

# Australian Rotarian to Receive Global Award

Australian Rotarian Stephanie Woollard has been recognised on the global stage with a prestigious Rotary Responsible Business Award. Stephanie is one of only six honorees worldwide, applauded for her ground-breaking work establishing the Seven Women project, which supports disabled women in Nepal.

The presentation of the awards will form the centerpiece of Rotary Day at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. Rotary International President John Germ, 1500 Rotary members, UN officials and NGO leaders will be present to discuss humanitarian challenges whilst celebrating the positive impact Rotary and others are making in our world today.

Stephanie started her Seven Women project when she was only 22 years old after visiting Nepal and

meeting seven disabled women making soaps and candles in a small tin shed. In Nepal, disabilities carry a strong social stigma, believed to bring bad fortune. The women were consequently able to sell only a fraction of what they produced at market and lived in dire poverty.

Stephanie used her last \$200 to pay for two trainers to upskill the women to manufacture products appropriate for sale abroad. The Seven Women project has since changed the lives of over a thousand disabled Nepalese disabled women through training, employment and the sale of their ethically manufactured goods worldwide. In addition 5000 women have been positively impacted through outreach programs facilitated by the enterprise.

Six Seven Women centres have

now been established, with the Seven Women headquarters in Kathmandu also providing shelter and medical assistance to women in need or escaping domestic violence. Numerous education programs are hosted by Seven Women, particularly practical production skills such as sewing and growing vegetables, literacy classes and business and savings classes. "Our approach is to give a hand up, not a hand out," said Stephanie. "All it takes is one generation to learn how to break the cycle of poverty and pass their learning down to the next to transform a village forever."

As Stephanie nor any other volunteers receive any payment for their efforts, in order to sustain her passion she founded Hands On Development through which she speaks at conferences, provides mentoring and runs immersive tours to Nepal and Indigenous Australian communities.

Stephanie is dedicated to education and empowerment, believing a realistic understanding of the causes of poverty is a crucial ingredient for bringing peace and tolerance to our globalised world. "My key to a better world is as simple as finding your passion and dedicating your life to using that passion to bring hope to the lives of others."



Stephanie Woollard with members of her Seven Women project