

UMN News

Issue 45 | November 2014



Fullness of life for all, in a transformed Nepali society



Dear friends,

Welcome to this edition of *UMNews* in which we celebrate learning. Education, both formal and non-formal, has always been core to the work of UMN. This newsletter highlights the significant contribution that UMN has made in this area in Nepal during its 60-year history, and the on-going work we are involved in to strengthen education in Nepal and help those who live in poverty to fulfill their God-given potential. From smoke-filled NFE classes to village schools to eminent institutions like Gandaki Boarding School, UMN has been there and taught people not just to read and write, but to learn, to think, and to live.

As we have developed our strategy for 2015 -20, the importance of learning for us as an organisation has come to the fore. Innovation and learning are increasingly being recognised as key roles for INGOs globally. Trying out new approaches to development and service provision and then recording and gathering the learning from these, and then sharing this with others, are key to increasing our collective effectiveness. To be successful at this, we need to develop a culture of learning, including a commitment to think critically about our work, and an openness to what has gone well and what has not gone so well. We need to be proactive about documenting this learning, and then actively sharing this with others.

I am always inspired and encouraged when I come across examples of work and approaches in other organisations and institutions which are modelled and based on what they have learned from UMN. I pray that God will continue to give us the humility and commitment to learn, and the courage to change ourselves and others in response to that learning. Please join me in praying and working towards ensuring that UMN continues to be an organisation that learns and develops. We want to celebrate 60 years of experience, not one year of experience 60 times!

Mark Galpin
Executive Director

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THE JOY OF LEARNING



UMN and Education have been together almost from the very beginning, with the pioneering of girls' education at Mahendra Bhawan (1957, see *UMNews #42*) and the support of village schools and teacher training in Gorkha District (from 1958).

I followed in these footsteps, and spent five wonderful years in a village school in the east of Gorkha. The headmaster was outstanding. Why? Because he had been taught by those pioneers: people like Jonathan Lindell, Asbjorn Vorland, Margaret McCombe and Howard Barclay. Margaret went on to teach ladies informally. I often meet people who tell me of the sweets she made for the students on Saturdays.

From my Language and Orientation Group (class of 1982!) some went to other village schools. Alan McIlhenny went into new and difficult territory, the University Campus in Pokhara. A handful of others have also made their mark in higher education, teaching in medical colleges, Karnali Technical School and helping set up Kathmandu University.

Good educational provisions for the children of expatriate UMNers has been important to keep families together in Nepal. UMN folk were instrumental in setting up the British Primary School, with a UMN children's hostel. But families often left when children reached secondary level, so Alan McIlhenny and his wife Margaret started the Kathmandu International Study Centre. With so many people in distant locations, tutorial groups were run so primary-aged children could study at home.

With high illiteracy rates, non-formal education was a major UMN activity in most projects (*page 6*). The huge Jajarkot NFE Project covered almost every VDC in that mountainous district, teaching about health, hygiene, agriculture and income generation, as well as literacy and numeracy. The interesting and well-produced Pipal Pustak books were designed to be suitable for new readers (*page 7*).

I moved to Gandaki Boarding School (*page 4*) in 1989, as it was "given back" to UMN as a co-ed English medium high school. Several ex-students are still my very good friends. Then reluctantly, but sure of God's will, I was seconded to the Government, and by amazing, tortuous events found myself training government teachers and even writing some of the textbooks. From this base, I began to train teachers for other INGOs or local groups of schools. It has been fascinating to see the changes in school education over the last 30 years.

I left UMN in 2005, but continue to be busier than ever in training rural teachers, and education is still a UMN priority, as it partners with schools and NGOs to improve government teaching standards. Sometimes, there is a lot of hopelessness and a sense of failure, but as Christians, we can try to help: the joy of learning from good teaching is always possible!

Christine Stone
Educator

In 1999, Christine was awarded the Order of the British Empire (OBE) by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II for services to education in Nepal.



In 1965, a national politician, a mid-western politician, and a high official in the Education Ministry appeared at the UMN compound, Kathmandu. Representing the Citizens' Committee of Pokhara, they came with a request:

"The good boarding schools are all in the Kathmandu Valley. There is no proper education for our sons in the west. We have therefore joined together to make a quality boarding school in the Pokhara area... We know about the school work which your Mission has already done in Nepal and we have come to ask you please to join and help us with this school."

After much discussion and prayer, UMN suggested a three-way partnership: the Pokhara Citizens' Committee, UMN and INF, which was already working in Pokhara. UMN would find capital for the building work, and provide skilled staff to manage and teach at the school.

Thus was born Gandaki Boarding School - a cluster of thatched huts overlooking the Gandaki River, in the shadow of Mt Machapuchare. Beginning with 50 boys in four classes, by the 1970s 350 students were enrolled.

The school's vision was to provide a quality academic education, along with practical skills. The school boasted a large farm, and students were rostered for cooking and cleaning duties as well as farm work. In addition to the beautiful stone buildings, UMN contributed expertise in curriculum development, teaching and management that put GBS at the forefront of education in Nepal.

In 1971, GBS was absorbed into the National Education System Plan, and was run by a management committee appointed by the Education Ministry, with UMN membership. It became the first Regional School in the country in 1985, and a year later, girls were admitted. There are now over 1000 students, 35% girls. The Gandaki College of Engineering and Science offers a Bachelor of Engineering in Software Engineering.

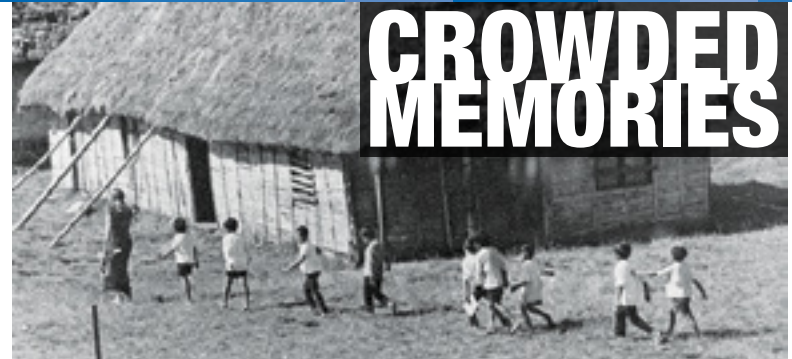
Throughout its history, GBS has provided for the education of talented but economically disadvantaged students. UMN's scholarship team travelled to remote parts of the country, interviewing teachers, parents and students, and administering the scholarship exam. To this day, 20% of the students at GBS study on scholarships, managed through the Dr PV Chandy GBS Trust (established by a former UMN Principal).

For its academic performance in the School Leaving Certificate exams, GBS has been awarded the Regional Educational Birendra Shield 15 times. In 2004, it won the National Birendra Education Shield, for the best performance in the country.

But the most important achievement of the school lies, in the words of its motto, in the knowledge, character and service of its students. GBS students have contributed mightily to national life, through politics and the law, education, science and medicine, the arts, and through many social development organisations and activities. GBS graduates "give back" to their communities in a myriad of ways.

Three men with a vision, UMN's willingness to listen and respond, years of commitment to excellence and integrity – a lasting legacy for Nepal.

Lyn Jackson
Communications Director



Looking back to GBS in the 70s and 80s, many memories come flooding into my mind. Dinner duty in the dining hall, ensuring that mealtime for 200+ boys went smoothly; inter-hostel Cultural Competitions involving dance, drama, singing and much more; sports events where friendship and rivalry competed for top place; Saturday morning swimming trips to the Kaali Khola with a hundred boys; monsoon downpours which seemed to arrive just when the boys were getting out of class; accepting a wide variety of wildlife specimens from pupils - "It's for Science, sir"; toilet duty in the hostels – yes, even for high caste rich kids; the annual scholarship treks, searching out the most promising students from remote villages.

And still more pictures: the collection of rabbits and goats on the school farm; the weekly competition to be the cleanest and neatest hostel (later the McConkey Sanitary Shield!); the mountain of firewood to be chopped to fuel the school kitchen; the love and interest shown to our own young children by the hostel boys; the first office photocopier – only to be used for very special jobs.

All of this with the background of the Annapurna Himals, surely one of God's masterpieces!

And I can see faces - teenage GBS boys full of hope and potential. Some of them I taught and some we shared a hostel with for a few years. Recently in Nepal, I've had the joy of seeing some of those faces again, now middle-aged and often topped with grey hair. Lives have gone in different directions, but all of them look back with contentment and gratitude on those days in GBS. I do too!

David McConkey
GBS teacher and hostel parent: 1976-1986

MORE THAN LITERACY: NFE IN NEPAL

In the late 1980s excitement was building in Nepal. *Naya Goreto* (New Path) developed in the progressive style of Paulo Freire had just been introduced. Critical thinking was embedded in the teaching approach. Having experienced the education system in Nepal earlier, I was eagerly looking forward to the New Path and found NFE staff energized by this methodology.

Naya Goreto and NFE classes were empowering for the more than 7000 women enrolled in UMN non-formal education classes. Women had an opportunity to gather, to learn and build self-esteem.

One night in 1994, Ishwori Sapkota, co-ordinator of the Gorkha NFE Programme, and I stood on the grounds of the Amp Pipal School where I taught in 1968. It was dark. Flaming torches streamed along the mountainside across the valley in the direction of the historic seat of Gorkha. Each torch carried by a woman led to an NFE class, a scene repeated across the mountains of Nepal.

Classes were held in villagers' homes. Women with their *Naya Goreto* books would cluster around an oil wick or small kerosene lantern. They came to learn and were eager to be with their village friends learning and sharing in solidarity.

NFE was more than literacy. Classes included hygiene, nutrition, sanitation, kitchen gardening and encouragement of girls' education. Evaluations of NFE programmes involved more than measuring whether women could read and write. Did they have kitchen gardens? Were their daughters in school? Were children immunized? All indicators of progress in Nepal!



UMN's partners continue to offer life-changing NFE classes to women who missed the chance to learn when they were children. Each year, more than 500 "somebodies", women who can read, write and do simple calculations, and MUCH more, graduate from NFE classes.

Riding on a bus to an NFE meeting in Pokhara, I shared a seat with a woman from Gorkha District. She could not stop talking about how her life had changed after NFE classes. She learned, she taught and supervised classes. Now she was travelling to a conference in a BIG CITY and told me, "My life has changed. Now I am somebody!"

There are thousands of "somebodies" all across the mountains of Nepal. The NFE class discussions could be considered early manifestations of the myriad NGOs across Nepal today - making a difference in the lives of the Nepali people.

Norma Kehrborg

Norma filled various education roles from 1969-1978. She returned to Nepal to head up the NFE Office from 1991-1997, was a member of the Executive Committee in 1999 and served as Executive Director in 2000.



In 1989, UMN Nepal adopted UNESCO Asia-Pacific's goal of making the population aged 15-35 literate by the year 2000, and so we began the Jajarkot NFE Project a year later. According to the Jajarkot District Education Officer at the time, the official literacy rate was 11% for males, and not even 1% for females. We were working with the very good government literacy materials, *Naya Goreto* (New Path), but in remote areas especially there was nothing interesting for a new reader to read - and practice and motivation are essential for growing mastery. Building on experiences in Australia, we began developing reading books for new adult readers based on the Language Experience Method. This method involved asking people who had overcome some personal difficulty to speak their story slowly while one of our Nepali facilitators scribed their exact words, clarifying as they went along. At the NFE Office, we did only minimal editing, and then sent out the scripts for field testing. The illustrations were done by Nepali girls who had done a short Drawing Workshop with us, plus visiting Australian Art students. The series, called *Pipal Pustak*, was launched at UMN HQ in 1991 with six books, and immediately they were bought and used by NFE workers around the country.

Pipal Pustak goes from strength to strength

Now, over 50 real-life stories are available in Nepali language and 68 real-life stories available in 22 other languages used in Nepal (Maitali, Tamang, Tharu, Awadhi, Limbu and many others).

The books are published by the Educational Resource Development Centre Nepal (ERDCN), an independent Nepali NGO formed from UMN's Non-Formal Education Unit. New titles are being added to the collection each year. (erdc@wlink.com.np)

From the first, we wanted the books to:

- show how courage and initiative could change difficult situations, thus challenging the prevailing fatalism;
- be a rich oral history resource, giving voice to women and men from all over the country, especially the poor, whose stories had never before been told;
- preserve the speaker's own voice, including dialectal variants, so that this language was honoured (minority language stories came later);
- provide for a range of reading proficiency, from early beginners to fairly advanced, by grading the books into different levels;
- be the most attractive and durable reading books on the market, thus motivating readers and enhancing esteem for the experiences they recorded;
- have plenty of illustrations so that new readers could easily guess or confirm meaning;
- use Nepali editors, illustrators and printers, thus increasing national capacity;
- be realistically priced so that the project was self-sustaining (initial set-up funds were donated by Australian schools, churches, Rotary Clubs and individuals).

My greatest joy since returning to Australia has been to see the project flourish, winning a UNESCO prize in 1996, adding many more titles, producing books in minority languages, and becoming an independent production unit.

Kath White

UMN Appointee 1987-1994

Photo: The launch of the first six Pipal Pustak books, 1991.

CELEBRATING *Learning*





- ① **Learning to read is difficult**, but Nepali has a big advantage for new readers – it's very phonetic. So UMN's education team has developed a reading programme which uses a limited vocabulary based around sounds to supplement the government textbook for young readers. Anu Kumal is enjoying learning in this new way; she and her classmates will be better, more fluent readers as a result.
- ② **Instead of perching on broken benches** and chanting from dusty blackboards, many Nepali children are enjoying learning the "child-friendly" way. They use colourful learning materials, and work in a comfortable environment. Last year (2013-2014) UMN trained 186 teachers in 120 schools in 10 districts in child-friendly teaching techniques.
- ③ **A good teacher is one who never stops learning**, and teachers often learn best from each other. UMN brings teachers together in "mobile meetings" – they move from school to school – so that teachers can share ideas and experiences, learn to make and use simple teaching materials, and discuss educational issues.
- ④ **For remote schools**, getting connected to the world through the Internet is even more important than for schools in Kathmandu. UMN has helped two of its partner schools, Rampur HSS in Doti and Dolghanjyang HSS in Dhading, set up computer classrooms and get students started on their discovery of the wider world.
- ⑤ **Getting a good start is essential** for a good education. These youngsters in Rukumkot are able to learn through play at their Early Childhood Development Centre. UMN provides basic resources, helps schools set up a good learning environment, and trains teachers to manage classrooms where learning is fun. This year, 125 Centres received this kind of support.
- ⑥ **Many Nepali children speak minority languages** at home, and struggle to learn in Nepali at school. UMN has pioneered the production of school books in local languages which, along with child-friendly teaching methods, help children learn better. This year, our Multi-Lingual Education Programme was extended to Rukum district, where materials in Kham Magar language are being developed.



A class at Jeevan Jyoti School.

Mira Shaha recalls her time training to be an NFE facilitator in Jajarkot with smiles and tears. She was thrilled to be learning a skill that would get her a job, but her heart would cry all day at the training centre, as she had to leave her seven-month-old son with her eldest son, who was just seven. She had to trust that her seven-year-old would handle everything well at home. For three years, Mira taught at NFE centres in Jajarkot. Classes started at around 8:00 in the evening and sometimes went around until 11:00 pm. Women would take their books when they went to the fields with the cattle, or read while they cooked for their families or nursed their babies. “It was amazing to see more and more come in for the classes,” says Mira.

Abandoned by her husband, Mira had four children to take care of. Later, she heard that her husband was in Kathmandu living with another woman. Mira decided to travel to Kathmandu to talk to him to try and save her marriage. Her meeting with him left her only hurt and lonely. Now in the big city of Kathmandu, she felt lost. “I think I have experienced all kinds of pain in life. It is a horrible feeling for a mother to put her children hungry to bed. It is the struggles and the pain that has made me strong,” she says. Thin as a stick, she remembers cringing at her reflection in the mirror.

Against all odds, intelligent and spirited Mira decided to fight back. She joined a morning school to continue her studies. During the day, she taught at an NFE centre in Godavari and managed to pass the SLC in 2004. UMN paid her fees one year, and also sponsored her twin daughters’ education.

Today, Mira runs a school called *Jeevan Jyoti* (Light of Life) for women like her who come to schooling later in life. One of her happiest moments was when a 37-year-old woman passed the SLC from her school four years ago.

“When I got that training from UMN 20 years ago, I didn’t know God was preparing me to change the lives of so many unfortunate Nepali women,” reflects Mira. She firmly believes that education brings new meaning to a woman’s life, and has a ripple effect within the family and across generations.



Two years ago, *UMNews* reported the plight of girls from the remote northern part of Mugu district, who had to leave their villages if they wanted to study past primary level. It has taken a long time, but this year the Girls' Hostel in Mangri was opened, and is now home to 40 girls. Local people are very proud of the hostel, a well-built facility that provides safe, clean accommodation. The girls share the cooking and chores, and have time to study.

SONAM CHENJOM LAMA

Sonam is 16 and studies in Grade 9. Her favourite subject is English, and in future she would like to train to be a doctor. She certainly studies hard enough! She gets up at 6:00 am and has tea. If it is her turn to cook, she does that between 7:00 and 8:00 am. She is then off to school for a 10:00 am start, and back by 4:00 pm to do her homework. After the evening meal at 7:00 pm she studies some more, sometimes up until midnight! Sonam would not be able to study this hard if she was not able to live in the Hostel.



SAFE WATER FOR STUDENTS

Lack of water is a problem for many schools. Thirsty children can't learn, and when children can't wash their hands before eating or after using the toilet, sickness results. Children at Baseri Secondary School now have plenty of water for drinking and hand-washing, thanks to a new water system, provided partly through UMN's partner Committed Society for Change and partly through local contributions. The process involved lots of negotiation with the local community, which was worried that the school would deplete their water supply. Agreement was reached, and everyone is happy with the result. The school has six taps for drinking water and for the toilets. Better still, children are taking their newly-learned hygiene habits back to their families, so everyone is cleaner and healthier.



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2,944



@umnepal #UMN #Celebrate60



youtube.com/umnepal

DISASTER RESPONSE

This year saw many villages and communities devastated by floods and landslides during the monsoon. In Rupandehi, two rivers broke their banks, isolating 700 households on an island of higher ground in a sea of muddy water. UMN helped with rescue and immediate food needs. Landslides triggered by heavy rainfall in several districts in the far west and in Rukum resulted in loss of homes, crops and livestock. UMN channelled funding through INF in Surkhet, and Nepal Red Cross and Nepal Christian Relief Services in Bardiya.



MARK AND DHANA DOWN UNDER

Executive Director Mark Galpin and Clusters Director Dhana Lama visited Supporting Partners in Australia. A highlight of their trip was the TEAR Australia National Conference near Sydney, where several hundred supporters gathered to hear from a number of TEAR's partners around the world. Dhana particularly enjoyed being part of a panel on women and development, which also included Tumaini Matutu (left), a Community Development Facilitator from Tanzania, and Denise Champion an Indigenous Adnyamathanha woman from the Flinders Ranges in South Australia. Mark and Dhana also shared at the INF conference in Sydney, with Baptist World Aid supporters, and in various churches in Melbourne, Sydney and Adelaide.



MT BLANC CHALLENGE

Back in December 2013, four young men who had been climbing in the Everest region were injured in a road accident, rescued by villagers, and cared for at the Okhaldhunga Community Hospital. They decided to celebrate their safety and thank the community and the hospital by raising money by climbing Mt Blanc, which they did in September this year. They raised USD 365, which will help equip the new wards at Okhaldhunga. Thanks, Fabien, Joe, Yotam and Nick!



tell others



Share UMN's Hope for the Future with friends by sending them a UMN Calendar or Christmas Card, or both!

The Calendar features 12 lovely photos of UMN's work, bringing hope and a future to those who need it so much. Nepali angels from different ethnic groups grace our Christmas Card this year, thanks to Ratan Ale's great artwork. Cards come in packs of 10, with envelopes.

GBP/EUR 4; USD/AUD/CAD 6

Postage extra.

Price in Nepal: NRP 150

Celebrate with us! Order a copy of our 2013-2014 Annual Report – it's free! (A donation towards postage would be appreciated.)

To order:

- ➔ Email communications@umn.org.np
- ➔ Order online at www.umn.org.np/store
- ➔ Write to us at PO Box 126, Kathmandu, Nepal.



From fatalism to development

“I always wanted to help poor people”



As a child, I wanted to be a missionary, to help poor people to help themselves in practical ways. Over the last 29 years, I've been blessed to see people able to help themselves out of food-insecure situations by using what they already have in and around their homes.

When I first came to Nepal in 1985, many people had a fatalistic attitude. “I'm poor because it's the will of the gods,” they thought. This fundamental attitude is changing, and people are more likely to say: “I can see how my neighbour has improved his/her situation, and I want those changes too.” It's a real joy when communities come and ask for help to improve their lives.

Over the years, my attitude has changed too. I was a food processor in New Zealand, where a farmer produces enough to feed 200 people, so the emphasis is on processing, distributing and hopefully exporting. I thought that's what I would be doing in Nepal. For years I struggled to find something that would get onto the local market and be a boon to agricultural producers as well as industry. But in Nepal, a farmer barely grows enough for his own family. Whatever is produced is consumed immediately. What should I be doing, then?

As I listened to people, I realised that they actually did produce a lot of food. They might not produce enough rice – they actually produced a lot of other food, but didn't manage it well. So my focus became household management of food. Recently, I've been teaching people to process and cook food from what they produce, to give their family a balanced diet for good health. It's wonderful to see people enthusiastic about feeding their families from what they produce themselves. Some of the favourites have been potatoes cooked in different ways, millet or maize pancakes, biscuits and bread, pumpkin cake and pickled vegetables. After all, vegetables are nature's vitamin tablets!

Roydon Chesswas

Roydon bid farewell to UMN on 22 September, 2014 after 29 years of service. We wish him every blessing as he retires in New Zealand.



Praise God for the many people who have had access to a good education, thanks to UMN's many education-focused projects over 60 years. Thank God that many people educated by UMN are now in important positions in the country, "giving back" to their communities.

Despite the expansion of education opportunities, literacy rates for women are significantly lower than men's in Nepal. Education for girls is significant in developing countries like Nepal. Please pray that barriers to girls' education would be reduced. Also pray for many organisations like UMN that are diligently working to make education a priority in families.

Christmas in Nepal is a great time for celebration for Christians, as it is everywhere! Pray for churches and for our cluster offices, as we prepare Christmas events that will share God's love with friends and community.



Several long-serving expatriates and families have left Nepal in the last few months. Pray for the Wrights resettling in Scotland, the Smiths returning to the Netherlands, and Roydon Chesswas retiring to New Zealand. Pray also for Pradhuma Dakhal, retiring after 31 years with UMN.

Pray for the friends and family of Mary Martin (left), former Technical Director of UMN, who passed away on Monday 20 October at her home in Grande Prairie, Canada. Mary had been suffering from cancer for some time. She died very peacefully, surrounded by those she loved.



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 any of these (two listed below) positions, or if you would like to ask about other opportunities for service in UMN, please contact Valerie Lockwood at expat.recruitment@umn.org.np to learn more. Send your CV or resumé with your email.

PRIORITY NEEDS

GENERAL SURGEON/ENT SURGEON – United Mission Hospital Tansen

General Surgeon and ENT Surgeon with full postgraduate 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.

EDUCATION ADVISOR – Kathmandu, with travel to regional areas

A person able to support the Education Team in their aim to eliminate barriers, enable access to education for all, help communities recognise the value of education and promoting child rights. Experience in formal/non-formal education, teacher training or other education related areas is required.





donate

A charpi (toilet) is an odd thing to wish for! Riuchi really wanted a toilet, but she couldn't afford it. She knew it would help her keep her three sons (aged 12, 9 and 6 years) healthier, but as a widow, how was she to get the wood and the stone, the cement and the toilet pan? It seemed impossible.

Like many Nepali women, Riuchi is determined. She collected and carried the wood and stone herself, and persuaded a local mason to do the construction work in exchange for a kilo of honey instead of wages. UMN's partner helped by providing a bag of cement and a toilet pan. Now, Riuchi has a brand new toilet, and her village has been declared "Open Defecation Free"!

UMN would love to see ALL our working areas open defecation-free. You can help us achieve this through our Christmas Appeal this year. A donation of USD 30 (GBP 20, EUR 25) helps fund a water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) programme which raises awareness about the importance of toilets, and also assists very poor families to build one.

Give a charpi this Christmas!

Last Opportunity! "GIVE 60" to UMN's 60th Anniversary Appeal.

Give 60 - \$60, EUR 60, GBP 60 - to help UMN's work with families and communities in Nepal that struggle with poverty.

Go to umn.org.np/give60 for more information.

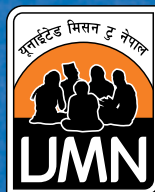
- Make out a cheque or money order payable to United Mission to Nepal. Include a note saying that it's for the 60th Anniversary Appeal. Post it.
- Use your Credit or Debit Card and give online. Go to umn.org.np/give60 and follow the instructions.





“LIGHT HAS BEEN BROUGHT TO MY VILLAGE!”

Binita Lama, NFE participant, Toplang, 1992



Fullness of life for all, in a transformed Nepali society

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