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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 March newsletter! It is wonderful to hear from you. Here is our latest quarterly newsletter keeping you up to date with some 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 has been completed 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.
- First batch of volunteers will be arriving from EGP in first week of June and BVDA and SVA will be coming at end of June. There are two groups from Birmingham University and Imperial College of London will be coming in 10 July and last batch from ODA will be arriving in 1 August.

My Time in Nepal

By: Amal Paonaskar, PSD Intern

Sometime after completing my postgraduate studies in Global Health and Development, I applied for an internship with PSD. I knew of PSD from my time with Edinburgh Global Partnerships (one of PSD's overseas partners) and was successful in getting the appointment to work in PSD's central office in Kathmandu. I arrived in Kathmandu in the beginning of March, just in time for the festival of Holi which was a fantastic welcome to the city. I celebrated the festival with my host family and others from the neighbourhood which was inevitably messy (as the celebrations involve throwing coloured powder and water on others) but immensely enjoyable. My host family was very welcoming and definitely helped me settle in quicker. After nearly three months, I can honestly say that there hasn't been a

dull moment in Kathmandu. Now armed with some Nepali and after a bit of exploring, I've made some fantastic friends and grown quite fond of the city, including its many quirks and the varied attractions that keep me occupied in my free time. The things I have learned from my work with PSD and by living in Nepal with a local family have far outweighed the challenges that I've faced during my time here.

My work started with a brief orientation and a few days of familiarising myself with PSD, the nature of their work and the issues faced by people in rural Nepal (where most projects take place). I was then tasked with redesigning aspects of PSD's volunteering programmes. PSD works with a number of national and international volunteers who help raise funds for various infrastructure projects. Furthermore, these volunteers assist in the completion of the projects as unskilled labour and engage with the students and communities by organising extracurricular activities and teaching; fostering cultural exchange and awareness.



I also had the opportunity to work with PSD and some of their associates on developing proposals for some new projects like a particularly interesting Behaviour Change Communication (BCC) training programme to tackle the issue of child labour in rural Nepal. If accepted, PSD will work with a number of Civil Society Organisations and UNICEF-Nepal to build capacity on using BCC to combat child labour across Nepal. The vast experience and knowledge of my colleagues during such assignments has helped develop my own knowledge and skills which will serve me well in my future career. I was also given a lot of responsibility from the start, asked for input on various assignments and offered guidance whenever I needed it.

The most interesting aspect of my internship has been my visits to the field, to evaluate the preparations and sites for this summer's projects, attest the state of past projects and even meet with communities that plan to propose projects in the future. I was fortunate to visit quite a lot of the country spending time with communities in the Lamjung, Gorkha, Chitwan and Baglung districts of Nepal. The long bus journeys, *bandhs* (transport strikes) proved to be a bonus in this case, allowing me to spend a couple of days in the charming town of Bandipur and visit the shamelessly touristy but lovable lakeside city that is Pokhara. It was good to meet with the beneficiaries of PSD's varied projects over the last few years and hear about how the various project ideas had been developed and accounts of working with PSD and volunteers. PSD supports sustainable community driven initiatives which was clearly reflected in the communities' dedication and commitment to maintaining and properly utilising completed projects. The projects ranged from simple measures to improve sanitation standards in the community like soak pits to rather larger ventures involving construction of classrooms, water facilities and



refurbishment of public school infrastructure; improving capacity and the learning environment. Another great aspect of the field visits was going from one site to another. This entailed a lot of hiking as PSD does a lot of work in remote areas with marginalised or isolated communities. I was rewarded with some breath-taking scenery, great food and the fantastic hospitality of the Nepali people. The work also helped to strengthen my Nepali language skills, knowledge about local culture and to develop a better understanding of life in rural Nepal.

On returning to Kathmandu, I have been drafting reports for the donors or partner organisations involved in the projects and sites that I visited. I have also been developing training material for the volunteers' who will work in these communities over the summer. It is very important to PSD to keep all stakeholders and partners informed of the progress and status of their efforts, which has improved participation and helps coordinate future efforts.



PSD also help to run after school programme and nature education to the small children. These programmes are low-cost and effective ways in which PSD coordinates and encourages extracurricular activities for children from disadvantaged backgrounds, fostering interactive and enjoyable learning. Public schools' in Nepal struggle to provide such opportunities, primarily due to budget constraints and the aforementioned programmes are helping to promote a more holistic approach to education while improving environmental awareness amongst Nepal's youth.

This has been my second visit to Nepal and did not disappoint at all. In addition to enjoying my work, I managed to take some time to go trekking in the spectacular Langtang National Park and scale what is hopefully the first of many Himalayan peaks. I spent a lot of weekends hiking or running in the hills around the Kathmandu Valley which allowed me to see some of the less travelled parts of the country. The natural beauty, cultural diversity and friends that I have made in Nepal are truly awesome and have made a lasting impression on me. In contrast, travelling by public transport jammed with people and the occasional live-animal, not being able to work due to power-cuts and strikes and dodging Kathmandu's crazy traffic and dogs on a daily basis has undoubtedly been challenging. I've gained a great insight into working in development, the tactical hurdles in implementing programmes in developing countries and the experience of working for a small but highly dedicated and successful development NGO. The knowledge and skills I have gained will undoubtedly serve me well in the future and have only been developed due to the variety of assignments I was given and the expertise and guidance provided by Mr. Bishnu Bhatta, Mr. Mohan Parajuli and Mr. Tirtha Paudel of PSD. I am immensely grateful for this opportunity and would recommend interning or volunteering with PSD to anyone interested in development, Nepal or gaining experience of working overseas.

Learning from Mother Nature Programme

PSD has recently launched a programme to encourage more extracurricular activities, environmental awareness and promote a more holistic approach to education. The programme will be carried out in partnership with Public Schools in Nepal and involves gardening, taking students on day hikes and field trips to visit local farms or community forests. The pilot programme was launched in January 2012 at the Shree Himalaya Higher Secondary School in the Chitwan district of Nepal. Being on the doorstep of a World Heritage Site that abounds with an array of wildlife, the school is ideally situated for students to experience nature.



as an excellent form of exercise and provides a break from the classroom!

Mr. Deepak Prasad Aryal (Assistant Headmaster) is particularly keen on the programme and has accompanied the children on many of their trips. These have included a forest-walk, trip to the local livestock farm, the canal and an outdoor lesson in the school's own "Friendship Garden". The students have planted a vegetable patch have also planted various trees and a vegetable patch behind the school which has been christened "The Friendship Garden". Indeed, when the weather is suitable teachers conduct classes in the garden to give students a break from the classroom and learn about the various plants that they have planted. He has expressed that the children are learning a great deal not just about nature but also about life. It was



made clear that students are developing a deeper appreciation for all living things while enhancing their knowledge and enjoying themselves. Furthermore, the teachers have stated that students (particularly from the lower) classes tend to ask more questions and are more attentive on field trips and more refreshed when they return to the classroom.

PSD would like to thank Mr. Aryal for his enthusiasm in implementing the programme and providing us with regular updates and photos. Based on the success of the programme we are now looking at launching it in other schools where we will carry out our infrastructure development and education projects with assistance from our international volunteers.

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