



Hello

We have had an enormous year and are busy preparing for an exciting year ahead. **Batase is getting a library!** This exciting venture will not only provide books and a space for learning, children will have access to the world through the internet. This has been possible through the fantastic help from Christina Lee, who has worked closely with Libraries Without Borders.

Christina Lee may not be known to all of you. Christina went to Cairns State High School and has driven the building of a library in Batase. It will be opened before Christmas 2018. A lot of the funding was raised by the women on the recent Take on Nepal trek to the tune of \$20,000. This will be **the first library located in a village in Nepal.**

Our hostel is now rebuilt after the devastating earthquake of 2015. With your help the hostel is fully operational and providing food and shelter for over 50 disadvantaged children, not just from here in Batase but also from surrounding villages. These children now have access to education and exciting opportunities. FHC continues to fund teachers at the school and help children with schooling materials and uniforms. Our project to help our good friend Samir Tamang build a school in his village of Pritti is ongoing. So much done and so much more to do. **Thank you for your continued support.**

Som Tamang and Susan Devitt



FRIENDS OF HIMALAYAN CHILDREN (FHC)

PROGRESS

DECEMBER 2018



FHC HOSTEL NEWS



Name: Buddi Man Tamang
Class: 4
Home Village: Urleni
Age: 12

Meet Buddi. He has just arrived at FHC's hostel in Batase. Buddi comes from a very poor background. His father died 12 years ago and his mother is now living abroad.

Buddi comes from a neighbouring village to Batase called Urleni. His older brother and sister are living in Kathmandu while his other siblings live with his uncle.

Women's trek to Everest Base Camp with Take on Nepal

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Batase Village through my eyes

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Take on Nepal

Take on Nepal is a successful new trekking company started by Som and Susan that provides welcome career opportunities for the youth of Batase beyond school.

Som Tamang page 2

EVENTS

DECEMBER 1 • Saturday (7pm)

Gala Charity Ball

- Pullman Cairns International Hotel
- music by Cairns Big Band
- \$110
- tickets online or from Himalayan Dreams shop, Pier Shopping Centre (www.nepalifamily.org.au/gala_charity_ball_2018)

(more information on page 3)

DECEMBER 16 • Sunday (5-7pm)

FHC Christmas gathering

- Goomboora Park, Brinsmead
- Som and Susan will talk about FHC activities
- bring friends, food to share and chairs/cutlery

(more information on page 2)

UPCOMING EVENTS (stay tuned)

MARCH 9 • Saturday

- International Women's Day Dinner
- Cairns Brass Hall



Women's trek to Everest Base Camp (EBC) with Take on Nepal

About a year ago, I started seeing some information coming across my Facebook feed about a Women's trek to EBC. The rest is history. I've just returned from the trip...with a full heart, a child I'm sponsoring and a huge insight into the FHC Charity and a trekking company called Take on Nepal.

The EBC trek starts with a stunning (and daunting) 22-minute flight into Lukla at 2860m. From there it is a steady climb for eight days to the destination – EBC 5380m. The combination of breathtaking scenery, swing bridges, steep climbs, followed by steep

declines, makes this a challenging endeavour. Lodges provide basic accommodation and food with limited access to showers and luxury.

Our group consisted of 19 women and as much as possible was run by women, with a spread in ages from 18 to 66 years and an average age of 52 years.

The trip ran smoothly, led by Dinesh, Som's 22-year-old brother and Sandip, a knowledgeable young man from Chitwan. Our young women guides were delightful. They kept us safe. They

kept us entertained. Many of the young women carrying our packs and guiding us came through FHCs hostel in Batase...it is such a perfect model.

Our group formed, normed, stormed and performed brilliantly. I'm sure taking orders for food three times a day for 19 women was a wee bit like herding cats. Nonetheless, we made it to base camp. In all honesty, this became a less important part of the aim. I'd prefer to say we all jumped through the window of opportunity and were enriched for it.

by Mary Frances de Jourdan

Batase Village – through my eyes

Batase visit, September 2018: an emotional roller coaster ride for EBC trekkers!

Eleven of the women's group trekking to Everest Base Camp with Take On Nepal, also paid a 3-day visit to Batase village. Its beautiful, tranquil hillside location, looking out over terraced slopes and valleys to the snow-capped Lantang mountain range, distracts momentarily from its stories of struggle.

Recovery is on track, but the 2015 earthquake cast an enduring shadow over the village in terms of pain and poverty resulting from lives lost, and homes and livelihoods destroyed. And yet, we found ourselves immersed in a warm, welcoming community where orphaned children play with

a spontaneity and delight that belies the hardship and loss in their young lives.

Tears flow easily in Batase but its many sad stories have inspiration as their core theme and they are delightfully illustrated by acceptance, resilience and joy.

Batase inspires empathy, wonder and will to help... and pride when we see the new library under construction, funded by donations through FHC... and gratitude at the opportunity to visit Batase...and life-affirming hope for humanity.

(Kay wrote a blog about the Women's Everest Base Camp Trek and her visits to Batase. The blog can be found at: toebcwithtakeonnepal.blogspot.com.au)



by Kay Smith

Goomboora gathering

Sunday December 16 (5-7pm)

FHC invites you to a gathering of friends! We would love to meet as many of our friends as possible at an informal gathering to celebrate the great work being done in the village of Batase, Nepal.

Could each family bring a small plate of food to share? You will all need your own chair, a plate, cup and cutlery.

Bring a friend who indeed, may become a Friend of Himalayan Children. Som and Susan will report on recent activities in Batase and several women who recently participated in the Take on Nepal trek will talk briefly about that walk. This is simply an opportunity to take a breath at the end of a busy year and celebrate some amazing successes.



Young women training to become guides. From left: Anjal, Sangita, Anita, Rita, Sangita and Sanjhana

by Som Tamang

Take on Nepal

At Take on Nepal we are incredibly proud of our team of young female guides who are turning heads on the trails to Everest Base Camp (EBC).

Very few women are employed in the trekking industry for a variety of reasons: Men are preferred for their strength; Nepal's patriarchal society makes it very difficult for young women to breakthrough the expectations placed upon them; In the villages daughters are expected to marry very young (often 14-16 years) to a life of labour on their husband's family farm; girl's education is not valued so their opportunities are limited; there are few role models to aspire to; and training to become a trekking guide is expensive.

We want to make a change for the young women of regional Nepal by empowering them through education and training. Take on

Nepal supports them through further education in Kathmandu where they better their English and learn about the hospitality industry. We support them to gain their professional Guides license.

On a recent trek to EBC, our group learned about the importance of this training. One of our group members – Kirsty Nancarrow – shared the following:

"This morning we have been touched by the stories of two of our guides, who are extremely strong advocates for the empowerment of women in Nepal. Eighteen-year-old Rita Tamang was forced to marry at 13. Last year, she won a competition run by the World Organisation for the Future of Nepalese Women, beating 200 others with her presentation, 'No more child marriages'. She asked to join Take On Nepal earlier this year and has now been able to pay her college fees and graduate. Rita now

wants to study social work so she can continue changing the lives of other women. Bimmaya Tamang, 18, is the youngest of six sisters and the only one to refuse marriage. She became the 'man' of the house after her father was killed, but was determined to continue her education and fight to get her father's land back.

Thanks to support from the Friends of Himalayan Children and Take On Nepal, Bimmaya is in grade 12 and working as a trekking guide as often as she can. We are totally inspired by these trailblazers and the other female guides on our Everest Base Trek. This journey was never about bucket lists, it was always about celebrating the change that is happening in Nepal, thanks to these brave women and their mentor, Som Tamang."



GALA CHARITY BALL

Benefitting Nepali Family Inc. • Friends of Himalayan Children Inc.

PULLMAN CAIRNS INTERNATIONAL HOTEL

1st December 2018

7:00pm

\$110 pp

Christmas Dinner • Raffles
Auction • Entertainment

Contact Susan or Sarah:
0466 400 415 • 0488 681 916

TICKETS AVAILABLE ON-LINE OR FROM HIMALAYAN DREAMS, PIER SHOPPING CENTRE

www.nepalifamily.org.au/gala_charity_ball_2018