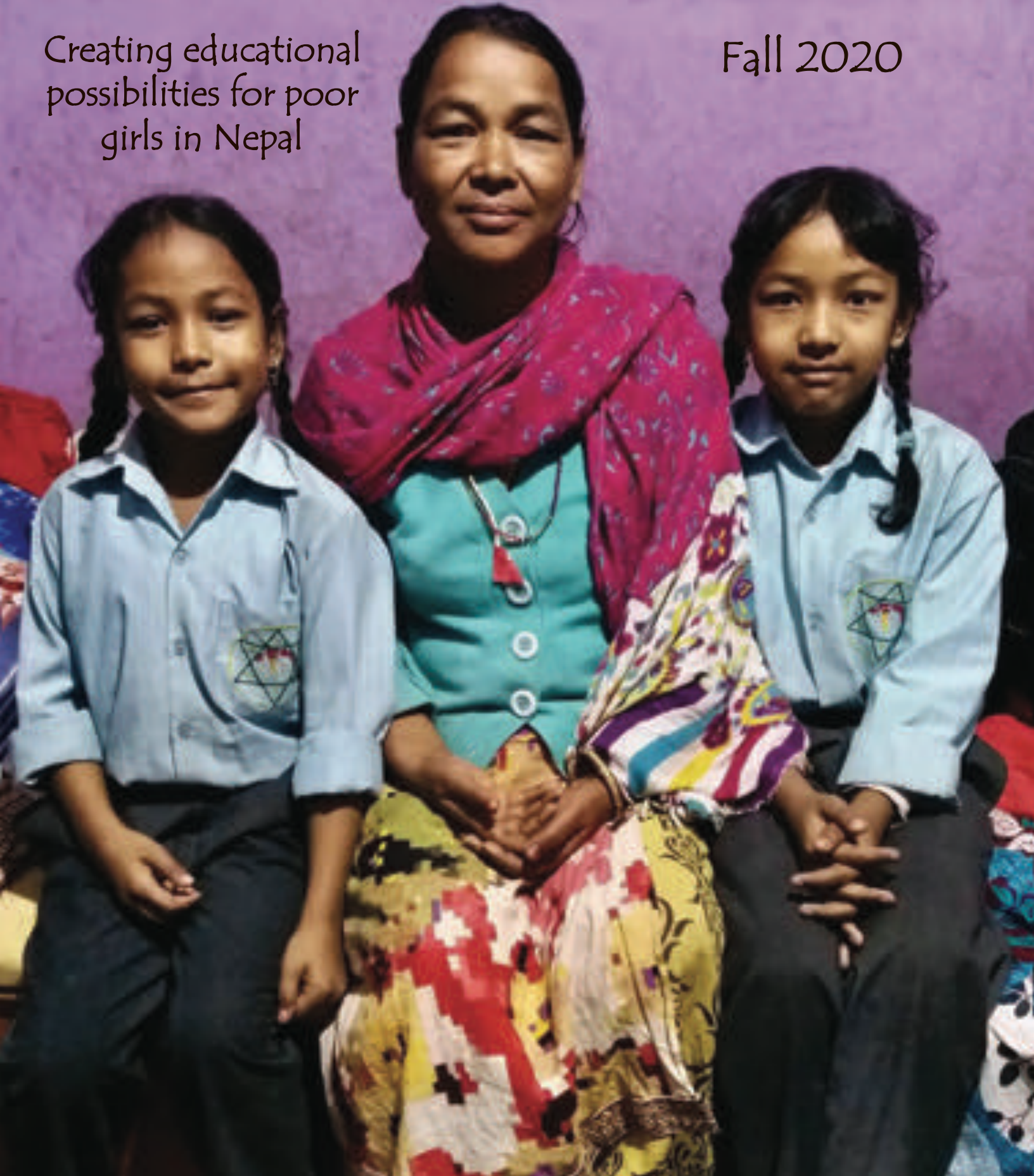


Hands in Outreach

Creating educational
possibilities for poor
girls in Nepal

Fall 2020



From the Directors

Last October, we pictured a year of celebration ahead. This year marks HIO's 35th anniversary serving Nepal's poor. A nation-wide campaign — *Visit Nepal 2020* — was slated to reinvigorate tourism. A rebound from the devastating 2015 earthquakes. We were putting finishing touches on our March 2020 sponsor trip plans. Looking forward to deepening our cross-cultural understandings by sharing time and space with our girls and their mothers in Kathmandu.

Instead, we're experiencing a worldwide pandemic, feeling its profound impact on every member of our extended HIO family. Our hearts go out to all who are coping with the paralyzing effects of this tragedy. Lockdown conditions, lost jobs, scarce food supplies and interrupted school schedules find our vulnerable HIO families in Nepal living ever closer to a perilously fragile edge. It's so hard imagining how they manage their day-to-day lives, but they carry on with dignity and courage.

Scrolling through our sponsorship roster reminds us how vitally important our social work is. We recognize in 166 girls' names hundreds of individual stories of promise and hope, hardship, grit and determination. We see our sponsors' great kindness and their belief in the power of education encouraging our girls to study and work hard. From kindergarten through college, our girls are moving forward one step at a time. With your help, they're creating a positive generational change that will deeply impact their future and the future of Nepal.

Our boots-on-the ground social work team shines a bright light on our path forward. Ram and Palmo are steady as rocks, creatively problem-solving unthinkable challenges. Tapping into every resource available to ensure our family-centric approach holds fast. Working small miracles with generous gifts from our partners Lisa and Arthur Berkowitz, Adara, The Good Works Institute, Friends of Nepal, Gendap, and The Stone Family Foundation.



We rely on our trusted sisterhood of volunteers, our Didi Network, to support our Nepal team's social work during lockdown. Pushpa Subedi is instrumental in delivering relief to HIO families in the Loyalty Academy community.

We're onboarding two new team members, Lata Rai and Bhim Kumari Darji, who oversee our *Be Part of Her Dream* women's education program. We're enlisting volunteers to distribute food and supplies to the 200+ families we serve. Providing sound guidance to our dedicated staff and preschool teachers as they learn and grow with each changing day. All the while meticulously recording field notes from weekly calls to each and every one of our girls while home visits are put on hold.

Cover Photo: Jyoti and Aarati are newly sponsored by Sharon Nolan and Jo Bernhardt. Their mother Gita is grateful for the many opportunities her family receives through HIO sponsorship.

We're holding our older girls especially close. Although Nepal's Secondary Education Exam was cancelled, thirteen HIO girls are moving on to the eleventh grade based on good marks they earned on their school-issued exams. We couldn't be prouder of the heroic team effort that's paved their way to a brighter future. Despite gender and caste-based discrimination, these girls have avoided child marriage, teen pregnancy, and a lifetime of dead-end, low-paying jobs. The odds are so unevenly stacked against their success. We'll not let a widening digital divide become the obstacle keeping these smart, brave young women from realizing their higher education dreams.

With your help in the months ahead, we'll stop at nothing to empower our girls and their mothers with education and voice. A new tech committee will help our partner schools navigate the many challenges that remote learning presents in Nepal. Our *Be Part of Her Dream* steering committee will continue helping our teachers implement a grass-roots, community-oriented curriculum they've designed for our mothers.

HIO graduates serve as mentors for our adolescent girls, assisting them with schoolwork and talking through taboo issues like menstruation, sexual violence and reproductive health. For 2020/2021, we'll welcome ten poor, young girls into the HIO sponsorship family, along with a handful of new sponsors. These commitments hold such promise for establishing bonds of a global community.



Jyoti, Rajena and Sabina represent Nepal's future leaders. All will move on to college with help from their HIO sponsors and the Higher Education Dreamers Fund.

It's often said that HIO is *the little organization that could*. Hope, resilience and teamwork are the pillars you enable for our educational interventions to succeed. Nepal's future will be all the better with leadership from the strong women our girls will become. We couldn't do this good work without you.

*With heartfelt gratitude
and warm wishes*

Ricky Bernstein
Laura Hunt



A generous grant from the Berkowitz Nutrition Program enables HIO to distribute food relief regularly. Such a blessing to have this support during the COVID pandemic.

In Search of a Better Life

by Ram Adhikari

SunMaya's small family lives in a tiny room in the heart of the Balkhu slum. Ashmita, Rashmita and their mother SunMaya don't miss their former life in the village. Their journey to Kathmandu began five years ago when Rashmita was six. Because SunMaya gave birth to girls, her husband married another woman and left the family with no support. SunMaya and the girls moved to Kathmandu to live with SunMaya's sister in Balkhu until they found a room nearby.

Having married at 15 and a mother of two small children by 17, SunMaya knew about hard work in the fields and at home. Her daily work is now at nearby construction sites hauling bricks and cement. When the girls were young, someone from the Balkhu community introduced them to Strong Roots Preschool and they came every day and loved it.

Rashmita, now 12, has great support from her teachers who keep encouraging her to learn. After two years at Strong Roots, she and Ashmita got the chance to attend LMV, one of our progressive partner schools in Kathmandu. SunMaya was delighted! At the end of second grade, Rashmita was honored to be first in her class. She loves her school and has been putting all her efforts toward her studies. Both girls are finding remote learning very challenging without proper bandwidth at home and a working tablet or a mobile phone.



Rashmita and Rachel look forward to reading one another's e-mail notes and receiving letters hand-delivered by our HIO team.

Before the stay-at-home restrictions, SunMaya earned about \$7.50 for a 12-hour day. She knows her hard physical labor feeds her girls and pays the rent of \$18/month. Rashmita's sponsor in the U.S., Rachel, also helps the family with some extra money for living expenses. Rachel is an artist and musician. She and Rashmita often correspond.

With the COVID lockdown, SunMaya is unable to work. The family has to buy electricity and water for cooking and washing. Their home for three is an 8'x10' box made from corrugated metal sheets and old saris. The family shares one bed and has one light bulb overhead for light. It's hot in summer and cold in winter, but it's their own place.

SunMaya was encouraged to fight for birth certificates for her girls, along with her marriage certificate and citizenship papers. She is very appreciative and thankful for all the support that HIO and Rachel provide. Her wish is to see her girls succeed and not have to work every day doing such hard labor. SunMaya would love to learn in the women's education class at Strong Roots. Hopefully, if things get better, she will one day. And Rashmita dreams to one day be an artist like Rachel.



Rashmita's mother, SunMaya is dedicated to her daughter's education and hopes to soon join the BPOHD women's education classes at Strong Roots.

To Have Hope

By Rachel Fuller

In the mid-1990's I was so impressed by what HIO was able to achieve, helping girls and their mothers on such a personal level. I became an HIO sponsor for Salina Shrestha and enjoyed our relationship through letters and emails throughout her many successes in education.



Rachel Fuller has developed wonderful bonds with her sponsored girls for more than three decades.

We communicated often and I enjoyed helping Salina grow her loving collection of small teddy bears. I marveled at the opportunity to watch her grow into a lovely young woman with a bright future. It was such a pleasure to share in her enthusiasm and hard work while she graduated from college with a degree in finance, interned at the bank of Nepal and went on for an MBA. For a while she was the HIO financial officer. Sadly, a brain tumor curtailed her career plans. Salina remains a delightful person and a great help to her aging parents. Receiving her email letters is still such a joy to me!

Last year, I decided to sponsor another child. I was paired with Rashmita Tamang. She's a strong, intelligent girl who loves to read and draw. Rashmita has an older sister and a very caring mother. I learned that her favorite color is red. My husband David and I love receiving Rashmita's sweet letters and fanciful drawings. I admire the strength and resilience the HIO girls and their families show as they struggle with the pandemic. We hope they all come through continuing their progress, knowing that so many people care for them, offering support and love.

I have admiration and gratitude for Ricky, Laura, Ram, Palmo and all of the other kind and generous people of HIO who work to change peoples' lives. It's so heartwarming to see that all of the girls are given options to raise themselves above their oppressive poverty. To have hope. This is how I see HIO.



Salina was a brilliant student who nearly completed her MBA thanks to Rachel's loving support.

Teaching with Resilience and Passion

by Laura Gladding

As a Nursery-12th grade educator in the United States, I have first-hand experience with the difficulties of teaching children during the pandemic. Delivering effective, engaging lessons can feel overwhelming. Truly connecting with students can be challenging.

Six months of lockdown conditions have added multiple layers of new complications to teaching and learning in Nepal. Our HIO teachers have needed to adjust and reset. Despite spotty Wi-Fi signals that literally change with the weather, they've gathered on Zoom to learn and hone new teaching skills. They've shown tremendous resilience and passion throughout this ordeal.

Amazingly, HIO teachers now regularly connect by phone and video with our children in Kathmandu. When lockdown was lifted briefly but public transportation was scarce, many teachers walked to and from school for an hour to meet one-on-one with children and their mothers. Their commitment to ensuring everyone's health — both physical and mental — is so strong. When comparing my own challenges to those my colleagues in Kathmandu encounter daily, I'm humbled and inspired.

Each week throughout the pandemic, our Nepal teaching team attend real time *Long Distance Learning* sessions (LDLs) with members of HIO's Education Committee. Kate Turner, an upper school science teacher at Moses Brown School in Providence, led an informative series about COVID-19. This helped teachers understand the science of the disease and discuss strategies for preventing its spread. Laura Hunt led a session exploring COVID's impact on gender inequality that helped teachers connect their daily work to HIO's mission of empowering poor girls. I taught a series on social emotional learning to help teachers and students manage stress.

LDLs were originally developed by WordScientists founder Maida McKenna in 2014. After conducting on-site professional development, she yearned to connect frequently with our teachers from afar. The idea was born to build teachers' ability to implement instructional methods to develop foundations of English language. LDL sessions have grown, evolved and flourished over the years, becoming an integral part of professional development for many of HIO's partner school teachers.



Manisha Shrestha is one of eight HIO preschool teachers who individually tutor sponsored girls to support remote learning provided by our partner schools.

When I first began as an HIO volunteer, remote learning via Zoom was relatively new. Maida's passion for LDLs convinced me to give it a try. I'll never forget the unsettling, quiet video space of my first LDL. I wondered, "Do these teachers really understand me? Is this the material they need or want?"

In June 2020, our Education Committee arranged for Nepali translators to join our LDL sessions. No one is better suited for this job than our dedicated HIO graduates, Bimala Rawal, Norden Tamang, and Sunita Nepal. They graciously accepted the challenge without hesitation. What a wonderful way for these bright young women to give back. Their understanding of Nepali and English has helped break down communication barriers. Stronger emotional bonds that encourage deeper learning have unfolded. Everyone benefits — our presenters, our teachers in Nepal, and especially the students they teach.



Lata Rai and Bhim Kumari Darji add depth to our HIO team. Their training is specifically focused on our Coming of Age and BPOHD women's education programs.



Prakriti tells stories through drawing thanks to skills her teachers learned with our wonderful teaching coach, Lani Peterson

Lani Peterson, an engaging committee member, led an LDL series encouraging teachers' storytelling and listening skills. Lani is an outstanding storyteller and professional coach. In one session, she divided our large Zoom group into five "breakout rooms." Each person had a chance to share a story about one of their heroes. There was a spirited buzz in every room as group members eagerly chatted in Nepali and English.

Our diverse community of virtual learning is encouraging our Nepali teachers to take broad leaps forward. They're learning content, developing professional skills, and gaining confidence. They're breaking the mold of traditional Nepali teaching methods, paving a way for educational progress. Soon the very people we're now training will be on the flip side of the screen. I can't wait for the day when our bright, dedicated HIO teachers are delivering powerful training workshops to Nepali colleagues themselves.

Laura Gladding is a veteran teacher/librarian at Moses Brown School in Providence, RI and HIO Board President.

A Sisterhood of Hope

by Laura Hunt and Palmo Tamang

A world in which girls' education is valued begins with educating their mothers. Our women's education program, *Be Part of Her Dream (BPOHD)*, is making great strides toward that goal. In June, *BPOHD* completed its fourth year. Twenty-five women who'd been denied an opportunity to attend school as girls have created a lasting sisterhood of hope through this vital program.

Many of the women in our *BPOHD* classes work as domestics or on construction sites, earning about three dollars for a nine hour day. Studying at 6:30 a.m. means they can still get in a full day of work to provide for their families. Each of our new *BPOHD* graduates is a heroine in her own right. The success stories of Jamuna Giri, Hemu Sunawar and Jasmine Tamang represent countless others we celebrate every day as we learn and grow alongside this courageous group of women.

Jamuna has surpassed every one of our *BPOHD* expectations. She's learned to read and write in Nepali and English and she's mastered basic math skills. She has citizenship papers for herself and birth certificates for her children. She's saved more than half of her \$30/month stipend and she knows how to spend money wisely. Jamuna now knits and makes beaded bracelets with beautiful, intricate designs.

A quiet, strong woman, Jamuna is an inspiration to us all, and especially to her daughter, Neru, who will soon enter college. Although she has completed the *BPOHD* 4-year curriculum, Jamuna intends to remain involved with the program. There's no doubt that she'll find ways to give back in the years ahead. With a stronger belief in herself and a will to move forward, Jamuna has set her sights on a new goal. She and her dear classmate, Hemu, plan to attend a nearby women's school to earn their high school diplomas.



Jamuna Giri leads a performance during HIO's International Women's Day celebration at the Chandra Kala Center.

Hemu is well respected and much loved by her *BPOHD* sisters, especially her friend, Jasmine. This beautiful friendship began about eight years ago when Hemu and Jasmine lived in the same building. Both women are second wives who hardly get any help from their husbands. Hemu's youngest son was 6 months old, and Jasmine's daughter, Pritika, was 2 months at that time. The mothers loved sharing time together with their children.

The 2015 earthquakes created a lot of damage to their house, so Hemu and Jasmine were forced to move out. Sadly, they had to settle in different homes. When they saw each other again at the *BPOHD* class, Hemu and Jasmine were so excited. They always sat near one another, and their friendship grew. Eventually, Hemu and Jasmine moved into the same house.

Jasmine started a small business roasting corn and selling vegetables by the side of the road. She taught Hemu the business too. Hemu tried this for a few months, but began working on a construction site instead so she could earn more money. During the COVID-19 lockdown, Hemu could no longer do construction work. Jasmine reminded her of the vegetable cart she'd gotten from HIO.

Vegetables were scarce in the city and people were afraid to travel long distances to buy them. Hemu knows how essential vegetables are to a healthy diet. With moral support from Jasmine and her other *BPOHD* sisters, Hemu began her business. On the first day, she almost doubled her investment and used her profits to buy more vegetables. Hemu's sales grew. She had developed a smart business model by pushing her cart right to people's doorsteps instead of waiting for customers to come to her.



Hemu Sunawar and her daughter Salomi worked as BPOHD project partners sewing masks for our HIO families.



Third-grader Pritika is helping her mother, Jasmine Tamang, learn to read and write.

Hemu and Jasmine are hard workers. Their day starts at 2 a.m. when they walk their wooden carts to the local vegetable wholesale market. They return home around 6 a.m., drink tea with their children and then start selling vegetables from their carts. They then return home to cook, feed their children and help them with school. These resourceful women make sure to have a few vegetables left at the end of the day to feed their own families. They are so happy to make a good profit and fill their bellies too.

It is far too easy for poor women like Jamuna, Hemu and Jasmine to become further marginalized by the harsh lifestyle of Kathmandu's *hidden slum*. Their commitment to studying in the *BPOHD* program is remarkable. How heartwarming it is to see our girls partnering with their mothers, learning and growing together. In HIO's family-centric approach, everyone plays a part in making each other's dreams come true.

To Reach for the Stars

by Ricky Bernstein

There's something remarkable about being in Nepal that captivates the soul, especially if you're able to see beyond the world heritage sites and the lure of the mountains to the back alleys where our HIO families live. Seeing how these desperately poor girls and women manage the challenges of their daily lives, it's hard to turn away without wanting to step in and help.

In Nepal, as in many developing countries around the globe, girls are denied access to education that is so critical to their lives. Girls are valued far more as field hands, to tend cows and goats or look after younger siblings while parents plant and harvest crops. Of the 510 million illiterate people in the world, 70% are female. For girls and women, access to education is the single most important factor for their economic stability, self-reliance and dignity.



Rojina is developing confidence and strength due to Jeff and Jessica's ongoing support.



Sanam proudly displays some girl power lovingly sent by her sponsors, Jessica and Jeff.

The girls we work with are born into poverty with little hope of change in their lifetimes, if not for some outside intervention. Nearly all of their mothers are single heads of households whose husbands provide no family support. Girls are chosen for HIO sponsorship on the basis of economic need, and to a small degree, on academic promise. Most are between four and eight. Without an HIO sponsorship, many girls would drop out of school before the fourth grade, continuing a cycle of desperate poverty.

For Jeff and Jessica Pearson, a visit to Nepal evolved into a passion. Some months after their travels, Jeff called to say he'd been to our Strong Roots Preschool in the Balkhu slum. We'd never met in person. Jeff and his wife Jessica wanted to sponsor the education of two young Balkhu girls. He asked how else they could support Strong Roots. It's been two short years since that phone call, and Jeff and Jessica have now made a profound difference for the entire Strong Roots community through their kindness and willingness to get involved.

Unbelievable! Montessori in the Middle of a Slum!

by Jeff Pearson

In November of 2017, my wife Jessica and I traveled to Nepal. We went to volunteer in a pediatric dental clinic in Kathmandu (our knowledge of dentistry did not extend beyond flossing and brushing), and then to trek the Everest trail. We'd never heard of Hands in Outreach. A friend in Boulder, less than an hour from Denver, where we live, asked if we'd carry some books and school supplies for a school the friend knew about in Kathmandu.

On our second day in the city, while the other dental clinic volunteers took a field trip to the Temple of Shiva, we met up with the person the Boulder friend had told us would take delivery of the books and supplies—about a hundred pounds worth, it turned out. After we'd hefted the duffels into the trunk of the man's car, he asked if we had some time. He'd be happy to show us a school he worked with.

Off we went through the maddening Kathmandu traffic. Unbeknownst to us, our host was Tejendra Lama, founder of the Strong Roots Foundation, and husband to Palmo Tamang, HIO's Nepal-based co-director. Tejendra took us to the Balkhu slum, and then into Strong Roots Preschool. Upstairs, we watched a class of "big kids" and one of "little kids," who welcomed us with recitations and tea. They then broke into smaller groups, each supervised by a teacher, and sat on the floor, working with letters and sounds and words at their mats.

We were astonished by what we saw. As we walked out, Jessica said, "Unbelievable! Montessori in the middle of a slum! Exactly what our grandkids are getting at home!"



Jeff and Jessica Pearson's generous support of the Strong Roots program makes it possible for 50 profoundly poor children to go to school.

Poonam, the school's lead teacher, led us through a maze of ramshackle tin, wood and plastic structures on the banks of the smelly Bagmati River to the windowless, one-room home of a man whose wife had just drowned. The man scavenged electronic parts for a living, and now was in sole charge of a family of five. We met one of his daughters, a Strong Roots student.

The rest of our Nepal stay was consumed with dental clinic work and trekking. When we got home, I immediately went on the internet to find out more about what we'd seen in Balkhu. This led me, of course, to Hands in Outreach. I called Ricky, who took my unsolicited call without ceremony. We talked for an hour.

Jessica and I soon became sponsors of two beautiful, four-year-old Strong Roots girls, Sanam and Rojina. Alas, we've not yet met them, though we send letters and care packages every time someone travels to Kathmandu for HIO. Their pictures adorn the wall of my study.

My wife, a sociologist, reminds me that the best predictor of a girl's success in life, regardless of country or culture, is an educated mother. Educating a girl, as HIO says, "changes a life forever," and the impact ripples through generations.

Optimism and Strength

by Sunita Rana

Balkhu is one of many slums in Kathmandu. I was happy after moving here as a teenager, and I introduced my living situation with pride. Now, I am hesitant to tell people where I live. I am worried they will judge me. "Slum people have no good character," they say. "Many are involved in illegal activities and are drug addicts." This hurts. I do not deny that there are such people who take refuge in the slum. But every society has these kinds of people don't they?

I am 30 years old and I live in Balkhu with my father, mother, and younger brother. My home is very close to Strong Roots Preschool where I work. My life has been like a rollercoaster with many ups and downs. But through it all, my parents always encouraged me to have a good education.

Sometimes the slum can feel dangerous. Our huts are made of zinc sheets, plastic and rice bags. They do not protect us from weather, thieves or bad people. The polluted Bagmati River floods our area during monsoon season. It sweeps away houses and lives every year. Three years ago, the mother of two Strong Roots students drowned during this season of rain.



Sunita Rana, who lives in the Balkhu Slum with her family, is a marvelous role model for HIO girls.

My parents encouraged me to follow my heart and have patience.

Nepal's government is unpredictable and our community is always on alert. Digger and dozer machines may destroy our houses with no warning. People feel protective of the slum and gather in protest. So far, with every household represented, we have been able to convince the government to allow us to stay. Many other slums have been destroyed.

If I rewind 16 years, my life was quite miserable. When I graduated from high school, my mother was unwell. My father wasn't able to find work. I tutored children part time after school to help pay our bills. My father went to Qatar in search of work to pay off the loans we had taken.

My mom and I settled in the slum area. At the beginning, there was no electricity, no water facility and fewer people living in the area. We were afraid, but we gave each other strength. My brother was so small at the time.

I had a dream to become a nurse, but I couldn't afford school books or college fees, so I dropped out. I felt shattered and empty. I joined another, less expensive college program studying sociology. These classes helped me build confidence and rapport with others. I came to understand society and myself in better ways.



Sunita fits her mother for reading glasses during a RestoringVision distribution that HIO organized.

My brother is more grown up now. But I am afraid because he is friendly with other boys who are involved in bad activities. I asked my uncle to hire my brother to work on his construction site as a supervisor. My brother doesn't know that I pay his \$45 per month salary. I am thankful that my uncle helps keep my brother busy and provides food for him. This makes me feel more secure.

I joined the Strong Roots preschool staff four years ago as an assistant. I left a higher paying job teaching older students. I wanted to work closer to my home. My aunt Sarita is the Strong Roots' caretaker and suggested I try for work there. She told me I would like being part of the hard-working teaching team. I always try to learn from different people to improve my life.

Working at Strong Roots is a good experience and gives me a lot of pleasure. Through HIO's training sessions, I have learned about teamwork and determination towards any task. I am thankful to my whole teaching team, especially Palmo. She boosts us up whenever we are in a dilemma. I have felt uplifted and become a better teacher through their guidance and support. In addition to teaching classes, I also serve as the Strong Roots librarian. I now want to go back to college to become a counselor or social worker.

My parents taught me that optimism is a great strength. Follow your heart, be calm and have patience. If we do this we will be happy in our life in any situation. I am happy to spend my life with my family and I feel responsible to not leave them alone. My parents sacrificed their whole life and body's strength for my brother and me, so I am happy to spend time with them. We should be happy with what we have because some people have much less.



Strong Roots Preschool teachers coordinated a major food relief effort during the COVID lockdown for HIO families, funded by the Berkowitz Nutrition Program.

Digital Lifelines During a Lockdown

by Laura Hunt



Smriti, at left, received the gift of education from her aunt Neera, a former HIO student. Her mother, sister, and grandmother will benefit from Smriti's achievements when she becomes a nurse.

cough? What did you study today? Do you like to draw? Who did you look up to when you were a child? Sometimes I exchange photos of nature and food with our girls. Sashmita and Smriti, who attend different schools, became math study buddies through their HIO virtual connection.

Sashmita and I connect for an hour every Saturday morning. I've learned about her mother, her grandmother, and her eight-day hospital stay when she had typhoid. Her admiration of her brother's engineering skills and her acceptance of a pesky cultural rule that keeps her from entering the kitchen when she's menstruating.

Sashmita, Smriti, Srijana and I have gotten pretty good at giving each other virtual hugs. What a joy it'll be to soon hug one another for real.

Over the past year, I've been catching up on HIO's family history. The better I come to know this creative, forward-thinking community, the more convinced I become of our power to quietly move mountains of social injustice. One grain of rice at a time.

Through the immense generosity of our sponsors, donors, volunteers, and our tireless social work team, poor girls like Srijana, Sashmita and Smriti have the education their parents could only dream of. Srijana, in tenth grade, is one of the top students in her class and has her eyes set on medical school. Sashmita, in her first year of dental school, is benefitting from HIO's *Higher Education Dreamers Fund*. Smriti is now clear-eyed on a life of service. All this is possible with Ram and Palmo serving as excellent mentors and role models.

When visiting Nepal last November, I'd made promises to see our girls six months later. There's nothing more inspiring than chatting with them face-to-face. Sadly, COVID sidelined our plans. I've discovered Facebook Messenger, Zoom and e-mail to be lifelines to some of our older girls.

There's nearly a 10 hour time difference between East Coast US and Nepal. Often, my day begins and ends with a computer ping prompting a text chat. *How's your mother's*



Tenth grader, Srijana is the first in her family to attend high school and has blossomed through Margaret and Dave Rose's kind sponsorship.

With Much Gratitude

by Sashmita Raut

Namaste...I am sincerely honoured to receive an HIO scholarship to attend dental school. By awarding me this opportunity, you have lightened my financial burden, which allows me to focus more clearly on the most important aspects of school learning. HIO's generosity has inspired me to help others and give back to my community. I hope to continue helping students achieve their goals just as you all have helped me.

My father was originally from a small, rural village. My younger brother and I were born and brought up in Kathmandu. My father's parents died when he was seven years old, leaving him emotionally traumatized. It was hard for him to get basic items he required for survival.

At this young age, my father decided to go to Kathmandu in search of work to suppress his hunger. He couldn't pay the bus fee so he hung onto the back of the bus for a ride. He roamed around in search of work. Somehow, he managed to get a job at a momo shop. He was hired to wash dishes, clean tables and serve customers.

The only problem was that my father had no place to stay. He spent nights at the entryway of the momo shop. One day, a customer offered him housekeeping work. The customer was the head of the Chunikhel municipality. My father cooked, washed dishes and clothes, and planted and harvested in the fields. In return, the house owner provided him some money and a place to stay.

My father's life was overwhelming, filled with sadness and struggles. There was no one to support him, but he had some success and happiness too. After several years, he met my mother. Their paths crossed every day when he was going to work. My mother was kind to him. Finally, my father had someone to share the ups and downs of his life.

My mother was just 15 and my father was 19 when they eloped. In Nepal, this is called a *flying marriage*. It is not accepted by society. Due to this one wrong step, my parents faced much society cursing. Even my maternal grandpa and grandma did not accept them. All these consequences forced my father to leave the house where he was working.



Weekly Zoom contact with Laura Hunt through the pandemic has enabled Sashmita to cope, gain strength, and begin her life of service to others.

My parents found their own place to live and my father found work in the cloth cutting industry. After nearly three years, my grandparents finally accepted my parents' marriage. They passed many hard days together and a year later, they had me.

It was tough for my parents to manage a family with my father's meager income. But they were determined to give me what they never had - an opportunity to study. To implement this dream, my mother had to work as well. When I was a year old, they sent me to live with my maternal grandparents and uncle. I lived happily there while my parents continued struggling against poverty. Nothing could stop their decision about my education. They took loans to enroll me in school, never letting poverty stop my study and success.

I love to see my parents happy. They have done so much for me. They have toiled hard every second of their lives to pay for my education. Someday I hope to repay their loans and give them every happiness in the world there could be. I want to be the daughter who makes them so proud.

Board Members

Co-Executive Directors

*Ricky Bernstein
Laura Hunt*

Laura Gladding

Alice Brewer

Simmie Kerman

Kate Turner

Jack Isler

Alisa DelTufo

Carolyn Schmitz

Nepal Co-Directors

*Ram Gopal Adhikari
Palmo Dawa Tamang*

HIO Nepal Staff

*Lata Rai
Bhim Kumari Darji
Kanchan Adhikari*

When girls and women
succeed, everyone benefits



*Devika's loving sponsor, Margot Bull,
regularly sends notes encouraging
her to do well in school.*

Special HIO Advisors

Catherine Miller
Board Governance

Wayne Henderson
Legal Counsel

James Lee, MD
Endocrinologist

Elizabeth Bengtson, MD
Oncologist

Mike Callaham, MD
Emergency Medicine

Josh Jaffe, MD
OB/GYN

Jack Isler, MD
Eye Surgeon

Will Dixon, MD
Family Medicine

Education Consultants

Tracy Tyson, Kelly Case,

Maida McKenna,

Joyce Catsimpiris

Lani Peterson, Anne Krive,

Sofia Riva, Anne Deepak

Help sustain the HIO program

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$50 An after school meal and extra tutoring for a group of children for a month | <input type="checkbox"/> \$150 Provide healthcare coverage for five mothers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$75 One month supply of lentils, rice, potatoes and cooking oil for 3 families | <input type="checkbox"/> \$250 35 reusable menstrual kits from Days for Girls |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$100 Uniform & Books for one HIO girl | <input type="checkbox"/> \$500 A laptop computer for a college-bound HIO girl |

To Donate by Credit Card, go to: www.handsinoutreach.org

for additional information:

ricky@handsinoutreach.org
413-229-7993

laura@handsinoutreach.org
508-951-1287

Name

Address

City

State

Zip

Email

All photos used with permission

Design: Harry Dickens

Hands in Outreach • 1504 Silver Street Sheffield, MA 01257

Hands In Outreach is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. All contributions are tax deductible to the full extent allowed by law.