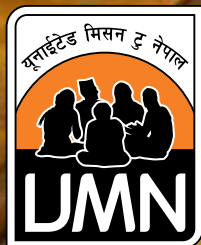


UMNNews

Issue 39 | May 2013



Fullness of life for all, in a transformed Nepali society



Dear friends,

Welcome to this edition of **UMNews**, in which our theme is “**Learning Together**”. This edition features stories of how individuals and communities have been inspired to learn and therefore grow and develop: from blind students in Mugu learning Braille, to older

women learning to read and write for the first time. But learning is not just about education – be it formal or informal. It is also about whether we as an organisation and individuals are pro-actively learning from our experience and sharing and applying this learning. Only by doing this do we continue to improve the effectiveness of our work. The question is: does UMN have 59 years of experience in Nepal, or one year of experience 59 times! I am glad to say that generally I think it is the former, but learning is something we are trying to get better at. Our Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Team is now our Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Team, with a specific responsibility for improving the learning in the organisation as a whole.

Often we learn more from our mistakes than our successes. Part of developing a culture of learning is therefore giving people the freedom to be innovative and try things out, with the risk of getting it wrong. Then ensuring that we have a culture where people feel free to share what has gone wrong and what they have learned from that. The key is not to avoid getting anything wrong in the first place, but to make sure we learn from our mistakes and don't make the same mistake twice!

My hope and prayer is that you will be encouraged by these stories of learning and change, and challenged to continue to learn yourselves – whatever your age or circumstances!

Mark Galpin
Executive Director



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Cover Photo: Lyn Jackson
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LEARNING Together

Before joining UMN in July 2005, I was involved in teaching, educational research work and teacher training work. In 1994, I visited UMN's office with a friend, and was quite impressed with the environment and resources. I dreamt of working there. The dream became reality ten years later, and I started learning with UMN at the Learning Review workshop, held a month after I joined UMN.

I have really enjoyed my work, and the learning opportunities that have helped me grow up to my potential. We are all learners; our partnership approach is a cornerstone for our learning, and working along with our partners, who are learning at different levels, gives me great joy.

Community-level learning is really meaningful for anyone who wants to contribute to the transformation process. Staying in the communities, working closely with our partners and addressing the real needs by living out our values help me to create my own learning horizon. Teachers who oppose enhancing education through team work and community engagement, head teachers who resist making big changes in their schools, parents who blame teachers for poor education - all can be transformed by establishing a culture of learning together. Forums and networks at district level help us to share knowledge in a sustainable way. In our teams, we have built our confidence and become multi-skilled community developers. With our partners, the participatory approaches that we have adopted and our capacity development activities enable us to learn from different people.

Open learning sharing among technical experts from many countries is a beauty of UMN. Since 2011, I have been overseeing our Child Centered Community Development Programme (CCCDP). I really enjoy working with children and communities, and have been learning lots from children, parents, our partners and our supporting organisation. Together, we are transforming children's lives.

Of course, there are challenges. Our own perceptions are a major challenge in the learning process. Openness, being a good team player, co-operation and caring for each other are essential in a learning culture. Developing good listening, problem solving and communication skills have helped me minimise the challenges. I am proud to be part of UMN and its wider family. The culture of "Learning Together" is part of our identity and a foundation for achieving our vision: "Fullness of life for all, in a transformed Nepali society".

Yagya Pant
Education Advisor, CCCDP



Learning in their own language

You'd never think it to look at her, but Arati used to hate going to school. Almost every morning, she'd cry and complain. Her mother, Sila, who'd never been to school herself, didn't know what to do with her. She was determined that her daughter would learn, so she would scold and beat Arati, and send her off sobbing.

It's not surprising that Arati didn't enjoy school. The five-year-old had to sit in a dark, stuffy, crowded room, on the dirt floor, chanting from the blackboard all day long. And she couldn't even understand what she was chanting. Like most of the students at her school, Arati comes from a minority language group. Nepali is not spoken in her home, and rarely in her village. She was completely confused.

Until fairly recently, educational thinking in Nepal resisted taking account of minority languages at all in the classroom. Nepali was seen as the language to unite the many ethnic groups in the country, with English taught as a second language. This attitude has gradually been changing and, several years ago, the Ministry of Education developed a curriculum for Multi-Lingual Education (MLE), recognising that both children and adults learn to read more easily in their first language. Schools found it difficult to implement the programme, though, because there were no suitable resources.

AN INNOVATIVE APPROACH

Meanwhile, the school community at UMN's partner, Janakalyan Higher Secondary School,

was concerned about high absentee and drop-out rates. They discussed the issue among themselves and with various education experts, and felt strongly that a good MLE programme would benefit students, enabling them to learn more easily and keeping them in school longer. Other schools had addressed the resource problem by translating existing materials into local languages, but JKHSS took a different tack. Teachers undertook to write books in various curriculum areas, using local languages and local examples. These would be more interesting and more relevant for children. This long, time-consuming process has paid off. Now, MLE books in two languages are available for students in Grades 1 and 2, and books for Grade 3 are being prepared.

IT'S NOT JUST THE BOOKS

Other changes were taking place at JKHSS. The “child-friendly” education movement in Nepal has seen changes in teaching practice and changes in classroom environments. Arati and her friends sit on cushions on a carpeted floor now, and have access to brightly-coloured educational materials, not just their MLE books. The walls are painted with alphabet and numbers charts. Her teacher, Homakala Khanal, has been trained to teach in a more interactive way, using games and songs, group work and discussion. It's no wonder Arati has such a big grin at school these days!

The school has worked hard to involve parents at every step in the process. At first, they were concerned that their children wouldn't learn Nepali, and worried that they were just playing, not learning. Mothers' Groups were set up for Grades 1 and 2, and parents invited to take part in various training programmes. Sila, Arati's mum, overcame her diffidence to take part. “Now I understand about parents' responsibilities and children's rights,” she says. She makes sure Arati is smartly dressed in her school uniform, and sends her off with a hug instead of a beating these days. “Encourage your children and support them, don't beat them!” she tells other parents.

Arati runs happily off down the path, eager to join her friends and teacher for another day of fun and learning.



Arati's grin shows how much she enjoys school, now that she can learn in her own language.



Parent training has helped Sila, Arati's mum, understand how she can encourage and support her daughter.



UMN provides small scholarships to enable children from very poor families to continue their education. A scholarship for a primary school student costs about USD 215 per year.

See page 14, or contact finance@umn.org.np

Like a buffalo thirsty to learn

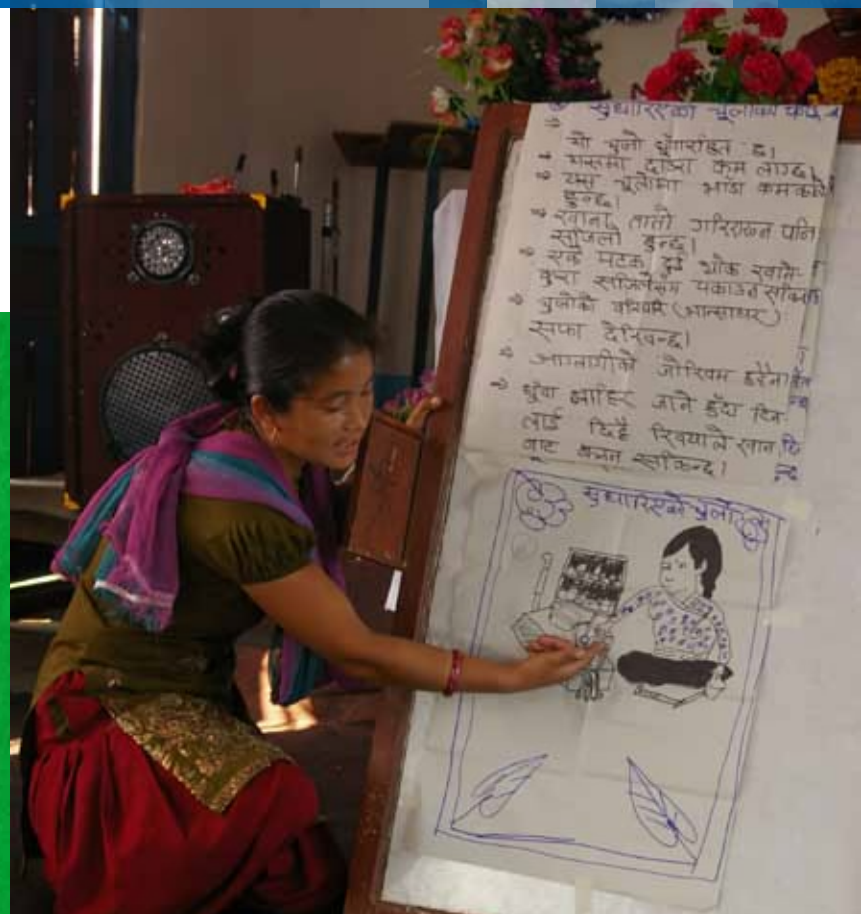
To get to the Jugepani Church in Dhaubadi, you leave the main east-west highway and wend your way through a magnificent forest for several kilometres before the trees give way to open fields. A colourful line of women, some riding bicycles, makes its way to the church for their weekly literacy class.

Alisha Tamang is there to greet them. She's the facilitator of the group, a compact bundle of energy. The session starts with some choruses – only about half the women are Christian, but they all enjoy the singing. Most of the women are ethnic Tamangs, so singing in Nepali is part of their learning, too. After a short prayer, the lesson begins.

Alisha is using the REFLECT method, which means that the interests and needs of the women themselves shape the content of the lesson. This is hard work for the facilitator; Alisha has made her own charts. Today, they are learning about improved cooking stoves, which are healthier (less smoke inside) and reduce timber use. The women are very interested. The forest outside is community-managed, and they are only allowed to gather fallen timber for their cooking fires. They want to preserve the forest, but they need to cook, too. The group aims to have 100 stoves installed in houses in the next six months. They practise the words that Alisha has chosen, writing them in their notebooks.

"I didn't know anything before," says one of the women. "I was like a buffalo – thirsty to learn!"

Access to education in Nepal has improved dramatically, especially when you consider that 60 years ago, only members of the ruling family and their courtiers went to school at all. Now, the literacy rate for people above 15 years is 60.3%, but less than half (48.3%) of women can read and write. When the women in Alisha's group were of school age, it was



unheard of to educate a daughter. "They will marry, and go into their husbands' families," parents reasoned. It didn't make sense to spend scarce resources on girls' education.

But things have changed. In an increasingly commercialised environment, women need to be able to read, write and calculate. Literacy classes, like those run by UMN's partner Isai Samaj Nawalparasi, bridge the gap for women, and also encourage women to educate their daughters and granddaughters. The generational change is extraordinary.



Jalekha's family runs several small “fancy goods” shops in the local bazaar. Because she couldn't read or write, Jalekha could just watch the shop when no-one else was available. Now, due to the literacy classes she attended, she is a competent book-keeper, handling sales and record-keeping on her own. Her third son is studying for a management degree.



Ambika nearly lost her sole income source, a fruit stall, when her husband died. He had done all the purchasing and account-keeping. Ambika could sell fruit, but she couldn't negotiate with the wholesalers or bargain in the market. Co-operatives wouldn't give her a loan, because she couldn't read. The literacy classes she attended saved her business, giving her the skills she needed. Now, her grandchildren (she calls them her “apples and oranges”) are attending a good school, and doing well.



Rupa's mother is well into her 80s. She had no education at all. Neither did Rupa, until she joined a literacy class. Now, she's a literacy facilitator, teaching other women to read and write. Her granddaughter Sashaktikaran is in Grade 9, and wants to be a doctor.



ISN is one of UMN's Christian faith-based partners. Literacy classes are a great way for the church to provide a valued service for the local community. Please pray for ISN and its partner churches in this important work.

Jugepani Church particularly requested prayer for the management of the local forest. Please pray that the community will be able to protect this valuable resource.

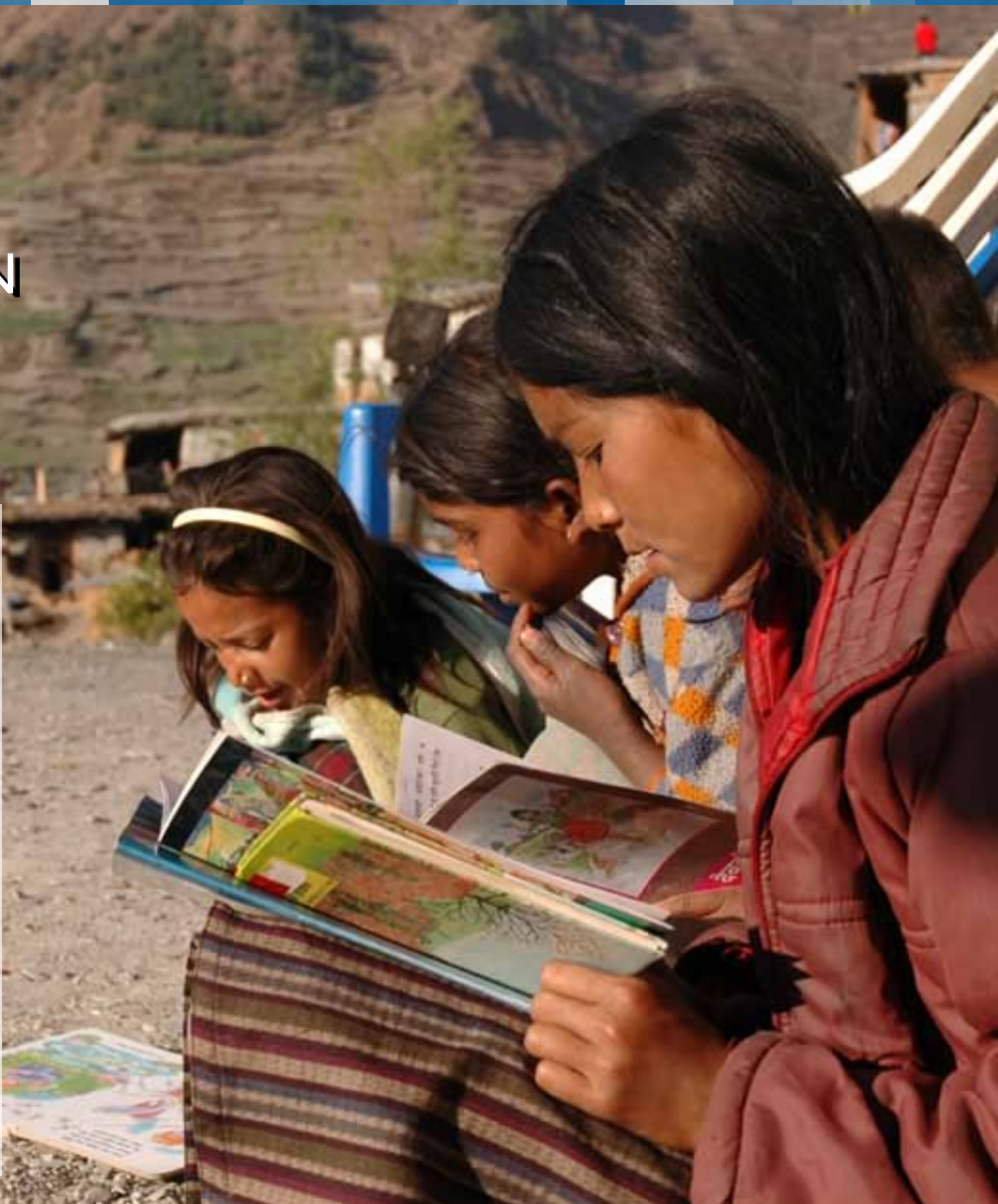
MUGU

HIGHER EDUCATION

When UMN began work in Mugu district up in the high Himals of north-western Nepal back in 1999, the plan was to start literacy classes for women. This soon changed, as the women in the community said: “What use is reading and writing to us? But we want our children to learn. Teach them!”

Fourteen years later, it's clear that UMN and the Mugu communities have truly been learning together. UMN has learned to listen to the community, to be flexible and responsive. We've learned to work in a difficult environment – challenging both geographically, socially and politically. And we've learned – again! – that people can show indomitable spirit and determination in changing their lives and their communities.

What have the people of Mugu learned? They've learned to grow apples and vegetables; they've built toilets and hostels, and rebuilt schools and clinics. The women have learned how to help each other in childbirth, and how to care for mothers and new babies well; and much more besides. They've also learned that everyone matters – even children like Ujeli, even low caste girls like Sarita, even people with disabilities. They've learned that, with a little help, everyone can succeed and contribute something valuable to their community. That's truly “higher education”.



EVEN A DALIT CAN DO IT

Sarita covered her face with her scarf and started sobbing. Was she nervous about the interview? I had asked: "What is it like for a Dalit (low caste person) in your village?" Was this the wrong question?

At just 15, Sarita has experienced the bitter pain of suffering discrimination because of her status as a Dalit. Her hurt and

frustration are expressed in quiet sobs. When she felt better, she wiped her eyes with chapped, coarse hands and explains: "The people in this village are jealous because I score the highest marks in my class and also because I receive scholarship grants." Now I see a stronger Sarita. "I will keep working hard and show them that even a Dalit can do well in life," she says.

Sarita is a Grade 10 student who has been receiving a scholarship from UMN for three years. When she was in Grade 7, her parents could not afford to send her to school any more. That is when GSS, a UMN partner in Mugu, visited her village and made her dream to finish school come true.



Sarita struggles to find time for household work and her studies. As the eldest, her mother expects Sarita to help more at home. But she also understands how important going to school is. "There is nothing as valuable as education; I never got a chance to go to school, but Sarita is lucky to have this support," she says.

Left: Sarita and her family. Right: Hira Lal teaches Ujeli to read Braille.

BRaille – SIGHT FOR THE BLIND

Hira Lal Raut had no idea how tough and challenging it would be when he joined the Braille training course in Kathmandu, provided by the Blind Welfare Association (BWA), six years ago. "Learning Braille was not easy," he said. "It's like learning a new language."

Hira Lal has a heart for sightless children. A blind child in Mugu has no identity, no life, and is expected to just sit in the corner of the house, doing nothing and causing no trouble.

It has now been six years since Hira Lal started teaching Braille to a group of children in Shree Nepal Rastriya Primary School. The Braille books that have been given by UMN have expanded these children's world, and lifted their minds to a higher level.

Damodar Pandit, UMN's Rehabilitation Co-ordinator, remembers how he tried very hard for Hira Lal to get a place in the BWA training course. Hira Lal has also received training through UMN, where he learnt about taking care of and dealing with blind children.

Hira Lal very lovingly spends time with these children. "They need a lot of encouragement when they start Braille, as it's quite challenging and they want to give up. The children are hard-working and eager to learn," says Hira Lal.



Back to school

for farmers

It's easy to understand why farmers tend to be conservative, especially marginal farmers for whom any decrease in production has disastrous consequences. They need to be sure that new techniques will work before they commit their fields and their time.

However, farmers in many parts of Nepal are going back to school. Integrated Pest Management Schools are teaching farmers how to use readily available local materials – herbs, urine, dung and indigenous crops – to make organic pesticides and fertilisers. Different products are used on demonstration plots, proving to farmers that they can control pests and raise healthy crops without expensive and environmentally damaging chemicals. This year, UMN's partners have conducted 18 schools in six districts, training 446 farmers in these important skills.

Bimala Ghimire, of Nawalparasi, is thrilled with the results in her vegetable plot. She has been able to achieve better production at minimal cost, over a two-year period. "What a miracle happened!" she says. "I can hardly believe it."

In Dhading district, farmers are keen to spread the news about organic farming to their neighbours. Ramraja Panday, who now uses no chemicals on his fields, just the organic compounds he makes himself, says: "My future plan is to help form an organic farming network, so we can work together in the production and marketing of products."



WHEN THE CHURCH MOVES OUT

What happens when the church moves out of the church building? All sorts of things!

Since 2010, more than 420 churches in Nepal have participated in the Church Community Mobilisation Process, a programme run through UMN's Integral Mission Team. Church pastors and leaders get together to study the Bible and learn what God has to say about seeking justice for the oppressed and serving the poor with compassion. They also learn skills in how to plan and implement small-scale projects in their own communities, showing God's love in practical ways.

Fifty-two members of the church in Pelma, Rukum, spent 22 days constructing a trail between two villages, through steeply sloping land and across treacherous mountain streams. The trail will halve the time it takes to get from one village to another, according to church leader Suk Bahadur Khatri. The villagers appreciate the hard work of the Christians, and now take them seriously as part of the community, rather than followers of an "outsider" religion.

Other activities undertaken by churches include health camps, out-of-school classes for children, savings and credit groups, care and counselling for people living with HIV and AIDS, and providing materials for local schools.



ECDCs DRIVING CHANGE IN RUKUM

Early Childhood Development Centres in Rukum were in dire condition some years ago. Then, the primary and higher secondary schools weren't too eager to change the way they worked. So UMN chose to focus on the ECDCs rather than schools. This pragmatic approach was taken because change can only happen if people are willing to change - otherwise time, energy and money would be wasted.

Many ECDCs were visited, parents were brought together and plans were made. Now the children of Rukum love their ECD Centres. They don't like the holidays, when they are expected to stay home. The Centres use materials, the teachers are trained and the parents are very involved in the whole process.

However, a child will spend many more years in school after leaving the ECDC. Students who have enjoyed a creative, experiential learning environment in their ECDC are slowly but surely making transformation happen in the Rukum schools. When these former ECD students went to Grade 1, they were not very happy. They used to love their ECD Centre and learn so much. Now they were expected to sit on a hard bench for hours and hours, just reciting what the teacher told them. The children protested, and now the teachers are starting to feel they should change their way of working.

What UMN could not accomplish before is now demanded by the children!

NEWS

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REMEMBERING PETER HARWOOD

Peter Harwood, who served with UMN from 1993 to 2002, passed away in the UK on 6 May 2013. Peter and his wife Valerie came to Nepal in 1993. Seconded to the Butwal Power Company, and then to Himal Power, Peter was the man behind the USD 130M 60MW Khimti Hydropower Project. In its time, Khimti was one of the biggest private ventures in Nepal. Under Peter's leadership and management, the project came in on time and under budget – an amazing feat – and still provides much-needed electricity. Peter was awarded the Prabal Gorakha Dakshinbahu by King Birendra, in recognition of his contribution as “a loyal and trusted friend of the Nation” in 2001.

Our heart-felt condolences to Valerie and their family. Peter's wisdom, passion and humanity will be deeply missed.



Peter Harwood receives the Prabal Gorakha Dakshinbahu from King Birendra, 2001.

UMN EXPAT RETREAT 2013

UMN's Expat Retreat is a real treat – a time for UMN's expats to get together, talk, laugh, learn and pray. For this year's retreat, we all descended on the Chitwan Paradise Hotel. The retreat featured elephant rides, canoe rides and jungle walks, as well as times of learning and worship, led by Malcolm and Cati Ramsay.

Our UMN T-shirt model is Asha Wright, fearlessly leaping into the river to cool off. Asha and brother Jack were both awarded for their dedication in wearing UMN T-shirts almost continuously during the weekend.



SCHOLARSHIPS FROM LOCAL SOURCES

Seven of UMN's Rupandehi partners are collecting funds for local-level scholarships from local resources – from VDC funds, from local businessmen, from community members who work abroad, from donation boxes, and from various community groups and churches. All together, they have collected around NRP 600,000 (USD 7,060) and deposited this in special scholarship accounts. In this way, a culture of helping those less fortunate is slowly developing.

UMN has played a vital role in helping set up scholarship committees and establishing good policies and processes. All the local scholarship programmes focus on the poor, girls, children with disabilities, children affected by HIV and AIDs, and very gifted students.

Champa (*pictured*) is happy because this means she can stay in school and get the education she needs for her future.





UMN and INF conferences are a great way to connect with others who have a passion for Nepal, and get the latest information on what's happening.

UK and Europe: "No other foundation"

20-22 September

The Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick

Contact Nepal Conference Secretary on +44 0 121 472 2425 or email nepalconference2013@inf.org.np

Australia Nepal Conference

27 July, 9:00am-2:00pm

Barker College, Hornsby, Sydney

Contact the INF office at 02 9411 1195 or email ausoffice@au.inf.org



I AM STILL

Learning

“What a rich life!”

David McConkey
Liaison and Integral
Mission Director

In the summer of 1976, Ann and I headed off to Pokhara after four months of language learning in Kathmandu. We were to be hostel parents for 50 secondary school boys, and I was to teach science at Nepali Aadarsha Madyamik Vidyalaya (later known as Gandaki Boarding School). It was a wonderful, though at times humbling, experience. A steep learning curve! So many silly mistakes in Nepali language – but 30 people in every class to correct me, and 50 in the evenings in the hostel. Yet they did it with a laugh and a smile.

We were able to share lots of things with the boys, with the teachers, with village folk and with others who just passed by. A two-way learning process. What a rich life!

A blessing from God.

One of the joys of more recent years in Nepal is meeting some of those students again, many of whom are now grey-haired, middle-aged men, but doing significant jobs in various walks of life. One said to me: “David sir, I remember in a Class 8 science test, you once gave me 11 out of 10!” I think it was because his answer was so good, I gave him a bonus mark. He still remembered it 35 years later!

I’m still learning. Not just new Nepali words, but new things about Nepali society and culture as well as the cultures of other UMN expatriate colleagues from different countries. And new things about myself. It truly is a rich environment.

As Henry Ford said: “Anyone who stops learning is old, whether at twenty or eighty. Anyone who keeps learning stays young.”

Now there’s a challenge for me!



In August, David and Ann will be leaving Nepal (again!) after a total of 27 years of service. We wish them every blessing, as they continue to grow and learn and serve God wherever He places them. We will miss them sorely!



pray

Pray for UMN's Education Team, led by Kshitij Prasai. Hira Lal Shrestha probably has one of the most challenging roles, as Education Officer in Mugu. Hira Lal relocated to Mugu this year, so pray for him as he settles into a new cluster, forms relationships with local schools and the District Education Office.

Pray for the students on UMN scholarships. Currently, 446 students receive UMN scholarships, and many more, like Champa, receive local scholarships from partner organisations (see *News* page 12).

Pray for the Multi-Lingual Education Programme at Janakalyan HSS (see *pages* 4-5). There has been a lot of interest in this programme, and there may be opportunities to replicate it with other language groups. Pray that funds might be available, so that more children can start their education in their own language.

Pray for churches which have participated in Sangsangai, the Church Community Mobilisation Programme (see *page* 11). Pray that pastors and church leaders will be able to enthuse their congregations to find ways in which they can serve their communities. Pray that these acts of love will open people's hearts towards Christians, and draw communities together.



donate

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Mail to:

**Finance Team (39), UMN
PO Box 126
Kathmandu, Nepal**

INTERNET BANKING & MONEY TRANSFER

Set up a payment or monthly standing order to transfer funds.

UK & EUROPEAN CURRENCIES

Pay to: **United Mission to Nepal**

Sort Code: **60-91-99**

Account Number: **10078177** (Sterling)
10615512 (Euro)

US & NEPAL CURRENCIES

Transfer or wire to:

**Standard Chartered Bank Nepal Ltd.
PO Box 3990, Nayabaneswar,
Kathmandu, Nepal**

Account Number:

Swift Code: **SCBLNPKA**
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OTHER OPTIONS

Contact finance@umn.org.np

- To designate your gift for a certain cluster or area of work
- To find out about tax-efficient giving in the UK, USA and Australia



tell others



See for yourself! Watch the UMN website for the release of a new series of video clips, showing aspects of UMN's Health and Education work. These short clips are ideal to show your church or home fellowship group, or to put up on your Facebook page. Go to umn.org.np/video to watch or download.

Everything you need to know about UMN. UMN's amazing fold-out brochure contains lots of useful information in a very accessible form. It's a great way to introduce others to the work of UMN. And on the back, there's a lovely poster. Contact communications@umn.org.np – why not order several, so you can display BOTH sides on your church notice-board!



join us

UMN's cross-cultural teams provide opportunities for suitably skilled expatriates to work with Nepali colleagues, sharing technical skills and demonstrating God's loving concern for all people, particularly the poorest and most vulnerable.

Expatriate team members do not receive a salary or remuneration from UMN directly, but are self-supported volunteers, or supported by a sending mission or church in their home country. If you are interested in either of these positions, or if you would like to ask about other opportunities for service in UMN, please contact Ann McConkey at expat.recruitment@umn.org.np to learn more. Send your CV or resumé with your email.

PRIORITY NEEDS

Surgeon – United Mission Hospital Tansen

General surgeon with full post-graduate qualifications, currently registered with his/her own national regulating body. Work involves dealing with both elective and emergency general surgical cases and also teaching and mentoring junior Nepali doctors. Flexibility and an interest in teaching required, as well as the ability to work in a more resource-limited setting.

Climate Change Advisor – Kathmandu, with frequent travel to regional and remote areas

A person willing to work flexibly to explore, research, plan, implement and monitor interventions for clean energy and/or climate change. S/he should have skills in at least some of the following: knowledge of and ability to

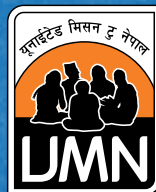
promote clean energy (e.g. micro-hydro, solar power); knowledge of adaptive and mitigation measures for climate change; ability to promote adaptive livelihood measures such as resilient crops, water management and micro-insurance; ability to advocate on climate change issues.





**Bhabishara, Secretary, Sagarmatha Kisori Group
(Everest Teenage Girls' Group), Sundar Nagar,
Butwal. Bhabishara is studying in Grade 7.**

“WITHOUT AN EDUCATION,
IT'S LIKE SITTING IN DARKNESS.
TO GO FORWARD,
WE NEED AN EDUCATION.”



Fullness of life for all, in a transformed Nepali society

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