



EMPOWER GENERATION

Introduction



We empower women to power communities with clean energy

Location: Nepal

Industry: Clean Energy

Founded in 2011

Image credit to TechinAsia/
Empower Generation

Empower Generation (EG), founded by Anya Cherneff, Bennett Cohen, and Sita Adhikari, is a social enterprise that connects renewable energy technology (RET) suppliers with female entrepreneurs at the base of the economic pyramid—those living on less than \$2.50 per day. EG provides women with business and technical training and support, and provides energy-consumers with micro-financing for RET purchases increasing local economic opportunities, and promoting gender equality.

Highlights

- EG was one of the finalists for Project Inspire 2013.
- EG’s founder Anya Cherneff received the C3E International Award in 2015, which recognizes outstanding leadership and extraordinary achievements of mid-career women working to advance clean energy.

Social Problem

Nepal is one of the poorest countries in the world, with half the population living below the poverty line and more than half living without access to reliable power. In the country, approximately 30 % of a family’s income in rural Nepal being spent on expensive kerosene for lighting and cooking, and around 40% of the population lack access to the electric grid. Even those who do have access cannot afford to pay for power or spend up

to 18-hours per day in rolling blackouts due to failure of the grid to meet electricity demand of the growing population.

Energy poverty affects women and children the most. Women can spend up to 9 hrs/day collecting fuel to provide basic energy services. When cooking or performing other household tasks, women are exposed to poisonous fumes from the indoor combustion of fuels such as firewood or kerosene. Many children and woman therefore suffer from respiratory problems which can turn fatal.

Social Intervention and Impact Created

EG operates as both a non-profit and a social enterprise in Nepal. The non-profit arm of EG trains local women to manage their own business and sales force, marketing and selling household solar products. The social enterprise arm of EG is a distributor that sells its products and markets them on behalf of the businesses it cultivates through its non-profit arm.

EG women already serving as household energy managers to become entrepreneurs. EG develops market-based approaches to increase the adoption of clean energy technology in remote areas, improving health, saving carbon and money, and laying the foundation for greener economic development. A solar light, for instance, offers instant savings and reliable clean energy for years, cutting the amount spent on lighting by more than half. The economic payback on products can be as little as a few months for many consumers. EG works on a triple bottom line of People, Planet, and Profit:

People

- Seed and support women-led enterprise serving the poor.
- Create lasting opportunities so women and girls are less vulnerable and can increase their social capital.
- Provide access to energy for all, including light for longer study hours, income generation, and alternatives to harmful and expensive fuel sources.

Planet

- Lead the global clean energy revolution.
- Reduce deforestation and carbon dioxide emissions.
- Share knowledge about the benefits of clean energy adoption in rural areas

Profit

- Establish viable businesses for a clean energy distribution network and services that
- Earn annual returns from loans to energy entrepreneurs, Clean Energy Funds, and energy services provided to customers.
- Earn profit in exchange for consultancy services to clean-tech suppliers wishing to enter the Nepal market.



Pabitra, one of Empower Generation's female entrepreneurs. Her business is called "Tri Urjah"

Image credit to Empower Generation

Business Model

Empower Generation creates markets for clean energy products, by bringing together impact lenders, clean energy technology suppliers, and women entrepreneurs. EG reaches out to impact lenders, who contribute to two types of funds:

1. The Clean Energy Funds provide low-interest loans for the purchase and repair of clean energy products, and funds community outreach events to raise awareness about the benefits of adopting clean energy. Clean Energy Funds are administered by local savings and credit cooperatives with a reliable microfinance track record. Energy-poor consumers qualify for low-interest loans that they use to buy clean energy technology from their local woman entrepreneur.

2. The Women's Entrepreneur Fund provides low-interest start-up loans to support the clean energy businesses as they grow and become profitable. EG administers these loans to ensure repayment. When loans are repaid, EG starts a new enterprise or provide credit to a new community.

EG mentors women-leaders as they write a business plan, pick clean energy products that fit the needs of their market, develop their brand and launch their business, and provide additional ongoing resources, such as workforce training and marketing support.

Social Impact

- 13 Women-led businesses
- ~ 250,000 people with cleaner, safer light and power
- ~ 50,000 Solar products distributed to customers
- Over \$2 million USD saved on household energy expenses
- Nearly 10,000 tons in carbon footprint reduction

Current Marketing Efforts

Online presence and social media

- Facebook (Empower Generation): 7473 likes, around 5 posts per week.
- Twitter (@EmpowerGrid): 1186 followers, 234 likes.
- Vimeo: EG has its channel on the video platform, with 19 videos posted since 2011.
- Linked in profile: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/empower-generation>
- Tedx talk by Anya Cherneff: <http://www.empowergeneration.org/tedxtalk/>

News articles

The Huffington post has written an article describing her work. Empower Generation was also featured as one of the vetted organisation by the CNN, during the relief effort of the earthquake in Nepal.

Competition, recognition and other exposure

EG's Co-founder and CEO Anya Cherneff is competing in the Tory Burch Foundation Fellows Competition, has competed in Project Inspire 2013 (finalists), pitched at the Miller Center for Social Entrepreneurship, and recognised for her effort at C3E international awards. EG was also involved in the Sankalp Global Summit 2016 held in Mumbai. EG's Operations Director Chloe Chapman and Program Coordinator Bindu Thanait have also attended the DHI Labs Impact Chapter: Start-up Challenge, a conference that links startups to capital and expertise, and pitched Empower Generation's business model to potential investors and mentors. EG was also featured as the Ground Up Project Blog's Top Ten Women and Sustainability Projects.

Challenges Faced and Project Scope

EG wants to increase awareness of both its non-profit and for-profit activities. On the non-profit side, EG wants to recruit more women into its training program. On the for-profit side, EG wants to increase sales of its solar light products. Currently, EG has little brand awareness in Nepal and many of its potential trainees and customers are in rural areas.

EG would like student teams to suggest a plan to develop its brand and marketing strategy in Nepal. In other words, how should EG market its two different activities to potential trainees and customers?

Useful Links and Resources

Company Website: <http://www.empowergeneration.org/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Empower.Generation>

Vimeo: <https://vimeo.com/empowergeneration>

Additional references

Video made for Project Inspire:

<http://www.projinspire.com/portfolio/empower-generation/>

2013 Annual report:

http://www.empowergeneration.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/EGAnnualReport_Final_BookStyle.pdf

Article by the Huffington Post:

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/anya-cherneff/the-best-way-to-rebuild-nepal-support-local-women_b_7656528.html

Mention by the CNN:

<http://edition.cnn.com/2015/04/25/world/nepal-earthquake-how-to-help/>

Article by the Miller Center for Social Entrepreneurship:

<http://www.scu-social-entrepreneurship.org/case-studies1/2015/7/9/empower-generation-helps-turn-the-lights-back-on-in-nepal>

TechinAsia - "Using clean energy, this organization is empowering women and poor alike in Nepal":
<https://www.techinasia.com/empower-generation-support-women-poor-nepal>

Various articles on EG's company profile:

Ashoka changemakers: <https://www.changemakers.com/joinourcore/entries/empower-generation>

Impact Space: <http://impactspace.com/company/empower-generation>