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“If you educate a girl, you educate a family, a community, and the next generation.”

- Usha Acharya, co-founder & executive director, Nepal
Sixteen years ago, we started with a promise to a single girl, a promise for education – a promise which itself holds far greater promises: safety, independence, freedom, financial stability, health, a better life.

Since then, we have grown – in size, in experience, and in the breadth and depth of our service. But our core promise remains the same. As part of this growth, we hope this will be the first of many annual reports to help us communicate the impact of your support and our gratitude to you.

2014 was a great year for the Little Sisters Fund. We currently support more than 1,500 girls who are economically disadvantaged, marginalized, and would otherwise be at risk for child marriage, child trafficking for the sex trade, and exploitative child labor. Our success in combating these injustices and transforming the lives of so many Little Sisters is possible only because of the people who work with us – our talented staff in Nepal, the dedicated teachers at our partner schools, the parents who trust us, and not least of all, YOU, our supporters.

During my November visit to Nepal, I expressed my gratitude to our dedicated team by saying that they are the engine that makes our work possible. In response, the Chairman of our Board of Directors in Nepal and former ambassador of Nepal to the UN Dr. Jaya Raj Acharya said, “Yes, we are the engine, but an engine cannot run without fuel. We are grateful to all of our supporters, because you are the fuel that allows this engine to run.”

We are often asked about our impact and achievements. Those doing the asking usually expect to hear numbers – and that’s why we’ve included plenty here. But our achievements also have names. They are Aashika and Akin, Pragya and Pratima. We track numbers rigorously, of course – finances, exam scores, and continuation rates, to name just a few. But even as we grow, each and every girl who remains safe from child marriage, trafficking, and labor, as she transforms her life by pursuing an education, represents a major success for us.

Whether you are a donor, an advisor, a cheerleader, a volunteer, or a combination of all of those, we thank you for partnering with us and each of the 1,500+ Little Sisters to make our success possible.

Trevor Patzer
Thank you for partnering with us for another year. It is hard to believe that we are entering the 17th year of our work. I have always said that if you educate a girl, you educate her whole family. As such we are educating more than 1,500 families of the next generation!

Unfortunately, child marriage and early pregnancy, child labor, and trafficking of girls are still rampant in many places of Nepal. But these are the reasons we must continue our efforts. Prevention is the best policy, and education both addresses these problems at the root and provides a firm foundation for the future.

We live by the philosophy of “learning by doing”. We constantly strive to improve our programs and find new ways to achieve our goal. In 2014, this philosophy led us to start up our new mobile libraries program, encourage our School Coordinators to engage in “story time” during their visits with their Little Sisters, and pilot a new kind of scholarship for girls who would have dropped out after grade 10, 11 or 12.

We will continue to expand, improve, and refine our work in 2015. For example, we are exploring new ways to better support the transition from education to employment, and we have already selected three new partner schools in villages close to the Indian border in Parsa district, which will be our 19th district.

And while there is still much work to be done, we know we are successful. Not one Little Sister has been trafficked in these 16 years. This is very important, as almost 10 to 15 thousand girls are trafficked every year from Nepal. When we can enable a girl to stay with her family or intervene when relatives try to force her into marriage, we know that we are doing the right thing. After just one year with us, we can see the difference in the girls: their uniforms are tidy, they look healthier, their shyness starts to disappear, their grades improve.

In our graduates these changes are clearly evident, and we see the fruits of long-term support. LSF graduates are nurses, teachers, and accountants. One is forging ahead at Teach for Nepal. Others work at NGO’s such as Save the Children and in offices throughout Nepal. Three have scholarships to study in the US and many are pursuing bachelor’s and master’s degrees in Nepal. But most important of all, they are healthy, empowered, confident, and strong.

This impact is a result of the commitment and teamwork of the Little Sisters Fund family: Many parents deposit a few rupees a month to our modest microfinance program. Our Little Sisters stand strong against daily pressures and risks. Our donors enable opportunities through their generosity. Our alumni are setting strong examples for women in their communities. Together, we are fighting discrimination at its very roots.

On behalf of the entire Nepal team, we look forward to continuing the fight with you in 2015.

Usha Acharya
In 2014, we supported **1,542 Little Sisters** in Kindergarten – 12th Grade with full scholarships. These Little Sisters study at **70 partner schools in 18 districts** of Nepal.

**121 Teachers** from **12 schools** participated in our Primary Educator Training Program. As a result, **2,350 children** benefitted from improved skills and better pedagogical practices on the part of their teachers.

**95.9%** of **10th-grade Little Sisters** passed the School Leaving Certificate (SLC), a national exam at the end of lower secondary school – more than **2x the national rate of 43.9%**. Overall throughout our history, the SLC pass rate for Little Sisters is **98.6%**.

Our **year-on-year continuation rate** is over **98%**.

In comparison, UNESCO estimates that only **56%** of poor rural girls complete primary school, and just over **20%** complete grades 9 and 10.
OUR WORK

The Little Sisters Fund runs eight programs: three scholarship programs that increase access to education and five interlocking programs that address additional barriers to girls’ achievement and women’s empowerment.

1. School Scholarship Program
This program provides scholarships in government and semi-private schools and also covers books, supplies, and uniform costs. We plan to support more than 1,500 girls with school scholarships in 2015.

2. Individual Sponsorship Program
This program provides scholarships in private schools and also covers books, supplies, and uniform costs. There are currently more than 200 girls in this program.

3. Outreach Program
In 2009, Little Sisters and their families initiated a yearly fundraising program to “pay it forward” by supporting the education of other girls in similar situations. Since then the program has grown with additional donations made in Nepal. Today, 37 girls have access to education and LSF’s support programs thanks to this grassroots program.

4. School Coordinators Program
Young female leaders who have graduated from our program serve as mentors, role models, and community liaisons while monitoring the progress and well-being of “Little Sisters”.

5. Counseling and Awareness Raising
This program addresses challenges girls may face socially and also helps to educate parents, teachers, and the community on how they can support girls’ education.

6. Preventative and Emergency Healthcare
All Little Sisters receive basic preventative healthcare (e.g. multivitamins and deworming) as well as health education. Little Sisters Fund can also offer support in case of an emergency such as a broken bone.

7. Primary Educator Training
With the goal of improving overall quality of education, this program helps teachers move beyond the rote memorization that is typical and incorporate more critical thinking and child-focused methods in their teaching.

8. Little Daughters Savings Fund
This grassroots microfinance program is funded entirely by the families of the girls supported by the Little Sisters Fund as well as Nepalese staff members. Members can take out small loans for three purposes: higher education, small business start-up costs, and family health emergencies.
2014 HIGHLIGHTS

Creation of Mobile Libraries
For some time now, our office in Kathmandu has housed a resource center and small library, which has been a wonderful resource for the girls in the Kathmandu Valley who can easily check out and return books. But what about the girls outside of the valley? In 2014, we started a new “Mobile Libraries” program in which our School Coordinators carry small collections of books back and forth between Kathmandu and the more distant schools on their regular visits. This way, even girls outside the valley benefit from an ever-changing mini-library.

New University Partner in the U.S.
In 2014, Centenary College of Louisiana became the second university in the U.S. to offer scholarships to Little Sisters Fund graduates. Our third U.S. scholarship recipient, Aakriti, started at Centenary in September, following in the footsteps of two other Little Sisters now in their sophomore year at our inaugural scholarship partner Shenandoah University. All are doing extremely well academically and are impressively involved in campus activities, leadership, and service.

Alumni Association Established
Our long-term approach has meant we have needed to be patient to see the fruits of our efforts. But we now have a full-fledged alumni association to keep our almost 100 graduates connected to LSF, each other, and the ongoing fight for women’s equality. 2014 saw two alumni gatherings and we are excited to watch all that this group of talented, intelligent, empowered young women can do.
Good morning and Namaste to my dear friends, teachers, guests. Before starting some words I would like to say ‘Thank you’ to Madam and Sir and other members of the organization who helped to organize this program. Today I am going to tell you my story in short.

Life and death are natural rules, which we cannot eliminate. This is the reason one unlucky girl was born in a poor family without her consent. And, that girl is me. I do not know, maybe because of a past life’s sin I had to grow in this as punishment. My mom married with another man and left me behind. I was three years old.

There was only my father to take care of me, but due to the social customs of my village my father was compelled for another marriage. Then I could not get parental love and care. My step-mom never loved me. I was treated as a servant of the house. Grazing the animals and cutting the grass was my daily routine. My father changed into a type of devil. My heart started breaking up. Pain and sorrow started filling my heart. So I learnt hate more than love. I lived this way for seven years.

One day I was returning home with a bundle of grass in my back I saw big crowd in front of my house. I went inside the house and suddenly saw my mom. That was the happiest moment of my life. I couldn’t stop so I ran towards her. I hugged her. I was in a terrible condition. She could not look at me and tears started falling from her eyes. She couldn’t speak a word.

My mother took me to Kathmandu but her financial situation was worse. She used to work 24 hours straight. She started sending me to a school nearby. I was about to drop out while I was in Grade 3. My future took a turn and LSF/UGESP rescued me. It started providing me good education. I am in the 9th Grade now because of this help. I am dreaming to be successful in my life. I want to stand on my own feet.

My step-father is not serious in family matters. So our economic situation was worsening. My mother decided to go to gulf country to find a job. I was in 7th Grade. It has been two years. I am here with my two younger step-siblings. I have to look after them and be their guardian. I feel alone. It is really hard. But because of the love and care from Usha Ama (“Ama” means “mother”) and other Didis (big sisters) in LSF/UGESP it is possible. Every month our sister, the School Coordinator comes to see us and helps in all the steps including the letter writing. So I do not feel lonely. I do not feel my mother’s absence. I can do everything without fear. LSF/UGESP helped to take my life into a bright future. Now I can fight with anything. I don’t want to live my life in violence. I learnt to fight against violence.

Now we have two mothers. One is the one who gave birth and the other, Usha Ama. She loves us and cares for us and always supports us. She motivates us to be a good person. She also teaches us what is right and what is wrong. So I want to thank her and all sisters and especially Punam Didi who is our SC in my school. Punam Didi always takes care and asked us if there is any problem and tried to motivate, support and help in all. She is like our own sister, a friend and a family member.

I want to thank LSF/UGESP from the bottom of my heart. It is believed that future is written in fate by god but my god is LSF/UGESP. I feel now that I am a lucky girl.
THE DIFFERENCE AN EDUCATION MAKES

Two New “Little Sisters”...

Utkristi, age 9, grade 1
Utkristi's mother came to Kathmandu 4 years ago when her father died in a bike accident. Her mother began to work as a store-keeper, but despite her hard work, meeting basic family needs and the educational expenses for Utkristi and her brother remains a struggle. Utkristi is a smart girl and goes to school regularly. Her favorite subject is math, and she wants to be a math teacher when she grows up. She helps her mother in household chores such as arranging book-racks and washing clothes. She loves to skip, dance, and sing.

Aayusha, age 8, grade 4
Aayusha’s parents are farmers and could not afford to send Aayusha to school, so they sent her to her aunt’s home. Children living with relatives are particularly at risk for trafficking, abuse, and marriage. The LSF team found Aayusha to be in a very susceptible situation and decided to support her education. As a result, she is now back with her parents, who are very grateful. Aayusha loves to go to school, and does her homework diligently in the evening. She helps her mother with the household chores, including cleaning and washing. Her dream is to become a doctor.

And updates on two of our graduates...

Babita, graduated 2009
After graduating from LSF, Babita completed her bachelor’s in Development Studies and is now in her first year as a Teach for Nepal Fellow in a rural village. Babita herself grew up in a “poor and barely literate family” before moving to Kathmandu. “The conditions in the village schools are very different from the conditions in Kathmandu,” she says. “Many of the students I teach have to work in the fields before and after school. My work is very challenging, but I am doing my best to motivate my fellow teachers and my students, and show them the power of education. If the journey of 1,000 miles starts with a single step, I am taking my first step to bridge the inequality between government and private schools.” After finishing her stint with Teach for Nepal, Babita hopes to pursue a master’s degree.

Pushpa, graduated 2009
Pushpa completed her bachelor’s degree in the science faculty and is now pursuing a master’s degree in Psychology. She serves as a School Coordinator and played an integral role in preventing the imminent trafficking of a Little Sister in June 2014. She recounts the story: “I got a call from the girls’ group leader, who informed me that Salina had been absent for many days. After hearing this, I phoned the parents, but the stepmother informed me that they had been sending Salina to school.” It turned out that a trafficking agent had been regularly enticing Salina and she was about to get on a bus that evening. Her case was discovered just in time, and since then Pushpa has been providing high-touch counseling to Salina and her parents, to make sure she stays safe.
FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Income

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<td><strong>Total minus restricted gifts</strong></td>
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Value of in-kind tuition discounts from partner schools in Nepal (not included in audit & tax calculations): $138,600

Expenses

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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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Notes

2014 was a strong year for the Little Sisters Fund financially, as our income outpaced our expenses. This disparity is intended in order to support our long-term approach. When the Little Sisters Fund brings a girl into our program, we commit to supporting her complete education. Because we are growing, each year we aim to raise more than we spend to ensure we can uphold our commitment to each Little Sister to fund her education in future years.

In November, our auditor from the US made an unannounced visit to the Nepal office. She reviewed our financial records and processes, tracked sample transactions, and met with our Nepali auditor. We were pleased (though not surprised) that she found all of our finances and accounting to be in good order.

The figures included in this report are estimates. Our U.S. form 990 will be publicly available on our website by July, and our audited financial figures for fiscal year 2014 will be available upon request by August.

“Investment in girls’ education is the highest-return investment available in the developing world.” - Lawrence Summers, former chief economist, World Bank
LOOKING AHEAD: OUR PLANS FOR 2015

Growth
We plan to add 200 new Little Sisters in 2015. Since we support the full education of every girl in our program, this means we are committing to support another 2,000 years of education! This will bring the total number of girls currently supported by our scholarships to well over 1,700.

New Partnership Potential
We are actively exploring new and exciting partnership opportunities that have the potential to increase the depth of our support and better prepare Little Sisters for the transition from education to employment. Stay tuned for news from us on this front!

Geographic Expansion & Focusing
We are expanding into our 19th district in Nepal and adding three new partner schools in the villages surrounding Birgunj, a city on the Indian border that is one of the busiest border crossings between the two countries. Girls in the area face a high risk of trafficking due to the ease of crossing the border. In addition, we will be focusing more on a few high-risk districts, including Parsa District, where our new partner schools are.

Quality
We remain laser-focused on quality and 2015 will see us continuing to refine and augment our programs to better serve the needs of Little Sisters in a changing Nepal. We are also investing in the continued professional development of our dedicated staff to enable them to serve our Little Sisters even more effectively and efficiently than they already do. Ramesh, our finance officer, will receive training from an American auditor to augment his skills with QuickBooks software, while four other staff members will travel to India for professional development focused on child-centered teaching methodology and working in partnership with parents.
THANK YOU धन्यवाद

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