



## COMMUNITY ACTION TREKS, NEPAL

### COMMUNITY BENEFIT AWARD

### FINALIST 2009

# CASE STUDY

**Community Action Nepal and Community Action Treks (CAN/CAT)** are a combination of a non-profit NGO and a for-profit tour operator that provides opportunities for trekkers in the remote Nepalese Himalayas, while maximising community benefits to the indigenous population. This includes tours to enjoy the mountains, wilderness and culture of the Nepalese Himalayas with minimum negative impact on the environment and indigenous population. At the same time, the tours generate financial support for the provision of community health, education and cultural preservation, as well as income-generation projects, for the communities that are economically and socially excluded from the main economic activity in Nepal.



CAN is a registered charity, initiated by British mountaineers and run by a Board of Trustees. CAT is a registered company run by three unsalaried directors. The charity is funded by donations, grants and fundraising activities.

The company has three specific objectives:

- To provide great trekking experiences for clients
- To maintain good working conditions for staff
- To transfer profits to CAN, the registered charity that is its partner.

Project results to date include the building of six community health posts, the ongoing funding of 16 nurses and medicines in remote areas where the government health provisions have been inadequate, the building of three high-altitude porter shelters and rescue posts, the ongoing funding of 17 teachers in addition to those allocated by the government to government schools in remote areas, and the creation of micro-enterprise income-generation projects among the communities where CAN/CAT operates. These activities have resulted in the improvement of community health, the raising of standards and attendance in government schools, the preservation of the environment and the preservation of culture in their project areas.

# CASE STUDY



To help develop a real sense of local ownership and ultimately management of a project, all communities must contribute at least 30% of the project cost. Most often this is in the form of in-kind local manpower. CAN/CAT's aim is to empower the different sectors of a community to take responsibility and manage basic but essential project facilities. All its project sites are situated above 2,400 metres where there is a high level of economic deprivation and where alternate fuels and also fresh fruits and vegetables are hard to come by. Through liaison with the local communities CAN/CAT has helped to stop the burning of trees in all its porter shelter localities above 5,000 metres (the burning of wild juniper has been leading to serious erosion and deforestation).

This has been replaced by funding from CAN/CAT for alternative fuels, including kerosene. In addition, it has provided hygienic sanitary and water facilities for the porters. And at lower altitudes it is supporting kitchen gardens for fresh vegetables and goat rearing to provide better nutrition.

CAN/CAT was specifically established to work with those communities that traditionally provide manpower for the porter and trekking industry. These ethnic groups, the Gurung, Tamang, Rai and Sherpa in particular, are some of the most under-represented ethnic groups in Nepal and, by geographical location, are also some of the most economically and socially excluded. All CAN/CAT staff come from these groups and are employed at all levels as nurses, teachers, porters and managers. All their projects are located in the traditional regions occupied by these groups. Their Nepali Executive Board is made up of representatives from these disadvantaged communities.

CAN/CAT is the only organisation which, in partnership with the International Porter Protection Group, has built three porter-shelter and rescue posts that are specifically designed to help the indigenous porters should they get into difficulties at high altitude.

As a result of its work, which has been documented in evaluation reports produced by the Nepali Social Welfare Council, other community organisations in Nepal have been able to learn how CAN/CAT successfully organises project teams, ongoing maintenance payments, fundraising and care for the environment and local people. This approach continues to bear fruit through the sharing of best practice examples.

