

Number 12, September 2001

# UMN ews

United Mission to Nepal

*"Like the clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand"*  
Jeremiah 18:6





## Why Change?

**Why Change?** That is what we are talking about in the organisation, that is what the Board of Directors have mandated us to undertake, and that is also the focus of this issue of UMNews. But are we not already changing? Of course we are. Because change is part of our lives, it happens regardless of how we respond to it or become involved in it. Night follows day, seasons come and go, children grow up, technology advances (rapidly), political leaders move on, communities' needs develop... So, why is it such a big issue? Why are we as UMN focusing on it in this way? At this time?

UMN has had an almost 50 year history of service in Nepal, in health, education, rural development and engineering and industrial development projects. Many people's lives have been changed, not only through these projects, but also, and very importantly, through the lives of the many people from Nepal and all around the world who have lived, worked and served together to facilitate this change. And as we have become involved, we too have changed, and UMN has changed.

As we move towards celebrating 50 years of involvement in Nepal it is essential that we use the opportunity to reflect on the past, analyse the present and positively anticipate the future. We need to respond, organisationally and individually to the rapid and extensive changes that have happened across the world, in Nepal and in our lives. Pause, as you read this and think about some of the changes that have happened in these three areas, even in the past 15 years. How have they affected you? How have you responded? How do you feel about the changes and your responses to them?

There are many ways to respond to change, three common ones are: to resist it, let it happen or become actively involved in shaping and directing it and its effects. The latter takes energy, effort, creativity and time but as we engage in it, we will mature and grow as individuals and families. UMN will remain vibrant, appropriate and sustainable and the people of Nepal will be appropriately served.

The challenge is to be involved, to help shape UMN's future - but be warned! Through the process you too will be changed, matured and transformed. That's the risk, that's the opportunity!

God's Great Plan is for all of His creation to be changed. He is concerned, involved and working positively to see that happen. He asks the same of us, His people. Are we ready and willing for that?

*Jennie Collins*  
Executive Director

## Agreements signed for UMN work

Four important agreements for UMN work were signed in July and August.

The Health Services agreement with His Majesty's Government's Ministry of Health was signed on 18 July. It covers all UMN's health services activities, including its hospitals, community health work, the Lalitpur Nursing Campus, and specialised programmes in the areas of Mental Health, Oral Health, Nutrition, HIV/AIDS, Rehabilitation, Reproductive Health and TB.

A new sub-agreement for UMN's involvement in Patan Hospital was also signed. These agreements are valid until UMN's General Agreement with the government expires in November 2005.

An agreement for **Dhading Resource Management Project (DRMP)** was signed between UMN's Rural Development Department and His Majesty's Government's Forest & Soil Conservation Ministry on 17 July. It allows DRMP to continue its work in Dhading for two more years, focusing on forming and equipping Forest User Groups with skills to manage community forests and to carry out community development activities. A recently formed NGO, the Resource Identification



Signing of the Health Services agreement.

and Management Society (RIMS), has started to take over the implementation of some of DRMP's activities. The plan is that RIMS will carry on DRMP's work as UMN phases out of the area.

On 23 August, Kathmandu University (KU) and UMN's Engineering and Industrial Development Department agreed to continue their partnership. Expatriate professionals, seconded by UMN, will continue to assist in the capacity building of KU's staff and of KU's research and educational systems.

The agreement also provides for expatriate volunteers to carry out Research Electives at the University. The scholarship scheme for gifted but economically disadvantaged students continues, as KU sets aside an amount equivalent to the salaries which the UMN secondees would be paid were they Nepali employees.

The Education Department's agreement with the government for **Gandaki Boarding School** has also been renewed. It provides for secondment of expatriates, including for the position of principal, and also covers the scholarship programme.



Shakuntala Thanju has experienced many changes in UMN throughout the years. She is now principal of Tansen Nursing School, seconded from UMN.



STEFAN ÖSTMAN

## “You need to be committed”

**T**wenty-three years ago, Shakuntala Thanju graduated from Lalitpur Nursing Campus. Today she is heading the newly started Nursing School in Tansen, one day's journey west of Kathmandu. She has seen UMN change in many ways over these years, and is positive to the new steps being taken to revitalise the organisation.

Shakuntala was admitted to the Lalitpur Nursing Campus as a teenager in the mid-seventies. Intensive years of study lay ahead, but Shakuntala was very motivated. She studied hard to achieve good results, and succeeded. She graduated in 1978 and started working at the UMN hospital Shanta Bhawan. But she did not stick to the relative comfort of working in the capital. Instead she left for Okhaldhunga in the east, three days from the nearest road; without telephone lines to Kathmandu, and very limited electrical supply.

She worked for six years at Okhaldhunga Hospital. Then she returned to Lalitpur Nursing Campus, this time as a teacher, to share her experiences from the field with new batches of nursing students. She enjoyed her work and stayed there for many years, but in 1996 she was offered a scholarship for further studies in the Philippines. Once back in Nepal, she was requested to take on the responsibility for developing the new Nursing School in Tansen. It has been hard work to develop the school, but it is now running at full speed, in close co-operation with the United Mission Hospital. The third batch of students will begin in November, and thereafter the school will be full.

Shakuntala has personal experience of many of the changes that UMN has gone through. Her appointment as Head of Tansen Nursing School is a result of the efforts to bring more Nepalis into management positions. She is encouraged by this development, and thinks that still more can be done to increase Nepali leadership in UMN.

She has also seen a move towards working more in partnerships. When she was a student at Lalitpur Nursing Campus, it was run entirely by UMN. UMN continues to supply the administration, but the campus is now academically under Tribhuvan University, the Institute of Medicine. The Tansen Nursing School was set up from the beginning as a partnership between UMN, the government's Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training (CTEVT), and the local community.

Shakuntala is the only staff member who is actually employed by UMN, and seconded to the school through a special agreement. Secondment of UMNers, expatriates as well as Nepalis, has become more common as a result of partnering with other organisations.

“It is very different from working in a project directly implemented by UMN. It is more of a challenge. You are at the forefront all the time, and have to adapt both to CTEVT and to UMN. Sometimes they have different ideas, which can cause problems as issues must be resolved by both sides. But the management board is very supportive, an excellent group,” says Shakuntala.

She points out that the community's needs, and the circumstances in which UMN is working, change. UMN has had to adapt to these changes, and continues to do so. Shakuntala wishes that UMN staff would participate in this process, and take the challenges facing UMN as challenges for themselves personally as well. One step to gain flexibility in the organisation has been to introduce a new employment system, based on time-bound contracts rather than permanent employment. Shakuntala chose to sign the new contract. She thinks the new system is positive both for UMN as organisation and for the staff.

“UMN has never been permanent, but dependent on agreements with government. The new contracts are motivating. You need to be committed. Nothing can be taken for granted.”

Shakuntala sees her involvement with UMN as more than an ordinary job. Working as principal at Tansen Nursing School means that she is separated from her family most of the time. Her husband is working in Kathmandu, their 14-year-old son has just left home to study in India; only their 8-year-old daughter is staying with Shakuntala. The journeys between Tansen and Kathmandu are long and demanding.

“It was a difficult decision to accept the position in Tansen. We made it together as a family,” recalls Shakuntala, and adds that they prayed a lot together before the decision was made. She is convinced that they are following God's will, and that He is with them at all times. He has given her strength while being under pressure and a joy even in difficult circumstances.

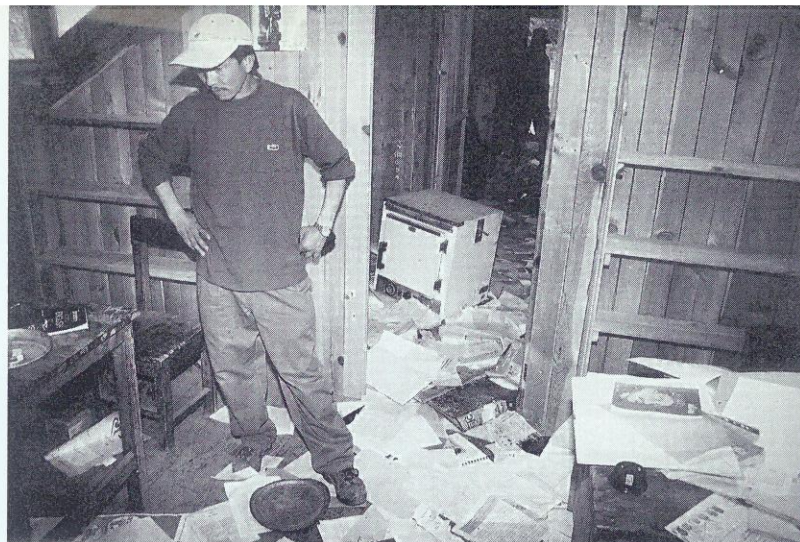
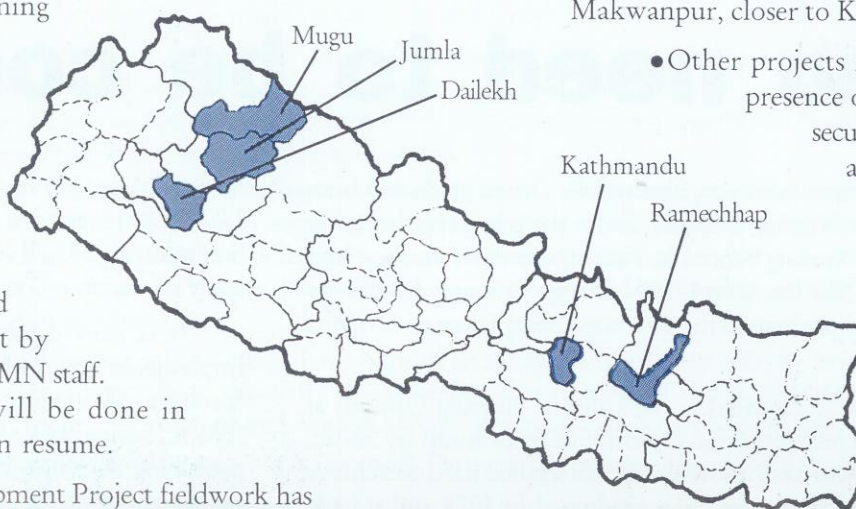
“Everyday is a new day. I'm never bored”, concludes Shakuntala Thanju.



# UMN faced with security issues

Over the last few months, security issues have been the top priority for UMN management since the Maoists escalated their activities in the remote hilly districts of the country. Several projects have been directly affected, with consequences for the organisation as a whole.

- The Karnali Community Skills Training Programme in Jumla was discontinued in April after simultaneous attacks on its three offices. Equipment was stolen and staff threatened.
- The Dailekh Non-Formal Education Project has been suspended since 27 May when its head office in Dullu was looted and burnt by Maoist insurgents, in the presence of UMN staff. A reassessment of the situation will be done in November, to determine if work can resume.
- The Ramechhap Community Development Project fieldwork has also been suspended since the looting of field offices and threats. The project head office remains open.



UMN staff member Edwin Dewan surveying the chaos in the KCST Jumla office after the looting in April.

- The Mugu Education Project is operating, but on a reduced scale due to increased Maoist activity in the area. No UMN expatriates are currently present in the district.
- The Nutrition Programme has closed its field work in Jumla and Dailekh, but is instead starting work in Dhading, Lalitpur and Makwanpur, closer to Kathmandu.
- Other projects have also experienced the presence of Maoists and government security forces in their respective areas, but their work has not been affected in the same way. The UMN Headquarters is affected indirectly.

The above is repugnant reading, however, most UMN work is still going on without restraints. No UMN personnel have been physically injured as a result of the conflict, and the number of incidents have decreased significantly since the Maoists and the

Two new pieces of Nepalese legislation will bring a lot of change for UMN, once they are implemented: the new Foreign Aid Policy and the Social Development Act. Final drafts of these documents are not complete. Information gathered thus far gives some general ideas about the future working relationship between UMN and the government.

The Social Development Act will eliminate the existing Social Welfare Council and create a Social Development Council (SDC). It will regulate all social development activities in Nepal, particularly of non-government organisations, international as well as local (INGOs/NGOs). The status of this Council will be made comparable to Nepal's National Planning Commission with the Prime Minister as chairman. It is to be the government's apex body for policy formulation, planning, co-ordination, evaluation and monitoring of all INGO/NGO activities related to social development. Furthermore, all INGO agencies, including UMN, must obtain "Permission to work in Nepal" from the new Council.

There remains some question regarding whether this will be required when UMN's present General Agreement expires or within six months time, after enactment of the legislation.

Whether within months or at the end of four years, UMN will have to obtain "Permission to work in Nepal" from the SDC. The

positive side to such a move is that once completed, UMN will not be faced with the renewal of its general agreement every five years. As long as UMN provides the required regular reports to the SDC, its permission to work in Nepal is continuous. The difficult part is that UMN is not presently registered as an organisation in any country outside Nepal and therefore does not meet the qualifications for registering in Nepal as an International NGO. It will be necessary for UMN to establish such a registration before it can be registered with the SDC under these regulations.

UMN will continue to have time-bound working agreements for its varied activities. The preferred manner for INGOs to work will be project agreements with the SDC, however, government has recognised that some of the work of UMN, such as hospitals, secondments, working with private limited companies and educational institutions does not fit this format. UMN has been assured that INGOs will be allowed to have work agreements with line ministries. However, processing of visas, duty exemption, etc. will go from the line ministry through the SDC.

## A new context





"Long live the Maoist Communist Party", written on the KCST office wall.

government declared a cease-fire and their willingness to resolve the conflict through talks.

UMN management is working continuously on security measures.

- Security guidelines for staff and projects have been developed.
- A security officer has been appointed to monitor and analyse the security situation continuously, network with related organisations, develop and follow up on policies and provide training for staff in personal safety.
- The projects are making contingency plans based on potential threats and vulnerabilities.

Recently, Bob Klamser from Crisis Consulting International, was invited to UMN to hold a workshop for senior managers. Facilitated by this recognised expert, they looked at UMN's security situation from a corporate point of view. The consultation was very helpful, with a number of positive outcomes.

"We are now more confident about the future of UMN. We may face problems from time to time, but if we deal with them wisely, UMN will keep its important role in empowering poor and marginalised people in Nepal," says Jennie Collins, Executive Director.

**for UMN work**

The bigger changes will relate to how UMN implements its programmes in the field. The draft SDC Act stipulates that all international agencies should implement their social development work at the grassroots by partnering with local NGO(s) rather than direct implementation. How broad the "social development work" definition reaches is not clear, however, certainly UMN projects such as those in Achham, Mugu, Dailekh, Ramechhap etc, will be affected, and possibly community health and development outreach type programmes.

Beyond the above, when looked at from the larger perspective, the Foreign Aid Policy and Social Development Act are likely to affect UMN in the following ways:

1. As government moves toward larger projects, agencies will be encouraged to pool their resources with others to create a basket of funds for implementation.
2. As government seeks a higher economic return on its foreign aid investment by targeting specific areas of need, larger projects, basket financing, it may be harder for UMN to reach the poor and disadvantaged.
3. As government seeks to reflect all foreign aid in its budgeting

## The Maoist conflict

The Nepal Communist Party (Maoist) went underground and launched its "People's War" in February 1996, calling for the end of constitutional monarchy and the setting up of a communist republic. Over these five and a half years, more than 1,800 people have died, and hundreds have been abducted by the Maoists or detained by the Police. Both sides have been accused of human rights violations. Many ordinary civilians have become victims.

The Maoists escalated their activities after the fifth anniversary of the People's War in February 2001. Several attacks on remote police posts caught international attention, and the Maoist issue was further highlighted in the media after the massacre of Nepal's royal family on 1 June.

The Maoists have gained control over many Village Development Committees (VDCs), and they have also declared a handful of district-level "People's Governments", mainly in western Nepal. Nepal's government has responded by deploying the army in 11 districts, through an "Integrated Security and Development Package". The aim has not been to seek direct confrontation with the Maoists but to provide security for the population and support for development activities.

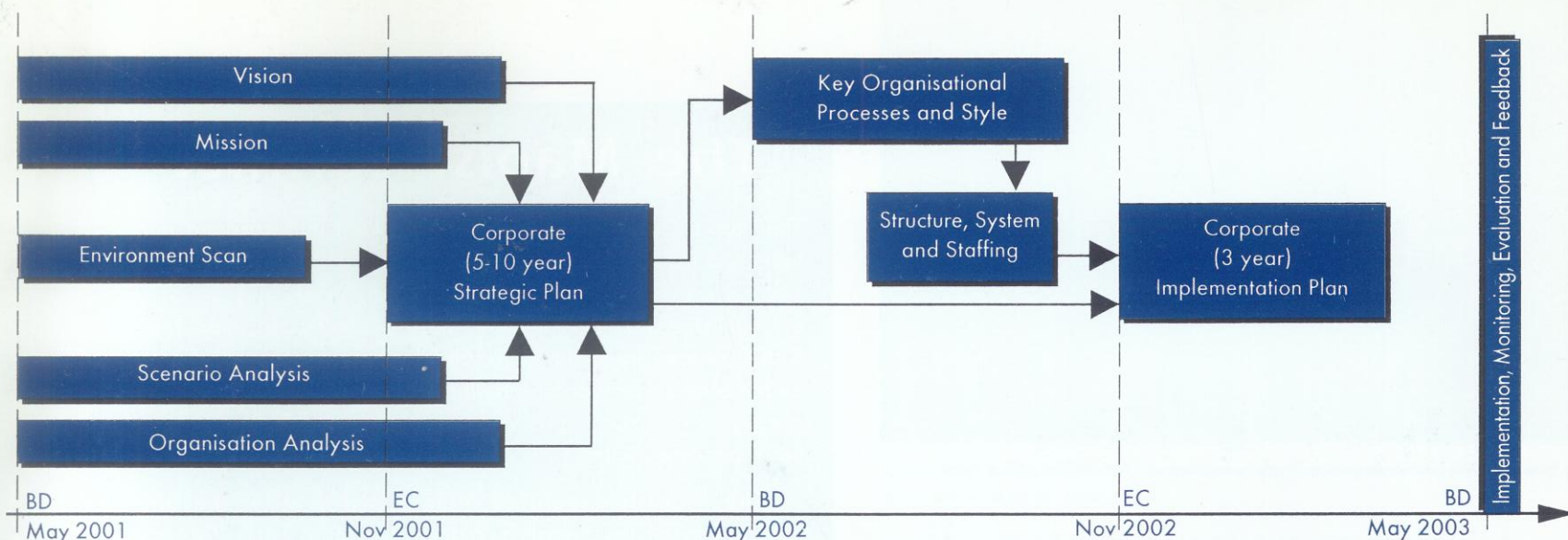
On 19 July, Girija Prasad Koirala resigned as Prime Minister of Nepal. He was succeeded by fellow Congress Party member, Sher Bahadur Deuba. The new Prime Minister's first action was to declare a cease-fire with the Maoists, who followed suit. Both parties have declared their ambition is to resolve the conflict peacefully, and the government has gained broad parliamentary support for talks. The two parties stand far apart from each other, but the nation hopes that this may be the beginning of the end of the conflict.

- process, UMN's budgeting and reporting process will have to change and may become more complex and time consuming.
4. Until new procedures are running smoothly there will be greater delays in agreement and visa approvals.
  5. Expatriate posts allowed will probably be reduced and UMN Nepali employees will become fewer when implementation is contracted to NGOs or other local bodies.
  6. INGOs must provide equal treatment to all NGOs in contracting their work, and everything that transpires between the two must be transparent.
  7. All relations between INGOs and NGOs will be controlled by the SDC.
  8. SDC will monitor and evaluate programme work.
  9. Funds will not have to be channelled through the SDC; however, a percentage may be required for administrative purposes.

Some of these changes seem daunting but we can be assured that God is present in what is taking place and ultimately His purposes for Nepal and UMN will be fulfilled. God has led UMN through many changes in the way it works in Nepal. As it moves ahead to deal with each changing situation, UMN must continue to pray for His clear guidance, and take one step at a time.

*Larry Asher*





## Preparing for the future

**U**MN is undergoing a "Change Process". Of course, UMN has always been changing – in constantly improving how it does things. However, UMN's new Executive Director, Jennie Collins has initiated the Change Process with the observation that the change "needs to be a transformation rather than a transition". That is, when one looks at the new UMN, it should be hardly recognisable as the old UMN!

**Why?** "Why is it so necessary to change?" A major reason is that the world around UMN is changing rapidly. Think of the difference between Nepal in 1954 (when UMN came to Nepal) and today. How big that change has been! The world around Nepal has also changed greatly in those same 47 years. These changes have impacted on UMN's Member Bodies, and what they expect of UMN has moved on since 1954.

**How?** A Change Team has been formed within UMN. The members of this team come from a spectrum of contexts within UMN. There are four men and three women, four expatriate and three Nepali staff. The staff levels of the members range from 7 to 12 (department director). But most importantly, each member brings a unique contribution and perspective to the team.

**What?** The job of this team is: "to facilitate UMN into a Change Process". Notice the word "into". This team is only initially responsible for preparing UMN for change. This preparation phase includes many activities such as:

- ensuring participation of stakeholders

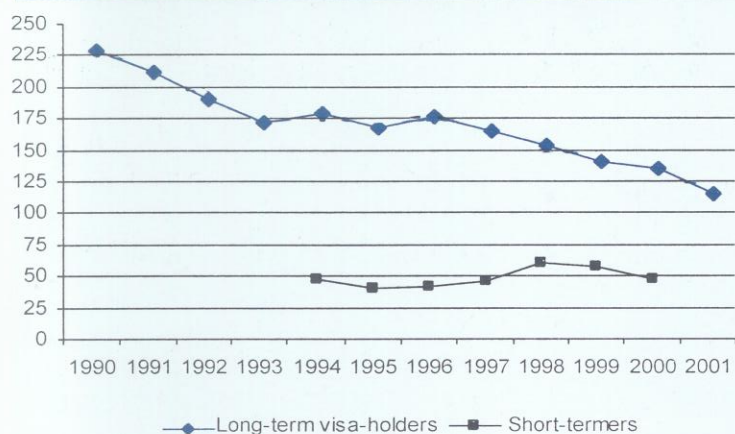
- creating a positive environment for change
- preparing and implementing a flexible Change Process Plan
- developing an effective communication process
- producing a number of "deliverables" including a Corporate Strategic Plan and an implementation plan which will detail a new organisational structure

**When?** The Change Process has already begun – with discussions at UMN's Board of Directors in April of this year. The Change Team has met and is developing the Change Process Plan mentioned above. The target is to have a draft Strategic Plan for UMN ready for the next UMN Board meeting in May 2002, and an implementation plan possibly by the November 2002 Executive Committee (see chart).

**Where?** The team's job is not to dictate change from a back room at UMN Headquarters – but to help UMN change. To do this, many will need to be consulted, and part of the communication process is a "change workshop" which will be conducted at all UMN work locations for all staff.

**So...** If we think of UMN as a growing child, then the body of that child will often be in some pain as it grows. Growing pains are not a disease, but they can hurt. For UMN to grow and survive, it must go through these growing pains, and those who are part of UMN must endure them and help it grow through them.

*Mark Glover*  
Change Team Manager



**T**he number of expatriates in UMN is falling alarmingly. On a positive note, more Nepalis have moved into senior positions, previously occupied by expatriates. However, training and recruitment of Nepali leaders, doctors and others, sharing UMN's vision for the poor and marginalised, does not keep up with the rapid decrease of expatriate professionals.

Over the last financial year, the number of long-term expatriate visa-holders dropped by 14 percent, to 117 post-holders. It has

## Falling numbers

almost halved since 1990. It is encouraging that the Language and Orientation Programme now has a relatively large group again – 12 new expatriates are preparing for their assignments – but it is too early to say that the trend is broken.

UMN's Personnel Director Bill Manley sees several different factors behind the decreasing numbers:

- Expatriates tend to stay for shorter periods of time compared to 10-20 years ago. A lifetime commitment to a particular job or foreign country is getting rare. Maintaining one's professional competency is increasingly important. The Nepali government has also become more averse to long-term placements.
- Other mission fields have become more attractive to sending organisations. Nepal is no longer as "exciting" as it was when it had recently opened up to the outside world.
- Nepal's political instability acts as a deterrent to some potential applicants. (Others may be attracted, and motivated by the country's problems.)
- UMN is perceived by some as an old-fashioned organisation that has failed to adjust to a changing context. The Mission's pioneering image may have faded over the years.



# Nuri's life transformed



**N**uri Sherpa's story started at home in Pattale, a village around six hours' walk north of Okhaldhunga. From this place you have beautiful views of Mount Everest and its snow-capped neighbours. Nuri is part of a large extended family and is not married yet, even though he is 21 years old. He had not been well for at least four months; he was coughing a lot, had fevers, chestpain and was losing weight. He had hoped the symptoms would subside, but instead they got worse and his family decided to bring him to the hospital. After some investigations the diagnosis seemed clear; Nuri had tuberculosis.

Tuberculosis is a fairly common disease in Nepal and Nuri remembered that there had been other people with the disease in his village, but most of them had died. Tuberculosis can usually be treated effectively by taking a cocktail of four different drugs for two months under the supervision of a health worker. This is followed by another eight months of medicines, which can be taken at home. In any case, the road to health is a long one, which can be full of complications. Nuri's road to health was certainly not an easy one. The soft-spoken boy started his treatment cheerfully, hoping for a quick recovery, but he didn't really get any better and kept on losing weight. Nuri was also too weak to cook for himself and had to depend on family members for food and care. His treatment was complicated by jaundice (a side effect of

the medicine) and excruciating stomach-pains. After two months in the hospital Nuri was too weak to get out of bed and there was nothing left of his once-prominent Sherpa cheeks. I asked him whether he thought he would get better, as I feared the worst. Surprisingly, Nuri was the one with the optimism. He cheered me up by saying "Doctor, of course I will get better! It just takes time".

Nuri's medicines were changed and he finally started getting better. He was fed large amounts of sorbattam pito (superflour) and his strength started coming back slowly. A hospital staff member invested time in daily physiotherapy, and we celebrated with Nuri when he was able to walk to her house all by himself. When he was about to finish his two months of medicine he was sitting outside in the sun, however he still looked very weak. I asked him how he thought he would be going home and he told me that his family was going to send people to carry him. On the day of discharge, almost 5 months after his admission, Nuri came to say goodbye. He was carrying a walking stick. He told me "Doctor, I am going to try to walk home. If my strength is not enough there will be people to carry me. I will be coming to collect my medicine every month. And I will come to show you that my cheeks will grow back".

*Marit van der Veer*  
Okhaldhunga Health Project

## — a challenge for UMN

- Many of UMN's Member Bodies are facing problems in recruiting for service overseas. Young people in particular are increasingly attracted by interdenominational organisations, who do not have deep-rooted relations with UMN.
- UMN's recruitment process (including the part of the process owned by the sending bodies) is complex and lengthy, in a time when people want quick answers.

United Mission to Nepal is actively working on developing Nepali capacity and preparing and training Nepali staff for senior positions. This is not primarily a response to difficulties in expatriate recruitment, but a deliberate strategy. A clear majority of UMN's project directors, programme managers and deputy department directors are today Nepalis. Still, UMN is struggling to find dedicated, well-trained Nepali professionals, who share UMN's vision and values and are capable and willing to take on difficult and demanding assignments, especially in remote areas. Most Nepalis with higher education live in Kathmandu, where they have their families, access to good health care, schools for their children, etc. It is difficult for them to leave these things behind and commit themselves to working in the poorest, remotest parts of the country.

There continues to be a need for people with a call from God, both Nepali and expatriate, and solid efforts are needed in the recruitment of both.

Bill Manley strongly believes in the Change Process that UMN has embarked upon. He thinks this process is imperative to face the issues mentioned above, and he has some concrete ideas that may facilitate the recruitment of expatriates:

- Remove the terms long-term/short-term. Treat all UMN recruits based on their specific individual situation.
- Make the Language and Orientation Programme more flexible, enhance its cultural component and link it to the professional development of expatriates.
- Review the recruitment process. Take a more active role in relation to the Member Bodies.
- Create more flexibility for personnel to move between different assignments within the organisation.

With creativity, determination and a listening mind, Bill Manley is convinced that UMN will be able to face any challenge lying ahead. Whether it will be with large or small numbers of expatriates, only the future will reveal.



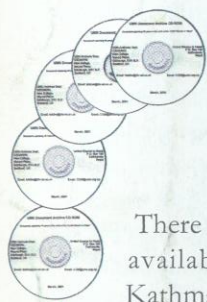
# Amppipal Hospital closed

On 24 August 2001, The Executive Committee of the UMN Board decided to close Amppipal Hospital in Gorkha District, effective from 5 September, 2001. The decision was made with much agony and after many prayers. The hospital has served the people in Gorkha and surrounding districts since 1969 and has gained an excellent reputation for its services, far and wide.

Over the last few years, however, the sustainability and future of the hospital has been discussed extensively. The staffing situation has grown from difficult to critical, with an acute shortage of doctors and the hospital director's position becoming vacant. Through improved infrastructure in the area, Amppipal hospital has become less "remote", with other health facilities becoming available.



As UMN withdraws its services from 5 September, the local community is seeking ways of continuing health work in Amppipal.



## Learn about UMN and its history!

There is a wide range of materials about UMN's work available in the UMN Communications Office in Kathmandu. A set of five CD Roms with documents spanning 40 years of **UMN's history**, has been compiled by the UMN Archives in Edinburgh. A separate CD with historical photos is also available.

The comprehensive book **Celebrating 45 years in Nepal** gives information about all UMN projects and programmes.

A mounted **mosaic** of UMN photos, new and old, has been produced. It is a nice gift item or souvenir. Part of it is printed on page two of this issue of UMNNews.

Several videos are also available, including "Compassionate Love in a Country of Change", "Empowered People - Sustainable Livelihoods" and "Sunshine in Shadows".

A new **General Leaflet** was recently produced, with a brief overview of UMN and its activities. It is ideal to use as handouts when presenting UMN to various groups.

These and other materials can be ordered from the UMN Communications Office (see address below). You are also welcome to visit the **UMN website**, [www.umn.org.np](http://www.umn.org.np), for in-depth information about United Mission to Nepal.



## New EIDD strategies

A new programme is starting in the Engineering and Industrial Development Department (EIDD). It is called the Enterprise Support Programme, and its emphasis will be on helping Nepalis to start and manage small businesses. It will be based in Butwal, and is expected to work in close co-operation with Development Consulting Services (DCS).

The programme follows on the focus on enterprise promotion in the new EIDD five-year strategic plan, which was approved by the UMN Board of Directors in April.

UMN is searching for a new department director to fully carry on the implementation of the new strategic plan.

## Honours to UMNers

UMN personnel keep being recognised for their good work. Dr. Dick Harding was recently honoured by the Minister of Health, Ramkrishna Tamrakar for his "lifetime excellent contribution to public health in Nepal".

Dr. P V Chandy, principal of Gandaki Boarding School, has been awarded the Mother Teresa Excellency Award by the Front for National Progress, India, for dedicated service in Uganda in the early seventies. Supported by the local community, Chandy was able to start a small school, which has now grown into an established, renowned institution. He received the award from the hand of Subhash Maheria, Union Minister of Development of India, and Krishna Moorthy, Chief Election Commissioner of India.

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.

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