



# WOMEN EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMS

Nepali women are born into a patriarchal society. In all cases women's rights are subordinate to those of men. Married early, with little or no education, no land rights or independent income, women are a voiceless section of society, dependent on men for their welfare and bearing the continued weight of cultural and social discrimination and violence against them. The threat of violence towards women is a pervasive and unmanaged threat in Nepali society. Women face domestic violence, often unreported, or violence through organized trafficking of young girls sold for sex across Asia. If a woman does not feel safe within a society then she cannot be empowered within it.

VIN is seeking volunteers to support the continued work of the microcredit cooperative and to help drive women toward autonomy. Join us to learn more about the barriers facing Nepali women and help remove them.

## **Women's Trafficking Prevention**

The program aims to prevent the trafficking of young girls within Nepal and internationally. Many girls are sold into trafficking because of poverty and lack of education; two of the debilitating socio-economic factors that stand between the communities VIN works with and empowerment. VIN is looking for committed volunteers or interns to work with staff and local volunteers to perform research on the issues causing women trafficking and determine pragmatic ways to minimize them.

One of the poorest countries in the world, Nepal has become a source of men, women and children sold into forced labor and sex trafficking. Victims are trafficked within Nepal, to India, the Middle East and Malaysia, where they are forced, among other things, to become prostitutes, domestic servants, beggars and factory workers. Many girls are lured by false marriages or promises of employment or education. Many are taken across the Nepal-India border, which is open and legal documents are not required.

Trafficked Women often face forced sexual and physical abuse and rape, denial of sustenance, denial of freedom and the risk of unsafe abortion and infection with HIV. Many times, after being rescued girls face discrimination in society and have difficulty reintegrating. There is a large need in many communities for education and awareness about the issue.

## **Micro-credit Cooperative Support**

This project is one of the most important initiatives within our Women's Empowerment Program for promoting economic empowerment among community women. We seek committed volunteers or interns to support the initiative and over 500 women who have become a part of it.

While it is estimated that 40% of Nepali women are engaged in economic work, their roles as mentors and laborers are not recognized. Often denied an education and ownership of property, they remain confined in menial jobs within agriculture. They cannot change their circumstances without access to credit or training.

Since 2007 VIN has worked with the JitpurPhedi community, empowering the women by supplying economic tools. Three years ago, VIN established JitpurPhedi Agricultural Women Cooperative Limited, which has now benefitted over 500 women, offering a service of saving and credit. They are also encouraged to join the local agricultural office to buy products such as fertilizers and seeds at a subsidized rate. VIN's ultimate aim is for the microcredit cooperative to run autonomously within the community.

## Income Generation and Marketing

This project was implemented to support the women of marginalized communities to generate sustainable income through agricultural and non-agricultural ventures.

Access to education is limited by poverty and gender discrimination, meaning women are confined to menial jobs within subsistence farming and without knowledge and credit, it is difficult to change their situation by engaging in a productive income generation & marketing project. Traditionally, in Nepali culture, women are left exclusively to do the work; both in the house, caring for the family and on the agricultural work, to feed them. Due to the low level of technology available in rural communities the agricultural work is labor-intensive. Furthermore, they are not paid. They will be fortunate if the yield from the farming will feed their family. For some, it won't.

The women remain trapped beneath this burden and the social and cultural barriers that exist in Nepal and, unsurprisingly, they have little self-confidence.

Through the women's groups, VIN provides a variety of training designed to help the women learn the skills they need to change their economic situation.

Among the list of training VIN has provided are Entrepreneurship Skills, Seasonal and Off Season Vegetable Farming, Basic Livestock Management, Account Keeping, Mushroom cultivation, and sewing and embroidery classes.

## Education, Rights and Life Skills

The program was established to give women in marginalized communities the knowledge, skills and self-confidence necessary to participate in a successful community. We provide basic education, life skills training, knowledge on health and domestic issues and inform women of their rights to give women in marginalized communities the knowledge, skills and self-confidence necessary to participate in a successful community. We have given literacy classes and practical training to over 500 women in the community. We are looking forward to implementing this work as part of the women's empowerment program, in Okhaldhunga, our new focus community.

VIN has now established 65 women's groups across the community; the number was 19 in 2009. The groups are designed to ensure that the women have a support network that is sustainable and can operate independently of VIN. The women are eager to learn to enable them to establish independence for themselves and for their children.

## What are the Requirements?

We do not ask that our volunteers be native English speakers. We do ask that they are flexible, with a positive attitude and a willingness to learn. During your volunteer or internship placement you will live with a Nepali host-family, allowing you an insight into Nepali culture and helping you to become immersed in day to day Nepali life.

### Children's Winter Camp

21/01/2018 to 29/01/2018

Volunteer Testimonial: Idoya Sanchez, UK

"It was truly rewarding. Being able to share my skills and my knowledge while supporting different communities has been a very gratifying experience. I've felt very humble to see how these communities manage their lives with the little resources they have and despite the hard circumstances that they have been put through. It's been a very inspiring experience".

