

MANAKAMANA FUND NEWSLETTER
SUMMER 2017

Although we were unable to make a field trip outside of Kathmandu this year, we met many of our scholarship recipients at two events: one a gathering to introduce people who help sell our fundraising calendar to the students who benefit from it, and the other a tea party for the recipients from in and around Kathmandu to meet each other and share experiences.



Ram Maya Tamang is from Dhading and is studying for her PJTA (Plant Junior Technical Assistant) degree at Emerald Technical School in Balaju, Kathmandu. Her coursework includes Plant Identification, Soil, Plant Propagation, and Agriculture classes. Her father has married a second wife and moved with her to Kathmandu, leaving Ram Maya's mother without any support. Her mother works as a laborer, and is angry because her husband won't support his first family.

Srijana Shrestha comes from Nuwakot and is studying for her Education degree at Janakau School in Nuwakot. Her courses include English, Nepali, Population Studies, and Pedagogy of Education. She wants to teach Class 4 or 5 because, as she said, the children know more by then and are easier to teach.





Melina Tamang is from Dhading and is studying for her CMA (Certified Medical Assistant) degree at a school in Dhading. She reports that she couldn't understand much in her classes at first, but now feels comfortable and confident at her school.

Sita Ramtel has recently completed her ANM (Auxiliary Nurse-Midwife) degree at Kavre Health Institute. She shared with us how hard it was to live alone at first, and how difficult it was for her to understand the subject matter of her classes. She said, "Before I was often bored. Now I'm never bored." She hopes to find a job soon.





Tsering Dolma Lama completed her Education degree in Kathmandu last year and returned to Nubri, a remote valley near the Tibetan border, where she was born, to teach kindergarten. I emailed to ask her what is the best/worst part of her job. She responded: "...the best of my job is we follow American teaching style...in our kindergarten, like we are not allowed to beat our kids, we do circle time and center time and have different corners for our kids. The worst about my job is during harvest season parents never send their kids to school and we have nothing to do. Besides teaching kids I also teach English to adults and run a reading club for primary school students."



More than 200 applications came in this year, a big increase over last year. Geeta and Manohari spent many hours reading and sorting them, and have recommended granting 45 new scholarships this year. Normally we grant 32 or 33 new ones each year to keep our total enrollment near 65, but this year there were many applications from blind, deaf or otherwise disabled girls, all asking to study Education, so we have decided to grant 19 sholarships to disabled students. Because they receive free school fees at the special schools for the blind and deaf, we will pay only their hostel fees of Rs. 3500/month (about \$400/year). This will bring us to 67 scholarships, an all-time high.

A sign of changing times in Nepal is that many village families now have some cash income, either from employment of family members or from remittances sent by family members working abroad. This allows us to have the families pay part or all of the student's living expenses, depending on the family's income, which has two advantages: first, we can spread our funds further and grant more scholarships, and second, families get used to the idea of spending money on education for their daughters, not just for their sons.

Things are also changing in the education system in Nepal, and we are working hard to anticipate and understand how the new system will affect our scholarship recipients. Until this year, secondary education ended after Class 10 and the comprehensive exam known as the SLC (School Leaving Certificate). The new system, to be phased in over a 5 year period, will extend secondary education to Class 12, and the SLC will be given after Class 12. Geeta and I met with the head of CTEVT (Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training) to discuss what the changes will mean for our girls.

There is a new comprehensive exam after Class 10 called the Secondary Education Examination (SEE). Students who want to continue their education in a technical field (like most of the degrees we fund) will need to score C+ or above on the SEE. They will then be able to go directly into those courses (after passing the entrance exam for their specific degree) and then take the Technical School Leaving Certificate exam (TSLC) when they finish their coursework and required on-the-job training.

At the same time, many of the vocational/technical degrees are being expanded to 18 months, so the CMA, JTA and Lab Assistant degrees will all be 18 rather than 15 months starting next year. So fees will go up along with living expenses.

Please continue to support the education of young women who have the brains and the drive to succeed, but not the money.

Thank you, Pam Ross & Geeta Manandhar



The 2018 Manakamana fundraising calendar is in production, and will feature 12 stunning Kevin Bubliski portraits of women and girls in Humla, one of Nepal's most remote and poorest districts. It's still \$15 in the US and Rs. 1000 in Nepal, and you can order online at our website, www.manakamanafund.com