

ANNUAL GENERAL REPORT

2022/23



FIRST STEPS HIMALAYA



LETTER FROM THE CEO

It has been with great joy that 2022/2023 allowed Founding Director, Durga Aran back to Nepal, not only to oversee our education projects but to take on the construction of a new earthbag school in Nuwakot. Perched high on a ridge and accessed only by a very rough road, the villagers of Payunswara were overjoyed to hear that they would finally have a school for their young children. Until now the youngest children did not go to school as it was simply too far away to walk.

During Durga's two visits to Nepal he visited almost all our project schools, oversaw teacher training, coordinated volunteer builders and teachers and conducted leadership training for head teachers in Nuwakot.

We had a strong financial year with our highest ever total raised in the annual appeal thanks to the support of dedicated donors around the world. Our Friends of First Steps Himalaya also continued to provide vital funding.

Our 5-year capacity building programme allowed us to continue to streamline our processes and administration which in turn create smoother running of our organisation. Our team in Nepal continue to grow professionally and take on increasing responsibilities. Our aim is that our Nepal based partner organisation, First Steps Nepal is able to operate more independently by 2027.

I would like to thank our dedicated board of trustees, donors and everyone who contributed to our success this year. I wish I could take each and every one of you to see the changes that we are making in Nepal. Do remember that we do post updates almost daily on Facebook and publish regular newsletters which you can subscribe to. We are so grateful for the fantastic support we receive. Thank you!



A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Fiona Heiton". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Fionna Heiton
Founding Director & CEO

ABOUT FIRST STEPS HIMALAYA

First Steps Himalaya works in rural Nepali villages to provide early childhood development and quality education in schools. The majority of teachers in rural Nepal are untrained and ill-equipped to provide quality education, and work in schools that are often dilapidated, dirty, and lacking in resources. This results in a cycle of poverty with poorly educated children, growing up to become parents who know no other way.

Thanks to First Steps Himalaya's projects, young children who were once left unattended, now learn in safe and nurturing child-friendly environments. Hundreds of children, in a growing number of communities, now benefit from attending pre-school and primary classes with better trained teachers, in classrooms that are now clean, painted, and adequately resourced.



BEFORE

A typical classroom in rural Nepal



AFTER

A nurturing learning environment for children

Our project base is in Sindhupalchok, north of Kathmandu. There, we support projects in eight villages from our small rural office, teacher training centre and accommodation block. We also work in nine villages in Nuwakot District, north west of Kathmandu and eight communities in Syangja District south of Pokhara.

WHERE WE WORK



AIMS

OUR MISSION

Building capacity in Himalayan communities through quality education.

OUR VISION

Opportunities through learning.

OUR VALUES

- Professionalism and integrity
- Encouraging community participation and sustainability
- Working in an ethical and moral way within the culture of the country
- Culturally respectful

WHAT WE DO



TRAIN

We provide hands-on teacher training in contemporary teaching practices, resulting in skilled, motivated and passionate teachers.



CREATE

We create child-friendly classrooms that are clean and tidy, well resourced and conducive to learning.



EDUCATE

Children attend classes that are stimulating developmentally and culturally appropriate and foster a long term love of learning.

SIGNIFICANT ACHIEVEMENTS 2022/2023

This has been a year of significant achievements, given that Director Durga Aran was finally able to return to Nepal.

THIS YEAR WE HAVE:

- Constructed one earthbag school in Nuwakot (partially complete) with four classrooms
- Run training courses for 102 teachers from 33 schools
- Our Nepal team made 164 supervisory visits to 21 schools in 3 districts
- Conducted English Language training for 25 teachers from 9 schools
- Conducted a menstrual hygiene programme for 94 girls in 3 schools
- Conducted a community resilience project in 9 villages in Nuwakot
- Published 2,000 copies of an English language children's story book set in Nepal.

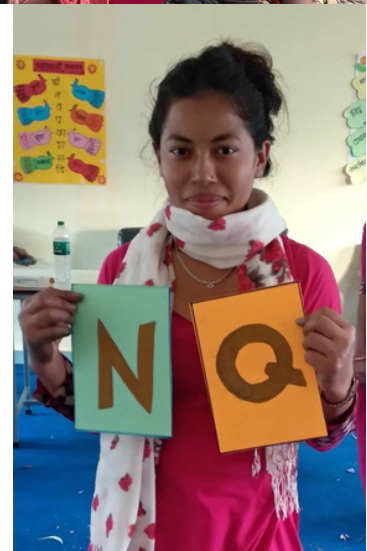


EARLY YEARS TEACHER TRAINING

This year we provided training courses for 102 teachers from 33 schools

A school is only four walls until there is quality teaching inside it, that encourages a love of learning in children.

First Steps trains teachers in modern professional teaching methods, appropriate to the children and their culture. Our effective, cutting edge and hands on teacher training courses support the long term professional development of teachers. Over time, they become trained in innovative and contemporary pedagogical methodologies. They are able to deliver effective learning outcomes for primary children under their care. Our practical hands on training courses aim to improve teachers' skills, motivation, enthusiasm and creativity.



ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE TRAINING

We provided English Language training for 25 teachers from 9 schools in Nuwakot.

Rural Nepali teachers are expected to follow an English Language Curriculum despite having very little English themselves,



LEADERSHIP TRAINING

We conducted 5 leadership training sessions for 16 head teachers & deputy head teachers from 9 schools.

Positive change in schools is largely dependent on the school leadership who need to be motivated and enthusiastic as school leaders. Our leadership training looks at different styles of leadership and identifies strengths and weaknesses in order to be more effective.



SCHOOL MONITORING

Our Nepal team made 164 supervisory visits to 21 schools in 3 districts

A vital part of our programme is visiting teachers in their own classrooms following teacher training. During these visits, we rate the quality of the teaching, the use of resources, the classroom and the school's external environment. We introduce new ideas to teachers and make suggestions as to how the classroom could be improved.



MENSTRUAL HYGIENE MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME

We conducted a menstrual hygiene management programme for 94 teenage girls in 3 schools.

The programme aimed to help girls feel confident to attend school whilst menstruating. It showed there is clearly a need for improved awareness around menstruation for adolescent girls in rural Nepal and that school toilet facilities do not support girls in feeling comfortable and clean while menstruating at school. The programme included reusable pad making demonstrations, talks about menstruation, assessment of toilet and disposal facilities and workshops with teachers so that they could better support the girls.



COMMUNITY RESILIENCE PROGRAMME

We conducted parent education talks and village clean up campaigns in 9 communities.

The Community Resilience Programme aimed to build community resilience in the Nuwakot area during the rapidly changing situation of Nepal as a result of the COVID-19 global situation that impacted every day life in poor rural communities.

This year, the end of project survey measured the changes from the start of the programme period. It showed that the communities had become much more self reliant, hygiene had vastly improved and production of vegetables in kitchen gardens had increased. People became far more aware of the importance of hygiene and helped each other more.



EARTHBAG BUILD

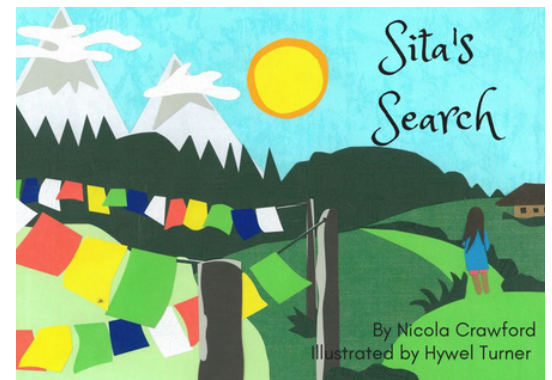
Following a request from Payunswara Community, Nuwakot, we embarked on an earthbag project to construct a school for young children in the village. A team of international volunteers worked alongside local villagers to build 4 classrooms from earth, stone and metal rebar. Construction began in March and is due to be completed in October 2023.



CHILDREN'S STORY BOOK

We published 2,000 copies of Sita's Search and distributed books to 24 schools

There is a lack of culturally appropriate English language story books in Nepal. Chairperson Nicola Crawford wrote *Sita's Search* about a little Nepali girl who meets several children who for several reasons are not able to attend school. The story captures the attention of young children and is written in simple English.



CAPACITY BUILDING

This year we conducted English language training and team building activities as part of this programme.

The capacity building project is well underway. We continue to refine and improve our administrative systems and processes which contribute to the smoother running of our operations in Nepal. This will continue to impact the quality of our service delivery and in turn the lives of the children that we serve.

Our Nepal team have been working on English Language skills with particular focus on report writing. Our first team building retreat in Pokhara was a fantastic opportunity to bring the staff together for a few days outside their normal working environment. The result was a greater sense of team spirit, gain in confidence and developing skills.



SCHOOL PROJECT UPDATE

Across Nepal, our team works one-on-one with early years teachers in selected schools. Our team mentors the teachers and monitors improvements on a regular basis. Below are some recent photographs of these schools.

SINDHUPALCHOK PROJECTS

We have been working in this areas since 2009. Our ECD centre at Sangachok Nursery is not only the longest running but the most successful project serving as a model for other schools in the area. Siranchour, Jitpur and Mulkharka schools have also excelled this year.

SANGACHOK ECD



SIRANCHOUR ECD



SIRANCHOUR CLASS 1



SINDHUPALCHOK PROJECTS

DYALI ECD



KADAMBAS ECD



MULKHARKA ECD



JITPUR ECD



IRKHU POKHARE ECD



DEURALI ECD



NUWAKOT PROJECTS

Working here since 2018, we support 9 schools in Ward 13 of Bidur Municipality. Geographical terrain is challenging here with some schools only accessible by 4WD vehicle.

SRIJANSHEEL



PRAGITSHEEL



KALYAN



KANYADEVI



SRIJANA



SUNDARADEVI



NUWAKOT PROJECTS

BUMDEVI



BAGESWORY



AJHINGHARE



OPENING OF PRAGITSHEEL SCHOOL

In December 2022, we held the opening and official handover of Pragatisheel School to Bidur Municipality. Pictured below: Lisa Choegyal, Honorary New Zealand Consul to Nepal with the mayor of Bidur Municipality,



SYANGJA PROJECTS

In partnership with the Rotary Club of Himalayan Gorkhas in Kathmandu, we have been supporting 8 schools in Syangja District since 2018.

JANA HIT



BASHPANI



HIMALI



JETHI KANYA



BHUMRE



RANBIR JANA HIT



SYANGJA PROJECTS

RAMBACHA

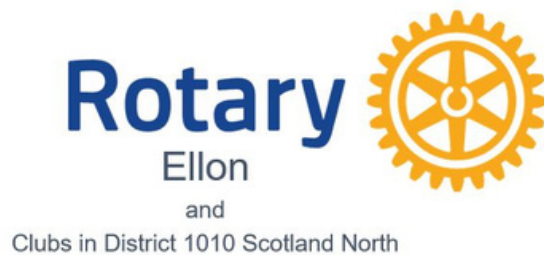


TALO KUMERDANG



OUR PARTNERS

We work in partnership with a number of organisations, delivering project services to their schools in rural Nepal. Our partners include UK based In Your Hands Trust and Huckerby Trust. We also partner with the Rotary Clubs of Ellon and Clubs in District 1010 Scotland North, Kathmandu Midtown and Himalayan Gurkhas in Kathmandu.



FUNDRAISING & GRANTS

THE HUCKERBY TRUST

U.K. based Huckerby Trust funded the construction of an earthbag built school in Nuwakot and the support of the new teachers who will be trained and supported there. We are enormously grateful for this support.

THE PETRA TRUST

We entered the second year of our 5-year capacity building programme which allows us to support our partner organisation in Nepal, First Steps Nepal to be more self sufficient. Administrative and financial systems are being refined and our Nepal team supported in their professional development.

COURT CONSTRUCTION FUNDRAISING

The team at Court Construction Limited in Auckland raised an incredible NZ\$40,595 this year through a number of fundraising events including a harbour cruise and movie night. They also secured the support of a number of generous corporate donors.



FRIENDS OF FIRST STEPS HIMALAYA

Our Friends of First Steps Himalaya programme continues to provide regular income to support our work in Nepal. These supporters receive updates three times a year showing the improvements in our project schools and Early Learning centres across rural Nepal and other news from our work in Nepal. We aim to continue growing this programme.



ANNUAL APPEAL

Our annual appeal this year exceeded our goal of NZ\$15,000 and raised NZ\$19,130. This was a fantastic total and we are so grateful for all the generous donations.



BEYOND THE CLOUDS

Our social enterprise, Beyond The Clouds which was on hold during the COVID period was able to restart this year with treks and tours in both Nepal and Bhutan.

We have more bookings for 2023/2024 and look forward to this valuable income stream growing again.



E-CARDS

Our e-cards continue to be popular especially at Christmas and New Year. These are available on our website, and continue to draw new supporters to us and advertise our work.



MEDIA AND MARKETING

We communicate with our supporters through a range of regular newsletters, blog posts and social media posts. These are informative and let followers know of our work on the ground in Nepal. The reach of our communications continues to grow.

WEDDING CARDS

We continue to offer wedding cards that supporters can opt for in lieu of wedding favours, for a donation. This not only supports First Steps Himalaya but offers an environmentally friendly option.

This continues to bring new supporters to us and also advertises our work.



BEQUESTS

Our bequest programme enables supporters who would like to leave a lasting legacy to support Nepali children's education as part of their will. A downloadable bequest brochure is available on our website.



MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

NZ TEAM



FIONNA HEITON - CEO & FOUNDING DIRECTOR

Fionna began her career as a charity fundraiser in the U.K. She then spent six years in Nepal, working for Water Aid, UNICEF, the Britain Nepal Medical Trust and The British Council. She has conducted numerous professional training sessions in Nepal. Fionna has studied at the University of California, specialising in the Supervision of Adults in Early Childhood Education and holds a Postgraduate Certificate in International Development Management. She is based in New Zealand.



DURGA ARAN - FOUNDING DIRECTOR & FIELD DIRECTOR

Durga grew up in a small village in Sindhupalchok and experienced the rural Nepali education system first hand. This insight and local knowledge allows him to seamlessly navigate the intricacies of overseeing FSH's projects. This entails project management, donor liaison, logistical support and management of staff. Durga oversees training, evaluation and monitoring. He divides his time between New Zealand and Nepal.



LAUREN PALLISER - FINANCE MANAGER

Lauren has a wealth of administrative experience, both in NZ and Australia. She looks after all aspects of our financial administration. Lauren has a strong interest in community work and has held a number of volunteer positions. Lauren lives in Nelson, New Zealand with her family.



MEREDITH RIMMER - FUNDRAISING & PROGRAMME SUPPORT

Meredith co-ordinates our fundraising programme and supports the Directors in providing programme support to the Nepal team. Meredith's eye for detail is invaluable in creating professional training materials and monitoring fundraising activities. Meredith lives just outside Nelson, New Zealand with her family.

GOVERNANCE

BOARD MEMBERS

First Steps Himalaya is governed by a highly skilled board of trustees who meet quarterly in Nelson. The board members have a wealth of expertise in education, business and management.



NICKY CRAWFORD - CHAIRPERSON

Nicky moved to N.Z. from the U.K. in 2002 and trained as a teacher. She has taught in rural and urban schools for 15 years. As Education Adviser to the board, Nicky works with the Nepal team to develop and implement its teacher training programmes.



JENNY DANIELL - DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON

As a retired primary school teacher, Jenny is keenly aware that education is the most powerful way to raise living standards and lead to a better quality of life. She has visited the FSH projects in Nepal.



JAN MARSH - SECRETARY

Jan is a retired clinical psychologist with 40 years' experience in a variety of settings. She first travelled to Nepal in 1977 and has returned several times. This has given her a concern for the needs of people in developing countries. She has a certificate in sustainable development and is a selection interviewer for VSA.



KAY MILLER - BOARD MEMBER

Kay is an experienced organisational development professional with significant experience in change management, training design/delivery and strengthening teams. She utilises her professional skills volunteering for many local and international community groups.

FINANCIAL REPORTS

All amounts in New Zealand dollars (NZD)

First Steps Himalaya	
Statement of Financial Performance	
End of year 2022/2023 (1st April 2022 - 31st March 2023)	
INCOME	
Donations & fundraising	124,283.97
Courts Donations	40,595.00
Friends of FSH	18,255.00
Nepal project & training services	6,705.19
Bank interest	6,166.40
BTC Trip income	19,224.24
Nepal village tourism income	325.34
Commission	125.54
Total income	215,680.68
EXPENSES	
Accounting Fees	726.63
Liability Insurance	2,087.25
Bank Fees	664.78
Bank Revaluations & Currency gain/loss	-1,286.69
Beyond the Clouds admin	11,496.25
Beyond the Clouds trip expenses	13,946.29
Beyond the Clouds village tourism	1,190.47
Travel expenses	8,708.75
Book printing	2,329.96
Computer Services & supplies	834.38
Contractor pay	23,273.09
Fixed asset depreciation	327.38
Fundraising & marketing	2,234.01
Hospitality	96.00
Legal Fees	51.11
Nepal Project & Training Services - Nepal Expense	15,053.06
Nepal Project & Training Services - NZ Expense	40,248.85
Office supplies	106.04
Supplies for Nepal	97.37
Websites & domains	1,432.64
Total expenses	123,617.62
SURPLUS / DEFECIT	92,063.06

OUR SUPPORTERS

We would like to express our deep gratitude to everyone who has supported us this year. We are so grateful to Court Construction Limited, The Huckerby Trust, the Petra Trust, Cally Stockdale, Tony Cederwall, Gillian Melsop, Royale-Kitchens, Nebulite, Nature's Nest and JBS Electrical.

We would also like to thank Auckland's Finest painters, Holtec Trust, Herman Pacific, Elephant Waterproofing, Placemakers Cook Street, Premium Tools, Opening Doors, Upright Scaffolding, Murdoch Newell, Optimum Environments, Swift Roofing, The Rotary Clubs of Ythan Valley, Scotland and Midtown Kathmandu, Daventry Methodist Church, volunteers and all our wonderful Friends of First Steps Himalaya and everyone who donated from around the world. A special mention too for those generous donors who wish to remain anonymous but play a vital role in supporting First Steps Himalaya. THANK YOU!

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit: www.firststepshimalaya.org

Email: director@firststepshimalaya.org

Facebook: www.facebook.com/FIRSTSTEPSHIMALAYA



To donate within New Zealand:

First Steps Himalaya

02- 0704-0065005-00

To donate from outside New Zealand:

Paypal: www.firststepshimalaya.org/donate

OR

Transferwise Payments can be made via international transfer through Wise: www.wise.com

Account name: First Steps Himalaya

Account number 02-0704-0065005-00

SWIFT code: BKNZNZ22

Address: Bank of New Zealand, 226 Trafalgar Street, Nelson, New Zealand

