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# UJMN<sup>ews</sup>

United Mission to Nepal







MARIE ÖSTMAN

**W**omen's issues have been central in United Mission to Nepal (UMN) work for the past 45 years. The first health work for women in Nepal came about as UMN was invited into Nepal by King Tribhuvan, to set up medical work for women in Kathmandu.

Soon after, there was a Nursing School set up by UMN and the first girls' high school at Mahendra Bhawan. Community Health Programmes started in the early 1970s to address mother child health concerns. Organized around women volunteers and village Maternal Child Health (MCH) clinics, they were initiated at a time when there were over 200 infant deaths per 1000 live births, a statistic soon to change. In areas of effective MCH work, it is now less than 30 deaths per 1000 live births. Through the years, the names of programmes related to health work have changed but the focus in UMN has been on the special health needs of the most vulnerable in society, women and children.

This emphasis was also found in education programmes. In late 1968, there were approximately 300 students in the middle school at Amp Pipal. Of the 300, there were 23 girls and two women teachers. Following the appropriate custom, girls were not allowed to line up in class lines with the boys for the opening programme of each day. We huddled together at the back of the school singing the national anthem of Nepal, "Sree Man Gumbir..."

Thirty years later, out of that small group, there is the General Secretary of the Nepali YWCA; a staff nurse at a large town hospital, a community health nurse, the mother superior of a Christian order in Kerala, and, quite unexpectedly, I am occupying, for a while, the Executive Director's office of UMN.

In May, 2000 the UMN Board of Directors approved a Gender Statement. This gives further recognition to the importance of keeping gender issues at the forefront of UMN in its work and in its employment practices.

At the UMN Board of Directors meeting in May 2000, one Board member said, "I know UMN has been constantly concerned about women's special needs; however, during the recent board meeting, it was only in the programmes of the Rural Development Department that women's concerns were highlighted." This comment keeps coming back to my mind.

As we move into the future with new programmes or with different foci to UMN programmes, let us not forget the special needs of women in Nepal. Nepal continues to have one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the world, hepatitis E causes the death of pregnant women at an alarming rate, social norms and legal laws discriminate against women, and trafficking of women across the border of Nepal has not even begun to be addressed effectively.

Jesus responded to individual women in their particular need. Women came to Jesus for healing, he noticed them and empowered them to be healed. He also had to confront the prevailing social customs of the day, which further marginalized women through rigid rules and unjust laws. Jesus ignored these unfair societal norms and enabled healing to occur.

This work in Nepal that was identified, needed and so well established by those in the founding of UMN must not be allowed to drift from our consciousness. The work is not done. Let us continue to follow in the pioneering footsteps!

*Norma Kehrberg*  
Executive Director



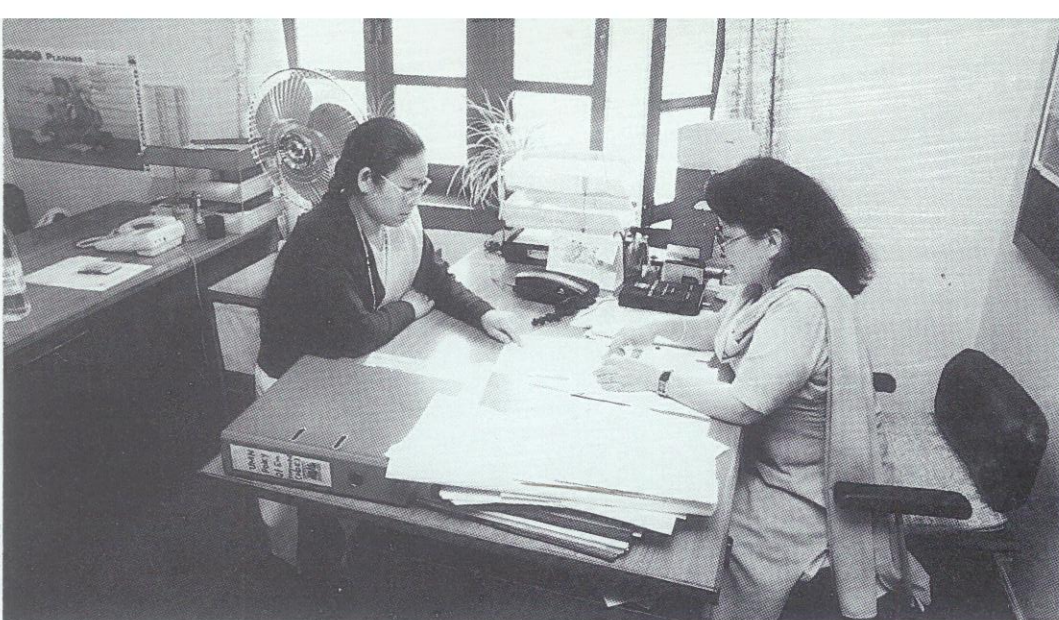
"In order that we might:

- improve the gender balance in our own internal policies,
- include gender issues in every aspect of our work,
- encourage shared leadership, empowerment and decision-making,
- recognise the important contributions of women among our Nepali and expatriate staff and the communities in which we work in Nepal,

... we will seek to:

- achieve gender balance in all issues regarding employment and policy for both Nepali and expatriate staff,
- uplift the status of women within our own organisation as well as to improve the future of women in Nepal,
- address gender issues as a major component of any work we are involved with in Nepal."

ADAM COUPE



Bal Kumari Gurung and Amrita Karthak in the Advisory Group on Nepali Women have been highly involved in preparing UMN's Gender Statement.

## UMN's Gender Statement

### - fighting gender imbalance

The importance of gender balance and recognition of the vital contributions of women within and outside of UMN were on the agenda for this year's Board of Directors meeting held in May. The Board adopted a comprehensive gender statement, which relates to all aspects of UMN's work.

Amrita Karthak, co-ordinator for the Advisory Group on Nepali Women (AGNW) raised the issue in UMN's senior management team in 1998. At that time there was not one single female member on the team and few women were in management positions in UMN as a whole.

The UMN Administration recognised that a gender statement could help promote women within UMN and also serve as a witness to others. AGNW prepared a draft, with assistance from Dr. Martha Carlough, Reproductive Health Co ordinator. A taskforce was formed, workshops organised, other INGOs and key persons consulted. When the Board of Directors met in May 2000, a thorough document was ready for approval.

Amrita Karthak is more than satisfied. She thinks the statement is bold and strong. It may not be easily accepted in a paternalistic society like Nepal, but Amrita is determined to see it fully implemented in UMN's projects. The adoption of the statement by the Board of Directors was only the beginning. The next step is to make all directors, managers and staff aware of the statement and how to implement it.

The process towards the statement has itself promoted awareness on gender issues. Amrita has noticed positive changes within UMN, with more women in high positions and a deeper understanding of gender issues.

The statement opens with a reflection on the gender context in Nepal, with national and international perspectives as well as a perspective from UMN's history. It states that UMN has considered the importance of women in its work and has stood up for women's empowerment and girls education from the very beginning in the mid-fifties. To some extent the new gender statement puts words to ideas that have been prevailing in UMN for a long time. But it also sharpens them and brings them to the forefront.

The gender statement stresses that all UMN activities should address gender inequity. It is not only a matter for projects with specific programmes for women, but for all projects.

The statement finally brings forward the importance of being a model in our personal lives, not only at work. How we act in our relationships gives the most powerful witness to those around us and also reveals if we are serious with our words.

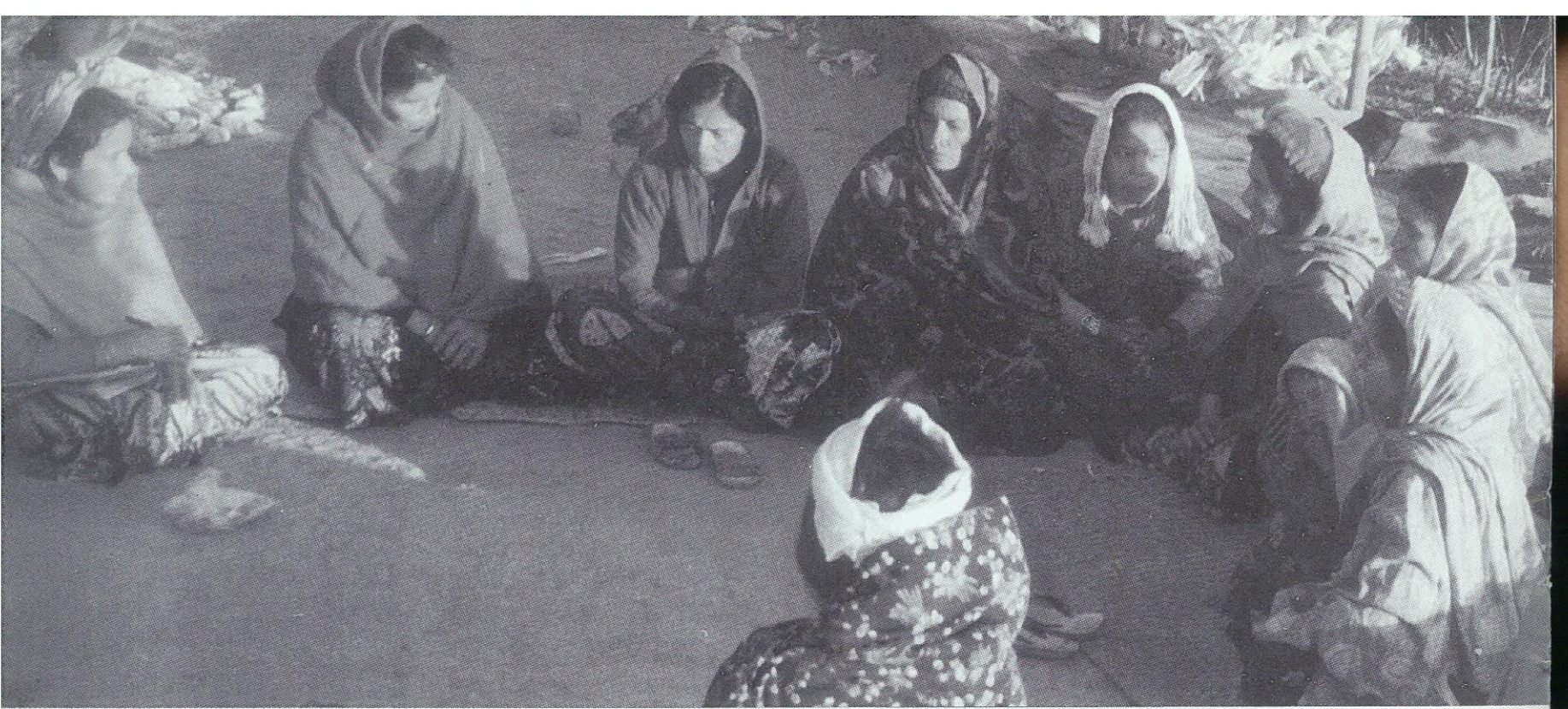
## Towards a more equal society

Nepal is by tradition a paternalistic society. Men dominate in the public life, while women have the responsibility for children and household. Many women are burdened by a heavy workload. Apart from the household chores they also have to work in the fields, collect firewood fodder and water. They are often deprived of education. Women's literacy in Nepal is as low as 25 percent according to UN statistics.

However, things are changing and women's contributions outside the family sphere are increasingly recognised and Nepal's government has in many ways declared the importance of women's participation for the development of the country. Non-government organisations are encouraged to work for women empowerment, gender balance and equity and the government itself has adopted a national policy to improve women's status in society. The new constitution in 1990 emphasises that the state shall make special provisions for women's education, health, employment and social security. It also guarantees female representation in the parliament. Little by little women are growing in respect and influence, on the national arena as well as in local communities.

Nepal's government has endorsed statements and plans for gender balance, women empowerment, girl trafficking and domestic violence from the UN conferences in Nairobi 1985, Rio de Janeiro 1992 and Beijing 1995. A major accomplishment is the establishment of a Ministry of Women and Social Welfare responsible for the implementation of the government's good intentions in the area of gender equity.





DHANANJAY PATHAK

## A painful reality in Dailekh

Bishnu Nepali in Palima village tells her story

“My parents told me the story of how I became disabled, a common story for girls born in poor families in our area. It seems that as a young child, I became sick with diarrhea, and of course there was no medicine for a lowly girl child. We had no toilet, so I had to crawl out to the bush to relieve myself. There I slipped and fell, breaking an arm and both legs. My mother was able to correct my arm, but I only had the use of my legs for a couple of years. Then I was crippled.

My parents were ashamed to have a girl like me. I could not help in the house, I just sat in my corner day after day. Every evening my parents said that I was a burden in the family. Many nights I have cried in the darkness silently. Tears were my only friends.

When I was 17, for the first time a strange lady came to me and talked to me with love and affection. I called her Mission-sister, but I later found that her name was Suryabadana, and she came from the Dailekh Non Formal Education project. The Development Co-operative Group (DCG) in my village had decided to change the NFE class location and bring it closer to my house. I could easily crawl to attend the class. After seven months I could read slowly and write simple words. Never before had I been able to do such things.

Later I was asked if I would like to learn the skills of weaving pote, women's necklaces. I was excited, and said yes straight away. After two weeks training, I was able to do it, and even begin to make new, fashionable designs. DCG members give me lots of work. Especially at wedding times, or for other ceremonies, I am very busy. After six months I had made 750 rupees, and could buy some new clothes for myself. The first day I wore my new clothes, I asked my younger sister to call Mission-sister. When she came, my eyes were full of tears, but this time they were tears of joy.

These days, I work to keep the village records up to date, but I still weave pote as well. Mission-sister and the DCG members tell me that one day I will become a trainer to teach others how to keep records, and to weave pote. Each time I weave differently, to make the pote attractive and fashionable.

This morning when Ajaya asked me to tell my story, I was stuck for some time, and did not know how to start. As I slowly began to talk, Ajaya tape-recorded it. When he re-played the cassette, I was surprised to hear my own voice, my own story. If there were no Dailekh NFE, I would never be able to tell this story. I would never have smiled.”

### Impact of NFE : “Now we have light”

A woman, thankful to the Gorkha Community Health Project (CHP), writes about the impact of Non Formal Education:

“We were in the dark before the NFE class, now we have the light of insight. We learnt many things for our daily life. Now, we know about good hygiene, sanitation and the importance of using a toilet. We know about a balanced diet and good nutrition, which both we and our children need. We know how to care for our children when they are sick and we also know about preventive measures. When we go outside, we can read the sign-board and identify the place. We can write letters to our relatives, who have gone to search for employment. We do not need to rely on others. Through the NFE class, we have seen changes in the family as well as in the community. Now, we are aware of other development needs, so we still request CHP to give further support in other areas of development in our community.”



# Delivered from the cowshed

The remote western district of Mugu has a great cultural heritage. Ancient Aryan invasions, kingdoms, trade with neighbouring countries, and beautiful scenery such as the Rara Lake, are all part of the heritage. Yet, in a traditional culture such as this people do suffer, and one notable group is pregnant women. They follow traditions handed down from former generations, often with little influence of health awareness that is impacting developed parts of Nepal.

Women in labour are forced to go to the cowshed (usually the bottom floor of the home) for fear that the gods will be angry if they should deliver in the house. They believe that failure to follow this custom can lead to death of the baby or to the mother becoming ill.

After the delivery, women eat millet bread, rice with oil/ghee, and meat or eggs for up to 20 days. There is a strong belief that a woman who has just delivered should not eat green vegetables nor beans and lentils. When the 20 days after delivery are completed, the woman moves from the animal shed upstairs into her home. These traditions, carried out in cold and unhygienic circumstances, contribute to the very high infant and maternal mortality rate in Mugu.

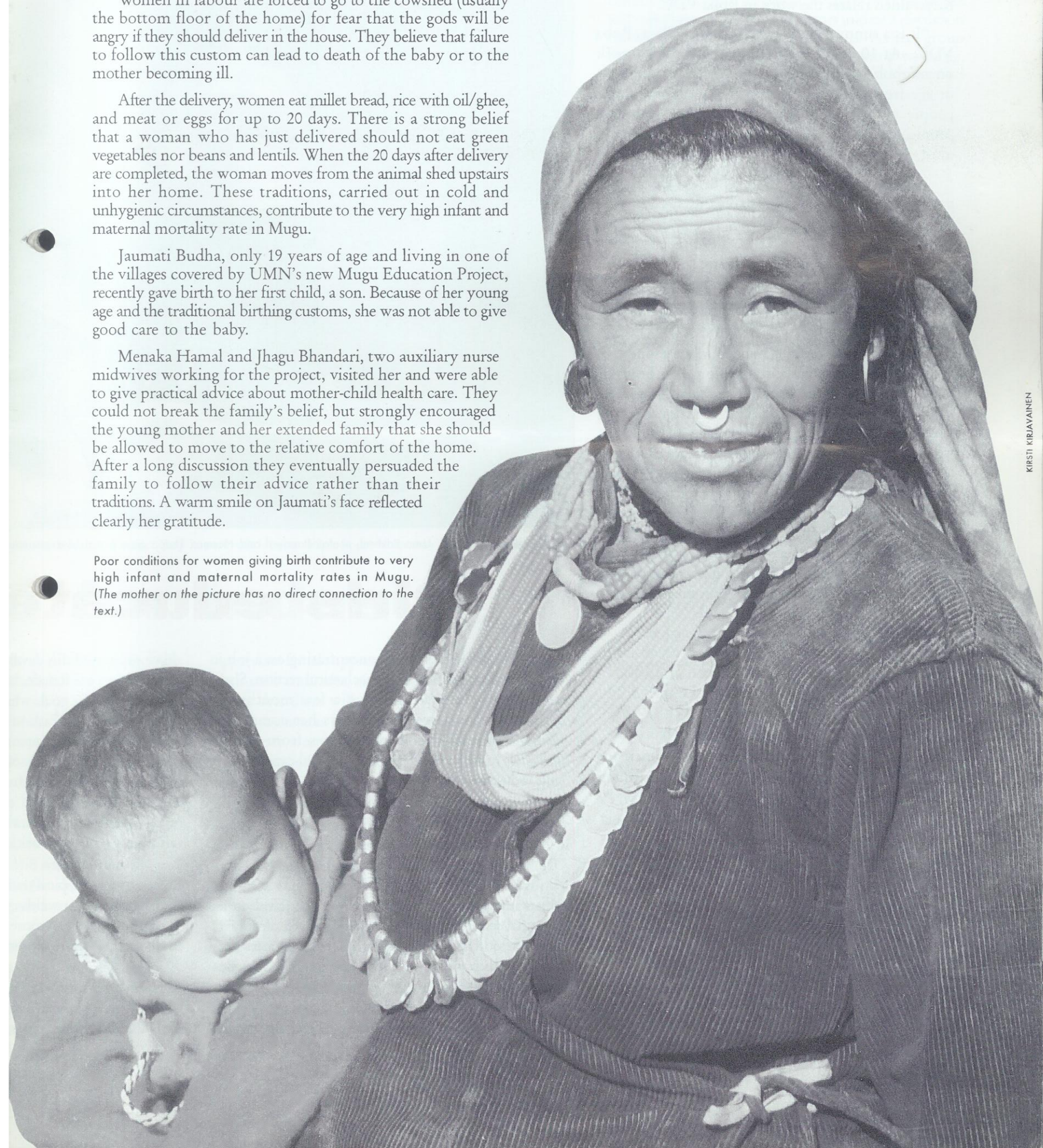
Jaumati Budha, only 19 years of age and living in one of the villages covered by UMN's new Mugu Education Project, recently gave birth to her first child, a son. Because of her young age and the traditional birthing customs, she was not able to give good care to the baby.

Menaka Hamal and Jhagu Bhandari, two auxiliary nurse midwives working for the project, visited her and were able to give practical advice about mother-child health care. They could not break the family's belief, but strongly encouraged the young mother and her extended family that she should be allowed to move to the relative comfort of the home. After a long discussion they eventually persuaded the family to follow their advice rather than their traditions. A warm smile on Jaumati's face reflected clearly her gratitude.

Poor conditions for women giving birth contribute to very high infant and maternal mortality rates in Mugu. (The mother on the picture has no direct connection to the text.)

News of this family's action spread around the community, and recently reports came of two other women shifting to their houses shortly after delivery. It is promising that local health workers and communities, assisted by the UMN project, can change some habits that appear to be harmful and improve the health of women and children, in this under-served district.

- Menaka Hamal





## Food for work relief in Mugu

United Mission to Nepal has recently started an education project in the remote northwestern district of Mugu. The area has been struck by famine due to lack of snow and rain last year. Therefore UMN was compelled to complement its development activities with a Food for Work Relief programme, in order to meet the most fundamental needs of the villagers. Kirsti Kirjavainen relates the work in Roba VDC.

"It is a sunny March day in Lumsa village, Roba VDC. At 10 am, 80 people have gathered to work on refurbishing an irrigation channel. The group ranges in age from 15 to 60 years, and about half of the people are women. There are a dozen low-caste people, and another dozen from a different ward, but most of the people are from this village.

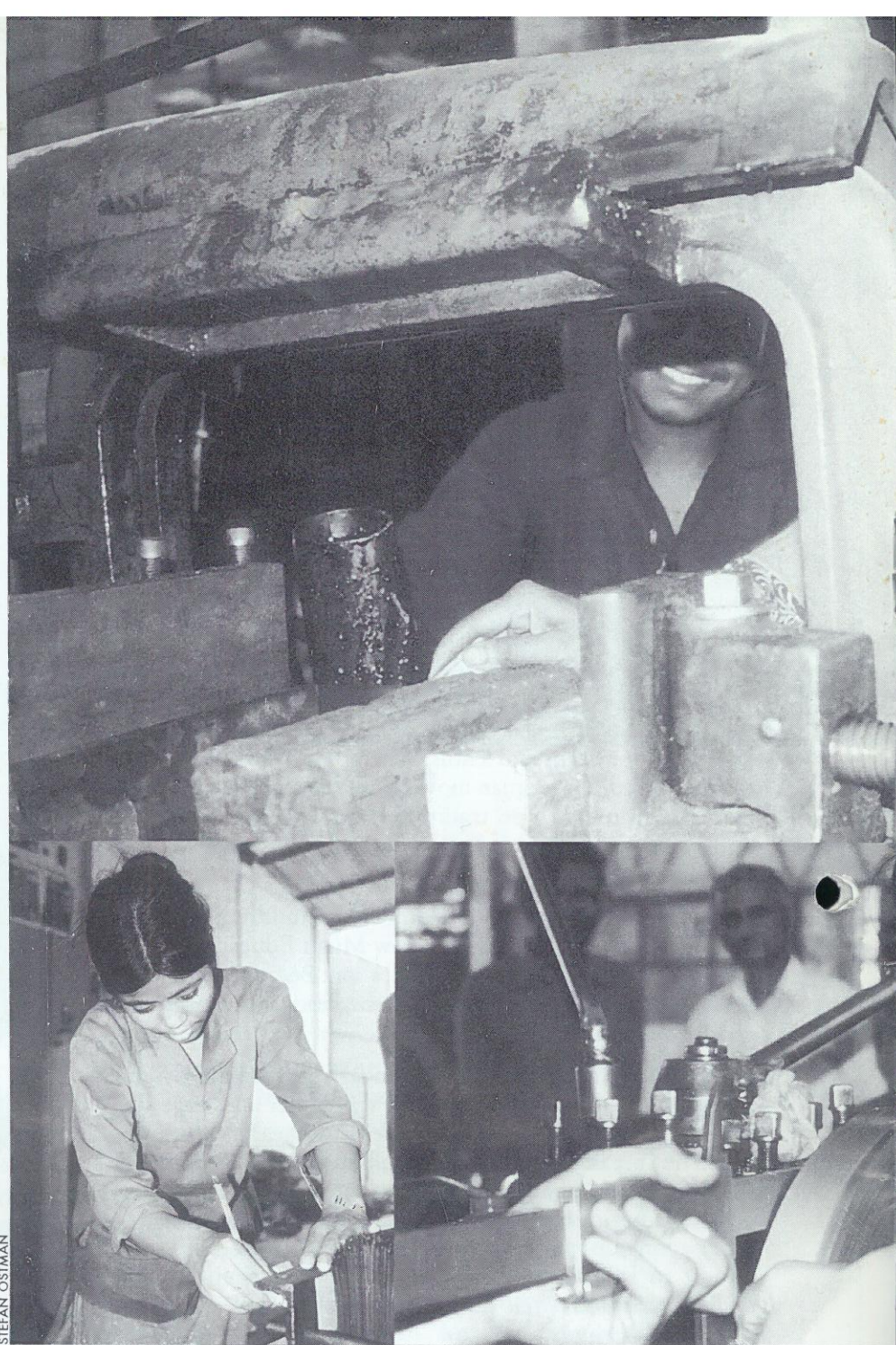
Roll call is over, and all have started working to prepare and build a wall to support the channel. The location is steep and dangerous. Every year the channel collapses in this same place. Now 90 metres of the system will be strongly built and lasting. Some skilled men are building the wall itself, the strongest men are breaking stones, while other men are lifting, holding and molding stones into the needed size and shape.

The women are carrying stone to where it is needed. Some carry stone in baskets, some on their heads or on their shoulders with a rope across their backs. The heaviest stones must be up to 20 or 30 kilograms. I am lifting stones for the younger women, and my hands are tired and sore, but the stones I lift are only 5 or 10 kilos. The women are laughing at me, and I know I'll never be able to do their work. One has to start carrying at an early age in Nepal, to be strong and balanced, to get the right position and have strong neck muscles. One also needs a patukka, a five metre long cloth wrapped around the waist. It makes the women look fat and ungainly, but it does prevent backache."

## Radio programme empowers women

In a country where the vast majority of women are non-literate, printed materials are far from enough for creating awareness on gender issues. Therefore, UMN's Advisory Group on Nepali Women uses audio-visual media in its work. Videos have been produced on issues such as gender equity and girl trafficking, and currently a series of radio programmes are broadcast through Radio Nepal.

The programmes are called "Milijulee" (Working together) and cover topics such as health, education and gender discrimination in social life. The purpose is to promote women's participation in development and increase awareness of women's status in society.



Deepa Neupane, Uma Pokhrel, Malati Paudyal and Narmati Thapa gain practical experience

## Girls educate

Deepa Neupane is deeply concentrating on a job in Nepal Hydro and Electric's mechanical section. She is in control. The machine, that a few months ago appeared rather threatening, obeys her commands. Deepa is one of 17 female trainees from Butwal Technical Institute (BTI), gaining practical experience in local industries.

"This is a good opportunity for me. I enjoy the work," she says.

Butwal Technical Institute was founded in 1963 as UMN recognised the need for skilled workers in Nepal while building Tansen Hospital. It has strongly contributed to the development of Butwal as an industrial centre on the Terai. Many graduates from BTI have started their own industries, which now offer apprenticeship opportunities to current BTI trainees.

Recruitment of women to industrial work has been a part of BTI's strategy for the last 10 years. UMN's Advisory Group on Nepali Women and the donors

have supported this development. 192 trainees are female, but they still have a long way to go to reach the goal, which business manager Bishnu Dhamala says. Many obstacles must be overcome to reach the goal, which business manager Bishnu Dhamala says. Many obstacles must be overcome to reach the goal, which business manager Bishnu Dhamala says. Many obstacles must be overcome to reach the goal, which business manager Bishnu Dhamala says.

"It is culturally difficult for women to work in industries, and haircutting are typical trade jobs for women. Many people don't believe that welding and other technical work are jobs for women. Many people have not taken girl apprenticeship opportunities.

However, the UMN project has helped. Consulting Services (DCS) Nepal (NHE) and Jhimruk Industries (JIDCO) try to set an example.



## New UMN project in Achham district

In January 2000 UMN launched a new rural development project in the remote Achham district in the far-west. The project is called CODE - Achham, and the initials stand for "Community-based Organisational Development for Empowerment". A new model is used for development activities. Self-help groups are formed, and their first task is to identify the community's urgent problems. By using pictures, stories and role-plays, the UMN facilitators initiate a discussion in the group about those problems. As the group members acquire skills for effective group working, they continue searching for solutions to the identified problems using locally available skills and resources.

As soon as the group functions well on its own, achieving visible results in the community, UMN's staff withdraw and instead offer consultancy and leadership training to group representatives in areas such as facilitation, planning and record keeping.

Fourteen CODE staff have started working in three localities and another three localities will be added next year.

## Jajarkot NFE closed in July

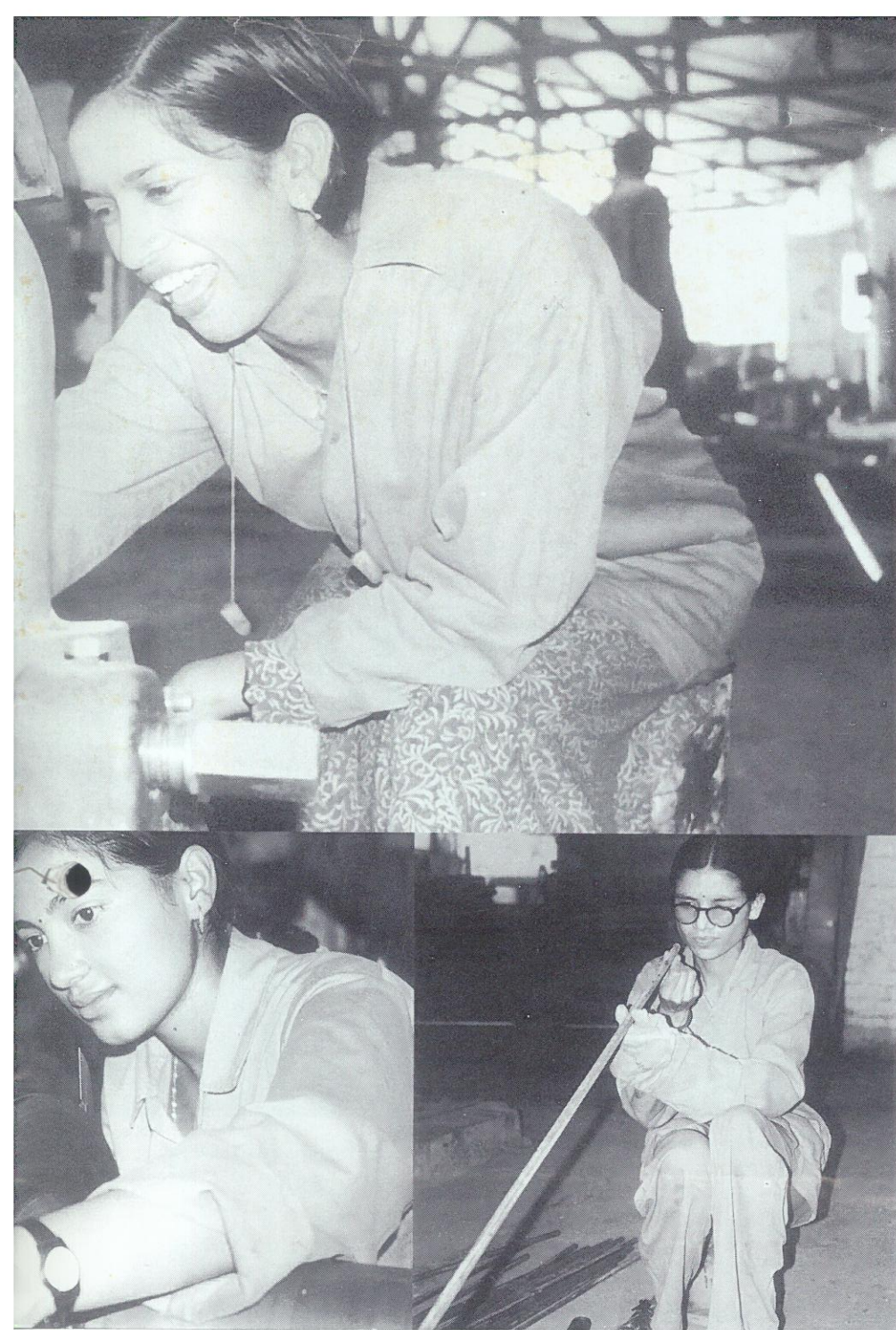
After ten years of persistent work the Jajarkot Non Formal Education (NFE) Project came to a close in July 2000. The activities have phased out and equipment has been sold, donated or transferred to other UMN projects. A closing ceremony was organised in January, with 41 representatives of government agencies, non-government organisations, political parties, local administrators, ex-staff and others. Many expressed their appreciation for the impact of the project on their communities and on their lives.

The Jajarkot project has been the most ambitious non-formal education programme carried out by UMN. Almost the whole district has been affected by NFE classes and related activities, such as construction of latrines, repair or building of pathways and resting places and installation of simple water/irrigation systems.

### Some figures:

- 11,486 people (including 7,747 women and girls and 4,087 members of disadvantaged groups) have participated in classes.
- 517 basic NFE classes, 119 classes for out-of-school children, and 250 follow-up classes have been held.
- Project activities have reached people in 28 out of the 30 VDCs (localities) of the district.

UMN staff has shown a remarkable commitment to its mission in an environment characterized by political unrest. They never let threats or pressure stop them from serving the needy people of Jajarkot.



in Nepal Hydro & Electric. They hope it will lead to employment when their training is finished.

## a for industry

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lt. Tailoring, typing and for females. People outside r mechanical and electrical So far, outside industries zes," says Bishnu Devkota. ners do. Development and Nepal Hydro and Electric rial Development Centre nple. They welcome and

appreciate female apprentices, who perform as wellll as their male comrades, often even better. Bishnu Devkota hopes that there will slowly be a change of mentality in the society, as people realise that work carried out by women is as reliable as if done by men. Then it will also be easier for small industries to accept female apprentices.

The two-year course starts with three months pre-training in BTI's premises followed by 20 months on the job training in the industries, during which the trainees spend one day a week at BTI for theory. By the end of the course, the trainees have a final month of coaching before they are tested and receive their certificate. They are encouraged to start new industries, and are also offered different kinds of sup-port after the course is finished. After having worked for at least one year, many trainees return to BTI for a two-year advanced course, giving them an even better springboard for success in their profession.





The nursing school gives colour to the town of Tansen. It enjoys great support from the community.

STEFAN ÖSTMAN

## New nursing school opened

On 14 March 2000, 31 students walked into their classroom at Tansen Nursing School, thereby starting a new era and hopefully providing a model for many nursing schools throughout Nepal in the future. This will be possible through close co-operation with the government's Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training (CTEVT) and the United Mission Hospital Tansen.

The premises below the mission hospital have not been used since 1993, when the previous Auxiliary Nurse Midwife (ANM) education was discontinued. The buildings slowly fell into disrepair, but in October 1999 they were handed over to the Tansen Nursing School. Extensive renovation work immediately started and the premises are now fresher than ever.

"We have had a busy time," affirms Shakuntala Thanju, principal of the school, who has had more than the premises and facilities to worry about. Only a few months before the school opened, she had no teachers, no materials and no students. "It has not been easy, but we have managed thanks to good teamwork. Everybody has contributed and the local community has also been supportive. People feel that Tansen Nursing School is important for the society."

Now the school is full of life. The students hurry from one lesson to another and from lectures to clinical practice in the hospital. They are enthusiastic about the education, despite the hard work it implies. They all live on the campus and have to devote a large part of the evening to self-studies.



The first batch of students at Tansen Nursing School get their theoretical training in newly renovated classrooms.



"The teaching is good and all are very helpful," assures Upasana, one of the students. She is eager to become a good nurse and spread knowledge about the nursing profession.

So is Upasana's friend Sandhya. "There are lots of problems in this country. We want to become nurses because we want to serve our people."

More hours are spent on clinical practice than on classroom lectures. The students gain important experience in Tansen hospital as they practice alongside competent nurses and doctors. Later, they will also receive training in UMN's Community Health and Development Programme and other neighbouring hospitals.

Classroom lessons are also important. Currently, there are three full-time teachers, two Nepali and one expatriate, and several teachers working part-time. Gradually, more teachers will be recruited as the school grows. The course lasts three years and there will eventually be 90 students in the campus.

The students have to pay admission and annual fees, but needs-based scholarships are offered to help students from poor backgrounds. The school hopes to receive financial support from the local authorities, beside the annual grant from the government.

Shakuntala Thanju has high ambitions for the school she is heading. She wants it to become a model for other schools, and the government's Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training (CTEVT) has the same expectation. It is the first certificate level nursing school administered under this authority. The pressure to succeed is heavy, but Shakuntala is confident. She relies on God's help, but also realises that hard work lies ahead.

She wants the school to be recognised for high ethical values, in the admission process as well as in the training itself. "We want to show a testimony by being honest, impartial and transparent," she says.



Most of the clinical practice is gained in the neighbouring Tansen Hospital.



Awareness raising among women is a prioritized area in the work of CDHP.

## Mortality rates down in Lalitpur

The Community Development and Health Project (CDHP) in Lalitpur/Makwanpur is one of the largest and oldest community based projects of UMN. Women and child health care has been its focus from the very beginning. It is encouraging to see the fruit of many years' hard work.

Lalitpur district on the outskirts of Kathmandu has experienced an extraordinary reduction in infant and maternal mortality rates. The population growth has decreased significantly due to effective family planning acceptance in the community. There is greater community awareness, proper perinatal nutrition, health care and utilisation of maternal health services.

CDHP has assisted communities by establishing health posts and mother/child health clinics. Training has been provided to a significant number of Traditional Birth Attendants and women health volunteers in every corner of Lalitpur. The project continues to support these community workers, who enjoy high confidence from the people. This has resulted in safer deliveries and an improved general health status.

The fight against maternal mortality is carried on through Safe Motherhood programmes. Other activities include immunisation and nutrition programmes, antenatal care, identification and referral of high risk pregnancies, sanitation and income generation programmes for women.

The new work in Makwanpur district focuses on development, empowerment and health education. Women groups are encouraged to initiate activities through knowledge, awareness, attitude, new skills and a capacity building approach. These groups carry out discussions among themselves on their community's problems and find out their own ways to solve them.

The example set by UMN staff has played a major role for the success of CDHP. Shared leadership and decision making between men and women has been a model. The project has worked for an environment that encourages a sound gender balance and the staff is committed to gender equity, not only at work but also in their personal lives. The result has been that community people increasingly respect women in the project's working areas. They see the significance of women's role in making the community a better place to live.

- Sangita Maharjan





RON STOUFER

Women learn from each other how to run a group effectively.

## Marginalised women form vital NGO

One of the clearest examples of successful women empowerment related to UMN work is found in Okhaldhunga. This eastern district of Nepal now has a well-functioning NGO, Gramin Mahila Jagaran Samuha (GMJS)\*, with 60 women groups carrying out development activities in their communities and speaking with one voice on the district level. It all began in the early nineties with individual women starting small local groups, encouraged by the Okhaldhunga Rural Development Project (RDP).

"Many of them started out of literacy classes. They said 'We don't want to stop now, we want to continue to work together to improve our village,'" relates Ron Stoufer, who was told this by many women while he was working in Okhaldhunga.

Of major significance to the early groups was merely getting together, to support each other and to talk together. Women were often not allowed by their husbands to meet other people and spend time on meetings. If they did they were called "lazy" and

"bad women". But as the meetings started to result in improvements in the villages, the women gained respect. Protection of the forest, group savings and credit funds, building of latrines and footpaths, and growing vegetables were a few of the activities carried out.

Purna Sari Rai was one of the strong women who formed the first group, in the village of Khimli, despite a lot of opposition. In an evaluation of UMN's Rural Development Project's partnership with GMJS, she tells about the many problems that they used to have in her village. Cattle grazed in neighbours' gardens, people stole fodder and firewood from each other, there were lots of fights, and men were drinking too much alcohol and beating their wives. The women's group managed to check those problems through rules and fines, which the villagers finally followed and accepted. The fines also gave the group some income for various activities.



Word spread about the first women's groups' accomplishments and new ones started one after the other. By the end of 1993, there were 15 groups active in different parts of the district, with informal links between them. The Rural Development Project encouraged the groups to get together and form a Non-Government Organisation (NGO).

A constitution was written, an executive committee elected, and in January 1994 the first community-based NGO with women leadership in Okhaldhunga District was registered by the authorities. UMN's project moved to another area in the district, but continued to support the new-born organisation.

GMJS has now grown to include about 60 women's groups in many parts of the district. They have managed to access funding for different activities from both government offices and international organisations. When they raise their voice, the authorities listen. They are not tied to any political party but are keen on being impartial and independent.

"Since they are organised they can put pressure on local authorities. It is not usual for women to visit government offices, so when they come, the authorities listen. The women have a high integrity and are honest," says Surendra Shrestha, who has been working many years for UMN in Okhaldhunga, and now heads UMN's Nepali Organisation Unit.

Surendra is very encouraged by the way GMJS has developed, but also pinpoints problems they are facing. The walking distance between the scattered groups is one issue. A new organisational structure has recently been launched to facilitate communication and decision making. Lack of resources is another issue. To make the activities efficient, the organisation really needs employees to administer the work. UMN currently second two staff to help GMJS with planning, monitoring and training, but this support will not last forever. It will phase out within the next few years.

"They are well established and have gradually improved a lot, but they need to continue to gain more maturity to function as an entirely independent organisation. This takes time," says Surendra Shrestha. He is confident though that they will succeed on the organisation level as they have done locally. Many previously suppressed women have seen improvements in their villages that they never would have dreamed about ten years ago.

Purna Sari Rai: "Now I see many changes in Khimli. Not only do the men let us women go to group meetings, they tell us, 'You have to go.' Now people don't need to cut fodder, firewood, and thatch in others' fields, because they have planted them in their own fields. People stall feed their animals, and don't let them run loose. Now, the community people listen to what we women say. Men and women work together equally now. People understand that daughters and sons are equal. They have understood that from NFE class, from trainings from RDP, and from seeing our group's work."

\* "Rural Women Awareness-Awakening Group" in English.

Purna Sari Rai is one of the strong women in GMJS.

## Women encouraged into leadership

The aim of Dhading Resource Management Project is that *the poorest and marginalised communities and women of Dhading district will take active and responsible roles in Forest User Groups and other community development groups, in order to improve their quality of life.*

By encouraging women to take leadership in the management of community forests, a unique opportunity is provided for them to influence change in their communities. The Dhading project is working with over 70 "disadvantaged groups" and assisting them in registering as Forest User Groups, thereby obtaining the right to dispose of the forest in their neighbourhood.

Peer Educators, one male and one female volunteer from each disadvantaged group, attend monthly training workshops. The project recently conducted three-day group management trainings to post holders in 66 groups, to equip these volunteers with leadership skills. Many women have started Saving & Credit funds and are working together improving their own villages with footpaths, toilets and kitchen gardens.

On World Environment Day on 5 June 2000, ten community forests were officially handed over by the government to local communities in Dhading District, representing a total of 500 hectares of forests, which can now be utilised by the local people. There is an average of 45% females on the new Forest User Group Committees. Kanchi Tamang, vice chairperson of the Andheri Khola Committee gave a speech in front of the Member of Parliament and other leaders about her vision for the community. Many other Forest User Groups have been formed and soon they will also get the opportunity to obtain legal access to the forest.

- Finlay Hodge







## Welcome, Jennifer Collins

Jennifer Collins has been appointed as the Executive Director of United Mission to Nepal, effective 1 December 2000. She has experience of service in Nepal from her time as rehabilitation officer with the International Nepal Fellowship (INF) from 1975 to 1982. For the last eight years she has been International Director of Tearfund UK. As part of this role she was for three years on UMN's Executive Committee.

Jennie Collins is looking forward to returning to Nepal. She writes:

"I not only believe in, but feel passionate about, the Mission and Purpose of UMN and the Vision and Strategy. During my seven years working with Tearfund I have had the enormous privilege of seeing first hand the outworking of God's heart of the poor through His people both nationals and expatriates across the world. I have grown to view poverty in relational rather than exclusively economic terms and so am committed to reconciliation, God with people, people with each other in community and people with His creation. To me, therefore, the incarnational model of mission is of paramount importance."



ADAM COUPE

The Board of Director's meeting in May gave opportunity for both formal and informal meetings. On the picture, Ed Martin from the Mennonite Central Committee, USA, is engaged in a pleasant conversation with Hans-Olov Green, InterAct, Sweden, in front of UMN project displays. This year's main topics at the Board meeting included "security", "recruitment", and "investing in organisations".

Khimti I Hydropower Project is now on line. All five turbines are running, with a total capacity of 60 MW. Earlier this year, former Finance Minister, Mr. Ram Saran Mahat and former Secretary for Water Resources, Mr. Bishwanath Sapkota visited the site and spoke to Peter Harwood, general manager of Himal Power Ltd, which owns the project (photo).



NORMA KEHRBERG

Many UMNers have been involved in the Khimti project, both at the site, with the contractors and at Himal Power Ltd's corporate office in Kathmandu.

United Mission to Nepal is a co-operative effort between the people of Nepal and 33 Christian organisations from 13 countries. Its main areas of work are Education, Engineering and Industrial Development, Health Services and Rural Development. For more information, please contact:  
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United Mission to Nepal

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