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PSD Connect

A Quarterly Newsletter

The PSD Connect is a quarterly e-newsletter published by the Partnership for Sustainable Development (PSD) Nepal to inform all their partners, ex-volunteers and supporters, about our activities and news. PSD Nepal is a non-profit social development organization dedicated to the alleviation of poverty of Children and youth of rural Nepal. For more information please visit www.psdnepal.org.

MESSAGE FROM the EDITOR

Namaste Friends!

We would like to thank everybody for your kind responses to our newsletter! It is wonderful to hear from you. Here is our latest quarterly newsletter keeping you up to date with all of our work and accomplishments over the last three months. This issue focuses on project evaluations and intern perspectives of our project. Please feel free to contact us if you have any announcements, articles, or messages that you want to promote through our newsletter. We heartily welcome your views, comments, and queries regarding the work of PSD-Nepal and/or regarding the improvement of the newsletter! You can send us an email to psdnepal@mail.com.np or call us at (9771)-4780369, fax 4780631.

Bishnu H. Bhatta

LATEST PSD NEWS

- Laura Andersen will complete her 6 month internship with us in April. She has spent time working in our central office and in a rural village in Ilam.
- PSD welcomed a new intern, Amal Paonaskar, who is a post-graduate student from Edinburgh University. He will be working in our central office for 3 months.
- Three medical students (one from Aberdeen University and two from Oxford University) will be carrying out their elective at a maternity hospital in Kathmandu in March and April.
- Our staff member Mr. Tirtha Raj Poudel has been taking 3 weeks of training on conflict resolution in Bangkok.
- This summer, our group volunteer projects will take place in the districts of Ilam, Chitwan, Gurkha, and Baglung. We will be welcoming one group of volunteers from Edinburgh University, three groups from Oxford University, two groups from Bristol University, one from Birmingham University, one from Imperial College of London, and two from Glasgow University. Projects have already been selected by the volunteers. Projects will focus on rural education, school construction and renovation, teaching English classes, organizing extracurricular activities, and designing outdoor learning spaces where they will teach environmental education. They will encourage students and teachers to take classes outside where students will learn from nature. There will also be several volunteers who will carry out their volunteer role on an individual basis.
- We organized a 3 day training program for Mega College social work students. We are also currently hosting 2 Mega College students as interns in the office.

My 6 Months in Nepal

By: Laura Andersen, PSD Intern

After deciding to pursue a career in economic development, I left my corporate job in Boston and traveled to Nepal to do a six month internship with Partnership for Sustainable Development. I arrived in Kathmandu in October just in time for Tihar, the festival of lights. The entire city was lit up and I experienced the holiday as Nepalis do with my host family. Initially I lived with Mohan Parajuli's family, the Chairman of PSD, which gave me the opportunity to learn about Nepali culture and become part of a Nepali family. After several months I moved into a house with other volunteers, and have met many other young people doing interesting and inspiring non-profit work here. Living in Kathmandu has been an adjustment in many ways, however I quickly came to love Nepal and what I have gotten out of the experience far overshadows the challenges.

My internship at PSD started out with training and daily Nepali language classes. Much of my work in the PSD office has been writing evaluation reports to send to past volunteer groups and to JustAid, a UK-based donor organization that PSD works with. These reports ensure the monitoring of past projects, show donors and volunteers what their contributions have accomplished, and gives PSD documentation and insight on how to improve programs in the future. I've also written project proposals, developed PowerPoint presentations for various programs, updated databases, given a short training program to Nepali undergraduate students, and written and edited various documents and articles. My time in the office has given me valuable knowledge on how a development NGO operates, and I have gained solid skills that will help me in future positions.



It was also important to me to spend time in the field interacting directly with the communities that PSD works with, so after spending five weeks in Kathmandu I took the 20-hour bus ride to Ilam, a district in the far east of Nepal which is famous for its tea. I spent six weeks in Ilam living in a rural village called Sangrumba with a family, working with a women's saving and credit cooperative, and teaching English at the local primary school. The women's cooperative empowers rural women by giving them the opportunity to establish their own savings, which they normally do not have

access to. The group also distributes small loans to its members at fair interest rates, which the women use to buy livestock, seeds, and other means to improve their agricultural businesses. This work showed me first-hand the power of giving women the opportunity to generate income and improve the lives of their families. The women were eager to educate themselves and learn English, so in addition to helping them with their accounting system I gave them daily English lessons. I met with the women in their group office, which PSD volunteers from BVDA constructed this past summer. The pride the women had in their cooperative, which they created themselves, and their incredible strength and love was humbling.



Teaching English at the local school was also a wonderful experience. Initially I was apprehensive because I had never taught before, however PSD provided me with lessons plans, and the children were so enthusiastic and excited to learn that it made

teaching easy and fun. Being in the village was very difficult in many ways, and there were times when I longed for personal space, indoor heat, a real shower, or someone who could speak English with me. However, becoming part of the community and befriending those incredible women and children taught me a great deal about myself and the way that many people in the world live.

I also had the opportunity to go into the field and visit PSD project sites in the districts of Ilam, Baglung, and Chitwan. The purpose of these visits was to monitor past PSD projects and evaluate their use and success. In Ilam, I visited three schools where summer volunteers had completed projects. I visited these sites independently along with a member of a local, partner NGO in Ilam who helped to translate. In Baglung, Tirtha Poudel and I spent 4 days visiting projects completed by summer volunteer groups such as school renovations, construction of community



centers, and smokeless stoves and soak pits. Hiking through the hills and the terraced rice paddies of Baglung to each village (since there was no transportation available) was rewarding and exhilarating. In Chitwan, Bishnu Bhatta and I spent 4 days visiting projects, the majority of which were clean drinking water projects at rural schools. In Chitwan, we spent days driving between villages through pink, yellow, and green fields and through Chitwan National Park. We were also guests at a school ceremony where



we were greeted with a parade, marigold garlands, and a band. Overall, the highlight of these field visits was the opportunity to see first-hand the incredible work that PSD makes possible.

During field visits in Chitwan, we also visited over 60 projects sponsored by JustAid, a donor organization based in the UK. These projects focus on improving hygiene and sanitation conditions in local areas by installing clean drinking water units and toilets. In Nepal, water-borne illnesses and diseases caused by poor sanitation are a major problem, especially in rural areas. Many households and schools do not have access to clean water or toilets, so they are forced to drink unclean water and go to the toilet outside which poses significant health risks. Nepal has one of the highest infant mortality rates in the world, and many children die each year from diseases and diarrhea which could easily be prevented. The clean drinking water projects sponsored by JustAid use deep boring techniques which go down 60-100 feet into the ground to ensure that the water is clean and safe. Tube filters, drinking stations with faucets, and pipes bringing clean water to toilet units are then installed. I was especially moved by our visit to the water



pumps built for members of Dalit “untouchable” caste families, who are not allowed to use the normal village water supply because of their untouchable status. The projects we visited were all successful and it was amazing to witness first-hand the benefits that they had brought to the schools and communities. It is difficult to imagine not being able to provide something as simple as clean water to your children until you see it in person, and hear from the recipients themselves how much it has improved their lives and how grateful they

are. I was impressed to learn about the JustAid system, through which anyone can visit the JustAid website (www.justaid.org.uk) and choose a project to sponsor online, of which 100% of donations go directly to that project.

I will admit that living in Nepal has been very challenging at times. In Kathmandu, I've become accustomed to functioning by candlelight during dry-season power cuts, wearing a filtered face-mask to protect against pollution, and being squeezed into full buses. Living in the village, I said goodbye to personal space and privacy. Above all, however, my time in Nepal has been one of the best times of my life and has profoundly changed me. I have learned a great deal about development and NGO work, and have developed skills that I know will help me in the future. The women I worked with at the cooperative became like mothers, sisters, and best friends to me. Their strength, resilience, and the love they showed me for no reason other than me being there to help them was the most humbling experience of my life. Knowing them, and facing new challenges of my own in Nepal, has instilled some of that same strength in me that I will carry with me for the rest of my life. I would highly recommend interning with PSD to anyone who is interested in learning about Nepal and gaining development and NGO experience.

Global Fund for Children Grant Programs

PSD recently received a grant from the Global Fund for Children in the US, with which we coordinated nine extracurricular activities for orphaned children so far. The programs focused on environmental awareness, cultural enrichment, and personal development. Activities included hiking, river walks, a trip to an amusement park, a trip to



a technology forum, and festival celebrations. In Nepal, these types of extracurricular activities are not commonly a part of school curriculums, and most youth do not have access to



enrichment opportunities outside

of the classroom. These programs exposed orphaned children to settings outside of their usual environment and allowed them to try new things, see new places, and learn new skills. The children learned about nature, environmental conservation, exercise and staying healthy, various career sectors,



and different cultures. They gained confidence by trying new things and going outside of their comfort zones, such as completing a challenging hike, playing in a waterfall along the river, cooking new kinds of food, and going on amusement park rides for the first time. Throughout these activities, the children worked as a group and developed camaraderie and



support among themselves. These activities sponsored by the Global Fund for Children gave children the opportunity to develop confidence, creativity, cultural awareness, and an appreciation for nature. Overall, it was clear that these activities greatly benefited the children and they enjoyed themselves immensely.

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