

TIPLING TREKS

Develop The Great Himalayan Trail section between Langtang and Manaslu.
Project Owner: Mountain People

Responsible institution

- Mountain People
- Mountain People Norway,
c/o Thorstein Nøkleby, Burmavegen 38 2975 Vang i Valdres Norway.
- Organisation description: See www.mountain-people.org
- Helping mountain people in Nepal to help themselves.
- Registered organisation number Norway: Org.no.914795117.

Project description

- Location: Dhading District, Tipling VDC, trails and communities between Gatlang and Arkhet Bazar.
- Beneficiaries: lodges, home stays, guides, porters, farmers (selling produce), schools and aid posts, trekking agencies and tourists.
- Institutional arrangements/partners linkages:
 - Led by: Mountain People (officers in Norway and Nepal)
 - Local partners: Steps Foundation and KEEP
 - Supporting partner: Reis Nepal (Olav Myrholt) www.reisnepal.no

Project rationale

- The reason why:

The little-known, but important link between the two major trekking areas Langtang and Manaslu on the Great Himalayan Trail through Dhading District south of Ganesh Himal was severely disrupted by the earthquakes in April-May 2015.

The east-west GHT route, as well as the south-north routes were damaged by landslides, with trail infrastructure partly destroyed. Trekking tourism in the area all but ceased.

In order to support the recovery and strengthen the fragile local economy and regain jobs in the local tourism value chain Mountain People initiated Tipling Treks.

Objectives

1. Improving local tourism-based rural livelihoods in northern Dhading District.
2. Increase tourism visits to the Ganesh Himal section of GHT

Project goal

1. Re-joining and improving the trekking link between Langtang and Manaslu.
2. Highlight and market the area near Ganesh Himal as an alternative trekking area.
3. Increase rural incomes and diversify the local economy by improving visitor infrastructure, services and by increasing tourism volume.

Activities

1. Study and document the effect of the earthquake in relation to past tourist facilities, the damage done to these, and gain an overview of what is needed to improve present accommodation facilities, and define where new facilities are required, be they home stay, lodge and/or camping sites.
2. Establish a clear (5 year) plan to improve lodges, home home-stay and camping facilities on the route. Create a training program for lodge owners, guides and porters - and a follow up management of such services, to include a wide spectre of issues from signposting, hygiene, fixed price policy, menus etc.
3. Establish infrastructure in places and contexts where tourism contributes (or can) to improvement in schools, clinics and religious/cultural sites.
4. Try to secure finance for future upgrading of lodges, home stays, camps and cultural sites.
5. Follow up visits for base evaluations of requirements, needs identifications, implementation methods, establish agreements and revisit project goals and activities for potential re-orientation.

Brief report on phase 1 of original proposal

Visits

1. Autumn 2016. Field visit post-Dashain by Thorstein Nøkleby and Tor Walen.
12 days trek, with camp and lodge stays. going east to west.
Own guide and staff, plus 1 local porter.
Main goal: record present facilities, standard, and needs.
Write basic route description.
Completed whole traverse - report on lodges below.
2. Autumn 2016. Field visit by Mountain People volunteer, Paul Sanders, engineer.
Study Tipling Gumpa, to establish needs to A. Repair or B. Re-build.
Lodge/home stay with 1 local guide/porter.
Drawings/specifications on hand, but no budget estimates.
Outside our budget, but would be an added value to tourism in the area, plus of great importance to the local people, as both religious and community centre.
It was this Gumpa that Mountain People used as distribution centre for first 8 helicopter lifts 10 days after earthquake, plus one of three distribution centres for the 700 quilts that were delivered 6 months later. The local people obviously want an upgrade, but have to concentrate on re-building own houses, farming etc without any government assistance.
An added value would be a vibrant Gumpa would offset (balance) the strong Christian influence into the area. One Lay-lama has taken responsibility for all books, statues etc until the Gumpa can be secured. MP will make Paul drawings and photos are available for local authorities/others for possible future evaluation/action.
3. Autumn 2016. MP arranged visit by photo-journalist Johnny Haglund and Tor Johansen with main aim: gain overview of earthquake damage for popular magazine on his trip. Resulting, in free use of his photos for project, eventual guide book.
Own staff, with 1 local porter.
4. Autumn 2016. American camping group, led by Leo Murry.
Coordinated their findings with MP, going west to east, crossed whole area. All own staff.
This now means we have had groups going both E/W and W/E and exiting S.
5. Autumn 2016. Helicopter evacuation undertaken by MP, resulted in contact with Jesuit priest, who has great influence in the area (new church, own christian teachers in schools, earth quake aid and sponsoring of schooling outside the area etc). This lead to willingness to act as contact person in relation to Tipling Treks.
6. Spring 2017. David Durkan visited the area, part of Steps project. Celebrating International Women's day. Three Steps-sub groups had arranged 8 sketches on issues ranging from culture, early marriage, forced marriage, natal care, violence, gambling and alcohol. 500 public from five villages, that can only be described as the biggest festival the village had ever experienced.
7. Established ties with local authorities, educational and local buddhist leaders - together with the Jesuit priest, with aim to introduce Tipling Treks, as a concept in local development. Positive response, but, we see clearly that they have different priorities - i.e. getting life back to normal, where agriculture is the main activity. They are used to people and organisations coming with promises, and not returning!

Below is the basic survey of the tea houses and lodges along the way,
by Thorstein Nøkleby and Tor Walen, October/November 2016

Place: Gatlang

Lodge	Tamang Home
Appearance	Good
Rooms	6
Beds	15
Toilet	Good
Shower	None
Dining room	Basic
Menu	None
Hygiene	Bad
Electricity	Bad
WIFI	No
Sign / Easy to find	Yes
Comment	Long day 8 hours. There is a plan to establish a Guest house half way. Power-plant in the making a lot of heavy transport. Possible to take a Jeep but not recommend because of altitude.



Place: Som Dang Valley

Lodge	Som Dang Valley Guest House
Appearance	Good
Rooms	6
Beds	15
Toilet	Good
Shower	None
Dining room	Basic
Menu	None
Hygiene	Bad
Electricity	Bad
WIFI	No
Sign / Easy to find	Yes
Comment	Long day 8 hours. There is a plan to establish a Guest house half way. Power-plant in the making a lot of heavy transport. Possible to take a Jeep but not recommend because of altitude.



Place: Pangsang Pass

Lodge	Pangsang
Appearance	Basic
Rooms	3
Beds	12
Toilet	Bad
Shower	None
Dining room	Basic but Heated
Menu	None
Hygiene	Bad
Electricity	Solar
WIFI	No
Sign / Easy to find	None
Comment	Beautiful viewpoint. They have a horse.



Place: Tipling

Lodge	Tipling Dongden Devi Canteen and Guest House
Appearance	Bad
Rooms	1
Beds	6
Toilet	Bad
Shower	None
Dining room	Bad
Menu	None
Hygiene	Bad
Electricity	No
WIFI	No
Sign / Easy to find	Big Sign
Comment	Room for improvement (Because of bad condition in lodge we used tents)



Place: Borang

Lodge	Borang
Appearance	Bad
Rooms	2
Beds	4
Toilet	Bad
Shower	None
Dining room	Basic
Menu	None
Hygiene	Bad
Electricity	No
WIFI	No
Sign / Easy to find	None
Comment	Room for improvement



Place: Lapa

Lodge	Lapa
Appearance	Bad
Rooms	2
Beds	4
Toilet	Bad
Shower	None
Dining room	Basic
Menu	None
Hygiene	Bad
Electricity	No
WIFI	No
Sign / Easy to find	None
Comment	Room for improvement



Place: Mayangal Banjyang

Lodge

Appearance	Bad
Rooms	1
Beds	none
Toilet	Bad
Shower	None
Dining room	None
Menu	None
Hygiene	Bad
Electricity	No
WIFI	No
Sign / Easy to find	None
Comment	Tents, but one house for making food. Basic hut.



Place: Dunchet

Lodge	Dunchet
Appearance	Basic
Rooms	2
Beds	4
Toilet	Bad
Shower	None
Dining room	Basic
Menu	None
Hygiene	Bad
Electricity	No
WIFI	No
Sign / Easy to find	None
Comment	Only lodge in town.





Last day Walk to Soti Khola lunch and bus to Arkhet Bazar

Conclusions/observations

1. Earthquake damage was greater than we had expected, and the project more complex than first envisaged. Local people are concerned with re-building their homes and regaining agricultural production, more than with tourism. Tourism is viewed as being “vague” for the majority. Understandable, as many lost agricultural land, plus that fertile land close to house clusters is being used for temporary housing, and building of new houses. Those involved in tourism had in the main moved to Kathmandu, where they would be part time employed by agencies as porters for groups going to other areas.
2. Present facilities mean that trekking groups need to bring their own staff, some food and tents. Unless locals are employed in Kathmandu, or that they meet up at the beginning of the trek, then tourism will not contribute greatly to employment. Luxury foods are carried in, by staff from other areas, and basic food stuffs (mainly potatoes) are purchased locally. The latter not in large quantities, plus locals presently sell at a ‘low’ price, as they do not realise the value in relation to groups having to carry food in. Rice is carried in from lowland, sold to tourist groups, at a small “profit”, not taking into account that locals used time to carry it in. So, presently, groups entering the area contribute very little to the local economy, and put pressure on the area re use of wood for cooking, leaving of rubbish etc.
3. Way forward:
This is an interesting area, close to Kathmandu, for alternative trekking groups and individuals. With an increase in trekkers who do not bring in all their own food and equipment, and wood burning stoves, then the project is positive for the district.



Immediate action (2017)

- A. 4 page basic information brochure - autumn 2017.
- B. Open Tipling Treks information centre (e.g. Beni Handicrafts shop in Thamel), connected to local (from Tipling) trekking agencies in Kathmandu and/or freelance guides.
We are aware of two agencies, owned or run by people from Tipling, but who have concentrated on treks to Everest etc. Idea, give them the suggested route, and send people to them.
- C. Promote Tipling Treks via internet - simple: post info with link to brochure and agent info.
- D. Inform other agencies in Kathmandu that we have a program for Tipling.
- E. Reach agreement with Steps, so they offer culture program, dance and music, where income goes to the organisations work locally. A win-win model practiced in Gaurapani (Poon Hill).
- F. We (MP/Beni) keep a list of qualified guides (two at present from area), and suitable porters - and how to contact them.
- G. Establish a KEEP course in Tipling. Partly to upgrade standard in present lodges, increase knowledge around tourism and what tourists expect etc - but also to start a more informal discussion of how to reduce negative impact and improve the positive aspects.

Joint arguments for point A to E

1 day to start, away from the crowds, views of Langtang, Ganish Himal and Manaslu, local culture.
Low altitude.

Mountain People/Reis Nepal: Tipling Treks

We continue, and are in discussion with agencies, individuals, groups and still have intent to support up and coming lodges - BUT feel there is a need for more capital if we are to upgrade 4 lodges in 4 different areas.



Mountain People

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