

## UMNHET newsletter, August 2020



Dear Friends of UMN Hospitals' Endowment Trust,

This has been a strange year for all of us across the world. We are united in our experience of Coronavirus and the fear and uncertainty it has brought. This virus doesn't respect borders or wealth but we have come to understand that it does bring out into the open, existing inequalities. You support UMNHET because you are already aware of these inequalities and are committed to addressing them. This year, more than ever, your gifts are helping to make a difference to the poor in Nepal who become ill and seek help at one of the four UMN founded hospitals of Tansen, Okhaldhunga, Patan and Amp Pipal.

So far, Nepal has been spared large numbers of Covid infections, with (as of 30<sup>th</sup> July 2020), 20,086 positive cases and 56 deaths, and all 77 districts are affected. This is a tribute to the major public health measures that have been instigated, with a very severe lockdown for much of the country. Unfortunately this has its own consequences.

Many people who are ill and who should have come to hospital have either been afraid to come, or not physically able to, due to restrictions on vehicles. Public transport is banned and even ambulances are

charging exorbitant fees. The rate of women dying in childbirth has doubled.

The lockdown has also meant that most people can't work, and thus can't earn any money. The majority of people in Nepal have no financial reserves and this has plunged even more people into poverty. Whole families are going hungry on a regular basis.



Our hospitals continue to provide care to all those who come, regardless of their capacity to pay. UMNHET plays an important role in this.

The endowment fund is invested and the income distributed in full each year. This gives security to our hospitals, ensuring a regular income to the Medical Assistance Fund (MAF) to support patients who couldn't otherwise afford treatment. Extra money raised in the year is added to this endowment fund, to provide a

sustainable source of income. In 2019 the four hospitals were given £34,244. Since the Trust started making grants in 2005, UMNHET has paid out £468,456.



The hospitals are as well prepared as they can be for the pandemic, with homemade PPE, and careful plans in place to ensure social distancing, together with separate fever clinics and isolation wards. They continue to provide general medical services and are still performing emergency life and limb saving surgery.

This year, we had a special request from the hospitals. There is no NHS in Nepal, and little government support, so most people who come to hospital are expected to pay for their care. This is a major source of income for the hospitals, particularly elective surgery. All elective surgery has been cancelled due to the pandemic – this meant that the hospitals have been struggling to pay salaries for their staff and were looking at making people redundant, just before the time when they might need them the most.

Our priority at UMNHET has always been to support paying for the medical care of those who are otherwise destitute – through the MAF. We felt it

was important that we should continue to honour this, and have done so. However, there are also some discretionary funds (the general fund), which we normally allow the hospitals to use to buy equipment. This year, we released this money early and allowed hospitals to use it as they saw fit.



We are so grateful for the support you give the Trust, enabling the four UMN affiliated hospitals in Nepal to serve the poor in need of medical care, regardless of caste, religion or resources. Please continue to pray for these hospitals, especially as the pandemic starts to take a firmer hold. Could we ask you, too, to share this newsletter with one other person to see if we can extend the support we give in the coming years? Please have a look at our website and show your friends!

[www.umnhet.org.uk](http://www.umnhet.org.uk)

The Trustees:

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