Reflection Paper

Introduction to the Project:
After the devastating earthquake hit Nepal on April 2015, I noticed that while a lot of people and organizations were focused on relief and rescue, there was very little discussion about long-term rehabilitation. While rescue and relief were extremely important for immediate action, once the flow of aid would decrease, people would eventually need to look for other mediums in order to survive. Through the resources I had access to, I felt that the best way I could help those deeply affected by the earthquake was by creating employment opportunity for them.

Thus I decided to found an organization called Utthan, which means uplifting in Nepali, with the aim to improve the quality of life of people in rural Nepal. Since the term itself is multidimensional, my first project under this organization was to start a goat bank in Pakwadi village in Waling, Nepal. Donations could run out but long-term economic investment could address not only monetary but also social issues such as hunger and violence that are caused due to unemployment.

The Idea: Goat Bank: A lot of people lost their cattle in the earthquake; for them their animals were not only means of income but also a big part of their daily lives since they used to set their everyday schedules around their cattle. The idea was to give two or three female goats each to 20 families in Pakwadi village, and purchase two male goats that would breed with the female goats. The male offspring could be sold for around Nepali Rs 30,000 (USD 300) each while the female offspring could help their herd grow, creating a continuous cycle for income.
On top of this, while signing the contract with the villagers, they were asked to return one healthy female goat offspring to Utthan while they could keep the rest. This is because we can then distribute the goat they return to another village, and expand our project.

In order to empower the people of Pakwadi, we also established a collective fund known as the ‘Kalyan Kosh,’ which will be funded by external sources and by the villagers themselves. This fund will be used to uplift the quality of life of the villagers, sponsor schooling for underprivileged girls in the village, and create a strong sense of community.

Details about the Goat Bank
I held a meeting with local experts in order to ensure that our project would run smoothly and we took decisions about goat breeds and technical care based on our discussion with them. We purchased local female Jamnapari goats to distribute to the families along with two male Australian Boars; the owners of local goat farms informed us that Australian Boars produce the best offspring after mating with local female goats. After meeting with the local vet, we learnt that in order to reduce the mortality rate of the goats and to make sure that they are healthy, technical assistance is needed every month. The government launched a similar program earlier but lack of technical assistance led to failure of the project. Thus we accounted for monthly technical assistance— for a year— in our budget.

Location: Why Pakwadi
Located in Syangja District, Pakwadi village has been deeply affected by the earthquake. However, since it is not a prime destination for tourists, the village has not received enough attention. Pakwadi’s proximity to the highway makes it a good location for our first project since we will be starting with minimal resources. The climate of Pakwadi is also suitable for raising goats.

Local Partners: Lions Club
I chose The Lions Club of Waling City as my official partner for this project because they are extremely active in Pakwadi and nearby villages. The Pilot Project for Utthan, the goat bank in Pakwadi, was launched as a joint project between the Lions Club and me. The Lions Club is responsible for locally monitoring the project and assessing it at the end. Since their name is tied
to the project, they are liable to ensure that the project is running smoothly. Also when I expand Utthan in the future, because there are many more branches of Lion’s Club around the country, I can use this network for the future.

**Finance**

After applying for and getting selected as one of the recipients of the John Jacquette Award at Cornell University, I received a grant of USD 3,000 to start my own social enterprise in Nepal. This amount along with local companies, development banks, and individuals I presented my idea to, helped me fund this pilot project. In order to expand my project to nearby villages I will be actively applying for more grants this year.

**Why will this make a difference:** The long-term economic benefits that this project will bring to an under noticed village with an ample population of women can create a huge social impact. Since the goat bank is not just a one-time installation project; it will create a continuous chain of income generating opportunities for the people of Pakwadi. To add to that we are helping a village that has not received enough attention nor aid after the earthquake since is not a prime tourist destination. Most of the men of Pakwadi have left the village to go and work abroad to provide for their families so arguably female members of the community ran the village. If this project is successful, once women are empowered and their quality of life improves, so does the entire household’s quality of life. That way we can create a make a bigger difference of the lives on people in Pakwadi.

**Reflection:**

Overall establishing *Utthan* was a very rewarding experience. I learnt about the importance of field visits, the power of local partners, and the respect I got from the locals of Pakwadi Village has only increased my interest in social entrepreneurship more.

During my field visit to Pakwadi village, I noticed that most of the people present at the event were women and children. After talking to them I found out that since majority of the men had gone abroad searching for work, females dominated the population. The women also conveyed their frustration over how they never received any skill based training which could help them earn money for their families. This made me realize that I had not done a demographic research
on the village. When I planned my goat-farming project, I had envisioned the men to take the goats for grazing.

This made me realize that often times we plan out grand projects to “uplift” the life of those who are underprivileged but there is no point in launching such projects if we cannot even understand the context. Since women could take the goats for grazing, my project was not affected but it could have been. This made me realize the importance of site visit and interacting with the locals. Had I known earlier that the women wanted skill-based training, I could have simultaneously run another program in Pakwadi village in a cost effective manner.

In the future I will definitely keep the importance of a prior site visit in mind and will highly recommend it to everyone. Although it is understandable that site visits are not always viable, then perhaps a local partner can do an area study to get a better idea of the demographic situation and the context of the project location.

I could not have launched this project as smoothly without the help of the Lions Club. They were not only active in Pakwadi, but the members also held respectable positions in areas such as politics, local banks, and civil societies. This made it easier to accumulate resources easily and knowing that I have reliable local partners also makes it easier for me to monitor the project from another country. In developing countries like Nepal, because the citizens do not trust their government too much, it is important to have influential local partners, who the target population trusts.

My long-term goal is to expand this project to other villages in the region, and eventually throughout the country. The aim is also to invest in more multidimensional areas such as skill development for women and for men. Although this seems like a grand project, the gratitude I received from the people of Pakwadi has only assured me of wanting to pursue this goal.