



Organization: Educate the Children Inc.
Project title: Food Security and Income Generation for Women Farmers and Their Families in Ramdhuni, Nepal
Grant amount: \$50,000 (two years)
Contact person: Lisa Lyons
Address: P.O. Box 414, Ithaca, NY 14851

Recap briefly what outcomes the project was designed to achieve.

By providing various hands-on training opportunities and useful resources, Educate the Children (ETC) will enable socioeconomically disadvantaged women to improve their families' health and nutritional intake and food security, increase their household incomes, and gain personal confidence and social status.

Has funding changed for this project? For example, have you received unexpected funding from another source?

We have not yet been able to secure the \$18,000 from Fondation Pro Victimis (Switzerland) listed as "pending" in the grant proposal budget. Because of the pandemic, there was and remains one activity that is yet to be completed in our former project area. We will have to wait until that is done and has been reported upon before we can request any additional funding from FPV. Alternatively, we can seek funding from other sources (foundations or individuals). Because our expenses were lower than expected for the first year of the program cycle*, it was not a major hardship not to have procured this money yet, and we have been able to fund the work through existing funds and unrestricted donations.

On the plus side, we (or rather, our women's groups) received unexpected support in the amount of approximately \$890 from the municipality government. This was in the form of 5,000 Nepalese rupees (NR) per group, times 21 groups, distributed in late winter/early spring 2021, once each group had accumulated 10,000 NR in its microcredit fund through members' own contributions. This amount doesn't sound like much, but it will grow over time as interest accrues, continuing to benefit these women for many years to come as they borrow from and repay to their group funds, most frequently to start or grow their small agricultural enterprises. Moreover, it represents a very welcome and public show of support from the local government for our work. It therefore has considerable value beyond the mere financial.

Is your organization or project situation different than presented in the approved proposal? For example, new executive director, significant project staffing changes or NGO affiliation, loss of large funding, or other significant changes?

As far as staffing:

* See the separate expense reporting document for details.

- We initially hired fewer new field staff members (three actual vs. six planned; two of the three are women) because of having to start the work on a scaled-down basis due to the pandemic.[†]
- Our women's empowerment program officer at the time of our proposal submission also had to resign for health reasons (non-COVID-related) and was replaced; the new WEP officer is also a woman, well-qualified and thus far a great success at her job.

As described in the February 2021 contact report and elsewhere in this document, the pandemic did certainly impact our ability to start the activities as soon as possible and at the scale originally intended. We remain very grateful for Together Women Rise's proactive understanding of this situation – affecting as it surely does all of your grantees, at least to some extent – and your willingness to allow flexibility in the use of the funds awarded.

Have the number of beneficiaries changed? To report this please refer to the original numbers in your grant proposal under *Number of women and girls directly impacted and population indirectly impacted*.

In the proposal, we stated that we expected to serve 1,000+ women directly and 4,000+ women and girls indirectly during the program and fiscal year 2020/2021 (July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021). Given the need to start later and ramp up more gradually than scheduled due to the pandemic, we served about half that many through the originally planned work that we were able to complete before the end of June. However, the overall number of women and girls served directly and indirectly *through the combination of our originally planned work plus special COVID-related resource distribution and education activities* was at least as many as originally planned.

Because of the pandemic, Nepal as a country was under strict lockdown between March and June 2020. It was not possible for us to do much of the groundwork that normally happens in preparation for a program cycle during that period, such as hiring a full contingent of field staff, building relationships with a broad cross-section of local stakeholders, publicizing and recruiting for women's groups, etc. When we were able to start aspects of our usual programming in early 2021, on a scaled-down level, we formed about half the originally intended women's groups (total membership 517 as of June 30, 2021).[‡] Quick-results agricultural programming was also undertaken beginning in January 2021, and all women's group members and their families benefited directly or indirectly from the newly established kitchen gardens and/or livestock husbandry programming (517 x 5 members per family = 2,585 people, of whom approximately 1,293 are women and girls; please note that there is undoubtedly some redundancy between that figure and the 3,750 cited below, although we cannot say how much).

In addition to our usual work, we also provided support for public health improvement, specific to the pandemic situation:

[†] As of September 2021, we have in place the full planned contingency of six field staff members, of whom four are women.

[‡] The remaining women's groups were formed in summer 2021, after the conclusion of the period to which this interim report refers; total membership is now 1,017, which equates to the originally planned number.

- Beginning in fall 2020, we purchased and distributed reusable/washable masks and a three-month supply of antiseptic soap for 1,500 families, and provided practical instruction to the young children about proper hand-washing. Average family size in our project area being five members per household, this means we supported 7,500 people in this manner, approximately half of whom are women and girls (3,750).
- We distributed additional, similar materials twice during the winter, including to all 517 women's group members (as above, 517 x 5 members per family = 2,585 people, of whom approximately 1,293 are women and girls). We also produced illustrated posters, which were then posted prominently in public areas such as school gates and municipal buildings, to promote regular hand-washing and the proper care and use of masks.
- We purchased and distributed masks, soap, and other needful supplies such as forehead thermometers to four health posts and a COVID isolation center in our working area. The thermometers were particularly necessary because the oral thermometers in use were perhaps not always able to be properly cleaned between uses, thus risking the spread of COVID.
- There is reason to believe that our efforts have helped contribute to the relatively better COVID situation in these villages, compared to elsewhere in the region and nationwide.

What challenges are you facing as you move forward with this project? How are you approaching these challenges?

As has been the case for grassroots NGOs and INGOs worldwide, the pandemic and lockdown restrictions did throw a major wrench into our original plans. Through our decades of experience – including during other times of great difficulty/crisis such as political upheaval and the massive 2015 earthquakes – our organization has developed a considerable amount of flexibility and resilience, meaning that we are always guided by our time-tested program model and operational plans, but never obstinately bound to them. In this case, we relied on our early 2020 baseline study results and subsequent observations/interactions in the targeted villages to make the adjustments that allowed us to remain true to our goal by focusing immediately on the types of activities that would allow us to achieve the quickest and most useful results under the circumstances. As described elsewhere in this report, this meant starting later than and at a smaller scale than originally planned, and prioritizing activities that would begin to be useful to the program participants in a relatively short time period. (All of the activities will also, of course, continue to be useful to them throughout the entire planned program period and well beyond.)

On a positive note, we have come to know without doubt that we are wanted and valued there. Our Nepal staff has formed strong and fruitful relationships with local government leaders, who have supported our work both financially (as described above) and by inviting ETC and our local partner Save the Earth (STE) to participate in a number of initiatives, among which are COVID/public health-related projects. They have provided our organizations and individual staff members with certificates recognizing our contributions, and overall have made it clear how pleased they are to have ETC working there. All of this began to happen before our work in the villages officially began and has carried over beyond the period covered by this report. Although we are accustomed to developing and enjoying the benefits of strong relationships of this sort, we cannot help but feel pleased and proud that they have developed so quickly here in this geographic area. Some of this is due to our choice of local partner: STE was already well

established and well respected in the area, and we at ETC have found them to be an invaluable partner, especially given that our KTM-based staff has found it difficult/unsafe or logistically impossible during the pandemic to travel to visit the field staff and oversee the programs as often as we normally would do.

Have you revised your original objectives since the project began? If so, why? What are your new objectives?

We have not revised our overarching objectives since the work actually began, although we realized that it would be unrealistic not to remain flexible as to the order in which/timing of which we performed the various specific activities. For example, given that the pandemic intensified the greatest pre-existing and interrelated challenges for our target population – i.e., food insecurity, malnutrition, and lack of income-generating opportunities – we focused on supporting quick-results agricultural activities such as kitchen gardening and poultry farming sooner than might otherwise have been the case. We have also added more health-related activities as a direct result of the pandemic and the unmet need in our villages for basic resources and education.

What progress have you made toward achieving your objectives? Please address each stated objective.

The overarching objectives as stated in the grant proposals were “to help marginalized women gain the skills, knowledge, and initial resources necessary to improve their own and their families’ food security, nutritional intake, and household incomes – and thus their overall well-being and standards of living.” As stated above, the pandemic has only intensified these needs, and we have in fact been addressing them, although via a different mix and timing of activities compared to the original plan.

Planned activities/outcomes vs. achievements supported by Together Women Rise are explained below in more detail.[§] Please note that “training” can involve small- or large-group-based dissemination of information, encompassing one or more days, depending on the type of training, but do include resource provision/support of the appropriate sorts.

- Kitchen garden establishment and maintenance
 - Stated outcome: 1,000 or more women will have established and be maintaining their kitchen gardens
 - Actual figure as of June 2021: 517 women**
- Demonstration farms (for hands-on training of larger groups)
 - Stated outcome: four established (one per ward)
 - None operational by June 2021. This is because larger-group training hasn’t been a top priority, nor yet typically as safe as we want it to be. Kitchen garden training can be done at other venues.^{††}

[§] The Animal Health Camp listed in the application was not scheduled to happen in Year 1, the year covered by this report, so there is nothing to report about that activity as yet.

** This figure will be 1,017 as of fall 2021. The new women’s group members have already begun to establish their gardens as of September 2021.

†† As of the second half of September 2021, two demonstration farms are becoming operational; the other two will become operational later in the year.

- Horticultural trainings
 - Stated outcomes: three or four offered annually, serving 180-240 participants annually
 - Only the kitchen garden training for the first 21 women’s groups (517 members) has been offered as of June 2021. Participants received seeds for various seasonal produce (cucumbers, squash, okra, etc.) as well as useful hand tools such as watering cans. More specialized trainings such as would normally take place at a demonstration farm has not been a top priority thus far, because those tend to require more preparation time in many cases than do some of our other agricultural activities – e.g. to set up special environments (tunnels/covered spaces) for crops like mushrooms or tomatoes, or to procure special resources. Setting up the farms themselves also takes time that was better spent, in our estimation, on conducting the more quick-results activities first.^{‡‡}
- Livestock trainings
 - Stated outcomes: five trainings serving 240 participants annually
 - We have served 140 participants through 4 livestock training activities, which were less formal training-heavy and more about resources and less formal technical support:
 - 1,000 ducklings (20 each for 50 women) – these came with antibiotics to prevent diseases. The ducklings did very well and could be sold for a profit of more than \$5 per duck.^{§§}
 - 800 chicks (10 or 20 each for 50 women) – these proved to be more susceptible to diseases than the ducklings were. Unfortunately, most of the chicks died before reaching maturity. With that in mind, we have already determined to concentrate on ducklings instead of chicks for future livestock activities in this geographic area. (We have had considerable success with chicks before, in previous geographic areas; perhaps veterinary support could help us here, but ducklings are an excellent alternative.)
 - 20 goats (1 each for 20 women) – these were still very young as of June 2021, but seem to be thriving nicely.
 - 20 piglets (1 each for 20 women) – same as goats, above.
- Irrigation equipment provision
 - Stated outcome: provision of this equipment to 240 women in twelve women’s groups
 - None as yet distributed. As with other activities, this hasn’t proved to be a top priority

It is also worth noting, given that supporting the development of income generation opportunities for women is among our main goals, that as of June 2021, twelve women had already sold excess produce from their kitchen gardens or sold chickens/ducks, for average

^{‡‡} More specialized horticultural trainings/resource provision have begun as of summer 2021. We distributed fruit tree saplings to members of four women’s groups in July 2021, and we are beginning to offer “semi-commercial” (market gardening) training in September 2021.

^{§§} Many women are already beginning to raise their second round of ducklings as of September 2021.

earnings of \$17 per woman. This may not sound like much, but in rural Nepal it is sometimes the difference between making ends meet and not. Moreover, as these activities were only underway as of late winter 2021, we think that twelve women already making money is a very good start. They can serve as advisors and role models for their peers to achieve similar or greater success.

Details about the important but previously unplanned activities made possible in part by Together Women Rise's support are given in the answer to **"Have the number of beneficiaries changed?"** above and also below.

- In fall 2020, we purchased and distributed washable, reusable masks and three months' supply of antiseptic soap to 1,500 families, as well as providing practical hand-washing demonstrations for children in particular.
- In winter and spring 2021, we purchased and distributed additional masks and soap, including to our women's group members and their families (twice) and for other members of the community.
- We have engaged in community-wide COVID prevention educational activities in conjunction with the municipality/ward governments and other organizations. It's very hard to know how many people were reached via these activities, but for example the illustrated COVID prevention posters are in prominent locations where anyone and everyone can see them.
- We purchased and distributed supplies for health posts and the isolation center in our working area, including forehead thermometers. We have no data as to how many people came through those facilities after we had provided those supplies.
- Through these unplanned activities, all of which are essential to maintaining public health and ensuring that other "normal" work can happen, we conservatively estimate that 2,000 or more girls and women directly benefited.

Do you anticipate any difficulties in completing your project in the timeframe outlined in your proposal?

It is hard to say if we will be able to complete every one of the initially planned set of activities within the two-year period; some of the activities may take lower priority in light of the global pandemic, and may be stretched out into the following year or two. That said, in the absence of one or more additional, extremely prolonged lockdowns that would prohibit procurement/distribution of resources and travel to and from the area, we do foresee being able to address the main goal in a substantive and useful way. That is, we have already begun to help and will continue to help 1,000 or more women gain the skills, knowledge, and resources to raise more nutritious food for their families and to sell, thus addressing the interrelated problems of food insecurity, malnutrition, and lack of income-generating opportunities.

Expenses incurred between 7/1/20 and 6/30/21 and covered in part by the Together Women Rise grant are given below:

Expense type	US Dollars
Staff salaries and benefits (Nepal)	\$20,067
Program supplies (agriculture)	6,634
Program supplies (public health/COVID prevention)	5,609
Other agricultural program expenses	2,515
Other expenses (transportation, communications, occupancy, etc.)	2,200
Total	\$37,025

Other:

- Please see the photos (labeled as to subject) in the Dropbox folder. We are sorry that they are not particularly high resolution; they were taken by our field staff, using their phones, and sent along via a couple of stops through WhatsApp and/or other communications and social media apps. We confirm our right and consent to use these photos as per local law.
- More photos of our work can be found on our website: <https://www.etc-nepal.org/photos-and-publications/> (scroll down slightly).
- Once again, we would like to thank Together Women Rise and its thousands of members in hundreds of chapters for your confidence in our work. It's been immensely useful, not only financially but also as a vote of confidence that so many intelligent and knowledgeable people support what we do, because you know that it matters. You may recall that we were invited to participate in some 50 virtual chapter meetings during our first month as your featured grantee (May 2020, i.e., in the height of the pandemic's initial phase) and our executive director and several board members were very pleased to answer members' questions. One chapter on the other side of the country has frequently invited one of us back, in fact (thanks, Spokane Valley Risers!), and others have subsequently asked for information on a more ad hoc basis.