



Happy New Year even though it is April!

I hope your life in lockdown is bearable. I was away in Batase for all of March and returned home to a 14-day lockdown. From a personal point of view this has allowed Susan and I to settle into our new home in Brinsmead, Cairns. We have also had lots of time to do outdoor activities with the three kids like hiking and bike riding.

It is a tough time as our shop in Cairns, 'Himalayan Dreams' is shut and our trekking business, 'Take On Nepal', has no treks happening in Nepal.

Nepal has responded to the current Covid-19 pandemic like many countries. The country is in total lockdown. The streets of Kathmandu are literally empty but the village of Batase is bustling with the return of senior students and most of our 'Take on Nepal' staff.

With only 16 confirmed cases and no deaths recorded to date in Nepal, lockdown seems precautionary. Testing is minimal and most people do not present to hospitals for treatment when ill. We have no idea what the true impact of this virus might be in Nepal.

I hope all of you, our valued supporters and donors, are well and happy in these difficult times.

Kind regards Som and Susan



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FRIENDS OF HIMALAYAN CHILDREN (FHC) • Empowerment through education

PROGRESS



MARCH 2020

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NEPAL SHOP IN CAIRNS

Did you know you can buy authentic Nepalese products here in Cairns? Himalayan Dreams is a shop run by Susan and Som in the Pier Shopping Centre on the marina in Cairns. It's full of products from Kathmandu in Nepal, all made by local merchants, and all 'fair trade'. It is a great place to pick up last minute Christmas presents.

IDEAS? WE WANT YOU!

We have nearly 600 people who are paid up members or who donate regularly to FHC. If you have an idea for a fundraiser, however small, please email me at donations@f-hc.org. If you'd like to give a talk about FHC to work colleagues or friends please let us know and we can supply advertising material. Every cent counts and we are responding to more and more needy children in Batase. Thanks.

FHC HOSTEL NEWS



Currently there are 47 young children boarding at the FHC hostel, all with their own stories of disadvantage and family hardship. Not all are orphaned but they are at risk of exploitation and missing out on an education. The hostel ensures each child has access to food, accommodation and schooling. Staff at the hostel have skills to extend the children's school lessons beyond the class room. After-school lessons are a big part of the children's lives here at the hostel.

FHC is struggling to meet the growing demand to help these children. You can help. Just \$50 per month can transform lives here. Contact us: <https://www.f-hc.org/contact>

Friends of Himalayan Children Hostel, Batase – by Angus McColl



Samjana is 11 years old. She is in grade six at the local school in Batase village and has been living in the FHC Hostel for two years now. Her father was killed in the 2015 earth quake. Her mother works the farm and can't afford to look after her seven children on her own so Samjana has moved into the hostel where she boards and goes to school. She's getting well looked after and educated. She shares the hostel with 46 other students, 46 other extraordinary life stories. Samjana is intelligent

and outgoing. Her English, even at her young age, is very good and it's easy for me to have a conversation with her. Because of FHC she now has a chance to achieve to her potential and I have no doubt she will. Future Prime Minister? I wouldn't be surprised.

What would have become of Samjhana and her spirited potential if someone wasn't around to help?

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Friends of Himalayan Children Hostel, Batase (cont'd)

Tragedy led to Sujan and his four sisters becoming parentless, orphaned, when the youngest was just five months of age. They then fell into the hands of their extended family with very mixed levels of care and protection. The older children, Sujan and Sangita, laboured on farms for survival. Sangita would watch other children walk to school and dreamed that one day that would be her, in uniform, laden with books. Sujan strayed into the seedy side of Kathmandu for any work he could find, the family now splintered. By this time Som Tamang had moved to Australia and started his charity, FHC. He returned to Nepal, found Sujan and brought him home. With FHC support, the family got back together and were given access to education. Sangita would finally reach her dream. At the age of 15 she entered school in Grade 4. She is now 26 and studying Humanities and Political Science at University. Sujan is now employed by FHC and has the huge responsibility of managing the everyday functions of the charity on the ground here in Batase village, including the busy hostel. Kamala is sibling number three and she's training to become a trekking guide with Take on Nepal (TON). The younger girls are completing their schooling.

FHC's hostel is not an orphanage. The children aren't necessarily from parentless homes but they are considerably disadvantaged for a variety of reasons – family disfunction, poverty, alcoholism, gambling, and out-dated cultural traditions that discriminate against girls. In regional parts of Nepal, old cultural traditions still very much determine the lives of young women. Their role in life can be one of few choices. At the age of 10, young girls are working the farm while looking after their siblings. By mid teens, a partner is being arranged for them and marriage follows. Or their families sell them off to slave labour in the cities, or

neighboring India. Whatever the situation, school is limited for them. Their stunted education offers them few choices in life.

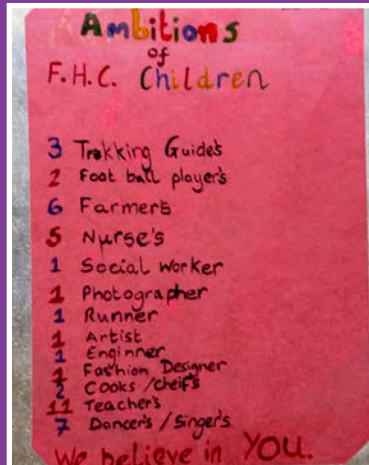
Som Tamang knows very well about how difficult life can be in these parts of Nepal because this is his home village. Now the charity is run by Som and his wife Susan Devitt. As well as the hostel, it raises funds to provide educational and health resources for Batase and neighbouring villages, including school-building projects. All money raised goes directly into the cause because the administration of the charity is managed 100 per cent by volunteers. I know this because I'm one of them. And now I can see the end result. Giving these kids a chance in life is what they deserve.

FHC's support for the children in the hostel doesn't stop when they reach the end of the Batase School curriculum. They can go to Grade 10 here, then further their schooling in Kathmandu with FHC support. Then onto university if they choose. Or they can possibly choose a career as a trekking guide with Take on Nepal, a trekking business run by Som and Susan.

The hostel is located about three kilometres from the school. As well as accommodation facilities, the hostel has a kitchen and full-time staff provide meals as well as help the children with their homework. With the help of the staff, the children are committed to their school lessons beyond the class room. These children have lived lives already, shaped by difficult starts to their life. Consequently they have a maturity of mind and spirit that is difficult to find in children of similar ages with more privileged upbringings. These children appreciate the opportunity they have been given by FHC and work hard to do the best they can. Their commitment is obvious and exciting to an outside observer. All they need is a chance. They will do the rest.



The hostel provides a happy and supportive environment for disadvantaged children from Grade 1 to 10.



Sangita, Anjana, Kamala, Pema, Sujan

Coronavirus in Nepal – by Tim Trehearn

In March, as the pandemic was unfolding, Som was in Batase. Before his urgent repatriation to Australia, he was able to secure essential supplies including rice for the village. He reports that morale in Batase is very high with extra hands available to help with farm work and to advance essential development projects.

Construction jobs underway include a stone retaining wall on the hostel access road and Jonathan Clayton's greenhouse

project. Anil and his family are constructing a new house with the help of many of the FHC and TON staff in their spare time.

The school has been closed but children at the hostel are being tutored by Bijay and some of the other senior students. Som is also linking students to BTN programs that relate to the Corona crisis so that children can understand why life has changed for them and why volunteers are no longer visiting the village.

Projects that have been put on hold include Nijita's hip surgery that was scheduled for May and Jitman's trip to Australia for a prosthesis leg.

The resilience of Nepalese people shines through. Many endured extreme hardship during the 2015 earthquake and many recall the devastation of the civil war. They are meeting the various challenges of Covid-19 with courage and enthusiasm and appreciation for the ongoing support of FHC.



Children at the hostel are being tutored by senior students.

Take on Nepal (TON) – by Angus McColl

Geljen has just been bitten by a snake and we're on a mountainous trail far from anywhere. He doesn't know what type of snake it was but that doesn't matter. We must assume the worst and act quickly because his life depends on it. Dinesh is our lead guide so he takes charge, snapping into action. It's day four of our short course to train young Nepalese people to become great trekking guides. The pretend snake bite is one of many first-aid scenarios we are putting to the students today.

Dinesh responds. "We haven't taught them how to treat snake bites in the classroom yet. We thought it best to spring it on them out of the blue to see how they would go, to see what base knowledge they have." Dinesh uses a bandage as a tourniquet above the bite and talks of cutting open the bite to let the toxin bleed out. It's not the right way. We show them how to do it properly and they are all surprised. A great lesson.

Take on Nepal (TON) is a trekking business...with a difference. The main aim of the business is not just money. It's about creating employment opportunities for young men and women. Especially women. They deliberately train and employ women porters and guides.

In regional parts of Nepal, life is conservative, old cultural traditions still very much determine the lives of young women. Their role in life can be one of few choices. At the age of 10, young girls are working the farm while looking after their siblings. By mid teens, a partner is being arranged for them and marriage follows. Or their families sell them off to slave labour in the cities, or neighboring India. Whatever the situation, school is limited for them. Their stunted education offers them few choices in life. TON is trying to change that. They are giving young women in regional Nepal other life options.

Som Tamang and Susan Devitt started TON to not just be a sustainable, successful trekking business but to also empower women. This business dovetails nicely with a charity they also run - Friends of Himalayan Children (FHC), a Cairns-based charity helping disadvantaged children in regional Nepal.

Tim Trehearn and Mary Frances are outdoor education specialists, Marika is a trekking guide for a global company and I'm helping the students with their English. Each of us have trekked in Nepal more than once. Now we are training 21 young people in the skills necessary to become great trekking guides. Half of the students are young women. Most of the students have had local training to get their necessary guiding certification but our training will supplement their knowledge.

Right now we are on a day-long trek to get the students to put into practice what they've been taught in the classroom. First aid is a big part of the training.

Take on Nepal's motto is 'Inspire, Connect, Empower'. By supporting them you are doing much more than helping a business. You are helping to progress some outdated cultural traditions that disadvantage the life opportunities for young women, like child marriages and slave labour.

Another side to TON that makes it stand out from the hundreds of other trekking businesses in Nepal are the treks they offer. One of their trekking options includes time in a village to experience rural life in regional Nepal.

You can learn more from their website www.takeonnepal.com

What TON is doing for young women here in regional Nepal can not be understated. I'm here. I can see what they are doing and feel privileged to be part of it.



Young women being given choices in life by training to become 'great' trekking guides. (From left) Sangita, Sanjumaya, Mary Frances (trainer), Pulmaya, Som, Bimmaya, Anita, Samjhana, Bindumaya, Marika (trainer), Kamala.

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The students deliver donated clothing on behalf of FHC to a school in a nearby village.



The students collect rubbish on the trail.

Thank you Take on Nepal – by Bijaya Tamang

First of all I want to give thank you so much Take On Nepal for create this such an amazing environment and our teachers Tim, Mary Frances, Angus, Marika for those wonderful knowledge and make us confident and other more things which is very useful in the mountains and our daily life.

During the training we learned many things like First aid, Risk management, Games, what clients needs etc and we hiked to other village and we use them in practically.

Everyday our teachers taught us new things and we played games everyday before we start our course. So I am really appreciate with Take On Nepal founder Som, Susan and our four teachers who gave us really wonderful knowledge.

So this training was really awesome and we look forward to see more training in the future which is so important in the mountains and our daily life.

Thank you.





FRIENDS OF HIMALAYAN CHILDREN – 'Empowerment through education'

MEMBERSHIP FORM

Members receive FHC news updates, 10% discount at Himalayan Dreams and 10% off on all FHC sponsored events.

MEMBERSHIP TO FHC

Membership to FHC is to be paid annually. Becoming a new member, or renewing your membership, is a 3-step process:

1. Indicate your membership type
2. Make payment through your online bank via 'Direct Debit' (see below)
3. Provide your details and send back to us.

1. Membership type (for a single year or a 3-year term)

SINGLE (\$10/year) ☐

COUPLE (\$20/year) ☐

FAMILY (\$30/year) ☐

SINGLE (\$30 for 3 years) ☐

COUPLE (\$60 for 3 years) ☐

FAMILY (\$90 for 3 years) ☐

2. Payment

Please make payments via 'Direct Debit' to:

Friends of Himalayan Children

BSB Number 034 664

Account Number 262 957

[Please put your 'name-membership number (if you have one)' in the 'Payee Reference' box]

3. Member Details

Name: _____

Address: _____

Preferred phone contact: _____

Email: _____

ABLE TO VOLUNTEER?

When organising fund-raisers or other FHC events we are on the lookout for people to lend a hand. Would you like to be on our 'able to volunteer' database so that we can contact you when we need help? If so just indicate by ticking the box below.

Yes I'm happy to be included on your 'able to volunteer' database ☐

Contact Details

Friends of Himalayan Children Inc, PO Box 5213 Cairns Qld 4870 AUSTRALIA

Mobile: 0428 861 001 (Tim Trehearn); Email: info@f-hc.org; Website: www.f-hc.org



CAN YOU HELP?

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

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, 0414281196

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

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

REDEEMABLE CONTAINERS

RECYCLING FOR FHC



Most soft drink cans, plastic bottles small and large, beer bottles and cans, juice poppers, even Yakult bottles are redeemable. Just look for '10c redeemable' 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.

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

Other ways to redeem for our cause:

- ring Jonathan on 0414281196; or
- email pascaleclayton@gmail.com with your address for pickup; or
- drop them off in **Redlynch** (front of the garage door at 29 Eugenia Cres); or
- drop them off in **Edge Hill** (8 Fleming St) – Di Andrews 0408180201.

EMPOWERMENT THROUGH EDUCATION



Sponsor a child in Batase

contact us: www.f-hc.org/contact

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

contact us: www.f-hc.org/contact

FOR JUST \$60 PER MONTH

you can support a young adult through Year 11 and 12 staying in FHC's Banana House in Nepal's capital, Kathmandu.

You can make a difference.

FUNDRAISING IDEAS?

We have nearly 600 people who are paid up members or who donate regularly to FHC. If you have an idea for a fundraiser, however small, please email me at:

donations@f-hc.org

If you'd like to give a talk about FHC to work colleagues or friends, please let us know and we can supply advertising material. Every cent counts and we are responding to more and more needy children in Batase Village.