



The B Project, Nepal

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Organization: Real Medicine Foundation Nepal (www.realmedicinefoundation.org)

Seven Summits Women (<http://sevensummitwomen.org/>)

Project title: The B Project

Project location: Bhotenamlang, Sindhupalchok district, Nepal



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Background

The district of Sindhupalchok, Nepal was one of the areas hit hardest by the April 2015 earthquake: more than 2,000 people died, many were injured, and the vast majority of houses, schools, and medical facilities were destroyed or rendered uninhabitable. In Bhotenamlang, the hometown of Maya Gurung (one of the founders of Seven Summits Women), there was not 1 house left intact. Sindhupalchok district was already known for sex-trafficking, lack of education, and discrimination against women, and the earthquake's destruction meant that these problems would only grow worse.

RMF's Presence

Soon after the earthquake, Real Medicine Foundation partnered with Seven Summits Women to rebuild schools, health posts, and other damaged public structures in the village of Bhotenamlang, Sindhupalchok, and to provide immediate relief and long-term support to the people of Sindhupalchok district. Currently, RMF, through Seven Summits Women, supports a tailoring vocational training program for women, provides afternoon meals to more than 2,000 schoolchildren at 8 schools, is planning to build Bhotenamlang Community Center, and is in talks to start new programs with additional partners.

Tailoring Training for Skill Development

In late August, Project B accountant, Sandesh Dhakal, and the project manager, Kushal Harjani, visited the village of Bhotenamlang for several days to evaluate the women's tailoring program. During their visit, Sandesh and Kushal:

- Interviewed each trainee individually,
- Spoke with the teacher,
- Held group discussions,
- Observed the students and teacher, and
- Evaluated the clothing that students have sewn.

They found that the program and students are progressing well.



Tailoring trainees gather around the teacher with their notes and drawings.

Challenges

Despite their good progress, the overwhelming response from trainees was that they need more time. Many trainees expressed a desire to extend the program by 3 months, and all of them said that they find stitching a shirt and pants or a school uniform to be the most difficult task. Also, because these articles of clothing are taught last, trainees do not have much time to practice sewing them. After our observations and speaking with the teacher and trainees, **we have decided to extend training by 1 month** to ensure that at the minimum, trainees can confidently stitch a high-quality shirt, pants, and a frock. (There is a great demand for trainees to learn how to sew a frock as well, since most schoolgirls prefer a frock over pants in the summer.)

Next Steps

Our plans for the program, Tailoring Training for Skill Development, are as follows:

- Students will each contribute NPR 1,500 for the additional month of training. This is a nominal sum, but will help trainees claim ownership of their education.
- Absenteeism will not be tolerated unless a trainee is very sick. After 2 absences, a trainee will not be able to stay in the program.
- After completing the program, trainees who wish to set up a tailoring shop will get to keep their machines at a slightly discounted price. They will have to pay back the price of the machines in installments. This is important for us to fulfill our goal of setting up and **promoting entrepreneurship among the trainees.**
- Trainees will take a practical exam at the end of the month, testing their ability to stitch a shirt, pants, and a frock. Trainees earning the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd highest scores on the exam will get special discounts on their machines. They will also pay back the discounted price in monthly installments.
- Trainees buying their sewing machines will form a group to guarantee against defaults. If one member of the group defaults, everyone has to pitch in a little more for the defaulter. This creates a type of social pressure to ensure that trainees keep up with their installments. The major motive behind not distributing sewing machines for free is so that **trainees have a strong sense of investment and ownership**, which in turn drives them to use the machine and their training to build an economically productive business.



Tailoring trainees work on their current projects.



More tailoring trainees in class



Bhotenamlang Secondary School

One of the 8 schools where Seven Summits Women provides nutritious midday meals to students (in partnership with RMF) is Bhotenamlang Secondary School. On our last visit, we were glad to find that school administrators and students reported the availability of a free midday meal has caused school attendance to increase and improved students' overall health.

Challenges

While visiting the village of Bhotenamlang in late August 2016, we found that the storeroom conditions needed to be improved. Also, there seems to be a decent amount of pilferage by teachers.

Next Steps

- Due to the program's cost, storeroom problems, and teacher pilferage, we need to reevaluate whether the program should continue and on what scale.
- We submit that it could be better to continue the program in only 3 or 4 schools where children travel long distances to attend class; it is perhaps not best to continue the program in all 8 schools.
- No additional supplies should be sent to the schools until they can provide a clean, separate storage space.
- An accountability mechanism is being implemented to make sure that food is being stored properly and given to the schoolchildren. We plan to get parents involved and form a parents' committee.

Bhotenamlang Community Center

We are planning and exploring options for the construction of a Bhotenamlang Community Center. We are currently in the process of choosing an architect and a building model.

Further NGO Activity in Bhotenamlang

- **Kamala Foundation** will begin permaculture training in the village, just before or after Dashain, a Hindu festival celebrated throughout Nepal.
- **Rato Bangala Foundation** will provide teacher training and school management committee training just before or after Dashain as well.
- **American Himalayan Foundation** and Project Manager Kushal Harjahi have scheduled a follow-up meeting to discuss whether American Himalayan Foundation would like to invest in one of the women's cooperatives, train the cooperative members and leadership team, and start a goat breeding microfinance project in Bhotenamlang. American Himalayan Foundation has done so in Nuwakot with good results: <http://www.himalayan-foundation.org/projects/121862>. This support would be a good addition to our Women Empowerment Program.

The timing of these new programs is also dependent on when the roads are repaired and reopened. The ride was a serious challenge for Kushal and Sandesh when they visited Bhotenamlang in late August.