

TOGETHER, WE

TRANSFORM

Rotary



PEOPLE OF ACTION

HANDS ON IN NEPAL

In Rotary, we talk about supporting projects we will never see and impacting people we will never meet. In July, Sue Gammon, of the Rotary Club of Bundaberg East, Qld, had the chance to change that, when she joined the first Seven Women Cultural Immersion tour with Stephanie Woollard and her social enterprise, Hands On Development, to Kathmandu, Nepal.



SUE met Stephanie in February in Bundaberg, Qld, when she presented at the annual Rotary Peace Scholars dinner, where she was asked to be the first Literacy Ambassador for Seven Women, promoting the new Seven Women Scholarships Initiative across District 9570 (Central Queensland).

"The opportunity to meet the people we were supporting was one of the reasons I was keen to go to Kathmandu with this first Hands On Rotarian tour," Sue said.

Fellow travellers came from Rotary clubs in Queensland, Victoria and NSW, and from districts all over Australia. There were also three women from Rotary International, who joined the tour to capture the impact Seven Women has had in Nepal.

"The one thing we all had in common was a passion for the work Stephanie is doing through Seven Women. Seven Women is a RAWCS project that has educated, trained and employed over 5000 marginalised and disabled women in Nepal. All of our group had been inspired by the work being done in Kathmandu and wanted to contribute our skills in some way.

"We saw temples and aid organisations, walked the streets of Thamel, and talked to the people who were leading change in Nepal in various areas. Our group donated to fund 21 cataract surgeries at the Tilganga/Fred Hollows Eye Hospital, and also donated more than \$500 to MAITI Nepal – an organisation that raises awareness about and helps women who are victims of modern slavery in Nepal."

The group also visited two local Rotary clubs where they shared their experiences and club projects and planned to collaborate in future.

"It was an immersive experience, with exposure to not just the beauty of the country and its people, but also insight into their history, culture, the real challenges faced by women in the region and the opportunity to personally make a difference," Sue said. "The tour gave us the opportunity to not only meet the women at the Seven Women Centre, but also use our vocational experience to help – from developing lesson plans,

organising their library and building a new website, to revamping the Seven Women handicraft shop. We all had something to contribute while there."

Sue said one of the highlights of the tour was the cooking class with the women at the centre, where they were able to share the women's culture, learn from them and practise their Nepali language skills (with much laughter). They also visited the building that will be the future hotel/hospitality centre to train women in hospitality and tourism – a new and exciting venture for Seven Women.

"It was without a doubt one of the most rewarding experiences I have ever had – both as a traveller and a Rotarian."

Sue has since registered to visit Nepal again with the Seven Women 2019 Rotarian Tour, along with six other Rotarians from District 9570. Other tour dates are also available. For more information, contact Sue via suegammonrotary@gmail.com or visit www.handsondevelopment.com.au and sevenwomen.org.

As part of the preparations for the trip, over the next six months District 9570 will be hosting screenings of the Documentary *Bringing The Light – the story of Seven Women*, talking about the opportunity for others to join the Seven Women Rotarian Tours to Nepal and encouraging clubs to adopt the Seven Women Scholarship program as part of their Literacy and International Service activities. •