



Roads to Rehab
Nepal



ROADS TO REHAB NEPAL ANNUAL REPORT 2022

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Namaste,



We have been working to support Medical Rehabilitation Organisation (MeRO) (previously known as Nepal Healthcare Equipment Development Organisation (NHEDF), since December 2016. It is difficult to think of our work separate to that of our wonderful project partner. Our paths are mutually intertwined. We would not exist without them, and they would not exist without us.

The catchy phrase that popped up early in the pandemic “We are in this together” is very appropriate to describe our mutual relationship!

The father of one of MeRO's recent patients said "I have already spent NPR 400,000 (AU\$4,622) on my son's treatment. I took a loan of NPR 350,000 but now there is no one else I could borrow money from. I have already visited four different hospitals and finally came to Kathmandu. I don't have any land to sell. Now my only hope is you".



WHY WE EXIST



We believe access to free health and medical care should be a universal human right regardless of income, age, gender, caste, religion or whether you live in an urban, rural or remote location.

Many people in Nepal do not have access to medical care and rehabilitation services for a number of complex reasons. These include poverty, (which has worsened since the onset of COVID-19), geographical location, lack of facilities, expensive emergency transport and a lack of resources including suitably trained and skilled staff.

In a place like Nepal, illness and injury regularly results in disability, death, poor physical and psychological health, personal and family distress, debt, deepening poverty, homelessness, economic loss and significant feelings of being a burden to one's family.

Many of MeROS' patients experience severe financial hardship due to the cost of medical treatment before they or their loved ones are referred to the Shelter. It is not uncommon for them to arrive at the Shelter with significant personal debt, usually to their community, and some even consider ending their lives.



ABOUT US



We are an Australian based organisation registered with the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission (ACNC). We work in partnership with MeRO who are registered with the Social Welfare Council in Nepal. These organisations are government bodies with regulatory and reporting requirements.

ABOUT MEDICAL REHABILITATION ORGANISATION (MeRO)

During this financial year, NHEDF changed their name from Nepal Healthcare Equipment Development Foundation to Medical Rehabilitation Organisation (MeRO) because they wanted a name that better reflects what they do. The new name was finally approved by the Social Welfare Council in Nepal in January.



Our relationship with MeRO's Director, Samrat and their Board Members, volunteers and staff is genuine and reciprocated. We recognise and respect that they are best placed to operate their project and advocate for their patients. Team MeRO, along with clinicians involved with the care of the patients referred to the Shelter work together. They identify patient needs and help them navigate their individual road to rehabilitation.

WHAT WE DO

We help fund MeRO's work. Together, we improve health outcomes by providing access to health and medical care. We facilitate medical and surgical intervention, nursing care, physiotherapy and rehabilitation services for people who experience life changing illness or injury but cannot access these services due to poverty.

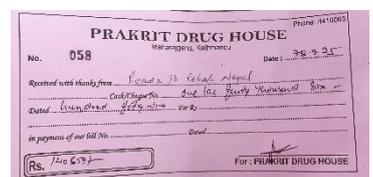


HOW WE DO IT

Both organisations rely 100% on donations. The number of patients we can help and the amount of support we can give to MeRO is determined by the generosity of our invaluable donors because without them, we could not do anything.

We support MeRO in three ways:

- Our Nurse & Physiotherapist Sponsorship Program **pays the wages of MeRO's three nurses and physiotherapist**. This financial year, this accounted for 38.5% of our expenditure.
- We pay \$1000 per month of **MeRO's pharmacy bill**, and more when we can. This means no one goes without and all patients at the Shelter receive essential medications plus all the other things they need during their long road to rehabilitation. These include all medical, nursing, physiotherapy and occupational therapy equipment and supplies. This financial year, this accounted for 43% of our expenditure.
- We fund the **cost of surgical, medical and hospital expenses** when required. MeRO can often source this from elsewhere, but when their bank of supporters is exhausted, this is where we step in. This financial year we have funded medical expenses for three people, including one woman with obstetric fistula. This accounted for 7.3% of our expenditure this financial year.



We have also facilitated ongoing professional development of MeRO's clinical staff and participated in ongoing mentoring of MeRO's staff, board members and volunteers around safeguarding, good governance and the reduction of risk.

HOW MERO WORKS

The number of patients MeRO can help is also determined by funding, but it is also influenced by patient acuity, resources, and staffing, as well as external constraints like the impact of COVID-19, the cost of prostheses and the availability of resources. At the Shelter, everything is free – not just medical care.

MeRO does receive some funding from another organisation in the Netherlands called StichtingCare4Nepal. They pay the Shelter's rent, and this year received a wonderful grant for this purpose and to provide the Shelter with a coat of paint and



new hospital grade beds. The latter have been very popular!



MERO also receives wonderful support and donations from individuals, organisations and medical practitioners inside Nepal. Many of them help with the day to day running costs at the Shelter such as food, bills and other incidentals. Medical staff working in various hospitals regularly discount their fees and some hospitals in Kathmandu often reduce their costs.

YOUR IMPACT & OUR ACHIEVEMENTS

Over this financial year, 51 lives have been changed. This brings the total number of lives we have helped change to 809. Because of you, 51 men, women and children have had access to the best surgical, medical, nursing care, physiotherapy and rehabilitation services possible and have been treated with kindness, compassion, dignity, safety and respect.



Without your generosity, patients with diagnoses of cancer, heart disease, osteomyelitis and multi-trauma would have died or become disabled from the long-term consequences of lack of treatment. Many patients would have chosen not to accept treatment because they could not afford it. Many would have taken their own lives as the only way out of debt.

Without your support of our staff sponsorship programs, patients would not be able to have extended stays in a medical and rehabilitation facility and access to around-the-clock nursing care.

Their physical, social, emotional, and psychological needs would simply not be met; complex wounds would not heal resulting in gangrene and amputations. Also, without expert physiotherapy, many patients would experience loss of function and increased disability and become bedbound.

Without your generosity and MeRO's help, many patients would become a physical and economic burden to their family and community. MeRO's treatment and support enables these patients to become self-sufficient independent and economically productive.

Diagnoses of patients admitted to MeRO's Shelter over this financial year include:

Amputations, burns injuries, burns contractures, congenital heart disease, synovial carcinoma, osteosarcoma, infected wounds, gangrene, pressure areas, lacerations, fractures of the cervical spine, sternum, ribs, collar bone, jaw and arm, fractured implants from the use of poor quality metal hardware used to fix fractures and replace joints, obstetric fistula, seizures, non-



malignant tumours, hydrocephalus, congenital hip dysplasia, ligament injury, osteomyelitis, craniotomy, seizures, eye injury and deafness.



Causes of trauma included longstanding and ongoing earthquake related injury requiring ongoing medical and surgical intervention. One was hit by a cow who fell off a cliff and landed on top of her; another was mauled by a bear; a man was struck by lightning; another was involved in a motor vehicle accident; one received negligent care; and three people sustained fractures and/or infection due to the use of poor-quality metal hardware used to fix fractures and replace joints. Several patients experienced burns injuries – both acute burns and burns contractures requiring surgical release.

This year, there has only been one patient that MeRO has not been able to help - a two-year-old girl who was born deaf and needs cochlear implants. The cost of this in Nepal is US\$30,000. Another of MeRO's patients sadly passed away. 16-year-old Umesh had osteosarcoma and developed secondary tumours in his lungs. He passed away at home earlier in the year.

TRUSTEE'S REPORT

I would like to say a huge thank you for another year of wonderfully generous giving. We try really hard through our regular quarterly newsletters, regular Facebook postings and communications sent out to those who donate through GlobalGiving, to demonstrate the impact your generosity has on the varied roads to rehabilitation of each and every patient at the Shelter.

I am missing Nepal terribly. Over the last two decades, I have been to Nepal every year, sometimes twice a year, but by the time I go in February, it will be almost three. This, however, does not change anything that we do.

We have continued to meet our commitments to MeRO and support their wonderful work from a distance. Thanks to regular virtual meetings, chats, social media and other communications, we stay up to date with everything that is happening at the Shelter as well as continue to work with MeRO to help strengthen its capacity for good governance.



Life seems to have become more normal at the Shelter, and as several of my Nepali friends say, "nobody talks about COVID anymore!" It seems Nepal is living with it and all patients and staff are vaccinated. Lockdowns have become a thing of the past and the Delta variant was replaced with Omicron. Restricted hospital access for MeRO's patients and cancelled surgeries have not been an issue over the last twelve months, and sometimes our conversations with Samrat, do not mention COVID at all!

MeRO continues to face significantly increased demand for its services as the number of people in Nepal experiencing financial distress has increased. Patient numbers have sat around twelve. MeRO has capacity for 16, but more patients means more funding which is always the hard bit!

Sometimes the acuity of a patient can be challenging. For example, Samrat said, when planning the treatment of Anjali, *"It was like we had a Mount Everest in front of us and we were determined to climb it. Slowly we started talking to many people and finally after a month we arranged everything."*



This is how MeRO tackles each and every person who walks through the doors of MeRO's Shelter and this is how 51 lives this year have been changed. Their connections, tenacity, coordination and organisational abilities are impressive.



The presence of the pandemic makes it difficult to plan. Even our fundraising dinner last year was not on its usual scale, We have decided to postpone this event until April or May 2023, partly because of the COVID situation, but also by then I will have to Nepal and stimulated the economy by doing lots of shopping for all those wonderful items we have for our auctions!

Despite the challenges, we have continued to fulfil our mutual obligations to MeRO as well as our reporting requirements to the ACNC and GlobalGiving, and I would like to thank each and every one of you for your incredible generosity.

With best wishes,

Virginia Dixon

President, Roads to Rehab Nepal

FROM MeRO'S DIRECTOR, SAMRAT

"The last twelve months was very challenging for all of us. Due to Covid we were so much scared and even we lost our treasurer to COVID. Losing one of our hardworking members was so depressing. The whole world was suffering, and we were not untouched. There was a month where we could not even fundraise for a single rupee. Although we were worried and frustrated, in our hearts we knew we had to survive. and we did. We still hope that one day this Covid will vanish and we will have normal life again.



The main reasons we survived was because of our determination, and the financial support we continue to receive from Roads to Rehab Nepal (RtRN) during the pandemic. The pandemic affected everyone, but together, we stayed strong even during these hard days.

RtRN never stopped paying the salaries of our nurses and physiotherapist or our pharmacy bill for which we were so grateful, and we reduced the intake of new patients so that we could continue to survive.



In January we changed our name from NHEDF to MeRO. It was like a new beginning. In Nepali MeRO means "mine" or "my". We hope it makes the Shelter feel a bit more like a home away from home as every patient can call it "My Shelter".

MeRO also has a new Board, and we are now 9 people who may be different, but we can achieve great things when we make a common goal and work together. We are not those people who think only about publicity or getting fame. We are individuals who really think life matters.



We have been helping each other directly or indirectly for years but we never had a chance to sit all together. This changed when we formed our new Board and we discussed the future of the organisation, the pros and cons, the problems and our feelings and

promised each other to stand together. It's just a small step and we are proud to associate with each other and stand for humanity.



Every day, our work is not limited to inside our office premises. We take care of our patients at the hospital as if they are our own family. Our team visits our patients every day in hospital to make sure they are okay. They stay with them, monitor their progress, and plan every one of their needs so that they can have better treatment with minimal stress. Many of them have never been to a big city before, or even to hospital.

Together, we are not working to change the whole of Nepal, but we work to change a life. We also work to change attitudes. Recently, we had baby with burns at the Shelter. Her father tried to get a loan from his neighbours to travel to Kathmandu and everyone was telling him "why do you need money. Let her die - its' a daughter".



We also rescued a 28-year-old woman from a district hospital. Her husband said "" I am not taking her to Kathmandu. Let her die - she is just a woman. If my Buffalo dies, I will cry. Who will cry for a wife?". We don't know how this attitude will change but our aim will never change. Every life matters and we are proud to fight for people and show it.



These happy faces are what we want to achieve. This is how we work to shape a life. There is nothing called impossible. You just need determination, friends and good people around you. Our team works day and night to support them. We don't care from which place they are from or which caste or religion they belong to. We just see humanity.

I personally would like to thank all the people who contribute to the wonderful work of RTRN.

Yours respectfully,

Samrat Singh Basnet

Director, Medical Rehabilitation Organisation

OUR NURSE AND PHYSIOTHERAPIST SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

Integral to our commitment to improve the health of people who have experienced life changing illness or injury is our Nurse and Physiotherapist Sponsorship Programs. These fund the wages of MeRO's three nurses, Kusum, Nirmala and Sony, and physiotherapist, Anjeela. Not all staff are fully sponsored, so after reading this annual report, if you would like to make a regular recurring fortnightly/monthly/annual payment to help pay their salaries, we would love to hear from you!



MeRO's clinical staff continue to provide non-discriminatory, person-centered, individually tailored, culturally appropriate nursing care and physiotherapy to all patients at NHEDF's Shelter, whilst adhering to all registration requirements, standards for practice, and codes of conduct and ethics which guide the delivery of care.



Part of our commitment to MeRO is to promote sustainable development and one way we achieve this by supporting the ongoing education of their clinical staff. The Australian company Ausmed has continued to provide nursing staff with a free online subscription which MeRO's nurses have found so useful.

This year, Staff Nurse Nirmala did a two-week training program at a hospital in Kathmandu specializing in burns injuries. She was then able to teach the others what she had learned. Anjeela continues to access electronic physio newsletters we connected her to and other online information which she has found really helpful.

MeRO recently hosted two students from the Netherlands who were doing an internship as part of their degree in Skin Therapy. Staff benefitted enormously by their presence, teachings and experience.



A BIT ABOUT GOVERNANCE

Both MeRO and ourselves are 100% operated by invaluable volunteers. No one from either organisation receives payment of any kind. We are both small, but we are effective, and our outcomes are easy to measure.

Our governing policies guide our work, promote good governance, foster accountability, transparency and due diligence and keep everyone associated with both organisations safe. We both have strong policies, processes and controls in place to mitigate risk. We both comply with all legislative, regulatory and reporting requirements and obligations determined by our respective governing bodies (the ACNC and the Social Welfare Council (SWC)). We have worked together to strengthen good governance and due diligence.

The ACNC has specific requirements which govern a registered charity's operations outside Australia and considers that engaging in overseas activities also carry additional risk. We recognise that we are a charity that operates overseas; that we engage in 'overseas activities'; and that such activities can be harder to monitor than activities at home.

As such, we comply with the ACNC's External Conduct Standards which are a set of standards, steps and requirements that govern how ACNC registered charities must manage their operations, activities and resources outside Australia. Compliance with and adherence to these standards ensures we engage in appropriate standards of behaviour, governance and oversight. We can demonstrate that we have taken appropriate steps, as outlined by the ACNC, to safeguard our funds, assets, volunteers, MeRO's staff, and the beneficiaries of our work to reduce risk.

ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT

Our organisation is run solely by volunteers. Management Committee members continue to fund their own expenses, do not receive payment or benefit of any kind and regularly and generously donate many services. We rely completely on donations and our own fundraising efforts. The number of patients we can help and therefore the number of lives we can change is directly related to the amount of money we can raise. This financial we have raised \$29,856.

ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2022

MeRO ACCOUNT

BANK BALANCE AS AT 30 JUNE 2021 **19,041**

RECEIPTS

Donations	18,249 ¹
Clinical staff sponsorship	8,140 ²
Fundraising dinner tickets	1,380
Sale of football shirts	1,052 ³
Sale of auction items at fundraising dinner	835
Refund of overseas transfer fees	<u>200⁴</u>

TOTAL RECEIPTS **29,856**

EXPENDITURE

Pharmacy	13,348
Clinical staff wages	11,931
Nepal Social Welfare Council registration fees	1,480 ⁵
Surgery costs	1,223
Taj Agra fundraising dinner	823
Website maintenance	450
Website and email hosting service	448
Overseas transfer fees	<u>260</u>

TOTAL EXPENDITURE **(29,963)**

BANK BALANCE AS AT 30 JUNE 2022 **18,934**

FISTULA ACCOUNT

Bank balance as at 30 JUNE 2021 **3,790**

RECEIPTS **NIL**

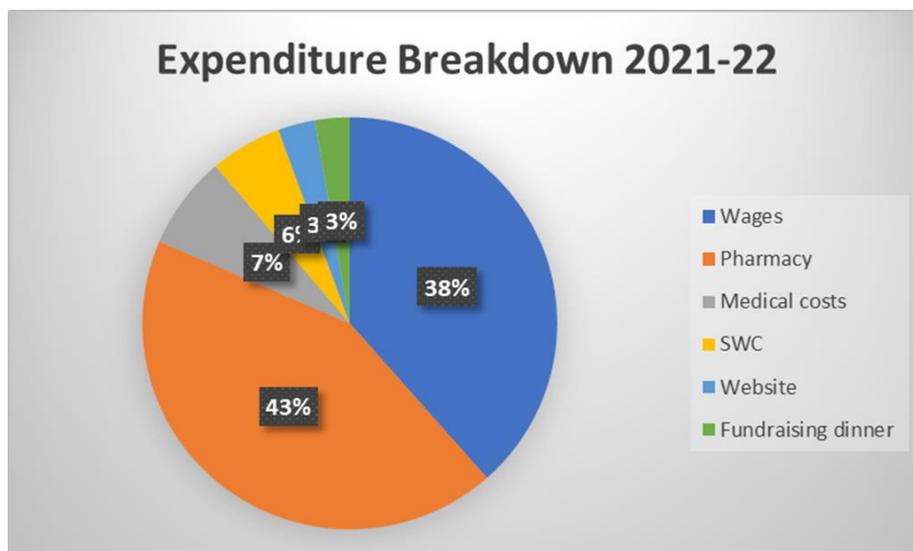
EXPENDITURE

Surgery costs 1,027 **(1,027)**

NOTES:

- 1) The major source of donations was through GlobalGiving (\$12,488). These donations were from a number of individual donors, plus matching donations from GlobalGiving itself. GlobalGiving provides a means by which donors can donate by credit card and also provides a tax-deductible platform for our donors in the US and UK. Roads to Rehab Nepal also received a number of significant individual donations.
- 2) These funds were donated specifically for Roads to Rehab's nurse and physiotherapist sponsorship program.

- 3) Football Australia donated two playing strips from the respective teams in the Australia v Nepal World Cup Qualifier played in Kuwait on 11 June 2021. These shirts were auctioned by Bid4Good on our behalf.
- 4) St George Bank refunds Roads to Rehab's overseas money transfer fees.
- 5) As required by Nepali government legislation, Roads to Rehab (as MeRO's Australian partner) is now required to pay a registration fee to Nepal's Social Welfare Council, which is the government department responsible for charities in Nepal. This payment will be required every three years, after each registration renewal.



Paul Dixon

Treasurer, Roads to Rehab Nepal

Date: 8 July 2022

TO OUR DONORS, SPONSORS & SUPPORTERS - THANK YOU'S & ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



We would like to emphasize that neither words nor photos can adequately express the gratitude of MeRO's patients and their families. We would like to say a million thank you's to everyone who has supported us and/or MeRO and thank you for everything your generosity has enabled us to achieve over this financial year.

We gratefully acknowledge and thank our past and present donors, partners, sponsors and supporters both inside and outside Australia and Nepal.

We have received some incredible donations of between \$1000 - \$6000 this year. We know many of you wish to be anonymous, but we hope you appreciate what your donation means to us and to everyone who benefits from your support.

Our gratitude goes to everyone who plays a role in the success of both organisations; our wonderful Management Committee Members in Australia; MeRO's equally amazing Board members, clinical staff and volunteers; the work of Rani Kakshspati who



continues to provide the Shelter with basic food items every month, and Prakrit Drug House for supplying them with medications, equipment and supplies at discounted prices and flexible credit.

We would also like to acknowledge and thank all those medical professionals in Nepal who refer patients to the Shelter and help keep medical costs to a minimum and Nepal Ambulance Service for assisting with patient transport.



Our grateful thanks go to Southside Physiotherapy Woden and Tuggeranong and Duntroon Physiotherapy Department for yet again donating many useful items which will make their way to Nepal.

Sincere thanks go to all those individuals who contribute to our Nurse and Physiotherapist Sponsorship Programs year after year. Our

appreciation goes to Ausmed for providing MeRO's nurses with a subscription to all their on-line learning resources and to Flat Gecko Design in Canberra for taking care of our website. We would like to thank Football Australia for the wonderful donation of two soccer strips from both the Australian and Nepali national teams.



Without all your wonderful support, none of the above would be possible. As Samrat said *"We work because we are the last hope for every family who comes to our Shelter, but we always know we are just mediators. We are nothing without the support from people like you"*.

ANY QUESTIONS? CONTACT US

If you have any questions or would like more information about any aspect of our work, please visit our website <http://www.roads-to-rehab-nepal.org> or contact us on info@roads-to-rehab-nepal.org If you have skills to contribute which we lack and would like to help us do what we do, please get in touch!

With best wishes and grateful thanks from all of us at Roads to Rehab Nepal, all past and present patients and everyone at MeRO for your incredible support and generosity during this financial year.

Yours sincerely,

Virginia Dixon

President, Roads to Rehab Nepal

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