



MITRATAA
FOUNDATION



**ANNUAL
REPORT
OUR IMPACT**

2019-2020

Mitrataa Foundation

Annual Review - Our impact 2019-2020

Note from Bec and Nimu

Another busy year full of learning, laughs and love for the Mitrataa family in Nepal. The first half of the year saw a lot of activity, goals, passion, and ideas as well as visitors, learning and laughs. But as the coronavirus pandemic took hold, Nepal went into lockdown in late March which was continuing at the end of June. As a country which depends on international tourism and remittances from Nepali citizens working abroad and a local population which largely depends on daily wages to survive, the pandemic and an extended lockdown locally have created enormous challenges. But with an unprepared health system, perhaps this was the most sensible solution.

While many of our projects were on hold, several became even more important during this time. As you know, our work is based in positive psychology with our Dream Recipe at the core. The ingredients of this recipe – passion, plan, belief, cheer squad, fun, hard work and persistence – help us to build skills for achieving any dream we set our heart to as well as to steer around the challenges of the world. Skills such as resilience, solution finding, responsibility and self-compassion are even more crucial as we continue to navigate the pandemic. As the focus has shifted from academic results to engagement and online learning with family, from exams to survival, safety and connection, we were able to give students more opportunities to engage with their passions as a tool for managing stress and uncertainty, more opportunities to be a cheer squad for each other and to build on the foundations of their life skills and values (including gratitude, connection and mutuality). They have also honed their skills with technology, online research and virtual learning.

As the coronavirus crisis continues, we have seen a stagnation of progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in Nepal and globally as well as severe challenges in terms of mental health and domestic violence. Hopefully, rather than backwards progress, we can see the opportunities to side-step some of the obstacles and move ahead together with new ideas and respect for each other and our environment.

As Nimu recently summed up: "Our lives have been altered dramatically this year and we don't know for how long we will face this pandemic. It is a scary place but together we can fight it and, even if we don't emerge from this pandemic with any great new habits or skills, that's ok, sometimes surviving is an accomplishment in itself."

Thank you all for your ongoing support in these times. Stay safe and stay connected.



Bec Ordish
Executive Director



Nimu Sherpa-Ordish
Country Director

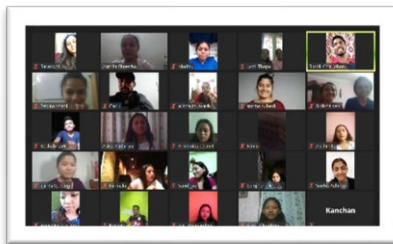
Cheer Squad

This is one of the best parts of our job – cheering on the members of the Mitrataa family and being there to remind them to believe in themselves and each other.



We live in a time where community is more important than ever and seeing the team take care of the families, they work with during the lockdown has been a wonderful example of this. We cannot always get there to be with them, especially over the last few months of the year, but we can continue to remind them that we are here, and we will catch them when they fall. That is a very important part of what we do. Sometimes a simple check in with a woman who is struggling to feed her family during the pandemic reminds her that someone has her back, that she will not be alone and gives her the courage to continue searching for solutions. On occasions too, it shows those around them, especially not-so-pleasant men in their lives, that someone else is watching and that can help keep the women safe.

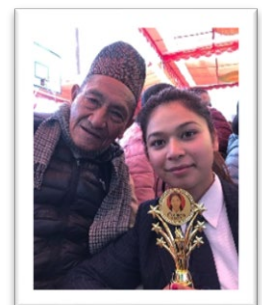
For a few years now, we have toyed with and piloted the idea of a universal basic income with some of our families. This concept, involving replacing other support with a guaranteed monthly basic income, has been used with varying degrees of success around the world. During the pandemic, we have continued our pilot program with several families, replacing their dependence on daily labouring or on the need for us to provide them with food, with a cash amount each month for them to spend as required. It's a challenging concept and requires support alongside but overall, the families we have worked with in this way have responded very positively to maintaining their dignity and control over their spending.



We hold monthly meetings for each of our groups of students as opportunities to network, share challenges, and learn skills together. Our Bhaktapur and Panauti groups went on several outings together this year which also taught them teamwork and coordination and planning skills on top of the opportunity to visit new places and relax together as a group. Our college (class 11 and 12) and bachelors Dream Catchers explored various topics at their monthly meetings including the role of the media

in today's society and the role of women supporting each other in leading social change. These meetings have continued online during the lockdown as an important tool for connection.

Of course, we also love the opportunity to cheer when our students work hard academically and achieve success so we are proud of all of them for progressing with their studies but a couple deserve particular mention – Kusum who achieved the Riviera College Star Award for her leadership, contribution and academic performance in class 11 and Asmita who topped her class in every single semester of her Diploma of Civil Engineering. Well done, you guys. Your leadership and commitment inspire so many of our students to continue to work towards their dreams.



Passion

Our Passion Box project provides opportunities for students and their families to explore and spend time developing their passions and strengths. This has been particularly important during the extended lockdown caused by the coronavirus.



Keshav and Sagar continued their passion for cricket this year with Keshav participating in a competition in India with his club during which he scored the Man of The Match prize due to his performance and commitment to being a team player. As they study for their class 10 SEE exams, many students leave their passions (extra-curricular activities) to focus on the exams. Our philosophy is that these passions are even more important during stressful times and can contribute to how we handle ourselves when under pressure, so we encourage the students to continue with their passions even during exam times.

Many of our students love dancing. Sudip, Jyoti and Sajan continued their b-boying classes throughout the year with a serious commitment of attending dance class every day after school. Their commitment paid off with Jyoti being selected to perform in various dance performances including a dance video. Sunita also continued with her passion for dance completing a 4-month Diploma in Hip Hop Dance during the year and teaching dance as part of our Devi's Award project (more on this below).



Rojina, our Roshani's Award scholar, loves to cook and during her winter vacation, she explored different recipes, delighting the hostel students with her creations. Cooking (including planning, budgeting and shopping) is a great way for her to practise math and reading as well as problem solving, planning, time management and various other skills in an informal context and it has really built her confidence.

Our debate team have had a great year participating in several competitions and engaging in discussions on many current world issues including the Black Lives Matter movement and its implications for caste and gender-based discrimination in Nepal. They also held a debate for our visiting university students from Charles Sturt University in Australia (see more under our partners section later in the report) which was a great experience for them to have to prepare and express themselves in English in front of native English speakers.



Many of our other students have continued to explore their passions too such as Jyoti and Smriti's story writing which has helped them during the lockdown time, Asika's new passion for history which she has really enjoyed researching and writing essays about during the lockdown, Bidisha has discovered a passion for Chinese language and Dhanraj has discovered a passion for entertaining people. Not many of us are fortunate enough to know what we are passionate about, especially at a young age, so a part of this project is giving the students an opportunity to explore different hobbies and activities to find out how they feel about them. This is an important part of getting to know themselves and having opportunities to try different activities.

Belief

A large part of our role as cheer squad for the Mitrataa family members is to remind them what amazing human beings they are and to give them opportunities to encourage and believe in each other.



Witnessing the magic that results when a student believes in themselves continues to give us hope and energy. Our Roshani's Award scholar, Rojina, has really thrived this year, exploring her passions for cooking and gardening, learning about her heroes like Greta Thunberg and supporting everyone during the extended lockdown period.

This year for International Girls Day in October 2019, the children interviewed an important woman in their lives - their mothers, aunts, grandmothers, older sisters, teachers – about their life as a child. The world has changed so much in terms of treatment and opportunities of girls and although we have a long way to go, it's important to stop and reflect on progress made. This was a really powerful activity which resulted in some conversations with loved ones in which mothers and grandmothers were able to share stories from their past which they hadn't previously felt comfortable sharing. Seeing the intergenerational connections deepening

and new-found respect from the children for the women in their lives and the hurdles they have faced to earn their strength was moving for us all. We published some of the children's subsequent writings for International Women's Day in March 2020.

As part of our Opportunity Box, we took several of our hardest-working students away overnight on a retreat to Herb Nepal. It was an opportunity for them to rest and rejuvenate, to celebrate their hard work and achievements, to connect with each other and with nature, to share ideas and experiences and to learn a lot about herbs and organic farming from the wonderful team at Herb Nepal. Sometimes, it is important to stop and reflect and take stock of our progress. The students all enjoyed their time very much and came back full of energy to continue their journeys towards their wonderful futures ahead.



Plan

Our Opportunity Box is a project which requires a lot of planning but it is such an important one as it continues to provide students with opportunities to ensure that they have access to some of the important life experiences that their peers have.

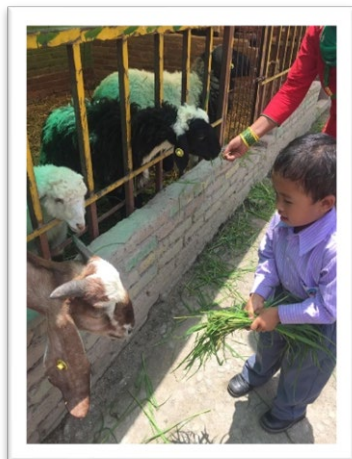
Several groups of students have been hiking to various locations led by Nimu who is passionate about hiking and Sarita who is getting lots of experience practising for her planned trekking guide business. The planned one-night hike to Bethanchowk with several students resulted in not only gorgeous views from the top but a lot of experience in finding solutions, taking care of each other, and hard work as they discovered it was going to take a lot longer than expected due to the snow and they would need to stay 2 nights along the way. Seeing them work together and persist through it all and come back full of stories and enthusiasm (albeit in need of a shower and exhausted) was a great example of how these opportunities build their confidence and skills.



Asmita, our hostel in charge and our science tutor, used the lockdown with several students in the hostel as an opportunity to really engage them in practical science experiments to bring to life their textbooks. We have seen a significant increase in their engagement with the material and with their ability to express the concepts in writing as a result.

Our Panauti community kindergarten project continued to support the local families with not only education but community support and family trainings as well. After practising in our kindergarten shop, the children were each given some money for an outing to a real shop to buy a vegetable for the day's lunch. They had to work together, learn to budget, how to ask for something in the shop, collect change etc. They were so excited to take their purchases back to the classroom and so proud of themselves for planning lunch together.





They also went on a kindy outing to a local farm activity centre where they learned how to milk a cow, where food comes from, and had a chance to run around and make new friends. Their parents also came along, and seeing their joy and excitement was almost more rewarding than watching the little ones! For many of the children (and several of the parents), it was the first time they had been on a bus so another important skill was learned along the way.

Our kindergarten teachers also ran a winter camp for some of the children whose parents work as day labourers. During the three week winter vacation, one parent would have to give up their work to take care of the children so Sarita and Mandira generously gave up their vacation time to run activities for the children so their parents could continue to earn an income.



Financial Literacy remains one of the core skills we focus on developing with our students which includes working with our partner schools to challenge traditional mindsets towards maths. We ran a workshop for the teachers of several of our partner schools combined with our visiting student teachers from Charles Sturt University in Australia exploring ways to overcome maths trauma in students. We also ran Maths Olympics activities with our class 10 students and have been developing

banks of activities during the lockdown to help the students learn creatively some of the more challenging maths and accounting aspects of their courses.

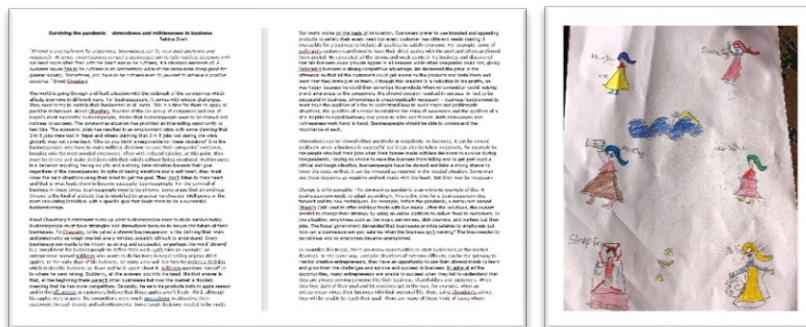


Building confidence through these experiences and giving them opportunities to learn how to plan and engage with the work makes the Opportunity Box one of our most powerful projects. Combined with the Passion Box Project, these projects filter through to all aspects of the children and their families' lives.

Persistence and Hardwork

Persistence is a skill that has really had a workout over the last few months of the year with the coronavirus pandemic.

Adapting to learning online, to spending extended periods of time locked down with family members, feeling isolated from friends and freedom has required all of us to adapt and persist through our fears and frustrations.



We have used this opportunity to build on the students' base academic skills such as essay writing, research and creative thinking and analysis. We have also focused on honing their life skills and problem solving ability to get access to food and the internet, to support their friends with studies when they can't attend online classes, to adapting to having to motivate themselves in their studies without daily reminders from teachers.

One of the essay writing competitions we hosted for the students involved a quote from Binod Chaudary, one of Nepal's most successful entrepreneurs, requiring the students to explore the importance of persistence in business success and the ruthlessness which is often required to plough through hurdles thrown at you along the way.



Our 10 students who had been working so hard towards the extremely stressful final class 10 SEE exams which were due to take place in March had some tough lessons in persistence this year. Unfortunately, the evening before their first exam, the government decided to postpone the SEE indefinitely due to the risk of the coronavirus. Students were sent home to spend the lockdown with their families and to continue their studies and preparation. Each of our SEE students wrote a letter to the editor sharing their ideas for how the government should deal with the SEE this year. Following 3 months of rumours galore about what would happen, the government announced that the

SEE was cancelled, with the students being allocated marks based on assessments and internal exams from their schools. It was a huge letdown for them after their hard work but they stood firm in the knowledge that their skills and commitment will do them well for the next phase of their lives and were not wasted.

Fun!

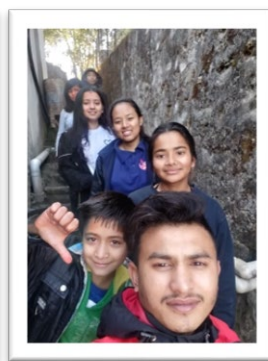
We are passionate about injecting some fun into the learning process for our students and the students and teachers from Mitrataa partner schools.



One of the benefits of our partnership with Charles Sturt University in Australia is the student teachers from the education faculty who spend 3 weeks with one of our partner schools, role-modelling how to ensure the students have fun while still covering the course content. Our Riviera students had fun making papier-mâché globes with Taylor this year.

When we lose a family member, we believe it is important to keep their dreams and spirit alive. Devi was a young woman with a vision impairment who we supported in the past. After some life

challenges, she took her own life last year leaving a baby son behind. Dance was Devi's way of escaping the challenging reality of her world. She came alive when she danced, building her confidence, her self-esteem and giving her a much-needed boost of energy. We wanted to share that gift with others in her memory. Partnering with Blind Rocks, a great organisation which works with young people with a vision impairment, we ran a dance program for their students. In addition to the dance classes twice a week, we provided a nutritious snack to raise awareness of nutritional importance with them. These classes have continued online during the lockdown providing much needed connection and fun for the students. One of our class 11 students, Sunita, who lost her sister last year to cancer and who is extremely passionate about dance, has been working on this project as an assistant dance teacher. Seeing her confidence blossom as a result has been such a joy for all of us.



Throughout the year, our hostel students, led by Keshav, have spent part of each Saturday doing some activities and outings which keep them fit and give them a chance to revitalise their energy. They have explored temples and stupas, found places to play basketball, football and table tennis, practised meditation and yoga, including occasionally laughter yoga much to the amusement of the neighbours, danced to Disney medleys and most importantly had fun.

During the lockdown, we hosted a number of competitions including a dance competition to keep the students active and connected from their homes. Our hostel students created their own board games to play too.

Team

Our team are young, energetic, passionate and keen to learn. They also all have huge hearts which they use every day in their work.

Many of them juggle family responsibilities, studies and life alongside their work. During the last few months of the year when the world was in lockdown, their commitment and dedication to reaching out to the families they support and ensuring everyone was safe and had access to food and shelter speaks to the heart of what Mitrataa is all about – creating community and cheer squads for our children and their families.

We asked them to write about their life philosophy and a statement about themselves as well as to sketch themselves or ask one of the children to sketch them so you can get to know them.



"I believe Nepalis have a great sense of community and resilience and are compassionate, hospitable and very big-hearted." – **Nimu**

In addition to being our Project Leader for our Nuwakot, Roshani's Award and Hostel PE Projects, Keshav is currently studying his Bachelor of Development Studies.

"I love that the world's highest mountain is in Nepal, because it is the unique symbol which represent respect and prestige for Nepal around the world." – **Keshav**



Archana is studying her Bachelor of Business Studies as well as being our On-ground Project Coordinator for Panchkal.

"I love the natural beauty of my country as well as its historic attractions such as Lumbini and vast cultural heritage." – **Archana**

As well as managing our local NGO partner, managing our kindergarten projects and leading our Bachelors Dream Catchers and Wendy House Dream Catchers, Saraswoti is in her final year of her Bachelors of IT.

"In Nepal, there are many things I admire such as religious traditions, culture, customs, as well as nature such as rivers and lakes, jungle and mountains. All of this gives hope and smiles, every time you experience something new." – **Saraswoti**

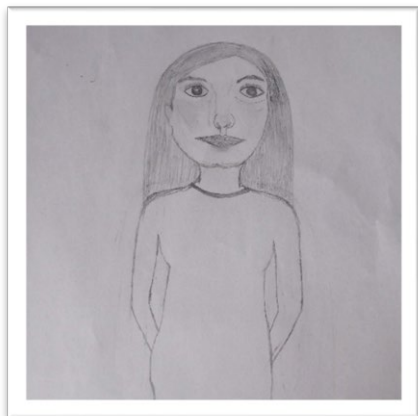


Rebina is our resident artist, currently studying art in class 12, and one of our core tutors.

"I believe the best thing about Nepal is its unique patterns of weather. It is a country of extremes in terms of weather." – **Rebina**

Currently taking a gap year before starting her Bachelor of Civil Engineering, Asmita is our hostel-in-charge.

"I am proud to be a citizen of a country which is known around the world for its natural beauty and harmony among its cultures. Among all the things I love, I especially like the helping nature of the locals and the natural environment which always makes us feel at home." – **Asmita**



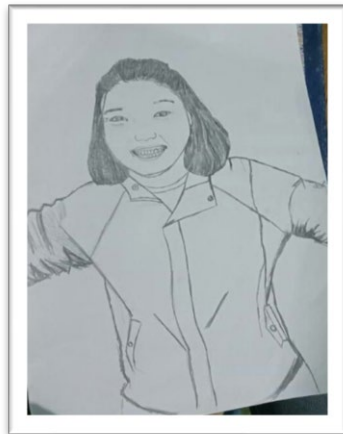
Sneha's vision is to be Nepal's first female prime minister. She is currently a junior project leader and tutor while she completes her A Levels.

"In Nepal, we have the ability to conquer the world; some days we rise, some days we don't. But we are always preparing and the youth are busy preparing to rule the world tomorrow. I love that." – **Sneha**

While in her third year of her law/business degree, Nirmala is the Senior Project Leader for our Panauti, Bhaktapur and Panchkal Dream Catchers.

"I love the opportunities that Nepal presents. This pandemic has made me realise that if we unite together we can deal with anything and satisfy all our citizens' needs ourselves, rather than depending on imports from overseas. If we want change, we need to have patience and work hard and learn from our mistakes. Rather than complaining about the government, I believe we can bring positive change if we work together."

- **Nirmala**



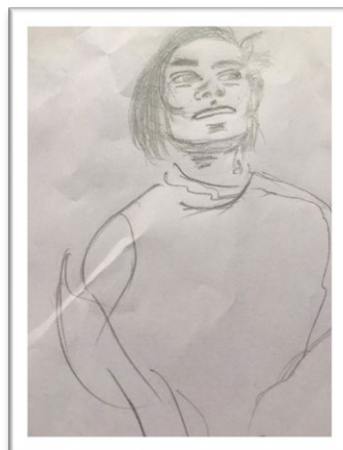
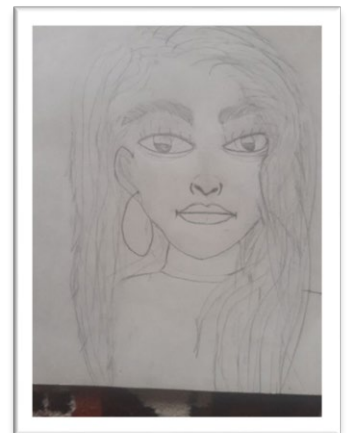
Wearing many hats in Mitrataa and working with Bec on various outside projects such as writing Nepal's 50 Women book, Sarita also has her trekking guide licence.

"I believe in Nepal because of the diversity in our culture which gives us our identity as well as bringing us altogether to unite as a Nepali family." - **Sarita**

Bandana will shortly commence her Bachelor of Business Studies but she also shoulders the responsibility for her 3 younger siblings while being our Senior Project Leader for several of our partner schools in Kathmandu and being our assistant accounts person.

"The reason I believe in Nepal is the many opportunities here - whether it is business or in the government sector for the young generation like us. To build our country's economy and to build employment opportunities here, young people like us need to remain in the country. We are the future leaders of the nation. We should follow this and believe in ourselves and our country."

- **Bandana**



Kalbahadur holds our students' hands as they navigate their fear of maths as our senior maths tutor while he studies his Bachelor of Civil Engineering.

"I love several things about my country - the bravery of the Gorkhali soldiers, the fact that we are the land of Gods and Goddesses, the birthplace of Lord Buddha, and the lands of mountains." - **Kalbahadur**

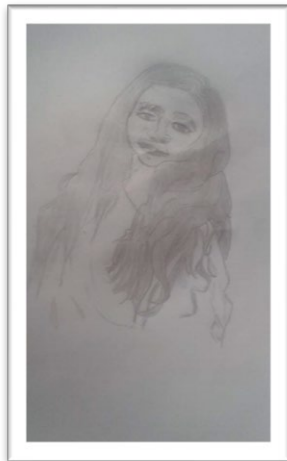


Kusum has just finished class 12 and is preparing for her entrance exam to study law. She is our junior project leader for our Riviera Dream Catchers.

"Although we grow slowly, Nepal will grow higher than our Mount Everest. I love that about my country." – **Kusum**

Sunimaya is our Financial Literacy Project Leader while she studies to be a Chartered Accountant.

"We may have many issues and fights internally in Nepal but we will always be together holding each other's hand if anyone tries to break our country. We have a lot of national pride." – **Sunimaya**

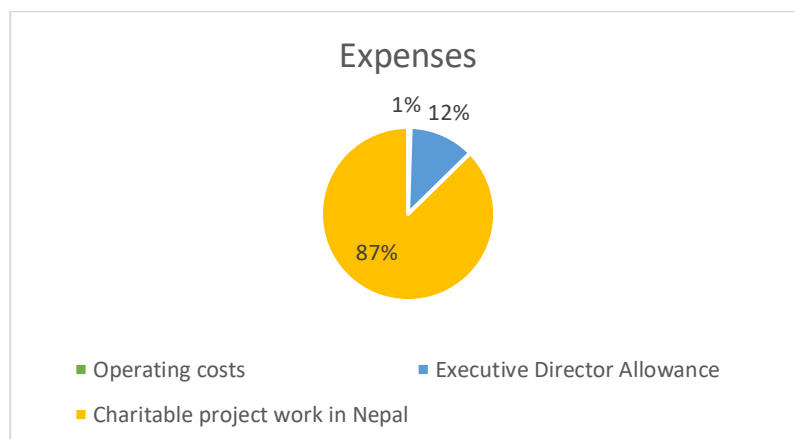


Kanchan is using her gap year before studying law to continue her role as junior project leader for our Bhaktapur and Panauti Dream Catchers.

"Just like our calm waters and high mountains, Nepal's pride and glory are like an unshakeable fortress." – **Kanchan**

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 \$154,177.51.



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. We love the way in which our partnerships with some of our core partners provide such mutually rewarding experiences. A couple of examples of how this has worked this year, in addition to financial support, with some of our most creative partners:

- ☆ **John Wiley & Sons** – Choosing a career is one of the most challenging aspects of finishing school. In late 2019, some of the Mitrataa students recorded videos asking Wiley staff for career advice. The Wiley staff generously recorded videos full of advice in return. During the coronavirus lockdown, the students completed an activity based on the Wiley answers, exploring which careers they could imagine themselves in and why as well as which careers they would never choose. The students also interviewed someone from their chosen field to get some practical advice and they had a lot of fun asking all their questions.



- ☆ **Charles Sturt University** – This was the eleventh year of our partnership with CSU bringing students to Nepal for lifechanging adventures. In addition to the education students' contribution in the Maths Trauma teacher training and the creative fun learning activities mentioned above, with the group of business and psychology students from Charles Sturt University in Australia who visited in January, we explored what makes a great entrepreneur, the role of entrepreneurs in development and the importance of social entrepreneurs with class 11 students from Riviera and from Saipal. It's a great partnership in which our students get access to global thinking and different perspectives while the CSU students explore social issues in a developing country and the way business principles can be used to identify solutions to them. We had also spent some time this year preparing some of our families in Panchkal to host the Australian students for an overnight homestay. This was a fantastic opportunity for the students to experience village life up close and for our families to learn new skills to host people so they can run farm stay programs in future for extra income.



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



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