

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

Grant Amount: \$20,000 for two years

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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. What was accomplished in connection with this project? Please address each stated objective. If any project objectives were changed, please also explain the circumstances leading to the modification of the objective(s). ^{SEP}

Support the tuition and related school costs for 100 girls: Over the past two years, Dining for Women provided support to 100 of the 165 Little Sisters in Banke and Dang—two extremely remote districts in Nepal. Not only were these girls previously at risk of sex trafficking, child labor, and child marriage, but they also live in districts where girls' education is extremely undervalued and many children are born into ancestral serfdom, with no opportunities for a different future. Thanks to the generosity of Dining for Women, 100 girls are now regularly attending school, benefiting from the additional support of our eight complementary programs, and on their way to becoming empowered future leaders in their communities and beyond.

As stated in our most recent report, the Little Sisters in Banke and Dang are achieving academic success compared to their peers. The 13 Little Sisters from Banke and Dang who sat for the School Education Examination last year surpassed the regional pass rates. One student in Banke not only ranked at the top of her 8th grade class, but also at the top of all 8th graders in the district, despite being on the verge of dropping out of school before receiving an LSF scholarship.

Mentoring provided by Coordinating Mentors, who are young female leaders who have overcome similar challenges on their paths out of poverty: Due to the remoteness of Banke and Dang (it can take up to 20 hours or more to travel to these districts from Kathmandu, due to poor road conditions), we rely heavily on our Coordinating Mentors (CMs) in these two districts. They function as a satellite office of LSF and keep us abreast of the wellbeing and academic achievement of each Little Sister between our annual visits.

The close coordination and frequent contact between the school management, Little Sisters, and the Coordinating Mentors creates a level of trust that is vital to the success of our program and the wellbeing of the Little Sisters. Because we do not have any graduated Little Sisters living in Banke and Dang, the Coordinating Mentors in these two districts are older social workers. These two women are incredibly dedicated to their work and to the Little Sisters they oversee.

During the two-year grant period, the CMs met with the Little Sisters on a monthly basis to check in on them, educate them about the importance of education, and provide the support needed to help them grow into empowered young women. The example we used in our interim report is still a clear indication of the importance of the CMs. When one of the students in Dang was struggling in school after the death of her parents, the CM noticed that the girl's sister, her new guardian, was keeping this Little Sister, who was in 4th grade, out of school so she could clean the house and care for her daughter. The CM quickly intervened and moved this Little Sister to a children's home in Kathmandu, where her education and her right to be a child, and not a child laborer, is highly valued.

Community awareness-raising to build a more supportive society: Hereditary indentured servitude and serfdom, while outlawed, is still practiced in Banke and Dang, making our awareness-raising sessions extremely important to the success of our program. On a quarterly basis, Coordinating Mentors led 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 not going to make an immediate change in the overall local culture, but they make a huge immediate difference in the lives of the Little Sisters. Through these sessions, coupled with exposing the Little Sisters to the alternative future an education can bring, we are making an impact that will improve outcomes for generations to come.

In addition to the quarterly sessions, over the two-year grant period, the Little Sisters in Banke and Dang 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. A fourth clean drinking water facility is currently being constructed at a second school in Dang. As a result of these projects, over 1,800 students at three schools now have, or soon will have, access to clean drinking water, and over 850 students have access to a new science lab, and as a result, a new Civil Engineering program at their school.

Basic health education and preventative healthcare: We provided basic health education and preventative healthcare to all Little Sisters in Banke and Dang. During at least 10 educational sessions per year, the Little Sisters were exposed to topics surrounding personal hygiene, healthy eating habits, and basic first aid. Older Little Sisters were also taught about menstrual health, puberty, and STDs. And we provided vitamins and deworming medicine to all Little Sisters twice each year.

As reported in our previous reports, we provided emergency healthcare to two Little Sisters in Banke and Dang. This included support before, during, and after one Little Sister underwent heart surgery, and setting up therapy for another Little Sister who was having anxiety attacks. We are pleased to report that both girls are healthy and happy.

Teacher training to elevate the overall quality of education in Banke and Dang: LSF's Primary Educator Training program encourages teachers to move away from rote memorization in the classroom. Over the past two years, we held our Primary Education Training program at seven schools in Dang. 85 teachers took part in these trainings, thus impacting over 2,900 students.

After the initial trainings, we conducted follow-up visits to ensure that the techniques learned were being implemented, and to answer teachers' lingering questions. These follow-ups are almost more important than the initial trainings for true change to take place in the classroom. In 2017, we carried out follow-ups at the seven schools in Dang and three schools in Banke (trained in 2015). While we previously reported that one of the challenges we were facing was to get

teachers to implement these new techniques in the classroom, we are happy to report that, thanks to the follow-up visits, the schools we trained in Banke and Dang are excelling at implementation and are seen as models of success of our country-wide program. In 2018, we will continue to follow up with each school we have trained, and we will conduct “Revive” courses at five of these schools so that older teachers can refresh their knowledge and new teachers can be exposed to the PET lessons.

3. *What challenges did you face in connection with this project? How did you address these challenges?* ^[1]_[SEP]

The most challenging aspect of working in 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, often as a result of the indentured servitude/forced labor that has been practiced in this region for centuries, despite being outlawed since the early 1900s. Through education and outreach both at school and through our support programs, the girls not only learn that this system is outlawed, but they also see all of the opportunities that an education can give them. Slowly, we help break the cycle of what was once seen as hereditary fate and, therefore, help keep this and the following generations of girls out of serfdom and forced labor.

A second challenge is that 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. While our partner schools are top schools in these two districts, the quality of education is not on par with that of other schools throughout the country and in Kathmandu. Therefore, we currently cannot expect the test scores of the Little Sisters in Banke and Dang to be as high as their peers in other districts (though we do expect them to be significantly higher than the average scores in Banke and Dang). We are working hard to combat this by providing effective suggestions to the teachers and school management regarding how to improve the provision of education to all students. Also, as mentioned above, our PET program has had a positive impact on the quality of education at our partner schools in both Banke and Dang over the past two years. After being skeptical at first, teachers in Banke and Dang are eager to implement the lessons learned in the PET course and the improvements made in the schools are seen as some of our biggest successes to date.

4. *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?* ^[1]_[SEP]

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

5. *What were the most important lessons learned?* ^[1]_[SEP]

Thanks to the support of Dining for Women, we were able to greatly expand our provision of scholarships to girls in Banke and Dang, two distant districts where some of the most

marginalized segments of society live. Over the past two years, this work has made the importance of giving girls in these remote districts a chance to gain an education even more obvious. We have seen first hand that by ensuring they are in the classroom every day, we can keep them out of a life of indentured servitude. As a result, we can start to break the cycle of this long outlawed system one girl at a time.

6. *What has changed within your organization as a result of this project?* [L]
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Through this project, we have started to work with some of the most marginalized segments of society in Nepal. Nepal is very difficult to travel across and it has only been in the past 20 to 30 years that “reasonable travel” to Banke and Dang is even possible—even now it takes almost as long to travel from the United States to Nepal as it does to drive from Kathmandu to Dang. By expanding our work in these two districts, we have gained a better understanding of the ethnic communities of Nepal and the specific challenges facing girls in those districts. While we had read about the challenges of indentured servitude in the news, we gained a much more in-depth understanding of the true nature and pervasiveness of the practice. Thanks to DfW, we are able to work with these girls and provide them with an education and an empowered future.

7. *Describe the unexpected events and outcomes, including unexpected benefits.*

The Coordinating Mentors in Banke and Dang have proven to be amazing and very important assets to our work in these two districts. Their engagement with and understanding of their Little Sisters is some of the best of all of our Coordinating Mentors, which is extremely important given the hardships many of the girls endure in these two districts. Due to the long journey between Kathmandu and Banke/Dang, we are very lucky to be able to rely on these Coordinating Mentors to help guide both the Little Sisters and the communities as they learn about the importance of girls’ education and women’s empowerment.

A second unexpected outcome relates to our preventative healthcare and teacher training programs. Nepal’s Social Welfare Council, the entity that evaluates the work of all nonprofits in the country, is so impressed with these two programs that they have asked us to consider expanding them to the broader community so that they can impact *all* the children in these districts. We are very humbled by this vote of confidence from the Social Welfare Council. While we currently do not have the funding, or the staff capacity, to carry out this work, we are meeting with the director of UNICEF’s Region of South Asia office in April to discuss potential collaboration and/or funding.

8. *Did you change your strategy as a result of obstacles you encountered? How will you address these challenges in [L]the future?* [SEP]

Our strategy of providing scholarships and support programming to at-risk and economically-disadvantaged girls in Nepal did not change during the two-year grant period. However, as we mentioned above, because of our expanded work in Banke and Dang, our team has become more knowledgeable about the slave systems in Nepal and the prevalence of young girls eloping in these more remote districts. This increased knowledge will impact the decisions we make moving forward about the criteria we use to select girls for our scholarship programs and has increased the urgency we feel about the need to provide an education to girls in the country’s

most distant districts.

9. *Approximately how many lives have been touched, both directly and indirectly, by the program?* [SEP]

Over the past two years, the support of DfW has impacted the lives of 100 girls by giving them the gift of education. It has directly impacted the teaching styles of 85 teachers, and as a result, indirectly impacted the education of over 2,900 students. It has also indirectly impacted the lives of over 2,600 students in Banke and Dang through community projects.

However, the above numbers are only those we can actually count. Through our scholarship program, teacher training, and community awareness-raising, we have indirectly impacted thousands of people in Banke and Dang. Just as a stone thrown in a pond creates ripples that eventually cover the entire lake, the impact of our work is touching entire communities in these two districts. As community members witness the positive impact education can have on the lives of girls, they are more likely to value the education of their daughters and granddaughters, and generation by generation, we can break the cycle of poverty and indentured servitude in the remote districts of Nepal.

10. *What are the measurements used to monitor success and how was this information measured (e.g., surveys, [SEP] observation)? Be specific and include measurable results.* [SEP]

Throughout the two-year grant period, LSF's Coordinating Mentors monitored the progress and wellbeing of each Little Sister, held quarterly parents' meetings, and conducted home visits, as needed. Through these sessions, we were able to ensure that each girl was living in a safe and supportive home environment and we were able to support the general wellbeing and self-esteem of each girl. As described in some of the stories above, when problems arose, LSF acted quickly to ensure the Little Sister was safe, healthy, and in school. We supported a Little Sister who needed heart surgery, we found therapy for a Little Sister who was having anxiety attacks, and we found a new home for a Little Sister who was being kept out of school and forced into child labor.

It is difficult to specifically measure, in the short-term, the impact education and empowerment can have on a girl in Nepal. However, using school and national exam results, we track several quantifiable results to show that each of the 100 Little Sisters supported by Dining for Women are on the right track academically.

- Over the past two years, 165 girls in Banke and Dang were kept in school and safe from child marriage, exploitative labor, and trafficking. 100 of these girls were supported by Dining for Women.
- Year on year, over 91% of Little Sisters in Banke and Dang passed their classes successfully and continued on to the next grade. District dropout rates indicate that without LSF support, that rate would be more than quadrupled.
- The Little Sisters in Dang and Banke are excelling academically in comparison to their peers. 100% of the 13 girls who took the School Education Examination (formerly the School Leaving Certificate) in 2017 passed the exam and surpassed the regional averages for receiving As and Bs.
- Finally, approximately 26% of Banke and Dang Little Sisters are ranked in the top 10 students in their respective grades. This is doubly impressive considering that the Banke

and Dang Little Sisters are highly disadvantaged, even among their peers.

11. If the program is ongoing, provide plans and expected results, including projected timeframe.

While Dining for Women's support covered two years of education for 100 Little Sisters in Banke and Dang, Little Sisters Fund commits to funding the full primary and secondary education (up to grade 12) of each girl we support. Thus, each of these 100 girls will be kept safe and in school through high school graduation. Upon graduation from 12th grade, each girl will also have access to LSF's new loan programs, the Higher Education and Health Care Opportunity Funds, making college that much more possible.

By supporting the full education of girls, we ensure that graduates of our programs are able to support themselves and their families financially, thus breaking the intergenerational cycle of poverty. Because our graduates are educated, employable, empowered, and financially self-sufficient they become leaders in their communities. A woman who can pay for her own bachelor's and master's degrees and who chooses to finish them before marrying and having children changes harmful perceptions about women through the power of her actions.

12. Provide a detailed list of all expenses incurred during the grant cycle which have been paid for with the Dining for ^{[[L]]}_{[[SEP]]}Women grant. ^{[[L]]}_{[[SEP]]}

See attached expense report.

13. Did this grant and relationship with DFW assist your organization in obtaining other funding, partnerships with ^{[[L]]}_{[[SEP]]}other organizations, or public recognition in some capacity? ^{[[L]]}_{[[SEP]]}

As described above, the work we conducted in Banke and Dang received the recognition of Nepal's Social Welfare Council and we have been asked to expand this programming to support all children in these two districts. While we do not currently have the funding to carry out this expanded programming, we will be speaking with UNICEF in April to discuss a possible collaboration.

Message to DFW donors and membership:

Little Sisters Fund would like to thank you for your support of 100 Little Sisters in the Banke and Dang districts of Nepal. Not only were these girls once at risk of the perils of sex trafficking, child marriage, and child labor, but many of them also come from families living in extreme poverty and hardship due to Nepal's ancestral system of indentured servitude. Though outlawed, this system endures and girls born into it are not often given the chance to become educated and empowered women. The girls supported by Dining for Women now have this chance, and, as evidenced by the success stories we included, they are grabbing the opportunity by the horns and not letting go. We are so proud of them, and we are forever grateful to you for making a strong and lasting impact on their lives.