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Year 8 - No. 1 March 2013

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 September 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 and give you an outlook what you can expect from PSD in 2013. 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

- On the 23rd and 24th of February 2013 the Early childhood Association (ECA) India organized the 2nd ECA conference. Bishnu participated on his own behalf for PSD Nepal in order to get informed about new trends and developments as well as raising awareness for PSD Nepal's work on an international level. He presented on the topic "The community challenge - coaching teachers and involving families". Furthermore he listened to international guest- speakers presenting on the topic of 'Early Childhood Education and Development'. He gave a 3 hour interactive workshop about "Involving volunteers in Early Childhood Development" and "The importance of Environmental Education" at Podar school, Mumbai, where great networking possibilities arose and he connected with many like minded organizations and people. Overall this is a very fruitful and beneficial program, which gives people to share their work and connect to people who share similar mindsets.
- On the 16th and 17th of March, Bishnu will travel to Malaysia and Singapore in order to present at the International Conference of the Montessori Association of Malaysia (Montessori Forum). The topic will be "Socializing children with special needs through nature education". He will further hold workshops at three different schools and visit several centers in Malaysia and Singapore serving children with special needs and exchange experiences with the children and teachers. Moreover there will be meetings with the National Association of Early Childhood Care and Education Malaysia (NAECCCEM) and the Association of Early Childhood Educators Singapore (AECES), in order to discuss a possible collaboration between Nepal and Malaysia as well as Nepal and Singapore.
- Finally Bishnu will travel to Washington D.C., United States in April to present the paper "Learning from Mother Nature" in the Institute for Global Education Diplomacy organized by Association for Childhood Education International (ACEI) at George Town University. During his stay in the States he will meet Global Children Fund (GCF) officials and representatives of other organizations for networking and discussing possible future co-operations.
- Also Mohan is traveling for private reasons to Australia for a period of one month. He has set up several business meeting concerning possible co-operations and partnerships in Canberra, Australia.
- PSD is happy to announce that after a one year break we can again welcome a number of

Aberdeen University medical students to Nepal. They will support local Primary Healthcare centers over a period of two weeks and facilitate health check ups in rural areas as well as supporting for Health Camp. We hope to continue this cooperation without a break for many years to come. Furthermore PSD is glad to welcome UK students from Bristol, Oxford, Glasgow and Birmingham for the summer projects to Nepal.

- Furthermore, Paul Loebbert, a German intern studying project management in the Netherlands is currently supporting us at the head office in Kathmandu. After his five- months- stay in Nepal he will go on a 6 weeks mission to raise awareness and find possible partnerships in Germany and the Netherlands. Next to him there are a number of national and international interns and volunteers supporting PSD and preparing the busy summer period.
- If you are interested in the content of the presentations and workshops given in India, Malaysia, Singapore and the US feel free to send us an email, we will be glad to provide this information. Moreover if you have suggestions, contacts or connections to set up meetings in the countries mentioned above, please let us know, we worship every possibility we can get to raise PSD's international profile. At this point we will not miss to mention the great support we received from Loren Weybright in the beginning of this year. His expertise and networking opened great new opportunities for PSD and the fact that we have joined hands together will certainly be a great enrichment for PSD's future work.
- Lastly PSD will celebrate 'International Mud day' as every year at 29th June. This year there are around 20 families, teachers and children from Bold Park School, Australia joining the celebrations in Nepal itself. We want to kindly invite you to join hands: come and experience this exceptional and unique experience with us, local children and teachers as well as other international like minded people. If the journey is not possible for you we want to propose you celebrate Mud Day at your own home community. It is a day full of fun and excitement which carries on a great Nepali tradition. For more information please contact us in time!

Reflection from 2012 Summer Volunteers

By Prava Rai (Imperial College of Longon)

After months of fundraising for a school in rural Nepal for the construction of classrooms, it was finally time for us to head off to Nepal to Lamjung where we would get live in the school for five weeks. A team of 6 students from Project Nepal society of Imperial College London headed off to Nepal. After a full day of intensive course in Nepali language and culture in the hotel we went for sight-seeing around Kathmandu. The next day early morning we headed off to Lamjung, a seven hour bumpy bus journey from Kathmandu! When we finally arrived at the bus stop in Lamjung called Bhotewdar we discovered that the school was another 2 hour trek uphill. Needless to say we were exhausted from this long journey but there was a lovely surprise for us when we finally arrived at the school. Children lined up in rows, the school teachers, some village people greeted us with clapping, cheering and singing, tikas and malas. It was a very humbling sight and certainly lessened our exhaustion. Then began our volunteering duties at school.



The next day, we met the children in their classes, years 8, 9 and 10 whom we would be teaching English conversation. Then we had a look at the construction site which was an extension of the school where a library and a computer room were to be built. Two of the classrooms would be funded by the money we raised in London. Our daily routine was teaching the kids in the morning and helping with the building of the classrooms during the day. In the evenings, we played football, Frisbee and other games with the school and village children. It was a once in a lifetime experience to immerse ourselves in the Nepalese way of living and the culture. Everyone treats you like family calling you dai and bhai for brother and didi and baini for sister. We were often invited to spend the night in one of the student or teachers' house where we got a real glimpse of what living in rural Nepal is really like. The rooms that they stayed in was very basic made out of mud and bricks, a far cry from the luxurious homes in London. The food they serve us is fresh from the fields or the animals they keep. One day we had the most rare opportunity to behold a chicken



ourselves and have it for dinner.

The scenery everywhere were breath-taking with never ending hills and majestic rivers covering most parts of the country, sometimes with glimpse of the beautiful and world famous mountains such as the Annapurna and the Fishtail! Over the course of five weeks, we along with the building team managed to complete the base layer of the school building and the pillar foundations for the upper floor. The headmaster of the school will keep us updated with the progress of the building which will be completed by the start of the next academic year. The school organised us a farewell ceremony with their cultural dance performances and thank you speeches by the village committee members, teachers and ourselves. The day of the departure was an emotional day for everyone. The school children came to bid us goodbye, some of them in tears and asking us if we are coming to visit them again. Some of the team members were in tears because we had grown so attached to the village during our stay there. With promises to call them once we arrive in London and goodbyes we get on our bus to Kathmandu.

By Ellen Jodson (Cambridge University)

I volunteered for two months this summer with PSD Nepal in Shree Rastriya Primary School of Ujjwalnagar. My first impressions were how wonderfully welcoming all the people in the village were; the family I stayed with, who took amazing care of me, the teachers at the school who were always willing to help, and neighbours, who invited me over for tea or dinner and were always interested to talk to me, despite the language barrier!



When I arrived it was the start of the school year, and so there was a lot of administration work going on at the school; I found this time really useful to get to know the school and the teachers and how things worked. The school takes children from nursery to class five, although they are hoping to expand their capacity by building extra classrooms. Most of the children are from low-caste landless families in Ujjwalnagar, and attendance at school is poor. Normally, the school day starts around ten with assembly and a short exercise routine, before classes begin; the classes run until four with a break in the middle of the day. While I was there, however, the weather was so hot that the school day started several hours earlier; the classrooms are equipped with fans, but the load-shedding in Nepal, whereby areas have electricity at different times of the day, means that the fans cannot always be on. I initially started volunteering in English lessons, working with the permanent English teacher to try and improve the children's pronunciation and vocabulary. It was challenging to communicate with the children due to the language barrier but they were always really willing to engage and took particular delight in activities like naming animals or reciting numbers faster than I could write them on the board! They loved to play, with football and dancing games being particular



favourites.

However, my time helping with lessons was cut short by the Nepal bandh (strike), so I had to look for other ways in which I could contribute to the community. Furthermore I helped the headmaster with designing and ordering of an exercise book, pencils, pencil sharpeners and erasers for the school. From speaking with teachers around the area I became aware that there were many social problems in the Ujjwalnagar area, such as lack of education about sanitation and



healthcare, money management, and environmental conservation. To that end, we ran an education programme with local experts speaking on all the topics, and although there were some problems with the timing of the speeches, it did result in several people visiting the bank to discuss saving, and hopefully had a positive impact in other areas as well. I also had the opportunity to attend many school and village meetings, as well as visiting

other areas of Chitwan, which is an amazingly beautiful place.

After seeing that the children have their meals at home very far apart and often nothing to eat at school, and that their attendance in nursery and Class 1 was very poor, we decided that we would commence a snacks programme, whereby the teachers would buy and distribute puffed and beaten rice to the two lowest classes part way through the school day, and it appears that since this has commenced the school has seen a real improvement in attendance and concentration. I am excited to keep supporting this project and hope that next year also funding may be secured from other charities. My time in Nepal was an absolutely incredible experience, made so by the hospitality, the generosity, and the dedication of all the people I had the privilege to meet and get to know, and I am forever grateful to them.

Learning from Mother Nature **By Deepak Aryal, and Bishnu H. Bhatta**

Shree Himalaya Higher Secondary School, in the small village of Gitanagar is located in Nepal's rural Terai area in the touristic hotspot area of the Chitwan district, 120 km southwest of Kathmandu.



In this remote area, life has been heavily influenced the winter. The sun hardly came through the thick layer of fog so that plants did not grow and also human and animals were shutting down large parts of their activities. When finally the sun was able to create humidity the atmosphere turned warm and damp and , in one dark night of January, it rained gently after a dry season of almost three months. The next morning was different from the usual. The fog could not block the warm rays of the sun any longer so life could finally start turning back to normal. As spring often does it brought hope and life back to the community and the children, along with the smiles on their faces, we could also see the flowers coming back to life. How our moods in life are influenced by nature is a great phenomenon, I reckon.

The flowers in the school garden got water from the rain, warmth from the sun, but still they were in need of manure and care. They desperately needed nutrition to grow strong and healthy. Further new seasonal flowers were to be planted after preparing the flower beds. The class teachers of Nursery, Kidergarden and standard one took the students out in the garden to teach them about the importance of warmth, water and manure in plant life as they tried to integrate the elan and motivation of the children and the change they could feel in their own bodies to learn about the life cycle. The classroom environment and the pages of their science books can not uncover the hidden secrets of nature and make the impression the same way you experience it in a spring garden after a long hard winter. The eyes of the children have to be trained to read the Great Book of Nature first- hand and their minds have to be wide open with all senses in order to let in the beautiful impressions of the world. Therefore, grasping the opportunity of the change in weather and using the children's enthusiasm for learning and being outside our teachers managed to take lively classes outside in the school garden.



The teacher of grade standard one, Dhruva Parajuli led the children to the compost dumping site at the western corner of the school. He showed him how rubbish in course of time gets decayed in the ditch. They could see how plants and old paper gradually turn black as heat is generated along with moisture. "By letting leaves, grass and other natural rubbish decay in natural process or burning them." She said, "We can nourish new plants and create new life from the old."

The teachers had asked the children to bring a packet of manure from their home for the flowers. Most of them have kept cows, buffaloes, goats or chickens. Their dung is used in the fields as manure. "Rupesh, what is in your plastic bag?", "Manure, Miss!" he answered. "Where is it from?", the teacher asked. "It is a mixture of cows, buffaloes and goats' wastes. My parents keep them for milk, meat and the manure." The teacher turned to Bibek, who had also a bag of manure in his hand. "Why do we use manure in the field, Babu?" "It makes the flowers bigger, the leaves greener and the plants taller. It is as useful to plants as meat and milk to us." It is amazing how children learn from their everyday life at home and at school have the possibility to share their knowledge with their classmates.



While the children were digging and planting the flowers, they happened to see a long creature. Then they started shouting, "Snake! Snake!!!" The teacher approached them at once but found that it was not a snake, just an earthworm. When the children wanted to kill it, as they thought it is poisonous, the teacher explained them that earthworms have one of the greatest responsibilities in nature, which is turning compost to new earth. As she told them to observe them for a while they learned that earthworms were indeed peaceful and tranquil creatures who do no harm to anyone and are not to be hurt. This incident taught them to observe and think before doing any harsh decisions and kill an animal for no reason at all. At another bed, Binisha weeded the marigold plants. They are immune to severe cold, so they were still in full bloom. The teacher asked her its name. The girl answered and added that it is used for worship the gods and decorate doors and gates in Nepal.



"What's buzzing among the flowers?" asked Sagun. "They are bees.", the teacher replied to the class. "Why are they flying about?" someone asked pointing to a flower with a bee. "They need the nectar from the flowers to make honey like humans and animals need at their mother's milk to grow." Bibek tried to shake the branch to drive the bees away. The teacher warned him not to tease them as they sting when they are being threatened and let them continue their work because bees are also very important for plants reproduction, the teacher explained. "Without them there would be no nice colourful flowers at all." The teacher asked them to sit in a circle in three groups. Amrita, Simran and Manish brought a handful of pebbles from the path. Their math's lesson started with the pebbles in the open park. The teacher got Nishan to count ten pebbles. He performed the task excellently. Then she asked him to give five pebbles to Jenny." How many pebbles remained in your hand now?" "Only five, Nishan replied. Then the children started playing with the pebbles relating to mathematics. This one day in the garden shows us how Nature is a facilitator, a stimulus, and moreover, a perfect teacher. It teaches us peaceful coexistent, the fact that death is not final and life needs care and work of many species to be as beautiful as we experience it. In the end we see that after a long cold winter, a warm sunny spring will finally come.

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