

# LMM NEWS

ISSUE 58 | MARCH 2018

*learning  
together*



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

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## Dear friends

It's been saddening to see major scandals entangling respected global agencies like Oxfam and Save the Children. Relief and development work relies on mutual trust - between people who give resources, agencies that put them to use, communities that benefit, and governments that oversee the process.

When trust is violated, especially by powerful aid workers, it poisons the ecosystem in which we all serve.

In the UMN Leadership Team, we've taken this sobering opportunity to review what keeps UMN worthy of trust. We have systems in place for safeguarding, anti-corruption, and prompt response to abuses - but so did the agencies engulfed in scandal. Even more important is our culture: the ways in which we actually live out the values of service, integrity, and accountability.

It starts with making sure we have (and are!) the right kind of leaders. The current scandals came from the top; they stemmed not from poorly supervised staff, but from directors exploiting positions of authority. We see in them the consequences of a hierarchical culture where leaders have impunity. At UMN, we're committed to a non-hierarchical culture, in which managers are challenged to live out "love and service" and keep themselves accountable to staff, partners, and the people we serve.

One major advantage of UMN's "cluster approach" is that most of our staff are based in the districts where we work. This not only helps us coach our partners to maturity, but to catch problems or abuses early on. As Dhana explains in this issue of *UMNews*, we've begun making changes to move decision-making even closer to the communities we serve, and to increase our accountability to them. We want to strengthen those elements in our culture that put the grassroots first.

Thank you for your trust, and for your prayers as we embark on various changes.

I want to end by mentioning one other important change: for over fifteen years UMN has been seeking to hand over Tansen and Okhaldhunga Hospitals to a Nepali organisation. But getting the necessary permissions proved impossible even before Nepal's shift to federalism added new layers and uncertainties. So as of our last Board meeting, we have recognised that **the hospitals will remain a core part of UMN's work**. We're excited to strengthen the connections with our cluster-based work.

*Joel*  
JOEL HAFVENSTEIN

**Produced by:** the Communications Team, UMN  
**Editorial Team:** Vijeta Shrestha and Nistha Rayamajhi  
**Design:** Phil Rawlings and Ramesh Man Maharjan  
**Cover Photo:** Ramesh Man Maharjan

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# learning together



Total adult literacy rate in Nepal 57.4% (2015)  
Literacy definition: age 15+ who can read and write  
Source: UNICEF

It is interesting that in 1951 Nepal had just 10,000 students with an adult literacy rate of five percent.

UMN's history of education in Nepal stretches back over 60 years. The establishment of the United Mission Girls' High School in 1957 (later Mahendra Bhawan Girls' School) which was the first school for girls in Nepal, the Luitel School in Gorkha in 1961, the Butwal Technical Institute in 1963, the Gandaki Boarding School in Pokhara in 1966, later the Karnali Technical School built in Jumla in 1980 and the Jajarkot Non-Formal Education Project (which covered almost every VDC in the district) in 1991, are some examples of pioneering moves in the field of education and training in Nepal.

We see many impressive advancements in the education systems of present day Nepal. UMN still finds joy in joining hands with the community, in paving paths, exploring opportunities and most importantly in "Learning Together".

After all these years, we have many reasons to celebrate small successes in our education work. Isn't it amazing to see child clubs actively campaign against child marriage or child labour and teach their families about taking care of the environment and gender equality? Read Niraj's incredible story on page 9. Child clubs can in fact even have an input in the school curriculum through the School Management Committee.



The bilingual textbooks have been a breakthrough in the Magar (ethnic tribe) villages of Rukum. What a joy it is for a mother to see her child enjoy school and learn in their own language. (see page 9)

The child-friendly education movement in Nepal has brought about a tremendous change in teaching practice and classroom environment. UMN is delighted to have been a part of this.

At UMN we also have a culture of learning. As an organisation and individuals we learn, we experience, make mistakes and apply our learnings. The Learning, Policy & Strategy Team of UMN also shares (see page 4) how they have been working on improving the learning of the organisation and lessons our communities have taught us.

UMN in its 64th year in Nepal has seen many changes and encountered challenges, but has not failed to adapt, learn and serve. "Learning Together" is the culture we have adopted. Surely God has been faithful in leading us in achieving our vision in Nepal.

**VIJETA SHRESTHA**  
Communications Manager

# Learning in the ORGANISATION



What is learning? How does it occur? Why is it important for an organisation to learn? "UMN is a learning organisation" What does it mean? These are some of the fundamental questions a learning organisation has to deal with.

Learning is both a process and a product. When we say "UMN is a learning organisation", we are essentially referring to learning as a process. But when we talk about dissemination of learning we are referring to learning as a product. Learning is generated from the experience of both success and failure. A learning organisation is one that is committed to improving/ changing its organisational behaviour, processes, and decisions based on

the learnings from past experience. Learning plays a pivotal role in minor corrective actions as well as strategic decisions of a learning organisation.

Learning in a true sense requires a change in the behaviour, action, and practices of an organisation. It is very easy to fall into a trap of limiting the idea of learning to knowledge generation.

If teams and organisations are to excel, change is a necessary condition and such change must be informed and influenced by learning. Therefore, UMN as a learning organisation is committed to accepting, acquiring, and transferring the knowledge and skills of its members and continuously transforming itself for positive change through learning.



## Recent learning from the community - Literacy Matters!

Babita Wagle, the chairperson of Kalika farmers group in Devdaha, Rupandehi plans to go to her relative's home to attend a marriage ceremony. This news brings worry among the other group members as there is nobody capable to take minutes, collect monthly savings and calculate the loan and interest of each group member in this monthly meeting. Therefore, a decision is made to postpone the meeting.

The case serves as an example and represents the issues of 19 Self Reliant Groups (SRGs) out of 124 SRGs formed by the Integrated Sustainable Livelihoods Project since 2010.

Because of a lack of basic education, the SRG members are dependent on one or a few literate members or are fully dependent on the project staff. Thus, many SRGs are unable to perform as per project expectations. Around 19 SRGs (15 in Nawalparasi and four in Rupandehi) have struggled the most.

This learning has led to gathering information on the beneficiary's level of education and could be used to determine whether the project needs a non-formal education component or not.

**LEARNING, POLICY & STRATEGY TEAM**



# EDUCATION

Opening up the future for children  
through quality learning opportunities



# What we do

Our education projects are diverse but our work has six main themes:

**1. Child-Friendly Teaching & Learning:** We involve all community members so that school improvements are “owned” by the community for sustainable change. We help by converting old, bare-walled classrooms where children sit in rows and learn by heart into child-friendly classrooms with carpeted rooms, books and educational materials. Teachers are trained to encourage students to ask questions and work things out for themselves.

**2. Multilingual Education:** Imagine coming to school for the first time and not understanding a word that the teacher is saying. This is the experience of thousands of children whose mother tongue is not Nepali. UMN provides primary level textbooks in both Nepali and the local language and trains teachers so that children can learn from their first day at school. This has also reduced the number of children who drop out of school in those areas populated by ethnic minorities.

**3. Helping the Disadvantaged:** Inclusive education practices in schools are actively encouraged to help disabled students access a good education. The Dalit (so-called low-caste) Girls' Scholarship Programme enables girls from poor backgrounds to receive a high-quality education and improve their life chances. In addition, UMN educational scholarships target the disadvantaged and disabled. Vocational training is provided for young people in school and for those who have left early, for example, due to early marriage.

**4. Computer Access:** Most schools in Nepal have no computers at all so students learn computer studies using a textbook only. Our Edutech Computer Lab Programme provides selected schools with 20 computers, teacher training and a range of educational software. Community involvement and supportive monitoring visits ensure sustainability.

**5. Child Rights:** Traditionally children in Nepal had very few rights. However, these are now enshrined in the Constitution of Nepal (2015). UMN works to implement this by empowering children and young people as a powerful force for social change. By joining a child club, children are able to learn about and then educate their own community on issues that affect them such as child labour, early or forced marriage and care for the environment.

**6. Improved School Governance:** The management of schools is strengthened through training and mentoring to ensure sustainable change.



# CHILD CLUBS

Reshma is an executive member of a child club in Doti. Learning about the four pillars of child rights through the Rural Community Development Centre, a UMN partner in Doti, some time ago at the child club has really empowered her to bring change in herself and the environment around her.

As a Dalit, (so-called low-caste) she had occasionally experienced unfair treatment even at the school. But now she feels the child club has given her the knowledge and confidence she needed in life to tackle issues that exist in the community. Reshma enjoys sports and takes part in other extracurricular activities at the school.



# Changing iVES

## Learning made easy

The Multi-Lingual Education (MLE) has been successful in transforming the education of a couple of minority language groups in Nepal. The Ministry of Education strongly supports the idea of children learning in their mother tongue. In 2012 UMN in coordination with the District Education Office produced primary level textbooks in both Nepali and the local language. The first MLE project was in Rupandehi's Janakalyan Higher Secondary School which was then UMN's partner. After a lot of hard work put in by UMN and the teachers, the students of Grades 1, 2 and 3 have text books in their local languages, Awadi and Tharu.

UMN's other MLE project is currently running in eight schools in the Bhume Rural Municipality of Rukum. The Magar families in this area do not speak Nepali at home, and their children were totally confused when they started school. Currently, about a thousand children of Grades 1-3 in Bhume have bilingual text books, both in Nepali and Kham Magar.

The high absentee and drop-out rates have definitely been controlled with this initiative. "Following a recent agreement, in the next four years we plan to expand the MLE project to 25 schools in different Rural Municipalities around Rukum", says Tara Hang Tawa, Cluster Team Leader of Rukum.



When the child club in Sunsari conducted a household survey to identify the status of children, they found that their school mate Niraj (name changed) was in child labour. When the child club members asked Niraj's parents, they lied that their son had crossed the child age, but the club members did not believe this. Determined to sort this out, they went to the local government office for the birth registration record and found out that Niraj was only 14 years old.

With this identified fact and evidence of child labour, they reported this case to the Village Child Protection Committee. After some discussion and a joint decision, the parents sent Niraj to school again.



Established by UMN and INF in 1987, KISC was initially a study centre for children of mission workers and was thus known as Kathmandu International Study Centre. Today, popularly known as KISC, eighty percent of KISC's 220 students are children of mission workers in Nepal.



## New school site

KISC has been looking for a new long-term site in the Kathmandu valley for the last 10 years. At their Dhobighat site, the landlord could serve notice to vacate with only six months' notice and at only five ropani (0.25 hectares), the site and buildings were too small. The plan was originally to purchase land and build, but with the required land costing of USD 6,000,000 it was too expensive to progress.

A short-term solution was to rent a nearby site of five ropani (0.25 hectares) to develop sports facilities, including a covered basketball site and an astro-turf football pitch. Unfortunately after two years on the site, the owner sold the land and the lease was not extended. Sadly the facilities were demolished. KISC was grateful for the time it had the site, especially during the earthquake - it provided shelter after the earthquake in 2015 for around 300 people from KISC and the neighbouring community.

KISC has leased land for 25 years from Somang Club, a Nepali NGO that operates Somang Academy in Thecho, a partner school of KISC EQUIP, KISC's Nepali Teacher Training programme. The site is 2.8 acres and will provide long-term security and a larger site with sports facilities and play areas. Being out of town, the rents are significantly cheaper and the air significantly cleaner.

The development of the new school started at the beginning of April 2017 and the school opened on 21 February, 2018. Having a purpose-built, earthquake-proofed building will provide better teaching areas than the current site, which was a carpet factory before KISC took occupation. The work has been completed with a limited budget meaning "wants" have been laid aside for the "needs" of the school.

Also moving well with KISC is KISC's teacher training programme, KISC EQUIP (Education Quality Improvement Programme). This was established 10 years ago to help improve the standards of education in Nepal. Working at different times in Dadeldhura, Lamjung, Palpa and Kathmandu, EQUIP partners with mostly rural schools providing teacher training over a period of five years. Visiting the school several times a year, the team will introduce teaching methods to encourage critical thinking and creative teaching methods, and then follow up with visits to the classrooms to encourage the use of the techniques.

**ANGUS DOUGLAS**  
KISC

## Memories of an early KISC student

In late 1980, I lived in rural Syangja district, where my father was chief engineer on UMN's Andhikhola Project. I would soon outgrow the tutorial group where I studied with the other mission kids and was nervously aware of older friends heading to faraway India for school.

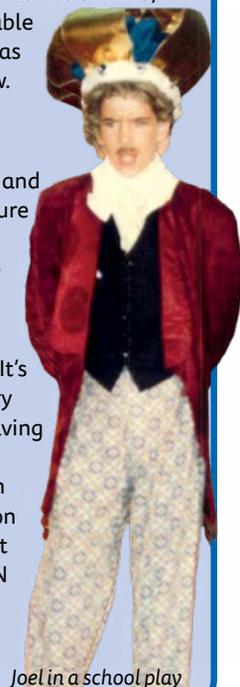
Then the good news came: UMN and INF were co-founding an affordable secondary school in Kathmandu! I became a boarding student at KISC in autumn 1987, shortly after I turned 11 years old (one of the youngest students at the newly-founded "study centre"). Back then it was in Jorpati, surrounded by bamboo stands and irrigated fields that stretched down to the Bagmati River.

Moving to Kathmandu was a great shock. After years in the village, I found myself suddenly immersed in pop music, movies on VHS, Archie comics, and firecrackers readily purchasable at the corner shop. But it was still Nepal, and I was surrounded by UMN families and children I knew.

KISC was where I learned the periodic table, the plays of George Bernard Shaw, and the Nepali alphabet. It was a rich international community and a great learning environment. For exploring nature or culture, the "King's Forest" at Gokarna and the stupa at Boudha were short walks away. The three school treks I joined were highlights of my childhood.

KISC has, of course, changed through the years. It's no longer a boarding school; it welcomes primary students (including my own son in Year One). Having moved inside the Ring Road for a while, it's now outside again and bringing students by bus, as in the late 1980s. It has become a hub of the mission community in Kathmandu. I'm delighted to see it thriving-as an alumnus, as a parent, and as UMN director.

**JOEL HAFVENSTEIN**  
Executive Director



*Joel in a school play*



For UMN, 2018 has begun with a season of change in our cluster work. This is based on a range of assessments and evaluations that we carried out during 2017. The major goal of the change is to make UMN more effective at helping communities and partners for community transformation. We want to see more decisions made at community, partner, and cluster level, with increased local government engagement and greater focus and integration in our work, both geographically and on impact. Therefore, we will refocus our work in Provinces 5, 6 and 7 to address the areas with the greatest concentration of poorest people living in poverty.

By July 2020, UMN proposes to bring an end to our work in Sunsari, Dhading, and Rukum clusters (Rukum district is now split into East and West – we will continue in East but eventually phase out from West), as well as Nawalpur (the northern half of what was Nawalparasi district) and Rupandehi district.

In the last two months, the Leadership Team has involved the UMN staff, Board, implementing partners, and supporting partners to feedback on proposed change agenda and also make amendments based on the feedback received. We have also at this stage started to work on the development of the exit strategy (2018-2020) in affected clusters.

Please do remember us in prayer as we go through the change process and manage the transition, and also UMN staff and local partner organisations who will be directly affected by these changes.

**DHANA LAMA**  
Programme Director



## ENVIRONMENT-FRIENDLY STEPS AT UMN HEADQUARTERS

At UMN, we have taken up an initiative to recycle better. Recently, we have joined up with Doko Recyclers, (Kathmandu's first digital recyclable waste pickup platform for households), to help us recycle our Thapathali office waste. A recycling awareness workshop for staff was also held at UMN on 29 January, which was facilitated by Doko Recyclers.



In our efforts to make UMN a plastic-free zone, we will now stop using plastic bottled water, plastic cups, cutlery and decorations for our workshops and celebrations.

## INTERNATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH CONFERENCE 2018

A two-day International Mental Health Conference was organised by the Ministry of Health, Department of Health Service, Primary Health Care Revitalization Division in Park Village Resort, Kathmandu on 16 and 17 February 2018. The event was organised in collaboration with other I/NGOs, academic institutes and the corporate sector. It brought together 350 plus people including several keynote speakers from different parts of the world along with the government of Nepal, multilateral and bilateral organisations, health professionals, social workers, the private sector and innovators, research institutions, and civil society on the same platform.

This two-day conference contained two parallel sessions each on the sub-themes of Human Rights, Prevention, Promotion,



Treatment and Maintenance/Rehabilitation related to mental health. A discourse on the newly drafted mental health policy and workshop on validation of the translation of Mental Health terminologies in Nepali were also the highlights of the conference. A ten-point Conference Declaration was released at the closing ceremony graced by the Honourable Minister for Women, Children and Social Welfare.

## REMEMBERING CHRISTINE STONE

It is with deep felt sadness that we inform all our friends the passing away of Christine Stone on 17 March in a care home in Scotland. On her departure, we remember her significant impact on education in Nepal.

Christine joined UMN in January 1982, sent by Church of Scotland to serve as a teacher in rural Gorkha district (Makaisingh and Namjung). From 1986, she taught at Gandaki Boarding School (GBS) for several years. In 1988 she spent a term at the newly established Kathmandu International Study Centre (KISC).

She then moved into Nepali teacher training, writing textbooks and curriculum development, based for some time with UMN's Education department, and then independently, with an office in the KISC building.

Christine was also awarded an OBE by the British government in the late 1990's for services to education in Nepal. She has influenced generations of students and teachers with her fun and effective approach to teaching and learning. UMN family will always remember her years of dedicated service and valuable contribution.



# 28 years with UMN!



## Rajanee Nyachhyon

Senior Funding Management Officer

### 1. When did you join UMN and what was your role?

I joined UMN in May 1990. I was a part of the Treasurers Department which is now called the Funding Management Team. I was the Assistant to the Treasurer who was Lynn Miller. Before joining UMN, I was a teacher at a school in Kathmandu for 16 months; then I taught at the Lalitpur Technical School. Here I taught shorthand, typing, office practices like filing etc. In May 2018, it will be 28 years with UMN.

### 2. Things were obviously different then. What are the unique changes that you have witnessed within the course of the years that you have spent at UMN?

The organisation itself has become smaller, in terms of staffing. Earlier, there were more expat staff, now there is a handful. This also shows that Nepali staff now have become capable and have the capacity to lead.

### 3. What motivated you to work with UMN for a long time?

After joining UMN, I never applied for jobs outside. The hierarchy-free and friendly working environment was the main reason I would say. UMN is a learning organisation and this gives staff a wonderful environment to learn and grow.

We had expatriate line managers and I found their attitude very warm, friendly and nice. Our executive directors were always interactive, the UMN culture is such that one would feel at home right away.

### 4. Tell us about your family.

When I got married, we lived in a joint family with three generations living in the same house. Currently, there are five members in my family that includes me and my husband, my mother-in-law, my son and daughter-in-law. My daughter-in-law is now in Finland and my son will also soon join her. Both my son and daughter got married recently last December.

### 5. Is there any fond experience or memory during your time at UMN that you would like to share with us?

There are many special memories that I will take away; it's hard to just pick one. The most memorable one will be working together with the friendly and cooperative staff at UMN. But if I must pick one, the most memorable one is during the time when I was working in the Treasurers Department. There was a vacancy for the position of an administrator in the Nutrition Department within UMN. I had applied for that position. During that time, my line managers who were from Australia and the US wrote a letter to me saying, "We won't be able to run the office without you." So then, I withdrew my application. That was a special moment for me as I felt valued and I still have that letter.



## PRAY

Pray for Prem Shintan, the newly appointed Education Team Leader of UMN. Prem has a long experience of working with communities, schools and child clubs in Doti. Recently he was heading the Child Centred Community Development Project of UMN in two districts.

Pray for Joel Hafvenstein and the Leadership Team of UMN, as they lead the change process of UMN (*see page 11*). Pray for God's guidance as UMN moves ahead with new plans and new locations and as we make meaningful relationships with newly elected local bodies.

Forty-two percent of the population in Nepal is under 18 years of age. Nepal has made some remarkable improvement in the last 40 years in Education and Health. Today, more than 90 percent of children (including girls) are enrolled in primary school (source: UNICEF). Nevertheless, we still have many children and youth who are denied their basic needs and rights. We have a lot of adolescents and youth who are under pressure from the family to start earning and providing for the family. Please pray for UMN's projects that seek to address the inequities and injustice in society so that all children are protected, provided with good health care and education. Pray especially for the children who are engaged in child labour and those (especially girls) who are being sexually exploited in Kathmandu and outside the country.

UMN's General Assembly is scheduled for May 2018. Pray for the preparations underway for this and for those friends and partners of UMN who will be travelling to Nepal from across the globe.



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

### PRIORITY NEEDS

**EXPATRIATE SUPPORT ADVISOR (Kathmandu based)** – Responsible for supporting all expatriates in their roles, to liaise with Sending Agencies, to oversee expatriate recruitment, to advise on HR matters for all UMN expatriates, and to coordinate the Language & Orientation Programme. The 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.

**GRANT WRITING ADVISORS (Cluster based)** – To support the writing of proposals and reports and build team capacities in this area.

**DOCTORS OF ALL KINDS (Cluster based)** – 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.

# Thank you!

UMN  
**Christmas**  
APPEAL 2017



We want to tell you how excited we are to have received your grant for the **Christmas Appeal 2017**. Thank you to our friends from around the world who have generously given - Sunday School groups, individuals, youth groups, prayer groups. Thank you for supporting us and trusting us. Your gift will make a difference in the lives of toddlers and young children by providing a brighter and better classroom environment.

Our field staff will soon be hard at work setting up the classrooms in Nawalparasi. The amount that we have received will allow us to set up and refurbish around seven classrooms and make them more conducive to children's learning and development.

Thank you for joining hands with us.



 **PayPal**



## 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 Learners 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.

LET US DISCERN  
FOR OURSELVES  
WHAT IS RIGHT; LET US LEARN  
TOGETHER WHAT IS GOOD Job 34:4



*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)