

PACT NEPAL: Women's Empowerment Project (WEP)

Literacy and Microcredit — Creating Opportunities

Knowledge is a means to freedom
The Upanishads

Nepal has one of the highest female illiteracy rates in the entire world: 78 percent of Nepali women cannot read.

The PACT Nepal Women's Empowerment Project is combating female illiteracy and poverty by combining literacy training with microfinance, empowering women with knowledge and economic opportunity.

As of the year 2000, PACT Nepal has reached over 125,000 women in 21 of Nepal's 75 districts. In just one and a half years, ninety percent of their female clients have passed a literacy test. In addition, through microfinance, these women have saved the equivalent of over \$1.2 million during this period. The astonishing success of WEP not only proves that the poor embrace learning but also that the poor have the desire and capacity to save.

The literacy program is the initial step for new members. As the women learn to read, they learn to save. The WEP literacy program uses savings and business development as reading topics in their workbooks, unifying the tools of literacy with principles of economics and banking. WEP's impressive success has been recognized by the people of Nepal, so much so that over 80,000 women are on WEP's waiting list.

WEP is a savings-led model. The newly literate women, who have learned the principles of banking, are then empowered with the authority to dispense loans from their own savings to others.

The PACT program in Nepal is an amazing innovation for poor nations with high levels of illiteracy. WEP is increasing their clients earnings and welfare, while simultaneously giving them the self-confidence they need to significantly transform their lives. The PACT Women's Empowerment Program is providing freedom and opportunity through education and micro-credit.

PACT Nepal

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