

Help the Children (HTC) Our activities in Nepal

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I Education Program

Since its inception in 1999, Education-support is the key components of Help the children, Nepal. In Nepal, there are still thousands of children deprived schools and many parents have not been able to send their children to school due to extreme poverty. In this context, education supports are always in high demand. Thus, we have given high priority to education under which various activities are carried out every year. Through its education program, we have helped hundreds of children in our projects sites. Thus, education supports have been very effective and there is an increasing demand of such help in the HTC working areas.

Objectives

- To established Pre-Primary Classes (Kindergartens).
- To encourage girl-students enrollment in schools.
- To reduce the dropout-rate and retention in the school.
- To create education awareness for girls.
- To improve the physical facilities of the schools.
- To provide appropriate teacher training for all kindergartens and HTC teachers.
- To mobilization of local available resources through stakeholders for school improvement program.

Projects and Activities

As mentioned earlier, education program has the following four major projects:

- Pre-Primary Education (Kindergartens)
- Teachers Training
- Search for new sponsorship
- School Improvement.

1. Pre-Primary (Kindergartens)

Pre-primary education has been one of the major projects under which we have to provide good care of kindergartens children and prepare them for primary education by providing them an opportunity for their holistic development. Most of the government schools in Nepal do not have pre-primary classes and children of various age groups are enrolled in grade one. This has caused high dropout rate (25%) at grade one and teachers find it very difficult to manage such a heterogeneous class. Thus, HTC has been helping to establish KG classes since 2000 since its project areas. The past experiences have shown that children who attend KG classes have performed better result in primary grades than their non-KG counterparts. Now 8 KG classes are running under HTC support.

In order to create friendly learning environment in the KG classes, HTC provides essential educational materials in such classes. The materials include teaching aids, play items, charts, posters etc. These materials will make classroom attractive and offer better opportunity for their holistic development of children. The learning in the classroom becomes joyful. Likewise, HTC also provides appropriate furniture to these classes and help the schools create learning corners in the classroom so that children with different interests can work in different subjects.

Objectives:

- To create joyfulness & child centered teaching learning environment.
- To create different learning corners in the KG classroom so that children learn different subjects in different corners in a variety of situations.
- To prepare children for primary education class.
- To provides opportunity for children's holistic development.
- To develop child friendly and child centered teaching learning situation in schools.
- To reduce dropout at grade one.

We often organize meeting with teachers and school management committee members and give them orientation about the importance of KG class. We help the community members to convince that KG class helps their children to grow well in education.

At least 200 children of 4-9 years age groups in the kindergartens are getting direct benefits in Naldum areas alone. We do not have the kindergarten in Betrawati and Kathmandu yet.

The children attending in the KG classes are the children of the women whom we are supporting; they will find free time to work in their field to grow vegetables and fruits if their children attend in the classes during morning time. Because of the Maoists insurgency in Nepal, we stopped the night classes and we have had changed the nighttime to morning classes. Also, the women will be convinced to contribute to the kindergartens once they start generating income from the agricultural products.

2. Teachers Training

Teachers are the key agent of bringing change in schools. It is their teaching through which children learn and apply their education in their behavior. Therefore, it is essential that the teachers perform their job in such a way that children learn quality education in school. Teachers support program has, therefore, been a major project of ours under education support. There are different types of teacher training that we organize in different phases. Basically, HTC provides basic primary teachers training, pre-primary teachers training, English language skills training, Mathematics subject training and mini teachers training. These training focus both the pedagogy and content enrichment. The main emphasis of these training is on how to make child friendly and child centered teaching and how to facilitate learning in class.

Once the pre-primary classes are set up, it is important that the teachers teach children with proper pedagogic considerations so that the children overall development is enhanced right from the beginning of their primary education. In order to do so, HTC often organizes refresher pre-primary teacher training for the same participants who receive the training before making them command on their profession and provide child friendly education to small children.

One-time-training is not enough for teachers to teach pre-primary class and they slowly go back to old model teaching if they do not get refresher training. Hence, as the teachers teach in schools, new problems and issues emerge during the course of time and they need to be addressed through the training. Due to the advancement of technology, teaching technology also changes and teachers need to be informed about and they need to be given the skills of adapting them in their classroom situation. It is essential that pre-primary children learn in joyful environment. Rote learning methods are

still applied in the village-schools and -classes and this should be replaced with child-friendly pedagogy.

Objectives

- To update the teachers with the current trends and development in both kindergartens and school teaching.
- Help them design materials for the classes.
- To inform them about the updated technology, developed in KG teaching and help them adapt the techniques in their classes.
- To support teachers for child friendly and child center teaching learning practice in the school.

The discussion about this training will be made in teachers' meeting and teachers will be informed accordingly. The training will be facilitated by the expert from HTC from Kathmandu.

Still many primary teachers are being untrained in Government schools due to lack of training institutes/organization and training was very big issues towards the quality of education in the schools. Similarly, another major issues in the school that trained teachers do not have practice their knowledge and skills properly into the school and due its negative influence in all schools and thus is declining the quality of education and people apathetic.

- There is no fun learning situation in the schools due to untrained teachers.
- Improve the quality education in the schools through teachers training.
- Teachers should always be innovative and creative to promote the teaching /learning situation would be friendly and Joyfulness.

3. Sponsorship.

We have to focus while awarding the new sponsorship, especially the children of the indigenous castes like Tamang and Dalits, and other castes, as they are always behind the education opportunity and awareness level is very low, and the situation is worse with the untouchable community. They are deprived of school. Two critical components were addressed here. One was to identify causes that prevented them from going to school. The other is to study and explore ways to improve teaching learning situation in schools. Emphasis is laid on girl education. Be noted that there is always higher demand of the sponsorship request in our project.

Children who registered with our sponsorship receive educational materials support and school uniform. Preference is always given to the girls who are likely to drop out schools for various reasons, like early marriage, discriminate against the girl child even by parents, house work-load for girls than the boys.

- Girls have less access to school, as the parents still prefer to invest on boys' education.
- As the parents can not afford to pay for their children's education cost mainly the school uniform and stationery, children from these communities drop out of school.

Objectives

- To provide access to education for the children (specially the girls) of Dalit and disadvantaged communities.
- To increase enrollment of disadvantaged children in schools

Outcome

- Girls' enrolment will increase in schools.
- School dropout rate will be reduced.
- Children from the poor families will have access to education.

Impacts

- Now, parents are motivated to send their children including girls to schools.
- Girls Child becomes model in their community.

4. *School support or improvement*

Under School support, we are helping different schools to create positive learning environment in schools. Until now we have helped different 149 schools since 1999. Major areas so far included under this project are building construction, classroom maintenance, cement plastering, room expansion, school fencing, toilet construction and repair, library promotion, roofing, play ground maintenance, furniture and so on. HTC will have to continue this support in different parts of our project areas. There are always demands of school supports.

Physical facilities have big role to play in bringing quality in education. Availability of classrooms for all the grades, enough space for movement inside the class, enough furniture for all the students to sit properly, availability of blackboard in all the classrooms, toilet facilities, drinking water facilities are some of the basic essentials, which every school should have in. In HTC working area, all schools do not have these facilities. Thus, we are supporting the schools to renovate their physical facilities on cost sharing basis in which part of the cost is covered by HTC and part of it is covered by the community.

Rationale

- Quality improvement in education remains only a slogan if there are no appropriate physical facilities in schools.
- Schools do not have enough funds to renovate and maintain the physical resources.

Objectives

- To improve the physical facilities of schools
- To involve community participation in the school's facilities renovation.

This activity will be carried out in close coordination with ours staffers and teacher from HTC. HTC staff will make school visits and organize interaction programs with the members and teachers of the school concerned. The existing physical facilities will be assessed and the gaps between what exist and what is required is identified. Based on the interactions, decisions will be made on what is to be added in the existing facilities and what needs to be renovated. The schools will be requested to make some contribution.

Outcomes

- Children will get good physical facilities and feel comfortable in schools.
- Good physical facilities will motivate children including girls to school and increase their retention in school.

HTC is focusing on school improvement program for improving the physical facilities of government school. While implementing the program, women groups member also contribute to the school devel-

opment and the community will participate in different stages of the project. They will attend meetings. Thus, the linkage among the different programs of HTC will be made during the entire project period.

5. Educational materials

Teaching materials brighten up the classroom and they enhance students' learning in class. Educational materials contribute to the better learning and the teacher can present lessons very effectively if appropriate materials are used during their deliberations. Realizing the importance of such materials, HTC provides schools with some educational materials every year and these materials have contributed to create joyful learning in classrooms. The materials include poster charts, maps, globes, game items, puzzles, basemen block etc

If the classroom teaching is not interesting, children do not like to stay in class. This results in high drop out and the teacher's motivation also degrades if their teaching does not become appealing for students. Therefore, teaching materials bring live in teaching and the students enjoy their learning if the teaching is accompanied by the use of teaching materials.

II Women Program

Women in developing countries like Nepal are socially, economically, culturally and politically dominated and they are excluded from the opportunities. Throughout the world, women face violence every day. From the battlefield to the bedroom, women are at risk from violence in all areas of life. Violence against women persists because of society canopy. Virtually every culture in the world contains forms of violence against women that are often invisible because they are seen as normal or acceptable. The underlying cause of violence against women lies in gender discrimination - the denial of women's equality with men in all areas of life. Because of gender disparities women face great hindrance in all aspects of human development.

HTC also started Women Program with the notion of empowering women through various activities, which could eventually help them to fulfil their practical needs as well as address the strategic interest to make their future better along with their own identity.

In the Nepalese social setting, women who cover half of the population, lag behind men in every areas of life. This has been an obstacle for the whole development process from home to the country. To overcome this obstacle, encouragement of women's participation for positive outcomes and mainstreaming gender issues into the development initiatives for women's development and the strategy of positive discrimination in favor of women are strongly felt and needed.

Women activities in HTC are designed based on the needs and demand as identified by our staff while giving help and enhance capacity building, increase knowledge through literacy program, make access and control over financial resources, improve the health condition of women and children, uplift the social status and decision-making power of underprivileged women through the literacy programs.

Women activities thus help to provide better opportunities to the women group members by enhancing the knowledge and skill and improve their quality of living.

Due to the lack of both access and opportunities, women are lagging behind their male counterparts. In order to bring them to the mainstream, it is essential that their needs be holistically addressed. Thus, HTC tries to empower them through various means so that they become independent and have access to the resources and participate in the social activities on equal footing with their male counterparts. We do this through comprehensive women package such as promotion of micro credit and income generating activities, educational opportunities, better health care opportunities and the opportunity for institutionalization of women's group.

1. *Women's Groups*

Nepal is one of the poorest countries in the world where more than 30% population are below poverty line. The people who are below poverty line have no or less access to development opportunities and they are kept apart from mainstream development. Due to the lack of adequate knowledge and opportunities, even the basic requirement for life is getting beyond the reach of the people. In this context, the women who covered around 51% of the total Nepal's population are found suffering from additional social and policy biases. Various factors such as traditional customs, inadequate recognition of their contribution to society, less initiative in empowerment of women, rare participation in decision making put them far away from development process of any aspects of life. Hence, the development endeavors do not reach among the women in general and of disadvantaged group in particular and it is found that the women of disadvantaged group are doubly discriminated firstly being a woman and secondly being a member of disadvantaged communities.

Realizing the reality of women's situation and their importance in development endeavors, it seems to be necessary to design program and policy to address the need of the women in particular and community people in general for the better quality of life. It can be assumed that if the women's condition and their position become better, that would have positive implications in the family and ultimately in the society too. There are now 8 women's Groups associated with us, in Naldum.

Objectives

- To facilitate the women / community people to internalize the importance and outcome of their collective efforts,
- To promote saving and credit (Micro Finance) activity to provide the women an access to the economic resources to make their living better,
- To help women groups and other local organizations to strengthen their capacity to insure sustainability of the development activities,
- To reduce the gap of discriminatory practices that still prevails in the society,
- To institutionalize the women's group to make them independent and socio economically empower,
- To enhance the leadership capabilities of women and thereby enable them to handle their activities by themselves on a more sustainable way.

2. *Literacy or Non Formal Education for women*

Women are discriminated, because of son preference traditions of the society dominated by religious beliefs. Daughters are discriminated from birth to funeral ceremony. Parents give less importance to daughters' education, as they have to leave parental house after their marriage where as son will stay with them. Further, parents also consider son as a helping hand in their old age. That is why it is believed that investment for son is more useful than for daughter. Indeed, daughters' marriage has always been given preference than to educate them. As a result, only few percentages of daughters have their access towards formal education.

Society has prescribed different set of roles and responsibilities to men and women. Looking at the roles and responsibilities it is found that man has more significant position in the society as compared to woman. Man enjoys more power, prestige and privilege than woman does. Not only this, man has more access towards opportunities and development endeavors and control over resources than woman does. Due to such impractical division of social roles and responsibilities, the relationship between man and woman has become asymmetrical and all the discriminatory practices begin from the birth of a child. Looking at the biological gender, parents start socializing their child with the notion of do's and don'ts for sons and daughters.

Due to the lack of access to education, women are lagging far behind in many areas of life. Realizing the fact, HTC has also adopted a provision of educating women through Non Formal Education along with the support for formal education for their children. Under the overall objective of “creating awareness about the importance of education” some specific objectives are:

Objective

- To provide access towards education to women through Non formal Education
- To provide basic literacy skill for underprivileged and low-income women
- To raise the number of literate women in the community
- To raise awareness and support to build confidence among women
- To provide functional education to women
- To create awareness among women about the legal rights of women in different issues like marriage, divorce, inheritance right, domestic violence etc. and other fundamental rights
- To encourage Neo-literates to create reading materials by themselves

3. *Learner Generated Material Workshop (LGM)*

- Lack of extra reading materials for the Neo-literates slows down their regular reading and writing habit which might be in the long run push them again in the illiterate category

Objective:

- To encourage Neo-literates to create reading materials by themselves and for themselves
- To Produce retention materials for Neo-literates

The LGM workshop or training will be of three days where neo literate members from women’s group who has completed Basic and Advance literacy classes will be selected on the basis of their performance in the class as participants. Throughout the period, they will be encouraged to write whatever they like to write in any topic. The topic for writing will be open for every participant. On the last day of workshop, the facilitator collects all the articles written by participants. Later on facilitator will only make grammatical corrections on the articles. After making corrections and sharing with HTC personnel, the articles will be compiled and published in the form of book. The published books will then be distributed to every member of every group. We have thus published till now 6 such LGM books by the women in Naldum.

The participants of the workshop will be the members of the group who have been literate through literacy classes.

III Health and sanitation training

People from underprivileged communities, mostly the women have inadequate knowledge about health problems and their implications. So, women are found in poor health condition compared to men. Women are not aware about the basic health issues, which are directly related to their health such as reproductive health, sanitation, safe drinking water and nutrition. Use of toilet is not a common practice in these communities. Similarly, due to the lack of proper management of livestock several health problems prevail in the community. They are even not aware about how much they are suffering from such livestock mismanagement. Hence, it is necessary to design and implement the activities related with public health so that women become health conscious and then can participate actively in the development endeavors. Every year at least 175 women participate in our Health and sanitation programs.

Objectives

- To create awareness about health issues, their implications in life and their preventive measures
- To provide support for the women group members for toilet construction as preventive measures
- To create clean and healthy environment
- To promote health seeking behavior among rural women

Rationale:

- Women group members lack knowledge about the cause of basic health problems and it's proper treatment
- Women group members are less aware about the consequences of traditional health practices

IV Toilet Construction Support

HTC believes that for the over all development of the community a person should be healthy from mental and physical point of view. Realizing this, we have been providing support to all the families of our children who have no toilet in their houses. Though the support from HTC's side only covers up to 40 to 50% of the total construction budget. Rest of the resources has to be contributed from the families. In this regard, HTC encourages for community participation as much as possible. The demand for toilet is collected and finalized from the staff.

But, before distribution of the support we monitor at the field level whether they have completed all the basic requirements or not; like, digging a hole in the construction area, whether they can afford the rest of the contribution or not etc. After distribution of materials the family has to complete the whole construction within three months. It is not necessary that all the families get support in a time. It is distributed phase wise and on the demand of the families.

V Agriculture Training

Agriculture training has given more emphasis on holistic development of underprivileged women and families. It provides skill enhancing trainings on activities through the utilization of available local resources and deploying technical human resources.

Moreover, agriculture is also the main source of food and income for the farmers in HTC intervened areas. New methods of action research and introduction of cash crops is necessary that are both appropriate and sustainable for the farmers in order to raise their socio-economic condition. The farmers still practice traditional farming system, which threatens the risk associated with the introduction of the new species of crops. Therefore, this agriculture is designed to empower farmers towards the new varieties of crops and to enhance their knowledge regarding the new agriculture technologies and the modern systems. This program is one of the indispensable components and it aims to promote livelihood and increase living standard of women and their family. Initially this program had focused only on the promotion of vegetable farming and goat rising as a blanket approach. Now it has been implementing the diversified activities related to farm community based on need and problem identification.

Thus, agricultural activities of HTC help to provide better nutrition to the marginalized and vulnerable community and improve their quality of living. Promotion of agriculture with conservation of the natural resources is one of the major features of ours. Every year we are distributing the seeds free of costs to the families of the children.

The end.