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Dear friends of WAWCAS

Covid-19 has impacted all of us the last few months. Even if the number of infected with Covid-19 and casualties in Nepal still make up rather low numbers, we can see that Nepal and thus many of the WAWCAS women entrepreneurs and their families have been impacted. This is due to a more than 80 days “total” lockdown where the population has only been allowed to leave their homes two hours every morning.

This has meant that many of the WAWCAS women, who during the last 12 years have build up their businesses, have been forbidden to open their shops, eateries, home stays etc. and therefore it has been impossible for them to generate any income. You know the WAWCAS Program focuses on training the women, given them a small loan and then they are “ready to fly” and generate their own income and securing education for their children. Our analysis have shown that approximately 95% of the women still run their businesses five years after they have ended the WAWCAS training.

Covid-19 has put this fantastic development on a temporary hold

We estimate that 40% of the almost 5.000 women who have gone through the WAWCAS Program will need our help to get back on track. The remaining 60% - who are in farming (goat, pig, chicken, vegetables) are not affected to the same extent.

Therefore we have taken an initiative “Reestablishing Business and Life” that shall make it possible for the WAWCAS women in need of assistance to get back on track as soon as possible. We will offer free

and focused training and a loan so they can start their businesses as soon as the authorities give their permission and the Nepalese society opens up again.

As many of you have already seen, a campaign to generate funds for the “Reestablishing Business and Life” initiative began a few weeks ago. I am pleased to inform you that we have succeeded to get sufficient means to secure reestablishment of 1.700 businesses - for extra training and small loans to restart the business. And we thank all of you for your contribution in that respect.

As you can understand much more is to happen and we will keep you informed on the details of the “Reestablishing Business and Life” initiatives, and the results and status in the coming months.

This Newsletter will be more of a snapshot on where we are beginning of July and what has taken place the last few months.

Torben Bjerre-Madsen
Chairman
WAWCAS International

WAWCAS in corona times

By Nina Schriver, International Program Director

First of all. Thank you so much to all of you who have made it possible for WAWCAS to implement the “Reestablishing Business and Life” help package. The process has started, and all women we meet are so thankful that we have not forgotten them and that WAWCAS is ready to help them to get back on track.

Covid-19 caused a total lock down for more than 80 days in Nepal. The last weeks the lock down is reduced. It is possible to meet at the office again and to meet a few of the women groups outside Kathmandu.

In central Kathmandu and in many places in Lamjung it is still not possible for the WAWCAS trainers to meet with the women, or possible for the women to meet with their group.

Nothing is as it used to be

So nothing is as it used to be. And it is and has been a very tough time for Nepal in general, the women, their families and the WAWCAS team. How to act in a situation like this? Ongoing contact, sharing, showing nobody is left alone, and learning from the women's situation to be able to develop relevant support and training has been very important activities.

Since the very first day of the lock down we have been very active in WAWCAS to tune in to the situation day after day. 786 women were in training when the country closed down within a few hours. They were all in a big life changing process and had started developing their businesses, They are all part of a woman group which is so important for their development and for support of each other. And suddenly they could not meet in the group or run their business.

The trainers contact all the women they have in training at least once a week each. The aim is to keep contact with the women, so they do not feel left alone. To listen to them. To learn from their challenges, and to support them so they do not lose hope and to give them specific information about Covid- 19 and important issues to be aware of to reduce the risk of getting infected. WAWCAS team has helped some of the WAWCAS women who are starving, to get access to donations of food from the government. WAWCAS team had a call-in meeting once a week with the management team, to share their learnings from the dialogue with the women and to share their own situation.

I have been in contact via skype almost every day with either Sirish or Sangeeta, to learn from their meetings with the team, to support them and to develop a revised strategy for WAWCAS.

Reestablishing Business and Life

We decided to develop a "Reestablishing Business and Life" help package as Torben has described above. It has never before been necessary to support the women once they have finished the program. We estimate that 40% of the exited women will need support via a small loan and extra training. The WAWCAS team has started to call the exited women and meet with those they can meet to get an overview of their situation. It takes a long time. There are

still many restrictions moving between areas. We do not want just to give a loan, so we take the time needed to investigate the womens situation and needs and make specific plans with each woman.

There is still semi lock down situation. It means only few customers in the shops. And the monsoon season has started. Lot of rain, landslides and challenging access to the villages is the situation now. We estimate we will have an overview of the womens situation in the beginning of august and then decide who is going to receive the help package and implement the help package.

Rita Limbu is a fighter

WAWCAS team looks so much forward to be able to meet with the women again and give the loans and support needed. But we will not start implementing the help package until the Covid-189 situation in Nepal has been normalized. The situation is too unstable, and it is still difficult to run a good business.

We are looking forward to update you further in the next Newsletter and we all in WAWCAS really hope that Nepal will open again soon, and the situation will normalize so WAWCAS can continue to train and support the women and help them back on a good track again.

Regarding the new women in training. As soon as possible the training of all the new women who were in training when the lock down started, will start again. All trainings and time schedules for repayments of the loans will be extended with the months the women have lost.

Wish you all a nice summer

*Nina Schriver International Program Director
WAWCAS International*

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