

Global Health Innovation: Reaching New Heights in Nepal

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DOI: [10.35898/ghmj-911308](https://doi.org/10.35898/ghmj-911308)

ABSTRACT

The role of charities and other non-governmental organizations is to address social, humanitarian, and environmental issues by providing services, advocating for change and mobilizing communities. The purpose of Rose Charities Canada is to help people around the world to overcome poverty through education, community support and healthcare. Listening to communities and collaborating with them to find solutions to the problems they identify is the core process, and this requires strong leadership, the dedication of local staff and industrious volunteers. Innovative projects and partnerships in healthcare, education and community support are central to the mission of effective charities. The value of international meetings in this context is that 'what works and why' can be shared and the lessons learned translated to benefit other communities. A recent international meeting in Kathmandu highlighted how Nepal is taking global health innovation to new heights.

Keywords: *Cataract; Child marriage; Farming; Global warming; Open Schools.*

Published: 01 February 2026.

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1. Introduction

Nepal is known for its rich cultural diversity and deep religious traditions, the height of its mountains and the warmth of its people. What is less well known is how much innovation is occurring there in the field of global health. A recent conference held in Kathmandu hosted by Vision Together Nepal (VTN) and Rose Charities Nepal focused on challenges in health and education in a changing world, and brought together participants from the region and abroad to share, discuss and learn.

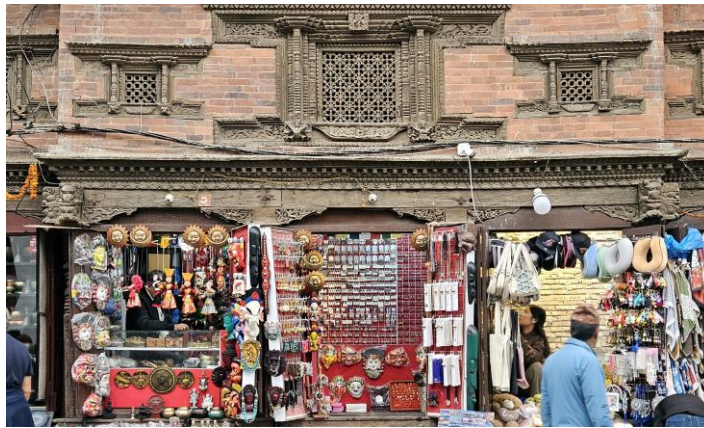


Image 1: Buildings in central Kathmandu mix the appeal of historic structures with commercial flare to attract today's visitors



Image 2: The conference poster highlighted the hosts of the meeting Rose Nepal and Vision Together Nepal (VTN) and acknowledged the meeting as the 10th International conference hosted by Rose Charities.

2. The Conference

Participants learned how Nepal is taking global health to new heights in a series of presentations. These followed reviews of how families can prepare for the health effects of global warming (Macnab, 2025) and the imperative for action in response to climate change (Romanello et al., 2023), and the contribution of Rose charities project activities around the world. The innovations described in the presentations reflect the deep cultural and spiritual nature of life in Nepal, and also challenges presented by social determinants of health that impact Nepal's population.



Image 3: Nepal has deep religious and spiritual traditions. The country is famous for being a peaceful home to people of different beliefs where respect for one another's religion is a common value (Mahat, 2024).

3. Eye care

The social determinants of health are the conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live and age, and the wider forces that shape the conditions of daily life (World Health Organization, 2025). Geographic location and the ability to access care are two fundamental social determinants of health and both have particular impact on populations living in mountain communities in Nepal. An innovative program that addresses these inequities in the context of eye care is 'Trek and Treat' (<https://visiontogethernepal.org.np>); teams able to provide screening for eye conditions travel into remote mountain areas and provide services normally unavailable in these communities.



Image 4: Planned in collaboration with the mayors and ward chairmen of each community the 'Trek and Treat' team treks on foot into remote regions of Nepal to conduct assessments of the needs of people living far from accessible health care facilities, and then returns with volunteers able to treat the conditions identified.

In addition to helping by identifying those with refractive errors whose quality of life can be improved with prescription glasses the team can provide, 'Trek and Treat' is an integral part of the success story in Nepal in national efforts to identify and treat blindness due to cataracts. Cataracts are the leading cause of preventable blindness worldwide (Luitel et al, 2024). Experts travelling with the 'Trek and Treat' team deliver cataract surgery 'camps'. The required surgical equipment is carried by porters and then set up in temporary operating facilities so that those requiring surgery can be operated on, in spite of where they live being remote from a regular health care facility. The 'Trek and Treat' team is taking the provision of eye care to new heights in Nepal.



Image 5: This shows team members were performing screening eye examinations and subsequent surgery being performed to remove a cataract and insert as prosthetic lens which restores the patient's sight.

4. Community-based projects

Rose charities Nepal is an integral part of several innovative community-based projects (<https://www.rosecharities.ca> › [rose-charities-nepal](https://www.rosecharities-nepal.org)). One important socially perceptive innovation in Nepal is the introduction of ‘Open Schools’. These allow individuals who have missed the opportunity to follow conventional schooling through to graduation to return to studying. Courses allow each individual to progress in a ‘self-paced’ manner supported by staff who appreciate the challenges and benefit this kind of opportunity offer.



Image 6: A speaker’s composite image from the conference illustrating the broad range of students who can now benefit from ‘Open School’ opportunities in Nepal

Open schools particularly benefit women married as teenagers. In Nepal child marriage affects approximately 37% of girls prior to the age of 18 and 8% by the age of 15 (Seta, 2023). As in other parts of the world child marriage has significant effects on young women’s health and wellbeing because of early pregnancies and the consequences of dropping out of school.



Image 7: While the many monasteries in Nepal provide religious instruction with schooling in parallel for the novice monks in their care, nuns are also among those who benefit from the ‘Open school’ program, as it is a way for them to complete their formal education.

In the tradition of Rose international conferences, after the program in Kathmandu delegates were able to travel out to a rural community where an ‘Open school’ is run alongside another innovative social program where sustainable farming practices can be learned and promoted.



Image 8: Among the valuable traditions of Rose Charities international conferences, making site visits to see working project delivery first hand is one of the most worthwhile. Kopu is a village situated in a rural valley 18 kilometers from Kathmandu and projects there include an ‘Open’ school, a sustainable farming initiative and a social housing building program.



Image 9: Delegates from the conference meeting with the principal of the ‘Open school’ in a house constructed using bottles recycled as building material. The base of the bottles can be seen within the walls, and the novel space provides a gathering place for participants in the school and the farm programs.

The sustainable farming school incorporates multiple facets of crop cultivation, animal husbandry, growth of produce and other farm-related practices. Donors from Rose charities have provided equipment to enable a range of skills to be taught such as bee keeping, rotor tilling and the milling of grain.



Image 10: Animal husbandry is an important feature of life in rural Nepal, and sustainable practices related to livestock taught at the school include the breeding and care of goats, cows and chickens.



Image 11: The sustainable farming school is a model for the community and teaches techniques relevant to improving yield and diversity in agriculture. The school also allows young people who have not flourished in conventional education to learn in a formative and supportive environment. This has social and emotional benefits through skills being learned in parallel with the building of self-esteem.

As in many countries, making affordable housing available for those who need it is a recurring challenge. This is another area where inspiring initiatives are happening in Nepal



Image 12: In Kopu the Rose charities director has been proactive in leading efforts to raise funds, obtain materials and coordinate construction of multiple housing units for the benefit of the community.

5. Conclusion

Non-governmental organizations like the ones described are an integral part of improving physical, social and emotional health worldwide. In Nepal, the combination of traditional cultural and religious beliefs with caring and creative programs that recognize human need is taking global health innovation to new heights.

Acknowledgment

We acknowledge all the volunteers who lead Rose Charities projects and contribute as team members around the world. Project delivery relies on donations; to learn more about the health, education and social programs Rose offers, visit <https://www.rosecharities.ca>.

Conflict of Interest

The authors have nothing to disclose.

Consents

The (identifiable) people photographed have given their consent for their pictures to be used in the dissemination and publication of this photo-essay.

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Cite this article as:

Adhikari, S., Subedi, S., Grut, W. N., & Macnab, A. J. (2026). Global Health Innovation: Reaching New Heights in Nepal. *GHMJ (Global Health Management Journal)*, 9(1), 08–14. <https://doi.org/10.35898/ghmj-911308>