



ASIAN UNIVERSITY FOR WOMEN

ACCESS ACADEMY STUDENT SUNITA BASNET WINS GLOBAL *WORLD PULSE* MENTORSHIP CONTEST

June 25, 2009

Sunita Basnet is from Nepal and is a member of the Access Academy's inaugural class. She is graduating this July. Twenty-three year old Sunita was referred to as a "[young microfinance leader](#)" by World Pulse, a media enterprise that broadcasts the marginalized voices of women across the globe. Inspired by the microcredit system implemented by Grameen Bank in her home country, Sunita founded an organization that provides loans for women in her community.

She and over 500 applicants participated in an international, interactive, highly competitive elimination process resulting in the selection of 30 World Pulse "Correspondents". Sunita talks about this experience in the interview below.

INTERVIEW

Sunita, congratulations on being selected to be a World Pulse Correspondent. How do you feel?

I am thrilled to be a part of the World Pulse network. I am also happy to make your acquaintance on [the World Pulse social networking site] [PulseWire](#).

Tell us about World Pulse.

World Pulse is a global team that aims to create "equal visibility" for women in international media and to foster women's leadership by broadcasting the unheard and ignored voices of women along with men's support. It covers global issues through the eyes of women. It also helps to provide innovative solutions of women across the world.

How did you hear about them?

I heard about World Pulse in our university (Asian University for Women) assembly. We were told to visit the website and think to apply for future correspondence program. When I visited the website, I was impressed because it is for women and run by women with men's support.

What kind of training and benefits will you receive as a Correspondent?

Our training has started from June 1st to October 15, 2009. It's an online training on "frontiers of new media and women's empowerment." According to the World Pulse, we will be receiving three mentoring sessions with our mentors via Skype. Furthermore, we will participate in "Citizen Journalism training" from a renowned women's empowerment institute. We will have opportunities to publish our article in World Pulse magazines. This training will build up our personal and professional development. Finally, we will have a network with World Pulse allies that can be helpful for problem solving.

In the fall of 2009, three correspondents will have the opportunity for a paid trip to the USA to "influence international opinion." Moreover, one correspondence will be receiving full scholarship from "Empowerment Institute Certificate Program" which will hold in January 2010.

You already have a background in human rights journalism. From these experiences, is there a memorable moment that you would like to share?

Yes, on April 25, 2006 at 8.30pm, Sapana Gurung was first raped by three security officers and was shot later. There was a crowd of about three thousand civilian protestors. The members of armed force opened fire where six protestors were killed and 50 others were injured. The accident was on Sub police Station at Belbari-3, Morang districts. I was the eyewitness of this catastrophe. My home was only 12km far from the site of the accident. Our journalism forum president, Deepen Neupane, was also injured in the accident. When my parents knew about it, they scolded me because that was not a job they wanted for their daughter. I still remember my mother's words: "You are important than money. If anything happens to you what would be our conditions? Have you ever thought about us?" I didn't reply anything because my hands and legs were shivering after seeing the accident. This was my first and last accident in front of me. I hope not to repeat those types of calamity anywhere in the world.

What do you like about writing? What inspires you?

I like to write about social issues to bring equality in our community. I believe if there is equality, there will be peace in the world. In our Country, Nepal, I saw women victims in cross fire when the Maoists were in the jungle. Women were raped and killed by the armies and the Maoists. I decided to raise my voice but didn't get place to share with others. Honestly, I was little scared too. Now, I understand words are very powerful to make a difference in our community as well understand the real world after coming to AUW.

Among the 30 correspondents, your quote was featured on their website announcement. They called you a "young microfinance leader."

My name was announced as "young microfinance leader" because I opened "Women Saving Club" with the help of ten women. Our Women Saving Club follow the same process of the microfinance. This is a half achievement of my life, so I am proud to be called by this name.

What is the "Women Saving Club"?

In my village, women had no opportunities to get involved in social activities and make networks with others. I thought women saving club can be a good way to interact with people, and encourage women to change their lives by themselves, so we formed a "Women Saving Club." It is a microfinance run by only women with men's support. We started our club by depositing fifteen rupees from each of the ten founders every month. Fifteen Nepalese rupees translate to about \$0.23 U.S. cents. We provide loans to our members as well to others. At present, there is every member from each family, and we collect Rs. 50 per month.

Have you heard from the women who took out loans?

Yes, they tell us whether they are able to succeed or not. The first couple of loans we gave were for sums of five hundred rupees, about \$7.50 U.S. dollars to Maiya Katwal, a member of our club, to buy seeds and fertilizer for her vegetable farming. These loans were faithfully paid back with interest, and she was happy.

To know more about our women's club, please visit this link

<http://www.worldpulse.com/node/8279>

What other social issues would you like to talk about, now that you have this opportunity?

Gender discrimination and poverty are the main focus. Firstly, when women are poor, they don't have money to go to school. Secondly, if they hardly ever join a school, there is low quality education, which means no opportunities. They have to depend on family and husband. They have no freedom and choice. Therefore, I would like to request to all change makers, if you really want to make differences in underprivileged women lives, please do not waste your time thinking much. Let's lend your helping hands from today. Please help those women to have freedom and change their lives, like us. Let's help them to understand the real world through their eyes.

Are these issues related to challenges you have faced in your own life? How easy or hard was it for you to achieve your goals?

Yes, many times poverty and gender discrimination became the barrier in my life. In future, when I will go to my community to work with people, I will have to face more. Life is challenging. We have to fight to get a single thing, but if we try confidently, we can get all in the world. Everything is possible, but we need to give our efforts from our heart and need to have patience.

Has your outlook changed after studying at the Asian University for Women's Access Academy? How so?

I cannot express my thankfulness to the Asian University for Women's Access Academy (AUW AA) in words. AA has helped me to change physically and mentally. The way I used to think a year ago and at present is different. I didn't have confidence to talk in front of people in English, but now I can. I have learnt to stay and work in multicultural environment, be flexible, communicate effectively, compromise, network with people and understand the real world. I have no fear to see a dream of a better future and express my opinions and thoughts.

What does your family think about what you are doing?

My parents are very proud of me and so am I to be a daughter. Last time, when I met my parents in Dhaka, the capital city of Bangladesh, for my mother's heart surgery, my mother told me "I wish all mothers had a daughter like you." But they are still little worried about my future.

What do you plan to do after college? Are there other projects you want people to know about?

After I graduate from the Access Academy, I have a meeting on July 11, 2009 in Kathmandu with our two world pulse correspondents regarding the education of girls in the context of Nepal. Some of our AUW Nepalese students will also attend the meeting. I will write about that in World Pulse.

After college, I will coordinate with some NGOs to empower women of my community. I will encourage women to raise their voice by themselves. I do have some other projects: I have a dream to make documentaries about social issues regarding gender discrimination. I want to convert my "Women Saving Club" into "Credit Union Bank," which will be run by women with men's support. All the members will be owners of the bank. I have also a vision to open NGO that will work to promote human rights especially women's rights, their education, and empowerment.

Let's see how far I can achieve my goal. Thank you for my interview.