

Easter Heart Appeal for Nepal 2009

Dear friends,

I invite you to contribute towards heart surgery for young Nepalis from eastern Nepal, where I used to work.

Rheumatic fever can have a devastating effect on heart valves of children and young people. There may be pains in the joints after a throat infection in the early stages, but in many cases there is little sign of trouble until a heart murmur is detected. The sufferer develops shortness of breath on exercise leading to progressive disability. Heart surgery to replace the damaged valves can transform such lives and prevent early death. This surgery takes place regularly in the Ganga Lal Heart Hospital in Kathmandu but is expensive. Nearly all such cases need financial support. The artificial valve may be provided free to the poorest, but money for drugs, blood transfusion, tests etc. must be found.

Five young people from the eastern districts are due to have surgery in the coming month. They came to DHERSEC, a disabled people's organisation in Dharan asking for help. I met them in the clinic when I was visiting in December and wrote referral letters to Ganga Lal Hospital. Each of them must put up Rs50,000 (\$1000). This is beyond their reach and beyond the budget of DHERSEC. So this appeal is going out, just as it did last Easter. I was fortunate to meet some those who benefitted from that appeal. I also helped to arrange a Melbourne University medical student to do some research to find out about the experiences of young people before and after heart surgery.

Stories and photos by Hannah Meyer (MBBS IV, University of Melbourne) with express permission to use these for fund raising purposes.:



Mina is a teenager from Dharan, eastern Nepal, with rheumatic heart disease. She lives with 13 other family members, all surviving on her mother's meagre income from a street stall in front of their house. Things are very difficult for her family – Mina left school to work and earn money for her family, but cannot find suitable work due to her heart disease. She is responsible for all the household work, despite her serious illness. When Mina first started to get sick, her family could not afford to send her to hospital, relying instead on a traditional doctor for treatment. Her father eventually sold much of his business so she could see a doctor. Mina recently came to DHERSEC for help, and she is now waiting for heart surgery, hoping to raise enough funds to make her surgery –and her new life– possible.

Nirjan works as a house-worker for an HIV patient support organisation in eastern Nepal. He lives with his wife and nine-month-old daughter in the office building, in a single room provided free of charge by his employer. Due to his heart condition, Nirjan has great difficulty even climbing the stairs to his room. Due to his family's poor economic condition, he left school in eighth grade to work abroad. Nirjan was diagnosed with rheumatic heart disease over 10 years ago. He spends 20% of his monthly salary on heart medication, spending everything else supporting his family. Nirjan's friends are actively raising money for his treatment and surgery, but it is beyond their means to raise enough. He worries about his daughter's future should he not receive heart surgery.

Menuka is 16 years old and living with rheumatic heart disease. Her mother passed away when she was eight, and she lives with her father and eight siblings. They do not own any land – they are squatters on government land, afraid they will be removed any day. Menuka wants to finish school and become a teacher, but due to her heart condition she is often too weak to even walk the 45 minutes to school. Menuka is also responsible for light housework, but cannot do any hard or heavy work due to her illness. Her father works extremely hard as a plumber to afford her heart medications and support his family, but cannot hope to save enough for surgery.



In the photo above Menuka is at the left behind her sister

You can make a real difference for these individuals through helping to raise this money. Surgery is not the end of the story. DHERSEC will help them to re-enter a fruitful life through education, encouragement and long term follow up. There are over 20 who have been helped in previous years.

Donations may be sent to Medical Missions Auxiliary, Vic. marked "Nepal heart appeal" by:

1. Chq/Money Order payable to "MMA Inc." Mail to:
Treasurer MMA, B. Hayes, 43 Milton Street, Nunawading Vic 3131, with contact details, indicating if tax deduction is required.
2. Electronic transfer to one of MMA's accounts at C/Wealth Bank, Mitcham
 - Tax deductible donations to
 - MMA OVERSEAS AID FUND BSB 063 146 A/c No. 1023 0489
 - Non tax deductible donations to
MMA Inc. BSB 063 146 A/c No. 1023 0470

Please enter your surname as description/reference. Then email, B. Hayes , treasurer MMA bhayes@vic.chariot.net.au with your name, address, amount donated to "Nepal heart appeal" and date of transfer.

Medical Missions Auxilliary is a small organisation that funds health and development projects; principally those in which CMS missionaries are involved. When we were in Dharan we asked MMA to help the Disabled and Helpless Rehabilitation and Service Centre (DHERSEC) and although we have come back, MMA is still the main source of funds. My wife, Mary is currently secretary of MMA.

DHERSEC <http://www.dhersec.org.np/> is a secular disabled people's organisation serving Dharan and the eastern region of Nepal. It was promised \$30,000 this year from MMA. A Finnish group called Abilis has provided \$20,000 specifically for DHERSEC to set up a wheel chair service. There are always more heart cases than are budgeted for. DHERSEC allowed for 6 operations (ie \$6000) but there are 11 people waiting. So I am hoping we can raise enough to fund over budget.

DHERSEC's budget 2008-9:

Medical	\$26,304	39%
Welfare, transport	\$3,306	5%
Education & training	\$7,692	11%
Wheelchair, aids & appliances	\$21,538	32%
Office and volunteers	\$8,642	13%

May Eastertide bring new life for these young people,

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