

**Together Women Rise  
Project Report May 2020 - March 2021  
Support for  
Kopila Valley's Women's Center**



BlinkNow is tremendously grateful to Together Women Rise for your generous support of the Kopila Valley Women's Center, which serves the most vulnerable women in our community by offering them life-changing vocational and empowerment training. We are delighted to provide you with the following update on our accomplishments during this reporting period.

**1. Please provide the following information:**

Organization Name: BlinkNow Foundation

a. Project Title: Kopila Valley's Women's Center

b. Contact Name: Ruth Dekker

c. Contact Address: PO Box 453 / Mendham / New Jersey / 07945

d. Contact Email and Phone Number: email: [Ruth@blinknow.org](mailto:Ruth@blinknow.org) phone: 973-828-2955

**2. Recap briefly what outcomes the project was designed to achieve.**

The goal of the Kopila Valley Women's Center is to empower women in the Surkhet Valley, aiming to increase not only their earning potential but also their sense of self-worth, enabling them to support their families and break the cycle of violence and poverty for their daughters. When women are empowered, the entire community benefits. Our program began in 2013 and its development has been greatly aided by the Dining for Women community whose funding has enabled us to grow and flourish.

**3. Has funding changed for this project? For example, have you received unexpected funding from another source?**

No, funding has not changed for this project.

**4. Is your organization or project situation different than presented in the approved proposal? For example, new executive director, significant project staffing changes or NGO affiliation, loss of large funding, or other significant changes?**

No, we have not had significant changes in staffing, funding, or NGO affiliation. Since the start of the pandemic, we have made adjustments to ensure that our beneficiaries and staff were safe and complying with national orders—and we continue to do so. During this challenging time, our Women's Center staff postponed its training program and used the time for planning and check-ins with our participants. We are delighted to report that in February, after extensive preparation, planning, and work, the Kopila Valley Women's Center welcomed back its first training group in nearly a year with many essential safety measures in place.

**5. Have the number of beneficiaries changed? To report this please refer to the original numbers in your grant proposal under *Number of women and girls Directly Impacted and population Indirectly Impacted*.**

We had anticipated training 90 women per year for three years in the areas of empowerment, job skills and entrepreneurship. We exceeded our goal in 2019 and were able to train 83 women in job skills and entrepreneurship and 31 in empowerment training. However, in the past year we were prevented from conducting any training for 11 months due to the pandemic. Having resumed in February, we currently have 22 women participating in a 6-month beauty parlor training and have plans to train a total of 147 women in 2021: Beauty Parlor (22), Advanced Beauty Parlor (20), Advanced Weaving (20), Literacy (45), and Finance (40). The number of impacted women and girls overall is expected to be on par with our original estimate.

**6. What challenges are you facing as you move forward with this project? How are you approaching these challenges?**

The Women's Center's most significant challenges are related to the impact of Covid-19. In addition to the lost income many of our participants and graduates experienced during the year, studies have shown that vulnerable women are at increased risk for violence, depression and suicide as a result of the pandemic. Even prior to 2020, a UN Sustainable Goals report indicated that 58% of children in our province of Karnali suffered from malnutrition and that 27.5% of our population live on less than \$1.9 per day.

Our staff has worked to check in regularly with the women we serve, conducting mental health checks, providing emergency food assistance and providing crisis intervention services as needed. The economy of Surkhet, like much of Nepal, is dependent upon wages earned abroad and sent home via remittances. Now that jobs in India and the Middle East have dried up, the lost income is felt at all levels. In light of this, the following changes are being implemented:

- a. Our challenge has been to find income-generating activities (IGAs) for women that will allow them to feed their families when so many people are without work. We've developed a strategy to complement our long-term vocational training with short-term training programs like beekeeping, container gardening, and soap-making that women can utilize to supplement their current incomes. Through a newly formed entrepreneurship fund, we plan to make available the supplies and materials needed to follow through on these IGAs.
- b. Our women are at a distinct disadvantage for jobs and opportunities because many were locked out of formal education during their youth, particularly because of the civil war taking place during this time. We have launched a new literacy program that is beginning now for the guardians of our Kopila Valley students. Over 90 women have signed up to take the course, a trainer has been hired and a curriculum has been developed. We believe this course will be an important step for improving the quality of life and the economic health of our participants.
- c. Noting that many of our graduates in both weaving and beauty parlor have not found a way to make a living using their skills, we are offering advanced courses in both subject areas and an opportunity to apply for start-up funding through our newly designed entrepreneurship fund.

**7. Have you revised your original objectives since the project began? If so, why? What are your new objectives?**

Our overall objectives remain the same. We continue to create a community of empowered women by teaching them to earn an income through skill development. We continue to teach women about their rights and provide them with counseling. However, we have made some adjustments to the training. After surveying our graduates, we discovered that many of our past participants were not earning an income with weaving. We decided to discontinue our 6-month weaving training and instead work with our weaving graduates to build their skills through an advanced weaving course in an effort to help them reach the next level. This will be combined with a program to provide graduates with looms and other supplies through an "entrepreneur fund" to help get businesses started. We are also making changes to the business course that



had previously been developed; it will focus less on marketing and more on financial skills in an effort to help all women understand the budgeting and planning in their work.

**8. What progress have you made toward achieving your objective? Please address each stated objective.**

We are tracking the results of our training via 'before and after' surveys that are conducted verbally and documented in each trainee's case file. Additionally, we plan to perform an annual income generation survey for all graduates who completed the program within the last three years.

The surveys seek to understand changes in economic status and empowerment. It specifically measures:

- Occupation / source of income
- Estimated monthly income
- Self-confidence
- Awareness of reproductive and maternal health topics
- Quality of relationships within family
- Quality of relationships outside of family
- Instances of domestic or verbal abuse
- Legal action taken

The results of these surveys will be provided to Dining for Women/Together Women Rise at the end of the grant period.

**9. Do you anticipate any difficulties in completing your project in the timeframe outlined in your proposal?**

Our proposal had a goal of training 90 women per year for 3 years, totalling 270 women. Despite being unable to provide training for 11 months, we remain on target to meet that goal. In addition, we believe that our training sessions will be well-targeted and especially beneficial to our beneficiaries due to the additional time spent on research and planning during 2020.

Again, the staff at BlinkNow and the Kopila Valley Women's Center want to thank Together Women Rise for your abiding support of the Women's Center. Your partnership helps to make possible our vision that every child in Nepal is safe, educated, and loved.

If you have further questions regarding your philanthropy, please let me know and I would be happy to answer them. We are very fortunate to have you as one of our most important partners.

Prepared by:

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