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North Carolina Quilter to Train Family Members of the Disappeared in Nepal

[Donate \\$50 to help family members make Tiger bags!](#)



Bobbi Fitzsimmons and Sarita Thapa prepare to make memorial quilts and Tiger bags.

In an unusual example of North-South cooperation between women, a leading American quilter has arrived in Nepal to help family members of the disappeared use embroidery to commemorate their missing relatives and make bags for sale.

Bobbi Fitzsimmons, from North Carolina, will leave tomorrow for the western district of Bardiya, where she will spend ten days working with 25 women who lost close relatives during the conflict between the army and Maoists (1996-2006).

The women have described the kidnap and arrest of their loved ones through embroidery and Ms Fitzsimmons will help them to assemble the squares into two advocacy quilts. One quilt will be used by the National Network of Families of the Disappeared in Nepal (NEFAD) to demand justice. The second quilt will be used by The Advocacy Project (AP) in the US to raise support for the Bardiya cooperative.

The Bardiya artists have also started making Tiger bags for sale. Ms Fitzsimmons will help them to upgrade the bags and explore the possibility of opening a store at the nearby Bardiya National Park. The park has the largest tiger population in Nepal.

Ms Fitzsimmons, 71, has made several striking quilts for AP and sits on the AP board of directors. She spent yesterday combing the alleyways of Kathmandu for cloth with Sarita Thapa, who heads the Bardiya cooperative. They will take the 17-hour bus ride to Bardiya tomorrow.

This is the first time that an American quilter has visited an AP partner in the Global South to offer technical advice and Ms Fitzsimmons hopes her visit will set a precedent. "American quilters are generous and skillful," she said. "They also want to use their talents to help others who are less fortunate."

NEFAD is enthusiastic about the quilting project because memorialization is one of the few options open to family members like Ms Thapa, who still remembers how her father was taken off by the security forces almost twenty years ago, never to reappear. Ms Thapa's husband died from a snake bite shortly afterwards.

The government of Nepal is firmly opposed to prosecuting those responsible for such crimes. As the prospect for a national solution fades, family members are looking for new and original ways to express their pain. Ms Thapa feels the quilting project will help.

Ms Fitzsimmons hopes that in assembling the quilts, the women will also acquire the skills and motivation to produce more Tiger bags and expand their product line to other handicrafts. Her first task on return will be to thank her guild in Wilmington, *Quilters by the Sea*, for donating material and equipment to the quilt project.

*** Want to help the Bardiya cooperative? [Donate \\$50 to our appeal on Global Giving](#).**
Every gift of \$50 will be matched. Thank you!