

## MANAKAMANA FUND NEWSLETTER SUMMER 2016

As the aftershocks from last spring's major earthquakes slowly become less frequent and smaller, and the hardship caused by political protests that led to a blockade of all forms of fuel last winter lessens, things are returning to something like normal in Nepal. During March and April, Geeta and Manohari and I met with current scholarship recipients and heard their stories.

First we hosted a gathering in Kathmandu of five girls who are studying because of the earthquake: Geeta met each of them during her immediate relief work, when she and countless other Nepalis bought basic food and cooking supplies, tarps and blankets, loaded them into trucks, and drove as far as they could to deliver the aid to villages where almost every house was badly damaged and many people had lost their stored rice and dal supplies in the rubble of their homes. In talking with young women, Geeta found some who had recently passed their SLC exams but had no way to continue their education. She handed out application forms, and we expanded our scholarship program from 50 to 63 girls.



L to R: Anisha Adhikari and Radha Rijal are from Dhading, west of Kathmandu, and are now studying to be teachers. Sita Ramtel and Makhamali Danuwar are from Sindhupalchowk, east of Kathmandu, and Makhamali is also doing a 2-year education degree, while Sita is one of our first Lab Assistant students. She studies Anatomy, Biochemistry, Microbiology, Hematology and Parasitology for 15 months and will then do a 3 month on-the-job training. All five of them enjoyed comparing earthquake stories and discussing the excitement of being in the big city, but all agreed that they will return to their villages as soon as they get their degrees.

In April we took a 4-day road trip east and south of Kathmandu, to some of the areas we visited last year, to check on schools and current students. In Sindhuli, we visited 6 girls who are studying at the Technical Training Centre for ANM and CMA degrees.



L to R: Geeta, Sita Bhujel, Pushpanjali Syangtan, Manohari, Babita Katwal, Ambika Tamang, Pam, Pramila Ghising, Hoisher Doma Thing, Steve

Steve tested the girls' knowledge of current medical trends by asking them what they knew about "navi," which refers to umbilical cord care in Nepali. Not only did they all know about chlorhexidine (CHX), but they were able to explain its use (prevention of umbilical cord infection after delivery) and the statistics, generated by health workers like our graduates, showing that use of CHX reduces infection by 24%. This inexpensive ointment is now used all over Nepal and other developing countries, based largely on research done in Sarlahi by the Nepal Nutrition Intervention Programme, which Steve heads.



We were lucky to catch a rehearsal for the community outreach section of the ANM and CMA degrees, where the students put on street dramas, one of which showed the difference between old-fashioned mother-in-law/daughter-in-law relationships (lots of ordering, scolding and criticism) and the modern style (polite requests, encouragement and concern for feelings). And because they know the best way to draw a crowd for their health-related skits, the girls also practiced singing and dancing for their upcoming show.



On the way back to Kathmandu, we visited Rubi Mahato, who is doing her ANM degree at Makwanpur Technical Institute. Her favorite subject is first aid, because it is both practical and theoretical. It's her first time away from home, and she sometimes feels homesick, but she and her whole family are happy that she will be able to get a good job when she finishes her degree.

Our last visit was to Priti Basnet, who was on her 4<sup>th</sup> day of a 45-day on-the-job training at a birthing center in Hetauda.



Despite double-digit inflation and a 25% increase in school fees in Nepal, we hope to continue to support up to 65 young women per year for vocational degrees which will enable them to return to their villages to work. Geeta and Manohari have just completed the difficult task of choosing 35 new recipients from over 150 applications. The breakdown is:

Education	12
ANM (midwife)	11
CMA (med. assistant)	4
Lab assistant	4
JTA (agriculture)	4

Our graduates find jobs in health posts, birthing centers, schools, labs, and NGOs, and we are convinced that a small, targeted program like the Manakamana Fund can truly improve the lives of dedicated young women, and of the villagers they serve.

In recognition of our long and successful experience, we have recently received two wonderful grants from the Ama Dablam Initiative of the Community Foundation of Northern Colorado and the Helambu Project. And we continue to count on all of you to help make the dreams of Nepali girls a reality.

Thank you, Pam Ross & Geeta Manandhar

And the 2017 Manakamana Fund calendar will be out soon, with photos by HR Downs. Still \$15 in the US and Rs. 1000 in Nepal. Order from [www.manakamanafund.com](http://www.manakamanafund.com) or directly from Leigh Williams, [leigh@laughingmoonchocolates.com](mailto:leigh@laughingmoonchocolates.com)  
Here's a preview:

