

## Vocational Education and Career Counseling Outcomes • 2011 – 2012

Vocational counseling is severely lacking in Nepal, and the country's unemployment rate hovers around a staggering 50%. Higher education is not the same stepping stone to job opportunities that it is in most Western countries; even people with advanced university degrees may have difficulty finding employment.

NYF's pioneering Vocational Education and Career Counseling center (VECC) enables disadvantaged youth to explore their strengths and identify rewarding careers where they can excel. NYF also sponsors children in vocational courses and help them find jobs so they can become self-sufficient.



Since VECC started in 2007, it has provided vocational training to 357 underprivileged youth, 82% of whom are now employed. Additionally, VECC's staff gives career counseling to hundreds of children every year. In 2011-2012, the program sponsored more than 150 needy youth in vocational training and provided career counseling to several hundred more, in many areas of rural Nepal as well as Kathmandu.

### NYF's Solution



Many young people in Nepal spend years pursuing higher education, only to graduate and find they are utterly unable to find a job. Some employment sectors have a demand for skilled employees, but most young people lack the necessary training in these fields. For some children, guidance and training in a specific career path is far more helpful than higher education.

The innovative Vocational Education and Career Counseling center sponsors children in training programs for dozens of different careers, such as website designer, hotel manager,



nurse-midwife, electrician, cook, and lab technician, and the number continues to grow. The decision for a child to pursue job training rather than higher education is reached by the child and staff together, after discussions, structured counseling, and a number of assessments and tests. The Nepal Youth Foundation has conducted extensive research into vocational schools throughout Nepal. VECC staff identifies the best training program for the child's chosen field, pays for the cost of training, and helps them to find employment following the completion of their course. VECC gives them guidance, helps them network, and sometimes does more – for example, three graduates of a fashion design training course started their own tailoring center with partial financial support from NYF.

In addition to vocational training, VECC provides individual career counseling to needy children. Many of the children supported by the Nepal Youth Foundation are orphans or were abandoned by their families. Not only do they lack the family connections that are necessary for getting many jobs in Nepal, they do not know how to go about finding jobs, and many feel insecure about this. VECC teaches them general life skills such as compromise and negotiation, as well as specific skills for searching for employment. Furthermore, many children are not gifted academically but have other abilities which they can use to get jobs, if only they knew how. VECC helps children explore their strengths and interests in order to identify careers where they can excel. The program also runs a computer learning center where underprivileged youth can learn basic computer skills, either independently or in training courses.

One challenge that the program has faced is that vocational training is widely looked down upon in Nepal. VECC staff provides group career counseling and orientation programs about job training to high school students, many of whom are daunted by their bleak employment prospects. The staff describes the wide range of trainings that are available and explains that many trades pay more than the office jobs that college graduates compete for. As a result, more youth are becoming interested in pursuing vocational training.



In 2011-2012, the Vocational Education and Career Counseling center continued to expand. Dozens of girls who NYF rescued from indentured servitude received career counseling and enrolled in vocational training and some are already employed. The program is exploring possibilities for generating income, and now earns money by providing career counseling and orientations about vocational training at a private school in Kathmandu. NYF plans to expand this approach to other schools and institutions. Additionally, VECC was able to obtain funding from foreign aid organizations working to reduce unemployment in Nepal to support training for almost 50 needy children.



## Sustainability of the Program

The Vocational Education and Career Counseling center enables disadvantaged youth to be self-sufficient. After completing the program, many of the children not only support themselves, but also provide for their destitute families. In a country where unemployment is shockingly high, even among people with university degrees, job counseling and training is a highly effective means to putting young people on a track for life-long success.



## From Indigence to Independence

Bal Krishna Banjara's father died when he was very young, and his mother earned a living by operating a small tea stall at Kathmandu's dusty bus station. The Nepal Youth Foundation supported Bal Krishna's education. After he finished high school, he enrolled in a vocational program to become a cook and subsequently found employment at an expensive restaurant on the fanciest street in Kathmandu. Because he was such a dedicated worker, he received a raise after only one month. Bal Krishna has now enrolled in college and is using his earnings from the restaurant to pay his own tuition. Furthermore, he is also able to support his mother.