

**Background:** Necha Betghari is a remote village with approximately 400 households in the northern part of Nepal. Since Necha is my home, I have a special attachment to and understanding of the village. During the civil war era in Nepal (1996-2006), Necha was one of the most affected regions. The Agricultural Bank and the Police Station in the village were attacked (2001) and there was a gun-battle between the rebel Maoists and the Nepal Army in Kedar Secondary School when regular lessons were going on (2003). These incidents not only created terror in the village but also have negatively affected the infrastructural, economic and educational development since then. Though the civil war ended in 2006, the effects of civil war are apparent in the village and there is a need to address these effects.

**Effects of the civil war in Necha:** Five out of 21 teachers of Kedar School were from urban areas and they returned home due to the problems of security in the village. As a result the school did not have enough teachers and this negatively affected the academics. Similarly, many youths began to leave the village and moved to city areas and even abroad such as to Qatar, Dubai and Iraq as laborers.

**Present situation:** (1) The present educational situation of the village is not satisfactory. There is lack of educational materials and the school does not have enough qualified teachers. Kedar School is the only secondary school in Necha village which provides education up to grade 10. It is unfortunate that none of the students in the school has seen a computer, neither have they known how the outer world really is. The school does not have funds to introduce computers or create a library. In this situation, it seems like the students will have no opportunities to use modern facilities. Introducing computers in the school, educating children about the basics of computers from an early age and providing access to internet facility could provide the students with innovative knowledge.

(2) As most of the youths have tendency to move out of the village since the civil war era, the new economic opportunities have not been explored. People feel that they do not have good opportunities to improve their income. Poverty has entangled the people as most of them are unaware of how to make most out of their fertile farm land. Cash crops have a great potential but due to lack of knowledge and exposure to the outer world, people still live on subsistence farming.

### **My mission and Vision:**

- 1) To give training on cash crop production to the villagers so that they can start their own cash crops in the village rather than seeking jobs in cities or abroad.
- 2) To take land in lease for Kedar School and to involve villagers in starting a cash crop production on that land. The annual profit will be used to fund the school, which will introduce resources such as a computer lab, thereby equipping the war affected school for better education.

**Project summary:** The wounds caused by civil war can be healed only when education and economic standards in Necha are strengthened. However, to implement innovative education in sustainable way, it may not be enough only by constructing a computer lab in the school. There has to be a backup which can make the project sustainable. Therefore, having had conversations with the school management team and the villagers, I have come to the conclusion that starting cash crop production on a big scale will not only enable us to establish a computer lab in the school but also will act as a model for villagers on how to create economic opportunities in the village. Estimated calculations have shown that if \$8500 is invested in the beginning, a minimum profit of \$3000 is possible per annum which will be described thoroughly later.

While starting cash crops for the school, approximately 50 villagers will be involved and given extensive training to start their own production. They will be taught techniques while working on the field on how to plant, grow and harvest. These villagers will then disseminate the techniques to other interested villagers.

**Implementation:** Over the past month, I talked to Mr. Eak Raj Sharma (the principal of Kedar School), members of school management team and with some of the students' parents. They are so excited about the project and have already extended their support. The idea is to take land in lease for 5 years with an area of approximately 7800 square meters. One of the parents has agreed to provide required land at a discounted price of \$1500. Dr. Til Chandra Bhattarai, an agricultural expert, has agreed to provide required trainers for the project. Two trainers will give training on techniques of successful cash crop production for three weeks and the villagers will be involved in the process while starting cash crop production in the leased land.

In December 2011, I asked three educated and experienced parents to do a small study about the feasibility of cash crop production and marketing in

Necha. According to their understanding, the suitable cash crops are turmeric, ginger, chilly, onion and garlic. These crops can be grown twice a year. Estimated calculations have shown that a total of 600 kg of turmeric and 300 kg each of chillies, garlic, onion and ginger is the possible production per annum in 7800 sq. meters of land. The estimated revenue from this production will be \$4000, thereby creating \$3000 net profit after subtracting management and labor cost of \$1000 per annum. The available land will be mostly planted with turmeric as it has the maximum expected revenue. A management team of five educated villagers will be allocated to manage the overall production of the cash crops. They will be given special training about how to plant, raise and market the cash crops and will be given responsibility for arranging part time laborers and managing funds. The management team will also be paid on the basis of how many hours they work. The marketing of cash crop is quite feasible because two district headquarters are based near Necha where cash crops are in high demand. Fortunately, the road transportation has recently been linked to the village (Jan 2012) and the cash crops can be transported to the other market places, thereby creating more market opportunities and potential for expansion of business. The profit from this production will be deposited in the school's account.

The teachers, parents and students will be involved while starting the project in the summer. The project is expected to last for 5 weeks from mid June to late July where first two weeks will be invested in arranging materials and conducting meetings and the latter three weeks will be invested on the field for training and planting crops. Therefore, we all will be working together to build our village. This will help to make villagers realize how working together will be beneficial to the society. I'm hoping this cash crop production will serve as a model for the whole village.

Different equipments such as spade, harrow and water sprinkles will be bought. Cash crop seeds and pesticides will be arranged before the project begins in the summer. Similarly, to utilize the available water resources in the village, water pipe and plastic water tank will be bought. The village has no difficulty in getting sufficient manure as organic manure from livestock is cheaply available.

**Expected impacts and outcomes:** The project is expected to make a tremendous impact in the village although some start-up lag is expected in the first year. With the expected profit of \$3000 in a year, a lab of five

computers can be established. Five computers can be bought at the rate of \$300 each and the remaining \$1500 will be used to set up solar power. There will be sustainable source of funding from the cash crop production and the equipments will be added year by year. Within five years, the project aims to have a good lab of 20 computers and some funds to buy library books. At the end of five years, the land will be leased again and the process will be continued. The intension is also to attract better teachers for the school.

Secondly, the project is expected to change the mind-set of the villagers. They will realize that how their joint effort can create opportunities within their own area and do not necessarily have to migrate away. Thus, this project is thought to be a model for many war affected remote villages like Necha. Creating employment opportunities within the village is possible. If villagers get together and use local resources to fund the local school and use their land to maximize their income, the poverty level of Nepal could be reduced significantly and academic standards improved.

Therefore, the main idea of peace of this project is to help reverse the outcomes of civil war by improving educational and economic standards. It has the potential to heal the wounds caused by the civil war. Such an improvement is the idea of peace whereby a student who has never seen a computer will actually use a computer within a year. Such is the idea of peace whereby a war affected youth who is frustrated with the lack of opportunities in the village can actually involve in revenue generating production. Such is the idea of peace whereby everyone comes together to make their own village a better place to live in—this is expected to bring perpetual friendship, motivation and peace in the village. This is how this project will help to strengthen the life standard of the war affected region.

My role will be to act as a bridge between different stakeholders of the project. I will talk to Dr. Til Chandra Bhattarai; work with teachers, parents and students. I will keep good communications with MIT Public Service Center for project updates and for necessary guidelines. I will manage project funds and give necessary directions. I will work alongside the people bringing equipments and trainers to the village. Necha is my village and I have understood the difficulties of the students and the people there. Hence, I will use my full energy, excitement and leadership skills to make this project a great success.