



PSD Connect

A quarterly **E-NEWSLETTER**

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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 good wishers, about our activities and news. PSD-Nepal is a not-for-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 EDITORIAL

Dear Friends!

*First of all members of PSD-Nepal would like to wish you all a **Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year for 2007!!!** We would like to thank you for your warm responses to our first newsletter! Since the first newsletter has been such a great success, we enthusiastically present our second newsletter. From now on our newsletter will be published every three months to keep you informed about PSD-Nepal, her work and results. This month's newsletter will mainly focus on the stories of volunteers about their personal experiences with volunteering in Nepal. Additionally this newsletter will give you a brief update of the projects that have been finalized, the current situation in Nepal, what PSD-Nepal envisions in the future and of course how you can help us. Comments or questions regarding the work of PSD-Nepal or regarding the newsletter are more than welcome! You can send us an email psdnepal@mail.com.np or phone to (9771)-4780369/ 4780631.*

*Bishnu Bhatta
Charlotte van der Tak*

LATEST PSD NEWS

In October our volunteer programme director, Bishnu Bhatta, has been attending a conference on connecting children with nature in the USA. He acted as a facilitator regarding Environmental Education.

On the 13th and 14th of October PSD-Nepal has organized a health camp in Chitwan district. This health camp has been on the agenda for almost two years, but wasn't possible to implement due to the security situation. Since peace has once again been restored in Nepal we have been very happy to finally establish the health camp in Chitwan. This health camp has been enabled by the facilitation of a general physician, a dentist, gynecologist, lab technician, nursing staff and pharmacists. All the facilities, including medicine distribution, were provided to two rural communities of Chitwan free of cost. This was among others enabled through JustAid, who was able to raise money to buy medicines for the health camp. Additionally this health camp has been hosted by the local organization; Sommaya memory trust, which was responsible for the day to day organization of the health camp. From PSD-Nepal's side, Mohan has been working in the health camp as a facilitator.

Alice Roberts, who has been working in Dang district as a volunteer before, has come back to Nepal. She has enthusiastically shown here willingness to help PSD-Nepal for two months.

VOLUNTEER STORIES

From July to August this year, myself and twelve other volunteers from Glasgow University spent six weeks on a PSD project. We were situated in Champanagar and Parasnagar, two villages in Chitwan. Both groups of volunteers assisted with the construction of classrooms in the local school, and helped out with basic English classes for the pupils.



Working on the classrooms

I was in the group situated in Champanagar, living with Durga Bhatta and his family. The whole experience was absolutely wonderful. The family in particular made us feel extremely welcome and looked after us with fierce determination. Despite the communication barrier, only made worse by my appalling attempt to speak Nepali, we instantly felt at home with the family and continued to feel that way for our whole stay.

I remember a particular incident where, with a lot of laughter and gesturing of hands, our Aama made in very clear that one of the boys was washing his clothes in completely the wrong way. It was this combination of laughter and help that sums up how lovely our family was.

The project itself consisted of helping with the construction of two new classrooms for the Shree Himalaya Secondary School. To start with, communication was a problem, but after a few days everyone got used to one another and began to communicate in any way they could. I myself struck up a friendship with one of the brick layers despite a lack of common language. My Nepali skills were really tested, but we got along just fine with smiles and hand gestures.



Warm greetings from the students

The whole experience was really good for everyone in the group. I feel that I myself matured whilst I was away, and definitely learnt new skills. Other members of the group became more confident with themselves and we all had an amazing time. The community felt like home by the time we left and we almost had the whole village there to wave us off when we left.

If you are in any way considering volunteering with PSD, or any other organization in Nepal, I would definitely recommend that you do so. I had a great time and helped people whilst I was there. Nepal is a beautiful country filled with friendly people.

Cara Sulieman

As we walked through the gates of Shree Yuwa Pratibha school, where we would be working for the next month, our group of volunteers from Oxford were greeted by line after line of smiling and clapping students and teachers presenting us with flowers. None of us could stop beaming. However the project would turn out, we knew then that it would be an amazing experience and that we would be treated to the warm hospitality of our Nepali hosts.

Our project aims were to support a community-owned, sustainable development project both financially and practically.

ODA, the Oxford-based organisation that sent us our, believes in sending volunteers to Nepal so that the volunteers have a personal involvement with the project, and so that the community interest in and awareness of the project is maximized.

During the weeks were we were working in Khokana, in the Lalitpur district, we were helping to construct, plaster and paint a meeting hall, to build a partition wall between two classrooms and to create a basket-ball court by brick-soiling the school playground. We learnt an amazing variety of skills, from bricklaying, to working on bamboo scaffolding, to how to teach General Knowledge classes with only aliali Nepali language and very little general knowledge! I still have no idea how the builders and teachers put up with our initial incompetence, but by the end of the project I really believe we were making a great difference to the school and the community.



Building the extra classrooms.

The creation of the two new classrooms will benefit the two kindergarten grades of the school by allowing each their own space rather than being taught in one semi-partitioned room. We were particularly pleased that we were able to paint the newly constructed classrooms and furnish them to make them a more pleasant learning environment than the previous one.

One of the special aspects of the projects was the supportiveness of the teachers and ancillary staff of the school, demonstrating their commitment by volunteering to help with construction and encouraging children to help with activities such as passing bricks. We even got the entire school throwing bricks up the stairs!

No matter how rewarding our work in the school was, however, it was the village life (and particularly festivals!) that really made it such a special experience. Living within families we found a unique opportunity to get to know a community, and we especially enjoyed living with just two volunteers to a family as it allowed us to spend more time with the family.

The care lavished upon us by the host families was wonderful. All the villagers were so welcoming - I remember getting through five glasses of chiya in one day I remember carrying corsani up from the fields with our didi (our wonderful older sister), Suryabati, with traditional baskets and dressed in Newari jackets, and feeling like I was home. We were also lucky enough to witness the famous 'goat-wrestling' festival, a sight we're not going to forget in a long time.



The volunteer groups with the teachers

We were able to make even more of our time living with families in the village due to PSD's sophisticated training programme, with a combination of cultural sessions and intensive language classes. Our counterpart, Shishav, added so much to our experiences and to the project, and was such a brilliant companion and friend that we can't thank him enough - especially for teaching us to make momos (though they don't seem quite the same in England!).

We wish the school, Khokana village and PSD all the best in the future and in later projects, and thank everyone for the incredible experience we had.

Jessica Kennedy

FUTURE PLANS

PSD-Nepal has been linking up with the Universities of Aberdeen, Oxford and Glasgow to send volunteers to work in Nepal. The universities of Bristol and Birmingham are also sending volunteers to work with us in the summer of 2007. Next to this PSD-Nepal is in the process of developing a network with a Singaporean volunteer organization in sending volunteers to work in Nepal in 2007. With this number of volunteers coming we will be very happy to establish several projects. Since the security situation has now been stabilized, we are ever so happy to conduct the project in the remote and beautiful places such as Ilam and Baglung, where help is most needed. In March 2007 a medical group will be coming from Aberdeen University. They will be working in community hospitals, health posts and a health camp.

PEACE IN NEPAL!!!

Finally it has happened!!! Permanent peace has been established by the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) on the evening of 21st November. It all started with the Maoists agreeing to lock up their arms and putting the Maoist guerillas in shelters all monitored by the UN.

As an editorial in the Kathmandu post says on the 22nd of November: *"November 21, 2006 will be proudly remembered and celebrated by all Nepalis as a day that transformed the destiny of this great nation. We have set an example in conflict resolution for the whole world..."*
"Jubilation across Nepal has marked the signing of a landmark peace agreement between the government and the country's Maoist rebels".... "Neighbouring India, the United States and the United Nations have joined the chorus of welcome." BBC, Wednesday, 22 November 2006.

The Maoists are now due to move into the parliament and the government, abandoning their guerrilla status. According to the peace agreement, in June 2007 there will be an election of a constitutional assembly. The whole of Nepal is in a state of excitement and energy for the betterment of the country. For PSD-Nepal and our work it means that we can now work safely through out the country and thus work where the need is the highest. It means we can conduct our projects and programs with the utmost responsiveness and effectiveness! For future volunteers it will mean no more worries about safety, full concentration on the project and of course enjoying and experiencing Nepal to the fullest!

JUST AID AND YOUR CONTRIBUTION

We are happy to share that in November JustAid has attracted several donors through their website, which enabled 15 projects to take place in Nepal. Christmas is coming and you might want donate to one of the Just Aid programmes yourself, or know someone who is interested in helping a poor community and school in Nepal. Please visit the JustAid website; **www.JustAid.org.uk**, to see the requests that come from the poor communities and government schools of Nepal.

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