



---

## SPECIAL EDITION!!!

### 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](http://www.psdnepal.org).**

---

#### MESSAGE FROM the EDITOR

Namaste Friends!

We would like to thank everybody for your kind responses to our newsletter! It has been really pleasant to read all your reactions. Here is our latest quarterly newsletter keeping you up to date with all our work and accomplishments over the last three months. 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](mailto:psdnepal@mail.com.np) or call us at (9771)-4780369, fax 4780631.

Bishnu H. Bhatta

---

#### LATEST PSD NEWS

- At the beginning of June, PSD said goodbye to Sarah Burns, who worked as an intern in the central office in Kathmandu for 3 months.
  - Just before Sarah left, PSD welcomed a new intern, Anya Petrovani, who also worked in the central office for 3 months.
  - This summer has been a busy one for PSD. We hosted a total of 64 volunteers from University of Bristol (BVDA), University of Glasgow (SVA), University of Strathclyde, Glasgow (SID), University of Birmingham (Intervols) and Oxford University (ODA), along with 12 Nepali counterparts. These groups were placed in Ilam, Chitwan, Gorkha and Baglung, respectively.
  - In addition to our volunteer program, PSD also organized several Mud Days. Details of these events can be found below.
- 

#### 2011 SUMMER VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

This summer, 64 volunteers from the UK travelled halfway across the world to volunteer in Nepal. These volunteers came from University of Bristol (BVDA), University of Glasgow (SVA), University of Strathclyde, Glasgow (SID), University of Birmingham (Intervols) and Oxford University (ODA). They represented a wide range of cultural backgrounds and academic disciplines. But what they all had in common was a desire to see and experience new things and help people in need.



BVDA volunteers before departure to Ilam

Each of the four groups participated in a 4-5 day training in a small hotel in Dhulikhel, about an hour's drive from Kathmandu. The volunteers appreciated the quiet and calm location of the training site, as they felt that they were able to relax a bit before their placements and get a chance to know each other better. During this training session, the volunteers had intense language training, learning the basics of the Nepali language. They also received training on cultural do's and don'ts, safety tips, and teaching techniques. While it was an intense few days, the volunteers all felt that it was helpful preparation for their placement.

After the Dhulikhel training was over, each group departed for their placements, together with one Nepali counterpart for

each group. Both excited and nervous, they went to work in four districts of Nepal: Ilam, Chitwan, Gorkha and Baglung. Much of the work to be done was similar: constructing additional classrooms for government-owned schools, painting and plastering classrooms and community centers, building women's centers, fixing toilets and water taps, installing smokeless stoves and soak pits, and planting trees.



SID volunteers after completion of project

In addition to their construction work, all of the groups taught children ranging from ages 5 to 17, conducting lessons in English, Math and Environment. Teaching was often a challenge: language

barriers made it difficult to convey their lessons to the students, even with the help of the counterpart. There was often a wide range of different levels and abilities, and finding the appropriate lesson was complicated. Unruly children were sometimes too enthusiastic to focus on their lessons. But it was also an incredibly rewarding experience. The children in the communities became very fond of the volunteers: sometimes the volunteers would come into the classroom to find the words "I love you" written all over the board. Oftentimes the children would want to play with the volunteers for hours on end; even after a long day of construction, the children wouldn't let the



SVA volunteers with community members

volunteers have a moment's rest.

One of the most special parts of the placement for many of the volunteers was the host family. All of the volunteers were blown away by how hospitable, welcoming and loving all of their families were. Whether it was a quiet household with just *aamaa* and *baa*, or a busy and heavily trafficked one with *aammaa*, *baa*, *didi*, *daai* and every aunt, uncle and cousin, living with a Nepali family always proved to be a great experience for the volunteers. They were able to get involved in every part of community life: they helped prepare meals, planted rice, milked the cows, cut the wheat to feed the animals (even cutting their fingers in the process!), and participated in community events such as weddings, birthdays and funerals. One group even had the honor of being asked to be formally adopted into the



SVA volunteers on construction site



SVA volunteers with host family

family, being given all of the rights and responsibilities of proper sons and daughters! Leaving their homes was always emotional, and the volunteers will certainly remember their host families for a long time to come.

Two groups have already returned from their placements: BVDA (Ilam) and SVA/SID (Chitwan). The groups in Gorkha and Baglung still have 1 week and 3 weeks left, respectively. We are excited to hear lots more stories from them, and get all their photos!

### Quotes from Volunteers:

"Project was made completely by the family. Close bonds formed with 10 of them (even the goats) and genuinely felt completely at home with the [family], and cannot wait to visit again!" James Millward

"The sense of community: a pregnant woman down the road who went into labour – we watched and followed as they carried her on a stretcher to the hospital." Ragevan Vaikunthavasan

"I would certainly recommend others to participate to others in this project. A fascinating experience, broaden my mind to a new culture, became a more independent person. Pupil really enjoyed this project. PSD is very well organized charity. It does excellent work and it should continue its volunteers work". Vijaya Pattni

"Really enjoyed teaching English as a foreign language and loved developing relationships with the children. We felt appreciated." Annabel Wilson

"Impending doom of eating daal bhat everyday turned out a yummy and enjoyable deal, thanks to our *aamaa's* cooking skills." Rachel Davidson

"The sense of achievement of being part of the process of completely a building – from fundraising at home, to laying the first bricks, then putting on the roof and plastering." Nicola Smith

---

## 2011 INTERNATIONAL MUD DAY



Preparing the field for Mud Day

At around 10am on the 29th June children started to gather excitedly around the Champanagar Community Centre, ready to celebrate International Mud Day with their community and PSD Nepal. Preparations for the day had begun long before the children arrived. The fields where Mud Day were to be celebrated were ploughed several times in the previous days to ensure the best possible consistency of mud. But the ploughing was only the last step in a long line of preparations. International Mud Day is also Asar Pandhra on the Nepali calendar, the date when rice planting traditionally begins in Nepal. About 4 weeks before this special day, nursery plots of rice were sown to provide the saplings of rice plants that would

be planted in the field in the days following Mud Day. This rice, once harvested, will be sold by the farmers to larger companies to supply the rice needs of many Nepali families.

Most of the children attending Mud Day were brought by their teachers. Krishna, a teacher who came with 25 children from his school, said that he was very happy to bring them and that they would all be

playing in the mud. When asked why this event was important, he replied that the mud is important for health as it helps wash away impurities from the skin. He said that he would be sure to help his students understand this. Deepak, another teacher who also brought about 25 children, said that the celebrations were very important because until today the children did not know about the value of mud, but that this event gave them the opportunity to learn. He also highlighted that wealthier families largely avoid getting dirty, because of its association with low income work. This day brings all people together, regardless of social status, drawing them closer to both each other and to nature.



Collecting the rice saplings from the nursery ready to plant the fields



Dancing as the celebrations begin

A group of local musicians provided the sound track to the mounting excitement, and created an opportunity for onlookers to begin the celebrations with dancing. Some of the foreign volunteers attending the event were even pushed into the middle of the circle, and had a chance to test their Nepali-style dancing skills, with varying degrees of success! Once everyone had arrived, the opening ceremony for Mud Day began. There to initiate the fun was Chitra Bahadur Shrestha, a political representative from the area and member

of the Constituent Assembly. He, along with several local children, rode on the back of an elephant into the mud. As they enthusiastically jumped off the elephant and landed in the mud, members of the community, both adults and children, charged in after them. In a beautiful explosion of pink and red saris, the women of the community danced with the politician in the mud, and began to plant the saplings in a neighboring field. Meanwhile, the number of children entering the mud was multiplying, with balls and frisbees flying left and right. Teams were created by the schools, and a football match that lasted hours began.

Sudip, who is 13 years old, said that felt very happy after playing in the mud. It was the first time he had played in mud in this way and despite losing his football match, he was still happy because of the fun he had. When asked about the importance of the mud, he said that mud was not only good for having fun; it was also important because it supplies the rice that we eat. There were many other children there on the day who expressed great happiness after playing in the mud. Sarita, for example, was brought to the celebrations by her teacher. Initially, she was very frightened to enter the mud, but when she gathered up the courage to go in, she had a great time. Likewise, Jaya Subedi, 9 years old, was very happy after playing in the mud for the first time. Keshav, also 9 years old, said, "It is right to enjoy the mud like we have done today," and expressed excitement at the prospect of doing it again next year.



Jumping from the elephant into the mud

Mud Day provides a unique opportunity for children and adults alike. Brinda, one of many women standing on the side and watching the children play, said that it was a great pleasure to see all the children playing in the mud and having such a good time. Although she knew that she would have to wash her children's muddy clothes at the end of the day, a difficult task, she knew it was worth it. Also watching the fun and games was Bishnu, who had helped prepare the field by ploughing earlier that day. After the hard preparation, he said that it was a pleasure to see all of the children enjoying themselves so much. When asked if he would like to do it again he said 'Yes, lets do it next year also'.



The children enjoy a game of football in

children were reluctant to get out of the mud, but when all the competitions were over and the children had washed and eaten, an awards ceremony was held. Prizes of school books, pens and soap were handed out to the winners of the various competitions.

At the end of the day walking past the fields, it was clear that some children did not want the day to end. As everyone else headed home to rest after a hard days fun there was still a group of three girls wading around in the mud!



The children wash off the mud

In addition to International Mud Day on 29<sup>th</sup> June, PSD also organized another Mud Day at the Samajha Kalyan Orphanage in the Kavre region of Central Nepal. These children have had the opportunity to celebrate Mud Day for two years in a row, thanks to the generosity of a school in Australia. They (as well as their teacher!) got thoroughly dirty and enjoyed every minute of it. The children were given an opportunity to bring out their competitive side, with matches of football, volleyball, wrestling and races, receiving prizes for winning. The children were so happy to have gotten such an opportunity, and, "hope such a help from you for conducting our program on coming future days." In other words: "we hope you continue to help us have many more mud days!"

---

## **SPECIAL ARTICLE**

Nienke Elijzen, PSD Intern from the Netherlands, conducted research for PSD during her time here in 2010. She visited a number of the different projects implemented by PSD, interviewed community members, and wrote a report on the challenges and opportunities for girls to participate in education in Nepal. We are sharing with you a condensed version of her report, in the hopes that it may shed light on the current situation in Nepal.

### **Girls' Participation in Education; Challenges and Opportunities**

*A Case Study of Two Rural Districts in Nepal*

By: Nienke Elijzen  
Educational Science  
University of Twente, Netherlands  
2010 Intern of PSD Nepal

#### **Summary**

In Nepal society is male dominated and next to that the country is also considered a third world country. This reveals itself in a lack of schooled children and especially in the lack of schooled girls. Many NGO's address and try to solve this lack by giving aid, and one of them is Partnership for Sustainable Development Nepal (PSD Nepal). In cooperation with PSD Nepal a research has been developed regarding 'The challenges and opportunities for girls to participate in education, in the

districts of Ghoroka and Chitwan in Nepal'. The objective of this study was to come up with recommendations for PSD Nepal to provide aid with regard to diminishing the lack of opportunities and challenges for girls to participate in education.

To prepare for the fieldwork in Nepal a literature study about the challenges and opportunities regarding education of girls in Nepal was carried out by the researcher. In consolidation with PSD Nepal two schools per village and district were selected to carry out the fieldwork. After developing and preparing the field research, two trips have been made into the field to carry out thirty-two interviews in nineteen days in total. The interviews have been conducted in the village Harmi in the district of Ghoroka and in the village Meghauri in the district of Chitwan.

To be able to conduct the interviews there was a topic list which had to be followed. To overcome the language barrier translators were integrated into the research. To prevent bias the translators have been given a thorough instruction before the interviews took place. The population of respondents contained of fifty percent male and fifty percent female and consisted out of four different categories: teachers, management, parents and students.

Back in the Netherlands the data was analyzed by making different comparisons (between the villages and between private and government school ect.). Out of answering the sub questions and making the comparisons followed the recommendations for PSD Nepal in regard of carrying out (more) aid to improve the challenges and opportunities for girls to participate in education in Nepal.

After interpretation and analyzing the data the following results have been found. The most important challenges for girls to participate in school have to do with the level of development in agriculture and therefore with economical conditions. Also unawareness of the importance of education and lacking in attracting the students are problems to overcome. One of the most important things for PSD Nepal in regard to sustainable development is to conduct research of and in an area before planning and giving aid. This could be done by using the topic list of this research.

## **Findings**

The central research question of this research is: 'What are the challenges and opportunities for girls to participate in education, in the districts Gorkha and Chitwan in Nepal?' This question can be answered by summarizing the data of this research. From the analysis and interpretation the following results were found. In the private and in the primary schools partly participation, drop out and repetition seem not to take place. Therefore the results that are mentioned account for the (higher) secondary schools in both villages.

On an average basis about five percent of 100 children is only partly participating in the schools. This used to be more girls than boys, but now the people are more aware so the girls will also attend school more and more. Only if the economic situation is really bad, students will not come to school. In that case most of the time it is the girl whom has to stay at home to help the parents with household chores or babysit her siblings. This has to do with the fact that when the girl gets married she will live with her family in law and is therefore seen as a non return investment since the children will look after their parents when they get old. If the parents cannot afford a pencil or a notebook, sometimes the shame also makes the children not go to school.

In both villages the lowest castes, study until 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> grade and when they get married they drop out. Since the girls are a most of the time ten years younger than their husbands when they get married, they are the ones who drop out because of the marriage. Nowadays it is more common that if younger people get married that it is out of love. Boys only do not go to school if they do not feel like going or have no interest in school, but girls do not go to school because of tradition and old beliefs, like girls do not need an education. In the schools there is no difference between castes, but in sending children to school there is a difference. If you compare the higher castes and the lower castes then the lower castes are less likely to send, because there is a basis lack of awareness and knowledge among these communities. In the lower castes students also tend to drop out more, but this differs per village and in Harmi the lower castes learnt the importance to go to school.

Of every school the average drop out is one student per year and mostly this happens in the exam year. Somewhat of four students will have to do a re-exam. Until primary school level all the students are in school and this seems to be fact for both the villages. From the 5<sup>th</sup> till the 10<sup>th</sup> grade, about five percent of the students face repetition. Until five years ago, children under five years of age could not attain school. But now there is also ECD in the school or in the same village so children from three years old can attend, which leads to less girls having to stay at home to take care of their siblings.

Some students are not in school because of the rainy season. This occurs for a couple of children per school, per day. This happens only for a few days per year, and the amount of students is different too with a minimum of two students per day. The biggest part of this problem is solved by giving the students summer break holiday during a big part of the rainy season. Only if the economic situation is really bad the student has to stay at home to help the parents on the land.

Trafficking of girls is believed not to happen in the area of Harmi and Megahauli, although due to the sign which warns for penalties for participating in girl trafficking, this is being questioned for the south region and thus for Meghauri. The Maoists were most active in the hill region of Nepal and are therefore only mentioned in Harmi. The Maoists did not keep children out of school, but parents and the government were afraid. Some children did join the Maoists army, but it was out of free will. It is seen as a problem of the past.

The government pays for governments schools, but sometimes children only come to school so the parents can collect the scholarship (only for the money). After a couple of weeks these children drop out again. The infrastructure of the buildings and their condition is critique for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. There are for example still no windows in the school and it still takes longer than a year to construct one school classroom building. Some children have to walk for one and a half hour to get to the school. In Harmi they have to cross a river which is dangerous, because the bridge is very old. They cannot come if there is heavy rain.

## **Conclusions**

One of the most important things for PSD Nepal in regard to sustainable development is to conduct a small research in an area before giving aid. By doing so PSD Nepal can make sure that not only aid is given which will relieve poverty but that this aid will also address the highest priority and is sustainable. For this small research they could use the topic list that was used in this research since it addresses the necessary topics. For example they would notice that primary schools and private schools are in less need of aid compared to a (higher) secondary schools in that particular village or vice versa.

The most important challenges for girls to participate in school have to do with the level of development in agriculture. Since in both villages the main income is via agriculture, they work on and live off the land. But the development in agriculture is poor, the people still work and maintain their land like a hundred years ago. Therefore it is inefficient and the work is hard plus the income is low. How can one send their children to school on an empty stomach is a sentence which is heard a lot. If the development in agriculture would increase, there would be more food with less effort. Due to that children will not have to help their parents anymore to gain enough food, and will have the time to go to school.

A solution for the unawareness in the villages mentioned by many of the respondents, would be an awareness program in the village about the importance of education. If there is a specific problem, it could help to go door by door, to make the people aware. If it is an economic problem, the government or NGO's can come with a solution to help improve and sustain. If the society/community comes together for awareness, they should talk about: what are the rights of the children, what they deserve, what could children do if they have education. PSD Nepal could play a vital role in the set up and leading of events like these. Especially for the villages in which they already participate in sustainable development.

Next to awareness the schools are lacking in attracting students and to make them fond of going to school and eager to learn. To attract the children to school this could be done with swings, and toys to play with. There should be more teaching materials to make education more effective and attractive.

The school management should be good and aware of the situations in and around their schools. They should be able to bring in good things to make a good environment, to make parents aware and to have good teachers. So that in the end the kids get the idea: my school is so much fun and so good I want to back tomorrow. PSD Nepal should be able to manage and help with all these things and to increase the interests of the children and the parents as well.

## **Recommendations**

As it is with every research so is it with this one as well, there are some limitations. For further research some recommendations will be given.

Due to time and money this research was done only in two schools per village and only in two different districts. But in Nepal there is a big cultural diversity from Buddhist to Hindu, with many variations and other religions, and there are numerous ethnic groups associated with location and religious-cultural systems. Because of this varied mix in cultures the perceptions towards education and educational outcomes fluctuates. Therefore it is not possible to make general conclusions for a big area. There are fifty-two districts in Nepal and also within districts the results may vary. So even if the research would have been done in more districts it would still be difficult to generalize results for bigger areas. Therefore it is recommended to do a small research with interviews with a topic list in every village before deciding when, where and how to give aid.

By interviewing different stakeholders before giving aid, there can be made a priority list for aid. This is recommended since in Harmi and Meghauri the negative effect of not having this list was stated. Some volunteers in Harmi were building a new classroom while the classroom of the group who came the year before they did, was still not finished. If good preparations had been made the existing building would have been finished instead of not completing a second one.

In Meghauri faith wanted for the volunteers to work very hard and they did finish their building after a six weeks of hard work. But instead of solving the overcrowded classes a bigger and more serious problem was discovered. By randomly interviewing people it was discovered that acid had been found in the fresh water well in the middle of the school yard. The poisonous water from the well made more people sick than the new room could provide lessons to students. The money that was raised for the project had already been spend on bricks and other building materials, if there had been done some research in advance both problems would have been discovered and dealt with.

In this research the districts and the schools where the research was done, were chosen by the NGO; PSD Nepal. Due to this fact the data can be biased. To prevent this kind of bias from happening, it is advised to let the researcher choose the districts and or the schools themselves. This kind of bias can also be solved by choosing random respondents for the research.

Another factor which might have biased the data is the language barrier. Since the research was based on interviews this was inevitable. Within a few months it is impossible to manage the Nepali language good enough to let the researcher from abroad do the interviews without a translator. To prevent the language barrier to cause bias it is recommended to let the research be done by a researcher who speaks fluently Nepali.

Because of the language barrier it was chosen not to use a questionnaire. Since this form of research can save a lot of time, effort and money it is recommended to start a trial pre-research with a questionnaire. The questions of the questionnaire should be based on the topic list of the interview. Profits from this form of research is that more people at once can be reached so all the different opinions regarding problems, solutions and aid can be discovered. This can improve the sustainability of the development and makes sure the most important issues will be addressed for giving aid.

*If you would like to read the full report, get a hand on the used references or the topic list, or discuss the work you can contact the author via email: [n.elijzen@student.utwente.nl](mailto:n.elijzen@student.utwente.nl)*

To subscribe to the PSD Connect, please send an email to [psdnepal@mail.com.np](mailto:psdnepal@mail.com.np) with the word "subscribe" in the subject line. If you do not wish to receive our newsletter anymore, please return this note with "unsubscribe" in the subject line.