



*2016 Report*  
*Hospital and Rehabilitation Center for Disabled Children*  
*(HRDC)*



*Creating a society in which children with disabilities  
can live a full life with dignity.*

## A note from Norbu Tenzing Norgay

*We were privileged to have Dr. Bibek Banskota make a presentation on the work of Hospital and Rehabilitation Center for Disabled Children (HRDC) at our Looking to the Future event in October. The audience gave him a standing ovation for his compelling and poignant talk, and I was humbled and moved to see just how unassuming he is, and how devoted to his young patients.*

*It's been a busy time for HRDC. After the earthquakes, Dr. Bibek, his father Dr. Ashok Banskota, and their team brought help to 45,000 people in medical camps—plus rebuilding from the earthquake damage to the hospital, making it possible to treat over 20,000 children at the hospital since.*

*We were in Nepal last fall and went to see the Drs. Banskota at the hospital. Over tea (best tea in Nepal) and cookies, Ashok sat beaming with pride when he heard how well Bibek's presentation went, and we were briefed on the latest at the hospital.*

*HRDC was bustling as ever, at 101% of capacity the day we visited. Field workers were preparing to travel to remote villages to see patients, and youngsters were learning in the hospital's classroom so they didn't miss school while in recovery. We saw many young patients, from infants with repaired club feet, to teenagers getting physical therapy and walking for the first time in their lives. That made me tear up. We also saw parts of the hospital that have been repaired since the earthquake and their plans for a timely addition of 26 beds.*



*I have been going to HRDC a long time; we helped the hospital break ground. But this visit was special. I saw the past, the present and a very hopeful future in Dr. Bibek. I saw the passing of the baton from father to son and the continuation of a legacy built on hard work, skill, integrity and compassion.*

*HRDC is a symbol of everything Nepal can be, and to know there are people like Dr. Bibek Banskota gives us every reason to work harder to make sure those with no one else to turn to get the care and dignity they deserve. And we have you to thank for making it all possible.*

- Norbu Tenzing Norgay



HRDC is a haven for poor, disabled children in the hills outside of Kathmandu.

**N**epal is the second poorest country in Asia, a beautiful but mountainous land of subsistence farming on steep inclines—and a place where having a physical disability can be a life sentence.

When day-to-day survival is a struggle, poor children with disabilities are often left behind. Not because parents don't care, but because they have few options. Doctors are expensive and scarce in rural areas, and health posts are often understaffed and undersupplied.

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*“It’s staggering that 27% of children under 15 years of age have some form of disability in my country.”*  
- Dr. Bibek Banskota

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So the bad luck of a break or burn, or a condition like clubfoot, can be left untreated and make it impossible for a child to get to school or help out their families. For those children, the consequences can last a lifetime. With no education or skills, they lose any hope for a decent job or even marriage.

**72,000 lives transformed.** And counting! Dr. Ashok Banskota's dream—to heal children with physical disabilities so they could lead full lives, regardless of their ability to pay—has been 30 years in the making. When we first began working with him, he was a one-man surgical team in a tiny makeshift hospital. With demand for his services ever increasing, we both recognized the need for him to grow and helped him build a real hospital in Banepa near Kathmandu. He and his team at the Hospital and Rehabilitation Center for Disabled Children (HRDC) have made tremendous strides in realizing his vision: delivering skilled, compassionate care to children in need so they can lead full, happy, productive lives.

It has been a challenging year at HRDC. The aftermath of the 2015 earthquakes brought a flood of new patients, many of whom had to be treated in tents. Political instability during the winter of 2016 made supplies and fuel scarce—they had to use firewood to cook (their famously tasty) meals for the kids.

But they haven't missed a beat. In the first half of 2016 alone, over 13,000 children were seen at the hospital in Banepa, their five satellite clinics, or one of their outreach camps throughout Nepal. The HRDC team performs about 200 surgical procedures a month and crafts thousands of assistive devices every year, helping kids become more independent in everything from taking their first steps—to taking the first step to school.

Disability in Nepal is closely linked to poverty. Malnutrition, poor hygiene, and inadequate information or services can aggravate and even cause disability. HRDC is not only bringing kids to their full potential through surgery, prosthetics, and physical therapy—they're also spreading awareness in local communities to prevent disability from happening in the first place.



It doesn't have to cost an arm and a leg to build one. HRDC has fashioned wheelchairs out of bicycles and artificial limbs from local materials, all designed with mountain terrain in mind. They make thousands of prosthetics every year in their workshop, and even train cobblers to craft assistive devices in the field.

## Treating the whole child

Children with disabilities in Nepal not only suffer from lack of comprehensive treatment and rehabilitation, but from the social stigma and exclusion strongly attached to disability. HRDC also addresses the psychological needs of young patients, with social mobilizers who visit every child after treatment and hold community talks about inclusion, training for parents about managing their child's disability, and now a fully-staffed classroom in the hospital.

For Dr. Ashok Banskota—and now his son Dr. Bibek Banskota—compassion is their mantra, and it sits easily alongside their surgical skills. You can see it at work at the hospital and in the field, in how the staff is trained and the easy way they make their young patients smile. Twenty-five of the staff are themselves persons with disabilities, onetime HRDC patients who know what it's like to be on the other side, seeing the possibility and promise of the world for the first time.



## Get on the good foot: Birmala's story

*Clubfoot is a widespread problem in Nepal, and in many cases it goes untreated for years. Clubfoot used to be treated surgically, but with the advent of the Ponseti method, a non-invasive treatment that gradually realigns the feet with progressive plaster casts, it is much easier on the children. HRDC has pioneered the technique across Nepal, and today offers the treatment to children through all five of their satellite clinics.*

**B**irmala is from a very poor family in the village of Devisthan, a two-day journey from HRDC. Her family depends on farming, but it only covers living expenses for less than half the year. For the rest, Birmala's father has to travel to India to work as a day laborer and send a little money home.

Shortly after Birmala was born, her family realized that she had a problem with her feet and became worried—but they did not have the means to get her the treatment she needed.

Fast forward a few years: HRDC's Regional Office, coordinating with a local youth group, discovered this forlorn young girl who could only walk with a stick and referred her to the main hospital in Banepa for consultation for her severe bi-lateral clubfoot.

Birmala stayed at HRDC for six months on and off. Though she was found too late for Ponseti, she received thorough diagnostics, two corrective surgeries, and comprehensive follow-up care. She recovered quickly, and was sent back home with a plaster cast on her leg. The care continued at home with visits and her own special shoes, made at HRDC and brought to her by a field worker.

Birmala, who was quiet and introverted, has since transformed into a happy and extroverted girl. She is now in grade 7, praised by her teachers for a noticeable improvement in her studies, and with no need for a stick to get around. Her family is very grateful, telling neighbors how, thanks to HRDC, she has gained a new life.



**Birmala before treatment at HRDC.**