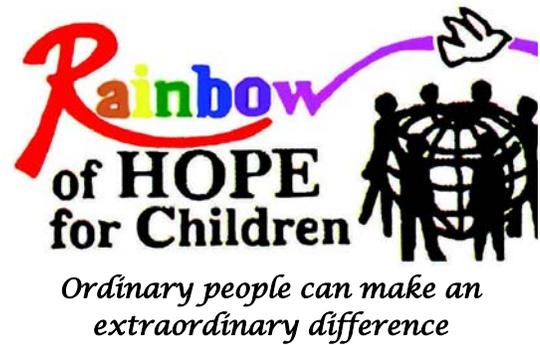


NEXUS

Volume 26 Issue 1
Spring / Summer 2022



— TREKKING, STUDYING, AND PAYING IT BACK —

~ By Harikrishna Devkotah ~

We have been sharing the stories about how ROHFC connects to the various countries in which we work. Each one of them has a special story. It's often just a couple of people forming that relationship between very different worlds but when there is a spark of an idea, these hard-working and dedicated people follow through and make things happen. Here's how Harikrishna Devkotah (Hari) of Nepal and Patrick Hessel of Edmonton met and ROHFC came to Nepal.



Hari (left) with one of the sponsored students, her grandfather, and Laura Hessel

I was born in a remote village in Nepal, very close to the Tibet border in the lap of the beautiful and popular Langtang Himalayas. I spent my childhood and high school years in the village. Every day I spent three hours walking on a rocky mountain trail from home to school and back home. I got my first pair of flip flops sandals when I was 15 years old and studying grade eight. During the same year, my sister bought me the first pair of trousers in my life. My childhood needs were very basic. There was no electricity at this time, and we used light from firewood to study and do household work. There were no toilets or water tap facilities at home. We went to

the bush every time for the toilet. There was no pipeline system for water supply and we walked 30 minutes to collect the water for cooking, drinking and feeding animals. It was a difficult life style to support the family, household work, and our early child marriage culture. When I was studying high school I had an arranged marriage and I have three children, two daughters and a son. After fin-

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Harikrishna Devkotah.....	1
A Mission... by Pat Hessel ...	3
Dr. Saul Ignacio Guzman Benavides (Nacho).....	5
Nwodua Library, Ghana	7

ishing my grade 10, I saw for the first time a television screen and electric lights. I was 15 years old the first time I travelled by truck for about one hour.

I have seven sisters (four sisters are older and three are younger than me) and I'm the only boy. Because of the absolute poverty and lack of knowledge of education my parents could not send my sisters to school and my older sisters focused on sending me to school so I was able to study and my luck started from there. Very few children went to school at that time.

My father was a seasonal trekking porter, farmer and road construction laborer and mother was busy with caring for children, household work, farming etc. I was trekking with my father for the first time as a porter in the Langtang Valley when I was 15 years old and I enjoyed it. I did not have shoes or a warm jacket but it was a milestone in my life and I started to dream about doing trekking and continuing studying.

After finishing high school, I went to Kathmandu for the first time. My parents did not want to send me to the city because of poverty and because they loved me but I went to Kathmandu myself after my grade 10 final exam. I started to work at building construction just to survive. I rented a room, sharing with other friends, and started my city life. Many villagers and my father were trekking porters so I was interested in becoming a guide and started a trekking porter job in 1998.

In the first week of June 1998, my final result of high school was published and I had made an outstanding score. All my relatives and teachers encouraged me to study medical science or engineering and I wanted to become an engineer myself too, but it was too expensive. My parents had no financial ability to support me so I studied mathematics, economics and English in university. I have finished a Masters in Economics. I have lectured in university and now I'm doing my PhD in economics. (My PhD title is *Fiscal Federalism in Nepal*).

In the summer season of 2000, I went to the Annapurna circuit trek (5,416m) with very basic mountaineering equipment. I was suffering badly from a blizzard on the high pass of the Throng La (5416m) and was rescued and supported by an American backpacker at that time rather than my own clients. This American friend and I began a plan to start an NGO to support Himalayan trekking porters of Nepal, and after we returned to Kathmandu we started the Porters Progress

Nepal organization. We immediately started a clothing bank, clothing lending program, first aid training, and English and other foreign language classes for porters. Within five years more than 100,000 porters were associated with this organization. I worked as president and volunteer for eight years. We were able to change the labour act of Nepal, start a porters' insurance policy and make significant contributions to trekking porters' life and the

tourism industry of Nepal during that period. I finished my Masters degree in 2007 and handed over this organization to porter friends who are still operating it.

During that period when I was actively involved in the Porters Progress charity I met many generous donors,

volunteers and kind-hearted people from different countries around the world. Among them was Nola Ainsworth from Australia (president of *Reach Out Nepal*) for the first time in 2001. She was supplying warm clothes for porters and porters' families every year. After that we were connected continuously from 2009 and through her I linked up with Habitat for Humanity. I started the High Himalayan Community

Project, Nepal (www.hhcpn.org) in 2010 and simultaneously I started my own trekking agency, High Himalayan Trekking and Expedition (www.highhimalayantreks.com) to raise income for me and my family to survive.



Suryodaya School in the Langtang Valley was the first school funded by ROHFC in Nepal.



COVID-19 food relief program, 2020-2021, Rasuwa

I met Patrick Hessel from Canada during the Habitat building program in Pokhara and then HHCPN started a supporting fund for child sponsorships, community development and empowerment programs. After the massive earthquake hit in 2015, and during the COVID-19 period till now, Rainbow of Hope for Children Society from Canada has supported several major donations in the Rasuwa district.



Arukhara Health Center

During my childhood many of my neighbors and childhood friends were not able to go to school. I was the

lucky one. My dream and passion was to educate directly 1000 orphans and poor children in my lifetime and that's why I started HHCPN and returned to my village area to make positive change. From 2010 till now we were able to directly fund 187 children's sponsorships (school fees, medicine, clothes, bags, stationary, meals, etc.). More than 2700 families are directly benefited by the goats, pigs and greenhouse sponsorship programs. More than 4400 families are in our micro-saving and credit programs now. After the earthquake we built five schools, the Rasuwa community library, and the Arukharka community health center. One school, Kalika primary school, is not completed yet because a river bridge crashed so that sand, cement and other necessary things could not be supplied there. The bridge is in the repair process now and after the bridge is fixed we will complete it within fifteen days. The Rasuwa communities received a huge donation from the Rainbow of Hope for Children society for food relief during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown period.

I have many miles to go before my long sleep. I have many dream projects for change in the communities, especially in the health/hygiene, education and agriculture sectors. Human rights, community empowerment, nature and culture conservation, and building schools and health centers are equally important. I have to address all of them one by one. ☺

A MISSION HALF-WAY AROUND THE WORLD

by Pat Hessel

My involvement in Nepal began with a 2010 Habitat for Humanity build in Pokhara, northwest of Kathmandu. There were about 450 of us from nine countries who built 44 houses in about a week. Following the build, a group of us did a six-day trek in the foothills of the Himalayas. I was hooked! I returned several months later with my son to hike the Annapurna Circuit: a 16-day trek that included the highest mountain pass in the world (over 5,400 meters).

In 2016, some of those who had done the initial six-day trek reunited in Nepal for another trek. With us was Nola Ainsworth, an Australian who had been doing charitable work in Nepal for a number of years through her organization, *Reach Out Nepal*. It was Nola who introduced us to Hari.

Through Nola, we discovered that Hari had undertaken a number of projects aimed at improving the quality of life and future prospects of the people of the Rasuwa District, a remote, mountainous region north of Kathmandu. His projects included sponsorships for students, purchase of pigs and goats for families,

construction of greenhouses to enhance self-sufficiency of the families and provide some income, and a program called Girl-2-Girl, that assembled and provided feminine hygiene pads that could be washed and reused, making it more likely that young girls could stay in school.

This work was done through a charity that Hari had founded, called the High Himalayan Community Project, Nepal. I was surprised and gratified to learn that all of the administrative costs associated with this organization were covered by Hari's trekking business. Unlike almost every other charity, all of the money donated to the High



Pat Hessel with Hari

Himalayan Community Project, Nepal went directly to their projects: zero overhead!

During that trip, Hari took us to see the village of Ghormu. In 2015, Nepal suffered a major earthquake and a large aftershock. The epicenter was near Ghormu and the village was badly damaged. The village was actually deserted when we arrived in 2016 and the school was abandoned. The children were being taught in a series of tin classrooms assembled by the local community.

With Hari's help and the involvement of the local community, my wife and I were able to support the construction of a new school in Ghormu and the reconstruction of a part of a school in another larger community, Jibajibe.

When I joined the Board of Rainbow of Hope for Children, the possibilities for helping the people of the Rasuwa District were greatly enhanced. There were still many schools that had been damaged by the earthquake. Rainbow of Hope for Children's first undertaking was the Suryodaya School. Construction was completed in 2018 and several members of the Board traveled to Nepal for the official hand-over. Travel to the site over the treacherous mountain roads made us aware of the huge logistical challenges of building in these remote settings.

During a visit in 2019 I was able to attend the "grand opening" of the Ghormu School. Hari also showed me another school, Manakamana, which was in desperate

need of replacement. George Bunz from our Board coordinated a joint effort between Rainbow of Hope for Children and the Wainwright Rotary club to construct the school.

Our travel to Nepal has been curtailed over the past couple of years due to the pandemic. In fact, we funded two relief projects that provided food and other supplies to the Rasuwa District in the early days of the pandemic. The trekking industry, a cornerstone of the Nepalese economy, had come to a standstill, and the people of Nepal were under a very strict lockdown. The people in the Rasuwa District were running out of food. Hari organized the distribution of the food and supplies and encouraged the people to immediately begin planting crops on every available parcel of land. During this time, ROHFC also funded the construction of a school in Kalika and a health care centre in Arukharka. With Hari's help, we are hoping to fund the reconstruction of another school and the construction of another health care centre.

Your donations to Rainbow of Hope for Children are having a profound impact on this impoverished part of the world. The sincere thanks of the Board are echoed by the many people in the Rasuwa District whose

lives you have touched. ☺



Temporary Ghormu School after the earthquake



Grand Opening of the new Ghormu School, 2019



ROHFC representatives Joe Gubbels, Pat Hessel, George Bunz, and Vicki Gerwing.

ROHFC PRESENTS WITH PRIDE: DR. SAUL IGNACIO GUZMAN BENAVIDES (NACHO)

~ by George Bunz ~



I recall Nacho speaking to us on our first visit to Isla El Espiritu Santo on November 13, 2016. He was a young university student then and he spoke to us about his dream of becoming a medical doctor. I could feel his eloquence and confidence at that time and especially his spirit of solidarity in wanting to serve the people of El Salvador. Six years after sharing his dream with us, he has made that dream come true. It is a testimony, despite his many challenges, to what can be achieved when the will is there. We can see the pride in the faces of his parents. I am deeply touched by Dr. Saul Ignacio and can't help thinking ahead to the many people who will be treated by him as a professional medical doctor. I hope that in the not too distant future, I can congratulate him in person.

Before the scholarship program came to the Island of El Espiritu Santo, only two people had left the Island to receive a high school education. Now we have many high school and university graduates giving back to their communities, like Dr. Saul Ignacio Guzman Benavides. It is a tribute to CIS and this remarkable youth program that ROHFC is blessed to be able to support. Below is Nacho's letter.



Dr. Saul Ignacio Guzman Benavides and his proud family.

Puerto el Triunfo, Usulután March 1, 2022

Every great dream begins with a great dreamer. Always remember: You have within you the strength, patience, and passion to reach for the stars and change the world.

(Harriet Tubman)

This letter serves to greet you and wish you success in the noble humanitarian work you carry out. I give thanks to God, the Centro de Intercambio y Solidaridad (CIS), and Rainbow of Hope for Children for the support you have given me to reach the highest goal I have set for myself, to finish my studies to become a Doctor of Medicine.

It started 15 years ago as a dream that has converted into something that fills me with pride to be able to say I have finished my university studies giving me a degree as Doctor of Medicine. This achievement is thanks to you for your untiring and laudable work that you carry out in communities with scarce economic resources and with persons who desire to overcome but do not have sufficient economic resources to achieve a university career.

I started in the scholarship program in 2011 on the Espiritu Santo Island, studying three years of high school. I began at the university in 2014, but at the time it seemed I would not be able to study more. Then I remembered the opportunity God gave me through the CIS Scholarship and Leadership Development Program. I was able to continue studying and it gave me strength to go forward and take on what appeared impossible.

I have many stories to tell you about my experiences with CIS. I participated in scholarship retreats, in the Clean Water program, reforestation projects, cultural activities, and educational tutoring with younger students. I learned moral values, how to have a critical opinion, how to speak in public, how to work in a team and help those most in need. I gained knowledge and abilities, but above all, I made many friends.

I would like to thank the director of CIS, Leslie Schuld, Rainbow of Hope for Children, and all the teamwork that make these opportunities possible. It has been an honour and a pleasure to belong to this marvelous family. Thank you and may God bless you and make this project continue to grow so many youths can overcome. I will never tire of expressing gratitude for the support you gave me during this time. I will always express that it was all of you who helped me overcome. Many thanks CIS and the Rainbow of Hope for Children family.

Sincerely,

Dr. Saúl Ignacio Guzmán Benavides



Rainbow of Hope for Children provides funding for a scholarship program for students from a remote island community who need to attend school on the mainland.

Rainbow of Hope for Children has partnered with CIS (Centro de Intercambio y Solidaridad (CIS), meaning Centre for Friendship and Exchange) in El Salvador for some years. Our main focus since 2014 has been on the Scholarship and Leadership Development Program. We fund a number of students from Isla El Espiritu Santo, an island community that lacks access to higher education. The CIS report from December noted that twenty students graduated from university and 87 from high school in 2021. These were not all from the island community that we support, but in total. This is a very worthwhile program that we are very pleased to be a part of.

ROHFC has also supported the Paso Puente dignified housing project through CIS which has transformed the lives of 85 families by providing decent housing. This is one great example of partnering with organizations that are operating closely with communities in areas where the need is greatest.[CR](#)

Try to be a rainbow in someone's cloud. ~ Maya Angelou

A LIBRARY FOR NWODUA, GHANA

Rainbow of Hope for Children Society is supporting the Ad Astra Foundation, Ghana to build a community library in Nwodua, a rural community in northern Ghana. Ad Astra Foundation began as a dream of its Executive



**Dr. Jacob Albin
Korem Alhassan**

Director, Dr. Jacob Albin Korem Alhassan. Jacob grew up in rural northern Ghana and accessed a small children's library, St. Gildas, run by Catholic nuns. He visited the library weekly to borrow books which gave him access to knowledge and information that shifted the trajectory of his life. Without the library he would not have

had access to books and resources outside of school because of his family's lack of funds.

With the solid foundation from his experience with St Gildas, Jacob proceeded to the University of Ghana, the first in his family to do so. He went on to win full scholarships to study for two master's degrees in the UK (at University of Durham and Oxford University). He subsequently earned a full scholarship to study for a Ph.D. at the University of Saskatchewan in Canada. Jacob has always said that his success would have been impossible without monetary support, hard work and luck such as being close to St. Gildas. Upon completing his PhD, Jacob was finally in the position to help other members of his community access supports to improve their chances of academic success. During a recent trip to Ghana, Jacob met with community members and chiefs and they agreed that a library would be a critical resource for improving educational access. When Jacob shared this idea with

friends in Canada, Ghana and the USA, they were enthusiastic. ROHFC directors Alice Iddi-Gubbels, Peter Van Winssen and Charlie Matt will coordinate implementation of the project for ROHFC..



Land allocated for the school.



Proposed library building.

The Nwodua library will bring access to educational opportunities in one of the most deprived communities in northern Ghana. The Nwodua community has demonstrated support for the project through the allocation of land. The allocated land is near a cluster of schools and central to many other communities, making it an accessible location for local youth and community members.

For more information go to their website:

<https://adastrafoundationgh.org>

OR

— INVITING BOARD MEMBERS —

Rainbow of Hope for Children is inviting people with new ideas and fresh perspectives to join the Board of Directors. We are a group of dedicated volunteers whose objectives are to enable and support schools and other educational projects, capacitation of women and marginalized groups, construction of new homes, and the development of health facilities and services, where the need has arisen. Let's chat.

Please contact Charlie, at:

Email: rohfc2017@outlook.com or

Phone: 306-242-2484

PROGRAMS OF THE RAINBOW OF HOPE FOR CHILDREN SOCIETY

Your support is requested and appreciated for the following projects:

Program Description	Funding Goals	Program Description	Funding Goals
Nwodua Library, Ghana	\$85,000	PAMBE Health, Nutrition, & Sanitation, Ghana	7,500
Ipuli School Classroom Additions, Tanzania	20,000	Kinyambu & Area- Classrooms, Kenya	60,000
Tabora School for the Deaf, Trades Training Equipment, Tanzania	17,000	Eye Health Care, Reducing Avoidable Blindness, Indonesia	10,000
Classrooms and Health Centre Projects, Nepal	100,000	Mt. Moriah School, Jamaica	10,000
School of Family Agriculture, Bahia, Brazil	12,500	CIS Scholarships, El Salvador	40,500
Ambrosina Young Women's Education, Brazil	20,500	Paso Puente Dignified Housing, El Salvador	14,000
Grota da Alegria Education, Brazil	38,000	Covid-19 Emergency Relief	\$50,000
Emergency Disaster Relief Fund	10,000		

Projects Waiting in the Wings

We are accepting Donations towards the following projects that we plan to implement in the near future

Hospital, Itasy, Madagascar	\$26,500	PREDA, Protecting Children, Philippines	\$15,000
-----------------------------	----------	---	----------

RAINBOW OF HOPE GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGES THE SUPPORT OF ALL OUR DONORS, and

- Several Rotary Clubs, the Knights of Columbus, the Edmonton Community Foundation, the Holy Family Columbus Club, and the Al Gerwing Charitable Foundation.
- George and Louise Bunz, Wainwright, AB., who prepared the NEXUS Mail-out.
- The Peter Van Winssen Professional Corporation, Wainwright, Alta. for donating the cost of the NEXUS mail-out.

We thank you for offering a gift to any one of these projects and we are pleased to acknowledge your donation with an income tax deductible receipt. Kindly send your donation to:

Rainbow of Hope for Children
Society
P.O. Box 2883
Wainwright, AB T9W 1S7



**The Annual General Meeting
will be held both in person
and by Zoom
on June 25, 2022 at 10 AM**

The in-person meeting will be held at:
Blessed Sacrament Church Hall
906 - 6 Avenue
Wainwright, Alberta

You must register in advance to receive a Zoom invitation.
Contact: Charlie Matt at: rohfc2017@outlook.com or 306-222-0651.

• Please make cheques payable to the full name of the organization:

Rainbow of Hope for Children Society

- When making a donation using a credit card be sure to include the 3-digit security code on the back of your card. That number is required by the credit card companies.
- Donations of securities have a significant tax advantage. To donate shares please contact our Treasurer at rohfc2018@outlook.com or 780-968-3952

OFFICERS

President: Charles Matt, Saskatoon, SK
Vice President: Peter Van Winssen, Wainwright, AB,
Secretary: Vera Hay, Wainwright, AB
Treasurer: Cheryl Budzinski, Spruce Grove, AB

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

George Bunz, Wainwright, AB
Joe Gubbels, Edmonton, AB
Patrick Hessel, Spruce Grove, AB
Margaret Bennett, Vermillion, AB
Connie Gerwing, Prince Albert, SK
Alice Iddi-Gubbels, Delaware, Ont.

NEXUS: Produced and edited by Connie Gerwing and Jan Schmitz in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan and Rainbow of Hope's Head Office in Wainwright, Alberta, Canada. The expressed views of the authors are not necessarily the views of the NGO.