

Greasing The Wheels of Social Justice Across the World: A 7-Day California Bike Trek and a Bicycle Camp for Women's Empowerment in India

Two groups of bicyclists—one from Northern California and one from Assam, India.

One, a group of young adventurers under the banner “Grassroutes” who completed a seven day 500 mile bike ride along California’s beautiful coastline earlier this fall to raise funds for IDEX partners.

The other, a group of women learning how to ride bikes for the very first time from a group of brave, older women who were motivated to teach other women of the job-hunting advantages and increased mobility a bicycle offers.

Grassroutes is the vision of Aaron Zukoski and Naveen Agrawal, who met while working together at an enterprise social network in San Francisco and soon discovered their shared passion. Aaron, an IDEX board member, and Naveen came up with Grassroutes after looking to create a venture that would combine adventure with social good.



A group of adventurers under the banner “Grassroutes” raised over \$20,000 for IDEX partners. Next year, they plan to do the trip again with more riders, this time from the Bay Area to Las Vegas.

Photo: Rishi Oswal

“We were inspired to fundraise for IDEX because of their unique model—to empower local leaders to create and sustain the change they need,” Aaron shared.

“Developing this bike ride as a fundraising opportunity for IDEX just made sense,” Naveen added.

Across the world in the Lower Assam area of India, the group of first-time bike riding women are part of Action Northeast Trust (the ANT)—an IDEX grantee that works with over 135 village communities on women’s empowerment, health, and income opportunities.



“I watched teary-eyed, as woman after woman boarded her bike and completed her first lap with a smile and newfound confidence,” said Vini who visited one of the ANT’s bicycle clubs.

Instead of depending on their husbands for transportation, women could enjoy greater freedom of movement. But it wasn’t easy.

In the beginning, they were stopped. Some had their bicycles taken away. Many were even physically abused by the men in their families. To avoid detection, some women began to sneak off at night to practice.

Part of the women’s empowerment model involves running an innovative bicycle club.

Vini Bhansali, IDEX’s Executive Director who visited the ANT earlier this year, was able to see one such bicycle club in action, where women from a nearby village had gathered for their favorite event.

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Operations Manager

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"Something as utilitarian as a bicycle can bring people together—for us as riders in California and in rural parts of India. We are empowered by the courage of women who are standing up for themselves and their rights."

—Naveen, Grassroutes co-founder and rider

Photo: Rishi Oswal

Vini described the ensuing scene as moving and jubilant. First-time bicycle riders, dressed in sarees, were taught by “old hands” as onlookers cheered on enthusiastically.

To join the bicycle club, a woman must both learn to ride and become a member of an ANT women’s group. Through these women’s groups, members are taking action against

domestic violence and developing their own microenterprises.

After three years of working with bicycle clubs and women’s groups—educating communities, leading bike rallies through the villages, and talking to men and women about human rights—the ANT has seen a shift of attitudes.

“Men have begun to fear the wrath of the women’s groups, which may show up at their home and hold them accountable should they hurt their wife or daughter for her cycling efforts,” said Jennifer Liang, founding member of ANT.

Now, some husbands even come to help women learn to ride for the first time.

Jennifer said that even though women have increasingly gained control over their daily lives—including greater mobility and financial independence—more work will be required to promote gender equality and women’s leadership.

Reflecting on the Grassroutes trip, Naveen commented “the ride was physically challenging but we were motivated by the idea that the funds and awareness we were raising would be going towards something so powerful.”

Get to Know New IDEX Grantees in India

IDEX has selected seven outstanding organizations in India this year to each receive a \$5,000 “catalyst grant.” These grants allow IDEX a low-risk opportunity to work with organizations before committing to long-term partnership.

Your support this year will help us fund grants to **The Action Northeast Trust** (featured on Page 1) and to other grassroots organizations carrying out high-impact, cost-effective solutions to poverty and injustice including the following:

- **Manipur Women Gun Survivors’ Network (MWGSN)** supports women survivors of gun victims to heal from their trauma and launch microenterprises by offering training in financial literacy, and assisting them in getting bank accounts and small no-interest loans.
- **Impulse NGO Network**, in the Meghalaya state of Northeast India, combats human trafficking with programs in rehabilitation, counseling and employment. Considering many trafficked women and children are in the sex industry, Impulse focuses on educational and vocational programs.

- **Mine Labor Protection Campaign Trust (MLPC)** works with mine workers in Rajasthan to protect their rights and the environment. MLPC works with mine workers—mostly from the historical “untouchable class”—to develop cooperatives, eradicate child labor, address occupational health and safety, and secure workers compensation while advocating for sustainable and ethical mining in the area.
- **Navdanya Trust** is a women-centered network of seed keepers and organic producers spread across 16 states in India. In addition to setting up community seed banks across the country and training more than 500,000 farmers in sustainable agriculture, Navdanya is actively involved in rejuvenating indigenous knowledge and culture and supports the largest fair trade organic network in the country.

Find out more about our partners and grantees online at idex.org

Spotlight on Supporters—Giving Back to the International Community

When Susan Kahn came home to San Francisco after travelling extensively in Guatemala and Mexico in the 1990's, she came home invigorated with the sense of wanting to give back to the international community. When she learned about IDEX, she offered to become a volunteer in a bid to satisfy her passion for grassroots development and supporting local initiatives.



"I like that IDEX looks at its partner organizations as having the expertise that they need to address poverty" shared Susan, posed here with her husband David during a recent trip to India.

Reflecting back on the time she spent at IDEX, Susan says she was most impressed by the "really close and personal connections IDEX shares with their local partners." "My husband and I like to support causes we believe in and like to know where our money is going. I like how IDEX very carefully selects partners, finding great organizations that do not yet have the kind of funding they need, but have enough internal

structure so that they can do sufficient reporting and contact."

Apart from volunteering at IDEX, Susan and her husband David have long been supporters of IDEX.

They have had an especially close connection to GRAVIS, an IDEX partner in India. After visiting GRAVIS and seeing their work first hand, Susan helped to plan a delegation of IDEX donors to visit India so others could experience what she had.

Susan and her husband David, who both share an equal passion for travelling, visited India again last year and part of their trip had them meeting with several potential grantees on behalf of IDEX to find out more about their work.

Ways to Give: Planned Giving

Grants to our international partners come entirely from our network of philanthropic supporters. There are many ways to lend your support.

IDEX's Planned Gift Program offers a variety of gift vehicles that offers increased benefits to you and IDEX by coordinating your philanthropy with your financial or estate plans. Your bequest will allow IDEX to serve grassroots partners for many years to come.

Please contact the IDEX office 415-824-8384 or email Rajasvini Bhansali at vini@idex.org for more information.

IDEX is a 501(c)(3) organization and all donations are tax-deductible to the full extent of the law. IDEX's EIN (Tax ID) number is 77-0071852.

Since her time at IDEX, Susan noted that IDEX is more established now than it was when she first became a volunteer. She observed tremendous growth in how IDEX gives and supports organizations.

"It's a major change how IDEX has moved from funding individual projects to forming long term partnerships. IDEX approaches their partners with the idea of 'you know what you need,' rather than 'we are the experts, so we will decide what's best.'"

Susan, a former marriage and family therapist, now spends much of her time traveling. Throughout her travels, Susan has seen immense poverty which strikes her as more of a reason to give back.

"We have great resources here in the US, and I like to take part in sharing them," she shared.

We are grateful to Susan Kahn and David Kaskowitz for their support and friendship over the years.

Susan also serves on IDEX's Alliance of Advisors, a group of 50 extraordinary social change leaders from around the world.

These visionary and brilliant friends have walked closely with us this past year as we seek to manifest the goals and strategies within our ambitious three-year growth plan.

To all of our advisors, we thank you.

About IDEX

Our Mission

IDEX promotes sustainable solutions to poverty by providing long-term grants and access to resources to locally run organizations in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

Our Vision

We envision a global community that embraces economic, social and cultural rights in which all people may access resources, preserve their environment, and are empowered to live free from poverty and discrimination.

In Practice

- Empowering Women
- Building Local Economies
- Caring for the Environment

IDEX works with partners and grantees in Guatemala, Mexico, India, Nepal, South Africa and Zimbabwe.

IDEX values community initiatives that come from people who want to create change for themselves. We provide the financial support, linkages to other resources, and capacity building support. Local leaders and community members innovate, grow and deepen the impact of their work.



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(415) 824-8384

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CELEBRATING A JUBILEE YEAR

December 8th—An IDEX Housewarming Party

IDEX has a new home! We're still in the vibrant Mission neighborhood of San Francisco and we have the same phone number and email addresses. What's new is that we have a great new space!

What: A festive evening to celebrate our new space and to get to know our many supporters, allies, and neighbors.

When: Thursday, December 8th, 2011, 5pm – 8pm

Where: The brand new IDEX office!

SAVE THE DATE! Spring 2012—IDEX Reunion Weekend with a musical evening on March 16 and a brunch for alumni on March 17. More details forthcoming.

Don't want to miss an event? Want to keep up with the latest at IDEX? Have IDEX news emailed to you! Sign up for our email list at: idex.org/events

**SPECIAL ANNIVERSARY
MATCHING CHALLENGE:
DOUBLE YOUR IMPACT!**

In honor of IDEX's 25th Anniversary Year, a generous donor is MATCHING all individual gifts from now until December 31, 2011 up to a total of \$25,000.

Today is the best day to make a gift to IDEX and support the life-changing work of our international partners.

Donate online at idex.org/donate.php