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UMN News

*growing
together*



Fullness of life for all, in a transformed Nepali society

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At the UMN General Assembly in May this year, we opened with a parade of flags from the countries that actively contribute to UMN's work. Most of them were carried by a participant from that country. I love moments like this, which give us a small foretaste of the Kingdom of "every tribe and language and people and nation" (Revelation 5:9).

Our two days of conversations and presentations covered many of the most important issues for the nation of Nepal and UMN's work. These General Assembly discussions highlighted one of UMN's greatest strengths: the diverse network of partner organisations supporting our work.

Our partners are serious about change, passionately dedicated to long-term work in Nepal, flexible, curious and rigorous. They question us, challenge us, inspire us and pray for us. Because of the breadth and commitment of our partner base, UMN can dare to innovate, to stretch ourselves in new and risky ways that we believe will allow us to better help people living in poverty.

Since 1954, UMN's partners have had the wisdom and humility to pursue change in Nepal through a united body, under a unifying strategy that no single partner determines alone but to which all contribute. And we are all "growing together" in our understanding of poverty in Nepal and what we need to do to uproot it.

Over the coming months, UMN will work on developing our strategy for 2020-25, culminating at our next General Assembly in November 2019. We look forward to involving our supporting partners from around the world in the development of this strategy and invite your prayers for the process.


JOEL HAFVENSTEIN
Executive Director

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growing together

I like the Nepali word for partnership. It's called "Sajhedari" which means both parties have an equal share. This denotes equality! Back in 2005 when I joined UMN, I was fascinated by the foundation or principles of partnership that UMN had adopted. Working in partnership with local organisations was a new experience for me. This modality was interesting, challenging and at times frustrating!

For UMN, working through local partnership was not just complying with government requirements and policy for INGOs working in Nepal, but it was a genuine concern developed from our years of experience of serving in Nepal. UMN had learnt over the years that partnership and capacity building is what brings sustainable change in communities. UMN foresaw a huge potential in local civil society organisations to be a powerful vehicle of social transformation. As a result, UMN changed its direction toward building partnerships and the capacity of local organisations.

We found this approach very challenging at the early stage. Most of us on the team had come from a direct-implementation background and we thought working on our own would be easier, faster and perhaps of better quality. Working with local partners and building their capacity and confidence is not and cannot be a quick process. There are no short cuts in this.

The capacity of local organisations was so low that many of us were often tempted to do the activities on our own. But we kept at it, strengthening, supporting and practising our partnership and capacity-building approach. We wanted to try out how this approach works (or doesn't work).



In our journey as partners, we have learnt from each other and have grown stronger in our vision. Today, it gives me much satisfaction and pride to see our local partners who were once struggling to find an identity get recognised as one of the best organisations in their district because they have left some clear, positive impacts in their community.

JEEVAN KARKI
Programme Development Coordinator

Soaring HIGHER



Nineteen years ago, when UMN began non-formal classes with a few women's groups in Mugu, it seemed almost impossible to make mothers understand the value of education. For families entangled in poverty, with no access to roads, electricity or health services up in the remote high mountains of Nepal, sending children to school would probably not be at the top of the list.

UMN's long-standing partnership and friendship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland (FELM) has helped many needy communities in Nepal to move towards *Fullness of Life*. One such successful project is the Dalit Girls' Scholarship Project in Mugu, which started in 2008. This project (among a few others) was instrumental in taking the Dalit (so-called low caste) girls' education and, with it, their dignity to a higher level. Not only has the female literacy rate gone up, but a Dalit person's status in a community has also been redefined to a certain extent. Twenty years ago, in a place as remote and backward as Mugu, to be born as a girl in a Dalit family meant very few life opportunities. Only 0.12% Dalit girls of Mugu were educated, which was just a handful of girls.

It was commonly expected of Dalit girls to work as low-paid labourers or in people's houses and fields and to be married off young. The rigid caste system and the social framework did not allow their families to see a future for their daughters beyond this. And it was almost like the girls had accepted their fate. Even if they did go to school, they would dread humiliating comments and be passive victims of caste discrimination.

Today, we can proudly say that there has been a breakthrough! Discriminatory practices against Dalit students and their exclusion from educational opportunities has gone down. Ten years ago, there were only 33 girls in school in the entire district. A survey done a year ago shows 2,047 girls were enrolled from Grade 1-12.

It is clear that UMN and Mugu have been on a long journey, *Growing Together*.



Sixteen-year-old Kasang Kami has been receiving a scholarship from UMN for four years. Before this, she struggled to find time to study as she had to work outside to earn and help with the family income. But not anymore, thanks to UMN.

Kasang is the eldest daughter of the five siblings in her family. Currently studying in Grade 9, she helps her two younger brothers and sisters in their studies and homework too. Her father, who is a daily wage labourer, says he would not have been able to afford to send all his children to school through his earnings, which are barely enough to feed the family.

Kasang's classmate who was also a UMN scholarship recipient was married off a couple of years ago. Kasang was sad that her friend couldn't continue her studies. "I told my father that I want to continue with my school and not marry and surprisingly he understood and supported me. But his earning was not enough to take care of our studies and run the house. I am very blessed and fortunate to have been receiving this help from UMN. The extra educational expenses of uniform, shoes, bags, books and stationaries would otherwise be a big burden to my family. Whatever may come, I am determined to continue my studies." Kasang understands that there is nothing as valuable as education.

UMN SUPPORTING PARTNERS

The newly constructed school close to Jharlang, North Dhading, serves 40 children in three classrooms, Mr. J. Tamang, the teacher, explains. The classrooms are bright and solidly built according to the rules of earthquake-safe construction. This is just one of the 39 schools which have been built by UMN, or are still under construction. In some villages such as Kapurgaon and Riketgaon it took the local communities time to agree on where to build the new schools, which are far better equipped than those before the earthquake. I talked to several teachers along the way. Many of them serve in those remote villages with their own families far away. In the field of education a lot remains to be done: teachers need training, they need reading materials and they need reliable payment of salaries by the government. UMN and its local partners have contributed their share to improve the infrastructure in the area of North Dhading.

My travel companion, Prakash Timalsina (in the photo), UMN's Project Manager for Engineering & Construction, explained that the local partner organisations play an important role in mobilising the local communities. This is the precondition so that conflicts can be solved, and people take ownership of the new and repaired facilities - not only for schools, but also drinking water schemes, foot trails, bridges and hydropower. I can report back with confidence to Gossner Mission in Germany that the money here has been well invested.



KARIN DOHNE
Gosner Mission
UMN Supporting Partner



WALK THE TRAILS

The partnership between UMN and Transform Aid International (TAI) is one that we value immensely. It's a relationship through which we not only work together to see great projects bring change in communities, but one in which we also grow together – learning and challenging each other to be more effective and better able to walk with the most vulnerable people in communities as they seek transformation.

This past June, UMN and TAI began a new component of this partnership as we laid the foundation together for a new 9-year project focused on seeing children, youth and their communities bring change by drawing on their own strengths for transformation and empowerment.

It was a privilege to be present in a (very hot!) community on the Terai as around 50 people gathered including youth, women, people with disabilities, local civil servants and elected community leaders, UMN staff, the local boundary partner, and TAI.

This was a design workshop, and what was particularly exciting was that the process was genuinely co-creative – with the community shaping the design priorities and UMN, the local partner and TAI in an accompaniment and facilitating role.

With this strong foundation and shared ownership from the very beginning, it is exciting to consider the journey ahead as we walk and grow together supporting children, youth and communities for change.



PETER KEEGAN
Transform Aid International
UMN Supporting Partner



A couple of months have passed since I had the opportunity to visit western Nepal and in particular Doti district. I met and talked with participants in two of the projects that are implemented there. One of the project components is focusing on child clubs in schools. The youth shared with me how they have been able to raise issues related to disability as well as sexual and reproductive health in their schools and communities. The young girls and boys were showing great interest in these topics and their efforts to create change and a better social and physical environment for their peers was admirable. The members of the Disability Rights Promotion Committees also showed dedication to improve the situation for people with disabilities. It was inspiring to see how they come together to strengthen their capacity to claim their rights. The visit gave me a glimpse of how UMN works in close cooperation with local partners to approach social issues from different angles and through different groups in the society, engaging both young and old. As a representative of the supporting partner organisation PMU Interlife, I can say that I feel proud to be part of this work that is benefitting so many.



LAILA SALEH
Regional Coordinator for Asia, PMU Interlife
UMN Supporting Partner

TALES *of* TRANSFORMATION in DOTI

A scenic district in the far west of Nepal, Doti's grandeur lies in its stunning landscape and the locals who work hard despite the challenges set by the rugged terrain. UMN has been here since 2008 and works together with six local partners to help improve health, livelihoods and education in this region. Here are two inspiring stories from my trip to Doti.

NISTHA RAYAMAJHI
Communications Officer



An ace shoemaker

Madan Mijar is 36 and has a physical disability that means he cannot walk properly. But, there is so much more to Madan, and it hasn't stopped him from following his passions in life.

Despite having no training in shoe design, he has aced the skills of making handmade shoes. "I acquired a few skills from my grandfather who also made simple handmade shoes," says Madan. He was motivated to start his own shop when he received an investment of NPR 5,000 (USD 45) from his father.

"He doubted my business because I had very little experience," says Madan. "When I sold the first pair of shoes he was shocked." With time he learned the tricks of the trade, and for the last five years he has been designing and making shoes for a shop that he runs called Muna Madan Shoes Centre.

UMN and partner Disabled Service Organisation (DSO) were inspired by his story and wanted to help him keep his dream of making shoes alive. To support Madan, they gave him seed money of NPR 10,000 (USD 91) and two pigs as a way to generate more income.

Thanks to this gift, Madan is still making shoes. However, it isn't without challenges. He hasn't made enough profit yet to fully pay off his loans, and there are new designs coming up in the market so he has more competition.

Despite these challenges, there's no quitting for Madan. Holding onto one of his latest designs, he says, "I don't ever want to leave my art of making shoes."



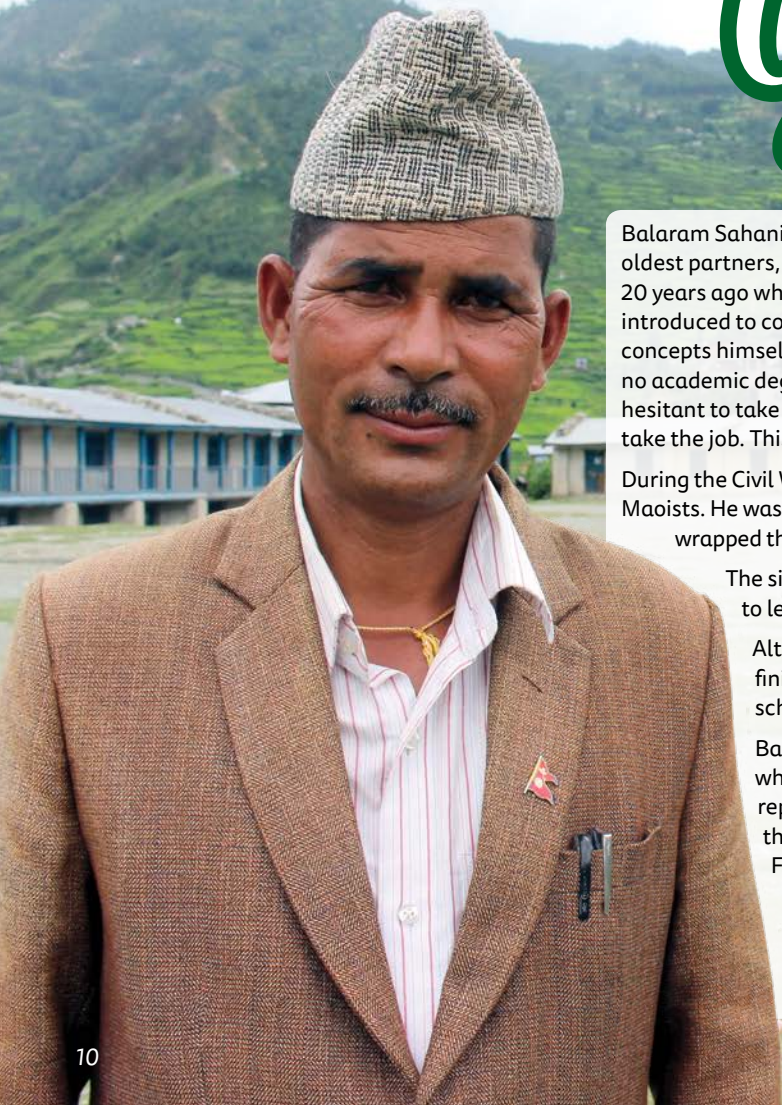
Healthy and tasty filter water

"The unclean water had germs, so we often suffered from colds, coughs and diarrhoea," says Sharada Bogati, who lives in Doti with her family. Sharada and her family used to drink water directly from the tap, but thanks to the support of UMN they are drinking safe water today.

UMN, partner Centre for Equal Access Development (CEAD) Nepal and Mudegaun Health Post came together to provide the drinking water filter and an orientation on the proper ways to use it. "We had to contribute NPR 400 (USD 4) and the rest NPR 1,600 (USD 14) was used to purchase the filter."

In total, 25 homes in Mudegaun have received water filters. "My children love the taste of filter water and are happy to drink it," says Sharada.

Truly Growing with UMN



Balam Sahani calls himself a product of UMN. For the last 13 years he has been leading one of UMN's oldest partners, Gramin Samudayik Sangh (GSS), in Mugu. Balam heard about UMN for the first time 20 years ago when they started the Mugu Education Project (MEP). As an employee of MEP, he was introduced to community development work and started engaging with the people and learning new concepts himself. When he was asked to be the chair of one of the groups of MEP, he was petrified. "I had no academic degree, no confidence and I was from a Dalit (so-called low caste) group," says Balam. "I was hesitant to take the role. How would people react to a Dalit person's leadership?" But in the end, he did take the job. This, he says, was the stepping stone and the beginning of his journey.

During the Civil War in Nepal (1996-2006), he remembers how the MEP office in Rowa was attacked by Maoists. He was worried that they would destroy the important papers. With gusto he shares how he quickly wrapped the office papers in a plastic bag, dug a hole in the ground and buried them to keep them safe.

The situation got better and then in 2005 the NGO GSS was born in Mugu. Balam continues to lead this organisation today.

Although Balam is quite accomplished now, one thing he regretted was that he never finished his high school education. Amazingly in 2009, at the age of 37, he went back to school and finally got his school leaving certificate after 18 years of waiting.

Balam stays passionate and works hard to serve the people of Mugu, particularly where there is injustice and oppression. His earnest service, passion to serve, transparent reporting, integrity and humility has earned him much respect. He was recently elected the chairperson of the Rara National Park of Mugu and is also the chairperson of the NGO Federation of Mugu.

"UMN is like my guardian or my family, who has not only shaped me, but has also given a second chance to so many backward and marginalised people in Mugu," says Balam. "The undoubted trust that I have received from UMN all these years is what I count as my achievement."

ORNAMENT of JUMLA

The Karnali Technical School (KTS), established in 1980 in Jumla by UMN, was the first model for Technical Education under the National Technical Team. Jumla is a remote mountainous region, situated in the far north-west of Nepal.

Ramesh Maharjan (from UMN's Communications Team) recently travelled to Mugu and had an opportunity to briefly meet Hansa Shahi, the current vice-principal of KTS and, interestingly, the first batch graduate of KTS. When he was a seventh grader, he left school and started taking care of the cattle as a shepherd. It was during this time he was introduced to the opportunities that KTS provided for school dropouts. His direction in life was changed forever.

The results of the good work that UMN envisioned 38 years ago are clearly seen now. Today KTS has 58 buildings and is a strong symbol of pride and hope for the people of the Karnali region. "It is a matter of pride for us that many KTS graduates serve in government positions today. KTS is an ornament of Jumla," says Hansa.

The school was handed over to the government in 1988. So far, 3,500 students have graduated from KTS and are in a position to drive forward the future of technical education in Nepal.



HAPPY FEET

HAPPY WITH A CURE

Dipesh had a tough start in the world, being born with clubfoot in both of his feet. His mother Devi loved him despite his disability, but not everyone was so kind.

“When he was born, my family and neighbours said that it was due to bad deeds of my past life,” says Devi. “My mother-in-law told me not to feed him milk so that he would not live.”

Lack of support made things difficult and so did a lack of resources. Devi and her husband are both labour workers and could not afford to pay for treatment. But hope came when UMN and partner Disabled Service Organisation (DSO) found out about their situation and offered to pay for treatment.

By Dipesh's first birthday doctors operated to fix both of his feet.

It was a success! Dipesh's life is forever changed. Today he is four years old and can walk and even go to school. “After my son recovered he received love from everyone,” says his happy mother. “And now my in-laws believe physical disabilities can be cured.”



UMN'S CHRISTMAS APPEAL 2018

Did you know, one in every 100 children in Nepal are born with clubfoot every year? Clubfoot is a deformity in which the infant's foot is turned inward. There are many reasons for this – genetics, environmental factors, early pregnancy – and in most cases, we don't know the reason. We may not know the cause or how to prevent this, but we know how to treat it!

With early detection and proper treatment, children with clubfoot will eventually be able to enjoy an active life – walking, running and doing other normal physical activities. Some deformities (especially late detection) need surgical procedures.

“I feel very sad when I see some families in remote villages of Nepal discriminate against their child who is born with clubfoot,” says Bir, UMN's Disability Programme Manager. “They are treated as inferior and given fewer opportunities and attention. Parents and families need to be educated and reassured that clubfoot can be treated.”

Children born with clubfoot in low-income families and in remote regions of Nepal have limited or no access to proper treatment. For many families, travel costs to the city for initial assessment and treatment are not affordable.

Currently at UMN, we have the funds to treat about 60 children, but the need is so great. Would you help us to treat more children?

- ➔ Fit a child with a pair of clubfoot boots at **\$10 (£7)**.
- ➔ Fund the travel expenses which cost roughly **\$100 (£70)**.
- ➔ Help pay for an operation. Surgeries start at **\$600 (£400)**.



Nishan Japral was two years old when we first met him in 2012 and he was suffering with clubfoot in both of his feet. We started treatment with a series of plaster casts for correction. The picture above shows Nishan helping the nurse take off the plaster.

He later had surgery in 2013 and this was followed by more casts, and finally corrective boots (*bottom left*). Today, there is no stopping Nishan. You can't keep up with him!



HOW TO DONATE:

- Make out a cheque or money order payable to United Mission to Nepal. Make a note indicating how you would like your donation to be used (*i.e.* Happy Feet Appeal). Post it! (to: UMN, PO Box 126, Thapathali, Kathmandu, Nepal)
- Use your credit or debit card and give via PayPal.
 - Go to www.umn.org.np/page/give-paypal and follow the instructions and you will be redirected to the PayPal page.
 - Use your PayPal information to donate from your PayPal account.
- OR**
- Don't have a PayPal account? Follow the instructions above and click on Don't have a PayPal account? to make a payment using your Debit/Credit card.



PRAY

Please pray for communities in remote areas of Nepal who experience tough and unfair lives because of the caste-based discriminatory practices in society. The so-called low castes – the Dalits, often face exclusion and many forms of discrimination. This includes being denied entry into temples, dairy service centres and the homes of people who are considered higher caste. In addition, they are not allowed to use public resources such as taps, community forests and crematories. UMN is working with local NGOs who come alongside Dalits to secure and protect their rights with the hope to give them back the dignity that every human deserves. Please pray for meaningful outcomes from these projects and to increase public awareness of Dalit issues.

You can also pray for people with disabilities. They should have the same equal dignity and rights as other people, but there are many situations where this is not the case. For example, often when babies are born with a disability they are seen as a curse and not given the extra love and care that they need. UMN is working with seven partners across Nepal to help erase the stigma that comes with people who have a disability. Please pray for the work, that we would help improve the lives of people living with disabilities and help improve the attitudes towards these people in wider society.

Praise God for a successful General Assembly in May 2018. We thank God for his faithfulness and for our partners around the world. We are grateful for their concern for the work we do and their commitment to walk hand in hand with us.



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

PRIORITY NEEDS

GRANT WRITING ADVISORS (Cluster based) – To play a key role in advising, providing hands-on technical support and building capacity of Cluster Teams in developing high quality, competitive project grants and proposals in line with UMN's strategy.

EXPATRIATE SUPPORT ADVISOR (Kathmandu based) – To coordinate recruitment, language and orientation, and HR matters for UMN expatriates, and to liaise with sending organisations. Background may be in Human Resources, Management, Intercultural Studies, Member Care, Language Teaching, or other related fields. Prior cross-cultural experience is preferred, but not required.

DOCTORS OF ALL KINDS – United Mission Hospital Tansen: General Practitioners, Surgeons, OB/GYN, Paediatrician, Internal Medicine, ENT and Urology. Okhaldunga Community Hospital: GP with Public Health experience & Surgeon. Flexibility, the ability to work in a resource-limited setting and an interest in teaching and mentoring junior Nepali doctors are required for all doctors. Long-term applicants preferred.



UMN Change PROCESS

We are happy to report that the Leadership Team of UMN's cluster work (the LT-C) continues to move ahead with the change agenda and managing it. We have been discussing the future cluster office location and cluster exit plan for Sunsari, Dhading, Rupandehi and Rukum West.

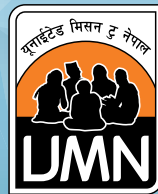
These are the affected clusters due to the change process and they will exit in July 2020 along with the local partner organisations and the projects they have been implementing: Partner Selection Process for the future, and the bottom-up planning process.

Technical Areas of Excellence and the Gender and Change Process have also been given priority and discussed, for we want to be more effective focusing on impact. As mentioned earlier, the overall structure of the Programme Team is changing in light of the changes at cluster level. The role of Technical Team Leader will remain an important one but with a changed role, and we are in the process of reviewing the role in light of the new structure and processes. We have already started to align new projects as per the change agenda, i.e. single cluster-focused projects with a manager-level staff based in clusters; therefore, a few new recruitments are in progress. However, some positions are no longer needed due to this change process. As a result, some staff whose jobs are ended are leaving the organisation with exit bonuses.

Please continue to pray for us as we continue to go through the change process and manage transition. It's both a challenging and an exciting time for us.

"TWO ARE BETTER THAN ONE
BECAUSE THEY HAVE A GOOD
REWARD FOR THEIR
LABOUR"

Ecclesiastes 4:9



Fullness of life for all, in a transformed Nepali society

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