



## WELCOME TO OUR SEPTEMBER NEWSLETTER

Namaste,

Welcome to our September newsletter.

## FUNDRAISING & THANK YOU

A huge thank you goes to everyone who supported our GlobalGiving July Bonus Day fundraising campaign and our annual Fundraising Dinner. Your amazing generosity across both events generated AU\$8,681/US\$5,693 for medical care for patients at MeRO's Shelter.

## MERO NEWS

MeRO has had a difficult time over the last few months, but we will share the good news stories first.

Since our last newsletter, nine of MeRO's patients were all happily discharged having made good recoveries. These included Paras who had a pelvectomy for osteosarcoma; Meghnath who was treated for osteomyelitis; Saraswati who was assessed for a prosthetic arm; Mamata and Bhakta, both of whom had cardiac surgery; Sampadha and Rabindra who were treated for acute burns injuries and Amit and Santosh who required release of their burns contractures.

Eight new patients were admitted, including brothers, Prashant and Hamenta, whose stories we tell below. Pariasal and 13-year-old Bipula both had burns contracture release surgery. Dhan was struck by lightning and is receiving ongoing physiotherapy and nursing care following a prolonged stay in hospital. Radhika had heart surgery and was transferred to the Shelter post-operatively. Dhana requires ongoing treatment for urological cancer, and 13 year-old Joshan had cardiac surgery.



14-year-old Prashant, and 12-year-old Hamenta both looked like healthy, normal children on the outside, but they shared a serious congenital abnormality that affected their ability to urinate normally. Prashant was taken to India for his first surgery when he was a year old. Medical care is cheaper there than in Nepal. The doctors asked his father to bring him back a year later for a second surgery, but by that time his younger brother, Hamenta, had been born. Samrat stated their parents said *"we were heartbroken and financially drained. We could not continue the boys' treatment"*.

A decade later their father heard about a young man who was referred to MeRO and underwent urological surgery. A chance meeting with a journalist who was in the region and knew of MeRO changed their lives. Samrat said *"desperate for help, the boys father reached out to us"*.

Prashant has now had his second and final surgery and Hamenta has had his first. His second surgery will be done in a few months time. Their father said he *"could not express his happiness enough because his children can now have a normal life."*

Now for the hard stuff....We do feel a responsibility to let you know about MeRO's patients who do not pull through. MeRO has had the occasional patient who passes away but the last few months have been very different.

28-year-old Mansara, was referred to the Shelter on a complicated regime of blood thinning medications since a previous double valve replacement for Rheumatic Heart Disease a few years ago. She had a stillbirth previously due to this, and was pregnant for the second time. Even in Australia a successful pregnancy, delivery and prognosis for someone on these medications is not guaranteed.

Mansara was advised to remain in Kathmandu for the duration of her pregnancy, however without friends or family to stay with, renting somewhere in Kathmandu for 9 months is not something people living in poverty can afford and attending as an outpatient every fortnight when it takes 2 – 3 days of travel each way is neither practical nor affordable. Fortunately for Mansara, her cardiologist referred her to MeRO. Everyone was very excited at the prospect of a baby. Sadly, despite regular check ups and the best medical and obstetric management available failed her, she lost this baby too.



Karna required an elbow and shoulder replacement and had his first surgery recently which went well. His wife, Sima, accompanied him to the Shelter, and as she complained of some intermittent abdominal pain MeRO organised for her to see a doctor too. She was diagnosed with an infection in her liver and was prescribed medications and regular follow-ups. About ten days after Karna's surgery, she suddenly developed severe abdominal pain and was rushed to hospital. She sadly passed away that day, due to a large gastrointestinal bleed from an undiagnosed gastric ulcer. It was a huge shock for everyone.

It is incredibly hard for MeRO when they have patients pass away, especially when they are children. Little Gautam was so brave and such a little cutie. He was only 6 when he first came to the Shelter for cardiac surgery. He did really well and was discharged and returned for regular follow-ups. He recently required a second surgery, but sadly there were complications. Samrat wrote: *"Life is truly unpredictable. When we take on something as difficult and uncertain as a medical journey, we never really know how it will end. Some stories bring us hope and joy, while others leave us with pain and loss. With a very heavy heart, we share that Gautam is no longer with us. Despite all our efforts and care over the past three years, we lost him. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family. We are also deeply thankful to everyone who stood by us and supported Gautam throughout his journey. Your kindness meant the world to us and to him"*



Then there was another tragedy...14 year old Nirmala was brought to the Shelter in May, also needing urgent cardiac surgery. Due to poverty and a number of other complex intertwined factors, she had experienced a succession of lengthy delays in obtaining timely, appropriate treatment for her congenital heart issues. She was referred to MeRO by a district hospital and transferred to Kathmandu.

When she arrived, Samrat said *"I have no words to describe her condition. She is fighting with death. I don't know what the future holds for her and she may or may not recover from this crisis."* Nirmala remained a patient in ICU for 4 days whilst surgery was being planned. Sadly she passed away before it could take place.

Samrat shared the news with *“Sometimes, life puts us in situations we cannot control. What we can control is how we respond. Despite our best efforts and the dedication of doctors over the past four days in the ICU, we lost her. Nirmala’s passing is not just a personal loss - it is a reflection of the harsh reality faced by many people living in rural Nepal. Even with the best medical care available, the delay in reaching a proper facility can be fatal. Her story resembles a common story of many Nepalese who live far from advanced healthcare services. But one thing I’ll always be proud of is our Team MeRO. At the very least, we were able to get her to the best medical facility in Nepal. That alone is a victory. We gave her a chance which she would never have otherwise had”.*

We hope you understand that the contributing factors of the sad stuff had nothing to do with the care or the management of these patients whilst they were at the Shelter. Again, we are sorry to bring upsetting news and as always, we are all so grateful for your ongoing support. If you have any feedback, questions or would like any more information about anything we do, please do not hesitate to get in touch. You can contact us via our website [www.roads-to-rehab-nepal.org](http://www.roads-to-rehab-nepal.org)

With best wishes and grateful thanks for your amazing ongoing support.

*Virginia Dixon*

President, Roads to Rehab Nepal

