

“12 FOREVER” – Women’s leadership camp 2024. Final report
submitted to
CANADIAN HIMALAYAN ASSOCIATION FOR INNOVATION (CHAI)
by Padma Rigzin, February 28, 2024

On behalf of HEALTH Inc. and its partner organisation SECMOL, we want to thank you for supporting the ‘12 Forever’ Women Leadership Camp from the 5th to the 20th of January 2024. We undertook this project to build female community leaders and peer educators in the rural villages of Ladakh. With more than 40 female participants from Nubra, Sham, Changthang, Zanskar and Leh, we have successfully partnered with communities where we haven’t worked before.



This Women’s Leadership Camp is called ‘12 Forever’ in honour of Tsetan Dolma

Project Overview: The Project was created to build female community leaders and peer educators in the rural villages of Ladakh by providing mentorship and capacity-building workshops on 21st century in-demand skills and traditional skills, fostering their leadership skills, self-confidence, and personal growth to encourage girls' participation in their respective communities.

Project Objectives: the objectives of the project were:

1. Build community leaders. Increase female participation in rural village by creating a cohort of young girls who are passionate about issues of women in their communities and have the potential to educate and organise them.
2. Create a support community surrounding women's health and mental wellness. Encourage conversation surrounding women's health and mental health to create a system of peer-to-peer educators in remote villages by training young girls who are capable of providing a safe and fun space for women and other members of their communities.
3. Train girls to become hockey coaches. Train girls with prior hockey experience to become coaches in their respective communities. As hockey gets popular in the region—especially among the younger generation—we realised that there aren’t enough local female hockey coaches, and male coaches are reluctant to coach female teams.

Activities conducted: This year we decided to conduct most of our activities and workshops with highly experienced mentors/resource persons who understand the cultural and societal context of women's issues in Ladakh.

1. **Workshop by Namgyal Angmo on women's wellness.** We invited one of our most experienced barefoot counsellors Miss Namgyal Angmo to conduct three-day workshops on women's wellness, where she talked about challenges of women in Ladakhi society and their solutions, gender identity, cultural identity, and LGBTQ+ issues. We also invited Miss Deachen Angmo who conducted a day long workshop on legal rights.

2. Menstrual health workshop by Tsering Angmo. We invited Tsering, who is pursuing her Ph.D. in sociology, to provide a 10hr workshop on menstrual health where we distributed menstrual cups, created local videos on menstrual health, and trained participants to become menstrual cup ambassadors in their respective villages.



Receiving Diva Cups

3. Mental Wellness workshop by Stanzin Tsewang. Stanzin works with the Indian Army as a psychiatrist and runs a clinic in town. During the women's camp, she did a two-day workshop on mental wellness where she talked about Anxiety, Stress, Depression and the importance of journaling. During the workshop, she had our students write a letter to their future selves and their former selves stressing feeling confident about themselves and their dreams. Apart from these activities, Stanzin talked about various coping mechanisms and when to seek professional help in times of need.



Mental health workshops

4. Workshop on Bhoti Language by Sonam Paljor. As part of our effort to build traditional skills, we started with teaching Bhoti, the local language in Ladakh. The workshop was scheduled for three days; however, we had to shorten it to two days due to our mentor's other commitments. We still managed to have two workshops where we focused on the history of our language and basic grammar. On the third day, Chetan Angchuk conducted a theatrical workshop where the topic was traditional farming culture in western Ladakh.

5. Canvas art workshop: The camp was very intense and demanding, but as we focused on building resilience and discipline, we did not miss out on making it fun. Jigmet Angmo, a well-known contemporary artist, conducted a 6-hour canvas art workshop at the SECMOL campus for our students. Each student completed a piece artwork, which were displayed in

the multipurpose hall at SECMOL. Apart from this, we conducted an orienteering workshop combined with an outdoor scavenger hunt.



Art workshop

6. Other activities: We also created videos and local resources on mental wellness, women's health, and how to use a menstrual cup, focusing a bit on broadcasting journalism. On the last day, we had Mr. Abdul Khaliq conduct a workshop on First Aid/Medical Emergency Aid.



First Aid workshop

Project Outcomes: Our initial plan was to invite participants only from our partner youth associations; however, with the early start of hockey season and an overwhelming request from other villages we decided to make the camp open for all, and for the first time **we had participants from all corners of Ladakh totalling participants of 45 college going girls!**

1. With our focus on promoting the use of menstrual cups among young and young adult girls, we **distributed 120 menstrual cups, and trained 30 girls from 5 different regions of Ladakh to become menstrual cup ambassadors.** Today we have **100+ active menstrual cup users and most of them are first-time users.** In their conversation with our mentors, **users said they feel more comfortable and confident** in using the cup. We received feedback that some girls are scared of using menstrual cups and we are **connecting them with our peer educators.** We have also received **requests from schools and other NGOs.**



2. Our mentor/resource persons on women's wellness and menstrual health have agreed to provide **free career mentorship for participants**. This has been the most important outcome of the camp as we wanted to make Winter Camp and Women Leadership Camp more sustainable by staying connected with our participants and tracking their progress over a period of time. We are considering starting a similar mentorship program with our other partner youth associations.

3. **All 45 participants have received a drive uploaded with locally produced videos on mental and women's health**, and they are **trained to conduct workshops and answer basic questions** out of which **30 of them are peer-to-peer educators** for their respective communities. Having a **peer-to-peer educator addresses 70% of the women's health concerns in remote villages** as most of the women in rural communities do not feel confident in taking help from non-local medical professionals. Consequently, they end up self-medicating and relying on traditional rituals; the peer-to-peer educator aims to address this issue.

4. Five girls with prior hockey experience have **received additional hockey training** from the Ice Hockey Association of India, and they **received necessary hockey coaching equipment** from HEALTH Inc. All five of them are now capable of **conducting 'Learn to Play' camps for kids** of 6 to 15 years of age in their respective communities.

HEALTH Inc. remains committed to building female community leaders in the remote villages of Ladakh and we have an agreement in place with SECMOL to extend our partnership for the next three years. Meanwhile, we have received requests from working women to do a similar leadership workshop for adults. We are considering this request and are looking for funders to do the same in July 2024.

We want to thank everyone at CHAI for supporting this project and we hope to continue this collaboration in the long run with CHAI.



"12 Forever" winter camp participants, 2023-24