it.

Did you know about menstruation before you had?

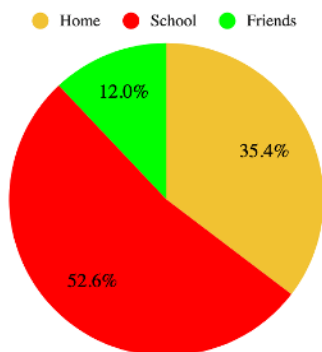


How did you feel during your first menstruation?

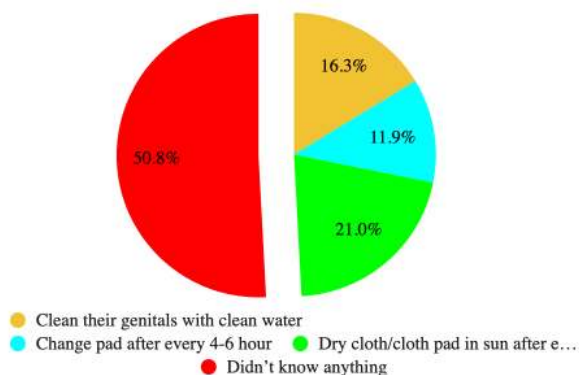


Also, although most of the girls affirmed having learnt about menstruation in the school, it was too late or not good enough because they did not have enough information on how to take care of their menstrual health.

Where did you learn about menstruation?



Before menstruation, What you knew about menstrual health?



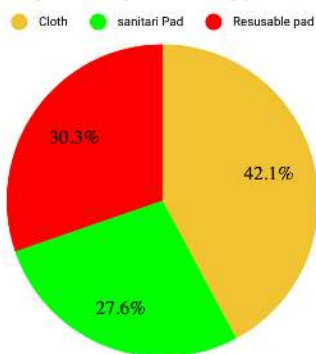
MENSTRUAL CUPS

Also, from the questionnaires before the menstrual cup training, we learnt that most of the girls use old cloth, 30% use reusable menstrual pads, and 27% use disposable sanitary pads for menstruation.

The last number has been increasing a lot this year in comparison with other years. The reason is that government schools have started to donate free menstrual pads in the school.

What in other circumstances could be seen as a good initiative, is in the girls' situation a disaster. We can not forget that these girls can not enter the toilet while menstruating because of Chhaupadi, or because the school toilets are so dirty and without water that they prefer to go to the forest, and most of those pads then end up in the forest. It's better to look towards renewable options.

What kind of product do you use during your Menstruation?



From the donated Ruby Cups during 2019 and 2020, we had around 2,500 Cups at the beginning of 2021. This year we distributed 971 out of this donation.

The rate of girls wanting to be part of our program is 96.05 %, and the 8 girls who didn't want to use it told us that they were scared to use it or find it too complicated or painful.

Despite the fact that this year's follow up couldn't highlight the reason why some girls wouldn't use the cups, we have learned from the previous years that some misinformation and myths about the use of the cups can spread among girls and women. Some participants reported one can get scared of what they had heard from others.

The myths are 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.

We conducted 3 months follow up, but we were not able to do all the six-month follow-ups because of the lockdown and the Covid-19 measures. The final follow up will be conducted during 2022.

The main purpose of the 3 months follow up was to verify acceptance of the menstrual cup as a healthy hygienic protection. The questions the girls and women who received the cups asked us allowed us to understand if the use of the cup had an impact on their health and hygiene during menstruation.

DIRECT IMPACTS ON THE COMMUNITY

Employment of local girls as coordinators, trainers, and mentors (Trainers helpers) in Achham:

1. Number of trainers: 7
2. Number of Trainers helpers: 14
3. Number of team manager: 2
4. Administrator in Ktm: 1
5. Project manager: 1
6. Male trainers and helpers: 6
7. Ladies in the Happy Woman Training Centre: 4
8. Trainers for the Happy Woman Training Centre: 3
9. Reusable Mask Sewing: 6 (5 local women and 1 local man)

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 that they will be able to use in the future.

BUDGET EVALUATION

We were planning big for 2021, trying to catch up on everything we could not do in 2020. We were able to do a lot with the budget we had, despite it not being as much as we needed.

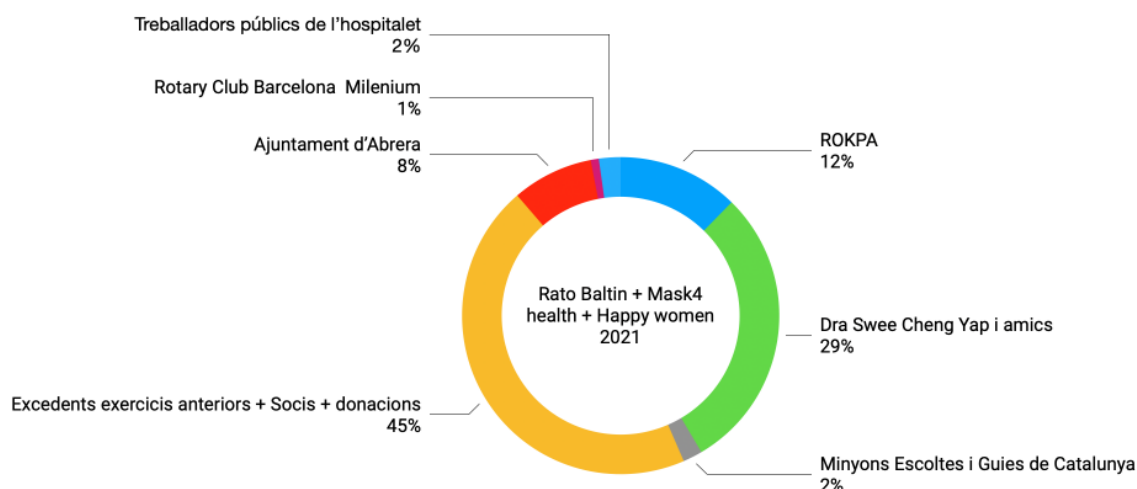
These numbers are not the final ones. The accountant is finishing the official ones.

Object Class Category	budget (EUR €)	Reality end of the year (EUR €)
1.1 -SUBTOTAL: Field Staff	€ 40,030.00	€ 10,367.45
1.2 -SUBTOTAL: HQ Staff	€ 22,470.96	€ 19,000.00
1. – Total: Salaries	€ 62,500.96	€ 29,367.45
2. – TOTAL: Non-Employee Labor		€ -
3.1 – SUBTOTAL: International Air Travel	€ 2,000.00	€ 2,900.00
3.3 - SUBTOTAL: International transportations cost	€ 2,200.00	€ -
TOTAL INT'L TRAVEL	€ 4,200.00	€ 2,900.00
3.4 – SUBTOTAL: International Per Diem	€ 1,200.00	€ 1,363.13
3 - TOTAL: International Travel & Transport	€ 5,400.00	€ 4,263.13
4.1 – SUBTOTAL: In-Country Ground Travel	€ 2,400.00	€ 2,171.58
4.2 – SUBTOTAL: Regional Air Travel	€ 1,980.00	€ 1,612.77
4.3 – SUBTOTAL: Transport of Goods	€ 460.00	€ 1,458.72
4– TOTAL: Nepal Travel & Transport	€ 4,840.00	€ 5,243.07
5.1 – SUBTOTAL: Housing	€ 300.00	€ 349.20
5. – TOTAL: Overseas Allowances	€ 300.00	€ 349.20
6.1 – SUBTOTAL: Nepal Rato Baltin supplies	€ 4,647.00	€ 10,365.98

6.1 – SUBTOTAL: Nepal Mask 4 health supplies	€ 24,480.00	€ 2,592.13
6. – TOTAL: Program Supplies	€ 29,127.00	€ 12,958.11
7.1 – SUBTOTAL - trainers and mentors traveling expenses	€ 1,996.00	€ 1,070.35
7.2 – SUBTOTAL: On the field spring Project	€ 4,800.00	€ 4,060.76
7.3 – SUBTOTAL: On the Field December follow.up	€ 144.00	€ -
7.4 – SUBTOTAL: women and cinema	€ 1,650.00	€ 66.84
7.- TOTAL: On the field + ToT Training - Food and lodge	€ 8,590.00	€ 5,197.95
8. – TOTAL: 9. Taxes in Nepal and social security in Spain	€ 7,076.30	€ 2,971.16
9. – TOTAL: Audit and SWC	€ 3,100.00	€ 2,784.29
subtotal: Direct Costs (1+2+3+4+5+6+7+8+9)	€ 131,434.26	€ 63,134.36
10. – SUBTOTAL: Other Costs	€ 14,407.37	€ 9,371.33
TOTAL Ratio Baltin PROGRAM - 2021 PROJECT	€ 145,841.63	€ 72,505.69

DONATIONS TRANSPARENCY

WHERE WE GOT THE FUNDS FROM:



PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

This year we have managed to maintain the presence of **our team in the fields despite the sanitary measures due to Covid-19**. Thanks to the goodwill of the trainers, the project went well, and we were able to implement it in most of the planned villages.

But, we still see how deeply rooted patriarchy is in the beliefs of the communities we work in through our local trainers. The trainers implicitly gave more weight to what the involved boys said, even though it was their first time being part of the process. A lot of the male trainers had privileges that the girls never had, such as going back to their house in the middle of training. These implicit biases were rampant, and when we realized how this was overtaking our own perception. They talked about the problem, and all realized how internally the boys take those privileges for granted. At the end, they stopped doing it, understanding the gender microaggressions in their behaviour that they have not been aware of until that moment.

Anyway, with the new changes that we did in the project: From now on, will be only one team all year long in Achham, we decided that they can not have one boy and 7-8 girls travelling and working together. This would have been a cultural and logistic concern, as boys can not sleep together with girls

and usually the space is really narrow. To promote a safe environment, the team decided to switch to having a girl teach the boys' curriculum to boys, but always with the help of 1 or two male teachers in the classroom. This way, teachers can learn new things, and girls feel more secure.

Our plan is to have a staff made up entirely of Achhami girls. We will employ at least 2 girls from each new village to work as mentor/ social mobilizers and assist the trainer once per month throughout the whole year. We are working off of our past years' efforts, establishing a strong mentor team in Achham. Nowadays, they are the trainers and team leaders. We will continue our strong work through the Rato Baltin project.

The idea, however, is that the girls will find mentors in each new village who can help and, in the future, be able to have 2 groups of trainers working in the field all year round. We still have the municipality of Panchadewal Binayak and the rural municipalities of Kamalbazar, Chaurpati, Mellekh and Bannigadi Jayagad where Chhaupadi is actively practised.

We plan on doing a study on the Ramaroshan Rural Municipality, which years ago was declared Chhaupadi free. NGOs persuaded the shamans to put the altars out on the street, instead of leaving the girls out, but the tradition is re-establishing itself.

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.

We need the local government to get involved to be able to help more women. By the end of 2021, we already had a discussion group with women in the remote Basti and Bara, with the help of Mangalsen municipality. We asked about how we could help them have more economic independence. The girls in both villages answered by asking for a mill.

Women right now have to walk 2 hours to grind wheat, rice, and millet and make flour. However, in Basti, there is no electricity and the kind of mill that they want is too expensive for us right now. We hope to crowdfund for such a project in the future. The women also suggested starting a banana plantation in Basti and a sunflower plantation in Bara. We will send the money to the women through the municipality as a microcredit, and when they start to earn money, they can then pay back the small amount of credit. In that way, we are sure that every woman that accepts our help is really willing to work. The Mangalsen municipality has already agreed to buy all the produce from these projects.

The participants of the Happy Women Training Centre project are now trained to continue making pads, masks, necklaces and pickles. During 2022 we will continue doing training to widowed women and trying to find products that can be sold in Achham, sold in Achham, innovative, organic and natural. We aim to continue to support economic mobility and independence.

CONCLUSION

The results of this complicated year are excellent, despite all the difficulties we faced. We have continued to get good work done, building on our base Rato Baltin Project and also gaining insight on how we can better train and support women. The challenges we faced while implementing the project in 2021 were due to the Covid-19, but despite the constraints, our local trainers have shown their motivation and willingness to keep working to bring changes in their community.