

## Education Creates Personal Opportunities— and Improves Conditions for Entire Communities!



On May 26<sup>th</sup>, 2022, the third Olgapuri Vocational School (OVS) Industrial Tailoring class celebrated their graduation in a special certification ceremony. During this course, these young women—most of them former *kamlaris*—learned the technical skills necessary to either join clothing manufacturing teams in Kathmandu or establish their own small clothing businesses. The certifications received during this program are endorsed by Nepal’s Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training, meaning the curriculum meets high standards for skills training nationwide. Immediately following the program, graduates are employed at a nearly 100% rate, making a starting salary over twice Nepal’s minimum wage—with room to grow!

One of NYF’s most cherished stories is of our founder’s original promise for the children of Nepal, made in a tent one night in the Himalayas.

While on a Himalayan trek in 1984, nearly-60 Olga Murray passed through multiple small villages and quickly fell in love with the joyful, playful, curious children she met. With her guide acting as translator, she learned that the dearest wish of these children was to attend school someday—a wish that seemed very, very distant.

One night, laying in her sleeping bag, Olga realized all at once that she wanted to make this wish come true—and that she could devote the remainder of her life to this work. She made a promise then and there that somehow, she would do just that.

**Nepal Youth Foundation began as an education-focused organization.** To this day, **Education** is at the heart of all our programs, whether it’s hands-on nutritional training for young parents in our **Health** programs, a focus on educational access in our **Shelter** programs, or the emphasis on academic and skills-training opportunities in our **Freedom** programs. **Education is the pathway to sustainable impact!**

This report focuses on NYF's scholarship programs for all ages and vocational education options for young adults—by far our largest set of programs! **NYF is one of Nepal's largest non-governmental scholarship providers.** We offer academic support to children in grades K-12, college, medical and law school, graduate school, and in technical school programs.

We also conduct our own nationally respected vocational skills certification courses in some of Nepal's fastest-growing industries, as well as entrepreneurship training and start-up support for several small business options.

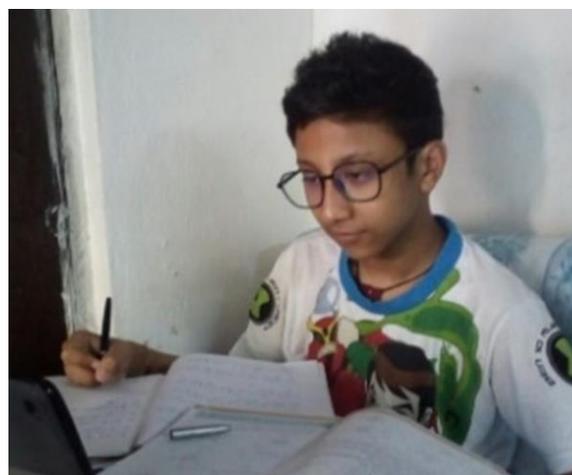
Scholarship support is designed to guide students towards self-reliance and competitiveness in Nepal's job market—no matter which career path they choose. As always, these opportunities go to students facing obstacles including casteism, sexism, financial hardship, discrimination based on disability, and more.

The over 12,000 students we have supported so far are Nepal's future teachers, doctors, NGO leaders, architects, designers, small-business owners, government officials, and more.

During the 2021-2022 school year, **741 students**<sup>†</sup> (341 male and 400 female) **received academic scholarships** from NYF, from kindergarten through post-graduate programs.

And during this same period, **955 young adults** (482 men and 473 women) **received vocational training or technical education support.**

*Thank you* for supporting Nepal's children and young adults as they pursue their education, building towards personal growth, financial sustainability, and the opportunities of their dreams!



Fourteen-year-old Balram\* spent the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic attending his classes online by signing in on his mother's very worn mobile phone. Meanwhile, his family members scrambled to identify daily labor job opportunities during lockdowns as their limited savings quickly dwindled.

By late 2020, Balram's mother could no longer afford his school fees—and they were falling behind in other areas, too.

Then, one day, the worn-out mobile phone just wouldn't turn on anymore. Without any way to replace it—and without other access online classes—Balram was faced with the prospect of dropping out of school to help his family with daily labor work instead.

NYF's social worker Reeta Mahat learned about the family's situation when Balram's mother shared her heartache at a local event for families experiencing hardship during the pandemic. Reeta sprang into action, helping the family sign Balram up for a **Day School Scholarship** in July 2021.

The scholarship helped Balram get caught up on his school fees and also supported the purchase of a small tablet for attending online classes. He's been back in school ever since, whether in lockdown or in person, and his scores are strong!

<sup>†</sup> This includes 204 Kinship Care students, whose stipends include a Day School Scholarship. These students are discussed in the Shelter report.

## K-12 Scholarships

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In Nepal, public school is free from kindergarten through 10<sup>th</sup> grade—but unfortunately, many students throughout the country are still at high risk of dropping out early or finding themselves unable to access the resources necessary to participate.

NYF has worked to develop targeted scholarships in response to the different circumstances that challenge Nepali students. **This year, the pass rate for our K-9 students was 98%, and the pass rate for 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders was over 90%**—a remarkable achievement for a group of smart, creative, hard-working students who might otherwise have been left behind. We celebrated **34 high school graduations**, and **46 students sat for the challenging Iron Gate exam** (the Secondary Education Exam or SEE) at the end of 10<sup>th</sup> grade. Across Nepal, this exam has an annual average pass rate of only 50%. **We're so proud that this year all 46 of our SEE candidates passed and moved forward to 11<sup>th</sup> grade!**

**Day School Scholarships** are awarded to students K-12 whose families are unable to afford the expenses associated with school attendance, like notebooks, uniforms, and kerosene for doing homework after dark. This year, **175 students received Day School Scholarships**.

**Boarding School Scholarships** are for those who need total support for education, housing, and other expenses. In most cases, these needs arise when an older child—usually high-school aged—experiences a hardship that leaves them without parents or a stable home. For these students, boarding school is a less disruptive option than late entrance into a children's home might be. This allows the student to maintain a sense of normality alongside friends and peers whose guardians have decided to scaffold the transition towards adulthood in this way. **NYF provided 17 students with Boarding School Scholarships this year.**



Brothers Ram\* (15, left) and Niraj\* (17, right) grew up in an orphanage. This year, their orphanage shut down, and Ram and Niraj—along with six of their friends—needed a safe new home.

These eight children were referred to NYF—and we've made sure they are all safe, healthy, and in school. Because Ram and Niraj are almost grown, they are both receiving **Boarding School Scholarships**. Both are studying in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade and living in a private space where they have the adult supervision and regular care they need, but without the stress of entering a new full-service environment so late in their childhoods.

Of the eight children from the closed orphanage, six have received Boarding School Scholarships (they're attending the same school and living near each other). The youngest two have been welcomed at **Olgapuri Children's Village**.

**Scholarships for Students with Disabilities**—those with deafness or blindness, chronic health problems, mobility challenges, or other physical limitations—face particularly strong systemic barriers in Nepal's society. NYF's scholarships for these students include personalized help from our social workers, who provide advocacy with schools as needed and assistance with identifying and obtaining accommodations for each student's particular needs. **This year, 64 of our academic scholarships fell into this category, including 51 grade-school kids and 15 college students.**



Durgesh\*, 18, comes from a very remote Himalayan village in northwestern Nepal, where the geography is quite rocky and challenging to navigate. The children in his home village walk about 45 minutes to reach their local school—and the path is treacherous, with slippery sections, sharp drop-offs, and thin stretches that must be taken single-file.

Durgesh was born with a significant visual impairment, and his parents realized early that many livelihood opportunities available in their village would not be a good match for him when he became an adult. The family was far from wealthy, but they worked hard and made personal sacrifices from the beginning to ensure he could access as many educational opportunities as possible.

When Durgesh was a small child, older village children would take turns carrying him on their backs on the way to school. This ensured that he could reach school safely, and he quickly distinguished himself as an excellent student (and a helpful friend who could provide informal tutoring to his peers when needed!).

But by the time he reached his mid-teens, Durgesh had grown too big to be carried along the dangerous trail by his friends, and careful attempts at having him walk side-by-side with friends were too slow, and too risky. That's when a family friend who was already attending college in Kathmandu made a brilliant offer: Durgesh should move to Kathmandu, where schools were easier to access (and of a better quality!). This friend would share his apartment and ensure Durgesh was doing well in the city. Durgesh's parents would send money for food, rent, and other necessities.

This plan worked—until the COVID-19 pandemic complicated matters. Durgesh's parents were unable to send as much money as needed. School fees were free for Durgesh (as a student with a disability), but he was struggling to pay his portion of the rent and for the special books and stationery he needed for school.

Fortunately, NYF had worked with Durgesh's school in the past, and the administration remembered that NYF offered special scholarships for students like Durgesh. He was referred for our **Students with Disabilities** scholarship in January 2021 and has been going strong in school ever since!

Durgesh was one of the top 5 students in his grade 11 final exam a year ago, and he has recently completed his rigorous grade 12 exam. His studies during 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade focused on Humanities, and Durgesh is excited about the prospect of college. We're excited for him, too, and we are eager to support him in the next chapter of his academic journey!

## College Scholarships & Beyond

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NYF strongly encourages college for most students, as these paths often unlock the best routes to personal economic freedom and flexibility in Nepal.

These scholarships are available for students in college, graduate school, medical and law school, and other higher-education programs. Students receiving these scholarships have almost all already earned full-ride academic support from the Nepali government, a feat achieved by only the highest scorers on competitive entrance

exams. **The problem is that they are unable to accept these scholarships due to expenses like rent, school supplies, lab fees, transportation, tutors, and meals!**

Each of these students has achieved so much to reach this point, against tremendous odds. **We are so grateful for the generous support that allows us to help these scholars bridge this final gap between themselves and the college education they've worked so hard for.**

**NYF College Scholarships** provide these deeply motivated students with quarterly stipends for their living expenses, allowing them to accept the government scholarships they have earned and to focus on their studies. **This year, 281 students received College Scholarships. Five students graduated from master's programs and 75 graduated from bachelor's programs.**

After graduation, financial support from NYF ends to encourage each student to enter the workforce as soon as possible. Our **Vocational Education & Career Counseling** program supports these graduates in their job searches, and help is available in areas like resumé writing, interviewing practice, and other career-related tasks.



Asha, 23, has always had a remarkable knack for building things—and a unique fascination with solving problems on a large, practical scale. She always dreamed of a career in Engineering.

Born in Rautahat District in Nepal's plains region, Asha was raised by a family that had to think and work creatively to get by. From the time Asha was young, her father has used a wheelchair, and her mother dropped out of school very early. Finding regular work was always a challenge. But Asha's education was incredibly important to her parents, and against staggering odds, Asha's strong academic performance carried her all the way to the School of Engineering at Kathmandu University. She immediately began setting herself apart as a devoted, focused student.

Unfortunately, partway through her first year at university, it became clear that even with a government scholarship, the costs associated with attending college in Kathmandu were too much for her family's hard-won budget. Losing this opportunity, when she had come so close to her dream, would break her family's hearts—as well as her own.

NYF learned of her situation in 2019 and quickly stepped in with a **College Scholarship**. Throughout the ups and downs of the COVID-19 pandemic and through every challenge of university life, Asha has performed with remarkable strength, resilience, and leadership.

In spring 2022, Asha completed her bachelor's degree in Mechanical Engineering with a focus on energy technology. Right away, she started a job as a team leader at a Kathmandu construction and power company, leading a team of six! Her current plan is to work for a few years, then become a trainer in energy technology—and then pursue a graduate degree in the same field. Asha is greatly thankful to NYF for helping her reach her dream. We are so proud of her achievements!

## Vocational Education & Career Counseling

Academic achievement is not the only path to financial freedom, and NYF is eager to ensure opportunities for as many young people as possible.

Youth underemployment in Nepal stands at a staggering 35%. NYF's **Vocational Education & Career Counseling (VECC)** team helps link motivated young adults with the holistic resources and training they need to start lucrative careers in Nepal's growing economy—starting each on his or her pathway to an empowered future.

The VECC program provides services including vocational training scholarships, job placement support, entrepreneurship classes, start-up microgrants, resumé-writing support, job interviewing practice, life skills workshops, basic computer training, and connections to other young adults on similar paths towards personal economic empowerment.

This team also coordinates the vocational education training and certification courses offered through NYF's **Olgapuri Vocational School**, helping students seize career opportunities in Nepal's growth sectors.

During this reporting period, the VECC provided services to **955 young people** (473 women and 482 men).

**Seventy-six of these young adults (43 women and 33 men) received Technical School Scholarships** for programs including nursing, engineering, agriculture, lab sciences, and hotel management. These programs last between 18 months and 3 years. **Thirty-one of these students graduated this year!**

The remaining 879 VECC students received vocational training in one of nine trades: electrical, plumbing, welding, carpentry, industrial tailoring, greenhouse farming, mushroom farming, vegetable farming, and tea and snacks shop entrepreneurship.



Nineteen-year-old Pramila's education ended when she couldn't pass the notorious Secondary Education Exam at the end of 10<sup>th</sup> grade. She thought about seeking work in Kathmandu—but then the COVID-19 pandemic hit, and she spent lockdown in her parents' home, helping tend their small farm.

Pramila joined a local women's group called the **Freed Kamlari Development Forum (FKDF)**. This empowerment organization was founded with support from NYF and is led by former *kamlari* women. Pramila was very interested in the advice FKDF leaders offered for young women, especially about personal financial freedom, wise money management, and entrepreneurship.

When Pramila learned about NYF's **Tea & Snacks Shop entrepreneurship training program** (which prepares women to run pop-up roadside food stalls, including start-up support), she was very interested! She liked the idea of running her own small business, keeping her preferred hours, and having the flexibility to experiment with locations and recipes. She was encouraged by success stories from other women who had used their Tea & Snacks Shop earnings to invest in things like school for their children, replacing outhouses with flush-toilets, buying land outright, and more.

Pramila completed the training in spring 2022 and started working right away. She's already identified some great spots where customers come for lunch—and she's saving most of her earnings, using some money here and there to repair her parents' home.

## Olgapuri Vocational School

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Though Nepal's economic growth and development relies on skilled work like plumbing and construction, quality training programs are rare. Without trained Nepali technicians available to perform this work, contractors instead hire workers from abroad—and the wages paid to these foreign artisans pours out of Nepal's economy.

Nepal is building up its infrastructure—roads, electrical grids, internet, running water in rural homes, earthquake-safe housing, and more—and Nepal's young people are eager to participate in creating this bright future. These careers are in high demand, are well-paid, and are a source of great pride for individuals, families, and communities. For many young people, the only thing standing between themselves and a lucrative new career is a lack of the necessary skills—and no way to acquire them.



Ashok, 20, comes from Dolakha District, a rugged Himalayan district against the border with China. His family of five depended on subsistence farming for their livelihood—an extremely tough lifestyle in the mountains.

In 2015, when Ashok was 13, the family's home was destroyed by the 7.8 magnitude Gorkha earthquake. Thankfully, everyone was outside working when the earthquake hit, so no family members were hurt in the collapse.

Unfortunately, the loss of the family home set them back financially and Ashok had to start helping his parents with the farming much more than he had in the past. This made attending school impossible, and Ashok dropped out of school without completing the 9<sup>th</sup> grade.

Ashok is a smart, fastidious young man with strong attention to detail. He knew he could provide much more for his family than farming allowed, and he dreamed of living somewhere outside of his tiny village. But without access to training or apprenticeship opportunities, and no money for traveling to a vocational school, he wasn't sure how to kickstart a new career.

In early 2022, Ashok attended a career orientation presentation being offered by NYF in a nearby village. Curious, he listened to members of NYF's **Vocational Education & Career Counseling** team describe the various skills trainings being offered at **Olgapuri Vocational School**. He was shocked to hear that the program was free for eligible young adults—including travel to and from Kathmandu and room and board during the three-month course! He signed up right away and was placed in the March 2022 session.

From the first day, Ashok distinguished himself with his hard work and focus on learning this trade. After receiving his certification three months later, he was placed in a paid apprenticeship at a large furniture house in Kathmandu. His performance there was so impressive that the employer offered him a full-time job in June. The position even comes with employer-sponsored accommodations as a benefit! Ashok is making around \$225 per month—nearly twice Nepal's minimum wage—and he's sending much of it home to support his family. He has also opened a savings account.

Even though he's living and working in Kathmandu, away from his family's village, he can visit them without much trouble. And with his highly valued skills, he could shift jobs at will without ever leaving Nepal. Ashok considers this NYF training to be the most important milestone of his career to date!

**Note:** Did you know that the stadiums used during World Cup Qatar 2022 in November-December 2022 were built by migrant laborers, many of whom were Nepali?

The World Cup provided a moment during which much of the world was aware of the plight of Nepali young people who travel abroad to work these intensely difficult jobs, often in terrible conditions. To read more about how this issue intersects with our Vocational Education programs, visit our blog at: <https://www.nepalyouthfoundation.org/world-cup-qatar-2022/>

Olgapuri Vocational School (OVS) provides three-month training courses in high-demand infrastructure-related trades including **electrical, plumbing, welding, and carpentry**. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we added the **SAAET Project** for women, a greenhouse-based agricultural program, and most recently, we have launched a six-month **Industrial Tailoring** course, also for women (the SAAET Project and Industrial Tailoring course are discussed in depth in the Freedom report!).

Some OVS courses are conducted in our specialized workshops on Olgapuri campus in Kathmandu Valley, while other sessions are conducted in a village-based “satellite” format pioneered during the COVID pandemic. The course is identical in each format.

During this year, NYF conducted **22 OVS courses—4 on-campus courses and 18 satellite sessions!** Satellite sessions have been incredibly popular, and many municipalities have contacted NYF requesting construction trainings in their communities. This is because **community-based trainings have resulted in swift local infrastructure development**, as community members who have long wanted or needed upgrades and repairs to their homes are suddenly able to hire local young people to complete the work.

A total of **441 young adults** received construction training during this reporting period, mostly in the satellite format.

OVS also provided Industrial Tailoring training to **100 young women**, mushroom farming training to **50 women**, and Tea & Snacks Shop Entrepreneurship training to



Chandra\*, a plumbing student, works on installing an outdoor sink at a village multipurpose building as part of his OVS training. OVS plumbing students learn multiple plumbing techniques for the water infrastructure situations they may encounter in their careers. Chandra’s installation here is a gravity-based model—a tank on the building’s roof collects rainwater, and the water pressure at this sink comes from gravity. This kind of plumbing configuration allows for running water (and better sanitation!) in rural areas where municipal water supplies and water treatment facilities do not yet exist.

By the end of the training, Chandra will also be prepared to install and repair plumbing fixtures connected to government-run waterworks—and even to assist in the expansion of this important infrastructure!

In Nepal, both approaches to plumbing are crucial to improving community sanitation and health. Chandra is very excited to bring these upgrades in his home region.

**209 women.** The SAAET Project provided greenhouse vegetable production training and start-up support to **79 trainees (67 women and 12 men).**

Each course combines theoretical lectures, discussions, practical demonstration, observation, guided exercises, and supervised practical applications. Trainees are also given health and safety guidance and entrepreneurship development training (including cost estimation, customer communication, and basic repair and maintenance of tools and equipment).

Our certifications are recognized, honored, and respected by contractors and employers throughout the country—and employers who have hired our graduates routinely report that their work is of excellent quality.

Once they've been placed in their first jobs, graduates rarely need help to sustain their momentum. Many individuals move into stable careers with construction firms, working their way up. Others remain on family farms, using their new skills as a lucrative side business. Some open local small businesses and begin hiring other young people as requests for work come in. Others use their new skills to finance their college studies and launch careers in new sectors.

## **Education-Focus Staff**

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NYF's Education programs are led and implemented by passionate teams who are devoted to ensuring excellent educational opportunities for students across Nepal. Some, like **Education & Youth Empowerment Coordinator Umesh Regmi**, spent years in academia before joining NYF, and are still active in pushing for education reform nationwide. Others, like **Day School & Students with Disabilities Officer Reeta Mahat**, experienced the challenges of limited education access in their own lives, and are determined to help young people overcome these obstacles.



**Academic Education Team, 2021.** *Left to right:* Umesh Raj Regmi (Program Coordinator of Education & Youth Empowerment), Ram Babu Rai, (Kinship Care Program Officer), Jitendra Thapa (Assistant Manager / College Scholarships), Reeta Mahat (Program Officer for Day School Scholarships & Scholarships for Students with Disabilities)



**Vocational Education & Career Counseling Team, 2021.** *Left to right:* Arjun Pandey (Assistant Manager - Program & Administration), Umesh Raj Regmi (Program Coordinator of Education & Youth Empowerment), Laxmi Ghimire (Career Counselor & Placement Manager), Madan Khadka (Manager- Program & Administration)

Many of our Education staff members spend a great deal of time traveling to check in on scholarship recipients or to make Career Orientation presentations—often to groups of hundreds of young people for whom a lucrative career seems like an unattainable opportunity.

**VECC Career Counselor & Placement Manager Laxmi Ghimire** (*above, in blue*) describes the satisfaction of watching faces change as she presents the programs offered through Olgapuri Vocational School. Individuals who arrive at these presentations looking discouraged and low begin to perk up throughout the crowd, realizing that they really *could* turn this opportunity into something transformational in their own lives. Watching them do just that over the course of several months is an exhilarating feeling—and one Laxmi is eager to share with others.



**Olgapuri Vocational School Team, 2021.**

*Top row, left to right:* Sailesh Khatri (Plumbing Instructor), Ram Kumar Raut (Account Officer), Man Bahadur Chhetri (Program Coordinator), Rajan Basnet (Welding Instructor), Sugarib Tamang (Carpentry Instructor), Nir Dhoj Khadka (Plumbing Instructor), Buddha Ghale (Carpentry Instructor), Yogendra Shrestha (Welding Instructor)

*Bottom row, left to right:* Anju Thapa Magar (Industrial Tailoring Instructor), Mina Tharu (Industrial Tailoring Instructor), Mandira Bhandari (Electrical Instructor), Maiya Rokaya (Office Administration)

Our OVS instructors are all experts in their fields, and each is incredibly enthusiastic to be sharing their skills with young adults—whether they’re teaching on Olgapuri campus or spending the 3-month course living on-site in a rural village. These men and women all know what a tremendous difference these opportunities make in the lives of each young person.

And they also know the incredible impact a growing skilled workforce will make on Nepal’s economic development—on the community level and for the whole nation.

We are so grateful to each of the loving, dedicated professionals we have working on our team. **Their commitment to each and every student in NYF’s care**—often including coordinating personalized action plans to assist in overcoming unique personal obstacles—**is a true marvel.**

### ***Dhanyabad!***

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**Thank you for the generous gifts you have made in support of this crucial work.**

A quality, empowering education is central to everyone’s journey towards self-sufficiency, personal power, and a joyful, fulfilling life. Whether a highly academic pursuit, mastery of a technical skill, or something in between, each educational opportunity provides the building blocks for a better future.

The stories shared here are only a few of the hundreds our donors have supported this year. **We are grateful for each loving gift—and our students are grateful as well.**

We look forward to sharing more stories just like these in the years to come!



Nepali medical students typically complete a “community posting” internship towards the end of their school experience. During this posting, they provide medical services at small clinics in rural communities. For many more affluent students, these postings can be incredibly eye-opening, as they see first-hand the conditions being faced by Nepalis in hard-to-access areas of the country.

**Medical School Scholarship** recipient Kuldeep\* grew up in a rural region, but he still learned a great deal about community health issues during his posting. He is eager to begin his career very soon. He wants his work to help improve healthcare throughout Nepal, and he’s very grateful for the opportunity NYF has provided!