



**BlinkNow Foundation**

P.O. Box 453  
Mendham, NJ 07945

*info@blinknow.org*  
*blinknow.org*

**Together Women Rise  
Final Report July 2023  
Kopila Valley Women's Center**

**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: Ruth@blinknow.org +1-973-828-2955

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

The goal of the Kopila Valley Women's Center is to empower and uplift women in the Surkhet Valley, aiming to increase earning potential, sense of self-worth, and overall quality of life for women.

Our overarching goal is to enable women to support their families and break the cycles of violence and poverty. From this, we see more children in school, fewer early and child marriages, healthier family relationships, less childhood malnourishment, more economic growth and more — **when women are empowered, the entire community benefits.**

We aim to:

- create a community of empowered women
- teach women (income-generating) skills
- teach women how to earn an income
- educate women on their rights
- provide counseling
- empower women through empowerment training
- seek change in abusive relationships



@BlinkNow



BlinkNow



BlinkNowOrg

### 3. What was accomplished with this project?

#### Vocational and Literacy Training

The project has grown since starting small in 2013. With your foundational support, we have provided vocational training to 442 women and 33 men, and literacy training to 52 women. And counting! The chart below outlines the total number of graduates since inception.

Training type	Total number of graduates
Sewing	118
Weaving	87
Beauty Parlor (5 batches)	96
Electrical	40 (33 men + 7 women)
Doll and Cushion making	22
CSEB (compressed stabilized earth bricks) making	14 (ongoing)
Water purification	13
Literacy	52
<b>Total</b>	<b>442</b>

**Entrepreneurial Funds.** Since 2019, 20 women have received funds to start their own businesses using the Women's Center Business Development Fund. This includes:

- 12 beauty parlor graduates
- 4 weaving graduates
- 2 loans for women opening snack shops
- 2 funds for women opening general stores

#### Empowerment:



- 61% of women who were facing domestic violence at the time of joining the Women’s Center are now living violence-free after our training.
- 9% of women have taken action to exercise their legal rights after enrolling in training.
- 90% of all Women's Center graduates have reported improved confidence levels, decision-making, and coping with everyday problems after they participated in empowerment education

**4. 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*.**

Our original proposal anticipated training 90 women per year for three years in the areas of empowerment, job skills, and entrepreneurship. In our last report, we noted that the number of impacted women and girls overall was expected to be lower than our original estimate as a direct result of covid-related challenges.

We exceeded our goal in 2019 and were able to train 64 women in job skills and entrepreneurship and 31 in empowerment training (95 in total). However, in 2020 and 2021 our program operation was derailed due to the Coronavirus pandemic, and consequently, our target number of beneficiaries decreased. We could only train 20 women in job skills and entrepreneurship and 24 in empowerment training in 2020. In October 2021, Nepal started opening again and since then our programs and number of beneficiaries have been building back up to our intended levels.

See the chart below for detailed numbers.

Year	Vocational and short-term training	Empowerment training	Literacy
2019	64	31 (new women)	
2020	20	24 (new women)	
2021	36	36 (new women)	12



2022	56	110 (new women)	20
2023	122 (+17 men)	6 (new women)	20
Total	298 + 17 men	207 (new women in empowerment training)	52

**5. What challenges did you face in connecting with this project? How did you approach these challenges?**

The most significant challenges we faced with this project were related to the Covid-19 pandemic and its impacts. Closures and mandatory government lockdowns in 2020 and 2021 stalled our in-person programs and services, while further indirect impacts of the pandemic—such as loss of income, more violence in the home, children at home, etc— added more challenges that were further exacerbated by rising costs of living and food prices.

In light of these challenges, during the pandemic and immediately afterward, we shifted our goals to how **we can help women earn more income to feed themselves and their families** as best they can. In light of this, we implemented the following changes to our programming:

- We have shifted focus to ongoing learning: helping women secure on-the-job training and internships, including getting further accreditations (such as the CTVET)
- We conducted rapid market research to determine what training would be most impactful. As a result, we are now researching hospitality and bakery businesses as potential future projects.
- We offered some programs virtually as best we were able (considering connection issues and access) including a virtual group for trainees.
- We designed training for **short-term income generation activities** including tunnel farming and electrical training for school guardians, guardians of parlor trainees, and the wider community. Interest in tunnel farming was low (mainly due to cost of supplies), so we focused on electrical training. We have already run two rounds of electrical training. Now, we plan on providing materials for tunnel farming and starting that project.



- Other short-term training we have offered included CESB brick-making training and water purification training, both of which have opportunities for further training and future growth. Moreover, 22 women were trained with 1 month-long doll and cushion making as well as business skills.
- We also developed a **business development fund** in connection with our business training skills for women to kick-start their own businesses. Altogether 20 women have received start-up funds since 2021.
- We also now offer **advanced weaving and beauty parlor courses** to help prior graduates increase their skills and earn higher wages. Recently, 10 tailoring graduates passed a skill test at CTEVT (Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training), an authorized agency for skill testing in Nepal. This accreditation can contribute to improved employment opportunities and higher incomes.
- As reported earlier, we also designed a **new literacy program** for guardians of our Kopila Valley Students. Many women in our community are at a distinct disadvantage for jobs and opportunities because they were locked out of formal education during their youth, mainly due to the civil war (1996–2006) and gender discrimination practices. This left a significant number of women illiterate. We launched the literacy program in December 2021. Over eight weeks, women with low to no reading levels learned basic Nepali reading and writing, numbers, and math. **Until now we have provided 3 literacy training sessions of 1-2 months long. A total of 52 women have participated.**

**6. Is your organization or project situation different from the approved proposal? For example, a new executive director, significant staffing changes, loss of large funding, or other significant changes?**

Aside from growth and the challenges of the pandemic, our situation has not changed drastically. There have been no huge staffing changes, although our manager left in 2021 and our other staff member was promoted to coordinator. We lost our program director and the position remained vacant for a year before we hired our current program manager.

**7. What were the most important lessons learned?**

One of the most important lessons we learned was to **diversify our training** in terms of what was/is needed within the community and to conduct market research to help us determine training. This included offering **short-term income-generating** activities, **advanced skills training** for graduates to earn higher incomes and be more competitive in the field, and looking at **non-traditional training**, like the CSEB brick-making and electrical training.





**BlinkNow Foundation**

P.O. Box 453  
Mendham, NJ 07945

*info@blinknow.org*  
*blinknow.org*

We also learned that for sustainability and greater income potential, we needed to focus on **entrepreneurial skills and business development**, offering business training and business development funds and supporting women with business proposals. Up until 2020, the Women's Center provided job skills and entrepreneurship and empowerment training, but did not help new graduates to open their own businesses or get employed somewhere else. With the launch of the Business Start-up Fund, graduates have started opening their own businesses. Vocational skills training, in tandem with entrepreneurship skill training, can motivate and support our women to start their own businesses.

Another important lesson is the value of **collaborations and partnerships**. We learned that collaborating offers more employment opportunities for women and access to targeted populations, as well as encourages community, resource-sharing, support, and an ongoing network for graduates. Partnerships can also provide a space and network for selling goods, such as with the Women's Cooperative. We made partnerships with government organizations, local corporations Nepal Youth Foundation, Hairdressers without Borders, Smart Paani, Build Up Nepal, and more.

We learned that one key focus of our project should be on **developing and maintaining an alumni program base**. Alumni provide valuable feedback and evaluations that help us contribute to further development, encourage project sustainability, and create a network of support for vulnerable women.

A final important lesson we learned was that **informed choice** while identifying targeted beneficiaries, relevant sensitization, empowerment training, as well as periodic **follow-ups** could contribute to improved income, retention, and increased investment in children's education and nutrition.

## **8. What has changed with your organization as a result of this project?**

Since our work at the Women's Center, our organization is more aware and gives priority to vulnerable women in the community. This stretches across our projects and includes the school, our sustainability programming, our health and wellness clinic, and more. This reaches beyond our own organization — Kopila Valley is now well-known in the community and has an excellent reputation for working with vulnerable women and children and having a positive impact.

We have also developed a more holistic approach to supporting the women in our community and are intertwining programming between different program areas. One



@BlinkNow



BlinkNow



BlinkNowOrg

example is our Health and Wellness project, which in 2021 began a new Family Development Program (FDP) to help strengthen vulnerable families of select KVS students. The FDP assesses the vulnerability status of families and uses this to create action plans and find the right interventions. The Women's Center has facilitated several trainings and workshops for guardians referred by the FDP on topics including finance, empowerment, and good parenting skills. In another example, in terms of sustainability and farming, the PGS (participatory guarantee system) farmer's group is made up all of women, who are now providing food to KVS.

## **9. Describe the unexpected events, outcomes, and benefits of your project**

One unexpected event was that through our partnerships and collaborations, we discovered women were gaining skills and benefits. For example, our collaboration with Hair Dressers without Borders led to training provided by them for our women once a year. We are also now referring our graduates for additional skills by coordinating with other organizations. For example, one of our graduates of basic sewing training is learning garments training in Kathmandu.

The sewing programming produced some unexpected outcomes. At first, we offered basic sewing skills, and then we partnered with local sewing houses to train our women (instead of us), with the idea that they might then be employed. We eventually found that the cost of the training was high, and women needed to be further trained before being employed, so we reverted back to our own training program and expanded to offer advanced training. We were also given an unexpected donation of sewing machines, which helped us with resources for training.

Our newest training program for brick-making was an unexpected occurrence! We didn't plan on this training initially but reacted to an opportunity that arose.

- Collaboration & communication - empowering women
- more women are not using weaving skills (size of looms)

## **10. Did you change your strategy as a result of obstacles you encountered? How will you address these challenges in the future?**

As noted earlier, we changed our strategy somewhat to look more holistically at supporting women in the community through more diverse vocational and short-term training, more advanced training, and collaborations with other project areas.



**11. Approximately how many lives have been touched, directly and indirectly, through the project?**

More than 450 women have accessed and benefitted from our project directly. If we likely assume that these benefits reach 5 of each woman's close family members (children, spouse, parents, in-laws), then we can estimate that 2250 lives have been touched through the Women's Centre alone - although the number is likely much higher.

**12. What are the measurements used to monitor success and how was it measured? Be specific and include results.**

To monitor our programs and measure success and results we use home visits, phone surveys, and feedback from beneficiaries, stakeholders, and even donors.

We track the results of our training via 'before and after' surveys for beneficiaries that are conducted verbally and documented in each trainee's case file. Additionally, we aim 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
- Quality of work-improved training, OJT through monitoring and follow-ups, improved team environment, empowered team member/s

Some of our results include:

1. Among 190 graduates, 53% were employed after graduation.
2. Out of 190 graduates of beauty parlor, sewing, and weaving, 58.4% have increased their income level.
3. 90% of all Women's Center graduates have improved confidence levels, can make decisions, and can cope with everyday problems after they participated in different types of empowerment education (self-awareness, speech skills,





psychosocial problems, anxiety and depression, nutrition, stress management, awareness on women right and law).

**13. If the project is ongoing provide plans and expected results, including time frame**

This project is ongoing and we aim for it to continue until it is no longer needed in the community. We set annual goals, targets and plans each year. Below is our training action plan for 2023.

Action plan	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
Beautician													21
Literacy Training													20
Doll and Cushion making													22
Electrician													21 (4W 17M)
Advanced Tailoring													28
Block Making													14
Advanced Beautician													20
Housekeeping													20
Tunnel Farming													18
Other (Knot craft, bakery, etc)													20





**14. A detailed list of all expenses**

<b>BlinkNow Foundation Kopila Valley Women's Center</b>				
<b>Dining For Women 3 Year Grant</b>				
<b>Actual Expenditures</b>				
	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>Source of Funding</b>
Salaries and Wages	\$ 19,360	\$ 17,403	\$ 21,768	\$15k each year DFW Grant
Materials & Operating Expenses	262	881	4,348	DFW Grant
Training Expenses, Workshops	6,160	873	4,465	DFW Grant
Research & Best Practices	0	0	50	BN donor pipeline and grants
Business Curriculum Development	0	0	0	BN donor pipeline and grants
Food	3,931	781	2,280	DFW Grant
Rent	2,291	1,260	3,270	DFW Grant
Utilities, including Solar	415	145	221	BN donor pipeline and grants
Computers & Software	1,065	655	653	BN donor pipeline and grants
Travel	334	0	11	BN donor pipeline and grants
Community Support	128	0	14	BN donor pipeline and grants
Building Improvements, R&M	493	516	636	BN donor pipeline and grants
Furniture & Equipment	1,220	0	245	BN donor pipeline and grants
Vehicle Costs	1,811	0	0	BN donor pipeline and grants
<b>In Country Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 37,470</b>	<b>\$ 22,514</b>	<b>\$ 37,961</b>	
Women's Center Director, Women's Center Fellow Payroll Cost	\$ 22,748	\$ 25,047	\$ 23,877	BN donor pipeline and grants
Travel	4,652	2,571	1,922	BN donor pipeline and grants
Professional Development	180	0	0	BN donor pipeline and grants
Insurance and Other	3,140	2,476	3,707	BN donor pipeline and grants
<b>US Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 30,719</b>	<b>\$ 30,094</b>	<b>\$ 29,506</b>	
<b>Total Women's Center Actual Cost (A)</b>	<b>\$ 68,189</b>	<b>\$ 52,608</b>	<b>\$ 67,467</b>	
<b>Total Women's Center Budget (B)</b>	<b>\$ 69,985</b>	<b>\$ 71,547</b>	<b>\$ 73,830</b>	
(Under) Over Budget (A) - (B)	\$ (1,795)	\$ (18,939)	\$ (6,363)	
% (Under) Over Budget	-2.6%	-26.5%	-8.6%	
<b>WC Budget Lines part of DFW Grant</b>				
Salaries and Wages	\$ 15,000	\$ 15,000	\$ 15,000	\$15k each year DFW Grant
Materials & Operating Expenses	262	881	4,348	DFW Grant
Training Expenses, Workshops	6,160	873	4,465	DFW Grant
Food	3,931	781	2,280	DFW Grant
Rent	2,291	1,260	3,270	DFW Grant
<b>WC Expense For DFW Grant</b>	<b>\$ 27,644</b>	<b>\$ 18,795</b>	<b>\$ 29,363</b>	<b>\$ 75,802</b>
<b>DFW Grant Amount</b>	<b>\$ 25,000</b>	<b>\$ 25,000</b>	<b>\$ 25,000</b>	<b>\$ 75,000</b>
			<b>3 YR TOTAL</b>	





**BlinkNow Foundation**

P.O. Box 453  
Mendham, NJ 07945

*info@blinknow.org*  
*blinknow.org*

**15. Did this grant and relationship with Together Women Rise help you get other funding?**

We received a \$250 donation after Maggie spoke to the TWR book club about her memoir *Between the Mountain and the Sky*.



@BlinkNow



BlinkNow



BlinkNowOrg