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Annual Report 2023

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| Message from the Team

I am very grateful to be a part of CHN. Working with different communities through CHN has exposed me to various knowledge and ideas. As a host member of Nagarkot Community Homestay, I am able to gain various knowledge and ideas that will be beneficial for both myself and the community. I have enjoyed working and being part of CHN. I am looking forward to more achievements with this team.

- Anup Bastola

After working with the Community Homestay Network team for a year, I have felt more confident and connected with the vision of promoting Nepal as a destination hub for community-led initiatives and responsible tourism. For a country like ours, whose main source of national income is reliant upon the tourism industry, people need to realize the impacts that climate change and over-tourism are having on different destinations. Hence, it feels good to be a part of something significant like CHN.

- Rubik Joshi

CHN has been like a second home for me these last six months. I enjoy the atmosphere and more importantly the work that I do. I think joining CHN was also a wake up call for me as I have started to see tourism as a promising industry. There are however a lot of areas that I can improve on and although I have a grumpy resting face, I really appreciate people coming to me and just talking about stuff that would create an environment of growth for both of us.

- Saurav Lamichhane

Six months in Community Homestay Network has been more than just a professional experience but, moreover learning and self growth experience. Learning from the CHN team members and different communities has broadened my vision towards tourism in Nepal. It's a great feeling to be a part of CHN, which is dedicated to promoting local community-based, responsible tourism over mainstream tourism.

- James Maharjan

With a pick up in the pace of the tourism industry in Nepal, it has been a hectic year for the whole team, who despite their own work have supported each other thoroughly. Being part of the team and working together to support the community is always a good part of this work.

I am looking forward to growing together with the team as well as myself as a professional in the upcoming year at CHN.

- **Melisa Rai**

Reflecting on 2023, it's been a journey of learning and implementation. I am grateful for the opportunities that came my way. I've had the chance to understand our communities, near and far truly. In the spirit of teamwork, we stood by each other, reinforcing the belief that we can achieve anything together. Notably, community-based tourism has flourished, showcasing the power of collective efforts. Here's to more growth, learning, and impactful collaborations in the coming year.

- **Sazza KC**

In 2023, my professional journey was marked by a series of enriching experiences. Eight community visits for capacity-building training exposed me to the intricacies of community-based tourism, offering valuable insights into their sustainable practices. Participation in renowned travel marts, ITB and WTM, significantly expanded our network, fostering new business opportunities for the Community Homestay Network (CHN). Additionally, active involvement with the Federation of Women Entrepreneurs in Nepal (FWEAN) provided a broader organizational perspective and contributed to both professional and personal growth. As the year concludes, I am eager to leverage these experiences for future success and meaningful contributions.

- **Poonam Gupta Shrestha**

As we bid farewell to 2023, I want to express my heartfelt thanks to all the communities within our network and our impact partners for their continuous support during this transformative period. I extend my deepest gratitude to our team for their dedication and hard work. In the face of numerous challenges, our team has shown great resilience, contributing to the gradual resurgence of tourism. I am immensely thankful for their efforts in promoting community homestays and enriching experiences. Our commitment to responsible tourism is a source of immense pride, and we aim to do this by curating even more immersive travel experiences in Nepal in the years to come.

- **Aayusha Prasain**

The experiences of 2023 within the Community Homestay Network have been truly enriching and insightful, brimming with opportunities for personal and professional growth. Engaging in capacity-building training programs across diverse communities, and venturing into rarely explored regions of the country, afforded me the privilege of both sharing my expertise and gaining invaluable new perspectives. These experiences have reshaped my understanding of community-based tourism, deepening my appreciation for its transformative power. Immersing myself in these communities provided first-hand insight into the profound impact of community-based tourism at the grassroots level. With the knowledge gained this year, I eagerly anticipate forging even stronger collaborations with communities and our team, striving for greater impact and connection in the year ahead.

- **Pushpa Thapa**

In 2023, we had the privilege of learning from various esteemed marketing and industry experts from around the world, enriching our experiences and equipping the team with valuable insights to drive our initiatives forward. I extend sincere thanks to our mentors, dedicated team, and supportive communities whose unwavering commitment and collaboration led to remarkable milestones and meaningful connections. As we move forward, our focus remains on strengthening partnerships for continued success.

- **Kaushal Shrestha**

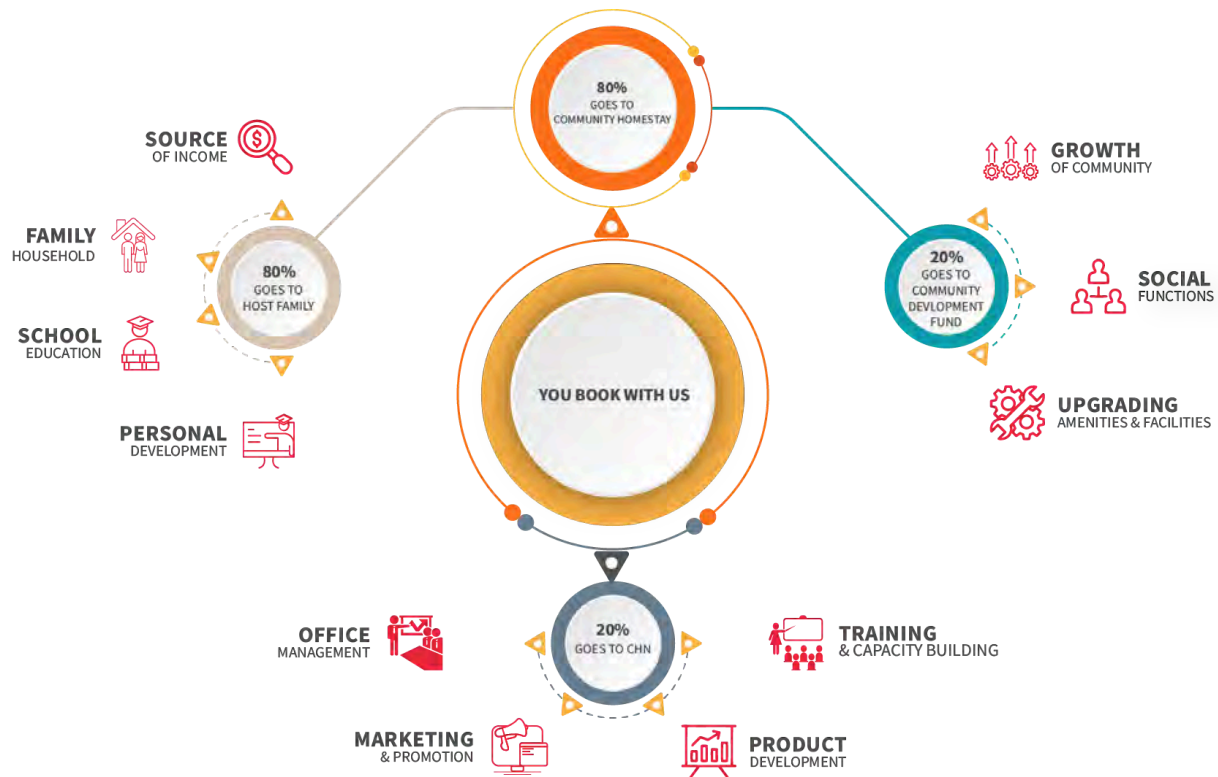


| About Us

Understanding the limited tourism benefits received by the rural indigenous communities due to the concentrated promotion of a few popular destinations, limited exposure to technology and marketing, [Community Homestay Network \(CHN\)](#) was established in 2017 to work with local communities to develop attractive tourism experiences through a value-chain approach. Intending to promote tourism that benefits locals and women directly, we work with communities to develop and upgrade their tourism products, train them on topics ranging from hygiene to hospitality, help them bring their products to a certain standard, and promote them on the global market through digital platforms. CHN is also unique in that it has an impact-oriented business model that is scalable to many destinations. We focus on partnering and collaborating with communities to develop and support tourism enterprises and destinations. We reinvest and provide technical support to develop/upgrade facilities and new experiences.

With the increasing number of community homestays in our network, we have revised our business model from 85-15 to [80-20](#) since 2022. As the 20% of the revenue that comes to CHN goes to office operation, training, and capacity building of the community homestays, we have reworked our business

model with the increase in the number of community homestays. More number of community homestays means an increased number of training and capacity-building programs.





| Highlights of the Year

Dhankuta: An Emerging Responsible Tourism Destination

As a part of a continued partnership with [International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development](#) (ICIMOD), we moved on to the second year of a pilot intervention to develop Dhankuta as a green, inclusive, and resilient destination through identifying and building tourism activities and attractions at Dhankuta, by initiating community homestay development programs in identified locations and community clusters.

Dhankuta, nestled in the Nibuwa Tankhwa Watershed Area of Eastern Nepal, took significant strides towards becoming an emerging and climate-resilient destination for responsible tourism. The region, rich in natural and cultural heritage, faced challenges, especially in terms of water scarcity due to climate change. To address these challenges, ICIMOD spearheaded a pilot intervention in collaboration with key stakeholders. The collaborative effort included Dhankuta Municipality, Chhathar Jorpati Rural



Municipality, Community Homestay Network (CHN), Smart Paani, Human Rights Social Awareness and Development Center (HUSADEC), and local communities.

As part of this initiative, a [familiarization trip](#) 'Discover Dhankuta and Mangsire Festival' was organized from November 28, 2023, to December 3, 2023. The trip involved thirteen participants, including tour operators and socially responsible content creators from Kathmandu. Its purpose was to promote responsible and community-based tourism on an international scale, highlighting the Aathpahariya community's culture, the unique Mangsire festival, and ongoing efforts in water resource regeneration.

The meticulously curated six-day itinerary showcased Dhankuta's hidden gems through heritage walks, visits to local parks

and spring shed management areas, and meaningful interactions with the community through stays at homestays. The Mangsire Festival added cultural depth to the experience, emphasizing the integrated watershed management initiative.

The journey concluded with a short hike, focusing on water-smart solutions and responsible tourism practices. Throughout the trip, collaborative efforts were brought to light to enhance Dhankuta's potential for sustainable tourism. This familiarization trip served as a call to action, urging support for destinations prioritizing environmental conservation, community empowerment, and cultural preservation. Preceding the event, various capacity-building programs and trail assessments were conducted, laying the foundation for a successful and impactful familiarization trip.

Investing in Communities

Throughout the past year, our team dedicated a substantial amount of time to building and strengthening the skills and capacities of communities within and beyond our network. With the invaluable support of various partners, we successfully elevated hospitality, sustainability, and marketing skills for registered and aspiring community homestays in thirteen communities spanning four out of seven provinces in Nepal. The efforts included training ten communities through the [USAID Trade and Competitiveness](#) Grant Activity, conducting destination development training and marketing in collaboration with ICIMOD, providing external consultations to two communities through the [Federation of Women Entrepreneurs Associations of Nepal](#) (FWEAN), and supporting two other communities by facilitating and coordinating with [PUM International](#) Senior Experts. The support aimed to train and capacitate the participants on various aspects like destination marketing, and waste management, among others.

The comprehensive training program for 15 communities directly benefited around 200 participants. Participants have acquired enhanced skills in tourism fundamentals, sustainability practices, hygiene management, and digital marketing, enabling them to offer improved services to travelers. This initiative has instilled a heightened awareness of hygiene and sustainability, leading to tangible improvements in



cleanliness, waste management, and responsible water usage. The promotion of gender equality and social inclusion has been a consistent and cross-cutting element, resulting in a more balanced participation of both genders in homestay management. Proficiency in digital marketing has empowered operators to effectively promote their services on platforms like Facebook and Instagram. The anticipated outcomes include improved overall management skills, enhanced community engagement, and increased guest satisfaction, with a specific focus on culinary excellence and sustainable practices, contributing significantly to responsible tourism development.

In addition to training within our network, we collaborated with organizations like FWEAN to enhance disaster resilience within women-led businesses, particularly homestay operators. FWEAN, established in 2003, serves as an umbrella organization advocating for the economic rights of women entrepreneurs across 57 districts in Nepal. Our team members were closely engaged in preparing and providing training in Bhimeshwor Municipality of Dolakha district and Rajapur Municipality of Bardiya district. The project aimed to empower women entrepreneurs with technical knowledge of homestay businesses, enhance disaster preparedness through Business Continuity Management strategies, and promote ecotourism resilience in the face of climate change. This collaboration envisions creating opportunities for women-led businesses to thrive and adapt intelligently to evolving challenges, fostering a paradigm shift towards active participation of women at all levels in socio-economic sectors. The initiative involved five-phase training sessions over five months, emphasizing an in-depth understanding of government policies, business analysis, and the development of effective business plans. Through this partnership, we strive to contribute to the holistic development of disaster-resilient women-led businesses in Dolakha and Bardiya Districts.



Presence in International Travel Markets

Our COO had the opportunity to participate in WTM London and the enriching Roadshow with [the Import Promotion Desk](#) (IPD) in Manchester and Newcastle. The five days of participation in one of the biggest travel markets gave us valuable opportunities, knowledge on global especially European Travel Trends, and the wonderful connections fostered during this period. As we celebrate growth, networking, and the embrace of every experience, we eagerly anticipate our upcoming participation in ITB Berlin. As part of their initiatives, IPD is actively involved in promoting Community Homestay Network with our COO representing them during a 3-day guided visit at the ITB 2024 trade fair in Berlin, Germany. CHN will participate as a co-exhibitor at the IPD joint pavilion, engage in business meetings, and benefit from pre-fair training workshops, with IPD covering certain associated costs to facilitate fruitful collaborations and market entry.





| Partnerships and Support

In our year-end report, we are pleased to highlight our dedicated efforts in collaboration with key organization that have significantly contributed to the development of Dhankuta as a prominent travel destination. Working closely with ICIMOD, our focus has been on implementing impactful initiatives, including Sensitization and Intensive Homestay Training, Trail Assessment, and support for Exposure Visits. These exposure visits have been instrumental in showcasing the cultural richness of the indigenous Aathpahariya Rai community, particularly during/through the Mangshire Festival. Since this is a comprehensive pilot work of 5 years, the scope and scale of ICIMOD's support and collaboration not only provided funds, but the technical guidance and knowledge exchange has strengthened the capacity of CHN's core team to plan-implement-manage responsible tourism in an integrated manner. The focus on GEDSI and water smart solution integration, and an opportunity to collaborate with multidisciplinary teams and partners (Dhankuta Municipality, Smart Paani, HUSADEC) has added a key skill set and know-how to our team. The Dhankuta Project has been instrumental in widening our understanding about sustainable community tourism keeping water security and social wellbeing (GEDSI) as key factors for building any responsible tourism destination.

Similarly, our partnership with [Planetterra](#) has been pivotal in fostering community development. Community-led initiatives such as the [Community Haat Bazaar](#), and Momo Making in Kirtipur among others have played a crucial role. The successful organization of the first-ever [Nepal Partners Meetup](#) signifies the initiation of a series of collaborative events aimed at furthering community development.

In addition to that, collaboration with [USAID Trade and Competitiveness](#) has been extensive and impactful, focusing on supporting community tourism through various grant activities. This includes the training of 10 communities in the Bagmati and Lumbini Province regions. To broaden our market reach, we have strategically hired sales representation in key European countries, including Germany, France, Denmark, the UK, Netherlands, and Spain. This strategic move aims to connect our organization with potential business agents, promoting responsible community tourism.

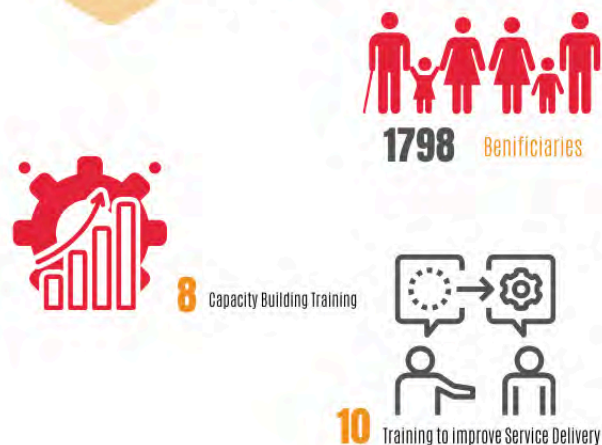
As part of our commitment to capacitate our team, [USAID Trade and Competitiveness](#) has facilitated Digital Marketing Training of Trainers (ToT) and Sales Team Capacity Training for our team members. Looking ahead, we are excited about the upcoming influencers and media journalists' engagement through Community Connect in May 2024. We anticipate that this initiative will provide valuable exposure, allowing us to showcase the diverse products and services offered through community tourism.

These collaborative efforts with ICIMOD, Planetterra, and USAID Trade and Competitiveness have strengthened our comprehensive approach to promoting sustainable and responsible tourism practices in the region. Lastly, the support we received from [PUM International](#) Senior Experts has been instrumental in enhancing various aspects of our operations. We have received valuable help from senior experts in marketing and sales, along with training support for two extra communities. They worked together smoothly to give us specific advice and training. This support has really improved how we operate, especially in important areas like promoting our destination. The knowledge and support from PUM International Senior Experts have been crucial in making CHN stronger, sticking to our commitment to sustainable practices, and positively impacting our communities.

Impact in Numbers



Overall value generated for the Communities





| Impact on Focus

Community Experiences

At CHN, we are dedicated to fostering unique and immersive travel experiences by collaborating with diverse communities and community initiatives. Our commitment to bringing the hidden gems in the light has resulted in the addition of eight distinctive experiences this year alone. From the enchanting celebration of Holi to the intricacies of [Paubha painting in Patan](#), our curated offerings aim not only to diversify the tourism product but also to make a positive impact on local communities.

These experiences go beyond the ordinary, empowering women, preserving traditional crafts, and safeguarding the ancient skills and knowledge of the land. Take, for instance, our [momo-making activity](#) in Kirtipur, where participants don't just learn the art of crafting momos; they engage with the women of the Kirtipur Community Homestay, gaining insights into their lives and traditional culinary practices. This activity, set against the picturesque backdrop of Hattiban Forest, unveils Kirtipur as a hidden treasure merely 7 kilometers from Kathmandu yet a world away from the conventional tourist circuit.

By choosing community-based experiences, travelers not only enjoy a more immersive journey but also contribute to the sustainable development of these communities. It's a chance to connect with local traditions, foster cultural exchange, and leave a positive footprint on the destinations explored. Our team is dedicated to highlighting initiatives that reflect our belief in the transformative power of travel that extends beyond sightseeing to create meaningful connections and lasting memories.





Looking Forward

A significant highlight for us in the year 2024 is the upcoming Community Connect where we are planning an exposure visit for travel writers, journalists, content creators, and travel industry experts. Taking place in May 2024, this initiative aims to bring key figures in the travel industry together to contribute to the success of community-led tourism in Nepal.

We are optimistic that the insights and influence of these industry leaders will not only inspire others but also play a crucial role in the promotion of community-led tourism initiatives. Community Connect is centered around amplifying the voices of rural communities, promoting tourism diversification, and mitigating the impact of over-tourism. The overarching goal is to establish an industry that not only enhances the lives of local residents but also leaves a positive, enduring impact. The anticipation of this exposure visit represents our collaborative effort to link influential figures in the travel industry with community-led tourism initiatives in Nepal. We aspire to create a more sustainable and enriching travel experience that benefits both visitors and local communities, aligning with our commitment to responsible and impactful tourism practices.



| Thank You!!

As we head into a new year, we want to extend a big thank you to all of our partners and supporters who have helped us create this impact at the community level. We are excited and committed to doing more in the coming year.

We started to host the travelers starting April 2022 after the pandemic and are glad to share that you have already helped us create an impact on more than 25 communities within our network this year with your continuous support. We hope to continue creating meaningful experiences with our big Nepali family and even expand it further.

We would like to express our deepest gratitude to our communities for your constant support and dedication towards supporting each other through the changing and challenging times. On our journey to establish this network of community-based tourism service providers, we are also thankful for your support for sharing your valuable knowledge and understanding with our other communities and partners.



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