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UMN ews

United Mission to Nepal



"Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." Matt. 19:14

NOW is a challenging time to live and work in Nepal and UMN. Some would call it a turbulent and troubled time, and they may be right. I do however prefer to call it challenging. Political instability and increased civil unrest in several of the districts where UMN is working, is but one of many reasons why we need to reassess who we are, what we are doing, and to ask God about His plans for the future.

Meanwhile, the wide range of activities in UMN projects and programmes goes on, for the benefit of thousands of Nepalis every day. Many of these are children, some of them abandoned, some struck by disease, some deprived of education. It was about them that Jesus said, "Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."

To convey the love of Jesus to these children, giving them the dignity they deserve, is part of our challenge. This issue of UMNNews therefore gives special attention to Nepal's children and to UMN's work for, among and with them.

Strategic change

However, Nepal is changing, and so are the countries from where UMN recruits expatriate staff and receives funding. This implies that UMN, and its work among children and others also need to change, whether we like it or not. One question has emerged as the key question for UMN's near future: "What does God want us as UMN to focus on in the next 5 years as we seek to serve the people of Nepal in the Name and Spirit of Jesus Christ?"

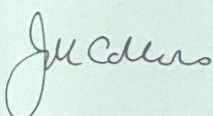
We have embarked on a journey to find the answer to this question. A range of issues with an impact on UMN, internal as well as external, have been identified and are now being analysed. These include the political instability in Nepal, changes in legislation related to NGOs/INGOs, challenges in recruitment and funding for UMN activities.

A lot of work lies ahead over the next 18 months. Constructive input from UMN's various stakeholders is crucial in this process. As a friend of UMN, you are also welcome to give your comments and suggestions, and above all your prayers!

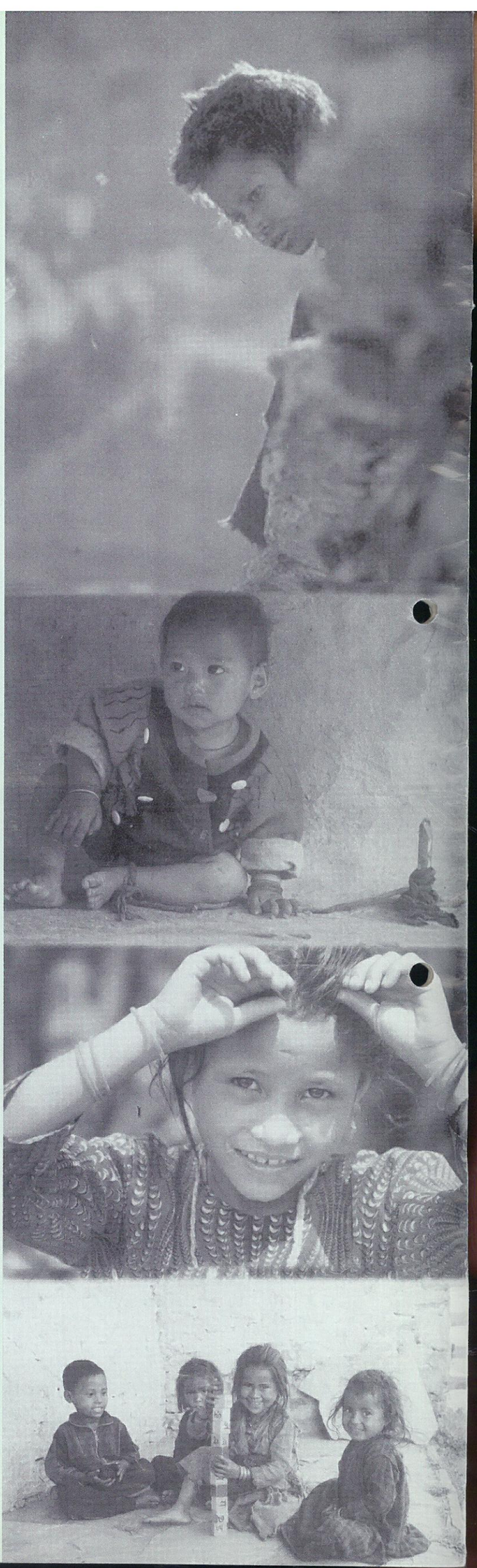
Security concerns

Some of the issues mentioned above already have an impact on UMN today. UMN projects have been directly affected by civil unrest in Nepal's rural areas. At the end of March, three UMN offices in Jumla district and one in Ramechhap were looted and vandalised by insurgents. No staff were assaulted, but threats in Jumla led to the decision to discontinue the KCST field programme. The Mugu Education Project was also suspended for a period of time due to unrest in the area, but work has now resumed. We are closely following the development in the districts affected by political tension. The safety of UMN staff is our first priority.

Developments such as these, which are out of our control, keep reminding us of our dependency on God and His grace. Jesus does not only teach us to help children and respect them, he asks us to take them as examples, and to be like them. As a child trusts its mother, we also trust that God will guard us and lead us through these difficult times, and again challenge us for the future.



Jennie Collins
Executive Director



Twenty years in Nepali education

Christine Stone recently celebrated 20 years of work in the education field in Nepal. Since 1981, she has not left the country for more than six weeks at any one time. The good of Nepal's children has been her motivation from the very beginning.

What areas of work have you been involved in over these 20 years?

I started teaching in village schools in Gorkha, grades 1-8, mainly English and maths. Then I taught five years at Gandaki Boarding School in Pokhara. I used to read stories to the students, and that is probably one of the most important things I've done in the whole of my time here in Nepal! For the last ten years I've been very involved in training teachers, and I have written quite a lot of textbooks in English and maths for the government school system. I am also doing some teaching, sometimes helping out at the Kathmandu International Study Centre, and also part-time in a Nepali private school.

What have you found most interesting?

I've enjoyed it all immensely! It's difficult to compare the different parts. There's been extremely happy times.

Tell me about the story reading!

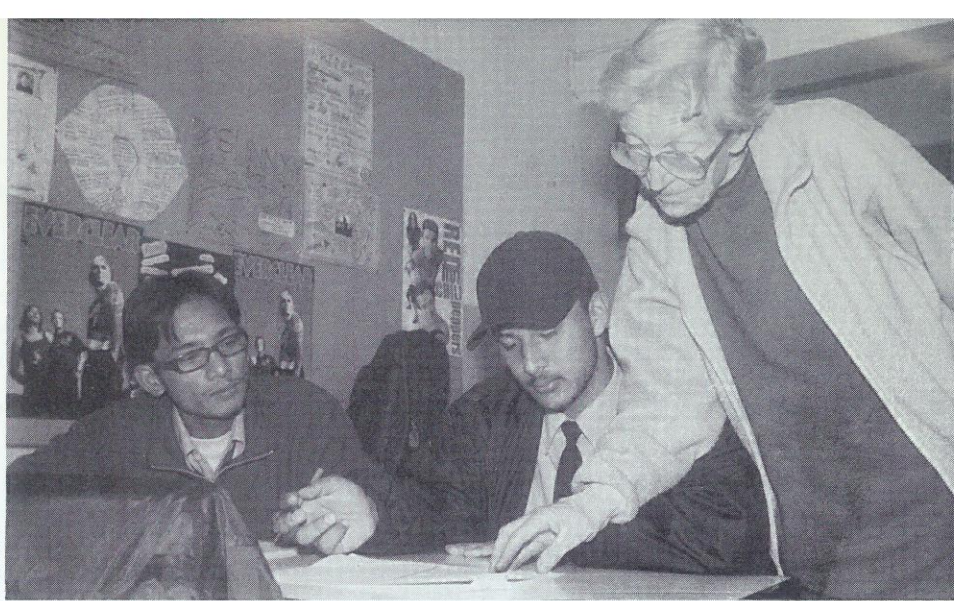
Well, there was one particular class at GBS for which I used to read half an hour every night for the whole of the five years. As they grew older I changed from "The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe" to detective stories, Les Miserables... adult books, really. And the young men and women can now tell me all the books I read to them! Two days ago I met a boy who was applying for a job here, and he came to me and said, "Are you Miss Stone?" "Yes," "I was at GBS!" "Oh, did I teach you?" "No, but you read 'The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe' to us." He had remembered that all this time!

Why was this so important?

Because the thing that is most missing in Nepali education is creativity, imagination and emotional development. I believe that stories are one of the most important means of the education of the whole person, and group reading of a story is even more important than doing it individually. The shared emotion of a story... there's nothing you can compare it with. One grade six boy said to me, "Oh, Ms Stone, that was even better than a video, because you make the pictures in your head." And in that sense, a book is far superior to watching a video.

What has been your inspiration and motivation for staying here for 20 years?

A complete trust that God brought me here, and a real belief in the value of education. There is no other way that a country can develop. Unless the people are well educated from childhood, I don't believe a country can really change.



Christine Stone believes that long-term commitment is needed to reach improvements in Nepali education.

I've been committed to this for the children's sake. When I first came here, their education was really nothing very happy or interesting. I think that education should supply a store of happy memories.

Obviously you must love children!

Well, when you're with them and get a relationship, then yes. They are fresh and life is exciting for them. But children en masse can be a real nuisance!

What do you see as the most urgent needs for Nepal's children?

To get good primary teachers. It was when I first came, and it still is.

The teachers don't need a bachelor's degree, but they need to know how to have a class of children and give them a good time, to play games with them and take them on nature walks. They need to be able to go out with string and measure things, to let them do group work, to read simple storybooks to the children. This is not difficult for a village teacher to do, but it is not done, partly because they do not know how to, partly because they do not have any books to help. But imagine the schools equipped with a tin trunk full of nice storybooks, strings and rulers, maybe a simple cassette player. That is all they need. With paper you can make so many things, but many teachers have never heard of, or experienced any activities at all. They are teaching the same way they were taught, sitting in rows chanting. If we can manage to address this problem, then Nepali education will take off.

Many Nepali children need more adult's attention. It would help them a lot if the parents would spend more time with them, in fun activities, talking to them, reading things... I would long to see more of that in Nepal. My mother played games with me for a certain time every single evening, to be honest until I went to university! This was important.

Has the situation for Nepal's children improved generally since you first came to Nepal?

Yes, but it depends which children you are talking about. There's a big difference between Kathmandu and the rural areas.

I see children with toys more, playing more than they used to do when I first came. My heart used to bleed because the children seemed to have no toys or traditions to play games.

Certainly there are more schools, and in the towns the schools are increasingly better.

The improvement in education is coming but it has not reached the children quite yet. There are far more teachers now, young teachers who want to teach better and I see a whole generation coming up who are eager to learn new ways of teaching. But changes in education are very slow. You are talking about changing the teachers' whole concept of what education is, and all the traditions they have grown up with. Sometimes development work is too time-bound. Real deep-down change that will take the whole country with it takes years. Twenty years is not a long time.

Should UMN be involved more on that level?

I think yes. We need more people working directly with the government. It requires a bit of toughness because it is often very frustrating and you often go backwards and don't feel you get anywhere... but it is worth the effort.

Have you ever had any doubts that Nepal is the right place for you?

Not until now. This is the first time I've thought of leaving. The government school textbooks needed writing year by year by year, right up to grade 10 and the School Leaving Certificate. So I've always thought, "well obviously I should stay here until it's done!"

Do you feel you have completed your task now?

Some days I do, some days not. About two years ago God said to me that I should be prepared to leave, because it's very comfortable and nice here... but I have not had any clear guidance. Maybe God wants me to go somewhere else now. Sudan, Mozambique... anywhere where there is a great need.

Not Britain?

No I'm not thinking of that at all. Not yet.

A mouthful of guava

I saw her sitting there on the bench, popping pills into her mouth like candy. Then, rummaging in the pocket of her tattered little dress, she pulled out a hard, green guava, obviously unripe. Digging her teeth into it she smiled and mumbled, "There! Now the bitter taste from my medicine is all gone." With that she toddled over to her mother, who swooped her up onto her hip and carried her off down the path.

The scene I had just witnessed was so endearing that I had to find out more about this little girl. The health post staff told me that her name was Sunita, and that she was four years old. "What was she taking those pills for?" I asked. "Worms?" "Oh no," they answered. "She has TB". I was taken by surprise, not because it is unusual to see TB patients at the health post - after all, this is Nepal, where TB kills over 15,000 people a year. But I had never seen such a young child with TB before. And I had never seen any child take medicine so well!

Luckily for Sunita and her family, UMN's Community Development and Health Project (CDHP) runs a health post only three minutes' walk from their house in the village of Ashrang, in South Lalitpur. When she showed symptoms of weight loss and a swollen belly, her mother brought her in for a check-up. "We first thought she was malnourished," said Sarada, the nutrition worker. "We fed her 'super porridge' and counselled her parents about good nutrition. Since they live so nearby, we could easily go and see how she was doing. But she just wouldn't improve." The staff decided to refer her to the nearest hospital, a two-day's journey across the Lalitpur hills.

There, Sunita was diagnosed with abdominal TB. Although the news was bad news, the fact that she was diagnosed early and started immediately on a treatment regimen was not to be taken for granted. In Nepal, many people suffer from TB without knowing the cause of their suffering or the means to treat it. Most live far from any health facility. Furthermore, many existing facilities lack basic drugs and skilled staff. Patients who are fortunate enough to receive both diagnosis and medication must commit to the rigorous long-term treatment plan, which is yet another challenge, given the conditions in rural Nepal. Many patients begin taking their medicine only to give up later on. This is owing to

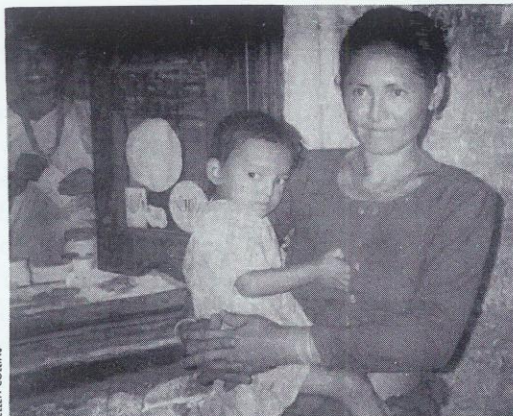
inaccessibility of drugs, lack of follow-up, feelings of futility, or because they think they are getting better and no longer need the drugs. The problem of "defaulters" is a major challenge to those fighting TB in Nepal.

In recent years the National Tuberculosis Centre has begun implementing what is known as "DOTS" (Direct Observation Treatment Short-Course) in the hope of reducing the defaulter cases and thereby addressing the problem of multiple drug resistance. The scheme requires the patient to take the drugs daily, in the presence of a trained health worker. CDHP has a DOTS centre in its health post located close to the capital city, in Chapagaon. But it was unrealistic to conduct DOTS in Ashrang Health Post, which serves a population scattered up to a day's walk in all directions.

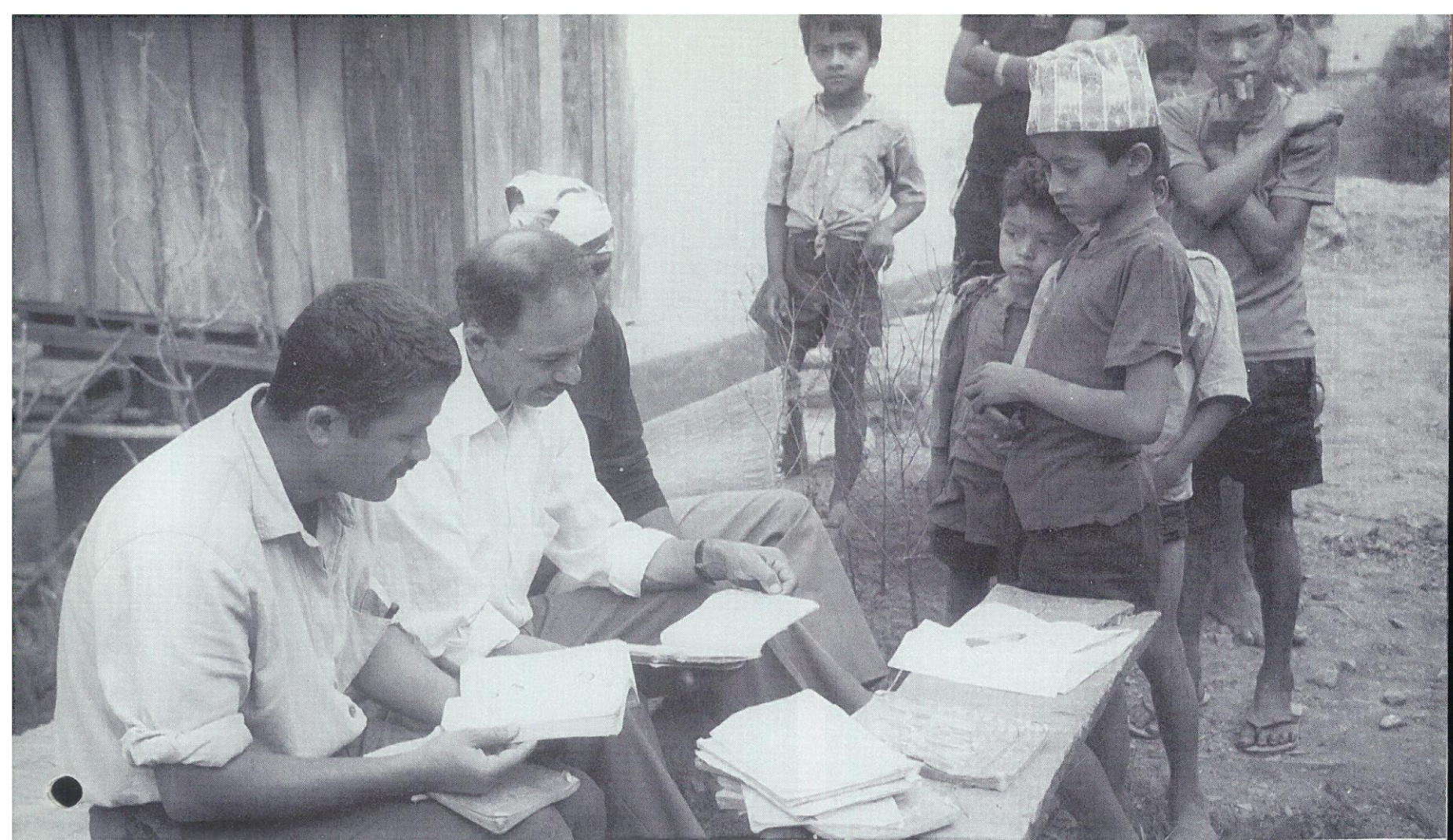
However, in Sunita's particular case, the DOTS method works perfectly! Each morning she walks up the rocky trail with her mother, greets the health post workers, and takes her pills as they look on. She has been a "regular" for six months now. Her parents, pleased with her progress and with the encouragement given by the staff, are true believers in the health post services. "Some people might have taken their child to see a Jhankri (traditional healer) or worse," Sunita's mother said. "But we are happy with the choice we made. We are happy our daughter is alive. What a blessing Ashrang Health Post and the good people here have been to us."

Sunita, her parents, and the CDHP staff are living witnesses to the value of community health in Nepal. Granted, things were a little easier because Sunita just happened to live "in the neighbourhood". But, as her mother said, proximity is not the only factor. Without the concern, timely referral, and treatment provided by the health post workers; without the commitment and discipline of these parents; and without the good-natured wilfulness of the little patient herself, this story might have a bitter ending. To the contrary - Sunita now has hope for a future free from the dreaded disease that nearly took her life. Happily I can say as Sunita did, with her mouthful of guava: "The bitter taste is gone!"

Ellen Collins
CDHP



Sunita with her mother.



STEFAN ÖSTMAN

Textbooks often reveal whether an application is accurate or not.

In search of the needy

The Gandaki Boarding School (GBS) in Pokhara has become a model school for Nepal's Western Region through United Mission to Nepal's involvement. Twenty-five percent of the students are from poor backgrounds and study at GBS thanks to scholarships. Approximately twenty new children are chosen each year.

Join us on a journey to rural families in remote villages, to identify needy boys and girls for the next school year.

The first beams of sunshine have just reached the Pokhara valley when Daya Ram Timilsina, Lok Bahadur Thapa and Shambhu Man Shrestha from GBS pick me up at the guesthouse and we start our journey southwestwards on the Pokhara-Tansen road. The Toyota pick-up is full of laughter, excitement and high expectations for the outcome of our trip. Daya Ram, who is scholarship officer at Gandaki Boarding School explains the purpose, as we leave Pokhara behind us.

Out of 600 scholarship applicants, 56 have been selected on the basis of results from entrance exams and interviews. In the application process, they have provided information about the age of the candidate, their current schooling and the economic conditions of the family. The purpose of this trip is to check the accuracy of these applications. Have the parents been honest, or have they provided false information in an attempt to deceitfully gain entrance to the school and a scholarship for their child?

Less than an hour after departure we leave the main road and soon stop at a teashop to ask how to reach the particular village that we are looking for. We learn that we cannot get any farther by vehicle, so we start walking up the hill. The father in the family we are about to visit is a student in Kathmandu, according to the

application form. The family does not own their house in the village, and they lack a stable source of income. Hence the boy should be well qualified for a scholarship.

However, as we approach the home, we start to realise that everything might not be in order. When Daya Ram asks his way to the family's house, he also asks innocent questions about them. From what we hear, it seems that the father is not actually a student, but rather a teacher. And by the time we reach the house we already know that the application is far from truthful.

It turns out that the family is actually fairly well off. They are not at home themselves, but we meet a relative who gives us all the details we want, and more. Before realising why we have come, he has already said too much to try to cover up the false information. The applicant's father is definitely not a poor student, but vice-principal of a boarding school in Pokhara, where his wife is also teaching! They both have MA degrees and probably incomes around 10 000 rupees each. They have a house and land in the village, but they have also recently bought land in the Pokhara valley.

After finishing the tea that the uncle insists we must have, I follow Daya-Ram and Lok Bahadur back on the trail, astonished by the dishonesty shown by this family. But my Nepali friends are

not surprised. Disappointed, yes, but surprised? No. They have seen too many similar cases before. When we reach the car and share our experience with the driver Shambhu, he cannot help but laugh.

Some parents try to withhold information about the financial status of the family, others are dishonest about the applicant's age. Next morning, we reach the home of another candidate. His father is working on the roof of the house when we arrive. A small crowd assembles as we start asking questions about the schooling of the child. Both the boy himself, his father, his grandfather and a teacher from the local school who happens to be present, assure us that he is studying in grade four. He could be, judging from his height and appearance. But Daya Ram wants to be certain. He asks the boy to show him his textbooks. He vanishes behind the house, and we also see his mother running around. It takes time. We chat with the father and the teacher, and finally, after 10-15 minutes, the boy is back with a bunch of books. They are indeed for grade four and dated this year. But the name is not correct.

"He took them over from a friend," explains the father with determination.

But Daya Ram is not convinced. The school is not open yet, so we cannot go there to verify the information, but the teacher offers to follow us to the headmaster's house nearby. He is not at home, but while waiting for him, another boy shows up. Daya Ram asks him if he knows the applicant and in which grade he is studying.

"Grade six," comes the short reply. Daya Ram looks at the teacher, who, slightly ashamed admits the truth.

"But he is a very clever boy, worthy of going to Gandaki Boarding School!"

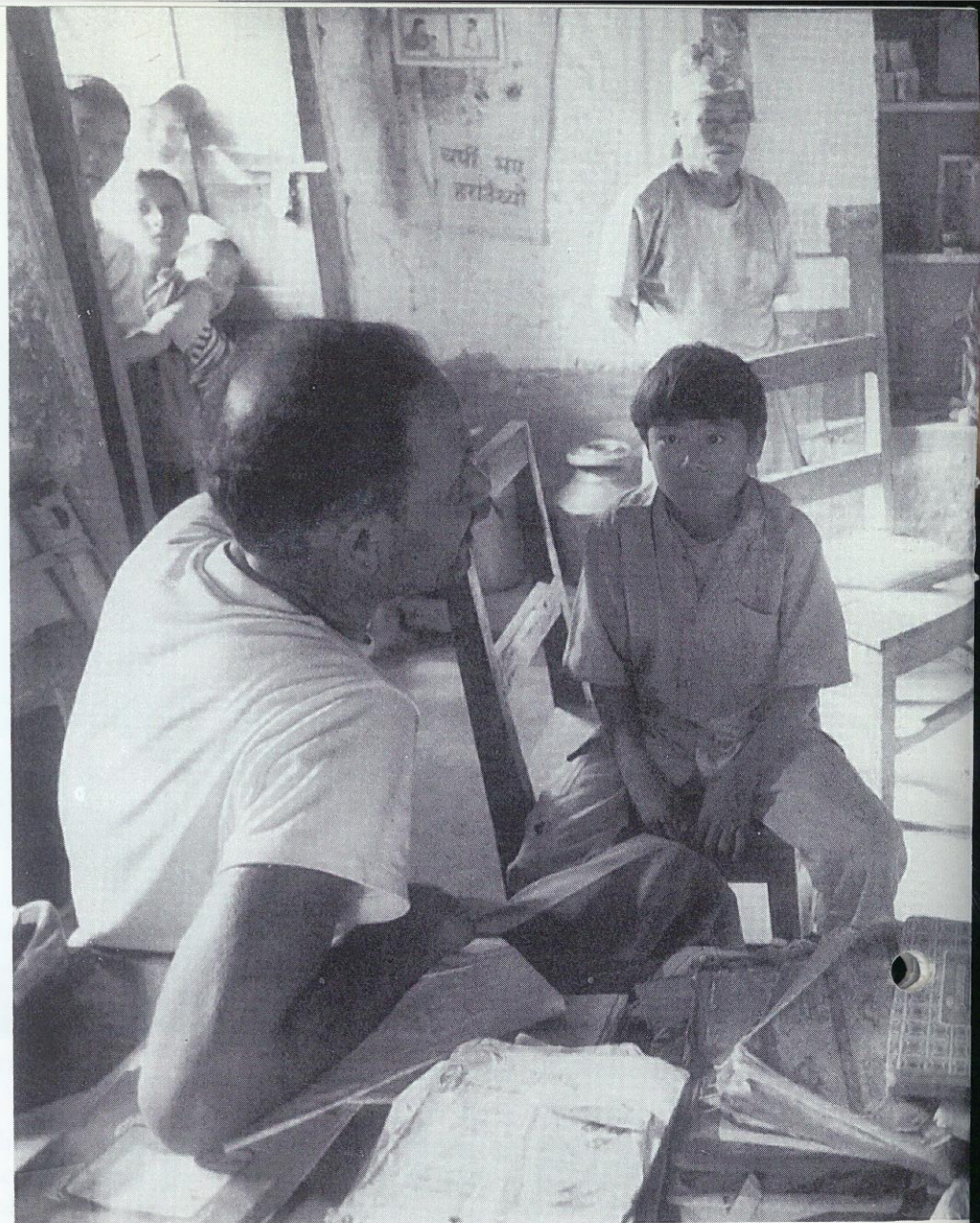
Again we have to walk away disappointed, yet satisfied that we found out the truth.

Beautiful views and dusty roads

For three days we go from place to place along dusty roads in the Syangja and Palpa districts of Nepal's Western Region. Beautiful views make up for the dusty roads and the discomfort in the vehicle, bumping its way slowly along hillsides and over ridges. The four-wheel-drive and large tyres of the Toyota Pick-Up justify themselves as the vehicle struggles up steep, sandy ascents and across water-streams. At times, the vehicle's steering capacity is not enough to make the sharpest turns, while climbing steep hillsides. But with a reverse gear and a collected mind, Shambhu does not have any problems in getting us forward.



Daya Ram collects a lot of helpful information by chatting with neighbours and relatives.



Daya Ram meets the boy Dhan Bahadur in his school. He seems to be a worthy candidate for a scholarship.

After several hours on dusty roads we reach the home of Dhan Bahadur Thapa. He is a nine-year-old boy studying in grade four in a remote village in Palpa district. It is late afternoon and his parents welcome us with tasty berries that they pick from a couple of trees in front of the house. The house is located by itself on a mountain-slope. The father is a farmer. Daya Ram asks what he is working on now.

"Nothing," he replies. "There is nothing I can do. It has not rained yet."

He looks out over the dry terraced fields surrounding the house. It has not been raining for a long time, and he is impatiently waiting for the first signs of the coming monsoon. There is distress in his eyes. The yield from the fields is not sufficient as livelihood for his family with four children. He is forced to do additional labour work to raise an income.

Dhan Bahadur has not come back from school yet, so the father willingly takes us to visit the school and see his son there. The headmaster meets us and calls for the boy to leave his class for a moment. All the children are excited about the strange visitors, and, full of curiosity, they crowd in the door and window of the office to get a glimpse of what is going on. Why have we come from far away to meet their classmate?

"He is a very clever boy," assures the teacher who is eager for Dhan Bahadur to get the chance of an education at the renowned Gandaki Boarding School. The boy answers Daya Ram's questions in good English. He cannot hide however a mixture of anxiety and excitement.

He glances at his father and hopes that his behaviour is correct. Daya Ram is full of sympathy for the boy and hopes that the scholarship will be more meaningful than a mere scholarship and thereby help his future.

Daya Ram has worked for the School Scholarship Department and truly enjoys his job, not least with the applicants.

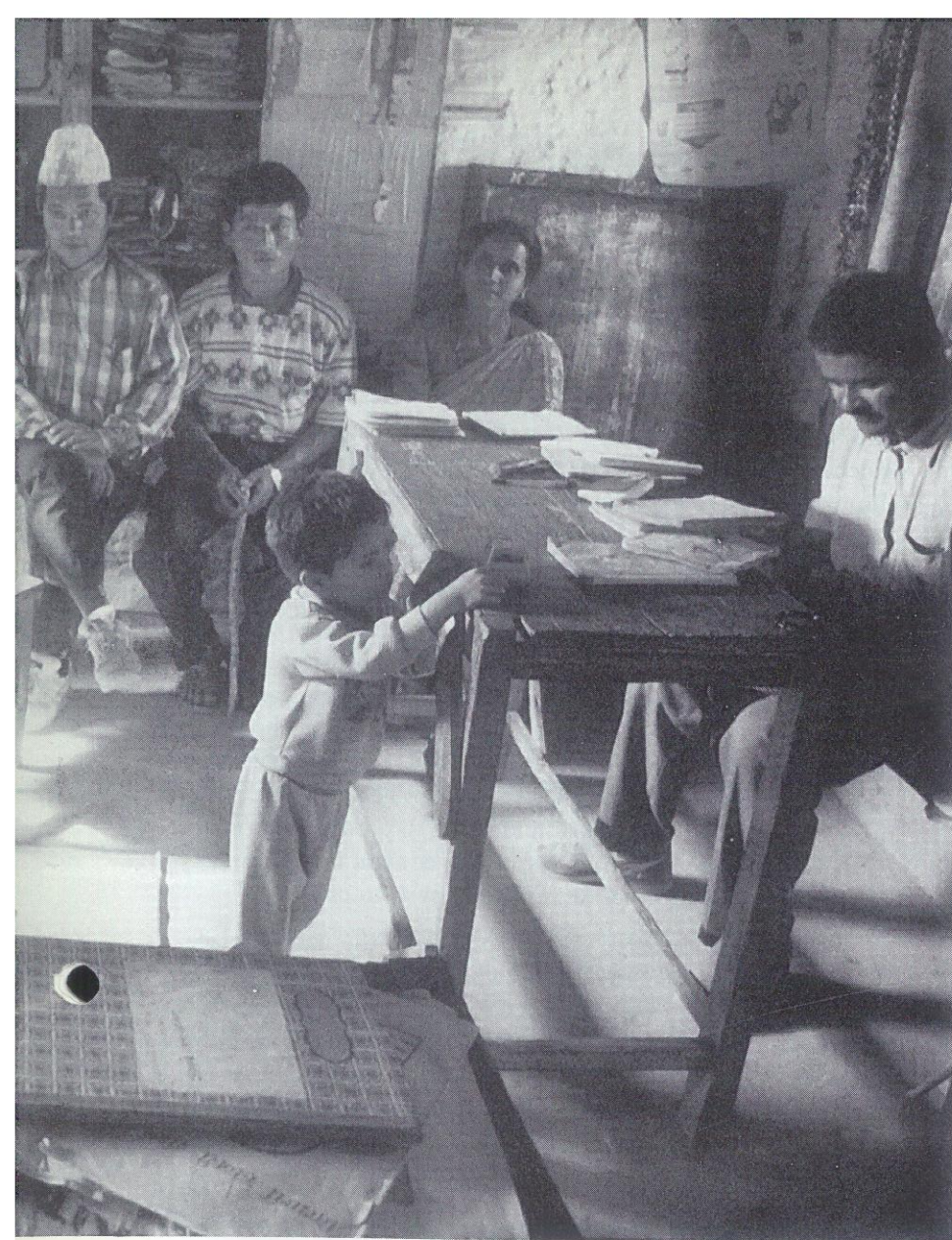
"I can remember all the times as we are being served a delicious meal of a student now studying in the school to welcome us in their home about their son Narayan's progress for the opportunity provided by the department.

Priority to girls

Finding genuine candidates is a task of hard trekking for long hours in their applications. Out of the 100 students from Syangja and Palpa, half are girls.

"It is very disappointing," says Daya Ram.

Girls are given priority in the selection process. Often disadvantaged in the selection process, a girl and her family, whose situation seems correct. "Encouraging



The Toyota pick-up has a hard time on the bad roads. Sometimes children ask for a ride on their way to school.



Most families show hospitality. Dhan Bahadur's parents offer us tasty berries.

arship.

teacher, seeking to ensure is, and we leave the school and his family. What could be providing this boy with a path towards a bright

in the Gandaki Boarding School for 12 years now. He is sitting in the homes of needy

students," he says with pride. "The meal by the parents is a great treat. They are delighted and excited to hear news of the scholarship. They are very thankful for the scholarship."

It makes up for the hardship to families who have lied on applications checked in the rate and half include false

that so many try to cheat,"

scholarships, as they are in the local society. We meet one person in the application says Daya Ram and Lok

Bahadur. Our next visit is more tragic. This girl has all the right qualifications for a scholarship. Her father left the mother with three daughters many years ago. She works in a health post to raise money for their livelihood, and the girl is very talented. Why did they send a false certificate from a local government school instead of the boarding school that she in fact is attending? This may have ruined the daughter's future. False information leads to immediate disqualification of the application.

"We have to be strict. Otherwise we might have problems later on. The local community must understand that they have to be honest. There are enough other needy children who deserve to be helped!" explains Daya Ram.

After three intensive days on bad roads and distant footpaths, I get off in Tansen, enriched with new experiences. Daya Ram, Lok Bahadur and Shambhu continue southwards to the Terai where they have many other homes to visit. Their task is huge and demanding, but when the selection process is completed and the new school year has started, they will truly enjoy the smiles of those talented kids who unexpectedly received the opportunity of an excellent education – for their own benefit, for their parents' benefit, and in the long run for the benefit of their country.

Stefan Östman
Communications Office

Dan Bahadur was selected for a scholarship by the committee and commences GBS in the new academic year along with 16 other successful scholarship applicants.

Scholarship officer urgently needed

An expatriate Scholarship Officer is urgently needed for the Scholarship Department at Gandaki Boarding School. Richard and Denise Ross, who have assisted Daya Ram Timilsina in the department for the last four years, are about to complete their term and return to the UK. They emphasise that an expatriate officer is needed to help resist the pressure from people who try to use their position in society to gain entrance to GBS, or who are not happy with the decisions of the scholarship committee. The expatriate is also needed to maintain good public relations between donors and students, and to work on fund-raising.

"It should be someone who likes the outdoors, challenges and adventures. He or she should have a critical mind and good interpersonal skills," says Denise Ross.

Fresh smiles for Nepal's children

At a luncheon meeting in July 2000, the Managing Director of Nepal Lever Ltd, Nepal's leading toothpaste manufacturer, told me that his daughter had many decayed teeth. He had been advised by a local dentist to have his six-year-old daughter's teeth extracted under general anaesthesia. I asked if I could take a look at his daughter, who upon examination had half of her 20 baby teeth affected by rampant caries.

The fundamental right of children to have good oral health and access to oral health care is a much-neglected area in Nepal. Research by UMN's Oral Health Programme has shown that dental decay is highly prevalent amongst young children in Nepal. Approximately 65 percent of Nepali children at age 6 years suffer from untreated dental caries, which makes it one of the most prevalent childhood diseases, more prevalent than malnutrition and Vitamin A deficiency. These young children have an average of three decayed teeth and some communities have many children with 12 to 16 decayed teeth. Almost 100 percent of these children are untreated due to limited access to services and lack of awareness.

Over a period of appointments, the little girl's teeth were restored using the Atraumatic Restorative Treatment technique, whereby decayed teeth are filled using hand instruments. When the mother of the child was questioned about the type of toothpaste used, she replied that they had been using non-fluoridated Close Up toothpaste.

Fluoridation of the teeth is an effective way to prevent decay. Drinking water in Nepal lack efficacious amounts of fluoride, and it is very difficult to fluoridate the water supplies. Hence, toothpaste is a very important vehicle of fluoride. Brushing twice a day with efficacious fluoridated toothpaste can prevent decay and reduce tooth decay amongst children in developing countries by more than 45 percent.

After completion of the girl's treatment, I took courage and went to the office of the Managing Director and said, "Your daughter is one of thousands of young children in Nepal who have

rampant caries. This type of dental problem and suffering experienced by your daughter and other children could be prevented through the use of fluoridated toothpaste. Nepal Lever Ltd. must fluoridate Close Up." The Managing Director picked up the telephone and phoned someone higher up in the organisation and asked, "Is there any reason why we can't fluoridate Close Up?" While the Managing Director was talking I sat silently in prayer. After a few minutes the Managing Director put the phone down and, turning to me, he said, "Dr. Yee, today you have had a very fruitful meeting. All over the world Close Up toothpaste is fluoridated except in India and Nepal. This will not remain the case. There is no reason why Close Up should not be fluoridated. I will order our manufacturing plant in Hetauda to produce fluoridated Close Up." I smiled and tried my best to contain my elation and joy, silently praising God for another answer to prayer!

In March, fluoridated Close Up entered the market place. Advanced Pepsodent Germin Check (which was fluoridated last year due to the advocacy work of the Oral Health Programme) has 15 %, and Close Up has 45% of the urban market share in toothpaste sales (200 tons). It has 31-37% of rural sales. At the encouragement of the UMN Oral Health Programme, Nepal Lever Ltd. will test the market place next year with even cheaper fluoridated toothpaste.

In just a short period of time, God has provided the opportunity for the people of Nepal to have access to affordable fluoridated toothpaste, when previously; fluoridated toothpaste was not a norm. There is still much work to do in lobbying the dentists and other toothpaste manufacturers, and in the investigation of salt fluoridation to ensure that even the children who are the most disadvantaged or who do not brush, will have their teeth fluoridated. It is God's vision and the Oral Health Programme's desire to see that all children in Nepal are able to praise God with pain free healthy mouths!

Robert Yee
Oral Health Programme



“From the lips of
children and infants
you have ordained
praise...”
(Psalm 8:2)

New children's ward at Patan Hospital

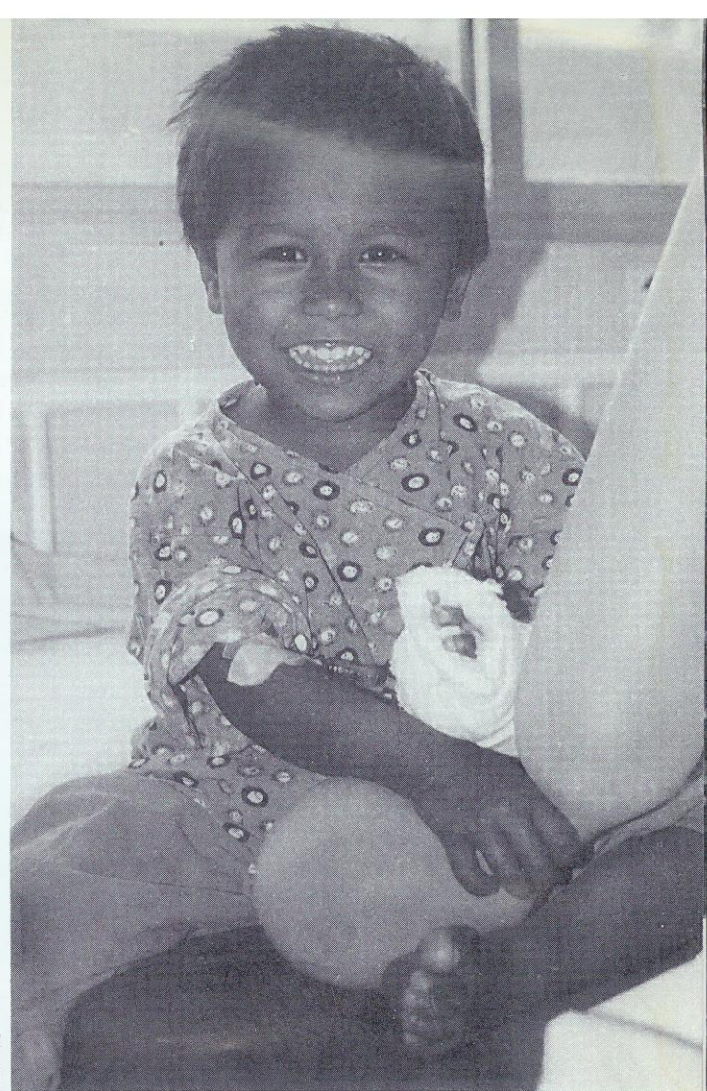
Seeds of love once sown, can reap a harvest many years later. Sahu Ganesh Lal loved children, especially his six sons and four daughters whom he often took to the temple with him.

Sahu Ganesh was an astute businessman. He exported wool from Tibet, as did his father and grandfather before him, across the Himal into the Kathmandu Valley through Sankhu, and then down to be sold in Raxaul, India. He traveled about four months a year in India. In Calcutta he saw the level of health care. One year after the great 1934 earthquake in Kathmandu, he opened a small dispensary in Patan. He had a dream to open a hospital. When he died in 1972, at the age of 78, it seemed that his dream would not be realised.

However surprising events sometimes happen when love is involved. In 1997, a Patan Hospital doctor met and spoke to Sahu Ganesh's third son, B. K. Shrestha. Through business in India, B.K. had done well. Now he is chairman of the Everest Bank in Kathmandu. B.K. wanted to share his wealth and he remembered his father's dream.

On the other side of the world love inspired people of the Montview Boulevard Presbyterian Church in Denver, USA. To celebrate its 100th year, the church is conducting a large fundraising drive among its members. Half of the money they raise will be given to mission and a large amount has been set aside for Patan Hospital.

Rosemary Huber
Patan Hospital



The new children's ward was inaugurated on 11 April.

Love for Phul Maya

The young mother was alone in our Nutrition Rehabilitation Center (NRC) with her nine-month-old baby girl. Usually the NRC has at least three or four patients but this particular week, little Phul Maya was the only one. When she was about three months old, her 20-year-old mother noticed that the baby's head seemed a bit larger than it should be. Now, at nine months, the baby's head was grotesquely swollen, making her tiny, malnourished body seem even tinier in proportion. Her eyes rolled back in her head and then flicked back and forth from side to side, signifying that her small brain was under considerable pressure from all the excess fluid in her head. She needed a shunt placed from her brain to her heart to drain that fluid out and release the pressure.

Here, in our small district hospital, we could not perform this operation. Phul Maya needed to go to Kathmandu. Her family did not have the money. But that was not the obstacle. We could provide the money for both the transportation and the surgery through our charity fund. The obstacle was Phul Maya's grandfather. As I talked with the bright, loving young mother, I learned something I could not understand. Her father-in-law would not let her go. The issue was not money. Phul Maya was a girl baby. The household already had another girl baby, Phul Maya's cousin. Why spend all this time and effort on a girl baby who would probably die anyway? Just let her die and get another baby. Phul Maya's mother might go to Kathmandu and never come back. He needed her labor in the household.

What a heartless man! I asked about all the other options I could think of. What about the young mother's husband? Would he dare to care for his little daughter, his only child? No, he would

not cross his father. What about the young woman's brothers? Oh, no, they would not get involved in a family dispute. But this baby's life was at stake. What about just ignoring the father-in-law and taking the baby to Kathmandu anyway? But the consequences of this would be too great. Phul Maya's mother would never be allowed to rejoin the family and could not remarry. Her husband would just get another wife. She would be alone and unable to produce a son for the rest of her life. This she could not do.

So she waited at the NRC for the ten days her father-in-law allowed her to stay, holding little Phul Maya, rocking her, singing to her, and feeding her. She loved her baby. Even though she had to support its large head as if it were a newborn. Even though its high-pitched, brain-damaged cry was haunting and insistent. Even though its eyes could no longer focus on her. Phul Maya was a precious little life and she would care for it as long as she could.

When her sisters-in-law came to fetch her, Phul Maya's mother obediently packed up her things and her little baby. I overheard them talking to her, telling her that her father-in-law would let her come back if she thought Phul Maya's head was aching. "Head aching?" I indignantly thought. "Her head is dying, you proud, cruel man." I could only pray that this young mother would find comfort in the few words I was able to speak to her about the love and constant presence of the one true God.

We cannot meet every need of the children of Nepal. Sometimes we don't have the answer. But we do have a God who does. One day in heaven, I hope to meet little Phul Maya. She will have a perfect body.

Sarah Wittmeyer
Okhaldhunga Health Project

Kali Maya goes to Kathmandu

Kali Maya is a little girl from Pere village, a six-hour walk from Jumla Bazaar in western Nepal. Her mother left her in the care of her ten-year-old sister while she went to the forest. The sister put Kali Maya to sleep by the open fire in the kitchen and went to play with her friends. When she returned, Kali Maya had rolled into the hot coals and had full burns on both legs from the knees down. Her parents brought her to the district hospital. She was sent to the mission clinic for dressings.

But Kali Maya needed more care than could be provided in Jumla if she was ever to walk. Phone calls were made to arrange a transfer to the mission hospital in Kathmandu.

I told the mother I would come to Jumla hospital on Saturday morning to get her and Kali Maya and go to the airport with them. When I arrived, the mother was having second thoughts. She had never travelled outside of Jumla and was afraid of the unknown. Everyone in the hospital told her what a fortunate person she was and that she should not pass up this opportunity.

When we arrived at the airport, we learned the flight had been delayed two hours. After sitting there a while, Kali Maya's mother said she was going to see her sister who was near the airport and would return in a short time. I waited over an hour and then went looking for her, to no avail. She had got frightened and run away.

The following week, I was assisting with an immunisation clinic and antenatal clinic in a village near their home. I sent a message

to her house asking them to come. An hour later, the mother and baby came to the place where I was staying. Kali Maya's legs were black from the knees down. Her feet were swollen and all the toes falling off. "She cries all the time," her mother said. "It hurts", I replied. "Are you still giving her the medicine?" (She had been given antibiotics and painkiller) "No, it is all gone," the mother said.

I told her I would be going to Kathmandu myself in two days. If she wanted to go, she must take Kali Maya to Jumla for dressing and be ready to go early the day I was going. "Of course, I want to go" the mother replied.

We arrived at Jumla airport at 9 a.m. No one was sure if a plane would come that day or not, as they were repairing the runway. To our relief, a flight arrived at 11:30 a.m. We switched planes in Nepalgunj, arrived in Kathmandu, and took a taxi straight to the hospital.

By 7 p.m. mother and child had been admitted to the hospital. There were four other young patients in the room. Other parents took pity on this woman from far away and helped her learn the hospital routine.

During her five-week stay in the hospital, Kali Maya's wounds were cleaned; she received skin grafts and both legs healed. Mother and daughter have now returned to their home in remote Pere village. "My daughter has received a second life," her mother says.

- Nancy McGaughey
Jumla



NANCY MCGAUGHEY

UMN's project in Jumla, the Karnali Community Skills Training Programme, has been installing smokeless stoves in the homes of villagers who have requested it. The stove gives a more efficient use of firewood and leads the unhealthy smoke out of the house. A third benefit is that it prevents accidents of the kind that Kali Maya suffered.

A Girl from Amp Pipal

Anya is a 17-year-old village girl. She has been a good student, studying in grade seven. According to her mother, she was previously a hard-working, stay-at-home, rather silent girl, not talking much and having few friends. She had been cooperative, and willing to do the tasks she was given.

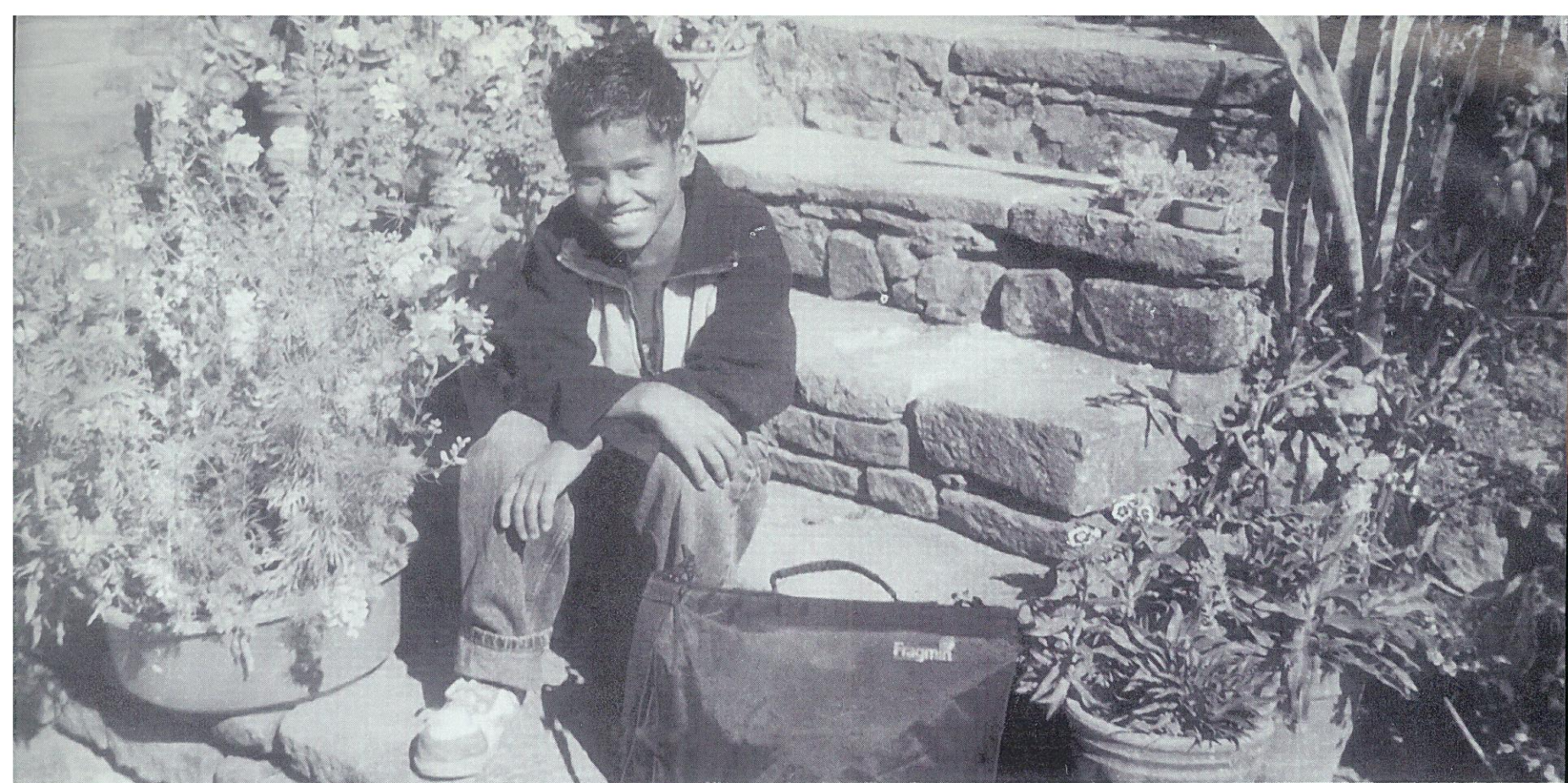
Her symptoms had started one month earlier, when she was not able to perform in her English language exam. She became withdrawn, refusing either to eat or speak. She was taken to Amp Pipal Hospital and had recovered after one week, but two weeks later her symptoms recurred and were even worse than before.

When I first saw Anya she had been in hospital more than a week. She was lying in bed with her eyes almost closed. She would only communicate by very weakly pressing my hand when asked. Her mother said that she had been eating just a little, and could be active for a short time but quickly returned to her confused state. The nurses described a girl who did not speak, except uttering single words repetitively. Basic functions such as eating, taking baths and going to the toilet were done with her mother's help.

Anya was given psychosis medicine while I worked with her mother. We discussed how to support her daughter's involvement in daily activities. The mother found it hard but she was willing to try. The interview with the mother took place in the presence of the daughter. She did not react to what we were saying and seemed to become more withdrawn and confused at first. But over the next few days she started to improve, and to my surprise, one day when I went to meet her she was out of bed and outside. I asked her to join me in sitting on the chautara (a resting-place under a tree, found everywhere in Nepal). She stayed with me and answered in single words. When I later met her in the ward, she was able to talk. She could describe her problems and tell what it was like when we could not make contact with her. She was willing to communicate, and shouted to me "see you at the chautara". She was able to express that she had received help, she wanted to study and find work serving people.

This young girl had an acute psychotic reaction at a time of severe stress. Her withdrawn personality and dependent relationship with her mother may make her prone to similar reactions in the future. However, during this episode she learned new things about herself, and she now knows where help is available.

Raija Kiljunen
Mental Health Programme



DIGBY HOYAL

A new life for Arjun

“My name is Arjun Nepali. I was born in Badera in Nawal Parasi District. I am now 12 years old. Originally my family consisted of four members: my father, mother, one younger sister and myself. My father was an alcoholic and smoked a lot. After drinking he would come home in an abusive mood.

Suddenly one day, my mother died. I was too small to know about it, so I really never knew my mother or appreciated my mother's love. Later my father died of TB. Then there were only two of us in the family, orphans with no one to care for us. We ate only what we could beg from the neighbours. Later, one of the villagers called Uncle Krishna Devkota took pity on us. We stayed in his house for five months. He was the only one who cared for us and loved us. I was able to go to the school up to class two. One day a poisonous snake bit my sister and she too died. I was the only one left of the original family of four.

Another day I was running to school because I was late. Suddenly I fell over. By the end of the day the foot was swelling badly but it seemed just like a sprain. For a long time they treated it in the village but it did not get better. In fact, it started to leak pus. Uncle Krishna, Aunt Chandrakala and other villagers collected money from the village and took me to the Lumbini Zonal Hospital

for admission. An X-ray showed my ankle was broken. I spent three months in that hospital but my foot did not get better. It just kept on swelling.

The villagers said that the doctor would not operate as we had no money, so I was taken to the Tansen Mission Hospital on 4 September 2000. They operated on my foot the next day. They found I had TB. I was told I would have to take TB medicine for eight months, and I have done that. My foot gradually began to get better and I started to learn to walk on crutches. I stayed in the Tansen hospital five months.

By then I had got to know all the doctors, nurses and other staff. They were very kind to me. Not only did I receive free food and medical care, I also found at the hospital love to replace that of my father and mother.

I wanted to go to school but I had no way to go. Finally with the help of UMN missionaries, I was sent to the nearby Bethel English Boarding school in Tansen. Now I have started to study. The teaching is in English so I am in a low class and it is all paid for. I am so happy to have achieved my dream of going to school. Everybody in school is so friendly.”

As told to *Khim Prasad Kandel* LOP, Tansen

Children in Nepal

A decade has passed since Nepal ratified the UN convention on Children's rights, and the last few years has seen increased advocacy in this area. Questions on children's rights, child development and exploitation of children are being raised as society is changing. There is however still an urgent need for more awareness raising and education.

On the one hand, child mortality is high, malnutrition is common, and few children receive more than a few years of formal education. Poverty and the continual struggle for survival make it almost impossible to provide adequately for children. Various kinds of exploitation of children remain a major problem in Nepal. Child labor and children living on the streets is common, not least in Kathmandu.

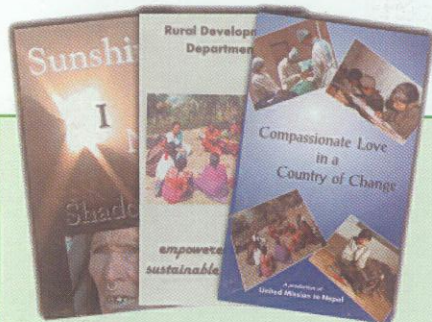
On the other hand, some children flourish despite the socio-economic odds against them. Many village children in Nepal have a clear sense of self-worth and social responsibilities from the role they play in doing household chores and agricultural tasks, such as herding. When the child is young, work, play and learning blend seamlessly. Before the chores become repetitive and interfere with education, active learning through work is a source of pride and satisfaction. It is not always obvious when the line to unhealthy child labor is crossed.

Anil Nepal
Communications Office

Recognition by the King

The hard work done by Peter Harwood and his colleagues on developing the 60 MW Khimti I Hydropower Project has been officially recognised. On 30 March 2001 King Birendra awarded him the "Prabal Gorakha Dakshinbahu" medal for his contribution to Nepal and for being "a loyal and trusted friend of the Nation".

Peter Harwood has been managing the Khimti project as a UMN secondee to Butwal Power Company and Himal Power Ltd. In addition to a significant contribution to the national grid, the project has also provided rural electrification, community health and development to the areas surrounding the plant.



New UMN videos and CDs available

UMN - Compassionate Love in a Country of Change: An overview of UMN's work in Nepal, 22 min. Available in English and Swedish.

Sunshine in Shadows: A video documentary of the Karnali Community Skills Training Programme in the remote district of Jumla, northwestern Nepal, 54 min (17 and 33 min versions also available). Available in English and Swedish.

Empowered People - Sustainable Livelihoods: A presentation of UMN's rural development work, 11 min. English.

The **UMN Archives** has produced a set of five CD Roms with a selection of documents spanning 40 years of UMN's history. A separate CD Rom with historical photos has also been made available.

Videos, CD Roms and other material can be ordered from the Communications Office at UMN Headquarters (address in the box below).

Gary Hafvenstein new UMN President

UMN's Board of Directors unanimously elected Gary Hafvenstein new President of the United Mission to Nepal on Monday 30 April. He is taking over from David Kerrigan, whose term ended at the board meeting. Peter Quesenberry was elected vice president.

Gary Hafvenstein is 50 years old, an engineer by profession, but currently working at the World Mission Prayer League headquarters in Minneapolis, USA. He worked in UMN from 1979 to 1990, first with the building of Patan Hospital, and later as Himal Hydro's project manager at the Andhikhola project. He has been representing the World Mission Prayer League on UMN's Board of Directors since 1992, and has served on the Executive Committee a total of four years.



UMN contribution to Gujarat

In a gesture of solidarity and friendship, UMN's Executive Director Jennie Collins handed over a cheque of 329,079 Nepali rupees to Enos Das Pradhan, Treasurer of the Church of North India for their relief work in Gujarat, at the UMN Board Meeting on 30 April.

The money has been raised from individual UMNers, who wanted to contribute to the relief efforts in the state of Gujarat in western India. In some UMN projects, the staff chose to contribute the equivalent of one day's salary.

The disastrous earthquake on 26 January 2001 claimed the lives of at least 30,000 people and left far more injured and homeless. The Church of North India, a UMN Member Body, has been highly involved in the relief work, and Enos Das Pradhan expressed deep gratitude for the contribution from UMN staff.



United Mission to Nepal is a co-operative effort between the people of Nepal and 30 Christian organisations from 13 countries. Its main areas of work are Education, Engineering and Industrial Development, Health Services and Rural Development.

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