



**THE MOUNTAIN INSTITUTE
CELEBRATING 35 YEARS:
IMPACTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

Many people ask us, *“What exactly do you do?”*

Maybe we can answer that question by describing some of what we’ve done over the past 35 years.

Long Term Impact of Our Work

Thirty-five years ago The Mountain Institute (TMI) set out to make a difference in the world by making a commitment to mountains and mountain people. Have we made a difference? Yes.

TMI's work is targeted at poor, remote, and marginalized mountain communities, and it is in these communities where we have had our most important impact. Since inception, we have reached approximately two million mountain people with in-depth programs that have improved their lives. We have benefited the lives of millions more indirectly, (the families of people whom we have trained, for example). Because we believe that sustainable impacts are based on the ability of local people to identify and address their own needs, our programs focus on education and capacity (skills) building rather than bricks and mortar.

When the 10-year Maoist insurgency destroyed communications and government infrastructure in the rural and mountain regions of Nepal, resulting in the pulling back of government agencies to district and central government compounds, TMI staff continued to provide training—at the demand and under the protection of local communities—because our work together made a real difference in their lives. It was this regular contact that prevented the mountain communities from being completely abandoned during this long period of conflict and fighting.

What do we do? Often, our job is to help communities meet the demands of the modern day “global economy” and make the transition from a subsistence household economy to one that can generate cash. This entails an expansion of traditional livelihood practices without losing self-esteem or traditional know-how. A typical community-level economic project often results in creating, and then doubling, household income above the subsistence level. Through our environmental initiatives, we have protected mountain areas that together are larger than Switzerland and Con-



necticut combined, and we have worked with local communities, organizations and government officials in the USA and eleven other countries to help them manage (and sometimes create) their national parks, improve their water resources, ensure richer forests, protect wetlands, restore high altitude ecosystems, regenerate over-used pastureland and save local species and wildlife.

Is our work “sustainable”? TMI’s approach to sustainability combines livelihood development, environmental conservation, and cultural preservation. Several organizations focus on one of these, some on one or two, but few use all three to address community needs. Many experts and organizational professionals have wondered why TMI includes cultural preservation as a basic organizational approach, but almost no one who works or lives in mountain cultures questions this. They understand the importance of culture to these communities. Supporting local culture engenders pride, identity, and self-determination, which give people the confidence to take responsibility for improving their lives under extremely difficult circumstances.

TMI’s approach demonstrates to the larger development community that for transformation in mountain regions to succeed, a holistic approach that includes culture is essential. The staff members in our regional programs are indigenous, and their appreciation of their own cultures goes unsaid. But we have also helped to restore more than 155 sacred sites, including monasteries, temples, pilgrimage routes, and meditation caves, and we have played a major role in highlighting the importance of Sacred Mountains to all of humanity. We have published more than 200 handbooks, chapters, teachers’ guides and tourism books on various aspects of mountain life in local languages for adults and children. TMI’s work with ten US National Parks, such as Yosemite and Mount Rainier, developing interpretive materials based on the evocative meanings and features of mountain environments

in American, Native American, and other cultures of the world educates the general public and connects with cultural and ethnic groups on the importance of mountains to us all.

TMI is the only international non-profit organization that highlights the significance of mountains world-wide. Just as the work of Jacques Cousteau has informed us of the importance of oceans, and the Rainforest Alliance has taught us about the Amazon rainforests, TMI continues to inform the public that if we are to have pure fresh water, forests, mineral resources, biological and cultural diversity in the future, we must protect the world's mountains and mountain communities. TMI expanded its outreach through the creation of Mountain Forum, now an autonomous organization with more than 2,000 members. Mountain Forum maintains an important online library, conducts regular global e-conferences on critical mountain issues, and has the ability to reach thousands of individuals through the Internet and other media resources to share information and galvanize action.

TMI's unique approach to working with mountain communities is steadily making positive changes in the lives of some of the world's most impoverished people. Our advocacy work is expanding public awareness that mountains – and the issues that surround them – belong to and are the responsibility of us all. From the water we drink, to the wood, paper and mineral products we use every day, mountains touch each of our lives constantly. The poverty, conflict, exploitation, and destruction that impacts mountain communities impacts us all, and we can each take immediate steps to change a rapidly deteriorating situation for the better.



Ten of our Most Noteworthy Accomplishments

1. For mountain people, changing their ancient way of life is not easy, neither is welcoming strangers into their communities. Over time, the people with whom we have worked have understood our commitment to them, and we have been rewarded by their friendship and trust. Positive and lasting change has been the result. We have acted as a catalyst, but they have made major changes by and for themselves. Witnessing their dedication to achieving lasting and positive economic, cultural and environmental change is our greatest and most valued reward, and their accomplishment.
2. We have helped to open the minds of many West Virginia youth to their potential as human beings and as responsible citizens (and environmental stewards) of their state. After attending our Scholar's Academy and courses on Spruce Knob, many have gained the confidence to go on to college, and some have returned to assume leadership positions at the community, state and national level. More than 40,000 students and teachers have availed themselves of our programs.
3. We have worked continuously on the Tibetan Plateau since 1985 and now know the grandchildren of some of our original colleagues. We were one of the first NGOs to work in Tibet after the Cultural Revolution, when working with outsiders on environmental protection was an anathema and viewed with suspicion. We were able to win respect and gain momentum by taking a non-political line, concentrating on our task, moving ahead with professionalism, and building the trust of a few key, honest Tibetan and Chinese officials. We broke major ground on several fronts.

Environmentally, we worked with the Chinese government and prominent Tibetan social scientists to establish the first major protected area, which is now a national level preserve in Tibet, the Qomolangma (Everest) Nature Preserve, or QNP.



This important work was funded by the Government of The Netherlands, the representatives of which understood the importance of not only protecting a bio-diversity hot spot but also “opening the door” to the outside after the darkest period in Tibetan history.

Our work has improved local living conditions for 90,000 people by linking their livelihoods to better natural resources management throughout this four-county protected area, which encompasses approximately 31,000 square kilometers. In 1995, we expanded our work to include assistance to approximately 1,200 fledgling private businesses across the Tibet Autonomous Region and introduced many new models and ideas, including micro-lending, environmentally-friendly rural construction design, community based eco-tourism, and private dairy businesses owned by impoverished farming families. This program tripled local incomes.

4. On the Nepal side of Mt. Everest, we helped the Government of Nepal establish and manage the 2,330 square mile Makalu-Barun National Park. This was the first national park in Nepal, (and in much of the world), that was developed in collaboration with its local residents, (pop. 35,000), and the only park in which the Government of Nepal agreed to employ local people, rather than the army, for park protection.
5. In groundbreaking work in Peru, TMI created the Huascarán Task Force on mining and conservation, which was able to develop dialogue, conflict management, and educational mechanisms between Huascarán National Park, local communities near the park and the Antamina Mining Company. Also, in 1996 TMI completed Peru's first Ecotourism Management Plan for Huascarán National Park and trained more than 300 community members, park guards and tourist service providers. Their participation in planning conservation activities and



safety and health care measures, as well as understanding the value of their cultural heritage, increased conservation awareness and improved tourism. The program diversified and improved livelihoods by supporting the reintroduction of llama and alpaca in cooperation with a network of more than 30 rural communities.

6. Although it is becoming more common, we were the first NGO that fully integrated “culture” into program design along with “economics” and “environment” in mountain communities. We believe that only by paying full attention to this triumvirate can lasting results be achieved in the enrichment of people’s lives. We took the integration of “culture” into our programs a step further by creating a Sacred Mountains Program in 1999. This program has made important progress by creating evocative interpretive materials with US National Parks, and working worldwide to integrate cultural and spiritual perspectives into programs of environmental protection and economic development.
7. Beginning in 1995, TMI developed and pioneered a transformative, community-based approach to project planning called “Appreciative Participatory Planning and Action” (APPA), which has since been adapted to many contexts and used by a wide variety of organizations and community groups. TMI has found APPA to be effective because it galvanizes community members to use their existing talents and assets to reach their goals instead of waiting for outside windfalls of assistance. TMI has trained more than 50 NGOs in 15 countries in Asia and South America to use and adapt APPA for planning a variety of projects. Many of these trainees have subsequently trained many more people in the method, and recent estimates indicate that APPA has been used in more than 20 countries in at least 100 small and large-scale projects.

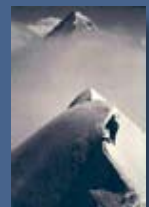
8. TMI is a recognized leader in community-based tourism in mountains. More than 100 professionals from NGOs, government, academia and the private sector from more than 15 countries attended several international courses in community-based tourism offered by TMI in partnership with the Regional Community Forestry Training Center (1999-2003) in Thailand. Alumni have designed and implemented award-winning tourism initiatives in Kyrgyzstan, India, Vietnam, Cambodia, Nepal, Pakistan and Laos, among other countries.
9. Because mountains often form international borders, we consider our work on trans-boundary cooperation to be important to conflict mitigation as well as economic development and environmental preservation. By encouraging communities and governments to communicate and work on cross-boundary issues, problems such as water management, poaching, and trade in illegal animal products, and emerging threats become easier to solve. We have worked with communities on the China/Nepal border, the Nepal/India border, and the Peru/Ecuador border. In fact, TMI was the first group to bring communities together on the Tibet side of the Himalayas with those on the Nepal side. Hands Across Everest describes that important effort.
10. Finally, we continue to deepen our commitment to our own organizational values. These are: a) Long term commitments to the people and places where we work; b) Teamwork and the full collaboration of our partners; c) Cultural and biophysical fluency in the regions of our programs; d) Measurable results and accountability to those whom we serve; and e) The belief that true progress can only be made when economic development, environmental protection and cultural expression are in balance.



List of Recent Awards

- WWF – Young Conservationist Award 2007: Karma Bhutia, Asia Program
- The Hilton Humanitarian Prize Short List, 2007
- The Netherlands Business in Development Award for the Yachakiwayi Initiative, 2006: Miriam Torres, Andes Program
- The American Alpine Club’s David Brower Conservation Award, 2006: Alton Byers, PhD, Research and Education Program
- Certificate of Recognition, for TMI’s support for Biodiversity Conservation in Nepal, presented by Government of Nepal, Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation, 2005: Asia Program
- First Place: Oikos Foundation’s Sustainability Writing Competition: Building a Sustainable Venture: The Mountain Institute’s Earth Brick Machine, 2005: Peak Enterprise Program
- Mountain Legacy’s Sir Edmund Hillary Mountain Legacy Medal, 2005: Alton Byers, PhD, Research and Education Program

- The Association of American Geographer's Distinguished Career Award from the Mountain Geographer Specialty Group, 2004: Alton Byers, PhD, Research and Education Program
- The Harvard Bridge Builder Award, 2004 to Kopila Rai, winner: Asia Program
- Commonwealth Award, 2003: Sacred Mountains of the World, by Edwin Bernbaum, PhD, Sacred Mountains Program
- Pacific West Region Partnership Achievement Award from the National Park Service, 2003: Ed Bernbaum, PhD, Sacred Mountains Program
- Certificate of Appreciation from Sir Edmund Hillary and The Himalayan Trust, for TMI's contribution to improve lives of mountain people, 50th Anniversary of the Climbing of Everest, May 29, 2003: Asia Program
- Lhakpa Sherpa, Co-Director of the Asia Program, is the first Sherpa to receive a PhD





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