

## "A horrible and wonderful place"

*Grace Ochieng' '12 simultaneously empowered the women of Lwala, Kenya, to sustain themselves economically; helped curb school absenteeism by providing girls with reusable, washable and environmentally friendly menstrual sanitary pads; and helped raise awareness about women's issues.*

afford menstrual pads and each month became a stressful time for them," she adds. The inability to deal with their periods, as well as taunting from other students, caused many of her friends to miss school each month.

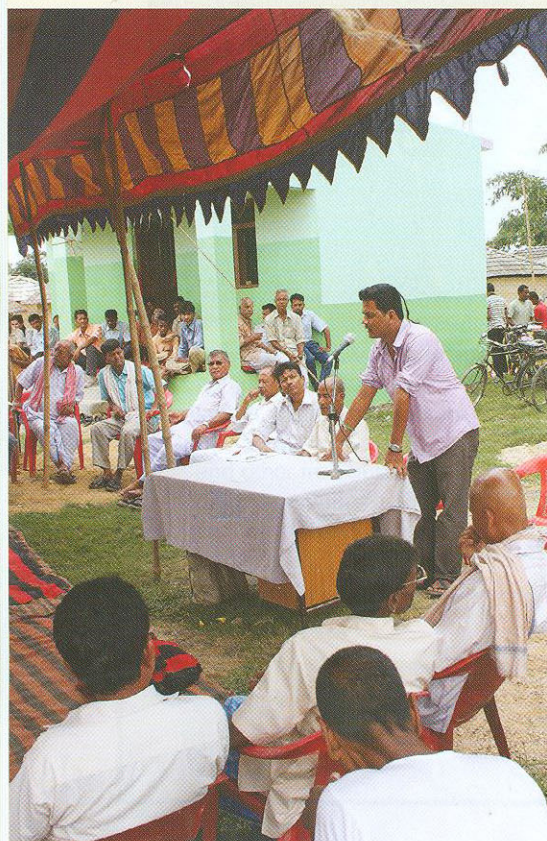
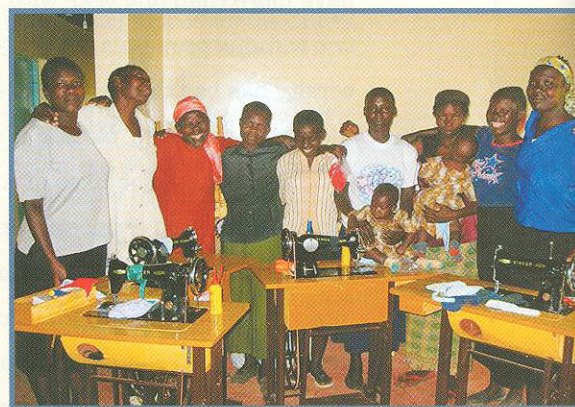
These memories from childhood, and the broad perspective that her global studies major at St. Lawrence provided, inspired Ochieng's summer 2009 Project for Peace, entitled "Micro-financed Sewing and Education Project in Lwala." The project helped curb monthly absenteeism by providing girls with "innovative, reusable, washable and environmentally friendly menstrual sanitary pads," she explains. Arranging with a local group of women to create

and sell the pads, as well as raise awareness about women's issues, she created a new economic means to sustain the women of Lwala. While menstrual pads continue to be a suppressed topic in places like Kenya, where such matters are generally not discussed in public, Ochieng' says that she is pleased with the personal relationships she formed and the individual change that her project created in the community.

Meanwhile, the benefits of this project have reached far beyond Kenya, for

**F**or many, menstrual pads don't go hand-in-hand with prosperity. But Grace Ochieng' '12 of Rongo, Kenya, developed an idea to use menstrual pads as a gateway to improved sanitation and education, as well as a means of income, for women in the rural village of Lwala, Kenya.

As a child, she says, she was fortunate to have parents who understood menstruation and provided menstrual pads. "However, at school I had friends who could not

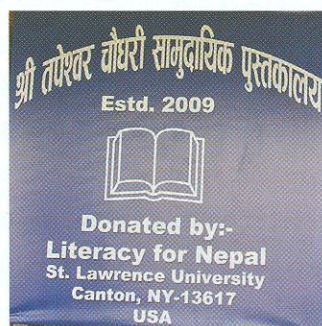


## "It's like an investment"

**A**s a student, Brijlal Chaudhari '10 founded the student group Literacy for Nepal. They raised enough money to fund construction of a library in his hometown in Nepal.

But Chaudhari didn't stop there. He used a Davis Projects for Peace grant to return to his native land high in the Himalayas to start a high school in a remote village.

"This is the first year," Chaudhari told a *Watertown Daily Times* reporter before heading off last summer. "Hopefully, the high school goes well and gets famous and lots and lots of people come from surrounding villages to study."



*Brijlal Chaudhari '10 speaks at the opening of the library he built in his hometown in Nepal with funds raised through the St. Lawrence organization he started, Literacy for Nepal. This was the start of more ambitious plans, as the description of his Projects for Peace efforts attests.*





it opened numerous opportunities for Ochieng'. She attended the annual Commission on the Status of Women meetings, February 22-March 4, 2011, at United Nations headquarters in New York City to discuss women's rights. She also received a travel enrichment grant through St. Lawrence to study female advocacy in Chile in the Spring 2011 semester, and hopes in the future to obtain her international law and public health degree.

"The project put me in a horrible and wonderful place," Ochieng' says. "It's horrible because I can't simply sit around and do nothing. I am constantly thinking of the women and girls, writing proposals, and seeking out opportunities for them. I don't exactly have the typical college experience. But the project was wonderful because after working with these women I further appreciated my ability to get a St. Lawrence education, as well as the hardworking professors and resources at SLU."

—Mary McAfee '11

High schools are a rare commodity in rural Nepal, where illiteracy tops 50 percent. And it's expensive to send children to urban schools in a country in which a quarter of the population subsists in poverty. Girls in particular rarely receive a secondary education, Chaudhari says.

"I started doing this because I wanted to build one library in my village," he told the newspaper reporter. "I thought I was going to fight everything with that. Building one library doesn't solve all the problems like ignorance and poverty. I applied for this grant to continue this."

"Continue" is a key word in Chaudhari's mind. His ultimate goal, he says, is to "establish a big university in Nepal," so Nepalese students do not have to leave their country to find higher education. "It's like an investment," the economics major added, "but it's helping people."

—NSB



## "Nothing works out quite the way you expect it to"

Melih Cokaygil '11 used creative drama, music, art, photography, and English language to generate peace in a war-torn part of the world.

Cokaygil developed "Peace through Interaction and Education in South-eastern Turkey" in hopes of teaching children non-violent ways of expressing themselves. For three weeks during summer 2010, Cokaygil and eight other American and Turkish university students joined together with eight street children of Diyarbakir, Turkey.

Cokaygil brought along two SLU students, Sarah Detwiler '12 and Erkinalp Kesikli '09, who like Cokaygil is Turkish, to work alongside other university students with the children of farming families who have been displaced to the cities by a 30-year conflict between the Turkish Army and Kurdish rebels. Cokaygil explains, "Hundreds of thousands of Kurds have been forced to leave their villages, which has created a huge unemployed population."

"In recent years, many children started to join demonstrations against the oppressor state agencies, such as the police," Cokaygil continues. "As a result, many children got arrested, detained and even prosecuted. Some even got jail punishment for up to 13 years."

Cokaygil says, "These are not homeless kids. They have homes and families, and most of them go to school. But they have been encouraged by their families to work in the streets due to high unemployment in Diyarbakir. The children work as shoe-shiners or windshield cleaners at the red lights to help support their families."

Kurdish children were among those with whom he worked. Cokaygil says, "Being ethnically Turkish, I represented the oppressor in the oppressed Kurdish

*Above, Roommates Brijlal Chaudhari '10, from Nepal, left, and Melih Cokaygil '11, from Turkey, used Davis Projects for Peace grants to introduce literacy and the arts as conflict-resolution strategies in their native countries in summer 2010.*