

# Annual Report

2014

## Setu Nepal

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## Forward

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### 2014

2014 has been a prosperous year for Setu Nepal: the transit home was a great success, and we made the most of crucial networking opportunities to forge strong links with other peer charities. These links helped us progress children in our care to further education, and gain further sponsorship during our appeals.

### Looking Ahead

For 2015, we look to the expansion of the total capacity in the transit home, enabling us to maximize its potential and cater for as many children and their guardians as possible. We strive to continue to liaise with other charities to maximize the potential of women and children in our care, and deliver a high standard of training to as many as possible.

Ranju Pandey  
Program Director  
January 1, 2015

## Introduction

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Setu Nepal is a non-profit organization established in 2001 by a group of young professionals and foreign volunteers. As a bridge to ease the transition of women and their children re-entering society after imprisonment and infected by HIV, its aim is to provide a residential center in order to rehabilitate and supply emotional care, as well as livelihood training, so that they can re-enter into society with economic empowerment; thus enabling them to provide a stable future for themselves and their children.

On the whole, 2014 has been a prosperous year for Setu Nepal. We've seen a more streamlined In Care approach to the prison program, an increase in prison visits, more child sponsorship and several successful appeals. In establishing the transit home, we have successfully provided emotional, physical and social support to children and their mothers suffering from HIV. As part of our networking drive for 2014, we established strong links with other organizations supporting women and children, and we successfully referred several children to these organizations for further care.

## Women in Prisons Program

### In Care Phase

By providing these women with advocacy, psychological counseling and vocational and skills-based training during their imprisonment, Setu Nepal empowers them and prepares them for life beyond the prison walls. Setu recognizes the plight of their children, whether inside or outside the prison, and acts accordingly to help children living in prison, support the dependents of prison women and provide education and healthcare to the needy.

### Jail Visits

As part of our Women in Prisons program, Setu Nepal conducts essential jail visits each year to prisons within and beyond the Kathmandu valley. This year, we visited jails in the Kathmandu, Kaski, Morong, Chitwon and Parsa districts with the following objectives:



- To celebrate festivals with women in prison;
- To update our records on the needs of prison women in order to provide sufficient support;
- To update records on their offspring living in or outside prison;
- To meet their families and establish a rapport between them and Setu.

During each visit, we met the prisoners, introduced Setu to new prisoners, gathered information on their respective circumstances (including health and dependent children) and assessed the facilities within each of the jails. From

these visits, we provided essentials, such as bucket broom, to several prisons after taking note of the inadequate amenities. From previous years, we noted the lack of cultural celebrations that took place in the prisons, and this year we succeeded in hosting Dashain celebrations to empower the women and celebrate our rich culture together.

### **Dashain Celebration in Prison**

Dashain is the longest standing and the most well-known festival in the Nepalese annual calendar, celebrated by Nepalese of all caste and creed throughout the country. During this time, relatives from near and far reunite in every household. Family elders give tika and jamara along with a blessing, while younger family members visit their older relatives for these blessings.



The importance lies in families coming together to receive blessings and honour their elders. Prison women equally have the right to celebrate

this holiday, but this did not happen: many have been shunned by their families, or their families do not have the means to come and celebrate with them. Setu held celebrations for these women: a representative from Setu along with two Australian volunteers visited Birgunj Jail to celebrate Dashain with prison women and their children, with food, gifts and tika. We are indebted to Laurel and Rachel from Australia, for expressing their interest in meeting these women and partaking in the celebrations.

## Child-centered Care and Education

### School visits for Monitoring and Evaluation

Throughout the year, representatives from Setu visited various schools in the Kathmandu valley and further afield to collect information about children to update their respective profiles. We met with the respective Principals and their teachers, and monitored the children's academic performance, attendance rate, assignments, cleanliness and involvement in extracurricular activities. On the whole, feedback was positive. It gave Setu the chance to make the children aware of the importance of their education, and to meet the families and increase their accountability for their child's performance. We conducted means based testing, with the aim of making parents and schools accountable for funding the child's education alongside Setu Nepal.



We met parents and teachers of sponsored children to discuss their academic performance and update our records. This year, we also had a home visitation program that ran in the Chitwon and Nuwakot districts.

### Sudha and Apsara

For the first time this year, children sponsored by Setu sat the school leaving examinations (known as SLC). Sudha and Apsara, two students who Setu have sponsored from primary level education, successfully completed their school level education, obtaining first division marks (67% and 76% respectively). SetuNepal does not have the means to continue educational

support after the mandatory school level, however we used our network of affiliates to link Sudha and Apsara to Nepal Youth Foundation to continue support for their education to college level.

By collecting report cards and convening with the school Principals, we have been able to assess each child's progress in order to gauge the best use of funding, and to encourage each individual child to reach their full potential through dedication to their studies.

### **Navin Acharya**

In 2014 Setu Nepal has stopped funding for Navin Acharya who had been supported since 2011. After discussing his educational performance with the Principal of Uttar Gaya English Secondary School of Nuwakot, we decided to discontinue his support as he was not making the most of the opportunity given to him to pursue an education.



We attempted to communicate with both Navin and his mother on several occasions to discuss a renewed dedication to his studies or explore alternate routes such as vocational training, but we were met by a complete lack of cooperation and understanding. Navin's attendance left a lot to be desired, and he ran away from the school hostel on several occasions. He wanted to pursue labour work to earn money. Setu Nepal isn't cutting Navin off completely; should he wish to discuss his future and show an engagement with his future and career, our doors will be open. From our critical performance evaluations,

we found that we can distribute funding more fairly to those children that are actively engaged in their education, and show a commitment to their studies.

## **Rescue Appeals**

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As per the translation of its name, Setu acts as a bridge for deprived women and children by raising awareness for their unfortunate plights through appeals and sponsorship from well wishers. We act directly with these deprived children and women, and ensure that 100% of donations go directly to those that we appeal on behalf of.

### **Puja, Samjana and Sushma**

Setu Nepal ran several successful appeals throughout 2014. Firstly, to rescue three children named Puja, Samjana and Sushma, the daughters of parents with HIV and whose mother had suffered discrimination from her husband and society. The appeal gained momentum after the girls were moved to the Setu transit home, and, with the help of Nepal youth foundation, we found the girls long term accommodation. It is thanks to the kind well-wishers we were able to house the girls, and facilitated their move to long term shelter with the aid of Nepal youth Foundation. However, Puja, Samjana and Sushma remain in contact, and in our hearts.

### **Sudha and Apsara**

Setu Nepal is limited in sponsoring children education to the compulsory age of ten here in Nepal. We appealed for funding to send Sudha and Apsara to college. Nepal Youth Foundation answered our pleas and are currently supporting the two children as they attend college.

### Kalawati



With the aid of the district Police Officials, the Women and Children Service of Doti and the World Vision International branch in Doti, Setu Nepal rescued a mother and her three year olds daughter from a cave in the jungle of Western Nepal where they had been living for six months. Kalawati, around 35, a HIV victim



that has also suffered severe familial discrimination, leaving her vulnerable to mental illness. Due to the stigma attached to mental illnesses in Nepal, Kalawati was hgunned by her family and expelled from the village, along with her daughter. When we rescued them, they had been living in the cave for 6 months. Acting as guardians for the pair, Setu Nepal made an



urgent appeal for support, and found sponsorship to help the pair. Laxmi, the name given to the three year old daughter, is vulnerable, unused to human contact and highly distrustful of strangers. We have seen progress this year, as Laxmi has begun to open up around Setu and our colleagues and is currently

undergoing treatment. We have found further support from two organizations, for mother suffering from HIV and mental health, and we continue to collaborate to provide the best possible care – all down to your help.

## Case Study

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What is your problem?

*(By Ranju Pandey, representative of Setu Nepal as her experience while she visited a school appealing for the education of a child with HIV)*

This year, I visited a private school near to our Setu head office on behalf of one of our beneficiaries; *Kabita (name changed)* is a child living with HIV in the care center at Setu Nepal, whose mother acts as primary caregiver to her daughter and three other HIV positive children in the center. Kabita's mother came to me with a proposition: to ask for support from Setu equal to that for a government school, and she would pay the difference to send her child to private school as it stands, the government is in talks to provide 1000 Rs for social security of children with HIV

I decided to pay the school a visit. I met with the principal, who had been working there since it was established 17 years ago. When I began to explain our proposal, he interrupted me and asked me to get to the point. I addressed him directly, saying that I worked for children living with HIV, and I have children infected and affected by the disease that are seeking admission to your school. He was shocked, and rendered speechless. Eventually he replied, by asking me if HIV was transmitted by sharing food. I told him that it this was unfortunate: if we so-called educated people don't know the facts about HIV, how can we educate others? I offered to host a HIV orientation session, free of cost. After a short exchange, he eventually told me that he reported to a committee of three different schools, so could not decide himself - he could ask the others, and on their authority give me an answer. I was exasperated; he was deferring to others for a decision, but how that decision is reached would be decided on his delivery of the proposition. If he was unconvinced, his delivery would be unconvincing. I said nothing. On leaving his room, a quote on the wall of his room caught my eye, and I told him as such. It said: "*The problem is not the problem. The problem is your attitude towards the problem.*"

### Setu Transit Home



This year Aarati House, the Setu Transit Home housed 17 children, along with 13 mothers. 5 were discharged after they received treatment, while a further 3 were discharged once educational support was confirmed from Setu and their peer organizations. At this moment, there are 3 children living in the

Aarati House.

### Festival Celebrations in Aarati House

One of our visions for Aarati House was to provide children with what they had been lacking: shelter, care and culture. In respect of the latter, we acknowledged several religious festivals throughout the year to educate and enrich the children in Nepalese culture.

### Asthami



In Nepal, religion is extremely important, and there is an inherent respect for the Gods. Krishna Janma

Asthami is a large festival by which Hindus celebrate the birth of lord Krishna. A celebration was held in the Transit home, for the children to celebrate with their mothers. It was very successful, and both mothers and children enjoyed it

immensely. We took the children to the local temple to pay their respects and familiarize them with our rich culture.

### Teej

Teej festival is focused on women, but we had celebrations in Aarati House. We provided a variety of foods for the children, and discussed the importance of the festival with them to deepen their understanding of longstanding traditions in Nepal. We also took them the Pasupati temple the day after.



### Dashain



October and November mark the festival season in Nepal. First, Dashain, the biggest annual festival, is celebrated. It honors the Hindu destructor goddess, Durga throughout the month of October, and various rituals are performed. Most businesses close and people are encouraged to spend time with their families. The children and mothers in Aarati House celebrated Dashain with blessings. Two volunteers participated in the celebrations, and clothes and toys were generously provided by the volunteers and Kay Bixby from the United Kingdom.

## Tihar



Tihar, or Diwali, is the festival of lights, which marks the beginning of a new Hindu year. Each year, lights are strung outside houses, fireworks let off and people go from house to house singing and dancing to honor the goddess of wealth, Laxmi – a tradition called Laxmi Puja. In Aarati House, the children decorated the home with marigold garlands and made a ringali with coloured powder and rice. It was a great success and enjoyed by all, a sure sign that this new year will be even sweeter and more prosperous than the one before it.

## Volunteer Placements

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Setu Nepal saw four foreign volunteers throughout 2014; Morgane Ortion (France), Jennifer Woods (Northern Ireland), Laurel Leak, and Rachael Harrison (Australia) and They assisted Setu in a variety of ways: with website content, the compilation of case studies and reports and online appeals, as well as visits to the prisons and care home, transit home and organizing Dashain festival celebrations. Setu has benefitted from these placements in raising awareness of our mission, as well as giving well-wishers firsthand experience of just how far their funding goes.

## Volunteer Testimony

*(By Jennifer Woods, Northern Irish volunteer from December 2013- January 2014)*

Coming to Nepal in late 2013, I had no idea what to expect of the country, the people or the culture. The only way I can think of describing my experience was overwhelming: I was overwhelmed by the kindness of Ranju and her family, those working in the prisons, and the inmates and their children we met.

In January of this year, I accompanied Ranju as a volunteer for Setu Nepal to conduct prison visits throughout the country: in Kathmandu, Lamjung, Chitwon and Pokhara. We went with the objective of updating our records, monitoring the progress of the female prisoners as well as mother with HIV who had already participated in training program. We had previously been in contact with, checking their needs were being met and organizing income generating workshops for the women.

The conditions were a far cry from what I had seen in my experience. Scores of women confined to dark and dank, concrete rooms, to cook, clean, live and sleep in – some even with their children. I was overwhelmed by the welcome I received from the women, given tea, food and a seat amongst them. The women showed me around their compounds, their handicraft and shared their tales, whether in broken English or through Ranju's translations. A few were unjustly imprisoned, their freedom bartered for their husbands crimes, or innocent women of my own age caught up in drug trafficking. The hardest part, in my experience, was seeing the children in prison with their mothers: wide eyed and smiling despite their grim circumstances. Seeing Setu in action, ensuring they got the supplies they need, training for work and income generating activities and above all treating these women with a respect they were denied elsewhere, really brought home the importance of Setu Nepal for these women. Without Setu, they would be denied

## Networking and Coordination

### Meetings with the Network for Children, Prisoners and Dependents

NCPD is the Network for Children, Prisoners and Dependents formed by several organizations who serve these people. As a member organization of NCPD, a representative from Setu Nepal attended various meetings at the NCPD Head Office to discuss the activities conducted by NCPD and raise the challenges and issues of children whose parents are in jail. In those meetings, we observed that almost all member organizations are primarily focused on children, rather than their mothers, and they have limited contact with former prisoners whose children are supported by their NGOs.



*“Parents don’t want to contact their children after their release because they don’t want to take on the burden of their children.”*

- Director, NCPD

### Organizational Development Training

This summer, Setu Nepal staff members participated in the Organizational Development (OD) training organized by NCPD, with the main objective of finding out more about the organizational structure especially the monitoring mechanism of the organization.

### **Orientation on Children Rights at NCPD**

A representative from Setu participated in a half day course on Children's Rights, organized by NCPD. The participants were from various child focused organizations. The objective of the training was to increase awareness of children's rights, especially those in care and juvenile delinquents.

During the morning, we discussed children's rights and their development, national and international conventions, rights of the child in residential care and provisions under the UN guidelines for the alternative care of children. Concerning the juvenile justice system, we addressed the reasons behind child punishment, and contrasted it with the treatment of adults. A child is less mature and therefore less capable of malicious intent when committing a crime; with their limited knowledge, children could be more readily rehabilitated.

### **Orientation on Government Guidelines to run child home**

The objective of the orientation program was to raise awareness of government guidelines amongst those who run children's homes. 50 participants attended from around 30 children's homes. There, the Nepalese Children's Act was discussed, along with the government's implementation and strategic action plans. It proved beneficial as a safe forum in which to discuss better solutions to the challenges of housing children of different ages, castes and cultures under one roof.



### **Candle Light Program in memory of Soul**



In memory of people who died at the hands of HIV, the Public Health Office holds a candle lit service every year in collaboration with several local NGOs. As of this year, Setu Nepal has ran a program for HIV, and was involved in the joining of hands in Patan Durbar Square commemorating those we

have lost. The District Public Health Officer gave a speech encouraging all participants to support those living HIV.

### **Workshop at the Department of Prisons**

The Department of Prisons is one of the core bodies within the Nepali government in direct contact with prison and prisoners. The Director General organized a workshop and invited Setu Nepal to update us on the current state of prisons and prisoners in Nepal, the challenges they face and the role of organizations who act on their behalf. It was a good opportunity to network and strengthen our rapport with other organizations and the government, giving us easier access for prison visits in the future.

### **Support from the Public Health Office**

We keep regular contact with both the government and other non-governmental organizations. We submitted quarterly reports to the Lalitpur district Child Welfare Committee, as per their required standards.



As of July, Setu Nepal has received support for basic medicines for the children living in the transit home, courtesy of the district Public health Office. The medicine is for those suffering from HIV that both live in or frequent the transit home. This is of the highest importance: not only for the welfare of the children and their mothers, but also as public recognition by the government of Setu Nepal's activities in the community.

### **Alternative Fundraising**

Setu Nepal raised funds by offering the head office as a venue for training conducted by MSP Era. For four days residential training, the organization was paid around Rs. 90000.

## Donations

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### Rice

Ms. BeluThapa kindly committed to donating a 15kg sack of rice each month to the Transit Home, providing 12 sacks in 2014.

### Bunk-beds



As Setu Nepal is already connected with MSP Era, the peer charity donated two bunk beds after Setu Nepal hosted training and accommodation for the other charity.

### Sofa Set

We would like to have the opportunity to thank Mr. Bimal Pandey, Vice President of Setu Nepal who generously donated a sofa set (worth Nrs. 25000). We are indebted to him for his kindness.



### Clothing

We would like to have the opportunity to thank Ms. Kay Bixby and Yasmin Laksi, who generously donated clothes for children. We are highly grateful for their donations and their concern for the organization. The children of Setu Nepal and prison women will benefit from their kindness.

### Storage and supplies



Aarati house, Setu Nepal's Transit home, received a generous donation from Australian volunteers Rachael Harrison and her grandmother Ms. Laurel Leak. They spent ten days working with the children in Aarati house on autumn 2014. Rachael donated Nrs.14000 to Aarati House to purchase a cupboard and winter blankets. Ms. Laurel Leak donated toys, sports equipment, clothes and stationary for the children. The cupboard is used for keeping toys and sporting goods as well as the blankets which are used for the children of Aarati House. The children and staff are very grateful for their help.

## Administration and Organization



Setu Nepal has renewed the charity status of the organization, after submitting the application and relevant evidence to the district chief office Kathmandu.

Following the suggestions made by the District Child Welfare Committee, we started to maintain separate files for each child admitted to the Setu transit home with their parent, detailing their state of health, and emotional and physical needs. Further,

we have designated the care home a strict non-smoking zone in line with the children's wellbeing.

Following on from a decision by the board, a part-time administrative officer has been appointed to maintain the financial and administrative documents for Setu Nepal.

## Conclusion

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2014 was a successful year for Setu Nepal: Aarati House, Setu Nepal's transit home, saw 17 children living there with their mothers, while we formed vital links with other charities at a variety of networking events. These links mean we have been able to deliver more care to a wider range of women and children in Nepal, whether through sponsorship or liaising with other charities to fund further education or find placements for the children.

We cannot begin to thank our well-wishers for everything they have helped us to achieve; without you, none of this would be possible. We are thankful for the success we have seen in 2014, and hope it continues into 2015.

## Contact Information

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