



A Daisy Chains Success Story

A group of women from Pragati in Kathmandu are leading the way to a much more prosperous future for women enrolled in our Daisy Chains project. This group of 10 women were part of a larger group of 24 who enrolled in the project in April 2008. Seeing them now it is hard to believe they were all completely illiterate at that time.

They worked hard to complete a nine month program that taught literacy, numeracy and basic business skills. Special classes were also given on candle making and snack making so that the women were exposed to some basic vocational skills as well as helping them to start thinking about the type of business they may want to run. This was all the encouragement the Pragati women needed. As this sub-group of 10 women all lived in close proximity to each other they committed to start a business together. They decided early on that candle making would be a good business and their feasibility study confirmed this. (People living in Kathmandu need to deal with anything between 2 and 20 hours a day without electricity.)



As a first step the group decided that four women should go for further training in candle making. They could share this training with the rest of the group whilst the rest of the group completed the business skills study. Once this training was completed and their studies reached an end, the group immediately began working for two hours per day each making candles. This required a high level of commitment from the team, most of whom worked as domestic helpers.

The group had saved 6,000 rupees (about AU\$95) as part of a savings program that is run in conjunction with the study program. To this amount a loan of 10,000 rupees was added (about AU\$158) and this was enough for full candle production to start in January 2009. Initially things moved slowly but the women were quickly able to turn a profit. They invested in larger equipment to make more candles of a better quality more quickly and then things really took off. They secured a number of standing orders from larger businesses and embassies and they have never looked back.

After a few months the entire 10,000 rupee loan was repaid and the women started their own savings account for the group. As of December 2009 this account has

35,000 rupees (about AU\$553) as member savings. At the same time the women have each been drawing 1,000 rupees (about AU\$16) per month from the profits of the business.

This result is success enough for this group of women but they have not been content with this. One of the women, Samjhana, borrowed 10,000 rupees from the group savings plan to start her own bakery. Samjhana's story is particularly inspiring – married at 9, she had her first child when she was 15. She is now only 29 years of age and she decided it was time to take control of her life. Whilst continuing to work in the candle business she took her loan and opened her own bakery and tea shop. This has proved such a success that she has already repaid the loan to the group and opened a second branch of the bakery! Hard work and success have become addictions for these amazing women!



In November 2009 we held a forum for all of the first Daisy Chains groups. You can read more about the forum at our blog – <http://mitrataa.blogspot.com/2009/12/forum-for-daisy-chains-women.html>. The Pragati women proudly attended the forum and were a source of inspiration and motivation to everyone there. They spoke about the challenges they faced and how they were overcome and they also highlighted the positives that have come as a result of their efforts. They even shared their secret with the rest of the women present – hard work!

News of the Pragati women has spread rapidly and enrolments in all of the centres for the 2009 intake of Daisy Chains groups increased. It seems success is infectious!



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