

The devastating floods that crushed Melamchi impacted Batase too. Power was lost but that didn't keep our hostel students from their lessons. Torch power instead. Photo by Anil Tamang.



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FRIENDS OF HIMALAYAN CHILDREN (FHC) • Empowerment through education

PROGRESS

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

SEPTEMBER 2021

Jamuna Tamang



Jamuna is 12 years old and comes from Thakani village near Batase. She's studying in Grade 7 at the Batase school because there is no school in her village. Jamuna has three sisters but her parents are too poor to support them with their schooling. They have been borrowing money from other villagers in an effort to get their children educated.

FHC will provide Jamuna with scholarship so she can continue going to school. An FHC Scholarship provides students with funds to cover uniforms, text books, lunches and school fees, while they live at home.

Jamuna is a very smart, talented, confident student and wants to become a good singer and actor in the future.

COVID hygiene



Personal hygiene is always important and an easy preventative solution to many health problems. COVID has amplified the need for good hygiene and our hostel kids are well trained in how to look after themselves. The school has opened up again after being closed during unprecedented COVID infections happening across Nepal. Now infection rates have eased and kids are going back to school but strict washing of hands and wearing masks is encouraged.

The COVID situation in Nepal has been bleak but things are improving. The 7-day average number of infections peaked in May with 8,865 people recording positive each day. At the end of August the 7-day average was 1,735. To date there have been over 10,700 deaths from more than 766,000 positive cases.

Melamchi flood



The devastating floods that crushed the riverside village of Melamchi last June also impacted life in Batase Village. Melamchi sits at the junction of the Melamchi and Indrawati rivers at the base of a steep valley. Batase village is located about 12 kilometres by road up in the mountains.

But despite Batase being out of harms way of the floods, destruction to Melamchi affected Batase village in many ways, both economically and socially. Melamchi is an important service centre for Batase and other surrounding villages, and families in Batase are closely connected to the Melamchi community.

FHC has become involved in the recovery through one of its students. Achyut's family is in Melamchi and FHC has been distributing rice and dhal for the

villagers from his family's house. FHC has been helping Achyut with his high-school studies in Kathmandu.

It is still possible to help Melamchi. Som has set up a 'Mycause' page for donations.

"Helping Melamchi is also helping Batase. We are raising special funds for Melamchi via a 'My Cause' funding page. Please help. Donate here. It is a heartbreaking time as villages and towns close to my village in Nepal have been devastated by flooding, with loss of lives and thousands of people homeless we urgently need funding to purchase tarps, corrugated iron, rice and medical supplies. All money raised will be going directly towards the cause and we will update you on progress made."

You can donate [here](#).

Sujan Tamang, FHC manager and school president



Sujan with some of the FHC hostel students. From left, Mingmar, Akrita, Gyalmu, Buddi, Sarmila and Ganimaya.

"Someone told me that she was at the Central Jail so one day I decided to go meet her. From outside the prison bars, I saw her. It didn't feel like it was meeting my mother. The love was not there. It was just indifference".

Sujan is a busy man. He is FHC's director of operations on the ground in Batase, managing the every-day functions of the charity. And he is the President of the School Board, which is an extraordinary honour for someone so young. He is 30 years of age.

But so typical of lives in regional Nepal, his life story is extraordinary. It was his unfortunate plight that inspired Som Tamang to help Sujan and others like him. That help evolved into the Friends of Himalayan Children charity.

Sujan was just a teenager when tragedy struck his family. His mother, suffering poor mental health, killed his father just six months after giving birth to their youngest daughter. Now orphaned, and with a mother and baby sister in jail, the remaining four siblings splintered, finding care with other families. In an instant, Sujan became the head of a broken family...at the age of 12 years. Confused and lost he initially laboured on road construction before straying into the restaurant kitchens of Kathmandu to find work. Kathmandu can be a hostile and dangerous place for young impressionable kids on their own. While in Kathmandu he visited his mother in prison. Ten years had passed.

Som Tamang, with his own difficult life story, had already established a successful life in Australia. Now financial and very familiar with the disadvantage facing children back in his community in Nepal, Som purchases a house in the near-by village of Talamarang and turns it into a hostel for kids from Batase to continue their schooling. School

in Batase then offered limited classes. It would be years before Som learns of Sujan's tragedy. Som's brother Amber (sadly killed in the 2015 earthquake) eventually finds Sujan in Kathmandu and Som lures him home with the offer of a job managing his hostel in Talamarang. While here, Sujan, now 18 years of age, is encouraged to go back to school.

Som grew his hostel into a registered charity in 2008 and FHC was born. This registration gave Som the legal right to accept young children, especially girls, under his care. Soon after, a Hostel was established in Batase and the school expanded with FHC's help. And with that, so did Sujan's role. From very humble beginnings, he now manages the every-day operations of FHC in Nepal.

Sujan epitomises the resilience of the Nepalese spirit. It's not uncommon for children to experience lives of hardship in regional Nepal but it's rare for that hardship to define who they grow up to be. Sujan now has a family of his own and he is striving to ensure that they, and the children under his care at the charity, don't lack for love and opportunity that he was deprived.

The FHC hostel under his care, provides food, accommodation and access to school for over 45 disadvantaged children. He also oversees the administration of nearly 40 scholarships where FHC covers school fees and materials for students while they live at home. And recently as President of the School Board, he secured a AUD\$50,000 grant from the Nepalese Government to build new classrooms for the school. The school is expanding to teach Grade 11 and 12. That construction, on FHC land, is in progress.

Sujan's sister Sangita has her own amazing life story to tell. Her story will feature in the December newsletter.

Hostel kids excelling



Rimmaya Tamang has just successfully completed her Year 10 in Batase and she achieved an outstanding GPA of 3.90. For now, to continue her education to Year 12 and beyond, she has to move to Kathmandu.

Rimmaya came to FHC's hostel seven years ago with her older sister Anita from Urleni village. Their father was tragically killed while working abroad in the United Arab Emirates (Sadly these jobs are usually dangerous and have very poor working conditions). Their mother remarried so there was no support for the girl's schooling. Anita has already finished her college education in Kathmandu.

FHC continues to support students like Rimmaya beyond Year 10 by offering sponsorships for college and university. These sponsorships cost AUD\$150 per month. If you would like to support a student through college or university, visit www.f-hc.org/sponsor-now or discuss with us at info@f-hc.org

All hands on deck...



Presently the school in Batase can offer schooling to Year 10, but FHC and the Nepalese Government are now working hard to increase the schooling facilities in Batase to include Year 11 and 12.

In the last newsletter we talked about Sujan Tamang, President of the School Board, securing a AUD\$50,000 grant from the Nepalese government to add more classrooms to the school. FHC donated the land for the purpose and, with your help, AUD\$5,000 to prepare the land for construction.

Preparation of the block is now complete and the students have been getting involved in planting trees to stabilise the land. Unfortunately construction of the new classrooms has been delayed because of supply difficulties. Damage to the roads from the recent flooding that impacted Melamchi has prevented essential building materials getting into Batase.

An award-winning documentary by Tania Verbeeck



In October 2019 Tania Verbeeck hiked to Everest Base Camp with an all-women's support crew ... and her camera.

Tania is a good friend of FHC. She, and a group of women, did the hike with Take on Nepal (TON), a trekking company run by Som Tamang and his wife Susan Devitt. The aim of TON is to provide career opportunities beyond FHC's care, particularly for women. Tania is a professional marketer and videographer. With her camera

she filmed her experiences, and those of the other women and guides on the trek. When she got home she found she had enough material to tell a story and so she did. The result is an award winning documentary called *Women Take on Nepal*. Some of the women highlighted in the film came up through FHC's hostel.

The film articulates beautifully the difficulties and limitations confronting women in a very traditional and patriarchal regional Nepal. Som and Susan are doing something about that and Tania's film explains how.

Tania wanted to use this film as a big-screen fund-raiser for FHC but COVID has made that very difficult. Part of the acclaim for the film coming her way is from Sony. She is a finalist in their film festival and they are allowing us to view the film here:

<https://filmfestival.sony.com.au/>

Enjoy the film and if you would like to make a donation to FHC, visit <https://www.f-hc.org>

Thank you for your support.

Rotary Grant of \$10,000 for computers and more



Kirsty Nancarrow with Jenisha Tamang, one of her sponsor children.

With the help of a good friend of FHC, Kirsty Nancarrow, the school in Batase has just won a generous grant from Rotary International and Rotary Club of Cairns Sunrise to the value of AUD\$10,000. The money will go to purchasing computers, improving internet facilities and providing one year of wages for a teacher to train students in computer skills. This will provide an enormous boost to the educational opportunities for the students at the Batase school.

Kirsty knows first-hand about the limitations of life in Batase having travelled there twice in the past five years. She was invited to speak to the Rotary Club of Cairns Sunrise about FHC's work in Batase village at a monthly meeting.

The hope was to gain Cairns Sunrise Rotary's support to assist FHC's work. Kirsty outlined the community's education difficulties and highlighted some of the shortfalls in Batase school and how a successful grant application could address some

of those issues and improve the education of children in this remote, subsistence, agricultural community.

They agreed. Rotary Cairns Sunrise club secured \$2620 through the District Grants program and the members contributed the balance of \$7380, with a generous donation from one member who wishes to remain anonymous.

Work has already started. The internet upgrade is already in progress, and a computer training teacher has been engaged. Laptop suppliers have been invited to provide quotes on appropriate packages for evaluation.

Rotary Cairns Sunrise is part of an international network of business, professional and community leaders who strive to make the world a better place through practical efforts. FHC thanks them for their generous support.

To learn more about Rotary Cairns Sunrise, visit:
<https://rotarycairnssunrise.org.au/>

\$2000 for the Batase school, thanks to Gyanmaya



Congratulations Gyanmaya. Gyanmaya's amazing effort with her studies has won the school in Batase a AUD\$2,000 grant. She topped the Basic Level Exam (BLE) with 96.5% when she went from Grade 8 to Grade 9. The local government (Melamchi Municipality) reward schools with high-achieving students with a sizable prize and this time Gyanmaya won it for Batase.

Gyanmaya came to FHC's hostel four years ago when she was studying in Grade 6. Now she is in Grade 10.

Gyanmaya has many siblings. Tragically her mother and younger brother passed away during the earthquake in 2015. School was

unaffordable for her family but FHC took both Gyanmaya and her younger sister into the hostel where they now live and continue to go to school. Your support has given them this opportunity.

In the future Gyanmaya wants to become a Nurse. She loves running, poem writing, listening to motivational speeches, and reading about history. She is currently recording her daily activities in a diary, which she hopes to publish one day.

She is a wonderful inspiration to the other children in the Hostel and we are very proud to have Gyanmaya as part of the FHC family. We wish her well in the future.

Scholarship Distribution Program



It's scholarship distribution time again. The school year is clicking over into the new year and students are advancing on to their next grade levels. For students under FHC care it's time to get their new school supplies.

Our scholarship program is for kids who are living at home in families that are too poor to afford school



fees and materials. Currently FHC supports over 30 students with these scholarships. It costs AUD\$30 per month to support these children while they are living at home. If you would like to sponsor one of these students, or simply sponsor the program, visit www.f-hc.org/sponsor-now or discuss with us at info@f-hc.org

Beyond the classroom...



It's the monsoon season in Nepal and for the villages, it's millet planting time – part of the rhythm of life in Batase. The community gets involved and that includes our hostel kids. They are learning how to plant millet in the paddy fields and contribute to the community, although Dolmo is making it look more fun than it probably is!

Millet is the main crop grown in Batase. While rice is an important part of the Nepalese diet, it doesn't grow well at altitude. Millet is a more successful crop here and is much richer in protein and dietary fibre. And the straw is an important source of food for the animals. "These activities are making their time useful and busy".



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

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

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 small and large, 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 Friends of Himalayan Children (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 pascacleayton@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.

WANT TO BE A COLLECTOR TOO: email info@f-hc.org

EMPOWERMENT THROUGH EDUCATION



Support a child in Batase

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

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

FOR JUST \$150 PER MONTH

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

You can make a difference.