

WE WISH YOU A

# Merry Christmas

AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR



From our heart we wish you a very Happy Christmas and New Year. Your support and generosity throughout the year is greatly appreciated and is making a difference to the lives of many young people in Nepal. The children of Batase don't celebrate Christmas but throughout the year they celebrate other festivals, which create the same excitement and joy that Christmas brings to children here in Australia. The people of Nepal are incredibly giving, even the poorest of people will give and share what little they have. It is deeply understood within our culture that sharing and giving will always bring more joy to our lives.

It's been a difficult year on many levels for everyone and our fund-raising efforts have been restricted, making your ongoing support even more precious to us. From memberships to multi-thousand dollar donations, you have kept our support for over 90 disadvantaged children going. Special thanks to Jonathan Clayton for his tireless efforts to raise funds through recycling. In a good week he can bring in \$680 (\$18,000 for the year). And a special thanks to members Mary Frances and Tim Trehearn, whose friendship with Clair Carter has brought about an invaluable partnership between FHC and Innocents Relief (read below). The future is looking bright for our kids. Bring on 2022!

Thank you again and we wish for you a Christmas filled with the love of family and friends.

Som and Susan

DO YOU  
READ OUR  
NEWSLETTER?  
PLEASE LET US KNOW IF  
YOU DO.  
info@f-hc.org



FRIENDS OF HIMALAYAN CHILDREN (FHC) • Empowerment through education

# PROGRESS

DONATE/SPONSOR NOW



"Our volunteer administration ensures nearly 95% of funds raised go directly to supporting disadvantaged children in regional Nepal."

DECEMBER 2021

## Asmita Tamang



Asmita is one of our scholarship kids meaning we support her education while she continues to live at home. She has just finished Grade 10 this year from Batase school with excellent results.

Asmita is from Manebhanjyang village next to Batase and she stayed with her grandparents while she studied at Batase School.

Now she will continue her education at Melamchi living with her parents, who can now afford to further her education. Asmita wants to become a teacher. Her dream is now possible with the generous help of FHC supporters.

## Tania WON



Tania Verbeeck's film chronicling the adventures of an all-women's trek (including the guides) to Everest Base Camp in 2019 has just won the Sony Film Festival for best documentary, 2021. Some of the guides highlighted in the film came up through FHC's hostel. And now they are trained trekking guides, a role usually only afforded men. The film beautifully articulates the difficulties and limitations confronting women in patriarchal regional Nepal. In doing so it also beautifully articulates the spirit of FHC's aims and ambitions. You can view the film at <https://filmfestival.sony.com.au>

## Innocents Relief – a new partner



Friends of Himalayan Children has made new friends. Innocents Relief is a charity organisation based in Brisbane, Queensland. They work hard to improve the lives of disadvantaged children across the world, in such places as Africa, Timor Leste (East Timor), India, Sri Lanka, Papua New Guinea and Peru. Our beliefs and aspirations align beautifully with theirs. They are a nonprofit organisation staffed entirely from volunteers and believe that education is the key to giving poor children an opportunity in life. They support 31 schools in 11 countries.

As well as funding school fees, uniforms, lunches and school materials for students, they also fund special projects such as safe water supply and new classrooms. It's under this 'special projects' funding that they want to help us with the Batase school expansion.

We've talked before about how Sujana accessed government funding to build new classrooms on FHC land. And how you helped with funding the preparation of the land for construction. Innocents Relief wants to help by funding the necessary infrastructure to get water to the new classrooms. They also want to fund two new high-school teachers in science and maths for two years. Their help is a huge boost to the school facilities in Batase. Their money has only just arrived and the water articulation project is already underway (see photos). Teachers are currently being sourced to fill the two teaching positions.

We are very thankful for this productive partnership with Innocents Relief. To learn more about this wonderful organisation, visit [www.innocentsrelief.org.au](http://www.innocentsrelief.org.au)



## Thank you Nick for your hard work



Nick Miller is in Grade 11 at Boonah State High School in south-eastern Queensland. He is a regular contributor to 'Containers for Change' for FHC. He's working hard for the community to go towards his gold-level Duke of Edinburgh's International Award.

## Sunita Tamang is off to college in Kathmandu



Sunita has successfully completed her Grade 10 schooling at the Batase School with an excellent GPA result of 3.80.

FHC started supporting Sunita two years ago while she lived at home through our Scholarship program. Her father has of poor health and her mother works abroad to support the family. They couldn't afford to send both Sunita and her brother to school.

Now Sunita is in College in Kathmandu where we continue to support her. She is studying science so that she can become a nurse.

## Friends of Himalayan Children & Innocents Relief



Mary Frances and Clair.

How did our partnership with Innocents Relief begin?

Charitable friends. Mary Frances is a committee member with FHC and has been a strong supporter for many years. Clair Carter is the secretary for the charity organisation, Innocents Relief. They have been friends for a long time. It is this connection that has evolved into a wonderful and productive relationship for our cause.

The value of this relationship to FHC's efforts can not be underestimated. It has given us access to funds for essential projects such as getting water articulated to new school classrooms and for us to employ two more teachers for the school.

## Batase's school – as resilient as the community



*Left: classrooms in 2016, corrugated iron walls, timber supports, dirt floors and bench desks.*



*Below: New classrooms, students doing their exams in 2021.*

On 25 April 2015 an earthquake devastated Kathmandu and central and eastern regions of Nepal. Batase Village suffered significant structural damage and sadly a few deaths. The school was destroyed. Fortunately the earthquake happened on Saturday, the one day of the week there are no classes. If it had been a school day, the collapsing stone walls would have killed many.

The community rallied and replaced the crumbled stone classrooms with timber and tin and the kids went back to school. In 2018 the timber and tin was replaced with a beautiful new earthquake-resistant,

concrete school, built by Caratas Switzerland. Caratas has centres all around the world and works hard to alleviate poverty and induce resilience in poor communities. With FHC's help, they identified Batase as a progressive and growing community and chose to help. The school now teaches to Grade 10.

Now it's 2021 and government funding is building new classrooms on FHC land. New teachers are being employed. The school is growing and we aim to include Grades 11 and 12 in the near future. We are very proud to be involved in the development of the school.

## Your support providing choices for men and women



From left: Samjana Tamang, Bindumaya Tamang, Achyut Shrestha, Sabin Tamang and Saroj Tamang are excited about being able to do their final college exams in Kathmandu.

COVID-induced lockdowns in Kathmandu have interrupted and frustrated the schedules of all schools and colleges but at last students are returning to class.

FHC continues to support students who successfully complete their schooling and want to go onto

further study. We are very proud of these students now finishing their college studies and going onto the next phase of their lives.

Your support has given these young men and women choices in life and control over their future. Their family bonds are strong so perhaps they will choose to return home and progress their communities. Or perhaps they will take on a career in the cities or choose to further study abroad. The choice is theirs to make.



## OUR MOTIVATION. Extract from a BBC news item: The Nepalese children made to work in bars and clubs



Child poverty and the exploitation of all children is a serious and toxic reality in Nepal and is core to our concerns at Friends of Himalayan Children. Our aim is to protect, nourish and educate as many disadvantaged children we can, to give them the best chance in life and defend them against the threat of cruel exploitation. Children from any background can have the potential to excel and contribute to their community.

The following is an extract from a BBC news report highlighting the serious and ubiquitous reach of this problem in Nepal.

Geeta Pandey reports:

**Children are being exploited in Nepalese bars and folk music venues, some of which are fronts for the sex trade. By some estimates, thousands of minors are affected.**

When Rita migrated from her village in Nepal to the capital, Kathmandu, she thought she was escaping poverty. Back in her village, Rita – whose name we have changed for her protection – lived with her alcoholic mother and siblings. Her father had moved to Malaysia for work and abandoned the family.

“At first he used to send us money, but then he stopped,” Rita said. “We did not have enough land, so I came to Kathmandu when I was 12 or 13.”

Her first jobs in Kathmandu included working in a brick factory, cleaning and washing utensils in a home, working in a hotel kitchen and being a shop assistant.

The pay was meagre, work backbreaking and quite often her abusive and predatory male co-workers tried to touch and grope her, she said. At 14, Rita got a job in a restaurant where she had to sit, eat and drink with customers.

“The customers smoked hookah and drank alcohol,” she recalled. “They would touch my hands, say vulgar words, but I couldn’t object. Some of them even wanted to kiss me. I used to escape saying that I wanted to use the toilet.”

Sharing her story with campaigners from the Child Labour Action Research program (Clarissa), funded by the British government, Rita detailed incidents where she was forced to drink alcohol and where men took her to nearby guest houses or rented rooms and offered her money in return for sex.

Campaigners say Rita is one of hundreds, possibly thousands, of Nepalese children, some as young as 11, who are trapped in the country’s adult entertainment sector, engaged in a terrible form of child labour.

Professor Danny Burns, Clarissa director and professor at the Institute

of Development Studies at the University of Sussex, says when we talk about child labour, a lot of the discussion focuses on big firms and global supply chains.

“But the worst forms of child labour are in small businesses and family-owned businesses – the kind of places that employ children like Rita,” Prof Burns told the BBC.

Nepal has 1.1 million children aged between five and 17 years engaged in child labour and 0.22 million children work in hazardous industries, even though employing children is illegal in the country.

Kathmandu has pledged to eliminate child labour by 2025 in tandem with the UN goal to end child labour in all forms and also set an ambitious target to end the worst forms of child labour by 2022.

Minister for Women, Children and Senior Citizens Uma Regmi told Binita Dahal of the BBC Nepali service that the “government is determined to meet the target”.

“We have little time left, but we will make all efforts to end the worst forms of child labour by 2022.”

But campaigners say that to do that, Nepal must focus on small businesses in the informal sector, especially the adult entertainment sector.

Pragya Lamsal, a researcher at Clarissa in Kathmandu, told the BBC that the charity had collected and analysed testimonies of nearly 400 children employed in the sector.

“We found that in a majority of the cases, the children had moved from rural areas to Kathmandu, they were recruited by informal intermediaries such as friends, relatives and neighbours, and most of them ended up working in massage parlours, dance bars, guest houses or seedy restaurants,” she said.

Sudhir Malla, the head of Clarissa in Nepal, said most of the children came from poor families or broken homes and in the city, they are hired

mostly by “dohori restaurants” – establishments that claim to promote folk music.

“There are some genuine establishments, but many smaller places in the dark underbelly of the city are seedy joints and fronts for sex trade. They hire young women and girls to serve alcohol, wait at tables, work in hookah bars, dance bars and massage parlours,” he said.

Many of these places operate under the radar, he added – functioning out of basements, street corners and private apartments.

“These establishments are required by law to register and renew their documents regularly and provide details of their workers to the authorities. Many register initially but don’t renew their registration and there is little incentive or repercussion if they do not. Then there are those who do not register at all.”

So, the children work without formal contracts and are not given any job descriptions or fixed salaries.

Ms Lamsal said most of the girls and young women who work in these places say they have found themselves in exploitative situations.

“The girls were told that if guests ran up a big bill, their own tips would be higher,” she said.

“Most of them are young and without formal education and, in most cases, they have no option because their families are dependent on the money they earn. They are very vulnerable and many of them slip into situations which are exploitative.”

The girls also have to deal with the stigma that surrounds this kind of work,” Ms Lamsal said. Most don’t even tell their parents, so in cases of abuse they can’t go to their families or the police for help. Many also don’t report abuse because of fear of losing their jobs.

You can find the full report at [www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-59459910](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-59459910)



## Helping parents help their children

Exams are done and the results are out and our team in Batase are helping the parents understand how their children did at school.

FHC’s scholarship children live at home and you support them with funds to pay for uniforms and school materials. But our help goes beyond just providing handouts. At this gathering to administer uniforms, Bejay (far left in the photo), Anil and Sujan help the parents help their children. They explain to the parents (whom

most likely have had no education) what the exam results mean and how they can help their children improve by providing a happy study environment at home.

Not all kids excel and the problems could be in the home. The children help their parents at home with work in the family business or on the farm. It’s important that the parents understand the importance of getting the balance between work and study right. Their children’s future depends on it.





# CAN YOU HELP?

There are many useful ways you can contribute to our cause.

## BECOME A MEMBER



For just \$10/year you can become a member of Friends of Himalayan Children.

You will be added to our email database and notified of up-coming FHC activities and events. Members get a 10% discount. And you will receive a quarterly news letter

with all of the latest news about what has been happening in Batase and beyond. You can join online at:

[www.f-hc.org/support/become-a-member](http://www.f-hc.org/support/become-a-member)

## FHC DONATION TINS



Do you know of a high pedestrian-traffic venue (ie. café, bakery, corner shop, butchery) that would be willing to have one of our charity tins displayed on their counter?

If so, please contact Jonathan on 0414 281 196

If the tin is lost or stolen, the venue will have no liability whatsoever.

We can also supply a chain and attach the tin to the counter.

## FUNDRAISING IDEAS?

We have nearly 600 people who are paid up members or who donate regularly to FHC.

If you have any ideas for a fundraiser, however small, please email Tim Trehearn at: [donations@f-hc.org](mailto:donations@f-hc.org)

If you would like to give a talk about FHC to work colleagues or friends, please let us know and we can supply pull-up banners and advertising materials.

Every cent counts and we are responding to more and more needy children in Batase Village.

## RECYCLING FOR FHC



Most soft drink cans, plastic bottles, beer bottles and cans, juice poppers, and even Yakult bottles are redeemable. Just look for '10c' printed on the label.

You can take your redeemable containers to any recycling centre in Queensland and the code **C10010512** will direct the money straight to FHC.

Big thank you to the Brisbane recyclers who are already directing refunds to FHC.

Or get your collection to us and we can process them:

- **REDLYNCH:** call/text Jonathan – 0414 281 196; or email [pascalleclayton@gmail.com](mailto:pascalleclayton@gmail.com) with your address for pickup; or drop them off in front of their garage door at 29 Eugenia Cres, Redlynch; or
- **EDGE HILL:** call/text Di Andrews – 0408 180 201, or drop them off at 8 Fleming St, Edge hill; or
- **CARAVONICA:** call/text your location to Annett Musumeci – 0434 702 126 and she can collect; or
- **FRESHWATER:** call/text Maureen Cameron – 0407 737 337, or deliver to 16 Merrybrook Street, Freshwater.
- **ATHERTON:** call/text Mary Frances – 0400 607 323, or deliver to 3B Crisp Close, Atherton.

**WANT TO BE A COLLECTOR TOO?** email [info@f-hc.org](mailto:info@f-hc.org)

EMPOWERMENT THROUGH EDUCATION



Support a child in Batase

[www.f-hc.org/sponsor](http://www.f-hc.org/sponsor)

**FOR JUST \$30 PER MONTH**

you can provide essential support for a child to be able to succeed at school to Year 10, while living at home.

**You can make a difference.**

EMPOWERMENT THROUGH EDUCATION



Sponsor a child in FHC Hostel

[www.f-hc.org/sponsor](http://www.f-hc.org/sponsor)

**FOR JUST \$50 PER MONTH**

you can guarantee a child a place in school and the support needed to help the child in our Batase Hostel succeed to Year 10.

**You can make a difference.**

EMPOWERMENT THROUGH EDUCATION



Sponsor a youth in Kathmandu

[www.f-hc.org/sponsor](http://www.f-hc.org/sponsor)

**FOR JUST \$150 PER MONTH**

you can support a young adult attending college in Nepal's capital, Kathmandu.

**You can make a difference.**