

Care Women Nepal Rescues Women from Prolapse Misery

- Seeks Funding for 34 Surgeries -

At a time when the government of Nepal and international agencies are retreating from the fight against uterine prolapse, Nepali advocates threw a lifeline to women in eastern Nepal recently by screening 294 women for the condition. Thirty-four women were found to have untreatable prolapse and will be offered surgery, if funding can be found.

The screening was organized at a 2-day health camp by [Care Women Nepal](#), a new partner of The Advocacy Project (AP), in the remote area of Sindhuwa, Dhankuta District.

Prolapse, also known as falling womb, occurs when a woman's uterus slips out of place, causing pain and humiliation. A 2006 [report from the UN Population Fund \(UNFPA\)](#) estimated that 600,000 Nepali women suffered from the condition and that one third needed surgery.



At the Sindhuwa Health Camp

Care Women Nepal opened the camp by blanketing 21 villages around Sindhuwa with volunteers, pamphlets, and radio broadcasts. The CWN team then brought in doctors from the hospital in Biratnagar, 100 kilometers away, to screen, distribute medication, and conduct ultrasound tests. Local support was so strong that villagers donated the community space and covered 8% of the cost.

While the health camp underscored the

commitment of Nepali NGOs to fighting prolapse, the government of Nepal appears to be in full retreat. Figures from the Ministry of Health and Population show that the number of prolapse surgeries funded by the government fell from 14,044 in 2010 to 4,725 in 2012.

The [2015 US Foreign Aid Bill](#), published on June 19, "directs" USAID to "support efforts

to prevent and treat uterine prolapse in Nepal." But USAID has been reluctant to act on prolapse, apparently out of concern that it would divert resources from the effort to end maternal mortality.



Indira Thapa and beneficiary at the Sindhuwa camp
organizing the camp, we just could not say no."

Faced by such indifference, Nepali NGOs like Care Women Nepal and the [Women's Reproductive Rights Program \(WRRP\)](#), another AP partner, play a key role in helping women to access what services are available.

Chandra Limbu, a volunteer at the camp, was full of praise for their work. "The people of Sindhuwa do not have access to proper medical facilities," she said. "Once Care Women Nepal approached us to help in

Care Women Nepal was launched by Indira Thapa, a prominent women's leader in Dhankuta, with her own savings. After three successful health camps, and with demand growing in the villages, Ms Thapa is keen to put her organization on to a strong footing. AP deployed an experienced Peace Fellow, [Katie Baczewski](#), to help, with funding from Humanity United.

Ms Baczewski, a graduate student at Tufts University, came face to face with the misery caused by prolapse at the Sindhuwa health camp through meeting women like Satya Devi Ojha (photo) who has suffered for 20 years.

Satya Devi Ojha, 68, (who agreed to be identified) never attended school and gave birth to her first child at the age of 16. All six of her children were delivered at home, and two died in infancy. She went back to work within 2 weeks of giving birth. All of this undoubtedly contributed to Satya Devi Ojha's medical condition, but prolapse also carries stigma and causes ostracism. Satya Devi Ojha told Ms Baczewski that work is painful and that her family will sometimes "ignore" her.



Satya Devi Ojha

While it may be hard to pinpoint the risk factors, few deny that prolapse makes life thoroughly miserable for rural women like Satya Devi Ojha.

One study from the UNFPA found that suicide was by far the largest killer of women of reproductive age.

CWN's next challenge will be to ensure that the 34 women receive surgery. Dhankuta lacks the facilities, but Biratnagar is 5 hours away and CWN is now seeking funds to cover the cost of transport and accommodation, at a cost of \$50 per patient. AP is appealing for the \$1,700 [on this page](#). We ask our readers to be generous, and will report back from Biratnagar after the surgery.

- [Donate](#) to the Care Women Nepal prolapse appeal (please write "health camp" in the comments section of the online donation page)
- Visit the new [CWN partner page](#) and [CWN's website](#)
- Read [Katie's blogs](#)
- Read the blogs of 2007 Peace Fellow [Nicole Farkouh](#), who launched AP's work on prolapse
- Read about AP's partnership with the [Women's Reproductive Rights Program](#)
- Watch the 2010 film by AP and WRRP about prolapse in Nepal - [Saving the Womb](#)
- View [The Mahilako Swastha \(Women's Health\) Quilts](#), made by prolapse survivors
- Read the recent [Amnesty International report](#) about the abuse behind prolapse.