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**MITRATAA**  
FOUNDATION

**ANNUAL  
REPORT  
OUR IMPACT**

**2017 - 2018**

# Mitrataa Foundation

Annual Review – Our impact 2017-18

## Note from Bec and Nimu

Putting together these reports always gives us a big smile. It's nice to think back over the stories and experiences of the year which give us hope and reasons to keep dreaming.

One of our favourite outcomes of Mitrataa's work is the networks that result – watching the children and their families support each other and pay forward the skills they have learned is a strong message that we are on the right track with our programs, values and vision. Of course, there are challenges and we have learned some tough lessons along the way, particularly in terms of sustainability of programs, but the opportunity to reflect and grow from these experiences gives us energy and hope to continue.

Thank you again to all of our donors and supporters for the privilege of delivering your love to the women and children of Nepal. It is a privilege to be the bridge and to experience the magic which results first hand. We couldn't do it without you.

Keep believing, keep dreaming and keep working hard always.

With gratitude



**Bec Ordish**  
Executive Director



**Nimu Sherpa-Ordish**  
Country Director



## Our Team

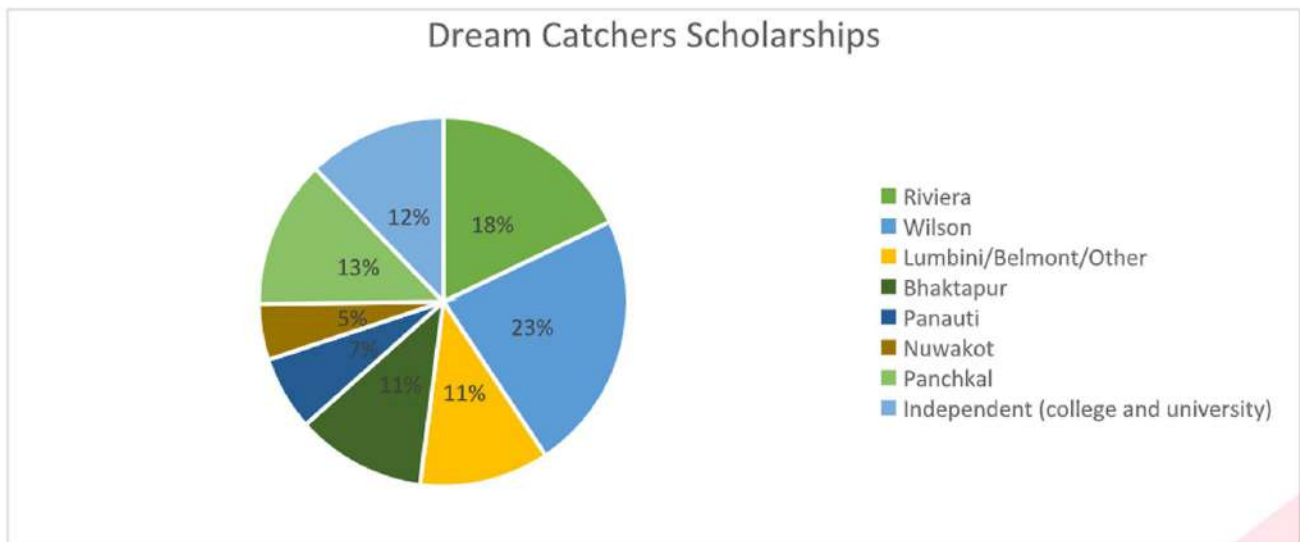
One thing the team could never say about their jobs is that it's boring. They never know from day to day what challenges, adventures, excitement and learning awaits. They need to be flexible, patient, passionate life-long learners to handle their jobs. We couldn't do anything without out them.

- ★ Saraswoti Thapaliya - President, Dream Speakers (our local NGO partner)
  - 👉 Team Leader - Nuwakot, Dream Catchers Independent Scholarships, Kindergartens
- ★ Nirmala Shahi - Team Leader – Panchkal, Bhaktapur and Riviera
- ★ Bandana Sen - Assistant Accountant, Team Leader – Wilson and Lumbini
- ★ Sapana Thapa - Team Leader – Panauti
- ★ Sarita Gurung - Team Leader – Special Projects, Junkiri Award, Belmont
- ★ Pushpa Shrestha – Senior Tuition Teacher and Hostel-in-Charge
- ★ Keshav Karki – Team Leader – Roshani's Award
- ★ Krishmita Basnet – Junior Project Leader – Riviera
- ★ Kanchan Gwaccha – Junior Project Leader – Bhaktapur
- ★ Archana Bolakhe – Junior Project Leader – Panchkal



## 1. Dream Catchers Scholarships

Offering an opportunity for an education is one of the best initial ways to give children, especially girls, a chance to achieve their dreams and therefore our Dream Catchers Scholarship Program remains one of our cornerstone projects. Although our focus is on educating girls and women, we have inherited a couple of brothers and other young men along the way.



Our 13 class 10 SEE (final school exams) graduates all performed well and it was great to see all their hard work and commitment paying off. We had 4 A+, 6A and 3 B+ results. Pujan deserves special mention for topping his school in his SEE exams. We continued to support 7 of the students into college:

- Kusum is studying law at Riviera
- Ashmita H is studying law at Xavier International
- Pujan is studying computer science in Gyan Kunj College
- Rajesh is studying tourism at Baluwatar Model College
- Alina is studying science at Khwopa College
- Sandhya is studying management at New Millennium College
- Ashmita L is studying humanities at Saraswoti Shikshya Griya

Although academic achievement is only one of the elements which our Dream Catchers focus on as part of their holistic education, we are always excited when they achieve their goals. Recognising the 25 students who finished in the top 3 students in their class last session was a great reason to celebrate and to network with other Mitrataa students. We are especially proud of Ashmita and Kalbahadur who continue to top their college in their Diplomas of Engineering. They are both incredibly dedicated, passionate students.

Our monthly meetings continue to enable the students to develop their networking, presentation, solution finding skills with themes such as stress management, social entrepreneurship and family pressure. We conducted a number of art therapy workshops for the students this year too on cheating in exams and stress management. The families continue to benefit from the cheer squad support and opportunity to share their challenges with each other to find solutions.



A part of our role is to help prepare the students to work when they graduate. We organised a 3 month internship for Samjhana at Kirtipur Hospital in the burns unit so that she could get some experience before starting her Bachelor of Science (Health Assistant) and Salu spent 3 months working at the Gratitude Café and Matan Chhen Guest House in Panauti in preparation for starting her Bachelor of Hotel Management. After a gap year working for Mitrataa, Sapana started her Bachelor of Social Work and is on her way to achieving her dreams of being a passionate social worker.

Leadership skills are so important for young people, especially in Nepal where there is so much change happening. When Enisha was voted to be school captain at Riviera this year, her leadership skills were taken to a whole new level.



As usual, many of the children showed off their talents at the annual Parents' Days at their schools. A special mention to Reshma who performed as Lord Shiva in a dance at the Riviera Parents' Day and had the audience mesmerised. A privilege to watch.



## 2. Partnerships - Charles Sturt University, Australia

We continued our partnership with Charles Sturt University Australia for the sixth year with another group of Faculty of Education students coming to get some practical teaching experience at Riviera. The students taught subjects ranging from maths and science to English and social studies. There is something quite confronting for them about having to face a class of 30 students for whom English is a second language and have to teach them with no resources other than a white board, a text book and themselves. All of the students go away more confident in themselves and their ability to handle what any class of students challenge them with!

We also ran a second trip with students from the faculties of business and psychology who came for 14 days of entrepreneurial immersion. They met with government officials, cooperatives, entrepreneurs, microentrepreneurs and worked through workshops on social enterprises and the role of business and entrepreneurs in development with school and university students. This was a very successful pilot trip with a lot of fascinating conversations and interactions. We hope to continue these trips next year.

Having CSU groups here each year is a great opportunity for all of us. They are programs which sum up our core value of mutuality program, allowing everyone to learn and share and be inspired by each other.



## 2. Positive education and community programs

### ● Teacher Training

In exchange for reduced fees so we can keep more students in good quality schools, we offer training to our partner schools' teachers and students. We often conduct wellness and stress management training for class 9 and 10 students to give them the tools to manage the stress of the SEE (final class 10) exams. We also conducted one day of training at Genuine School, our partner school in Bhaktapur, training 50 teachers on how, as teachers, we can be a champion for each of our students, supporting them, encouraging them and nurturing them. We also learned about the power of the growth mindset (as opposed to the fixed mindset) and ways we can utilise this in our classrooms. Our partner schools then pay forward the skills by hosting our village partner teachers to train them.





### ● English for Life in village schools – Nuwakot

Santoshi continued to work with classes 4 and 5 of our partner community school in Nuwakot on our English for Life program, developing the confidence of the students to communicate in English. The students loved their outings to practise their English in context. This program has been very successful in preparing the students to transition to English school when they finish class 5 (the last class at this school).



### ● Early Childhood Learning Support – Panauti and Nuwakot

We established a Kindergarten and Nutrition Centre in our partner community schools in Panauti and in Nuwakot to support the toddlers in the community to get a great start to their education journeys. The teachers of both kindergartens spent a month training in Kathmandu in one of our partner schools. The kindergartens aim to give the children skills and confidence at an early age to help them later in their education process while building the confidence of the local communities in their local schools so that they do not need to send their children to more expensive English language schools.

The centres also provide lunches to the students to ensure they are getting some strong nutrition. We work with the families to educate the parents on nutritional requirements for children and on positive discipline processes. The families contribute to the lunches program as we work towards sustainability by providing lentils and vegetables.





#### 4. Community farming / Sustainability / Businesses

- Panchkal – permaculture and organic farming

Our organic farming cooperative has continued to grow with 8 new families joining the cooperative, funded by the existing members. The leader of the cooperative, Krishna, has continued working hard towards his dream of converting Anaikot to a completely organic village. The farmers have had successful crops of cauliflower, beans, cucumbers, coriander, tomatoes with some fruit trees coming along, sharing ideas and experiences of what has been working and how to overcome any challenges that arise.





## ● Business development opportunities for our families

We are always keen for our families to become independent and so if they develop a sound business plan (sometimes with our support, other times on their own initiative), we do our best to help them get the skills and capital to start the businesses. We have had several families do that this year including:

Mushroom farming – One of our Wilson fathers attended some organic farming training as part of our sustainable farming program. He was inspired to start an organic mushroom farm which has been going from strength to strength with now 19 huts.

Bhaktapur women's group – Our Bhaktapur women have a lot of energy and a heap of skills but were not sure how to commercialise them. We have been working with them to build on their skills and prepare them to start businesses together. The women made the play outfits for our Nuwakot and Panauti kindergartens. The added benefit has been the support network that the business has created, allowing them to shift their focus from family challenges to building a future for themselves and their families.





## 5. Passion Box

Every child has a gift to offer the world. Our job – our privilege – is to help them identify this gift and give them the skills, support and opportunities to set it free. Focusing on our strengths and passions also gives us the tools to cope with challenging times, as well as perseverance and hard work.

We call it our Passion Box. Once a child has identified their strength or passion, we work with them to develop this gift, always scouting for interesting opportunities for the students. Working with the kids to find their special gift and watching them soar is one of our favourite parts of our jobs! We have so many amazingly talented kids in the Mitrataa family!

Some of the students who dipped into our Passion Box this year include:

- Kanchan had her poem published in Republica newspaper;
- Jyoti and Sudeep had b-boying dance classes (and Jyoti held a dance competition as part of her Junkiri Award while Sudeep performed at half time in the school basketball competition);
- Sapana and Dikshya also had dance classes;
- Our debate team continued to participate in competitions and hone their skills with our coach, Shreya;
- The boys at Wilson continued to win championship after championship in their basketball.



## 6. Financial Literacy

Financial literacy is one of the greatest challenges facing Nepalis. At its core is a strong fear of numbers learned and taught over generations in school. We want to demystify maths and numbers and make them accessible to the kids and women we work with, to empower them to make great, informed and confident financial decisions in their future.

We collected story books and novels in Australia involving numbers and maths after requesting recommendations from various teachers, librarians and parents throughout our Mitrataa community.

We have also been working with some of our younger kids using coins for counting and maths related games which they love. Rojina has been struggling with maths and was bored with it. She is now feeling much more engaged and has mastered the art of addition using the coins!

Our hostel students also learn the art of budgeting by managing their own budget, each student taking a turn to manage the budget for the month for all food and incidentals of students living in the hostel. It's a great way for them to get real experience of managing money!





## 7. Roshani's Award

The first recipient of the Roshani's Award, Tulasha, returned to her village after 2 years with Mitrataa, with some skills to hopefully enable her to take care of herself in future.

Our next recipient is Rojina. Rojina Shrestha had joined us with her brother, Ashalal, and sister, Sujina, in 2014 after their mother had abandoned them and their alcoholic father was unable to care for them. She was about 4 years old at the time. We put the 3 children into school and Ashalal and Sujina thrived but Rojina really struggled. We tried changing her school, organised extra support for her but finally we realised that she was dyslexic and on the autism spectrum and so traditional school in Nepal was not the answer for her. We home schooled her for a few months in 2017 but this also wasn't a sustainable answer for her as she needed the socialisation skills. We enrolled her in dance classes which she absolutely adores and which have built her confidence significantly. We have also now enrolled her in a school for students with special needs and she is thriving. She has overcome her fear of school and is doing really well.



## 8. Heart of Mitrataa – Our hostel

Our hostel continues to be the heart of Mitrataa in so many ways. It provides a safe place for the team to support the families and students and to keep all our files. It is home to a number of college students and this year some school students also began living there, including Rojina and our youngest student, Deepu. In holidays the number swells when some of our hostel students come to stay. We have hosted various family members and village students who need to spend time in Kathmandu for either medical reasons or counselling. There is something magic about the energy created and the unconditional support that everyone offers to whoever enters the gate. It's like a giant hug!

## 9. Earthquake – Third year anniversary

To commemorate the third anniversary of the devastating earthquakes, we decided to do something different. We headed to Anai Kot, Panchkal where we invited some very special people to join us for a very special day. We met the village of Anai Kot after the earthquakes and now support 15 students from there and have several other successful projects with this village including our farming cooperative. We invited the children and their families, as well as 25 of our kids from Kathmandu who were with us during the worst of the aftermath of the quakes.

With a crowd of almost 100, we held a minute's silence at 11.56am to remember the thousands who lost their lives and the devastation which occurred 3 years before. But we also wanted to do something different - to turn 25th April into a day for celebrating connections and new beginnings.

We set the kids on a treasure hunt to take a collection of very interesting photos ranging from something surviving from the quakes, a biogas plant, something which inspires hope, a photo of 3 generations of women together, a Nepali flag made from local items, the word 'smile' using their bodies, a Mitrataa student's family member making a funny pose in their fields and convincing a man to dress in a sari and milk a cow. We laughed, bonded, shared stories, hugged, remembered and celebrated our connections.

There were speeches from the Panchkal team members:

- Krishna spoke about the success of the organic farming project and his vision for making Anai Kot an organic village;



- Krishna spoke about the success of the organic farming project and his vision for making Anaikot an organic village;
- Kripa spoke of her journey from a shy girl who didn't speak a word of English 3 years ago to a confident class 11 student who is coming first in her class and who delivered a very moving speech in English without any notes;
- Ramesh from Saraswoti Shiksha Griha School who spoke about getting to know the girls and their commitment to their futures;
- Janak who shared his role in creating the strong connection between Mitrataa and Anakot;
- Ranjita who read a poem she had written about Mitrataa being the light which appeared in the dark hopelessness after the quakes to guide her on a new path.

The Anaikot girls entertained us with their dance. We also painted Ambika's house with support from Winner and his team to give new life and energy to her family's new home after the quake destroyed their old one.

As one of the kids commented, "Three years ago the earth shook and changed our lives. Today we shook the earth."

A really powerful new ritual was created to celebrate the seedings of hope and connection which sprung from the rubble of Nepal's quakes.



## 10. Junkiri Award

The pilot group have continued to work through the 6 wedges of their Junkiri Award. The Award contains 6 “wedges”, each a literacy necessary to thrive in the modern world:

- Financial Literacy: budgeting and event management
- Cultural Literacy: connections through culture and traditions
- Digital Literacy: the power of telling stories in an online world
- Wellbeing Literacy: physical fitness and nutrition
- Strengths Literacy: identifying and building on our strengths and passions
- Change maker Literacy: solution finding in our communities

Many of our Junkiri pilot group members have completed their Financial Literacy wedges having prepared a budget, created, organised and hosted an event and lodged a final report and expense report. Saraswoti organised a parents day in our partner school in Nuwakot and had all the kids decorate the new kindergarten building for her event; Ashmita hosted an art competition on the theme of Friendship at her old school; Jyoti entertained the Mitrataa family for an afternoon of dancing by our very talented and hard-working kids (including a hip hop dance-off between Jyoti and Sudip, judged by our dance teacher, Winner); Sarita, Bishnu, Bandana and Sapana took the whole Mitrataa team hiking overnight for a team building retreat; and Keshav raised the bar, taking the Mitrataa family to a garden nursery for an afternoon of learning about different plants, selecting appropriate ones for our hostel and then planting and nurturing them together as a family. All such different and wonderful events!

The group has also started working on their Strengths wedge which requires them to select 2 of their VIA Character Strengths (such as gratitude, teamwork, or hope) which they discovered after completing the online report and develop a 6 month plan to develop these strengths. They have also selected one of their passions which they will work on developing for the next 6 months too and we have another fascinating variety of talents being worked on, ranging from taekwondo dance, to learning Korean, to creating a clothing brand, to learning to swim. We will keep you posted on their progress.



The Fireflies are also working on their Cultural Literacy wedge which aims to ensure that the cultural traditions in Fireflies' communities are passed on and shared while developing their presentation skills. In the workshop for this wedge of the Award, the Fireflies were challenged to stand up and present for 2 minutes on a topic they chose out of a hat with no time to prepare. Their presentation was recorded and analysed with them so they could learn and develop their skills. Every one of them spoke so confidently in English on topics such as family, Nepal, hope, happiness, colours, the perfect Saturday, and what they would do with 1 million rupees.

The pilot group of the Junkiri Award are all such passionate risk takers, learners and leaders. Watching them grow over the course of this project gives us continued hope and excitement that this Junkiri Award has the potential to give the students a toolbox of skills to help them on the path to their dreams.



## 11. Medical support

Our role is to ensure the women and children have access to education and training opportunities and sustainable life skills. It's not possible for them to make the most of these opportunities if they aren't well. As a result, we often support medical costs for families where necessary. This year we supported Kanchan's mother through 2 surgeries and we put one of the father's through 9 months in rehab to overcome an addiction resulting from a significant childhood trauma. We also held several camps for all our families including an eye camp (including a surgery for one of the children) and providing glasses where necessary which has made a big difference for many of the kids with less headaches and easier concentration as a result. We held a dental camp and follow up workshops on teeth cleaning and we vaccinated all of our hostel students.

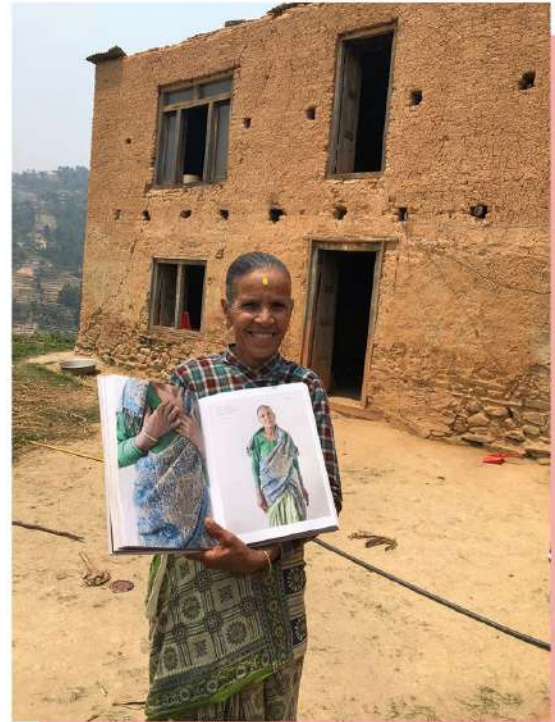




## 12. 200 Women and International Women's Day

We were very excited and honoured that Bec, Sapana, one of our Mitrataa team, and 3 of our Mitrataa women, Januka, Ambika and Sapana were featured in the 200 Women project ([www.twohundredwomen.com](http://www.twohundredwomen.com)). Geoff, Ruth and Keiran created a gorgeous book full of stories, advice, love and heartache. It is a book which every home should have and share and that we should all dip into regularly for inspiration.

Sapana, Nimu and Bec attended the launch of the book and exhibition at the Opera House in Sydney in October which was a lot of fun. We then had the privilege of giving Sabila, Ambila and Januka their copies of the book. Watching Ambika's daughter, Anjita, read her mother's interview aloud in English and the grin on her face as she read what her mother had said about her daughters was such a buzz for us all.



The 200 Women book played a key role in our International Women's Day celebrations too. Our team chose a very special way to celebrate this year. They decided on a Mother-Daughter Lunch. Each of the team members (including Keshav, our only male team member) invited their mother or another woman who has influenced their lives and inspired them and they headed off to Buzz Cafe for a special celebration.

Over lunch, they discussed questions such as the differences the mothers have noticed in society's expectations and limitations on women since their childhoods, and the increasing trend of women being placed into aged care facilities rather than being taken care of by family members, particularly in cases where the women have only daughters who move to their husband's homes when they marry.

We also wanted to share the inspiration and wisdom of the 200 Women book. As many of the mothers are illiterate, each team member chose one woman from the book who inspires them and explained the reasons why with the group. The mothers were so inspired and interested in the book and it was so lovely to see the group engaging with the stories and experiences of the 200 Women.

Many of the mothers work long hours both in their work and in their homes taking care of their (in several cases abusive) husbands and families, putting their health and own needs last. Seeing them relaxing and having fun with their daughters and animatedly sharing their ideas with each other was a lot of fun and the team members all very much enjoyed being able to spoil and thank their special women on this very special day.





### 13. Finances

We take finances very seriously. Our supporters entrust us with their generous gifts - our role is to deliver it with love in the most effective way possible to the people of Nepal. Our income for this year was \$248,927.47.



### 14. Thanks to our key supporters

We are eternally thankful for the generosity of those who share our vision of Nepal's future. Thank you all for your support. In particular, we would like to thank this year:

- ★ John Wiley & Sons – for all their ongoing support, both financial and with design services.
- ★ Libby Hathorn – for her guidance and support as well as her creative mind
- ★ GPP Audit – for completing our audits pro-bono
- ★ J-Legal
- ★ O'Callaghan Family, Adelaide
- ★ Quinn Family, Queensland
- ★ Rouse & Co International
- ★ Ylenia dal Bianco and her supporters in Italy

For more information, please visit our website ([www.mitrataa.org](http://www.mitrataa.org)) or contact Bec ([bec@mitrataa.org](mailto:bec@mitrataa.org)). We welcome your feedback and ideas.