

Nepal Project Update May 2008

'Rural Assistance Nepal' is currently in the process of being registered as a charity with the UK Charities Commission. It is being formed to help fund raising and assist friends in the UK to take advantage of tax relief on charitable donations.

Thanks to generous support from friends in the UK and other countries, four teachers in two schools are working to help improve the standard of education for children at these schools. A maths teacher is teaching at a secondary school in Garimudi, Dolaka and three teachers are teaching at Deusa secondary school in Solukhumbu.

A midwife is starting work in the next couple of weeks to get the village healthpost in Deusa running again, after being closed for some years due to the Maoist insurgency in the area. Maternal death and infant mortality are serious problems in the area, so it is hoped a midwife here will be valuable.

All this would not be possible without the wonderful help many friends around the globe are giving for their help, advice, moral support and kind donations.

Education

The publishers' excuse is that they were busy printing ballot papers for the election. Other excuses include poor quality paper being supplied. The majority of school course books are not yet printed. The new academic session started a month ago, in mid-April. Across the whole country, few students have their course books. These change each year, so it is impossible to use the previous year's books.



Deusa secondary school

Deusa, Solukhumbu: Mohan Shrestha, a teacher from Darjeeling has arrived at the secondary school to help the head teacher manage the school and will provide valuable support in teaching English and music there. Dev Chandra Rai continues teaching English and Lila Karki teaching science. A volunteer spent six weeks at the school earlier in the year, providing great encouragement to students and teachers with their English.

Profits from the sale of 6 kilos of coffee, grown by a local farmer, bought 200 exercise books and 100 pens for Class 1 students, taken to the school for the start of the new session.

A new block of toilets was completed by March 2008, built by the German NGO MedHimal. Additional classrooms are needed and in March 2008, land adjoining the school was bought from a farmer with help from donations. The VDC (Village District Committee) is saying money may be available in the forthcoming financial year to build some extra classrooms.



5* toilets

The lower secondary school has no toilets and before taking up the kind offer from a friend in the UK, the possibility of the District Education Office or German NGO that built the secondary school's toilets taking this on is being explored.

Posters have been sent to decorate the walls of the Dalit infant school for the new session. The walls of this school are badly cracked and help is being sought from an NGO to help repair the building.



Garimudi school library

Garimudi, Dolaka: The maths teacher recruited nearly two years ago has just been replaced by another maths teacher. Earlier in the year, a donation from Exodus UK trekking agency started a school library. The daughter of a friend raised money to help several of the poorest children with the cost of their course books. Earlier in the year, Sacred Heart Primary School in Ruislip, London made a generous contribution that has supported the maths teacher's salary for the past few months.

Health

Expedition Medicine (www.expeditionmedicine.co.uk) provides valuable assistance by posting details of how volunteers can help the healthpost via their website. Currently, a doctor from the UK is visiting with a Scottish nurse to help train village women and teachers at the secondary school on various health issues. Another UK doctor is planning a short visit in July and more in the autumn and next spring.



Deusa healthpost

Currently the healthpost has no nurse, just a Medical Healthcare Worker who has very limited training, but provides assistance to pregnant mothers and their babies. Advice from the Sherpa doctor who set up Phaplu Hospital, a day's walk from the village, recommended that a midwife would be the most necessary nurse for

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the village. Maternal death in Nepal is the highest in the world and infant mortality is very high. It is planned to equip midwives with portable ultra-sound equipment, supplied by a company in the US, to make home visits so problems anticipated in good time. There is a maternity unit at Phaplu hospital where treatment can be provided.

As well as setting up the hospital at Phaplu, the doctor has set up a nurses' training college there. Taking students from hill and mountain districts, the aim is that they will work at least for a while in rural healthposts. The cost of training a nurse is just £20 a month for two years, which covers all of their costs, except food. The training college is supported by donors.

An Auxiliary Nurse/Midwife, who will be sponsored by a doctor from the UK has just been found and should start in a few weeks. In theory, there is also a government vacancy for a Community Medical Assistant, who would run the healthpost on a day-to-basis and can supply medicines to the sick. Efforts are being made to galvanise the District Health Office to fill this post. If this is not possible (government nurses are registered on a national list and always in short supply), funds permitting, a CMA might need to be found to ensure the effective running of the healthpost.

The role of village healthposts is primarily to inform and refer patients in good time, so that treatment can be given before problems become too serious. All too often, the most minor complaints are neglected until too late and patients needlessly die.

The volunteer doctors and nurses coming from abroad have a valuable contribution even if they can spare only a short time and cannot run clinics (to practice, doctors from abroad need to register in Nepal. This process can be completed within one week in Kathmandu). The importance of using the healthpost as a point for referrals, training and awareness are essential to improving healthcare in remote areas.

Coffee

A farmer living near the school grows good coffee. However there is a very limited market for coffee in the area, not least the problem of access to roads mean the price offered locally is much less than in Kathmandu. By encouraging villagers who are coming to Kathmandu to bring a few kilos of coffee, it is hoped to pay Arunjit Rai the going wholesale price, then sell on the coffee at a profit so the profit can be used to help the school. Profits from the first consignment of coffee has resulted in 200 exercise books and 100 pens being supplied to Class 1 for the new session.



Arunjit preparing the beans

Financing

Many friends are helping support the teachers and schools with most contributions worth £5 - £10 a month, and a few larger donations. One teacher (at Garimudi) has been largely supported by one donor and the Sacred Heart Primary School in Ruislip. Another teacher's salary is being supported for the 2008/09 session by a donation from the Sheikh Zayed Private Academy for Girls in Abu Dhabi. Land was bought with money from the Abu Dhabi girls' donation and another donor.

Depending on how fund raising with the set up of the new charity goes, as well as ensuring the future salaries of the teachers, it might be possible to sponsor the training of nurses (2,500 RS / £20 a month) and if necessary, find a CMA for the healthpost (5,000Rs / £40 a month).

Current cost of supporting teachers and nurses (monthly salaries):

	Monthly salary	Total monthly cost
Secondary school teacher (degree qualified to teach up to class 10) x3	10,000Rs/£80	30,000Rs / £240
Lower secondary teacher (no degree, qualified to teach to class 8)	5,000Rs/£40	5,000Rs / £40
Auxiliary Nurse/Midwife (ANM)	9,000Rs/£70	9,000Rs / £70
TOTAL		44,000Rs / £350

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