



EDUCATE THE CHILDREN

Fostering Hope Through Education

By Susanna Pearce, Executive Director

All of us who care about Nepal were saddened by the collapse of the cease-fire at the end of August. Violence has now resumed throughout the country. I'm pleased to report, however, that even in the current difficult circumstances ETC's Nepal staff team, under the strong leadership of In-Country Director Mira Rana, continues to do a tremendous job working with individuals and communities to help them build positive futures. More than ever, positive influence is needed in Nepal. People need hope, and tools to improve their lives. You – ETC's dedicated community of supporters – are making such hope and learning possible. You are changing real people's lives for the better.



This year, hundreds of women gained literacy skills through ETC. Literate women have smaller, healthier families and are far more likely to send their children to school.

ETC's 118 Women's Groups involve more than 1,700 women and their families. Through ETC's programs over the past year 334 women have gained basic-level literacy skills and 282 women advanced-level literacy. Four hundred and fifty-four children received scholarship support this year, helping them build futures for themselves and gain skills to create the next stage in Nepal's history. Sixty children, ages 9-14, previously not attending school, successfully completed a nine-month curriculum enabling them to now enter class four in the regular government school system. Twenty schools received support, both for school repairs and in the form of basic educational materials.

Through these and other ETC activities, a great

number of children, families, and women are benefiting. In addition, beginning in July 2003, two new programs joined ETC – the Nepal Bhotia Education Center (NBEC) and the Thangmi Education Program (TEP). Both provide educational opportunities for little-reached ethnic groups in very remote areas (See page 6 for more details).

It takes courage for staff people and community members to continue their efforts. There is now daily violence, even in the Kathmandu Valley. Mira Rana describes the situation as follows,

“Psychologically, people are disturbed and nervous because of constant sad news about escalating violence and problems all over the country.” She adds, “But due to appropriate approaches and the strategies of ETC and the hard work of ETC personnel, we have still been successful in assisting our partner communities and the individuals we work with.”

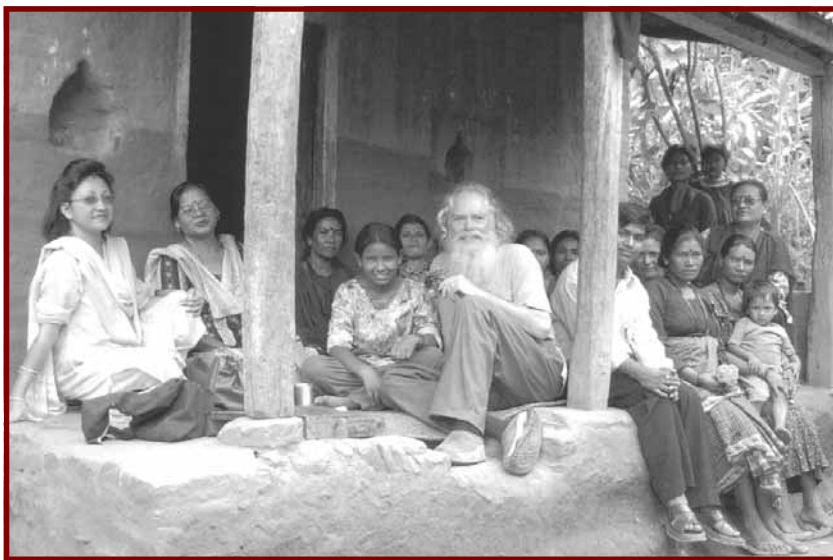
Nepal needs you now more than ever — your gift paves the way for lasting change. I hope you will consider making a special investment in Nepal's most disadvantaged women and children at this time. A little goes a long way in Nepal; your support brightens people's lives at a time of great need.

Please remember the enclosed holiday gift list when choosing presents for loved ones this season. Give a gift of hope that spans the globe!



Visits to Nepal...

Despite the current political turbulence in Nepal, several ETC supporters have recently made trips to our programs areas. Over the years, the person-to-person connections made during visits to Nepal have served to bring new meaning and appreciation to sponsorships and have formed lasting bonds between our loyal supporters and ETC beneficiaries. Recent visitors include Joyce Tapper, Sally Olds, Margaret Roche, Phyllis and Bob Wynn, Berniece and Pat Patterson, Kathy Rankin, Freema Hillman, Barbara Cook, Yogendra Shakya, Lawrence Chitta Tharp, Gail Carson, Barbara Pease, Ram Saran and Niruja Thapa, and John and Susan Dalziel. We are very pleased with the interest and enthusiasm of our visitors.



The low-caste women I met made a searing impression on me. I remain dumbfounded by their courage, their resiliency, their solidarity.

- Lawrence Chitta Tharp

Left: The Chun Devi group at the home of one of its members. On the left is Manju (ETC staff); Tharp is in the center holding flowers from the group; next to him is Samjhana, the youngest member of this women's group.

Notes From a Visit to ETC's Women's Groups: Messages of progress and hope

By Lawrence Chitta Tharp, ETC supporter since 1999

I work with a non-profit foundation, Compassion Without Borders, that sponsors several of ETC's low-caste and minority women's groups. Wanting to know more about these groups, I arranged for a visit to ETC-Nepal when I was in Kathmandu this past summer. I met with the Director, Mira Maiya Singh Rana, the Women's Development Program Officer, Manju Singh Rana (no relation to Mira) and other ETC staff for a 90-minute briefing that left me tingling with excitement. We talked about ETC's work, and the multiple layers of oppression of low-caste women in Nepali society (gender, caste, poverty and often minority status).

We traveled to an outlying town to visit the Chun Devi Women's Group. I was deeply impressed with the women's self-confidence, their laughter, their camaraderie. Manju explained that building self-confidence was one of the main goals of the training. One woman related with joy that she had learned to write her name. The group's chair-lady, Phulmati Bisunkhe, described how, as a group, they were able to resist some of the oppression they had experienced in their community, which they could not do alone. I met Nanu, a group member who had learned to raise goats and had built a sanitary outhouse through the assistance of the group. And I met Samjhana, a warm and vivacious 15-year old, the group's youngest member.

The next day, I was greeted with a dozen bouquets of flowers when I visited Gairi Kuwa Women's Group in the outskirts of Kathmandu. Many of the women had learned floriculture in their group training, and had borrowed money from their bank to buy seeds and rent land. They earned an income by marketing their flowers in Kathmandu. I met the lovely San Nani who at 19 years of age had only one year of schooling. I was shocked. Now in her group she is learning to read and write.

Upon my return home, after hearing my glowing first-hand report of the programs, the Compassion Without Borders' Board of Directors allocated additional funds to sponsor another low-caste women's group as well as Samjhana's schooling.

Women's Group Success Stories

Gyan Maya Rajbahak, 36, is a member of Ratomate Women's Group in ETC's Ichangu Narayan program area. She took part in literacy and agricultural training projects through ETC to better provide for her husband, two daughters and son. She owns only a small plot of land, which had previously been used to grow oranges and flowers. Since the training, she has been using the techniques she learned to improve her yields.

In addition, Gyan Maya has enrolled her two daughters in ETC's Non-Formal Education program. The girls had not previously had the opportunity to attend school. After completing a nine-month accelerated course, her daughters will be able to enter Class 4 in the standard school system.

Gyan Maya Rajbahak meets with other training group members and trainers to discuss methods for flower production. She is seated fifth from the left.



...I realized after training that we could do much better if we would follow the tips and knowledge that we received from the training. ...It is obvious that we have to put in more effort than before, but there is also the possibility that we can earn more for our survival!

~Gyan Maya Rajbahak



Kamala Ramtel tends to the mushrooms she grows in her home.

Kamala Ramtel, 32, lives in ETC's Godavari program area with her husband, two daughters and son. Her husband works in a low-level government job and they own only 250 square meters of land, half of which is occupied by their dwelling.

In 2001, Kamala joined Halchowk Women's Group. She said, "After finishing the Non-Formal Education classes, I was able to read and write, which gave me greater self-confidence. In addition, I received a lot of training about group management, savings and credit mobilization, and agriculture. Small land holding is no longer a big problem for me."

As a result of this training, she has been earning an average of 150 rupees per day from her vegetable sales at the local market.

Program Highlights...



The children pictured here are participants in ETC's Community Sponsorship Program. In the past year alone, over 300 Dalit (low-caste) children have continued their studies as a result of educational and material support from ETC, and 65 students are pursuing higher education. In addition, 42 students currently receive sponsorships and are reported to be making good progress.

The students at right are sponsored by ETC's Private Sponsorship Program and study at Maitri Shishu School. Currently, there are 47 children benefiting from this program, and they are making the most of this opportunity. The young boy standing at the center is Lobsang Kunga, the youngest member of the program. He is sponsored by Joy Rushfelt.



These women are attending a Non-Formal Education class of Bojhene Women's Group in Bishankhu Narayan VDC in the Godavari program area. The main objectives of this program are to raise the number of literate women among the most disadvantaged, build confidence, provide functional education, instruction in legal rights of women, encourage the recently literate, and prepare out-of-school children to enroll in schools.

At the right, Indira Tamang displays some merchandise at her retail shop. She is a member of Pema Women's Group and is participating in an income-generating activity. ETC's income-generation component provides financial support and training to women's group members who wish to initiate potentially viable business ventures.



New Programs...

Beginning in July 2003, two new unusual and innovative programs have become part of ETC's work: the Thangmi Education Program (TEP) and the Nepal Bhotia Education Center (NBEC). We are very pleased to have these high-quality programs join ETC. Through them, little-reached populations in remote areas are gaining access to transformative educational opportunities.

The Thangmi Education Project (TEP) is a small scholarship program working with the Thangmi ethnic group in the eastern part of Sindhupalchowk District and the western part of Dolakha District in Nepal. The project reaches a population in great need.

TEP was initiated by Sara Shneiderman, a Ph.D. student in Anthropology at Cornell University, and Mark Turin, a Visiting Scholar at Cornell and Digital Himalaya Project Director.

TEP provides two types of scholarship assistance: 1) Substantial support enabling rural Thangmi children who have completed all locally available education to attend ethnic-friendly private schools in Kathmandu for 9-10th grade and seeing them through their School Leaving Certificate Exam, and 2) Small grant support enabling rural Thangmi children to attend local government schools in their home areas.

TEP selects students based on their family life and their motivation to study.



Thangmi Education Program

In its first year, TEP has selected 16 students to support with funds allotted at the small grants level. The students range in age from 6 to 20, Classes 1 to 12. In August, school supplies and uniforms were distributed to the children, and objectives of the project were discussed with committee members and the parents of all of the sponsored children.

The Nepal Bhotia Education Center (NBEC) is an integrated education project designed to include families, communities, and schools in the effort to increase the quality, relevance, and accessibility of formal schooling. Drawing upon the talents of indigenous teachers and leaders, NBEC serves the much neglected and historically excluded communities of Singha Bhotias (ethnic Tibetans) who reside in small villages along the border of Nepal and Tibet.

NBEC was initiated by current ETC board member Josh Brody and his local counterpart Chhanduk Bhotia.

Nepal Bhotia Education Center



NBEC's objectives are 1) to assist local primary schools, increase community involvement in formal education, and increase school accountability; 2) to offer adult education classes that raise parental literacy and provide families with strategies to help children succeed in school; 3) to provide non-formal education classes to out-of-school students; and 4) to train female secondary school graduates to become effective teachers and social animators. NBEC emphasizes local solutions and sustainable outcomes.

Gail Carson, sister of ETC founder Pamela Carson, recently traveled to Nepal for the first time to see the work her sister started. She was accompanied by other ETC supporters, and upon their return she shared these thoughts with us.

After a bumpy ride on the recently monsoon-gutted Kathmandu streets, we arrived at the foot of a steep hill in Kathmandu. After a short climb, we arrived at the school, where ETC board member Freema Hillman was teaching future teachers about creativity in the classroom. The idea was that there is generally too much learning by rote in Nepal. So the idea was a new one. The teachers-in-training clearly warmed up to it, as they each drew lovely original images of flowers from their imaginations, each one entirely different from the other, taking pride in their creativity.

Mira Rana, the wonderful in-country executive director of ETC, also spoke in Nepali to the students about Pamela Carson and her work in founding ETC. It was a wonderful experience going to the school and seeing that Pamela's work goes on. The student-teachers were so receptive and so warm in greeting us. It was also great that Ram's wife Niruja and her brothers got a clearer picture of what Pamela did. Ram was introduced to the students as the son of the founder. Then we were all served cold bottled sodas and water, which *one* person carried up the hill in a heavy wooden tray, proving again how kind and helpful the Nepali people are. We saw evidence of it every day of the two-week trip, along with sights of spectacular natural beauty everywhere.

Pamela's Legacy

By Gail Carson



Barbara Pease

Staff & Board News

Co-Director **Colleen Flynn Thapalia** resigned in June due to family circumstances. Colleen remains an important part of our ETC team, helping out in a variety of ways from her home in Albany, NY.

Susanna Pearce (Previously Co-Director together with Colleen) is now Executive Director. Susanna has been involved with ETC since 1992, when she first went to Nepal as an ETC volunteer. She served on ETC's Board of Directors from 1993-1998, was ETC's Interim Director for six months following Pamela's diagnosis of cancer in 1997, and has been a member of ETC's US staff since 1999. Prior to joining ETC's US staff, she worked as a Resident Coordinator in Nepal for Cornell's study abroad program. Susanna's graduate studies were in Asian Studies at Cornell University, focusing on issues of development, health and religion.

Christopher London was recently hired as part-time Assistant Director. Christopher comes to us with a Ph.D. in Development Sociology from Cornell University, and extensive field experience in Colombia. He has also worked as a program director in a Washington, D.C. NGO.

Suzanne Cullen, who has been with ETC for nine years, continues to be the third member of ETC's US staff team, serving as Financial Officer and Sponsorship Coordinator.

Nepal staff member, **Tek Narayan Shrestha**, Administrative and Procurement Assistant, recently came to the United States for a short personal visit. He generously took time away from his holidays to come to our Ithaca office and assist us.

Cornell University student workers, **Hope Barter** and **Rachel Margolis**, provide significant assistance in the office, as do our local and long-distance (internet) volunteers, many of whom come to us from Cornell, Ithaca College, and the Ithaca community.

ETC is pleased to announce the addition of two new Board members, **John Silverstone** and **Manohar Sharma**. John is a former Executive Director of World Education in Nepal, and now serves as Management Associate for Creative Associates International in Washington, DC. Manohar, a native of Nepal, joined the International Food Policy Research Institute in 1993 and currently co-heads research on rural finance and food security. He is a research fellow in the Food Consumption and Nutrition Division.



Thank You...

- ETC would like to thank **Colleen Flynn Thapalia** for her two years as Co-Director. Her expertise was a great asset and we are so thankful that she continues to assist us.
- Thank you to board member **Dan Sisler** for his generous gift of computer software to the Ithaca office to update our accounting system.
- Thank you to the **Delta Kappa Gamma Educational Foundation, Everest 96, Jack DeLoss Taylor Charitable Trust, Himalayan Explorers Connection, The Moore Charitable Foundation, Norm Thompson, Inc., Namaste Foundation, and Himalayan Fair** for their recent renewals of support to our programs.
- Thank you to **Kendal at Ithaca** for providing us with accommodations for our board meeting.
- Thank you to **Art Lustgarten** for providing us with a staffperson to assist us in switching to a new computerized accounting program.
- We would like to extend a warm thank you to **Ricky Stewart** for the many hours he spent solving our computer problems.
- Thank you to **Margaret Myers, Eric Schnell, Richard Cooper, Aaron Pines, Kiran Tewari, Elizabeth Taylor, Rebecca Greenfold, Maya Holmberg, Deepa Oja, Terry Koch, Rusty Leech, Alice Shiau, Michael Su, Bonnie Chollet, Srijana Bajracharya, and Linda Farthing** for all of their support and for the vast amount of time they have given to us recently.
- Thank you to board member **Karen Knudson**, whose contribution enabled us to participate in the Workplace Giving Campaign in the state of Virginia.
- Thank you to **Jessica Vantine** for her help to us in Nepal.
- We are very thankful to all who responded to our special summer appeal. Your support and contributions are greatly appreciated.

Looking for other ways to help?

Car Donations. V-DAC is a program that accepts car donations as an alternative way to support an organization. It establishes and supervises all processes, including maintaining a registry of non-profits and providing marketing programs. For more information, please visit www.v-dac.com. To give to ETC through this program, please go to www.v-dac.com/org/?id=16138981.



Holiday Cards. Check out our website at www.etc-nepal.org, to view some of the lovely cards handcrafted in Nepal that we are selling.

Gift List. Please take note of the updated gift list attached at the centerfold. This holiday season, choose gifts for your friends and family that give to others too!

More Ideas. Please contact our office if you would like more innovative gift ideas, or to find out about how to assist ETC in other ways.



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