

MOVING MOUNTAINS

Changing Lives

An International Development NGO

“The world is changing all around us. To be at the forefront of development we need to use innovation and knowledge to shape solutions to the present and future problems facing the world.

We are committed to helping people move mountains and giving them the power to prepare for what’s to come and change their lives for the better.” Founder, Gavin Bate

OUR VISION

“Empowered equitable relationships will ultimately drive the evolution of development”

We are driven by the belief that every person deserves to live life to its full potential. People who are educated and healthy and recognised as equal global citizens, have a greater opportunity to succeed and improve their quality of life.

OUR MISSION

“Growth doesn’t travel along a smooth trajectory, and what works in one place does not necessarily succeed in another. Neither does providing development ‘aid’ always help economic or social development. Sadly sometimes even the values of compassion and forgiveness can be overlooked.

The solutions ultimately begin with people, attitudes and relationships, and changing mindsets is sometimes as hard as moving a mountain. But nowadays in our connected world it has never been easier to challenge prejudice and aim for a democratic and non-prescriptive model.”

We are on a mission to help people enjoy equality and equal opportunity, and have a positive impact on society. Ultimately this begins with empowerment and we believe it is the main way in which people can achieve their potential and for communities to become the ‘architects of their own success’.

We want to work with local stakeholders to find sustainable solutions to social, environmental and economic challenges, and be part of a team where collaboration is the key. This is a process that takes years of trust and friendship, from which everyone benefits. Together we prepare people for a productive and economically secure life through schooling, entrepreneurship, and technology and life skills education.

Our mission is underpinned by duty to protect human rights and natural resources, and to promote social justice and equality for everyone.

OURVALUES

“Behind our work is the desire to have strong values of honesty and respect. Like any family, it’s the foundation for everything else that follows.”

Values are often presented in all sorts of visual ways like signposts, pie charts, diagrams and modern infographics. It’s easy to forget the meaning behind the pictures! The words below represent the attitude during our many meetings with communities, village elders and of course between all our staff in the different countries. It has a trickle-down effect to the children we support and to the volunteers who visit. It becomes the character of the whole organisation and what people remember the most. Our values are what we are most proud of, and they are the same now as when we first started.

Compassion - above all else, any organisation acting to ‘serve humanity’ has to show compassion to individuals. In Moving Mountains we don’t treat people anonymously; everybody has a story which deserves understanding and personal attention.

Integrity - we believe in acting with fairness and with a belief in doing things the right way.

Equality - helping people realise their long-term dreams and ambitions without discrimination starts with recognising people for their qualities and potential.

Collaboration - we always work in partnership with communities and have a ‘level playing field’ view where solutions are discussed and decided together. Local ownership is always uppermost in our minds, as is shared responsibility.

Confidence - everyone has dreams for a better life and control over their future, and just by giving people the confidence and self-esteem to believe in their potential is an important first step to working towards their ambitions.

Participation - nobody likes to feel as if they have to face the world alone, and we work hard to make Moving Mountains a ‘family’. Everyone has something to offer, and we promote volunteering as part of our identity and appeal.

Transparency and value for money - everything we do is discussed and agreed in partnership and we work together to monitor our impacts, justify our expenditure and report back to donors, supporters and stakeholders. We use a value or money approach throughout the project cycle to ensure economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

UKTRUSTEES

“I wanted Moving Mountains to stand for something both equitable and inspirational, and genuinely thoughtful in how it tackled issues. Choosing the right people to help me has been a journey in itself. Primarily they understood that Moving Mountains was never going to offer a glib response to complex questions, but a lifelong relationship to learn and find solutions together.”

Gavin Bate, Founder

Trustees: Gavin Bate (Chair), Christopher Little (Secretary), Andrew MacDonald (Treasurer), Dot King, Susan Birkett

Most of the UK Trustees have been involved since the inception of Moving Mountains and are there to provide strategic direction, governance, oversight and fund-raising for all the stakeholders. This includes the Trustees of ‘MM’ Kenya, ‘MM’ Nepal, ‘MM’ Ireland, and the Penan Koperasi in Borneo. They have been part of an evolving model, and they have many years of experience in the ‘third sector’.

Each ‘Moving Mountains’ organisation is a separate legal entity and registered NGO run by its own team of Trustees, but joined by the one vision of collaborative and equitable development.

We also work with a large number of other organisations, from committees to co-operatives and women’s groups, and in each case we establish a clear and positive working relationship based on shared values.

Hand Out or Leg Up? - How we move mountains

“We don’t want to fall into the trap of ‘handout aid’, our purpose is to create the circumstances in which individuals and communities can prosper, which includes generating wealth.

We achieve this with a ‘bottom up’ policy that starts with supporting the family, and enabling the people of the community to build the livelihoods they need. We have many heart-warming stories of families breaking out of the poverty cycle, communities turning their villages around, forests being regenerated and successful individuals gaining tertiary education, careers and living their ambitions.”

Not long after Moving Mountains began, we started to equip our partners in Kenya and Nepal and later in Borneo with the means to set up their own local Moving Mountains NGO. This was an integral part of the model and it has been a big part of our success. Now all of the programmes and projects are managed locally. It was always important that a shared responsibility and a ‘start small, think big’ mentality would allow us to progress organically over a long period, and this has generated a high level of trust and joint accountability.

Getting it ‘right’

Getting the relationship between charity and beneficiary ‘right’ is critical to us, we don’t want any assistance to be seen as a handout, not do we want money to be the only factor involved. We are trying to enable and promote independence of thought, self belief and accountability. Therefore we spend a lot of time assessing the consequences of our actions, which is only right when someone’s livelihood is in question. These are big issues for us, and it is vital that we question our work all the time. Our strap line claims to change lives and that is not a marketing line; we try very hard to ensure our work is not misunderstood and has a positive long term impact. We do this by collaborating all of the time, taking advice, working with the right people and by creating ‘authorising environments’ where people manage their own projects and programmes.

MM UK and MM Ireland fund the programmes and projects (employment, housing, education, healthcare, social welfare and personal development) mostly through direct fundraising and the efforts of a small army of supporters and volunteers, but the money is accompanied by mentoring, counselling and a ‘shoulder to cry on’ if necessary. Money is just part of the solution, especially when children are involved, and we work hard to make sure that other values are instilled into the MM family spirit such as compassion and of course equality.

Personal Development – delivering Education, Vocation, Innovation

One of our objectives as a charity is to employ people who are trained and experienced in a wide range of skills, and therefore our daily 'work' is funding teachers, medical personnel and counsellors who teach life skills and act as mentors to young people and their families. We believe that just giving money to children for school fees is not nearly enough, it has to be combined with teaching essential values like parenting, conflict resolution, personal responsibility and work ethic, career training and planning, job interview skills, primary and mental health and alcohol or drug abuse. Essential to our ethos is that we adopt a holistic view to development and we would far rather do a better 'job' with fewer beneficiaries. The relationships are based on love and concern, and our priority is quality of care, not quantity.

Another of our objectives is to promote personal development and this enables us to operate exchanges and run placements schemes that give people the chance to work with an NGO and in many cases, find a focus in life. Many of our beneficiaries in Kenya and Nepal have gone on to become professionals and have had the chance to travel widely. Many of the young people who have come out with us on school trips have ended up choosing international relations and development as their career.

Social enterprise – the business case for development

When it comes to projects and communities, we view our money as an investment and our role as being one stakeholder in a long term relationship with aims and goals just like any corporate arrangement. Villagers and communities make a sacrifice too, but it is more often in the form of land, skills and time. Integral to the principle of development is the need to render ourselves unnecessary so that people can break out of poverty through business and revenue, and many of these investments are ideas in social entrepreneurship. Clearly, building a school has the main aim of educating children, but making that school financially sustainable without continued funding and reliance is just as big a challenge. Similarly, putting in hydro electricity in a mountain village on the face of it provides power, but the practical benefits include driving businesses which put profit into a village co-operative. We have many stories like this and it is heart warming to see how one investment has led to a whole string of successful enterprises which have enabled us to walk away and leave a place able to develop itself. We can then use the same model in another village.

What we have seen is that with the correct support and clear guidelines, micro-funding and micro-lending have become successful social enterprises, and over time they have spawned spin-offs that we never imagined. Our catalyst, however small, is enough to ignite a natural entrepreneurial ability which, spurred on by a hunger for progress and stability, has been truly inspirational. This method of using business and enterprise as the catalyst for breaking out of the poverty cycle is the current thinking in the post-2015 MDG world. In fact the Millennium Development Goals are being renamed the Sustainable Development Goals.

Sustainable Conservation projects that are innovative and manageable

Another objective in our trust deed is the protection of natural resources and ecosystems, and we have worked hard to learn about the technicalities of difficult tasks like reforestation and siculture in remote areas. Again, understanding sustainable solutions to complex issues relating to climate change and air pollution takes knowledge, time and expertise.

We fund that expertise in order to enable the local people to understand the problems and the technology which might help provide the solution. In the case of our forest enrichment project in Sarawak, we then take practical steps to employ people to collect seeds and eventually transpose saplings into logged areas, ensuring the correct variety of plants and trees. We also invest in technology which helps to prevent deforestation, for example in Nepal where we buy and instal specially designed cooking stoves that use less wood and produce no smoke in the home. Again, we find that a holistic and collaborative approach to complex issues, without imposing solutions from afar, is the best way forward.

Volunteering and global citizenship

This may be a hackneyed phrase but done correctly volunteerism adds value to the economic sector. Volunteers working under local leadership perform well if there is proper training and properly defined expectations on all sides, and even short term volunteering works if the individual effort contributes to a specified long term aim. We prepare people to integrate into local structures and adopt our ethos of collaboration and respected relationships. We measure change in the local area and volunteers understand that their presence is a part of that change. Our volunteers become part of our work, by engaging in data collection and helping us evaluate the work.

The future really does demand participation and these cultural exchanges give people advantages in many ways. The internet has allowed a virtual interconnectedness but people still crave the authenticity of personal experience, a chance to be part of a community. We have so many stories of lives being changed for the better simply by meeting someone and sharing thoughts and aspirations for the future, sometimes that's all it takes. In the UK and Ireland, many people have discovered their passions and even their future vocation by taking part in our programmes, and for others the long road from a life in the slums to university is one that is made real through this exchange.

Personal Development Through International Development – Trips to get involved with our work

“There is a lot of controversy and debate about volunteering, yet there will always be a desire in people to help others. The issue revolves around how the relationship and attitudes of the visitor and host are managed, and the integrity of what is being done in the name of development. Our experience is that by connecting people in a good way we have enriched lives.

Let’s get away from the idea that only the ‘haves’ can give something of value to the ‘have nots’. Our experience has been that everyone has something to give, and nobody ever got rich just on money alone.”

It doesn’t take much to have an impact on the life of another person. Leading by example and teaching children values and morals can make as much of an impact as any amount of money. Volunteering and participating builds skills, experience and confidence. It heightens self-awareness and self-esteem and it promotes an intercultural exchange which helps develop ideas about our place in the world.

The important words to add here are “for everybody”. We’re not making any claims to save the world, but we do believe that a combination of travel, learning and sharing does change attitudes and empower people. The right values have to be in place to create an environment where doors are opened in people’s minds and we have worked very hard to achieve this.

We call our trips the Volunteering & Educational Trips, which is a bit of a mouthful, but the simple aim is to create learning experiences that encourage exploration and innovation. It’s not only for the well-off and it’s not a luxury and it doesn’t deny someone else of a job. It is inclusive and we do select and prepare people properly, and we would love people to stay involved with Moving Mountains afterwards!

As a charity our main administrative costs are covered by our partner Adventure Alternative, but we rarely apply any grants and therefore the money from volunteers, schools, gaps and visiting groups really does enable us to carry out our work. Historically we have always found that once people visit and experience our ‘model’ of development, they tend to get very involved and become part of the fundraising effort. So, we ask that groups and volunteers achieve a minimum donation for their trip, and hopefully stay on for the long term.

Options for Trips with Moving Mountains

SCHOOLS & COLLEGES

Introduction to the work of a development NGO on trips that last three to four weeks. With lots of support and guidance, these trips are an enriching personal experience for young people and a lot of fun. Dates are flexible to fit in with school holidays and we work with teachers and parents to build the trip together.

'GAP' ADVENTURES

A longer, more in-depth look at the work of a development organisation with more travelling and working with our staff on the projects. A high level of interaction in-country helps people think of what being an engaged 'global citizen' means.

UNIVERSITIES

University groups and societies contribute to our work by going on specific volunteering trips which help the charity evaluate its work and carry out specific tasks such as free medical 'camps' or tree planting.

VOLUNTEERING

Volunteering is for individuals or pairs with a real interest in international development. The trip includes teaching, coaching, counselling and mentoring and working with our field workers and staff for up to three months.

GROUP PROJECTS

Getting involved with our building projects allow you to work with our staff and the local communities, and gain direct experience of innovative technologies and development project interventions.

Fundraising Goals and paying for a trip

When somebody signs up to one of our trips we separate the costs clearly into Trip Fee and Fundraising Aim. That means there are always two payments to make to two different organisations.

Trip Fee – This is a payment to the travel company Adventure Alternative for the logistics like transport, accommodation, activities and staffing, plus the organisation of your trip and the back-up while you are in-country. A breakdown is provided on the invoice.

Fundraising Aim – This is a donation to Moving Mountains which contributes directly to the area of work you will visit and also helps pay our field workers, teachers, community health workers, counsellors and staff.

We are flexible about arrangements like dates, timings, ratios and group types, but we ask that you respect the ethic of Moving Mountains when it comes to the What and the How of your visit. Our priority is as much the benefit to the host community as your personal experience.

Our Volunteering Ethos – A model of fair trade volunteering

“There is a lot of debate about volunteering, yet there will always be a desire in people to help others. The issue revolves around how the relationship and attitudes of the visitor and host are managed, and the integrity of what is being done in the name of development. Our experience is that by connecting people in a good way we have enriched lives.”

‘Volunteering’ means donating your time and services for free. Helping yourself while helping others is great; it helps you make new friends, it increases your social and relationship skills, it increases self-confidence and self-esteem and general enjoyment of life. It helps prevent social isolation and helping someone else is a great way of finding out that yes, you have something to offer! And there are plenty of studies to provide that the more we volunteer, the happier we are.

But volunteering often involves visiting people whose rights have been abused or have had their rights limited or even removed. For example, it is a shock to meet people who don’t have access to basic rights like a proper standard of living or an education. Those people undeniably need more ‘help’ than somebody whose basic human rights are valued and upheld. Our experience is that simply by meeting someone from another country and spending time together, and realising that underneath it all we’re all the same, those people get the empowerment and motivation to change their circumstances. These interactions are very powerful and emotional for all parties, and over the years we’ve seen some incredible stories come out of those visits.

The trick is to approach the visit in a spirit of equality, and understand that the ‘beneficiary’ of any visit is as much the visitor as it is the host. All the benefits of self-confidence, self-esteem and happiness apply to everyone in the equation.

The main principle of volunteering should be humanity and people making a difference. In Moving Mountains our ethos is that there should be something for everybody who has something to offer. Every person who contributes brings something of them to the sense of community good. We place people according to their interests and skills, but also according to the specific needs of the charity in any particular area. We also work with other development organisations and we don’t adopt an isolationist mentality. Our ethos is very much about long term sustainability and co-building programmes, so and of the visiting groups or volunteers end up being part of a team and understanding their role in the bigger picture. We simply don’t take people just for the sake of it.

Avoiding the Pitfalls – prioritising the programmes

“There is an argument that volunteering is used to market and commercial tours using emotionally driven messages and packaging. Understandably, it becomes an emotionally charged subject if people feel they have been exploited and that the project or programme has somehow been ‘used’ for nothing other than commercial gain.

Frankly, it all comes back to the values behind and the priority given to the development aim. Any activity like this has to offer equal priority to both personal development and to the international development aim. Give people transparency, and follow a ‘fair trade volunteering’ principle with clear values and aims, and you’re more likely to succeed.”

One of the biggest pitfalls of volunteering today is that the aim of personal development for the visitor overshadows the aims of the international development organisation. We believe that the objectives of the charity should determine the nature of any volunteering visit, and that the local stakeholders should be involved in deciding the nature of any visit and how the benefits should be shared out.

In Moving Mountains every visit by any group or individual is assessed and decided by the local Moving Mountains NGO and by the stakeholders, for example the parent’s committee or co-operative or educational authority. Also, every visitor raises an amount of money which is collected by the local NGO and used to help fund that particular programme or project, and also contribute towards other programme costs that the NGO has (not administrative costs, but costs like employing teachers and counsellors and field workers).

Additionally, every visitor is required to learn about the programme they are visiting, and expected to communicate with the local Moving Mountains staff before they leave home. There are rules for people visiting schools, children’s homes, villages and project areas, which reflect country laws on child protection and a healthy dose of respect.

We are founding members of Fair Trade Volunteering which provides clear guidelines on how organisations should prioritise and manage their volunteering programmes with the benefit of the host as important as the personal development of the visitor.

Ultimately it’s about being fair and honest, and not sending people out on irrelevant trips which do nothing for the host and make false claims to the visitor. We have been working hard at making sure our trips have integrity and meaning for a long time now, and all of our visitors understand that they are part of a long term development aim.

Adventure Alternative – our provider and what they do for MM

“The big issues still capture the imagination – the fight against poverty and inequality, and amongst providers the issues are around sustainability and fair trade.”

As a charity we can't 'run' trips because we are not a tour operator and our expertise is in development. Adventure Alternative is the provider for all trips that involve visitors like groups or volunteers.

In the same way that there are different Moving Mountains organisations, all legally set up to be autonomous but operate from the same spirit of integrity and ethos, there are also separate Adventure Alternative companies in Kenya, Tanzania, Russia, Borneo and Nepal. Each one supports its local Moving Mountains by covering the administrative costs such as office rent, telephone, stationery and vehicles.

Every Adventure Alternative employee has to spend a proportion of time on Moving Mountains, and in fact a lot of the employees were once beneficiaries of the charity. When you visit, you will come across many stories of young people who were given a foothold by the charity, and are now given a job by the company. Jobs means money and money generally means a better quality of life, certainly for the children of those employees who will never have to suffer the same privation that their parents did.

Not only that but AA generates tourism in areas where MM works, bringing revenue and jobs and business. This is particularly true in Nepal, where the villages we work in have become busy places for tourists to visit. This has promoted a strong attitude of entrepreneurship.

This joint approach of capital investment from the charity, plus employment and a 'route to market' from the company has been very successful and some of the stories are really inspirational!

Legality of running trips

Any trip abroad which you pay for, whether it's volunteering or trekking or a beach holiday, falls under the legal remit of the European Travel Directive and the UK Package Travel Regulations. Any organisation that provides transport, accommodation, flights or activities must comply with the rules that are there to protect the consumer. That includes having liability insurance, insolvency bonding, risk assessments and threat analyses. Adventure Alternative has these and we encourage you to examine all the paperwork, which we keep on cloud for easy sharing.

So, even though it's volunteering and it seems like it's not a holiday in the traditional sense of the word, it's actually a travel package which has strict legal requirements for any organisation to follow.

Evaluating Our Work – Making it Count

“Sound financial management in charities matters, and understanding how charities spend their money is a key driver of public trust.

Every penny has to count and be accounted for, and all the projects and programmes should be evaluated and justified and have a purpose that complies with the objectives of the charity. In effect the same principles of auditing which are required for corporate bodies should apply to charitable organisations.”

In Moving Mountains the Trustees have the confidence to take full collective responsibility for managing their charity’s resources and justify the expenditure by providing clear evidence of need. They are not distant to the operations of each ‘MM’ in Kenya, Nepal and Borneo, but involved on a daily basis with every detail from proposals to cash flow to financial reporting.

Expenditures are discussed on a continual basis with each of the regional Trustees and all the information is held on ‘cloud’ so that everyone has access to see and edit documents. Our communication is quite exceptional and a big part of our success in managing funds safely.

We take the view that our money is an investment, whether in community infrastructure or someone’s future, and that this money has to be earned, evaluated and accounted for, or else it stops. We try not to use the word ‘aid’ because of its associations with ‘free’ money and inefficient support, and we ensure that handing out money is just a part of the solution to any problem. Every stakeholder has to contribute something, whether it be land or time or commitment and we ensure that our role is not seen as the most important one.

Impact Maps

For all our work we create ‘impact maps’ which are technical documents to help us evaluate our ‘theory of change’ which is a principle of progressive reporting. We need to ask ourselves questions like what is the value of our work, what would happen if we stopped our work, what are the developmental goals and the specific aims of the programme? Too many charities forget that one of the roles of development is to render itself unnecessary, so we also look at the sustainability of our work into the future.

We publish these impact maps and evaluation cycles and we show how our model of volunteering actually contributes to the sustainability of our work both quantitatively and qualitatively.

Data Collection

Like any 'investment' we need to show that work we do and the money we put in actually achieves something, and we do this by collecting data about every project and programme. Our MM partners do this, but so do the Trustees and also the volunteers. In fact the volunteers play a large part in helping us with this ongoing task.

Data is collected in a number of ways which are relevant and sympathetic to the communities and area being visited. Some of it is handwritten on forms, some of it is online, some video and photographic.

Quantitative data is slightly easier – number of children in school before and after rehabilitation of school buildings, number of saplings planted in logged areas of jungle, number of people benefitting from fresh water etc. Qualitative data is harder to collect and understand – there are different meanings to the phrase 'quality of life' for example, and we need to be careful not to impose foreign concepts of happiness, achievement, progress and so on to people whose perception of life is different. Our local MM organisations help us a lot – they know exactly what it means to feel secure, stable, happy or inspired.

The volunteers who come out often find themselves learning about these differences in life values because we ask them to get involved with our staff in collecting data and helping us evaluate our work.

We believe very strongly that it's not enough as a charity to simply say that we want to 'do good', we have to have the knowledge and expertise and experience to manage complex developmental issues. We need to interact with partners who can help us make the impact of our work much bigger, instead of acting in an insular way thinking 'we know best'. For example all our structural project work in Kenya involves local education or health authorities, local chiefs and village committees, the ministry of works and the local MP. Proposals go through an in-depth process before being accepted by everyone.

The Trustees have all gone through training about charity impact assessment reporting, project strategy, good governance and financial management. We spend time researching about progressive methodology and constantly updating the practises and governance of Moving Mountains, it all contributes to this charity being at the cutting edge of development and the volunteering debate.

MOVINGMOUNTAINSKENYA

An International NGO in Kenya

“If you ever want to see what ‘international development’ means on the ground, come to Kenya and meet the ‘family’. You will see what believing in somebody can do. There are no theories to describe it; it’s just about looking beyond the stereotypes and the prejudices.”

Since those small beginnings, MM Kenya has become a successful NGO founded upon/supported by/working in partnership with a large grassroots network of local committees, authorities, experts and villages. Visitors find themselves absorbed into this social and enjoyable process, learning that success is down to a collaborative process of developing ideas with many different stakeholders, and maintaining essential principles of integrity.

The work is devoted to the classic areas of education, health, employment, sport, social welfare and capital projects for schools, clinics and children’s homes.

A common criticism of ‘aid’ (rightly so) is that projects last a few years and then fail due to lack of funding, ownership and interest. This has never happened with any of the MM Kenya projects. Why? Because it is the Kenyan Trustees who implement and manage them, and they don’t make the mistakes when it comes to ensuring shared responsibility and accountability. Also, the support has an agreement with conditions, a beginning and an end, and a reason for providing it in the first place.

Kenya Trustees

Chair – Gilbert Njeru

Secretary – Joseph Mungai

Treasurer – Francis Kioni

Areas of Work

Schools

Education

Children’s Homes and Rescue Centres

Clinics

Social Welfare

Sport

The ‘Solio’ Project

Employment

Working Principles for running the NGO in Kenya

- Development doesn't stop. Beneficiaries are assisted until they become independent and/or employed, and they are recognised for their individual rights. We are inclusive and we promote the support of families, schools and communities around the life of a child.
- Our work is transparent, measurable, accountable and altruistic. We aim to be economic, efficient, effective and equitable in our use of funds and ensure value for money at all stages of the project cycle.
- We are a dedicated, honest team of people who are trained and experienced in NGO management, and we receive training in management, children's rights and good governance.
- We involve donors and try to teach visitors the value of a progressive developmental process.
- We provide social welfare in an inclusive way in areas of poverty and disadvantage, actively combining this work with interventions to promote education, training, employment and long-term earning capacity.
- We make Kenyans the architects of their own development through co-operatives and community committees, who we teach and mentor about how to run community-led organisations.
- We try to render ourselves unnecessary in the long term as far as possible and do not build a relationship of dependency with beneficiaries or communities.

Document Library

Annual Reports
Education Policy
Staff certificates

Objectives and Principles
Medical Policy

Domestic Support Policy
MMK NGO Certificate

MOVING MOUNTAINS NEPAL

An International NGO in Nepal

"A chance meeting over twenty years ago between Gavin and a young Sherpa working as a porter led to a friendship that has resulted in a complete turnaround of several villages in the Himalaya.

If you visit Bumburi and Bupsa now you will see full schools, families bringing up their children, new monasteries, hydro-electric power plants, profitable businesses putting money into a well run co-operative and people who have worked together to create a thriving community in this beautiful part of the world. There is an entrepreneurial spirit here that only needed investment and a catalyst to trigger a turnaround which has become an inspirational tale."

The problems facing mountain communities in Nepal are unique to that region, where remoteness and terrain mean that there is no national grid for power for example, and business struggle to succeed in a harsh environment. This rural life is quite often subsistent and facilities like education and health are difficult to reach. Government schools and clinics can cover huge areas and historically the country has been ravaged by the effects of conflict.

All of the projects have succeeded and gone on to provide an income for the villages and enabled them to progress by themselves. The spirit of collaboration and strategic planning for the future has been managed in large part by Ang Chhongba Sherpa who himself is a classic example of achievement, having started off by walking for two weeks to the nearest school to become educated, worked as a porter and is now manager of a franchise in New York State. His three children grew up in the village of Bumburi, and are now all in American universities. Every year he visits the projects in the villages where he comes from and every day he keeps in touch with the committees by skype.

MM Nepal has supported other young people through tertiary level education, and the communities continue to grow as the villages become more popular than the capital city as a place to bring up a family.

Nepal Trustees

Chair – Ang Chhongba Sherpa
Board Member –Sarasoti Sherpa

Secretary – Pasang Tendi Sherpa
Board Member –Lakhpa Sherpa

Treasurer – Gelgen Sherpa
Board Member – Norbu Sherpa

Areas of Work

Schools	Education	Clinic	Social Entrepreneurship	Monasteries
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MOVING MOUNTAINS BORNEO

"As nomadic hunter-gatherers, we Penan people have been roaming the rainforests of the Upper Baram region for centuries. Even though we have settled down and started a life as farmers since the late 1950s, we still depend on the forests for our food supply, for raw materials such as rattan for handicrafts, for medicinal plants and for other jungle products. Our entire cultural heritage is in the forest and needs to be preserved for future generations." Penan Elder, Sarawak

Our relationship with the Penan people who live in the jungles of Sarawak is formalised through an agreement with their community based organisation called 'Koperasi Pelancongan Penan Selungo' which translates as Community Operation Programme of the Penan of the Upper Selungo river. Locally however, the Penan villagers call themselves 'Keepers of the Forest'. Our role is to assist them.

We are currently the only organisation providing funding in the 163,000 hectare Penan Peace Park for the collection of thousands of seeds every year. We transplant 10 - 15,000 saplings every year to areas that have been logged or cleared for palm oil plantations and we are providing access to advocacy and support for expert education on forest projects, and we are promoting low impact tourism to the region.

The programme has generated a great sense of pride and realization that the programme has long term benefits both financially and culturally, and in the longer term the old and new forests will be recognised on a global level for their carbon worth. There is often a great deal of confusion about forest enrichment projects, but we have adopted our 'start small, think big' philosophy so that no money is wasted in the initial years.

The long term aim is at least fifteen years, and we aim to increase our funding of the tree planting and seed collecting in order to make a significant impact on the cleared areas of forest. We aim also to help provide access to niche tourism which will help challenge people's perceptions and stereotypes of indigenous people and the diminishing environment in which they live (we would describe this as 'conscious travel'). This will mean accepting the realities of supply and demand, and playing a role in the complex debate around sustainable futures for both the forest and the tribes that live in them. As usual there is no simple answer but our relationship with the Penan People is about each of us developing views and solutions.

We want to avoid the cliché of a carbon offset project, and avoid concentrating solely on carbon credits. Clearly there is a need for quantitative data to justify the expenditure, but the qualitative feedback is just as important. Deforestation is easy to see, but we also need to be sure of the positive impact of our work in the coming decades.