



Rising from the Rubble: Rukmini's Efforts in Nepal

Progress Report: April 2015 – August 2015

Rukmini Foundation



Table of Contents

From the President	3 – 4
Where We Work	5
Our Mission and Timeline of Events	6
Disaster Response Highlights	7
Holistic Recovery Efforts	8 – 12
A Rukmini Scholar & Survivor's Story	13
Community Rebuilding	14
Pittsburgh & Efforts in the USA	15
Our Call to Action	16
Sincerest Thank you	17
Recognizing Our Supporters	18



Progress Report 2015

Dear Friends,

Through difficult and trying times over the past three months, our Nepal team and staff, Rukmini Scholars and families, and community partners have shown incredible **dedication**, **tireless effort** and **swift adaptability**. Our Rukmini Scholars had just completed one month of the new school year in April 2015 when everything changed for them.

On the evening of April 28, 2015, a 7.9-magnitude earthquake struck Nepal. It took thousands of lives, destructed homes, depleted essential resources, and stole all senses of safety. This was the worst disaster in Nepal's modern history but we were determined to recover and recover better.

Our first priority was to make sure that our Rukmini Scholars, Foundation staff, and community partners were safe and unharmed by the damage that occurred. The Foundation's emergency response began immediately. We contacted community members in the areas we work in, in Pharping, Nepal. It was challenging to reach people by mobile phones because power lines were destroyed. Many people could not charge their cell phones.

The day after the earthquake, our Nepal team visited the villages where our scholars, staff, and partner schools are located to talk to families in person and assess the damage incurred. There were varying levels of destruction and debris everywhere. Our evaluations of homes, family health, and shelter conditions helped determine which families would require the most immediate support. We gave out relief packages to sustain vulnerable families for up to one month. *We planned and acted quickly to restore the hope that was lost in these communities.* Our response in the weeks immediately following the earthquake included setting up temporary shelters, conducting mobile clinics, addressing emotional and mental wellness of community members, rebuilding homes and schools, and emphasizing earthquake safety measures.

Our team and volunteers worked to clear the debris and damage around collapsed homes and buildings. We recognized that *families living under tents would be especially vulnerable to diseases from poor health and sanitation.* Our team closely observed and supported these families. Tents would not be sufficient for monsoon season so we created a Temporary Shed Management plan to assist these families in returning to their permanent residence. We also constructed temporary classrooms so children could return to school safely.



Progress Report 2015

We have made tremendous strides since the disaster occurred. Our progress to return to normalcy would not be possible without the hard work of our team in Nepal, team in the United States, and supporters, like you, who believe in the cause of our Foundation. We sincerely thank you for your time, donations, and compassion for the Nepalese community.

Rukmini Foundation's efforts are especially crucial right now. In this post earthquake period, **women and girls, particularly, are vulnerable**. Though the community has shown remarkable resilience and capacity to move forward, the earthquakes and trauma caused inevitable physical and emotional damage that must be addressed. Girls and women are even more susceptible to health complications, abuse, and human trafficking amidst the chaos of recovery, reopening of schools, and rebuilding efforts. We ensured the health and wellness, education, and family needs of Rukmini Scholars and staff were met holistically during this time. We would not let children, girls, and women bear the brunt of this disaster.

Despite the devastation faced, we are happy to see improvements made. On June 18, we received wonderful news that all of our Rukmini Scholars who took the 2015 School Leaving Certificate exam passed with almost all girls scoring in the first (highest) division. We have helped build 16 temporary classrooms, 20 temporary sheds, and addressed the health needs of 250 individuals. We recently launched our Instagram page (@RukminiFoundation) and continue to write articles found on our [website](#) to keep everyone informed about the situation in Nepal.

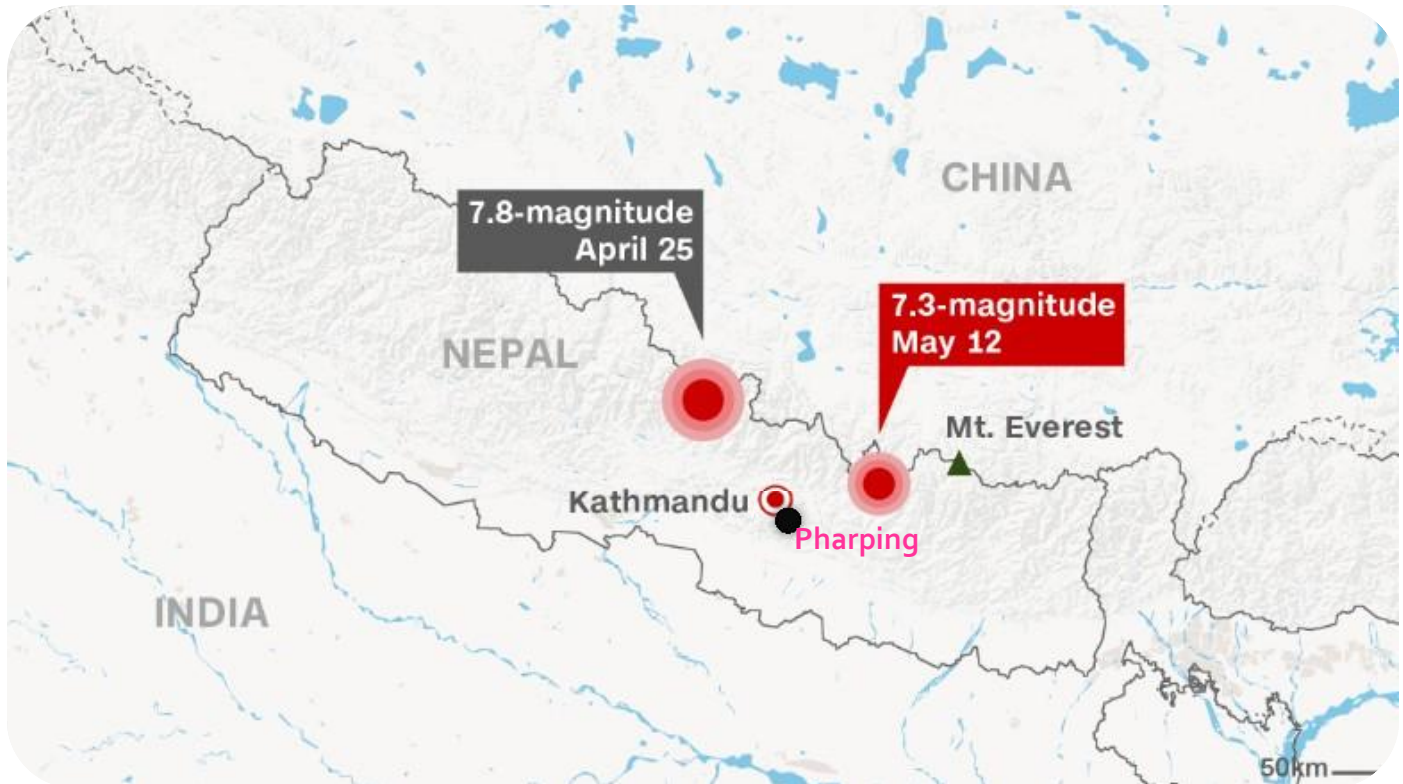
What we have and what we continue to accomplish in Pharping, Nepal is not easy but it is possible with the commitment of our Scholars, dedication of our staff, Nepal team and USA team, cooperation of community members and community partners, and your belief in our cause of equipping girls with the knowledge and tools necessary to lead healthy and happy lives through quality education, formative mentorship, and health and wellness programs.

We look forward to bringing you more updates. None of our accomplishments would be possible without your generosity, sincere support, and compassion. Thank you.

Bibhuti Aryal
President, Rukmini Foundation

Where We Work: Pharping, Nepal

Nepal is a landlocked, low-income nation in South Asia. The poverty the country faces affects girls in rural areas the most. However, girls in Nepal should not be victims of poverty but rather part of the solution. Educated girls can improve their families, communities, and in turn, their country.



Villages we serve: Bansbari, Bhanjyang, Chalakhel, Chaimale, Dollu, Kopugaon, Nimtol, Pharping, Satikhel, Simpani, Sokhel, Talku, Yuntiki

Our Mission

Rukmini Foundation has focused on adolescent girls in villages in the Pharping area since 2011. Girls in rural Nepal are often forced to do household work rather than go to school due to familial financial constraints. Rukmini Foundation ensures girls are given access to quality education and extracurricular opportunities through holistic programming and implementation of novel concepts of mentoring, problem-based learning, academic coaching, and health and wellness activities in the Pharping area.

An educated girl lives longer, makes healthier decisions, and fights against child marriage, an illegal yet persistent problem in lower income families. With our Education, Health & Wellness, and Didi programs, we show girls and their families that education is what leads to opportunities to create a better life.



Progress Report 2015

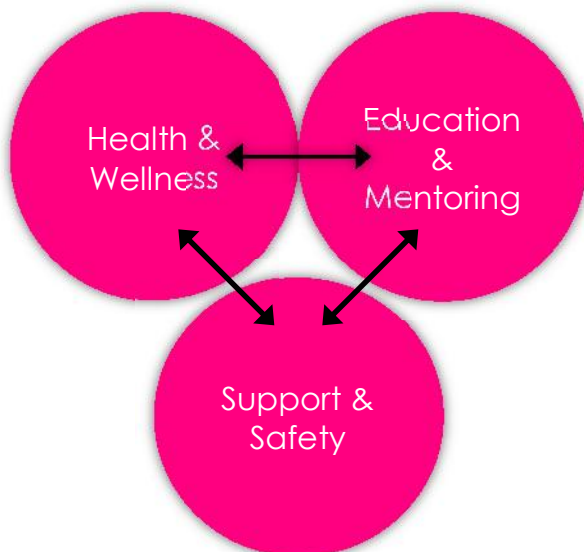
Our Mission

Rukmini Foundation empowers adolescent girls through a combination of quality education, supportive mentoring, and health and wellness programs. Our efforts have been particularly crucial over the last three months.

In the face of natural disaster, girls & women are most at risk.

We are making sure the earthquakes and their repercussions do not set back the progress of Rukmini Scholars and families in these areas:

- Reducing the incidence of child brides in rural Nepal
- Protecting girls from human trafficking
- Reducing the literacy gap between males and females
- Promoting self-esteem in young girls
- Showing low-income families the importance of investing in girls.



Timeline of Events April – July

April: Rukmini Foundation's new and old Scholars begin the new school year.

April 25: A 7.8-magnitude earthquake rocks Kathmandu, Nepal and surrounding regions.

April 29 – May 1: Relief efforts begin with community visits and damage assessment.

May 12: A 7.0-magnitude earthquake hits Nepal. Over 600,000 homes damaged and eight million people affected.

May 25: Schools reopen and children reunite with their friends and peers.

May 30: Mental wellness and counseling sessions are held for women and children.

June 2 – June 7: Disaster preparedness and earthquake safety sessions are held at each of our five partner schools.

June 18: School Leaving Certificate exams results came out. 8 out of 8 Rukmini Scholars who took the exam at the end of 10th grade passed with almost all scoring in the first division (above 60%).

July: Reconstruction, temporary shed management, partner school construction, and additional family support services. Normal programs resumed with more health, wellness, and preparedness efforts.

DISASTER RESPONSE HIGHLIGHTS

Upon the natural disaster, we are trying to restore a sense of normalcy and security to everyone in the Pharping, Nepal region.



46 homes assessed in 13 different villages



275 individuals seen in mobile health clinics



46 relief packages distributed



75 children reached through mental wellness program



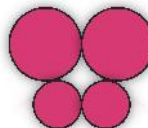
50 community members reached through a safe building workshop



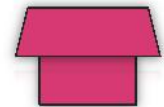
46 families visited to check food, health, and home conditions



150 children engaged in hygiene and hand washing program



12 families supported with immediate relief materials



5 partner schools reached through earthquake preparedness and aftermath safety session

An Overview of Our Action Plan

- Clear damaged homes and debris
- Monitor the health and wellness of families
- Rebuild homes and lives
- Coordinate with other stakeholders for building, health, and education programs

Our First Response: Family Safety & Damage Assessment

Our immediate response to the earthquake was to make sure Rukmini Scholars, their families, our staff, and community members in Pharping were okay. On April 29, our team visited each family and their home to assess their circumstances and current living conditions. This assessment helped determine who would need shelter, supplies, and support most immediately.

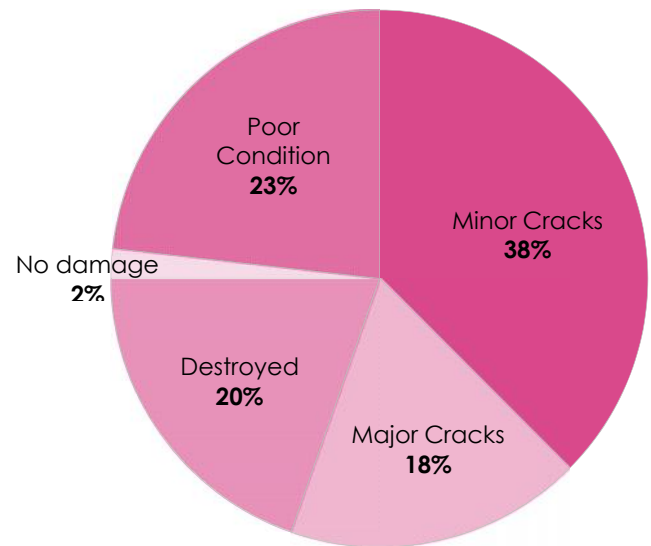
We identified 13 out of 46 families who were most vulnerable after the disaster. These families no longer had shelter and essential supplies. They were living in tents. Rukmini Foundation provided CGI Tin Sheets so the most vulnerable families could construct sturdier homes that would protect them from monsoon weather. Many other families were fearful to return to their homes and stayed in

Damage Assessment Results:

- 13 out of 46 homes were in poor condition
- 21 out of 46 homes had minor cracks
- 11 out of 46 homes were destroyed
- 10 out of 46 homes had major cracks
- 1 out of 46 homes was left undamaged

Houses suffered varying levels of damage from total destruction to minor cracks (images below). Even families whose homes suffered minor damage were afraid to stay indoors. Hundreds of aftershocks caused the entire community to live in fear. Our team wanted to make sure all families had safe and sturdy spaces to live in before Monsoon season in mid-June.

Conditions of the Homes Visited



Distributing Survival Kits with Food and Household Items

Immediately after the first earthquake, we set up a **relief package distribution** location in central Pharping. Volunteers and staff gave families relief packages that contained essential supplies and foods. Each package contained foam to sleep on, nutritive foods (lentils, rice, grains, biscuits), water, Oral Rehydration Solution, and hygiene items to last a family up to one month.



For families who lost everything in a matter of minutes and were reminded of this through hundreds of earthquake aftershocks, these packages represented **hope**. The first steps to improving their circumstance were restoring their security, health, and spirits.

Pictured below (left) is a Rukmini Scholar **Sunita** carrying survival items with her mother and her sister. Pictured below (right) is our staff helping another Scholar, **Sonita** carry items home.



Rebuilding Homes & Lives: From Tents to Temporary Sheds

Life cannot wait until aid comes. Families had to be very resourceful to construct temporary shelters after the earthquake. They used tarpaulin sheets, blankets, and nearby bamboo to create tents. However, these tents would not serve well as shelter during heavy monsoon season rains in June.



Post-Earthquake Living Conditions

Sunita, a Rukmini Scholar (right) and her mom (middle) talk about their living conditions with Rukmini Foundation Mentor, Ms. Pramila (left). Sunita's family lost everything they owned during the earthquake but they were grateful to still have each other. Many families live in poor conditions like Sunita's. They barely have room for four people to sleep in their tent. They must travel far distances by foot to fetch water and they barely have any food supplies left. They cook outdoors.



Our Temporary Shed Plan

We raced to provide families with sturdy CGI tin sheets so they could build sturdier homes before monsoon rains hit. We selected 20 of the poorest families who were living under tents to give tin sheets to. Using the tin, families built one or two bedroom sheds. Ideally we would support all families. *Decisions like these are not easy but they must be made – especially when time is pressing.* This is why our staff and partners in Nepal regularly communicate with families in Pharping to check on their homes and wellbeing. **Families were thankful to receive CGI tin sheets that tremendously improved the quality of their shelters.**

Pictured above is Rukmini Scholar **Smriti Balami's** tent. Her family is one of the 20 families we gratefully supported through the Shed Plan.

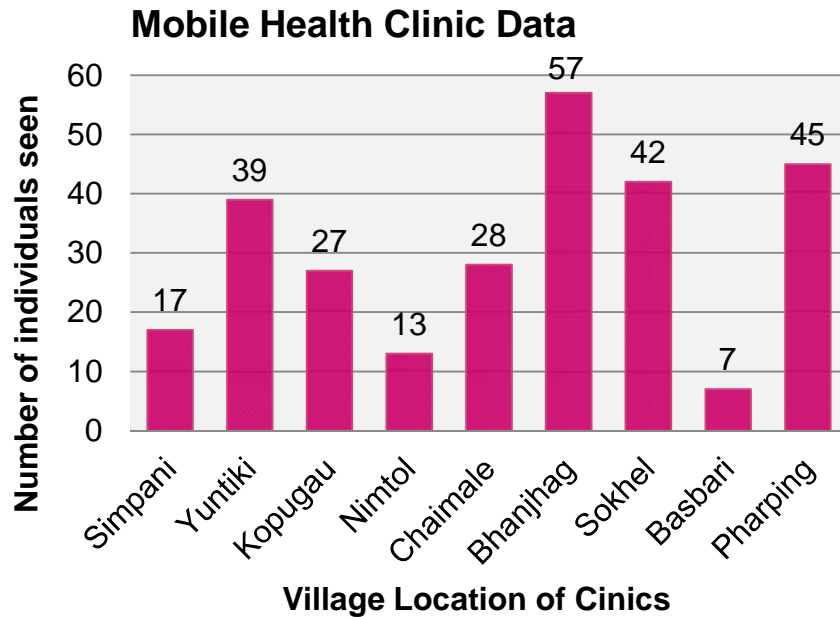
Rukmini Scholar **Nirupa Poudel's** mother (right) cried out of happiness when our team visited their family's temporary shed. Her emotion conveyed a clear message: **they were grateful for Rukmini Foundation's sincere support.**



Pictured on the left is the **Poudel Family's** newly constructed shed using 4 CGI tin sheets. Nirupa's mom was overjoyed to be able to create a space for her daughters to do their homework in, in their temporary shed.

Health & Wellness: Mobile Clinics in Response to the Earthquakes

Over four days in May, we conducted Mobile Health Clinics that served **275** individuals in **nine different villages**. We worked with medical staff and professionals from Manmohan Hospital to make sure residents of Pharping received check ups and medicines after the earthquakes.



Our team used motorbikes and traveled by foot to set up clinics. Roads had poor infrastructure and damage from the earthquakes.



Clinics were set up in front of Rukmini Scholars' homes to make sure people living in the most rural parts of Pharping had access to medical care and essential medicines. During check-ups, we noticed that community members were fearful and unable to sleep after the earthquakes. This further complicated their difficulties breathing, coughs, and stomach illness.

Together, with Manmohan Hospital, we **integrated physical, mental, and emotion wellness**.

Restoring a sense of community and safety is just as important as providing medicines.

Our Emphasis on Education, Emotional Wellness, & Earthquake Safety

Children, adults, and the elderly in Nepal went through some of the most traumatic experiences of their lives in April and May. They did not have much time to cope with the trauma or loss from the earthquakes because they had to make shelter, take care of their livelihood, and secure food and supplies for survival.

After schools reopened, children finally had the chance to see their friends and classmates again. On May 30, Rukmini Foundation led a "Happy Times" program in two villages (Kopu Gaon and Untiki). The goal of the program was to finally give youth a chance to express themselves and share their experiences during the earthquakes in a comfortable setting.

"Returning to a normal life not only includes going back to routine but also restoring **comfort, happiness, and faith** in the **community**."

~Arya Aryal, Associate Program Officer



Chadanni, 8th grade student in Untiki Village:

"This type of program was done for the **first time** in this village and I am so **happy to be a part of it**."

Rukmini Staff Member, Ms. Pramila is pictured above conducting the Happy Times program. Children ages seven to 14-years old talked about their feelings during the earthquakes and any fears they have moving forward. They also learned and practiced earthquake safety techniques.

- First program dedicated to children's emotional and mental wellness after the disaster
- Students split into small groups, which encouraged active participation in discussions
- ~150 children were engaged through 2 Happy Times programs in 2 villages

People of Pharping: A Story of Resilience & Recovery



"I was so relieved to see the Rukmini Foundation team. Before the relief items arrived, it was very hard for us to survive. All of our good and grains got buried. The house was in no condition for us to recover them."

~Anjana, Rukmini Scholar

Rukmini Scholar Anjana standing in front of what was left of her home after the 7.9M earthquake, April 2015

A Scholar & Survivor: Anjana Poudel

On April 28, Anjana Poudel was inside her home when violent tremors shook the ground beneath. Anjana made a split-second decision and **leapt** out of her window. Had she not done so, she may have been buried in the rubble and suffered more severe injuries as her home was **completely destroyed**. Anjana's quick thinking and **courage** in the midst of chaos helped her survive.

Thankfully the rest of her family members were not physically harmed. However, they were heartbroken and traumatized to see their memories and belongings buried in rubble. We are happy to have served families like Anjana's.

Anjana's home before



Anjana's home after



Temporary shelter built with Foundation support



A Community Effort to Rebuild Schools

Providing quality education is core to Rukmini Foundation.

Our partner school, Shikharapur Community School (SCS) faced a major dilemma after the earthquakes: there were not enough safe classrooms to teach students in. The new school year just began in April and schools had already been closed for three weeks. Further closing would deter academic progress for the year. Our funding supported SCS to provide a safe and secure learning environment for students and teachers under a very demanding time constraint.

It took an army and a village to complete construction...



The Nepal Army (left), schoolteachers, and community volunteers (right) build temporary classrooms.

"It was the support of Rukmini Foundation that helped us construct bamboo trusts within time. We are able to resume school on time."

"The students got their new school which is safe and secure, where they can stay and study without any fear and even the teachers can teach without being scared." ~Principal Mahat, SCS

- \$2,000 to supply materials for reconstruction
- 16 temporary classrooms built
- ~400 children returned to school
- \$5 per child to return to education that will last a lifetime



Our Efforts in Pittsburgh and the USA

Rukmini Foundation is based in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in addition to Pharping, Nepal. Our global reach and support has enabled us to accomplish all that we have over the last three months and since our inception in 2011. From April through July 2015, we've brought together Pittsburghers, the Nepalese community, students, schools, and dedicated supporters through informative and fun programs that helped support families and our recovery efforts in Pharping.

No matter how far you are from Nepal, your support, awareness, and actions can have a positive impact.

1 Nepalese Rupee = 0.00098 US Dollars
\$20 / month supports a student's **school year** including tuition, textbooks, uniform, computer class, and school supply fees.



A vibrant and diverse Pittsburgh community gathers at Wigle Whiskey Barrelhouse for our Brick by Brick, Sip by Sip event, which supports the rebuilding of our partner school. The event **raised nearly \$2,500**, which is half of what we are pledging to the school.

Some of our other events included:

- Monaca Presbyterian Church Dinner Fundraiser
- Foundation President speaks at Pittsburgh World Affairs Council Summer Institute addressing both teachers and high school students
- Foundation President speaks at Mt. Lebanon Library and Greentree Rotary to provide an update on the situation, months after the initial earthquake



Allyce celebrated her 28th Birthday Bash as a fundraiser for Nepal. Her goal is to raise \$2,800, of which she has been **able to raise just over \$2,000**. You can still help

Allyce achieve her goal by donating online:

[Birthday Bash for Nepal](#)

Connect, Collaborate, & Create a Positive Change:

We are always looking for more ways to **connect** with different communities, **collaborate** with individuals and organizations, and **create** innovative events and programs. If you would like to work with us, help plan an event, or fundraise, please contact us at info@rukminifoundation.org.

We look forward to hearing from you ☺

The Road to Rebuild Continues – A Call for Your Action

Dear Friends– Tremendous progress was achieved with your support and the hard work of the U.S. and Nepal teams. *Still, there is much more to be done to recover and rebuild lives and homes.*

Our Temporary Shed Management program constructed sturdy sheds for the most vulnerable Rukmini Scholars and their families. However, these sheds are only *temporary solutions* to immediately protect families from heavy monsoon season rains. The families are in need of **permanent homes** in which they can resume their lives and restore their wellbeing to the way it was before the earthquakes.

Temporary sheds are only temporary solutions to restoring normalcy.



Rukmini Scholar Smriti and her family have lived in a sturdier shed than the cloth tent they have to live in immediately after the earthquake, but this shed cannot sustain them forever and they need a new home

Although the sheds successfully protected 20 of our Rukmini Scholars and their families in the immediate post-earthquake period, they do not provide adequate space even for a family of four. *We need your help to continue our efforts and make sure every Rukmini Scholar and family has a permanent home.* Temporary sheds are much sturdier than the tents they were forced to live under, but they cannot replace a home.

Based on an analysis by local engineers, **the cost to rebuild one home is roughly \$3,500.** This home will have an indoor toilet and the cost includes all required materials, labor, and transportation. To build these 20 homes, **we would have to help raise nearly \$70,000.** While we will seek assistance from local organizations and the national government to ensure each family has enough, we will need your help as well. Please continue to **give to our Emergency Fund.**

You can contribute to the success of Rukmini Scholars & their families in Nepal

- 20 families were provided sturdy sheds, but are in dire need of permanent homes
- ~400 children returned to temporary classrooms ...they will need a real school soon

THE HAPPINESS OF OUR GIRLS AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS WOULD NOT BE POSSIBLE WITHOUT YOUR SUPPORT AND DEDICATION.

It is you – **your generosity, humanity, and passion for creating a meaningful and sustainable change** – who enables our progress in Nepal. We sincerely thank our generous donors, supporters, volunteers, partner organizations and schools, and the very committed and dedicated staff who really make any and all of our efforts possible. *Without you we would not have been able to make as much progress as we have in our recovery efforts from April till now.*

Thank you for being part of our journey over the last four years and especially, over these last few months. We appreciate all of your contributions and hope you will continue to support our Rukmini Scholars, their families, and communities in Pharping, Nepal. To serve is to live.



Sincerely,
The Rukmini Foundation Board

Bibhuti Aryal, Priti Bhattarai,
Kristin Briggs, Linda Githiora,
Susan Majcher, Cheryl Paxton-
Hughes, Allyce Pinchback,
Nikolas Ristev, & Lauren Smathers

Students in Pharping express their gratitude and thanks for your support





Progress Report 2015

You have supported girls through quality education, expedited post-earthquake reconstruction, and helped families restore their lives through your contribution.

We are grateful to have you in our supportive Rukmini Foundation Family.

Special thanks to the following individuals, families, organizations and schools:

Amer. Endowment Foundation	Ashley Holloway	Cris Mooney	Adam Shuty
Anonymous Donors	Kunio Honjo	Monaca Presbyterian Church	Barbara Shuty
Adejuwom Anjoorin	Sara Huber	Stephen Morgan	Kayla Silver
Aamir Anwar	Francis & Gilda Hurite	David L Myers	Lakesha Silver
Juan Arredondo	LitWorld International, Inc	Todd and Tricia Navarra	Kellie Skweres
Michael Baker International	Gary Johnson	Shana Nelson	Jason & Lauren Smathers
Branden Ballard	Kyersten Johnson	Rebecca Neuhart	Tori Snyder
Sarad & Ila Baral	Rikard Johnson	Kikuya Nobuhiro	Kartik Subramany
Frank & Carin Batchelor	Eddy Jones	Kelly O'Connor	Sumar Lakhani Foundation
Priti & Abbal Bhattarai	Stephen Joseph	Elliot Oshry	Eri Taniguchi
Alisa Bigelow	Steve Kaufman	Cassandra Pan	Pradip Teredesai
Bryan and Kristin Briggs	Iftexhar Kazi	Julie Painter	Tyler Thornblade
Julie Brown	Susan Keim	Jamie Passinault	Chere Tiller
Katie Brown & Family	Gail & Richard Kepple	Cheryl Paxton-Hughes	Richard Ting
Kate Buckley	Shawntia Key	John Peller	Shaun Tomaszewski
Darcie Cameron	Karen Kingsbury	Anand & Cassandra Perumal	Nicole Travis
Michael Cappella	Nobuhiro Kikuya	Clyde Pickett	Tara Tucci
Evelyn S Castillo	Sarah-Jane Kirkland	Ashlee Pierre	Christina Unger
Sabarish Chandrasekharan	Bob Klemens	Dennis H Piispanen	Adam Walkowiak
Rachel Chung	Dennis Kremer	Amber Pinchback	Arati Warty
The Dress Circle	Chitti Kumar	La'Fay Pinchback	Teraya White
Lynsie Clott	Honjo Kunio	Marc Plowey	Wilder & Sein LLC
Leanne Condon	Suzie Lachut	Reeju Pokharel	Wilhelm-Oberle Foundation
Ashley Cvrkel	Alan Lawson	Lee Ann Pontis	Ellyse Williams
Mark Cvrkel	A-Love Lee	Alicia Quebral	Kathy Woll
Alyssa Cypher	Randy Lentz	Kripa Rajbhandari	Thomas Zagorski
Kris Deneselya	Shanea Leonard	Real Pilates	Cathy Zaharko
Tom Dickson	Latrenda Leonard	Rosy Reed	Julia Zebley
Chris Dinnin	Jon Lindefeld	Stephen Reichard	Marlene Zukerman
Brian Donnelly	Robert Lindefeld	Scott Rhodes	
Michelle Fagan	Marissa Lipinski	Robbi Robinson	
Michael Fallon	Charlotte Lott	Robert Robinson	
Justin Forzano	Carole & Rabinder Madan	Shawn Robinson	
Neil Friedman	Brian Magee	Courtney Rodriguez	
Angela Garcia	Susan Majcher	Jerry Rubin	
Linda "Alby" Gates	Maria Mariani	Lisa Rudick	
Mamar Gelaye	Jamie Matthews	Alexander Scheinker	
Raghu & Sharda Ghimire	Tara Matthews	Aiken Elementary School	
Golden Earth Inc.	Latasha Mayes	Dormont Elementary School	
Arlane Gordon-Bray	Scott McEvoy	Myrtle Elementary School	
Amy Greiff	Alex McKim	Spring Valley School	
Michael Greiner	Julie Melnick	Upper St. Clair School	
Sathiasaelan Gusa Lavan	Angelina Mertens	Toshiaki Seki	
Frank Gyngard	Sushila Mertens	Tokihiko Settsu	
Chris Harbour	Donna Micheaux	SevenOlives	
Kimberly Harris	Sushila Mishra	Taras Shablii	
Lina Hipps	Arun Misra	Sameer Shamsuddin	
Ohzakura Hiroyuki	Patty and Bernard Misura	Ang Sherpa	
G Hitchon	FC Mongols	Dawn and Sonam Sherpa	