



Lumbini Girls' School, Nepal

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Prepared by: Gaurav Pradhan

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Real Medicine Foundation
11700 National Blvd., Suite 234
Los Angeles, CA 90064
+1.310.820.4502

Background

Lumbini is 205 km west of the capital city, Kathmandu, and has the lowest female literacy rate in Nepal, at just 18%. Issues such as the marriage of girls before age 12, parents' reluctance to have their girls in school with boys after puberty, the dowry system, and restriction of women's decision-making all play a role in suppressing the rights and potential of women in the region. On a larger scale, discrimination and lack of education for women contribute to Lumbini's struggle with severe malnutrition, lack of medical care, and high infant and maternal mortality rates.

Karuna Girls' School is working to change these statistics by providing education for girls from grades 6–12, as well as vocational training for underprivileged girls and women in Lumbini. Since this is an all-girls school, parents are more willing to allow their daughters to attend, and Karuna Girls' School has gained some popularity in the region. During the course of 2016, the school grew from serving 150 students to 186 students. The curriculum emphasizes reading, writing, computer literacy, health, hygiene, nutrition, and family planning, while vocational training includes courses in computer literacy and tailoring.

RMF's Presence

RMF has been active in Nepal since 2015, when we arrived shortly after the devastating April 25th earthquake to provide emergency relief services and strategize a long-term plan to help strengthen education and healthcare systems in Nepal. We focused on strengthening Kanti Children's Hospital, the only government referral level children's hospital in Nepal; supporting orphans and vulnerable children in Kathmandu; and reaching the underserved populations of rural areas, such as Arupokhari and Bhotenamlang. Through our emergency relief work with Venerable Metteyya Sakyaputta, founder of the Nepali organization Global Karuna, we also learned of Karuna Girls' School in Lumbini, Nepal.

In August of 2017, RMF began construction for a new 4-classroom building at Karuna Girls' School with a capacity of 200 students. Construction for the building was completed in April of 2018, and the building was officially handed over to the school management in November. This is a step in helping the school to meet its long-term goal of accommodating 500 students.

Currently, RMF's new focus at Karuna Girls' School is in supporting the salary of one of the school's teachers.

Summary of Activities

Karuna Girls' School has worked especially hard in educating parents on the benefits of sending their daughters to school. As a result, more and more parents are becoming interested in enrolling their girls at the school. During the months of April and May, new admissions were announced, and there has been significant growth in inquiries from parents.

Karuna Girls' School distributed pamphlets and visited nearby villages to announce the opening of admissions for the new academic session. The school will operate new classes for grades 1 through 4 from our new school building, which was built by RMF, starting in the next academic session.



A Karuna Girls' School teacher putting up a pamphlet to promote new admissions

Federal Assembly of Nepal Member Visit

Ms. Komal Oil, a member of the Federal Assembly for Province 5, who is also a TV personality and folk singer, visited Karuna Girls' School during the auspicious occasion of Buddha Jayanti, the birthday of the Buddha. She met with Venerable Metteyya, the founder of Karuna Girls' School, as well as with the Vice Chairman of Lumbini Development Trust and Shankar Gautam, the Principal of Karuna Girls' School. They discussed the good work the school has been doing for educating both girls and their parents on the importance of literacy in society and in the home. As a female member of the Federal Assembly herself, Ms. Oil was highly aware of the challenges and lack of opportunity girls face in Nepal, and thus she deeply appreciated the work of Karuna Girls' School.



Ms. Komal Oil, a member of the Federal Assembly, visits Karuna Girls' School



Ms. Komal Oil interacting with the students

Buddha Jayanti Celebration

May 17, 2019 marked the 2,563rd birth anniversary of the Buddha. This day is celebrated each year in Nepal. On this occasion, Lumbini Development Trust awarded 5 students of Karuna Girls' School with scholarships for the year for their outstanding academic performance. The recipients were: Sima Harijan of Grade 8, Gauri Gupta of Grade 10, Manisha Chaudhary of Grade 9, Nirutta Bhattarai of Grade 9, and Sanjana Gupta of Grade 10.



Students in traditional attire on Buddha Jayanti

State-Level Essay Writing Competition

Mr. Shankar Gautam, Principal of Karuna Girls' School, took part in a state-level essay writing competition and won third place amongst 65 participants. The competition was jointly organized by Province no. 5 and Lumbini Buddhist University.



Mr. Gautam receiving an award for winning third place in a state-level essay writing competition

A New Academic Year Begins in the New RMF Building

RMF has supported Karuna Girls School by constructing a 4-classroom building on the premises so that the school can have sufficient classroom space to accept new students. Previously, the building was not in use, as the school was still searching for funding for desks and tables for the classrooms at the time. However, they were able to start utilizing the building for classes at the start of this academic year.

The school is on a mission to increase the number of students, and they are doing this by going to nearby villages and conducting workshops for parents to educate them about the importance of literacy in modern times. The building which RMF has constructed for the school enables them to conduct this level of expansion.



The installation of whiteboards in the new RMF classroom building



Newly enrolled students participating in a drawing competition