



LITTLE SISTERS FUND

**Little Sisters Fund  
Interim Report to Dining for Women  
Banke and Dang Expansion (School Scholarship Program)**

Grant Amount: \$20,000 for two years

Contact person: Abigail Akre, Development and Communications Director

Address: P.O. Box 909, Hailey, Idaho 83333

1. *Recap briefly what outcomes the program was designed to achieve.*

The Banke and Dang expansion program was designed to directly support 100 girls and 50 teachers and indirectly impact more than 1,500 students and community members in the Banke and Dang districts of Nepal.

2. *Has funding changed for this program? For example, have you received unexpected funding from another source?*

Since 2015, we have not had any unexpected funding increases or decreases for the Banke and Dang program. We received additional funding from the Dorothea Haus Ross Foundation in 2015 and 2016 to support the education of 120 girls in six high-risk districts, including 25 Little Sisters in Banke and Dang. We have also added support from several foundations for our overall School Scholarship Program, including Circle of Sisterhood Foundation, Sangham Foundation, and International Foundation. This increased support allowed us to expand our scholarships to over 2,000 girls, an addition of over 500 girls since we originally applied to Dining for Women that surpassed our goal of adding 200 girls per year.

3. *Is your organization or program situation different than presented in the approved proposal? For example, new executive director, significant program staffing changes or NGO affiliation, loss of large funding, or other significant changes?*

The overall goals, activities, and outcomes of the proposed program have not changed since the original proposal was submitted in 2015.

In September 2016, Abigail Akre replaced Catharine Morgan as Little Sisters Fund's Director of Development and Communications and is now the main contact for this grant.

4. *What challenges are you facing as you move forward with this project? How are you approaching these challenges?*

One of the biggest challenges we are facing in both Banke and Dang is our capacity to penetrate the ingrained notions in these two districts that girls' education does not have a value. This belief is held not only by parents, but also by some of the school administrators. Additionally, the delivery of education in more remote districts like Banke and Dang is unbalanced. School management is often negligent and teachers' attendance is irregular, resulting in a difficult learning environment for many students. We are working hard to combat these beliefs and imbalances by conducting frequent meetings with the girls and their parents and providing effective suggestions to the teachers and school management regarding how to improve the provision of education to all students. Monthly counseling meetings with the Coordinating Mentors is of utmost importance to tackle these problems, as we can ensure each Little Sister

knows that at least one person, and one organization, values both her education and her rights to live a life of safety, stability, opportunity, and hope. Progress is slow as we address this challenge, but we are already seeing improvements in several of the schools and with some of the parents.

A second challenge we are facing, as was addressed in our September 2016 Contact Report, is the rise of elopement among teenagers. Over the past year, two young girls eloped—one in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade and one in 10<sup>th</sup> grade. Despite her early marriage, we were able to ensure one of the two girls stayed in school, which is at least a step in the right direction. Elopement and child marriage are challenges we expect to face into the future. Through regular counseling and exemplifying the opportunities life can provide by waiting to get married, we will help change the attitudes in these two districts, even if we have to do it one girl at a time.

The third challenge we are facing is closely tied to the first challenge. While teachers and school administrators who have taken our Primary Educator Training course admire the PET concepts and the new way of teaching it promotes, it is still difficult for many of them to apply the new concepts in their classrooms. We attribute this to the heavily ingrained culture of rote memorization and test score-based education. Encouraging students to think for themselves and using creativity in teaching is a big jump for many of these educators, and it will take time to truly change the system. Through our training program, regular follow-ups, and re-training with our Phase Two course, we can slowly, but meaningfully, implement changes in the schools in these two districts. As mentioned below under Question 6, we are already seeing great improvements in three schools in Banke and Dang and we expect more schools to follow suit.

5. *Have you revised your original objectives since the project began? If so, why? What are your new objectives?*

Our objectives for the program have remained consistent since the project began. As stated in the original proposal, the objectives for the Banke and Dang expansion program are to support the tuition and related school costs for 100 girls over the two-year grant period. In addition, the program will also provide the comprehensive support that is critical to ensuring that girls not only access school, but also thrive there and position themselves for future success. This includes:

- mentoring provided by Coordinating Mentors, who are young female leaders who have overcome similar challenges on their paths out of poverty;
- community awareness raising to build a more supportive society;
- basic health education and preventative healthcare; and
- teacher training to elevate the overall quality of education in Banke and Dang.

6. *What progress have you made toward achieving your objectives? Please address each stated objective.*

1. Support the tuition and related school costs for 100 girls: Since March 2016, Dining for Women has supported 100 of the 165 Little Sisters receiving LSF scholarships in Banke and Dang. These girls were previously at risk of sex trafficking, child labor, and child marriage. They are now regularly attending school, benefiting from the additional support of our nine

complementary programs, and on their way to becoming empowered future leaders in their communities and beyond.

In late March and early April, 13 Little Sisters from Banke and Dang sat for the School Education Examination (formerly called the School Leaving Certificate). All 10<sup>th</sup> graders must take this test to be able to continue their education through the 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Of these 13 girls, all passed with an “Acceptable” or higher grade, one earned an A, and two earned a B. We are very pleased with these results, as in their region, only 12.2 percent of girls score a B and only 5.5 percent score an A. Thus, the results of DfW supported Little Sisters in Dang and Banke surpassed the regional A and B pass rate.

Additionally, one student in Banke not only ranked at the top of her 8<sup>th</sup> grade class, but also at the top of all 8<sup>th</sup> graders in the district. While she comes from a very underprivileged family and background, and was on the verge of dropping out of school before receiving an LSF scholarship, her hard work and dedication to her studies is paying off.

2. Mentoring provided by Coordinating Mentors, who are young female leaders who have overcome similar challenges on their paths out of poverty: Our Coordinating Mentors meet with the Little Sisters in Banke and Dang on a monthly, if not more frequent basis. The close coordination and frequent contact between the school management, Little Sisters, and Coordinating Mentors creates a level of trust that is vital to the success of our program and the wellbeing of the Little Sisters.

For example, one of the students in Dang was having trouble in school after both of her parents passed away and had to move in with her sister. It became clear to her mentor that this sister did not value education and was taking advantage of the situation by requiring her younger sister—who was only in 4<sup>th</sup> grade—to clean the house and take care of her daughter, resulting in many missed days of school. The mentor worked with LSF staff and the school management to move this young girl into a children’s home in Kathmandu, where she now resides. LSF continues to cover the costs of her education and she now lives in a community that values her education and her right to be a child, and not a child laborer.

3. Community awareness raising to build a more supportive society: On a quarterly basis, Coordinating Mentors lead sessions with the Little Sisters’ parents and teachers to educate them on women’s rights, the dangers of trafficking and child labor, and the importance of education. These sessions are especially important in the more remote districts, such as Banke and Dang, where girls’ education is less valued, daughters are regularly taken out of school at an early age to take care of the house, and the perils of child trafficking, child labor, and child marriage are heightened, even above the already heightened risks facing girls in these districts.

One of LSF’s new programs, the Youth-Led Community Projects program, benefits both the Little Sisters and their communities. We work with the older students to identify a need at their school or in their community, write a proposal for funding and carrying out the project, implement the project, and monitor it after completion. Since the program’s launch in 2016, Little Sisters in Banke and Dang have completed three community projects: two clean

drinking water facilities at schools in Banke and Dang and the construction and equipping of a science lab at a school in Dang. As a result of these projects, over 1,000 students at two schools now have access to clean drinking water, and are therefore less likely to contract water-borne illnesses, and over 850 students have access to a new science lab, and as a result, a new Civil Engineering program, at their school. We are very proud of this new program and the impact it has on the community and the development of the Little Sisters' leadership skills that they will carry with them for the rest of their lives.

4. Basic health education and preventative healthcare: Through our Health Education and Preventative Healthcare program, we educate the Little Sisters about issues such as personal hygiene, healthy eating habits, seasonal diseases, and basic first aid. We introduce topics such as menstrual health, puberty, and STDs as the Little Sisters enter the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. We also provide vitamins and deworming medicine to all Little Sisters on an annual basis.

Through this program, we also are able to support the Little Sisters when they have medical emergencies. As reported on in our September 2016 Contact Report, one Little Sister from Banke had a condition that required heart surgery. Not only did we provide support before and during her surgery, but also we have continued to support her after the surgery by taking her to her regular checkups in Kathmandu. We are happy to report that she is doing great.

Recently, through our regular check ins with the schools and Little Sisters, we identified that one Little Sisters was having regular anxiety attacks. We were able to set her up with therapy, and take her to her appointments, and she is now doing much better.

5. Teacher training to elevate the overall quality of education in Banke and Dang: As reported in our September 2016 Contact Report, in March 2016 we carried out our Primary Education Training (PET) program for 85 teachers in seven schools in Dang. By training these teachers move away from a teaching style of rote memorization and toward more creativity, we have positively impacted the education of over 2,900 students in Dang.

In 2017, we have focused on conducting follow-ups at the seven schools in Dang and three schools in Banke (trained in 2015) that have taken our PET course. At our follow-ups, we work with the teachers to address any questions they may have about implementing the lessons from the course in their classrooms and we monitor their progress. As discussed in the challenges section above, many of the teachers are struggling to implement the PET concepts in their classrooms, and we are working with them during the follow-ups to improve. Despite these challenges, three of the schools (one in Banke and two in Dang) are excelling at implementing the lessons learned through the PET course. They are exemplary in their implementation and we will likely provide them with a library starter kit by the end of the year to recognize their follow-through, diligence, and success.

6. *Do you anticipate any difficulties in completing your project in the timeframe outlined in your proposal?*

We do not anticipate any difficulties in completing the project by March 2018. As stated in the original proposal, while this grant supports two years of education for 100 girls in Banke and

Dang, Little Sisters Fund is committed to supporting the education of these girls through 12<sup>th</sup> grade, so our program will continue for many years as we work with the girls to support them to their graduation from high school and beyond.

***Additional information:***

**Detailed financial report:** Attached

**Message to DFW donors and membership:**

Little Sisters Fund is incredibly grateful for Dining for Women's support of 100 Little Sisters in the Banke and Dang districts of Nepal. Because of you, these girls are in school, safe from the dangers of sex trafficking, child marriage, and child labor, and on their way to becoming the next generation of leaders in their communities, in Nepal, and beyond. Dining for Women's support makes such a strong and lasting impact on the lives of so many girls in Nepal. For that, we are forever grateful.