

MANAKAMANA FUND NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2015

Before the devastating earthquakes on April 25 and May 12, 2015, Geeta and I made two visits to schools and met with our scholarship recipients and school personnel in four different districts. Amazingly, none of our girls was killed or injured, although many lost their family homes, and the hostel of the school in Dolakha (where we visited in March) was badly damaged. Communication after the disaster was good, and Geeta heard from most schools and students quickly. Unfortunately, all our files and records were in Geeta's family's old house, where she had just moved her office, and the structure sustained major damage and will have to be torn down. It was some time before she was able to get in and search for the files, so our June payments to students were delayed, but we are now back on track and working through the applications for next year.

First we visited the Sinduli Technical Training Centre, where we met **Lalita Mktan** from Sarlahi, who is doing her CMA degree and living in a tiny dark room with 2 other students. Lalita is second from the right in the photo, and you can see their "kitchen" behind Geeta and their bed, on which we're sitting. They have to do their studying on the roof of the building because their room has no natural light and the power is out more than half the time.



Geeta, Suntali, Lalita, Pam

Photo by Steve LeClerq

Sushma Pariyar and **Baishali Ghising** are both doing ANM degrees at the same school. Sushma had just finished the community service section, during which the students perform street dramas targeted at different populations: public health messages for kids, for elderly people, etc. Baishali asked for extra help because she can't manage on the amount we've been giving her for food and lodging. Her father was killed in an accident at the sugar factory where he worked, and there was no compensation. There are 2 younger children at home, and Baishali's mother has sold the family house and has no income other than selling home-brewed alcohol. We decided to increase Baishali's living stipend because of her family circumstances.



Sushma, Baishali

Photo by Charles Gay

In Sarlahi, we were able to visit and observe **5 former scholarship recipients who are now working** as interviewers and educators of pregnant women who are being followed in a long-term detailed study of nutrition and childbirth by NNIPS (Nepal Nutrition Intervention Program Sarlahi) supported by Johns Hopkins U. These young women are most impressive: they visit each woman once a month, driving program motorcycles on the dirt roads of villages, recording weight, temperature and blood pressure, filling out a detailed questionnaire on the progress of the pregnancy, and finally, holding a neighborhood education session at the woman's home for all women, old and young, mothers or not, to learn about pregnancy and danger signs and when to seek medical help.

Here's **Shanti Tamang**, who was a Manakamana Fund recipient in 2006–08, with her patient and then with the group.



Photos by Charles Gay

Anjala Thapa received a scholarship in 2005–07. She's been in our newsletter and calendar several times. Her first job after finishing her degree was in a sub-health post where she worked alone. When that job ended due to lack of funding (Anjala worked without pay for 6 months before quitting), she got a job at a birthing center in Dailekh, in the far west of Nepal, where she knew no one, and where she worked for 3 ½ years before joining NNIPS, first as a vaccinator and now doing interviews. Here she is with her parents outside their family home.



Photo by Charles Gay

Sita Damai had a scholarship in 2008–10, and has worked at NNIPS for 4 years. She still lives with her mother in this house where I photographed her mother and a neighbor child in 2009.



And here is Sita doing her job.



Photo by Charles Gay

In March, Geeta, Manohari and I traveled northeast of Kathmandu to Dolakha district, where we have funded scholarships for 10 years at the **Dolakha Multi-Sectoral Training Institute**. We were able to spend time with the 5 girls who are studying there this year, and to have a full tour of the school. **Abita Thami** lived in the hostel building which was declared unsafe after the earthquake. Unusually, she was not at all shy about speaking English with us, and told us about her recent “community” time, when she did health research surveys and taught health messages in skits in surrounding villages.



Abita Thami

Photo by Pam Ross

Sunita Shrestha lives in a village 2 hours by bus plus one hour walking from the school. She told us that she always wanted to be a nurse, but that her family could not afford the school fees. Her father is a teacher, and both her parents work at extra jobs to pay her living expenses, while Manakamana Fund pays her school fees. She hopes to work in her village health post after graduation, and would be the first local person to work there. Her favorite part of training is deliveries.



Sunita Shrestha

Photo by Pam Ross

Sharmila Gubaju reports that she would go to another part of Nepal to find work after graduation if necessary—a new attitude for both students and for their families, who formerly felt that young women could not work outside of their own area. Sharmila lives by herself in a room in Dolakha and cooks for herself to save money. She pays Rs. 1500/month rent, while the hostel run by the school costs Rs. 1700 (US\$17).



Sharmila Gubaju

Photo by Pam Ross

Life in Nepal will be more difficult than usual for the next few years as people in villagers in the earthquake-affected 14 central/east districts struggle to rebuild their houses, their agricultural terraces, and their confidence in the future. Inflation is in the double digits for school fees, food and lodging. We hope to carry on with about 50 scholarships active at any given time, and are immensely grateful for a wonderful donation from Norman Silver, who raised about \$9,000 by asking for donations in memory of his wife Madelyn Bradley, and then matched those donations. We hope to keep most of that money in time deposits and to use the interest to help defray rising costs.

Our 2016 Manakamana Scholarships fund-raising calendar is in production, and will have outstanding photos by Mani Lama. It's Rs. 1000 in Nepal and US\$15 elsewhere, and can be ordered from our website: www.manakamanafund.org or from Leigh Williams, our US salesperson at leigh@laughingmoonchocolates.com It's a wonderful gift.

As always, thank you so much for your generous support for 25 years of Manakamana scholarships—we're a small organization, but we actually improve the lives of the young women who receive scholarships, of their families, and of the community members they serve after graduation.

Namaste, Pam & Geeta