Empowering Women of Nepal; Improving Self-Confidence Through Trekking Guide Training

Nepal
Lucky Chhetri

Organization type:
nonprofit/ngo/citizen sector

Budget:
$50,000 - $100,000

Website:
http://www.3sistersadventure.com/EWN/

- Education
- Girls' development
- Youth development
- Youth leadership

Project Summary

Concise Summary: Help us pitch this solution! Provide an explanation within 3-4 short sentences.

Empowering Women of Nepal (EWN) fosters the growth of independent, confident women through training to become trekking guides. EWN's free guide-training teaches each woman practical life skills while broadening her global perspective, cultivating her independent thought, and increasing her employability. These skills are invaluable to the woman's development of self-confidence.

About Project

Problem: What problem is this project trying to address?

Women in Nepal lead a difficult life, particularly in rural communities where ignorance of the law hinders progress towards gender equality. Nepali women are expected to be subservient, given inferior education relative to their male counterparts, forced to work without pay, and often abused, emotionally and physically. In a study by UNICEF in 2007, the literacy ratio for Women:Men was 3:5. A 2004 Oxfam study on violence against women in South Asia found that 1 in 2 women suffer from domestic abuse and hundreds of thousands of Nepali women are victims of sex trafficking. The detrimental effects of such a lifestyle manifest in low self-confidence. Nepali women learn little from society about their self...
worth and have few expectations for themselves. Without self-confidence, a woman cannot act as a role model for her children or community.

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**About You**

**Organization:**
Empowering Women of Nepal

Section 1: About You

First Name  
Lucky

Last Name  
Chhetri

Email  
ewn@3sistersadventure.com

Website URL  
http://www.3sistersadventure.com/EWN/

Country

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Section 2: About Your Organization

**Organization Name**
Empowering Women of Nepal

**Organization Phone**
+977 (0)61 462231

**Organization Address**
P.O. Box 284, Lakeside, Khahare, Pokhara-6, Nepal

**Organization Country**

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**Your idea**

Country your work focuses on

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**Innovation**

What makes your idea unique?

EWN’s approach to rectifying low self-confidence is unique in training Nepali women to be trekking guides in Nepal’s male dominated adventure tourism industry.

Over the course of 6 months, program participants of varying background and caste learn the skills necessary to lead a trek, graduating as assistant guides. The women will earn the title of Senior Guide after gaining further field experience and undergoing more training if necessary. Participants enter the program extremely shy and soft-spoken, doubtful of their capabilities. Over time they metamorphose into exuberant women who are able to confidently lead a trek for western clients. This transformation shows how giving some basic education, responsibility, and respect to an individual can empower her economically, socially, and most importantly, emotionally.

Outdoor education has long been regaled for its unique emphasis on experiential learning, and EWN uses this idea to improve the Nepali woman’s self-confidence by teaching her the skills that will earn her self-sufficiency.

“At first I thought the training was all about trekking but it was different. I was not able to come out because of my own self but now I have changed. Women in the villages should be made empowered and aware.” -Mina C. Pun (Participant in the guide training program)

Do you have a patent for this idea?

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**Impact**

What impact have you had?

In the last decade, Empowering Women of Nepal trained over 700 guides. The initial class size has grown from 8 to as many as 46 individuals, showing the heightened desire of women throughout Nepal to change their socioeconomic situations. The women graduate from the program with a new perception of themselves and of their capabilities.

Several of EWN’s graduates continue on to higher education or start their own business. EWN encourages actions like these by way of a savings program. Each person is asked to put aside 100 Rupees a month, or the equivalent of 1.25 USD. While they may use this money however and whenever they like, these saving plans enable the women to think beyond the day-to-day existence. It is a simple, yet effective way to encourage someone to plan for the future.

The economic benefits the women gain from guide training not only enrich their own lives, but also improve the lives of their families and community. Some participants work to improve the standard of living in their communities through ecological awareness and personal healthcare education. Several participants found employment as healthcare assistants or in NGO’s. The benefits gained through the program aid to promote
long-term social change and gender equality.

“I learned that women are equal to men. The training was very encouraging to show our hidden talents. Now I am confident and can speaking front.” -Kalpana Thapa (Participant in guide training program)

Actions

EWN’s free training program is offered biannually, recruiting female participants from all over Nepal. The training begins with four weeks of intensive courses on First Aid, CPR, leadership, geography, English, and environmental protection. A 6-month apprenticeship as trainee guides follows, and the women earn equal wages with men. After graduating as assistant guides, some women return to their villages to encourage friends and neighbors to join the program, others continue their education through EWN refresher courses, and the majority of alumni find work in the adventure tourism industry with EWN’s partner trekking company, 3 Sisters Adventure Trekking. With further training and employment, the guides advance to the title of Senior Guide.

Results

Since its inception in 1999, EWN has trained over 700 female guides. Each Senior Guide is qualified to lead up to a month long trek for several clients. By learning about trekking and the logistics of leading a trek for western tourists, gaining employment, and achieving self-sufficiency, the Nepali woman learns to take confidence in herself and emerges as a completely different individual from the 6-month training program. EWN has had the privilege of witnessing the revitalization of each woman’s life. With gainful employment, the women improve their education, their health, and their standard of living. Each trekking season over 100 guides are employed by the organization, and currently 10 are running their own businesses and over 50 are pursuing higher education.

“At first I could not speak openly but now after the training I am able to speak.” -Mina Pariyar (Participant in guide training program)

What will it take for your project to be successful over the next three years? Please address each year separately, if possible.

A few years ago EWN began training female candidates in advanced rock climbing in the hopes of sending some of them to summit Mount Everest. This goal was created in order to inspire the female guides with the success of this incredible feat, as well as to begin to expand the skill set of the female guides. In the next three years these women will receive further, extensive training. EWN’s second goal is to build a new outdoor training school in Pokhara, where EWN is based, for the female guides and any interested western clients. Both of these goals will require significant effort. The three-year plan is as follows: Year One, 2010: During this year EWN will pursue sources of funding and sponsorship for both mountain trekkers and the new training school. Additionally, experts will be recruited to train the selected trekkers with advanced technical skills. The training will be for a minimum of three months in order to prepare them for their Everest ascent in 2011. Year Two, 2011: EWN will fully provide funding and more training to the selected Everest candidates. Year Three, 2012: In the third year EWN hopes to build the adventure school. Besides funding, it will be necessary to recruit those with the technical expertise to build and manage the outdoor adventure school.

What would prevent your project from being a success?

As a non-profit organization, Empowering Women of Nepal is financially dependent on awards, grants, and donations. The program is also dependent on continued tourist support and their interest in exploring the Himalayas. Fifteen percent of the profit from 3 Sisters Adventure Trekking, EWN’s partner trekking company, funds the guide-training program. Maintaining political stability is crucial for Nepal’s tourism industry and any imbalance would hurt EWN by discouraging tourists from trekking. Without funding, the organization could not offer the training course for free or help provide the guides with necessary equipment. Also, EWN would not succeed without trainees and their courage to sign up for the course despite intense social scrutiny. In a society where men dominate the tourism industry, it is not an easy endeavor to become a female trekking guide. EWN leadership admires the courage of its trainees and its staff members who stand as role models for the aspiring young guides. Volunteers play a role in the training courses by teaching the English curriculum, and a lack of volunteers would hurt the program.

How many people will your project serve annually?

101-1000

What is the average monthly household income in your target community, in US Dollars?

$50 - 100

Does your project seek to have an impact on public policy?

Yes

Sustainability

What stage is your project in?

Operating for more than 5 years

In what country?

Is your initiative connected to an established organization?

Yes

If yes, provide organization name.

Yes we are currently funded by Global Fund for Women, Mama Cash, Triodos Foundation, Uniting People, Global Giving

How long has this organization been operating?

More than 5 years

Does your organization have a Board of Directors or an Advisory Board?

Yes

Does your organization have any non-monetary partnerships with NGOs?
Empowering Women of Nepal worked hard to establish strong partnerships with local NGOs throughout many of the districts of Nepal. In this manner EWN is able to recruit women for the training program from a variety of regions and have a widespread effect when the guides return to their communities. These relationships are crucial for the success of the training program. EWN also has a partnership with 3 Sisters Adventure Trekking, the company where the trained female guides are hired for client trips. Fifteen percent of the proceeds from this trekking company funds the programs of EWN. EWN’s goal to train two women to climb Mount Everest in 2011 is dependent on a partnership with the Magic Mountain Foundation, a climbing organization from Poland that sends professionals to train the aspiring Nepali climbers. Without this partnership the goal of climbing Mount Everest would not exist. EWN is thankful for the encouragement, support, and partnership of many organizations throughout its existence.

What are the three most important actions needed to grow your initiative or organization?

In order to grow as an organization EWN will take the following actions: 1) To provide continuous and effective training to the guides in hopes of further expanding each class size. 2) To apply for grants for funding in order to continue training programs and to build a new outdoor training school. 3) To find local sources of funds and improve 3 Sisters Adventure Trekking’s business. As the global economy is in turmoil, it is necessary to find ways to become self-sufficient locally and through EWN’s business partner.

Tell us about the social innovator behind this idea.

I have always been passionate about helping others improve their quality of life, and prior to founding EWN I worked with different organizations in India and Nepal on projects on such topics as gender issues, adult woman literacy, youth education, and clean water for all. In 1999 my two sisters and I created 3 Sisters Adventure Trekking and Empowering Women of Nepal. Since its establishment, EWN has expanded to include a children’s home and additional training for more advanced guides and locals. Some of these seminars, such as a hotel management course, are designed to help locals improve their tourist products. We work hard to benefit the local communities as we adhere to ecotourism principles. I graduated from Loreto College in Darjeeling, India with a B.A. in Art and from Padmmodhay School in Kathmandu, Nepal with a B.Ed in Education. I have also attended many different international training conferences on Women Leaders, Sustainable Tourism, and Impact of Training. Currently, I am the treasurer and/or advisor to many different non-profit organizations in the local area that focus on youth, tourism, and/or social entrepreneurship. I hope to help others in their programs as I learned so much from founding EWN. For my work, I was recognized as an Ashoka Fellow in 2004, and EWN was invited to join the Clinton Global Initiative in 2008. I am a strong supporter of freedom for life and value democracy for all. I like to live an adventurous life, one that challenges and motivates me to work hard. EWN has been the outlet for these passions and a way to give back to the local people and region.

How did you first hear about Changemakers?

Through another organization or company

If through another, please provide the name of the organization or company

Ashoka

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