

Celebrating 5 Years of
Community Tourism



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Message from the CHN team

The past year has been an amazing learning experience to thrive despite the challenges, uncertainties and changes. Through these changes and challenges, I have understood the power of a team even more. The never-ending dedication of the team to connect, support and collaborate with the communities has been the highlight of the year. I am grateful to have this space and meaningful partnerships that support our work to amplify the voices of rural communities while promoting responsible and sustainable positions.

- **Aayusha Prasain (Chief Executive Officer)**

I joined CHN amid the pandemic in early 2021. It was quite fascinating that this team of energetic and optimistic people were striving to work with the communities despite all the hardships. It was indeed the determination and optimism in my team that has always pushed me to have a positive outlook and strive to thrive.

- **Kanchan Shrestha (Project Lead)**

Although the tourism industry has been on standstill for more than 20 months, despite all the uncertainties the pandemic also brought an opportunity to reflect back on our past actions. This reflection has further fueled up the motivation of our team towards the envisioned goal of developing Nepal as a community-based tourism destination.

- **Bikal Khanal (Product Development Expert)**

It's an incredible experience to be a part of the Community Homestay Network. The company, even at this time of uncertainty, has stood by its principle and continued its effort to create new opportunities for the rural communities in Nepal. At the same time, it is also inspiring to see the communities in our network become resilient and put their effort to build back better, in the hopes of providing better experiences for the guest when tourism revives. It is also an absolute joy to work with the team here, always supporting each other and growing together.

- **Kaushal Shrestha (Operations and Planning)**

The most important thing that kept me highly motivated on accomplishing my work during the pandemic was our strong teamwork. Even during the tough times, the team did not leave anybody behind. We learnt together, worked together & grew/still growing together.

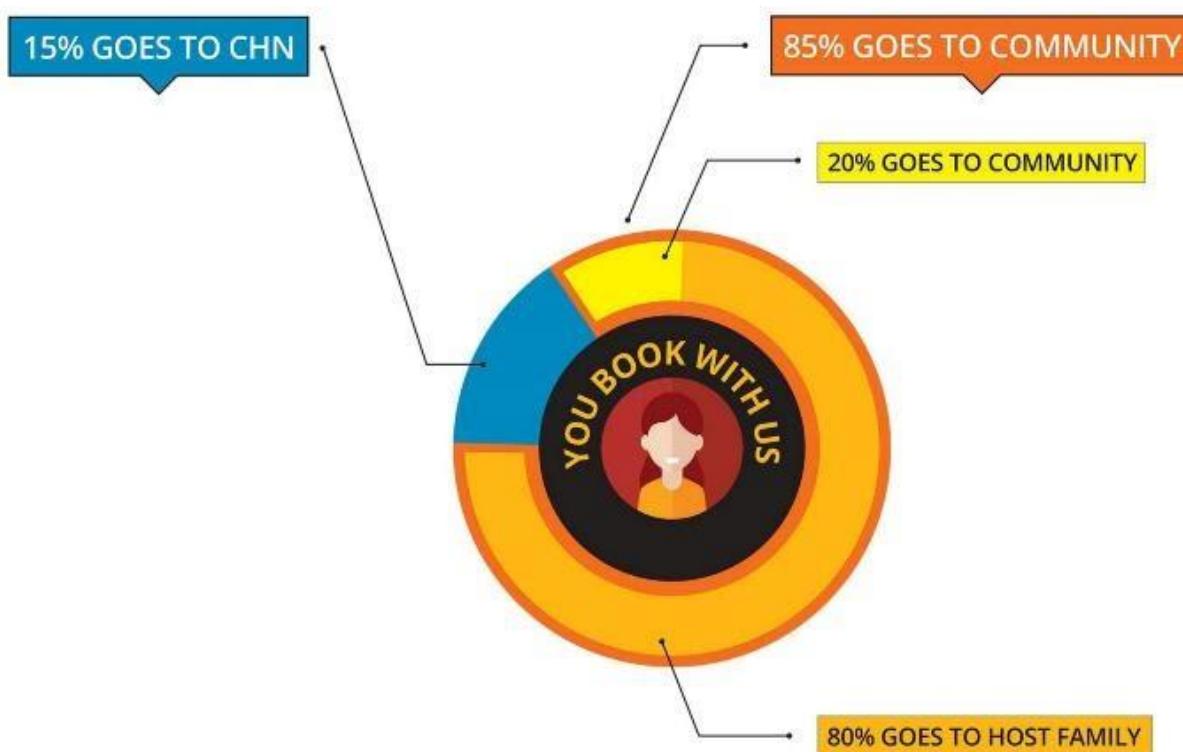
- **Sabita Basnet (Travel Expert)**

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 grassroots communities to develop attractive tourism experiences through a value-chain approach. With the goal 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 also reinvest and provide financial support to develop/upgrade facilities and new experiences. 85% of revenue generated goes to homestay and experience providers and CHN receives 15% of the revenue. Of the 85%, the families hosting the experiences receive 80% and 20% goes to community development funds.





Highlights of the Year

The past two years have been a difficult time for the tourism industry, Community Homestay Network and the communities we work with. However, as we reflect on the year we have been able to expand Community Homestay Network to **25 communities** as well as strengthen the communications with our community partners via various training and exposure visit.

We were also able to scout nine communities to add them to our network. Continuing the practice from 2019 we were able to take five **baseline measurement surveys** that would be soon inside our network to measure the impact effectively.

A key aspect of our overall mission is to develop and promote community-based tourism activities in Nepal. Our commitment to redistribute tourism benefits to the rural communities keeps on motivating us to add more communities to our product lines. We categorize our overall product offerings into homestays (oriented to provide lodging and food service) and experiences (oriented towards providing activities and experiential services).

Adding new destinations and experiences will allow visitors with a wide range of choices for community-based tourism products, and most visitors traveling to Nepal can experience at least one of these products.

The year 2021 has also been a year to reflect back and strengthen our organization as well as document the work we have been doing since the establishment. As a part of organizational strengthening, we forged meaningful partnerships, able to add our team members, formulate a Human Resource Policy and even

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had our first strategic meeting. Through our strategic meeting, we have prioritized our coming year we would be specifically working on:

- Community Engagement Plan for the Existing Communities
- Adding New Communities
- Strengthening the Internal Communication and Reporting Mechanism
- Exploring New Market Segment



Our Story

We began our journey to **support tourism dependent communities** and diversify their income during the pandemic.

Kick started the project with the support from Booking.com

Started with 10 products from 5 communities, including Pisang in Manang.

A woman is speaking at a podium on the right, and the ICIMOD logo is visible on the bottom right of the slide.



Partnerships

Forged Partnerships with ICIMOD

The International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) and Community Homestay Network (CHN) officially embarked on its three years collaborative partnership on 20 July 2021. The primary objective behind the partnership is to establish and strengthen community homestays within Bhutan, India and Nepal areas of the Kangchenjunga Landscape (KL).

Understanding both the socio-economic potentials as well as the vulnerability of traditional rural communities both CHN and ICIMOD would be working on developing and promoting community-based tourism by capitalizing homestay as a brand to build the image and competitiveness of these destinations. As a part of this collaboration, the first joint visit was scheduled between 23 and 30 November 2021 where consultative interactions between tourism service providers and the private sector were organized to develop and market transboundary community homestay circuits along the Deurali-Maipokhari, Dobato and Jaubari routes of the KL. Following the visit, as per the assessment of the communities, an exposure visit was organized with the aim to support the existing and aspiring communities from Ilam and Panchthar to establish and strengthen their homestay operations as well as have a deeper understanding of the community homestay model. This trip emphasized on peer to peer learning from the established community homestays. The participants had an interactive session at Community Homestay Network's office and Traditional Comfort from the tourism experts, followed by community homestay visits and interaction sessions with hosts from Nagarkot and Panauti Community Homestay.

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Entered into partnership with GATE

In order to strengthen the service delivery of community homestays within CHN, we have entered into a meaningful partnership with [the Global Academy of Tourism & Hospitality Education](#) (GATE) on 20 October 2021. Together we aim to support the communities through training, capacity-building programs and knowledge sharing.

Continuing and strengthening our work with Planeterra

With the collaboration with Planeterra, we were able to continue constant communication through various activities like health, sanitation & safety training and community hour. We were able to provide training as well as a safety and sanitation tool kit to our community homestays at Panauti and Barauli to support them prepare themselves to host the travelers safely.

We were also able to co-host Community Hour with [Planeterra](#) on 15 December 2021, where hosts from Panauti Community Homestay shared [their stories of resilience and homestay operation](#).

We are glad that the voices of our communities could be amplified into the global platform and hope it inspires others too.





Awards and Recognitions

As a result of continuous effort towards promoting community-based tourism that benefits locals and women directly. Community Homestay Network was awarded one of the winners for **UNWTO SDGs Global Startup Competition** for **SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth**. Similarly, the jury of World Travel Market, Travel Forward and World Tourism Forum Lucerne awarded us as the winner of **Front Runners 2021** in the category of **Experience Revolution**.

The project Koseli also received recognition from the World Travel Market 2021 **Responsible Tourism Awards** as **Ones to Watch**. Furthermore, the project is also awarded the **Dr. Andreas Schild Memorial Mountain Prize 2021** from **ICIMOD**.

It is a great honor to be awarded and recognized in the global forums and platforms, we do not take the trust and support bestowed to us lightly and will continue giving our all to our mission of empowering communities through travel. Along with the awards, we were also able to emphasize the immense possibilities of experiencing Nepal beyond the traditional way by contributing a **case study** focusing on community-based initiation at Narchyang Community homestay on joint publication by **FAO** and **World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)** representing the Nepalese context.





COVID Response

Koseli: Building Sustainable Communities

In 2020, Koseli was initiated with an aim to generate an alternative source of income for the communities during the pandemic. The idea was to explore the products that our communities can offer and market. The response that we got from the communities for this initiative was quite tremendous. With the support from booking.com's booking booster grant, we were able to pilot Koseli in 4 communities with 8 products.

Now, Koseli works with a purpose to increase the accessibility of local products and stimulate local economies. As of now, Koseli is promoting 16 products from 7 communities in Nepal.

Koseli in Numbers



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Preparing Communities to Re-Host (Health, Hygiene and Sanitation Training)

The current pandemic has clearly shown us that post-pandemic travel will require further assurances for the health and safety concerns of the travelers. In an effort to assure the health and wellbeing of both travelers and host communities we conducted **Hygiene and Sanitation training** in **7 communities**. This training mostly included topics from sanitation and hygiene maintenance of the homestays, new standard practices of operations post-pandemic era and other safety measures to assure the overall experience is as safe as possible.



Wellness Break While Connecting with the Communities

Although as a team we were able to navigate the problems together, the past two years have been very challenging times for us as well. With the hope of tourism revival, we wanted to prepare ourselves better for the changing times. In September 2021, we began to visit our local communities in Bardiya, Barauli, and Shree Antu, Illam. The trip is our effort to revitalize the team to move ahead with a clear set of mind while reconnecting and revitalizing local partners.





Impact in Numbers



The total number of Communities in our network increased to 25 in 2021

Training was given to the hosts in various communities to help them prepare to re-host with proper health and safety measures in place



Forged partnership with ICIMOD and GATE

Impact on Focus

Panauti Community Homestay: Resilience through Entrepreneurship

This pandemic showed us when we support locals to build their entrepreneurial skills via engaging them through tourism, it does not limit to one avenue. Amidst the uncertainty of pandemic, one of our community homestay hosts from **Panauti Community Homestay** scaled up her hobby into a business. As tourism was at a halt and she was not receiving guests in her homestay, instead of losing hope she initiated her own online business of making masks, scrunchies among others.

Ms. Anjana Shrestha initiated making her products, particularly masks from locally sourced fabric *Dhaka*, one of Nepal's traditional and popular ones. She is firmly invested to make her business sustainable and believes that clothes made locally are environmentally friendly as well as promote the local economy. Her designs and use of traditional fabric have gained a lot of popularity among her clients; hence encouraging her to register a shop where she would not only be selling her products but also provide space to others in the Panauti Community who make handcrafted items. We think starting a small online business and transitioning into someone ready to provide a platform for others is quite a journey.





Shree Antu Community Homestay: Hope and Path to Recovery

While Nepal was covered in uncertainties during the peak of the second wave of the pandemic in early 2021, the [Shree Antu Community Homestay](#) at Ilam had been working to [build back better](#). The stories from the tourism-dependent communities on upgrading their infrastructure and their enthusiasm to maintain the health, hygiene and sanitation for the travelers and their communities has been one motivating story to share. Thinking about the times where travelers visited and loved their communities, the hosts felt the pandemic would end at one point and travelers would visit their beloved communities once again. With this hope, the hosts at Shree Antu Community Homestay, Ilam took personal loans from cooperatives and financial institutions to upgrade their infrastructure to provide the guests with a comfortable authentic experience. The hope of revival and investment shows their resilience and, in their own words, are very proud of how their culture of consumption has gradually shifted towards reinvesting.



Thank you

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

To our travelers, we are ready to host you safely whenever you are ready to travel with us. We hope to create meaningful experiences with our big Nepali family like before.

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