



Mandate Spotlight: 071 Nepal, FWEAN

E-commerce and Trade Support to Women Entrepreneurs in Nepal Project

Location: Nepal

Beneficiaries: Federation of Women Entrepreneurs
Associations of Nepal (FWEAN)

Consultant: Adam Smith International (ASI)

Start: February 2023

End: December 2023

GAC Contribution:
CAD 299,810

Context

The mandate was designed to address the multiple challenges businesses face in Nepal. Women-led businesses contend with economic and social barriers associated with patriarchal attitudes and structures within society, while those outside Kathmandu struggle with connectivity, resulting in geographical and other forms of exclusion. For many business owners, these barriers overlap and intersect, culminating in a complex landscape within which they strive to establish and scale their operations. Capacity building and e-commerce together provide potential solutions to these issues.

FWEAN is the apex body for all women entrepreneur associations in Nepal and is a focal point for interaction among its members and government agencies. It has over 3000 members across 59 of Nepal's 77 districts. The organization has demonstrated itself to be an effective, dynamic, and impactful institution, particularly with respect to advocacy on behalf of its members. FWEAN is well connected within the Nepali government and works closely with the Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens and the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security. Through professional organizational management and successful advocacy for government support, FWEAN maintains its self-sufficiency in its operations.

FWEAN aspires to support its members entering Nepal's rapidly expanding e-commerce space through this proposed short-term technical assistance. It will operationalize its e-commerce platform and associated app while, in parallel, building the capacity of FWEAN Business Advisors to provide advisory services to the FWEAN network members at large.

Brief Description of the Mandate

This mandate focused on working with FWEAN to (i) enable FWEAN to make an informed decision and strategic plan with regard to their e-commerce platform strategy to support members' online expansion and (ii) position FWEAN as a key resource for ongoing strategic and digital marketing advisory support to Nepali women entrepreneurs, empowering women-led businesses to enter the digital marketplace and scale operations.

Selected Key Results

- The mandate facilitated introductions between FWEAN and Daraz, one of the largest e-commerce marketplaces in Nepal, with operations also in Pakistan and Sri Lanka. This mandate supported FWEAN through pitch development and coaching, which resulted in the signature of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to establish a strategic partnership between FWEAN and Daraz. Under the strategic partnership, Daraz extended e-commerce and onboarding training to nearly 100 FWEAN members (98% female).
- Branding and Marketing Support: hands-on support was provided to FWEAN in brand building and digital marketing. A comprehensive WinBiz brand strategy was produced, outlining the vision for creating a brand that embodies social sustainability principles, environmental responsibility, and women's economic inclusion. Marketing collaterals were also developed, including social media templates and a service catalogue for FWEAN's Business Development Centre (BDC), through which FWEAN extends business services to its growing membership.
- Corporate Gift Package Initiative: as with many CSOs, particularly volunteer-based ones, FWEAN faces challenges with consistent and predictable core funding. This mandate helped FWEAN find avenues to sustainably increase its core revenue stream, particularly through a corporate gift package to drive revenue generation beyond the project's life cycle.
- Capacity building was delivered on e-commerce and digital marketing in line with FWEAN's business strategy and plan. In total, 10 Master Trainers (100% women) from FWEAN were qualified through this mandate and are intended to be deployed by FWEAN on a fee-for-service basis. The Master Trainers have already directly trained 55 women entrepreneurs, also members of FWEAN, in e-commerce and digital marketing.

Environment & Climate Change

Crucial support was provided to Nepali women-led businesses, mostly focusing on producing environmentally and socially responsible goods for the domestic market. These MSMEs primarily used locally sourced or homegrown materials like clay, bamboo, and seasonal crops for product development and marketing. This approach of using local resources cuts down on carbon emissions and fosters an inclusive and thriving business environment.

Environmental sustainability was included in the e-commerce and digital marketing training through a mainstream approach. This enabled lessons and discussions to focus on the practical application of environmental considerations. For example, many FWEAN business owners are producing locally made and environmentally friendly products and are conscious of the growing demand for these types of products. As a result, they gained skills in articulating their positive environmental practices as part of their product offerings.

Follow-up Support

FWEAN should continue to make efforts to build one or more strategic partnerships with established e-commerce platforms in Nepal, building on the success of Daraz. These partnerships provide a more sustainable avenue of marketing FWEAN member products as they align incentives on both sides – alleviating the heavy burden of running e-commerce operations for FWEAN while increasing revenue for established e-commerce sites. This incentives-based approach provides a better long-term strategy rather than relying on these sites' Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities, which are not based on mutual benefit.

As a follow-up to increasing core revenue streams through corporate gift packages, FWEAN should expand the marketing of its corporate gift packages ahead of gift-giving periods in Nepal and potentially explore the possibility of international gift packages.

E-commerce and marketing capacity building could be expanded by offering customized and localized material to fit the varying levels of education of FWEAN's members across Nepal's diverse geographies. In parallel, capacity building could be scaled up in Kathmandu through the BDC as well as in FWEAN chapters throughout the remote regions of Nepal.

Gender and Social Inclusion

Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA+) was at the core of the approach and contributed to improving the inclusion of women entrepreneurs in Nepal's e-commerce ecosystem. Women make up 51.5% of Nepal's total population and are among the most active members of Nepal's growing environment of entrepreneurs. This mandate provided crucial support to women-led businesses seeking to access domestic markets with their environmentally-sustainable goods. A key feature of this support was the deep collaboration and consultation between CTIF and FWEAN, rooted in the understanding that FWEAN leadership is the foremost expert on the Nepali context and needs of their diverse membership. This focus on collaboration enabled robust mainstreaming of diversity and inclusion through all project interventions, and a deeper understanding of women-led business challenges underlined the delivery of this mandate. This included comprehending not only the barriers faced more broadly by Nepalese businesses but also those specific challenges faced by women-led businesses, such as socio-cultural norms related to their participation in a patriarchal society.

Testimonial



"To do certain things we need a push factor, these training sessions were the push factor for me, triggering a series of transformations in my business and pushing me forward."

- Ms. Raktim Joshi, Owner of Orchid Family Salon

Image 1: Ms. Raktim Joshi has integrated environmentally friendly business practices as a result of the mandate.