

# UMN News

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dignity  
&  
respect

hope  
&  
freedom



*Fullness of life for all, in a transformed Nepali society*

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## Dear friends

UMN's model of poverty emphasises "Shame and Disrespect" and "Despair and Oppression", intangible factors that entangle vast numbers of people in poverty.

Any account of poverty in Nepal must include caste, the institutionalisation of shame and disrespect for millions of Nepalis. Social stigma persists long after the scrapping of old laws, imposing countless barriers for people from "lower" castes and ethnicities.

As for despair and oppression, these fundamentally stem from false beliefs. When the poor believe false things about themselves, it fosters despair. When the powerful believe false things about the poor, it fosters oppression. Either way, the false belief makes change seem impossible.

Shame and despair are of course interconnected. To end chhaupadi, the risky and degrading seclusion of menstruating women, we have to address a system of shame grounded in beliefs about impurity. To bring both dignity and hope to people living with disability, we need to address the shame grounded in the idea that the people themselves are karmically to blame for their disability. To improve the livelihoods of Dalits, we need to overcome all manner of wrong beliefs – from the fear that a Dalit consuming milk will supernaturally kill the cow, to the more prosaic slur that Dalit villagers are lazily resistant to new ideas.

Our work against these insidious factors of poverty reminds me of Paul's letter to the Ephesians: we struggle not against flesh and blood but against intangible powers, titanic and pervasive, that shape people's thinking and behaviour at a deeper level than conscious intention. But we struggle hopefully, confident in the truth that all people have dignity as God's children.

This issue contains stories of how UMN's local partners have helped bring people into *Fullness of Life* by increasing Dignity, Respect, Hope, and Freedom. Please pray for this vital work!

**JOEL HAFVENSTEIN**  
Executive Director

**Produced by:** the Communications Team, UMN  
**Editorial Team:** Vijeta Shrestha, Hailey Brenden and Nistha Rayamajhi

**Design:** Ramesh Man Maharjan

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I have been blessed with many wonderful benefits and opportunities in life. These include stability and safety as I was growing up, more than enough food to keep me healthy, and freely available health care when I was not. One of the greatest blessings was opportunity for a good education.

One of the disadvantages of all this is that it is easy to slip into being unconcerned for others who do not have these blessings. Working in UMN has given me countless insights into how difficult life can be and how hard it is for someone to develop themselves, understand their own self-worth and raise the quality of their life.

Just one year ago I visited the Doti Cluster and spent an afternoon with a group of children, young people and their parents. These were families from a poor, low caste and very much demoralized community. Most of these children (35 to be exact) come from families that are heavily affected by HIV and AIDS. Most of them have lost their father or the main wage earner who provides for education and livelihood.

For some years UMN in co-operation with a local Church has been providing educational support for these families. Books and uniforms have been made available and also strong encouragement to take advantage of this opportunity. During the afternoon each mother and child was asked to share about progress. Many of the mothers felt so insecure meeting "educated" and "cultured" people that they would hardly speak or even look at us. These lovely people had very little sense of their true worth.

Thankfully during the course of a couple of hours they were encouraged to share their stories including their setbacks and disappointments. A number of these young people are beginning to grasp the hope that they can change their circumstances. With the help and support of UMN and the Church, and their own hard work, they can gain education and open up a better future. I am praying that out of this group there will come nurses, school teachers and other skilled workers.



This is such a simple project and so easy to do - sharing a small amount of practical help and a large amount of personal encouragement will change minds and attitudes leading to raised ambitions and a better life. These people, young and old, are important and of value to God. Any hopes that I have for them are small in comparison to the way in which God values us all. "I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future". (Jeremiah 29 v 11)

**PETER FLEMING**  
Integral Development Advisor



# EMPOWERING ISOLATED COMMUNITIES



UMN believes that everyone, everywhere deserves to live a life full of hope, freedom, dignity and respect. Even in the places that are hardest to reach, and the places that can feel lonely and isolating for communities. That's why our work in Mugu District, one of the most underdeveloped and remote places in Nepal, is so important to us.

We are working with an underprivileged group of people called the Karmarong community in Mugu. They live a harsh life up high in the cold mountains. Four years ago UMN started a project called the Mugu Community Transformation Project in Mugum Karmarong Rural Municipality in Mangri, Kimri and Pulu.

The geographical remoteness, language barrier, local people's negative perception towards NGOs and deep-rooted practices and beliefs made it a challenge to work with this community. But, we don't believe in giving up on anyone and we were determined to help.

UMN came alongside the community and together we identified problems, needs and solutions. Poor sanitation and hygiene, poor access to quality education and healthcare, social justice issues, caste and gender-based discrimination, unreliable government services and domestic violence were some of the key development issues.

Himali Gurung, UMN's Programme Manager of the Good Governance Team, initially felt the work would be impossible. But today she's pleased to report the work is making a difference. Himali is confident that a good base has been set and believes people know their rights and responsibilities in the community. "The transformation we see is amazing," says Himali. "Earlier the women had very low self-worth or were made to believe they were nothing. Today the women confidently hold community group meetings, set group objectives and write action plans."

Education is one area where they are seeing transformation. Prior to the work many children were denied access to education in schools. There were many obstacles. Teachers were not regular to school due to weak school government and management. Parents also weren't sending their children to school. Families felt their household and farming chores were much more important and they needed their children to help. UMN and partner Karani Community Development Centre (KCDC) worked closely with schools to tackle these issues. Today there are improvements and families are starting to value education more. Mothers have started visiting schools to enquire about their children's progress in school.



Netra Shahi, Senior Good Governance Officer in Mugu, shares how the project has made a difference in the community. "It's not a project we run for a few years and leave. It's related to a person's life, family and their challenges," says Netra. "We have seen more transformation than we expected in these four years."

This is a great example of the way UMN prefers to work. We believe in empowering local communities to bring about lasting change. We know they have the power to identify and solve the problems they face. We're happy to walk alongside them through that process and break bondages and challenge false beliefs along the way.

We want the Karmarong people to know that they are not alone and there is sweet freedom and fullness of life to be found, even high up in the mountains.

**VIJETA SHRESTHA**  
Communications Manager

# KARMARONG WILL RISE UP



Tenzin Torche is a young energetic man who has a vision for the people of Karmarong. When you speak to him, you can see the sincere concern and enthusiasm he has for the marginalised and isolated people who live in these communities.

Tenzin got his start in a youth club, where he worked actively for a year and a half. Currently he is a Social Facilitator for UMN partner Karani Community Development Centre (KCDC). He works actively with the community to take UMN's Mugu Community Transformation (MCT) Project forward.

He believes this is a life-changing project. "We have achieved a lot for our people together in these last four years. Of course there were challenges and there are still more hurdles, but I have learnt to take the challenges as a way to learn and move forward. I am confident that our children and the next generation of Karmarong will be better off with more opportunities for growth. We bring big projects through organisations to the villages, but real transformation should start from the person. If a person is not willing to change, the projects and hard work we are doing is useless.

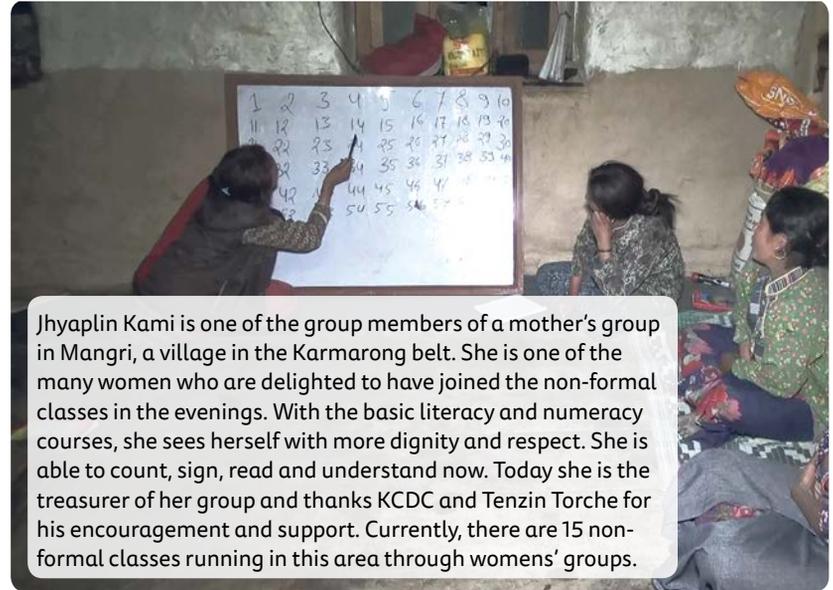
One of the first changes we've seen in the community after the MCT project is their participation in group meetings. In the early days of the project, we hardly had anyone turn up for the meetings. Even if people did come, they would only show up because they had expectations for meeting allowances and stipends. Today they all turn up early, looking clean and are eager to bring in their agendas for community development.

Earlier, our people's understanding of development was quite different. They took physical infrastructure like temples, taps, canals and roads as development. But today our brothers and sisters in the community understand the value of building their capacity, learning skills and making themselves aware and competent.

I am so grateful for the training I received from UMN. It has enabled me to understand the vision of KCDC and motivate the community to transform."



Shree National Primary School had a very bad record of students attending school. In addition, the teachers weren't taking their classes seriously. Most students had a poor learning ability and never completed their homework. They were instead involved in household work to help their parents. KCDC, UMN's partner, started a door-to-door visiting programme to meet the parents and children to encourage and counsel them on this important matter. Also, every last Friday of the month, they held a review meeting, fun time with extra-curricular activities and little rewards for students who were regularly attending school. They also conducted an enrollment campaign and household visits on a regular basis. The school and community group together made an action plan requesting education materials and made plans to build a playground. Now, the students attend school for 15 to 20 days a month which is good progress compared to the past. UMN has also supported the school by providing education materials for the lower classes.



Jhyaplin Kami is one of the group members of a mother's group in Mangri, a village in the Karmarong belt. She is one of the many women who are delighted to have joined the non-formal classes in the evenings. With the basic literacy and numeracy courses, she sees herself with more dignity and respect. She is able to count, sign, read and understand now. Today she is the treasurer of her group and thanks KCDC and Tenzin Torche for his encouragement and support. Currently, there are 15 non-formal classes running in this area through womens' groups.





# Recovery at last

Rashik Sunar, eight years old, from Rukum East is the only child of his parents. He was healthy during birth. When he turned six months, his mother took him to a nearby health post to give him a pneumonia vaccine. A few months later, he started suffering from different problems such as swollen hands and legs, and they became stiff and stronger than normal. Small water bubbles were seen in his body making him unable to walk and difficult to crawl. So, he would just lie in bed.

His worried parents took him to Nepalgunj Hospital, which took about a day of travel. But he was not cured, even after three months of treatment. They returned home and called a traditional doctor named Jhankri to get further treatment. They believed in superstition and traditional doctors. But instead of a cure, the problem increased. Rashik couldn't attend school. His parents were spending a lot and were losing hope.

UMN's partner staff met the family during a monitoring visit to the community. The staff performed a physical and socio-economic assessment of the child and the family. A plan was made to refer the case to the rehabilitation hospital in Kathmandu. Having discussed in the project team and consulted with Dhulikhel Hospital, partner Nepal Disabled Protection Forum (NDPF) referred the case to the Dhulikhel Hospital for further rehabilitation treatment and interventions. The boy was given treatment at the hospital and was then referred to Hospital Rehabilitation for Disabled Children (HRDC) Banepa for further rehabilitation. There Rashik was diagnosed with exostosis, a benign outgrowth from a bone. He was given treatment and rehabilitation support, such as surgical operations and physical therapy, through the support of the project.

After almost one year of therapy treatment, Rashik can now walk, run and do all the activities of daily living. He is completely fine now according to the doctors and rehabilitation experts. Moreover, he is regularly attending school and enjoys participating in the classroom with friends. Today he is in an upper kindergarten class. He enjoys participating in school activities like sports, singing, dancing and drawing. The project has also helped Rashik by providing him with the educational materials he needs at school.

Rashik's mother has started a small grocery shop with the encouragement of the project staff which is helpful to the family as they manage their daily expenses. "I was totally hopeless and never imagined my boy would stand on his own feet and go to school," says Rashik's mother. "Now his future is bright. It was only possible because of the support from UMN and their partner NDPF. I am very thankful to these helping hands."



My name is Reshma\*. I am 42 years old and live in Itahari, Sunsari. I got married when I was 20. My husband used to go to India frequently and then come back home. After some years, we gave birth to our son. When my husband's health was deteriorating, I took him for a checkup and learned that he was infected with HIV and I started to detest him.

Six months later, my husband passed away. After that, I had to look after all the roles and responsibilities by myself, including taking care of my son, who was very young. My health was also failing every day, so I got tested. My report came out as HIV positive. After that, I felt very hopeless. I was loathed by my neighbours and relatives too. Often I thought about suicide. But gradually things were about to change.

I found UMN's partner Naba Jiwan Samaj Sewa (NJSS) and saw many People Living With HIV and AIDS (PLHIVs) there. I found strength and motivation to keep living. I also attended a self-help group and began to share my problems with PLHIVs. I felt like I wasn't alone anymore.

NJSS helped with nutrition, Antiretroviral Therapy (ART), entrepreneurship training and gave me medicine. It has changed my life. I have also been given funding from NJSS for the cosmetic and wholesale shop. This has helped me with my daily living and today I am engaged in my profession. I want to thank UMN and partner NJSS for giving me a new life.

\*name changed

# IMPROVING LIVES ON The Riverside

Born into extreme poverty, Aakash Badi didn't have opportunities to get an education or have vocational training growing up. So he continued what his ancestors had done, fishing for a living. The only problem was that it wasn't enough to pay for his family's household expenses and education for his children. Not until he got connected with a UMN-supported project called Resilient Food Secure Communities.

Aakash lives in the Badi community in Rukum. This is a distinct marginalised group within Nepal's Dalit (so called low caste people) society. They have their own way of living, fishing and making musical instruments, like the madal (nepali drums), for a living.

Aakash would go to the river and harvest 1-1.5 kilograms of fish each day, but this was an insufficient amount to manage all of his family's expenses and afford education. He dreamed of selling more fish and saving money.

In January 2016, UMN and partner Nepal Public Awakening Forum started to implement a Developing Resilient Food Secure Communities project. The Badi community was one group of people they were going to work with and soon things changed for Aakash.

Through the project, Aakash was given NPR 20,000 (EUR 154) as a grant to purchase improved fishing nets. This made a huge difference. When he started using the new nets his fish-harvesting increased significantly from 1-1.5 to 3 kilograms per day. Aakash was then able to save money regularly. Today he has saved NPR 20,000 (USD 180).

This also helped his children's education, as they are now in boarding school. "Because of poverty my parents weren't able to put me in school," says Aakash. "But now I realise the value and my children are in school."

Aakash was able to find a way to continue the work of his ancestors and improve it. "I feel proud that I'm continuing the job of my grandfather," he says.

This is just one story of the way a family's life has been changed on the riverside in Badi. Twenty-three more households are socio-economically empowered and running their own micro-enterprises too.



# Four years on...

A few weeks ago Nepal once again remembered the horror of the major earthquakes that killed almost 9,000 people and injured more than 22,000 in April and May 2015. There was a strange reminder on 24 April, the day before the anniversary of the first earthquake. Three strong tremors were felt during that day, well-timed for the anniversary.

More than 700,000 homes were destroyed and today hundreds of people still live in temporary shelters. Sadly the vulnerable people, who were already struggling with limited resources, are the ones that were largely affected.

UMN through its Dhading Disaster Response Programme (DDRP) continues to work towards the restoration and improvement of communities following the earthquakes. The need is so big, but what little we have done with some of the remote communities in Dhading District has given families and individuals a new start after the tragedy.

Some examples of our work include improved agricultural practices, reconstructed classrooms and new school blocks, clean drinking water schemes, toilet construction, vocational training and training in schools and communities.

On 30 April, a water scheme project in Tawal Village in North Dhading was handed over to the community. This was one of the big projects of DDRP in North Dhading. With water sources broken after the earthquakes, it was imperative for this damage to be restored. The completion of this project has given a water tap stand and proper drainage system to 320 households.

Thank you to our supporters for making life a bit easier for so many people affected by the earthquakes.

# HAPPY FEET

Happy feet and happy hearts. It's with joy and gratitude that we share an update about our **HAPPY FEET Appeal**, which has been raising funds to treat children with clubfoot in Nepal. Thanks to your prayer and financial support, we've been able to raise USD 10,500. This will help around 15 children in Rukum District receive treatment for their foot deformities.

We want to say thank you for all of your support. You are helping children heal and giving families reason to hope. A special thank you also goes to churches, some of which we know were running campaigns around Easter week.

### What is clubfoot?

It's a deformity where a baby is born with a twisted foot. It does not cause pain, but if left untreated it makes it difficult to walk without a limp. The good news is that it can be treated- by either wearing a cast or having a surgery.

### Want to help?

You still can. There are many children who need their clubfoot treated across Nepal. You can help us treat more children by a donation:

Getting support and treatment for children with disabilities as early as possible is important. Please join us in transforming lives by supporting UMN's HAPPY FEET Appeal.

We have the funds to treat about 60 children, but the need is so great.

Can you help us treat more children with clubfoot?

- ➔ 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)**.

### HOW TO GIVE A ONE-OFF DONATION:

- ➔ 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](http://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.





## UMN Change PROCESS

The Change Process has been challenging but we are sustained through your continuous prayer, patience and partnership as we go through it. We are happy to share an update with you:

- ➔ The Cluster Strategic Planning Process is at the last phase; the community consultation was completed in April and respective clusters and facilitators are working on the write-up. We hope to finish it by the first week of May. The contribution of communities, clusters and the facilitators are vital and we are grateful for their active participation and inputs.

- ➔ May is another busy time for the organisation. All the Programme Teams will be busy working on the Project Agreement preparation with the Government of Nepal. This is very crucial to get approval for our project work. Similarly, the Executive Director's Team will be working on the preparation of the General Agreement.
- ➔ A Project Manual is also in process with tools and processes for the "Bottom-up/Participatory Approach". It is a very important document for our common understanding and guides us in to the future project design. We plan to complete it by May.
- ➔ All of UMN's new Cluster Team Leaders are now assigned to their respective clusters after the orientation/induction and handover/ takeover of their roles has gone well. They all have settled well and were able to engage in the Cluster Strategic Planning Process of their respective clusters.
- ➔ The Programme Support Team (PST) and Programme Partners Team (PPT) are formed as per the new organisational structure. This means PST consists of Technical Leads, and teams of Monitoring-Evaluation, Research and Learning, along with Cross Cutting Issues, where as PST includes all the Cluster Teams.
- ➔ The Change Process had brought about a lot of staff transition. UMN has been quite frequently engaged in the recruitment process.
- ➔ We are also going to work on cluster and local partner's exit plan. We need wisdom and a good plan in place. We plan to exit from Dhading, Sunsari, Rukum West and Rupandehi District by July 2020. Along with them, many of our own staff and local partner organisations will also exit from more than a decade-long partnership. It is a challenging process.



## PRAY

In many communities in Nepal, people have false beliefs about themselves and others. There are deep-rooted harmful practices and beliefs. This makes the sustainable change that UMN wants to achieve in our projects a challenging task. Pray for our field staff and partner staff as they visit families, meet with groups and make plans and frameworks to run our projects. There are things we cannot change, only God can do it. Therefore, we request that you include this in your prayers – that hope, freedom and dignity would be given to the people and that barriers would be removed.

UMN would like to work with the poorest people living in poverty. Pray that our programmes will actually reach out to the powerless poor who lack resources and power to provide for their families. Pray that our work would change their lives.

The recent data (2011 census) shows 513,000 people living with disabilities in Nepal; most of them are from poor communities. They are often isolated and excluded from society. With the lack of access to their rights, this powerless group often faces stigma and discrimination for having disabilities. Please pray for UMN's work for people with disabilities, that along with treatment and care we would be successful in upholding their rights and dignity.



## 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](mailto:expat.recruitment@umn.org.np) to learn more. Send your CV or resumé with your email.

### PRIORITY NEEDS

**DOCTORS OF ALL KINDS** – Tansen and Okhaldhunga.

For **United Mission Hospital Tansen**: General Practitioners, OB/GYN, Surgeons, Paediatricians, Internal Medicine, ENT and Urology.

For **Okhaldhunga Community Hospital**: GP with Public Health experience. 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. For OB/GYN & Surgeons, short-term or long-term.

**DISASTER MANAGEMENT ADVISOR - KATHMANDU BASED** – to support the preparedness of UMN staff and partners for disasters; advise on organisational systems and structures for disaster preparedness and response; support the effective implementation of disaster response, especially after a large-scale disaster.

**GRANT MANAGEMENT ADVISORS - CLUSTER BASED** – to play a key role in advising, providing hands-on technical support to, and building capacity of, one or more Cluster Teams in developing high-quality competitive project grants/ proposals in line with UMN's strategy.



## HEALTH CAMP

Health camps are organised to provide health care facilities to the underprivileged people who can't afford visits and check-ups in proper hospitals. This is a big help to the poor communities in Nepal in identifying health problems and getting counsel and treatment.

Recently partner organisation Dalit Social Development Centre in Kapilbastu organised a

one-day free health camp on 27 April. The health camp was aimed at helping children under five years old and pregnant women. A total of 399 people received treatment (184 were children under five years old and 215 were pregnant women). Among the children about 40% of them were malnourished, whereas among the women the major problem found was uterine prolapse.



## ANNA-LIISA PASSES AWAY



We are sad to inform you about the passing away of our old friend and missionary, Ms Anna-Liisa Jokinen on Friday, 29 March 2019. She was 96 years old. Anna-Liisa's health deteriorated very rapidly and she was hospitalised during her last two weeks. Anna-Liisa worked in Nepal from 1967-1987 and was sent by the Evangelical Free Church of Finland (EFCF). She was one of those missionaries who arrived by ship in Bombay, India from where she went by train to Delhi and then by plane to Kathmandu on 11 April 1967. She worked in Amp Pipal to help the business manager and did office work. Later she worked in Okhaldhunga District for 13 years until she retired in 1987. Anna-Liisa visited Nepal and Okhaldhunga in 1989, which was her last time in the country.

Thank you Anna-Liisa for all you have meant to us, both in Nepal and Finland and for dedicating a big part of your life to working hard for the people of Nepal.

SHE IS CLOTHED WITH **STRENGTH** AND  
**DIGNITY**, SHE LAUGHS WITHOUT **FEAR**  
OF THE **FUTURE**

Proverbs 31:25



*Fullness of life for all, in a transformed Nepali society*

**UNITED MISSION to NEPAL**

PO Box 126, Kathmandu, Nepal

Phone: +977 1 4228118, 4268900

Fax: +977 1 4225559

[communications@umn.org.np](mailto:communications@umn.org.np)

[www.umn.org.np](http://www.umn.org.np)