

Thulo.com, EMERGE's project to support women entrepreneurs concluded



A hybrid workshop (virtual and in-person) was conducted on May 11, to share the outcomes and announce the closure of the project titled ‘Fostering Resilience of Women-Led Businesses (including home-based women producers) and Consumers’.

Thulo.Com and Enterprise for Management, Economic Reform and Gender Equality (EMERGE) had started the project together under their campaign ‘Udhyami Utthan’ an entrepreneurship empowerment initiative.

The project was supported by USAID’s Tayar Nepal – Improved Disaster Risk Management Project.

Dr Mona Shrestha Adhikari, CEO of EMERGE, welcomed the participants and shared that the project provided a training programme on building resilient businesses, connected beneficiaries to e-commerce platforms through *Thulo.Com*, and facilitated access to finance and risk financing for business continuity/expansion. The project also made businesses and consumers aware of Disaster Risk Reduction Management (DRRM) through a dedicated web page and a downloadable mobile application on both Android and iOS.

Tammie Harris, Chief of Party, USAID-Tayar Nepal, expressed, “The partnership with Thulo.Com and EMERGE to implement this grant has been wonderful. It has brought our private sector interest, innovative approach, and GESI approach into one exciting, successful package.”

Durga Prasad Bhusal, Under-Secretary, Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Supplies, expressed his surprise that achieving such exceptional outcomes in just ten months is incredible. He

commended the effort of Thulo.Com and EMERGE for empowering and enabling the women entrepreneurs by upskilling them and guiding them towards resilient entrepreneurship. He added that this project is an example for all of us looking forward to digital transformation in e-commerce.

Sharing the outcome of the training programme entitled 'Building Resilient Businesses', Aleena Udas, Programme Director, EMERGE, highlighted that among the 129 participants, 25 were women with hearing and physical disabilities. She added that the training sessions have helped participants upskill themselves in DRRM, occupational health and safety, business management, marketing, promotion, sales, and the tools and techniques to transition towards e-commerce. One of the most significant achievements of this training is having 60 participants prepare their business continuity plan to run a disaster-resilient business.

Surakchya Adhikari, COO, Thulo.Com, mentioned how this project has helped bridge the digital gap by connecting 48 women producers/ entrepreneurs (including home-based and women with disability) to Thulo.Com, promoting their disaster preparedness products through various promotional activities, and emphasising their identity by featuring their stories and selling 3000 plus products. She added that the project partnered with seven private sector institutions to provide additional support to women entrepreneurs, whether for financial access or business expansion. The project has motivated some of its beneficiaries for new product development such as windcheater, Energy balls/bar, and Go-Bag related to DRRM.

Explaining the mobile application 'Ma Ta Chhu Tayar', Raja Ram Nepal, CEO, Thulo.Com mentioned that the recently launched mobile app primarily focuses on managing disaster risk and is targeted at businesses. He explained the mobile app's features and its usefulness to businesses and individuals and shared that the App already has 500+ downloads and 4000 web page views (thulo.com/tayar). He added that the mobile app is available on the Google Play Store and Apple Store.

Shanti Nakarmi, owner of Peace Tailoring, and Oliin Rai, Business Manager, Higher Ground Nepal, the two project beneficiaries, shared their experiences. The highlight of the closing workshop was to hear from the beneficiaries how the project helped them acquire knowledge and e-commerce skills to make their businesses disaster resilient and encouraged them to innovate new products like a windcheater and energy balls/bars.

Ajay Pandey, Field Team Director, USAID Tayar Nepal, expressed his gratitude to Thulo.Com and EMERGE, for such an innovative approach to supporting women entrepreneurs, including entrepreneurs of Tayar Municipalities. The beneficiaries of four Tayar Nepal working municipalities (Godawari, Birendranagar, Neekantha, and Tulsipur) were fortunate to attend the training program. Three beneficiaries could also be a part of the online sales activity, and their products are also available at Udhyami Utthan Online Shop at Thulo.Com. Sanjana Giri, one of the project beneficiaries, could join the Private Sector Innovation Challenge organised by Tayar Nepal and was one of the awardees. He hopes that Thulo.Com and EMERGE will continue to support women entrepreneurs and home-based producers.

Ambica Shrestha, President, Federation of Business and Professional Women Nepal (FBPWN), mentioned that the women entrepreneurs who could associate with this project benefitted greatly through training and e-commerce. Applauding the effort of the project team to reach out to women in rural areas, she wishes that Thulo.Com and EMERGE will continue to provide their support to more rural entrepreneurs.

Sristi Joshi Malla, President, SAARC Business Association of Homebased Workers (SABAH Nepal), mentioned that 77 members of SABAH have benefitted from the training. She wishes that such holistic training is needed for more home-based producers.

Rama Dhakal, General Secretary, Federation of Women with Disability Nepal (FWDN) mentioned that this project was special for FWDN as the project has also included women entrepreneurs with disabilities. She hopes that more entrepreneurs with disabilities could get this kind of support in the future as well.

Kiran Kuman Shrestha, CEO, Rastriya Banijya Bank and Aadar Bhandari from United Insurance expressed their commitment to support women businesses on access to finance and risk financing. They hope to keep up with long-term collaboration to support entrepreneurs in running sustainable businesses.

Towards the end of the workshop, Walter Weaver, Vice President, Asia Region, DAI in his observational remark, shared that TAYAR was not designed keeping COVID in mind. The challenges unfolded by the pandemic created a demand for new innovative solutions like bridging the digital gap and enhancing the business through e-commerce. He mentioned that it is incredible to see that it was possible to forge so many partnerships and work together in so many directions while reaching marginalized communities and helping their businesses even with a relatively small investment.

Similarly, Manju Thapa Tuladhar, GESI Advisor, USAID Nepal, expressed her pleasure in listening to all the results and outcomes of the project implemented by Thulo.Com and EMERGE. She said that USAID is interested in designing such projects that support women-led businesses. She adds that it is commendable of the project to bring in social inclusion while doing business, which is usually difficult to achieve. It is fascinating to see that women-led businesses like Thulo.Com and EMERGE have done outstanding work and achieved such results. On behalf of USAID, she thanked TAYAR Nepal, its team and the partners who have worked on this project.

Dr Mona Shrestha Adhikari concluded the workshop by thanking the entire hybrid closing workshop participants. She stressed that the good practices Thulo.Com and EMERGE have demonstrated in this project will be continued and shared globally. She requested everyone to download the 'Ma Ta Chhu Tayar' mobile app and manage disasters.

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<https://b360nepal.com/thulo-com-emerges-project-to-support-women-entrepreneurs-concluded/>

Other Press Release-

Spotlight news magazine:

<https://www.spotlightnepal.com/2022/05/13/closing-workshop-fostering-resilience-women-led-businesses-and-consumers-project-concluded/>

Foreign Affairs News:

<https://foreignaffairsnews.com/thulo-com-and-emerges-project-empowers-women-entrepreneurs/>

ICT Frame:

<https://ictframe.com/fostering-resilience-of-women-led-businesses/>

Ekagaj:

<https://ekagaj.com/article/finance/99908/>

Nepal Live Today:

<https://www.nepallivetoday.com/2022/05/17/project-fostering-resilience-of-women-led-businesses-including-home-based-women-producers-and-consumers-concludes/>