



# EDUCATE THE CHILDREN

Fall 2002

## Building on Success: ETC's New Program Areas

by Colleen Flynn Thapalia, ETC Co-Director

These days we hear these questions a lot: How are ETC's new project areas in the Kathmandu Valley different from the original project area in Rasuwa and Nuwakot districts, where ETC has worked since 1994? Is ETC implementing the same community-based model of development in the two new locations?

Clearly, there is more than just geography that makes these areas unique. Each has its own combination of local resources, access to services like roads and health facilities, and very different human communities. Below I have tried to detail a few of the challenges that make these two new ETC communities special.

Gadavari: The "Gadavari" project area includes three Village Development Committees (VDCs) on the southern rim of the Kathmandu Valley. There, ETC is working primarily with Dalit ("untouchable") castes and janjati (ethnic minorities). A recent baseline study confirmed that ETC's involvement is very relevant to improving the education and quality of life among these communities, as well as offering the potential to improve social

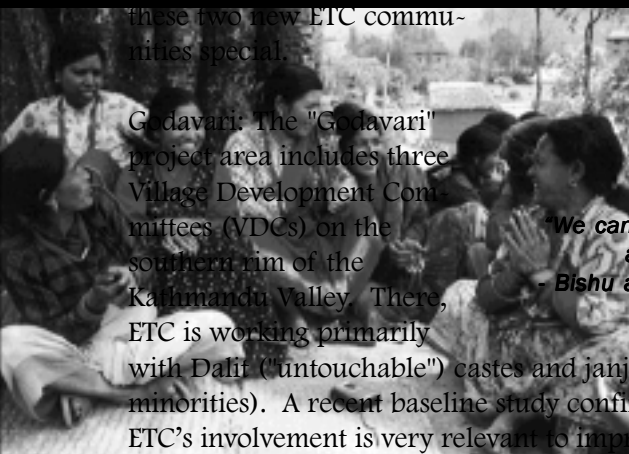
relations among all of the area's caste and ethnic groups. (See related story, page ?)

Nagarkoti: In the "Nagarkoti" area, the target community is a caste of very downtrodden, "low-caste" people who have been forced off their traditional land. Bishu Karki, a Women's Development Assistant, and Sunita Thapa, a Community Motivator, both work at the local level, helping women organize literacy classes and women's groups, as well as prioritizing community needs.

From what they have seen, the most pressing issues are income, education, and health. In ETC's original community-development model, income-generation came as an extension of literacy training, group formation and awareness raising. However, the Nagarkoti lifestyle requires field staff to adapt the model according to local

needs.

In the Nagarkoti area, which lies on the urban fringe of Kathmandu City, people have no agricultural land. "In the rural area (Nuwakot), people had their own land and



***"We can't just talk about awareness. Their stomachs are empty – they can't eat our words"***  
- Bishu and Sunita, Women's Development Field Staff

### ETC Unhindered by Recent Political Changes in Nepal

Instability in Nepal's political situation has remained since our last newsletter in the summer. Most recently, King Gyanendra appointed a new Prime Minister after dismissing the elected prime minister and installing a non-elected cabinet. The King has promised that the new Prime Minister will quell the Maoist "People's War" and call elections to reestablish democratic government.

Throughout these events, ETC's programs have continued to move forward. And we will carry on bringing education, women's development, health and agriculture programs to our partner communities.

## Books for Families!

**What is your first memory relating to books? Perhaps it is “The Cat in the Hat” or another classic. Or of looking at pictures while your grandmother read you nursery rhymes.**

For many children in Nepal, their first interaction with books happens on a hard wooded bench at school when they are already five or six years old. These school text books are to be studied, even memorized, not enjoyed. And they are likely to be the only books the child sees.

An ETC effort, supported with a grant from the Global Fund for Children, seeks to change this ... to make reading a fun family activity before children begin school.

Building on our successful women’s literacy program, ETC will bring together representatives from our women’s groups to develop books for children beginning this fall. With the help of facilitators and artists, the women will produce three sets of short stories over the course of a year.

Once the books are available, ETC’s field staff will train women in family reading skills, like reading with expression, using voices for characters, and giving children a chance to ask questions and comment on the story. Thus, the children’s books will strengthen newly acquired literacy skills on the part of the mothers, while introducing socially relevant messages involving issues like hygiene, gender equity, and ethnic tolerance.

“Having books read to them is so essential for children to build the knowledge needed to become good readers themselves,” says Freema Hillman, ETC Board member, who helped develop our pioneering kindergarten programs. “So, activities like ours will give small children an educational advantage in their preschool years, while reinforcing the women’s literacy skills.”



*A woman and child enjoy reading together, strengthening skills and*  
x x x x x x x x .

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## So many ways to share . . .

### Building a Strong Future Together.

Every gift to ETC, of any size, makes a tremendous difference. This holds especially true this year, when so many foundations and donors are scaling back on their charitable giving due to losses in the value of their investments.

Here are some ways to support ETC’s work:

- Our **annual holiday gift list**, which includes sponsorships, and other needed items and activities.
- **Workplace giving** through the **Combined Federal Campaign** and other campaigns.
- **Shopping online**. Two websites, **mycause.com** and **iGive.com**, offer the chance to make purchases at regular prices, with a percentage of the sale coming to ETC.

**Planned giving** is another option. Leaving a legacy through a bequest in your will is a very effective way to help secure ETC’s future. ETC’s Founder, Pamela Carson, chose to do this, leading to the creation of ETC’s small endowment fund. As this endowment fund slowly grows, it will provide a stable base ensuring future educational opportunities for women and children in Nepal. Naming ETC as a **beneficiary (sole or partial) of an IRA, retirement annuity or Keogh plan** also reduces estate taxes and support ETC. **Charitable Remainder Trusts** are an option that allows you to assure income for yourself or someone else for a fixed period of time, after which the trust is transferred to a pre-determined beneficiary, such as ETC.

# Academic Perspective Boosts ETC's Effectiveness

## Nepal Experts Back ETC's Work

ETC has long enjoyed the support of numerous Nepal experts from the academic community. Their research and depth of understanding of . . . . ETC supporters from outside the academic world take confidence in the support of . . . .

Most recently, Board member **Susan Hangen** and supporter **Sara Shneiderman**, a former ETC volunteer, represented ETC at the annual South Asia Conference at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Oct. 11-13. Susan, an Assistant Professor at Ramapo College (NJ), spoke with many scholars, who were excited by ETC's pro-poor approach, especially among women.

In fact, ETC has maintained active relationships with scholars since its inception in 1990, which has contributed to ETC's multi-dimensional approach.

ETC has had especially close contact with Cornell University, facilitated by our Ithaca, New York location. Many of ETC's founding board members were from Cornell, including **Professor Kathryn March** (Anthropology), **Professor Daniel Sisler** (Agricultural Economics), and Lecturer **Banu Oja** (Nepali language), as well as then-graduate students **Manohar Sharma** and **Lazima Onta**.

Academic work underway that touches on ETC's work

includes:

- Board members **Assistant Professor Katherine Rankin** and **Ph.D. candidate Yogendra Shakya**, both of the University of Toronto, who are conducting a comparative study of microcredit practices and gender politics in Nepal and Vietnam.
- Board member **Assistant Professor Susan Hangen** studies ethnicity, nationalism, and the anthropology of social movements, and teaches at Ramapo College.
- Board member **Laurie Vasily**, a Ph.D. candidate in Cornell's Education Department is developing a *Dalit*-focused literacy curriculum through a participatory process involving *Dalit* NGOs.
- Board member **Mukta Tamang**, a Ph.D. candidate in Cornell's Anthropology Department conducts research on ethnic political movements and diversity.
- Former Nepal Administrative Director **Sita Ram Basnet**, currently a Ph.D. student at the University of Reading, studies women's empowerment development projects, and plans to conduct field research in ETC's original program area.

## Congratulations to Pamela's Son on his Wedding!

Please join ETC in congratulating **Ram Sharan Thapa** and his new wife, **Niruja Hamal Thakuri**, on their marriage. A reception in Ithaca in September celebrated the young couple, who were married in Nepal last December.

Ram is the adopted son of ETC's founder Pamela Carson. She first met Ram in 1988 when he lived on the street in Kathmandu with several other boys. It was this chance meeting that eventually led to the establishment of ETC.

In reflecting on why he chose to return to Nepal to seek an arranged marriage, Ram recalls a dinner party conversation almost 10 years ago when he was in high school. The conversation turned to marriage, and Pamela asked Ram teasingly whether he thought he would marry a Nepali woman or an American. He answered that he would choose a Nepali wife. "My mom laughed at that time, but as the years went by that idea stayed in my head and I thought of many good reasons to marry in Nepal," Ram says. "Mainly I want to keep my culture and the something inside me that is Nepali."



ETC's Nepal Director, **Mira Rana**, with Ram's wife **Niruja**

# A Day in the

Indra Kamala lives in ETC's Godavari program area, on the edge of the Kathmandu Valley. THough by bus the capital city is only 1 hour away, Indra's village feels as rural as any in Nepal. To get to her house we zig zag over narrow earthen boarders between rice fields and walk up a long hill.

Indra's

family

xxxxxxxxxx.



# Life of Indra Kamala

Indra's day . . . . .



For children like Indra Kamala, education opens worlds their parents never . . . . .

## ETC's program area

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could eat," noted Bishu recently. "With the Nagarkoti, if they don't go to work every day, they might not have enough food."

To support the women in their quest for empowerment and a better life, Bishu and Sunita have helped form 11 women's groups. Training is underway and literacy classes are scheduled to start December 15th. To achieve this, Bishu, Sunita and their colleagues work unusual hours. Meetings have to be at 7 a.m. because local women must go to their jobs by 8 a.m. The women's work involves using hammers to break rocks into gravel for construction projects. They also carry cement and bricks.

"At first no women came to the meetings, but once the Nagarkoti men became convinced of the good work of ETC, the women started coming," said Bishu.

Sunita noted that the women work six days per week for about 100-200 rupees per day. But now, with ETC's help, they are learning how to save 50 rupees per month. Once a group has accumulated enough savings, the members will begin making loans for small business start-up funds. ETC's women's development team is looking into what kinds of businesses are most likely to succeed, given the women's limited resources. One activity under consideration is flower selling. "The people are close to the road, so income-generation will be different than in Nuwakot," observed Bishu.

The second priority issue identified by Bishu and Sunita was education. Since the women marry very young and begin having children – often as early as age 12 or 15 – they are not well educated themselves and lack an awareness of the importance of school. "All women marry within their village. They don't have exposure to anything outside," said Sunita.

Although many of the new Nagarkoti women's group members have studied through the mid-elementary levels, they are not fully literate. Therefore, women literacy class facilitators have been difficult to find in the local area.

A problem that Bishu and Sunita relate to the low education level of local women is the poor health situation in the area. Bishu enumerated the problems thus: "They are unaware of inoculations. There are no toilets – there is no space for toilets. Many of the older people have goiters indicating poor nutrition."

Some reflections: ETC is a learning organization. Susanna and I are proud to lead a team in Nepal that takes every experience into account when planning and implementing new initiatives. The many years of experience that went into the successful Rasuwa-Nuwakot project inform the field staff's design of the new projects in the Godavari and Nagarkoti areas. Yet these activities reflect the staff's innovation, creativity and practicality as well.

We also note that carefully laying the groundwork for new initiatives is essential. Baseline studies have given us a solid understanding of the current situation so that we can plan our work sensibly and evaluate it effectively. Many thanks are due to the Dalit Mahila Sangh (Dalit Women's Organization) and the Society for Integrated Community Development (SICD) for their help in locating these communities.

We hope you will choose to support our ongoing community-based efforts. Future newsletters will detail our progress.

(Special thanks to Josh Brody for his assistance with interviewing and translation.)

## Thank yous to:

- **Rachel Margolis**, summer intern extraordinaire, who came to us through **Cornell's Public Service Center**. Her work included outreach, research, and communication. We miss Rachel, who is now on a junior year in London.
- **Maya Holmberg**, another summer regular, who helped with administrative work and fundraising research.
- Loyal Ithaca volunteers **Leslie Eliet**, **Aaron Pines**, **Bob Oswald**, and **Terry Koch**.
- New volunteers **Margaret Myers**, **Jennifer Hanes**, **Cindy McClain**, and **Lauren Gavin**.
- **Renee Cammarata**, formerly of the United Nations Development Program in Nepal and now based in Syracuse.
- Ithaca College student **Tina Lax**, who is staging a benefit rock concert for ETC. We're grateful for your advocacy and action!
- **Sara Shneiderman**, a Cornell University grad student and former ETC volunteer in Nepal, who carried display materials to and from the Wisconsin conference.
- **Mark Turin**, of the Digital Himalaya Project, for permission to use his insightful article about Nepali letter-writing.
- **Don Mesibov** and the **Institute for Learning Centered Education** in Canton, NY, which provided a scholarship for ETC's co-directors to participate in their weeklong summer conference. Thanks as well to **Marge and Pat Flynn** for their encouragement. It was a productive retreat!
- **Juna's Café** on the Ithaca Commons, which showed ETC's photo exhibition for the month of August. We appreciated so much the chance to share our story.
- The **Zonta** chapter in Cortland, NY for their invitation to ETC's co-directors to speak at the chapter's October meeting.
- The **Wilmington West Rotary** (Wilmington, DE), (add two other names), and **Balaju Rotary** in Kathmandu for their initiative in establishing support for ETC's agricultural work.
- The **Three Guineas Fund**, whose two-year grant in support of women's small-business development is coming to a close this fall. As the work moves forward, and we recall all we have learned together, we thank you for your partnership.
- ETC supporters in the San Francisco Bay Area, who met with Co-Director Susanna Pearce during her visit there in June. **Bess Bendet** of the **Three Guineas Fund**, **Ken Jaffe** of the **International Child Resource Institute (ICRI)**, **Barbara Mercer** of the **Himalayan Fair**, **Claire Garrison** of the **Whole Child Initiative**, **Lawrence Chickering** and **Uzma Khaishgi** of **Educate Girls Globally**, **Katrina Muniz** of the **Global Fund for Women**, and **Andrea Dew** of the **Susie Tompkins Buell Foundation**.
- **ICRI** Director **Ken Jaffe** and ETC Board member **Freema Hillman**, of **Around the World Kid 2 Kid**, for including ETC as a partner in global child-to-child outreach. Check out Kid 2 Kid at [www.aroundtheworldkid2kid.org](http://www.aroundtheworldkid2kid.org).
- **Regina**, **Jackie**, **David** and all of our friends at **Voyagers International** for their many forms of daily support
- **Linda Farthing** and **Lesley Mackay** for their International Women's Day publicity efforts
- **Linda Farthing**, **Leah Mayer**, and board members **Laurie Vasily** and **Mukta Tamang** for their efforts to

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## Himalayan

## Research

## Bulletin

Those of you who are interested in reading about current research regarding Nepal and the Himalayan Region might be interested in the "Himalayan Research Bulletin", a publication put out twice yearly by the Association for Nepal and Himalayan Studies (formerly Nepal Studies Association). This publication is well-respected in the academic community, and includes articles on a wide range of topics. ETC will be featured in an upcoming issue. For more information, see [www.himalayan.pdx.edu](http://www.himalayan.pdx.edu).



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Because of your selfless service, today I am in this position. And there is one famous proverb that is, "Those who help others there is God to help them." Today I am being able to know about this world because of your help. Thanks a lot for that.

— Bimala Lama to Phyllis Wynn