

Nepal Schools Aid



Educational support for the children of Nepal

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Newsletter

Issue 5, December 2008

Universal primary education a distant dream!

Thank you for taking the time to download and read our newsletter. We hope it is a fitting tribute to the help you have given us this year either through your donations, sponsorship or taking part in events. We also hope that it will inspire you to support us again in 2009. The articles attempt to show this year a lot more about "the results" of our work rather than our events and fundraising, and you will be able to read about our funded teachers, UK schools who are partnering us, visits to our five supported schools and significant changes in Nepal as a country.

You may be wondering about the logo of the United Nations below which more specifically relates to the UN's development programme of Millennium Development Goals, of which there are eight. These goals address the fact that not enough recognition has been given to some of the world's main development challenges, which it was recognised can only be achieved with global political support and strong partnerships. The government of Nepal signed up to these goals in 2000 and have recently issued an assessment of progress to date in the country. Goal no. 2 is "The achievement of universal primary education" and the report states that it is unlikely that this goal will be achieved within the required timescales. Only 90% of Nepali children enrol and the completion rate is significantly lower than this. One of the main problems is the provision of free educational materials, something



we all take for granted in this country, but this demonstrates the value of our work to provide exercise books and textbooks. In all of our supported schools the number of children attending has risen (from 535 in 2008 to 697 next year) so we believe we have a tangible measure of our impact as well as the positive feedback from the schools themselves.

As you read through this newsletter and as Christmas approaches we would ask you to consider a year-end boost to our work by maybe making a donation to us instead of sending Christmas cards. Just email or tell your usual list of recipients what you have done instead. Or even consider making a regular monthly donation through a standing order which would be the best gift of all to the children of Nepal. Visit our website for online donations or to download a Gift Aid form. Please contact us if you would like to arrange a regular donation.

Points of interest :

- £12,000 raised this year
- 50% of Nepal children under 5 malnourished
- Highest rate of under 5's malnutrition in the world
- Monarchy removed by new Maoist government
- New government raises teachers salaries by 50%
- New Maoist government promises to remove or absorb private schools within 2 years and begins immediate punitive tax on them
- Two of our schools found to have no water, no toilets, no electricity
- USA teacher volunteers to work in our schools, February 2009
- UK teachers plan Nepal visits for 2010

Thanks for making our 2009 programme possible!

Thanks to YOU our programme of work in Nepal for 2009 is now assured. The finances are available to commit to the following support from April when the Nepal education year begins:

1. Children Supported (697)
2. Exercise Books (£2128)
3. Textbooks (£825)
4. School Bags (£230)
5. Teacher Salaries (£1625)

It's incredible that we can support 697 children with educational materials for so little money.

In 2009 we are attempting to do four things strategically. First we want to continue receiving donations of around £3000 to help with the value added work on top of our core programme and would appreciate finding more supporters who are willing to commit to standing orders. Second we want to build a reserve of capital to add to our existing £40k to become even less dependent on donations. Third, we have decided to help with the building costs for at least one of our supported schools. And finally we want to find three more UK junior schools who will join Haverigg and St James' schools in adding Nepal Studies to their curriculum and linking with Kathmandu.



You can donate securely online, visit our website at www.nepalschoolsaid.co.uk

Bashu's story, the life of one of our teachers.

Bashu Maharjan is one of our sponsored teachers. He is a new teacher at the Bal Bigyan school in Patan, once a separate city but now a suburb of Kathmandu. The school were desperate for a young teacher who could teach the young children English but could not get government support; this was when they approached us for help.

Our help involves paying Bashu's salary which for this year has been roughly £50 per month, not a lot by western standards, but just "above the breadline" in Nepal.

Here is Bashu's story:

"I was born in Pulchowk within the district of Patan in the Kathmandu valley. My parents are Mr.Ram Krishna Maharjan and Mrs.Hira Kumari Maharjan my father having died few years ago whereas my mother is still living. They were farmers. For schooling I went to Bal Bigyan Lower Secondary Community School which is where I now

teach. I then went to Tri-Chandra Campus (College) which is located near to the historical pond named as Ranipokhari which is in the centre of Kathmandu where I studied science. Currently I teach English, Mathematics and Science.

As usual our school day begins at 10 o'clock and ends at 4 o'clock. Altogether I have six classes out of eight periods in a single day. At the lunch time I just check and correct the homework or any other tasks performed by the students. In this time we discuss with our teachers as well as with our headmaster about pupils study, progress, behavior, discipline, success and lesson plan. "

I suppose to all you teachers out there this looks like a fairly typical progress towards teaching as well as being a typical day. The untypical thing is a peasant farmers son graduating in science and becoming a teacher. And don't be fooled by the apparent relativity of salaries and cost of living. Bashu is "just above the breadline".



New Maoist government focuses on education

Two news stories are dominating the political education scene in Nepal at the moment. Both are flowing from the office of Dr Bhattarai, the Finance Minister and second in command of the Maoist party.

The first item concerns Bhattarai's statement of intent that all education in Nepal will henceforth be state funded, organised, managed. So far so good, except the sting in the tail that all private education will be abolished within two years! As you might guess a significant proportion of all education is private here, since without it there would virtually have been none at all. The state had singularly failed in it's duty to the people and the creation of most schools came from business and community pockets.

The second item is Dr Bhattarai's decision to begin the immediate taxation of private schools! This has

caused outrage in the city and led to a challenge in the High Court as to whether it is even constitutionally possible for him to impose such a tax. Apart from the legality of it this seems a strange way to stimulate increased education in the country. Remember that Kathmandu private schools are not like ours. The issue of paying fees covers in many cases only the basics such as teacher salaries, exercise books, textbooks and so on which the state aren't paying! This is why WE are paying three teachers salaries ourselves, because the State isn't doing it.

We are unsure as to how these pronouncements will affect us but in the short term the answer is probably "not at all". In the medium to long term if our aid becomes unnecessary brilliant!

"All private schools will now be taxed and all private education will cease and be replaced by 2010."

*Dr Bhattarai,
Finance Minister*

Haverigg Primary School Develops Friendship

Haverigg Primary school in South Cumbria was the first school to link with us. Their enthusiasm is an inspiration to us and a model for other schools wishing to study Nepal and form a community links Janice Brockbank, Head Teacher writes:

"Staff have seized the opportunity and pioneered the possibility of linking Haverigg pupils with children in one of the charity's schools in Kathmandu. We have already adapted curriculum plans to ensure the link strengthens and builds over time. Champa has just hand delivered our first messages on her recent visit so we are hoping for some replies!

Brian and Champa are now familiar visitors to Haverigg Primary and last summer joined the school on its climb to the top of Black Combe, the school's dominant landmark.

The children prepared for their Black Combe Challenge expedition as if they were climbing Everest. Five to eleven year olds enjoyed and appreciated Brian's story of his experiences climbing in the Himalaya and enjoyed learning about safety, hydration, food for energy and appropriate footwear and clothing. The expedition introduced the school to Nepal which we have discovered is a wonderfully fascinating but little celebrated country.

The key reason for our Cumbrian school attempting to establish links with Nepal lies in children having the opportunity to build understanding and respect for global cultures. The planned link is an exciting adventure to develop as a sustainable, long term learning opportunity. The hope is that children from both countries will learn from and with each other and develop friendships which has to be the best reason of all."



Haverigg Village

Trustees get the “inside story” in Kathmandu

There's just no substitute for visiting a place to see it like it really is and this was the case for Champa and Andy in November.

Andy and his wife Sandra were on an Everest Trek along with Sue Butler who between them had raised more than £4000 for us. They visited two of our schools and saw the extreme conditions that exist generally contrasted with the sense of happiness that radiates from the children. Andy's next trip is likely to be a volunteer teaching expedition!

On the other hand Champa visited all our schools gaining an overview of their infrastructure as well as the teaching process and quality. Much time was spent with our three sponsored teachers, getting to know them better as well as giving them encouragement and reassurance. (They are totally dependent on us for their salaries).

One of the more significant events was an organised meeting for all five head teachers, a few governors and teachers with Champa and our Nepal

Operations Team. The main purpose was information exchange between themselves as well as between them and us. Already this is proving beneficial with the Head of Himalaya school helping the Heads at Sramik and Kesh Chandra schools to seek better facilities from the school building owners.

Champa was also bringing materials to a couple of schools from Haverigg Junior School including cards made by the Haverigg children. This is the beginning of our setting up communication between Nepal and UK schools with material exchanges taking place between both sets of children and staff. The ultimate here will be teacher visits to Nepal hopefully beginning in 2010.

We must not underestimate the very high value placed on such visits by the Kathmandu teachers. It gives them a sense of being supported and cared about, in some cases more than by their own government!



Malika's story, the life of another one of our teachers

Malika Shakya is another of our teachers at the Kesh Chandra school in the Itumbahal district of Kathmandu. The school is located in a “community building” with no water, electricity or toilet facilities. Equally there is no space for children to play so the conditions under which she teaches are quite “extreme”!

Malika is 27 years old, and married with a one year old daughter. She teaches English and Maths. In her own words:

“ My husband is studying abroad at the moment and I am living with his family. This is good as his mother looks after our daughter while I am working. We live in the Swayambhu area of Kathmandu near the well known “monkey temple” and my parents are both teachers

themselves. I have already finished my teacher training from Mahendra Ratna College and have also just completed a BA degree. I am currently awaiting the results.

I have taught in three different schools so far, but I'm glad I got the chance to teach those who are the most needy and poor which certainly gives great satisfaction. Most of the children in this school are from the poorest families and migrant workers. When I see a smile on the children's faces I know I have been blessed.

Finally, this school once again is very thankful to Nepal School Aid for such a caring support and for what we hope will be the continuous support for many years to come.”

There's not much more we can add to that!



St James' Catholic Junior School Joins Us

Head Teacher Nerissa writes:

Over the October half term, we held a 'Half Term Family Challenge' for our pupils and families as a means of stirring up some interest in our new venture. The challenge was to use any resources they had available to find out as much as they could about Nepal. They were told they could use the internet, the local library etc and should present what they found out in an interesting way so that others in school could learn about Nepal from their work.

Several children took up the challenge and came back to school with some fantastic work showing what they had managed to find out. We then invited Brian

to had taken part. The winners were Mariella Reed from Year 4, Abigail Bridges from Reception and Megan Athersmith from Year 3. All the children who took part received a certificate and some sweets. The work is now proudly on display in the school hall for all to see and hopefully to spark the interest of more children and families.

St James' has only recently teamed up with Nepal Schools Aid but we are keen to develop our link further and staff are meeting soon to look at how we might incorporate Nepal studies into our curriculum— an exciting project for us all!

Thanks, Brian and Champa, for making it possible!



Visit Nepal ! (You know it makes sense)

There is no doubt that the best way to support our work is to Visit Nepal!

Situated between India and Tibet, Nepal has a diverse landscape ranging from the plains of the Terai next to India to the grandeur of the Himalaya on its border with Tibet. The people are equally diverse with different languages, castes and cultures following both Buddhism as well as the Hindu religion.

We have often described it as an adventure playground with trekking, climbing, canoeing, rafting, mountain biking, bungee jumping, the list just goes on. But you don't have to be an adrenaline junkie to love this country. Visit temples, monasteries, safari parks, old cities, Buddha's birthplace to name but a few. The people are friendly, the pace is slow and everything is cheap. So what are you waiting for!

If you check out our website you will see that we are encouraging people to Visit Nepal as part of our support work. So, firstly you could book a packaged adventure such as a trek to Everest Base Camp using our UK travel partners, KE Adventure. Just visit their website, decide what you would like to experience, then contact us to discuss how we can both get the most from your trip.

Secondly you could be a lot more independent, book your own flights, hotel, and any activities in Nepal using our friendly agency in Kathmandu. This would work out cheaper as well as giving you the chance to have a lot more flexibility.

Third, you could arrange a full "education based trip" which could involve working at one of our schools for a while coupled with the usual tourism. This might suit you if you are a student teacher, a group of teachers seeking to make a CPD based trip, or even a school group looking for a short spell of community work.

Whatever your choice or focus by visiting you can make a BIG difference. The financials can work in both our favours. We are permitted to allow fundraisers to use a proportion of their funds to pay for their trip. In our case we are offering a 40:60 split with 40% of any sponsorship raised being used as trip expenses and the remaining 60% coming to us. You don't have to do it this way, but this is called a covenant and if you choose to allocate sponsorship money to your expenses then your sponsors must be advised of this up front. Obvious really!

So, there must be lots of you out there who would love to Visit Nepal! Contact us NOW.



Events 2009 (For the adventurous and the insane)

We have always believed that if you donate to a charity you should get something for your money: a poppy, a pink ribbon, a gold heart, or something a bit more adventurous, like an adrenaline surge! Maybe that's because we've all been or are mountaineers, rock climbers, ice climbers, cyclists, triathletes! This is why we tend to raise most of our money from outdoor adventures, though we are not averse to indoor ones if you can come up with them!

Here's our main list for 2009:

1. The Shamrock Traverse Trek (April)
2. Three Peaks Challenge (June)
3. Lakeland Passes (July)
4. Tour Mont Blanc (Aug/Sep)

You don't have to be super fit to do any of them, including the Lakeland Passes cycling weekend though you will certainly be a lot fitter once you've

done them! All of these events are relatively informal small affairs with up to a dozen or so people giving them a go. The initial donation to enter is quite small and there are no fundraising targets, we leave that to your own enthusiasm though we do like to agree personal targets.

All of the events are described in detail on our website where you can download registration documents and sponsorship forms. In some cases the dates are already fixed, like The Shamrock Traverse and Three Peaks Challenge, but the others are "open" within the specified month at the moment. All this means that we are flexible in the latter examples to accommodate the first registrations.

All of this is of course "extra" to our Visit Nepal! Programme which includes treks of varying difficulty in the Himalaya.

Just contact us if you have any queries or want to sign up.



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