



Mitrataa's Partnerships with Nepali Women

Inspiring Nepal's Women to Dream . . . and giving them the tools to achieve their dreams

1. In a Nutshell

Our philosophy is to partner with the Nepali women, to inspire them to take control of their own futures, and providing them with the tool box to achieve their dreams. There is strength in numbers and so we believe in creating a network of women who inspire each other – paying forward the skills, energy and passion we share with them as well as the financial support.

Our partnership has 5 main parts:



2. The Need

It's no revelation why we focus on women and girls in our work - the research overwhelmingly shows that empowering girls and women is a fast forward card for any country's overall development. The passion and energy that the women we work with show for their own futures as well as the futures of their families and their communities is inspiring.

A couple of quotes that sum up our view on the role of women and girls:

*"Supporting women is a high-yield investment, resulting in stronger economies, more vibrant civil societies, healthier communities, and greater peace and stability. And **investing in women is a way to support future generations**; women spend much more of their incomes on food, medicine and schooling for children."*

- Hillary Clinton, International Women's Day 2009

"We know that girls are the most inspirational, the most transformational, the most untapped currency in our world today. What will it take to unleash this potential?"

- Queen Rania Al-Abdullah of Jordan, Women in the World,

"Gender equality and women's empowerment are fundamental to the global mission of the United Nations to achieve equal rights and dignity for all... But equality for women and girls is also an economic and social imperative. Until women and girls are liberated from poverty and injustice, all our goals -- peace, security, sustainable development -- stand in jeopardy."

- Ban Ki-Moon, Women's Day 2010

3. Mitrataa's Partnership Programs

All of our programs with women are focused on providing them with a tool box of skills and encouragement to help them control their futures and then focusing on creating a strong network to support them and allow them to collaborate and learn from each other.

a. Daisy Chains

A literacy, numeracy and business skills training program with a difference. Women complete a 9 month education course in groups of 20 and then embark on a group business with a small loan, and ongoing mentoring and support. As their business grows, they repay their loan to the next group of women who they also mentor. It's a "pay it forward" model which is sustainable and creates a network of support for the women as they grow.

We also include health, legal rights, women's rights and self-protection training in the program.

This project has been running since 2008 and over 300 women have now graduated from the program.

b. Wiley Women's Dream Centre

We have a very successful Dream Centre model for our girls which teaches them skills for learning and skills for life in a 6 month intensive program. We are in the process of expanding this model to include women. The Centre will incorporate the Daisy Chains program which will replace the "skills for learning" component of our girls' centres. But most excitingly, it will adapt the "skills for life" element into a "Personal Learning Program" through which

the women will learn skills to increase their resilience to challenges in life, including learning about gratitude, team work, compassion, setting and achieving goals, identifying their strengths and passions and turning these into a business opportunity. Our pilot Women's Dream Centre, generously sponsored by one of our core corporate partners, John Wiley & Sons, will open in early 2011.

c. Defying Gravity

"I'm defying gravity. I'm sick of accepting limits, 'cause someone says they're so"

Wicked, The Musical

Creating role models who dream big and follow their dreams is crucial to empowering disadvantaged Nepali women. Mitrataa aims to inspire possibility for Nepal's entrepreneurial women by awarding scholarships to women which will provide access to markets, skills and capital for developing their dream business ideas.

d. Annual Conference & Gala Picnic

One of the key objectives of our work with women is to create a network of women who can support each other in a number of ways – emotional support, skills training, product supply, to name a few. We currently have over 300 women in the Daisy Chains network, a very powerful force if they work together. To achieve that, we need to get them together annually to reconnect, re-inspire and rejoice. The majority of the women in our network are domestic workers, many have been abused, they struggle to feed their families. They rarely get an opportunity to relax and enjoy themselves. So in addition to a conference on the future of the network, sharing of new skills and a chance to make new friends to help with their businesses and dreams, the conference doubles as a celebration of their achievements, their dreams and gives them an opportunity to dance – which is always their favourite part! We generally try to hold the event on International Women's Day or another meaningful day for women (such as Teej in September) annually.

e. Women in Business Network

As more women complete our Daisy Chains program and go into business, we recognised the importance of creating role models and continuing to inspire the women to work towards their dreams. Their businesses are growing along with the size of their dreams so we wanted to ensure that we share their experiences and learnings with the new graduates and also continue to support them as their dreams become more complex and stretching alongside their increased confidence. We created the Women in Business Network and Forum to fill this need. The women meet monthly to discuss any challenges they are facing in their business, to receive more training (which they request based on their needs) and to network to see if other members of the forum have a need for their products or services. We also invite successful women in business as guest speakers to share their experiences and advice to the women. This Forum was launched at the 2010 Women's Conference & Gala Picnic.

The women who are part of our Daisy Chain's network are all incredible – their energy and passion is contagious. And we love this about them, because it results in a vibrant, active, supportive network of women who believe in a wonderful future in which they are able to provide a safe and stable environment for their families. With the

combination of our 5 projects working with women, we are confident that we are providing them with a full set of tools to take responsibility for their futures. Our role is to nurture this passion and provide them with the skills and support to achieve their dreams.

Mitrataa's vision is to do ourselves out of a job in Nepal. This means our focus has to be on sustainability. We operate all our projects in conjunction with a local partner and adopt a "train the trainer" model to all elements of our work. Whether training our local partner's staff or training women in the network to pass on their skills, we are constantly looking for ways to ensure our work is sustainable and able to continue without our support in future through a "pay it forward" model.

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