

# Health for farmers and their families in the mountains of Nepal

Since January 2010, EcoHimal has been helping residents of the remote communities of Pawai and Bakhachol in the mountains of Eastern Nepal to improve their health status. Those living in this region belong to one of the most disadvantaged population groups in Nepal. This programme builds upon the many years of experience EcoHimal has had in rural development projects and the health sector.

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## Life in Himalayan villages

The two communities of Pawai and Bakhachol are home to around 6,600 women, men and children living in small, scattered settlements. The entire region is only accessible on foot along steep, narrow trails. People in the villages live primarily from agriculture, although the yields from their small farms often last for only nine months of the year. A small additional income is earned by wage labour outside the village, e.g. as porters.

## No on-site medical services

When the people of Pawai and Bakhachol get sick or injured, or a woman is expecting a child, it is virtually impossible for them to get to a physician or hospital. There actually are two small health stations in this mountainous region, but they suffer from a lack of medications and medically trained staff. The next hospital is several days' march away and the sick or injured have to be carried up and down many hundreds of metres of altitude change and through often impassable terrain.

The poor medical care in these villages represents a great health hazard, particularly for women. Births usually take place at home, and are carried out without the help of a midwife and also under catastrophic hygienic conditions. There are hardly any of the check-ups necessary during pregnancy and after birth because there is not only a lack of midwives, there is also a lack of knowledge about women's health issues. Thus women do heavy physical labour daily, even during and after pregnancy. This and a number of other circumstances are together responsible for the shockingly high maternal mortality rate in Nepal.

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## Strengthening women and their health

EcoHimal thus helps women improve their health status. By the same token, women's self-confidence is reinforced through training and education. The goal of the project is to overcome social, political and cultural barriers, create revenue opportunities for women and make it possible for them to live together with men on an equal footing. Women and men are the decision makers and action takers in the project, and thus also the framers of their own futures.

The training and education of women is also the priority in the health field. As a result, women from the villages are being trained as midwives. This training is being organised and financed by EcoHimal. The services of the future midwives in the villages will be paid for out of existed government programmes – thus assuring sustainability.

## Your contribution to supporting Nepal's women

80% of the implementation of the health programme is being backed by the ADC, the Austrian Development Cooperation. But we are relying on contributions from supporters and sponsors for the remaining 20%. To this end, we have already concluded a sponsoring agreement for the next three years with the Austrian biotechnology company Intercell AG.

Now we are turning to you to help us procure the funds we still need. Please help support the health of women in Pawai and Bakhachol!

With **€ 10,000**, we can build a **drinking water system** for an entire village. Every household will then have clean drinking water. This can drastically reduce the number of waterborne diseases that are often the cause of life-threatening illnesses that can affect the whole village. And women will no longer have to walk for hours carrying water back from the next well in jugs weighing 20 to 30 kg.

The costs for training a midwife come to **€ 1,200**. Young women from the villages complete an 18-month programme and can then closely and professionally assist women in the villages.

You can also purchase a **Health Module** for only **€ 15**. Each of these modules contributes to steps that need to be taken in the health sector such as building toilettes, planting vegetable gardens and designing supplementary information campaigns on hygiene, health and nutrition.

Thank you for helping!



gefördert durch die  
**Österreichische  
Entwicklungszusammenarbeit**

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