



AUGUST 2009
SAUSALITO, CALIFORNIA

Dear Friends,

In my last newsletter, I wrote about two NYOF graduates who succeeded beyond all expectations – one is the head doctor of one of the biggest hospitals in Nepal, and another just received a scholarship for a graduate degree at an Ivy League university. We are proud of these exceptional young people, but we admire just as much the many students in our programs who have not achieved such heights but have been successful in their own right.

Take, for example, the girls we have liberated from bonded labor at the age of 16 or 17 and who have never been to school. It would be too uncomfortable for them to be in a class with first and second graders, so we place them in an intensive literacy course for nine months and then train them for a job – preferably one which will allow them to start a business of their own.

Early on, we created a sewing program for these older girls. The success of this program is guaranteed because they make school uniforms for the thousands of girls we have liberated and now support in school. (NYOF pays the education expenses of former bonded girls, including two sets of school uniforms a year.) So there is no shortage of work for them. Better still, many of the girls we have trained have left the program and started their own sewing businesses in nearby villages.

We have also trained formerly indentured girls to run small shops, repair bicycles, etc. Many of the girls are remarkably entrepreneurial and have started their own businesses to generate income. One successful program sponsored by NYOF is a henna-growing project. The Dang District, where thousands of the liberated girls live, is apparently ideal for growing henna, which is a profitable crop in Asia. (It is used by both men and women to give a reddish tinge to black hair and to paint designs on the hands and feet for special occasions.) Some of the liberated girls have formed a coop to grow henna, have purchased machinery to process it, and are making a profit. We plan to increase



Learning how to sew as well as
how to support herself

the number of such projects so as to enable these girls to earn a decent income working in enterprises they create for themselves.



From bonded labor to running a henna business

For several reasons, we have also decided not to send to college all the children we supported through high school, as we did when our program was much smaller. Higher education is not the same stepping stone to job opportunities in Nepal that it is in most Western countries; even people with advanced university degrees have difficulty finding work. So, we have concluded that our limited funding is sometimes better spent on providing more children with elementary and high school educations and on efforts targeted at eventual employment and self-sufficiency.

I don't know the exact unemployment rate in Nepal, but I think it hovers around 50%. Thus, for many youngsters, guidance and training in a specific career path is far more helpful than years of higher education. We offer counseling to explore their strengths and interests, and then support them in training for 20 different careers, such as electrician, lab technician, cook, or midwife. These jobs often pay better than the office jobs many college graduates hold out for.

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Changing the world...one child at a time.



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Did you ever see a better looking plumber?

very young, and his mother earned a living by operating a small tea stall at the bus park in Kathmandu. We supported the education of Bashudev and his brother. After he finished high school and passed his college entrance exams, he enrolled in our vocational program as a cook and he found employment at a fairly snazzy restaurant on the fanciest street in Kathmandu. He was such a good worker that after only a month on the job he got a raise. He has enrolled in college in the morning and then goes to work on the day and evening shift. (The government college in Kathmandu starts classes at 6 a.m. to accommodate working students.) Not only that, he is now able to support his mother.

As always, we are deeply grateful to you for standing with us. Please give as generously as you can, so that we can continue to help kids in Nepal to uncover and develop their full potential. We have a proven track record in making the most of your donations – you can do more good with a dollar in Nepal than almost anywhere else, and we spend a very small percentage of donations on administration (as evidenced by our four-star rating from Charity Navigator). We hope you will help us in our efforts to make a difference in these children's lives.

Our vocational programs actively encourage women to pursue careers that in Nepal are traditionally restricted to men. At a technical training school in Kathmandu, NYOF sponsors the only female in the plumbing course. Once she's employed as a plumber, she hopes to serve as an example to others that women should not feel that certain careers are off-limits.

The vocational training staff makes an effort to maintain personal relationships with students in the training programs. Many of them are orphans or have no family support – an important advantage in getting a job in Nepal. We teach them general life skills such as compromise and negotiation, as well as specific skills to help them search for employment. After the training is completed, staff members guide them through the process of searching for jobs – which can be extremely daunting given the high unemployment rate – and facilitate interviews with potential employers.

One of the things we have to overcome in our efforts to help young people become self-sufficient is a cultural bias against working with one's hands. Some college graduates would rather work for a lower wage in an office than as an electrician or a carpenter. When this issue arises, I give our kids the "old codger" treatment. I tell them that I worked my way through college and law school, sometimes as a waitress, and am none the worse for it.

In fact, a number of our vocational trainees who have found decent paying jobs are attending college on their own nickel. One of these is Bashudev Basnet. His father died when he was



Bashudev and his friends in action

Warm regards,

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