Annual Report
2017
Our Mission
Little Sisters Fund helps economically disadvantaged Nepalese girls to become empowered leaders through education, mentoring, and community support.

We contribute to the development of a more equitable, just, and prosperous world where all children can claim their right to education and where marginalization does not occur on the basis of gender.
Every year, as we reflect on the accomplishments of the past year, we are overcome with gratitude for the support of our donors, champions, and volunteers. It is because of you that we can make such a huge difference in the lives of so many Little Sisters, families, schools, and communities throughout Nepal.

This year, we are overwhelmed by the accomplishments not only of the organization, but also of the Little Sisters, both individually and collectively. We are honored to support over 2,000 girls as they transform from vulnerable young girls into powerful, compassionate, and fearless female leaders.

In 2017, Little Sisters in the 10th grade more than tripled the national achievement rate for girls on the School Education Exam. 80 Little Sisters designed, participated in, and led 16 projects that benefited their communities, ranging from community libraries, to bathrooms dedicated to girls, to a science lab. And 98% of the graduating class matriculated into higher education—a HUGE feat in Nepal where only 15% of girls ever pursue a higher degree.

In 2017, we also launched two new programs. The Little Sisters are now receiving reusable sanitary pads and comprehensive health education through the Menstrual Health Management program. And, as the Little Sisters reach higher and higher to transform their lives, their families, and their communities, our new Higher Education and Health Care Opportunity Funds are right there with them to provide loans for a Bachelor’s or Medical degree.

The Little Sisters keep reaching for the stars, and it is your support that helps us continue to break the barriers that keep girls and women from becoming all they can be. We explain to people all the time that girls do not “need our help”—what they need is opportunity. LSF partners with girls by providing the opportunity and support needed to be safe, to grow intellectually and personally, and to become remarkable young role models for future generations.

Warm Namaste and Thank You!

Trevor Patzer and Usha Acharya

Co-Executive Directors, LSF
Nepal has the 3rd highest rate of child marriage in Asia.

40% of girls marry before 18 and 10% before 15.

In rural areas,

2 in 5 girls are married by age 14.

7 out of 10 girls have dropped out of school by age 16.

30% of girls are engaged in child labor.

10,000–15,000 girls are trafficked each year, primarily for the sex trade.

EDUCATION CAN PREVENT THESE INJUSTICES

By educating girls in Nepal, we are changing the equation and improving outcomes.

• 100% of Little Sisters come from at-risk and economically disadvantaged backgrounds.
• 93% of Little Sisters matriculate into higher education.
• 98% of Little Sisters delay marriage until they are at least 20 years old.
Our Impact in 2017

• **2,020**: We kept 2,020 girls safe and in school.
• **96**: We worked with 96 partner schools in 20 districts to identify and support girls who were at risk of dropping out of school.
• **3X**: Little Sisters in the 10th grade more than tripled the national achievement rate for girls in each of the three highest categories on the critical School Education Exam.
• **26.5%**: We provided higher education loans to 26.5% of the graduating class so that they can pursue their dreams of continuing their higher-level studies.

While there are many approaches to improving opportunities and equality for girls, they often just slightly elevate the starting point without providing enough support for females to fully get over the mountain of inequality before them. Little Sisters Fund has developed a powerful model that supports girls holistically and over the long-term so that by the time they exit the program, they are not just a little more educated or a little less oppressed, but on a level playing field with others and in a position to support themselves through higher studies and into gainful employment. This model ensures that the Little Sisters Fund is not just delaying the age of child marriage or postponing exploitation, but helping girls reach the top of that mountain.

- James Belles, board member
Highlights

Coordinating Mentors Pay It Forward

LSF relies on our Coordinating Mentors to stay in the know about each and every Little Sister. Once Little Sisters themselves, these young women understand the challenges facing at-risk girls in Nepal. In 2017, 25 Coordinating Mentors decided to complete the cycle by sponsoring the education of their “own” Little Sisters. These young women are ensuring that 25 more Nepali girls have the same opportunities they had through LSF.

Launched New Health Care Opportunity Fund

We raised over $100,000 to officially launch the health care component of our Higher Education Opportunity Fund. In addition to helping finance tertiary education, LSF now helps Little Sisters finance medical school and nursing school, degrees historically reserved for the financially privileged. In 2017, six girls took advantage of the opportunity during our pilot program. While graduation from high school already puts Little Sisters ahead of the majority of girls in Nepal, graduating with a higher education degree sets them up for a previously unattainable future and helps break the cycles of poverty and gender bias in a family and the broader community for good.

Launched the Menstrual Health Management Program

In Nepal, menstruation is a taboo subject and a main cause of girls dropping out of school. Many families keep a menstruating girl home from school, forbid her from entering the kitchen and touching others’ dishes, and sometimes even banish her to a shed behind their home. Through menstrual health education and the provision of basic, reusable feminine hygiene products, we are working to break the taboo, empower girls with knowledge, and keep them in school.

Recognition of our work

We were humbled by the recognition of two groups in Nepal: the Armed Police Family Women’s Association and the Teaching Hospital. The Teaching Hospital specifically honored the hard work and dedication of Usha, LSF, and the Little Sisters as they helped the victims of the 2015 earthquakes. Additionally, Shenandoah University President Tracy Fitzsimmons awarded Trevor and Usha the President’s Medal for their outstanding commitment to female safety, education, and empowerment over the past 19 years.
Meet the Little Sisters

I was born in a remote village of Ramechhap district. After the death of my father, my mother took my brother, my sister, and me to Shulikhel. We had lots and lots of financial problems. Then, I heard about Little Sisters Fund. By getting support from LSF, my mother was rid of the huge financial burden for my study. Before getting help, I was about to drop out of the school. But I got the golden opportunity to continue my education up to grade 12. After grade 12, I had the strong will to continue my career as a physician. Due to financial scarcity, my dream was about to get shattered. But then the HCOF loan came into my life and I got the chance to enter into the health sector. I am now continuing my education for a Bachelors of Physiotherapy. After graduation, I will be a good physiotherapist and will serve the nation with my pure heart.

– Muna Pouder

When I was in grade 3, my education was on edge due to some financial ups and downs. I wished to study to build up my future and LSF helped move my life to the path of success by supporting my education. When it came time to choose a career, I knew I had been interested in medicine since my childhood. The tuition to study medicine was too expensive, but my parents knew it was my dream. Despite their financial struggles, they convinced me that they would make my dream come true, so I started studying at Lumbini Medical College while my sister was still in secondary school. Though life does not always turn out how we wish it to be. During my 1st year of medical school, my parents had an accident. Luckily, my mother survived but we lost our father. After the accident, we were having much more difficulty with our finances. I had already started medical school. But it became very challenging for my mother to pay my tuition, my sister’s tuition, and pay for household items. Luckily, I again got financial support from LSF. They gave me a loan to continue studying to obtain my medical degree. I am so lucky.

– Suja Pandit

With the HEOF loan, I am obtaining my Bachelor’s degree. This small step has brought big changes in my life. Back in the days when I wasn’t an LSF member, my life was really challenging. My parents couldn’t afford the education of three children. We had to struggle for basic needs and sometimes we had to sleep with an empty stomach. There was a day when I used to go to school without books or notebooks and my teachers used to scold me. But after finding LSF, my family’s economic condition has gotten better. Now, with the HEOF loan, I am studying to obtain my Bachelor’s degree. No matter how much I thank LSF, it’s not enough.

– Nisha Sunuwar
Little Sisters Fund does so much more than allow at-risk girls to go to school; it develops their character, compassion, determination, and the qualities that allow them to be leaders in whatever community they end up in.

- Tracy Fitzsimmons, President, Shenandoah University

Menstrual Health Management:
- Distributed 1,000s of disposable sanitary pads to Little Sisters.
- Over 500 reusable pads purchased to be distributed in 2018.
- Over 2,000 girls received comprehensive health education.

Youth-Led Community Projects
- 16 community projects completed ranging from community libraries, to drinking water facilities, to a school science lab.
- 80 Little Sisters involved in designing and leading projects.
- 4,395 people benefited from community projects.

Preventative Health Care
- 4,000 deworming pills distributed.
- 2,000 bottles of multivitamins distributed.
- Dozens of nutrition outreach programs held.
Primary Educator Training
• 268 teachers trained from 18 schools.
• 7,000+ students benefited from improved teaching methods that prioritize analytical thinking over rote memorization.
• 50 classroom libraries established.

Community Awareness Raising
• 280 seminars held in 20 districts throughout Nepal to teach families and communities about the importance of girls’ education and female empowerment.

Coordinating Mentors
• 25 mentors started to sponsor the education of a younger Little Sister.
• 280 mentoring sessions held with Little Sisters.
• 32 mentors and junior mentors oversaw the wellbeing of over 2,000 Little Sisters.

Higher Education & Health Care Opportunity Fund
• 20 girls received loans to obtain a bachelor’s degree.
• 6 girls received loans to obtain degrees in medical fields.
Financial Stewardship

We are humbled by the generous support of all of our amazing donors. This year 277 individuals and 24 foundations donated over $785,000 to help Little Sisters Fund keep over 2,000 girls in school and safe from child marriage, child labor, and child trafficking.

Expenses:

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Please note that the figures included here are estimates. Our U.S. form 990 and audited financial figures for fiscal year 2017 will be completed by August.

Little Sisters Fund is an honest, effective, and efficient organization that is having a tremendous impact on the lives of young girls living in extremely disadvantaged situations.

—Ann Down, Visionary and patron since 2005
Donor Spotlight:

Dawn & Tom Crass
Dawn and Tom Crass started sponsoring a Little Sister in 2011 and have been committed to the organization since. Eight years later, they got to meet their Little Sister first hand when they traveled to Nepal with LSF.

I expected visiting Nepal and seeing Little Sisters Fund at work to be wonderful and it exceeded all expectations! Seeing all of the girls in their schools, all in uniform, smiling, and looking so proud was the most moving experience. Meeting Deepa after eight years of letter exchange was the highlight. We knew one another beyond a first meeting. Now graduated and moving forward to medical studies, Deepa has a full and wonderful future ahead of her. Thank you, Little Sisters Fund, for all you do. We are more committed to this project than ever.

Josh Dittrich
Josh and his family have been involved with LSF for years. In 2017, Josh was awarded $1,000 in support of LSF for a presentation he made to his high school’s Junior Rotary Club on the challenges facing girls and women in Nepal. His commitment to female rights and education continues to grow and he’ll be traveling to Nepal with LSF and his dad in November 2018.

Little Sisters Fund has changed my life because, for me, education is just a given; something I have taken for granted; something I must do. LSF has given me a new appreciation of this privilege. It feels great to be giving equal opportunities to these girls because they deserve an education as much as I do.
Little Sisters Sapana Ojha and Kriti Hada graduate from Shenandoah University.

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