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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 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. 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

Life with a family at the Himalayan Foothills

By: Leah Cardy from Birmingham University

Namaste! The past five weeks working alongside PSD Nepal and InterVol have taken us on the most incredible journey, an experience none of us will ever forget. As a group of five from the University of Birmingham, we fundraised for one year to complete the main project for Shree Jyoti Primary School which included building three toilets, teaching English, as well as additional projects such as painting the school and classrooms.

For the duration of our stay we lived with a host family. Their house was set in an isolated area at the foothills of the Himalayas with the most amazing scenery. Despite some initial culture shock, we quickly settled into village life and with the excitement of showering outdoors, to eating Dal Bhat twice a day with our hands, it was a really stimulating experience. Words cannot express the kindness of the family and our counterpart when they took us in and treated us as members of their own family. They taught us about some of their many traditions and offered us a variety of new foods, and I'll never forget Nepalese dances by candlelight at night. Despite the language barrier, we found other ways to bond with the family making it an emotional goodbye. They will always be considered our family.

With some guidance from PSD Nepal, we were given a lot of control about what we taught the children and how to do so effectively. We taught all lessons in English with the help of our counterpart to help translate and taught a variety of subject matters, from English, math, science, art, Nepalese geography, the map of Asia, English culture and geography, and went on nature walks to introduce a concern for the environment. Every child showed an eagerness to learn and participate in activities and constantly provided us with mangos they had shaken down from the trees or flowers! They particularly liked the animal face masks we provided and had fun with a Frisbee and skipping ropes. Their enthusiasm made it easy and a pleasure to teach them.

We immediately started the construction by knocking out the broken toilets. Progress was quick and the stones were re-used to supply the foundations of the pit. We worked closely alongside the skilled labourers after teaching each afternoon to complete the pit and build the walls for the three toilets. The walls were then cemented and painted and pipe work was laid to connect the toilet to the pit. We completed the project with plenty of time to complete other projects like painting the outside of the school and two classrooms. We painted the first classroom a jungle theme, with animals covering the walls. To further reinforce to geography we had taught them, we also painted a world map covering the back wall. The second classroom was painted an underwater theme, with sea creatures covering the walls. Finally, we painted the outside of the school light blue and pink, encouraging student participation by painting their hand prints on the wall. It was no longer just our project; by getting the students involved, it became a collaborative effort. It was messy, but enjoyable for everyone involved!

As well as teaching and construction, this project allowed us to have fun exploring Nepal during the weekends! We visited Pokhara and paraglided at 1500 ft through the Himalayas, bathed and rode elephants, walked through and slept in the jungle at Chitwan National Park, visited Nepal's biggest cave in Bandipur and finally explored the enchanting temples in Kathmandu.

The depth and understanding we gained into the Nepalese way of life made this a once in a lifetime experience. We actively participated in the culture and traditions by interacting directly with the Nepalese people, who couldn't have been more kind to us all and brought us so much joy. We hope our contributions matched even a portion of what they gave to us. We can't thank everyone enough for their kindness and we will never forget the people we met. If you are thinking of doing a similar project, don't hesitate - you will have no regrets!

International Mud Day 2013: An overview of the event

The preparations for IMD 2013 were taking place in Kathmandu where Partnership for Sustainable Development Nepal was preparing transportation for the international visitors, organizing toys for the children and preparing a program schedule for the days to come. Meanwhile, over in Panchkhal, the orphanage management organized to have one rice paddy flooded, prepared enough food for around 160 hungry people and organized items for games in and outside the mud. The June 29th Mud Day event really deserved the name 'International' when 17 Australian teachers, parents and children, five Americans, one German and one Chilean participated. The group took a bus from Kathmandu to the rural village of Panchkal where about 150 orphaned children were awaiting their arrival. The orphanage was the locale for the event, buzzing with children running around and locals coming to see who the bus had brought into their tiny village.

The youngest orphans welcomed the group with the traditional orange flower chains. After the welcoming ceremony, the master of the ceremony gave everyone a tour through the orphanage to paint the most accurate picture of how the children and youth are living together. He showed the guests to the kitchen where the cooks were preparing mutton for lunch, followed by the rest of the orphanage. During the tour, Bishnu introduced several orphans, explaining their background and how long they had been living in the orphanage. The oldest man was 38 years old, and there were several boys and girls with Down syndrome or other physical and mental handicaps. It was amazing to see the community of both healthy and special needs children living so close together, no differently than would brothers and sisters.



After the tour, we were all starving and the plans for the day called for a rich and nutritious meal, Dhal Baat Tarkari Kukura ko masu (rice with lentil soup, vegetables and chicken). This



traditional meal is consumed by around 95% of Nepal's population twice per day. After the meal, the boys, both Nepali and foreign, gathered for a game of football (aka soccer). Mud dresses and mud goggles were provided so we weren't worried about dirtying our clothes.

Then came the part we had all been waiting for. It was finally time to enter the mud pit and literally get dirty. There was no holding back. Everybody participated in the mud fight and nobody escaped with a clean shirt. Local villagers gathered around the pit to watch, while people were jumping around and wrestling each other in the mud. Soon it was hard to tell the boys from the girls and the adults from the children; it had become a big crowd of mud monsters.

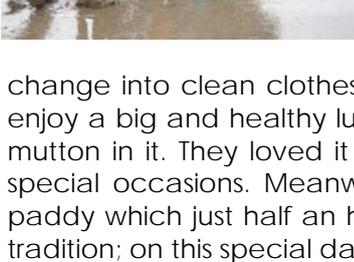


While everyone was playing in the mud, a local pottery maker had taken the topic and interpreted it uniquely. He had brought clay and a spinning wheel and started to make small pots, vases and bowls for the children and adults. He made such memorable gifts for Mud Day 2013.

After about half an hour Bishnu and Sharad retook their roles as masters of the ceremony and initiated an hour of games for the children, starting with a 100 meter race, a frog jump race, crawl race and three-legged race. Once everyone was exhausted, we decided to play something calmer. This game was a coin search game in which a coin was tossed into the mud pit and 15 boys had to try to find it, searching with only their hands. Everyone was ecstatic when a young boy from the orphanage found the coin and won the game!



We followed this up with a game of mud football for women. It was a unique and enjoyable site to watch them chasing the ball with loud laughter and it seemed to be a very special to them too, since they usually work hard planting rice in the fields. After many had finished playing in the mud, we were all allowed to swim in the local pool which had just been filled out with water for Mud Day.



Finally, after more than two hours of mud play it was time to hop into the showers and change into clean clothes again and for the orphanage's children to enjoy a big and healthy lunch. They enjoyed the same Dhal Baat with mutton in it. They loved it since they usually only get to eat meat on special occasions. Meanwhile, five women were planting rice in the paddy which just half an hour before served as playground. This is the tradition; on this special day rice is planted.



After everybody had cleaned themselves again and had a small snack, we led the group to the recreation room where an orchestra of young girls and boys had prepared to share some traditional Nepali music. The concert overcame every expectation when the young girls and boys showcased their musical talents. After only one song, the first woman entered the 'dance floor' and showed everyone how to dance. Some brave Australian and American men joined in and soon the dance floor was crowded. Toward the end, a Nepali girl from the U.S. regaled the audience with a violin performance everyone would be sure to remember.

The final point in the program was another highlight for the children from the orphanage. Each one of them got the chance to choose a toy under the condition that they do it blindfolded. They couldn't wait for their turns and tried to develop strategies to score the item they favoured most. In the end everybody was happy and left with a new toy to enjoy. Also the Australian children participated and earned awesome



games and toys including a memory card game displaying Nepal's bird, a very special gift to take home and remember this day in Pachkal.



When the time came to say goodbye, everyone, especially the orphans and children from the Kathmandu school were very upset to leave and end a day filled with such fun, laughter and presents. I am sure some are already counting the 364 days until next year's Mud Day, hopefully with as much international participation as this year's.

IMD, Chitwan, June 29, 2013

International Mud Day, which was established as agro-culture in Nepal, was organized by PSD Nepal, Kathmandu and DEST Nepal, Champanagar, Chitwan and celebrated here with a formal program accompanied by various physical activities. Several government officials, 10 schools children and teachers as well as the press and TV journalists, area police force, organizations, farmers, women's groups, and traditional music bands were invited to observe the celebration.

After the brief introduction session, chief guest and five children rode on an elephant. The elephant gently launched into a flat, well-prepared muddy plot. It paused in the centre, and then the guest and the children slipped from the elephant into the mud while Durga Prasad Bhatta danced upon the elephant for a moment and then jumped off with excitement, quickly thereafter beginning to plant the rice seedlings amid tremendous applause and beautiful melody of traditional music.



Soon the plot turned into a 'battle field'. Contestants from different wards and schools played football and tug of war. Hundreds of spectators on the road encouraged them by shouting and applauding. Even the onlookers could not be safe from the 'muddy attacks' of the 'army' in the mud.

They smeared the mud like curd all over each other and danced together to the lively traditional music played by a band dressed up in typical Nepalese costume. Women sang typical Ropain (planting) songs in a long note that reminded everyone of the old days of farming. There was a new competition for women this year, a planting competition. The women stood in a row with a bundle of seedlings. Each of them was assigned a specific width to be planted. The one who could cover the longest distance within the time allotted was declared the winner.

As the festivities came to a close, the Chief Guest awarded the winners of various activities prizes like footballs and volleyballs, while the Chairman offered Tika (red mark) on their foreheads. Some farmers prepared snacks in a shed. Beaten rice,



curd and sugar, which are typical snacks for this occasion, were ready to be served. All of them stood in queues for their turn and enjoyed the mixture. We had concluded Mud Day 2013, and are already looking forward to the next one!

Learning from Mother Nature

by Bishnu H. Bhatta and Deepak Aryal

Rainy weather: blessing or curse?

This year broke the previous records for monsoon rains in both amount and duration. Paddy farmers were now transplanting the paddy seedlings in the soil but many riverside towns and renowned holy spots in the west were reported to have dissolved in the flooding. Hundreds of people, animals and birds have been victims of floods and landslides. Thus, the rainy season brings both delight and tears to the Nepalese people.



Children are educated on natural science

We think our school children must become familiar with and understand the earth's natural phenomena. To begin this education process, on July 27th, two other teachers, Hari Prasad and Tara Dawadi, and I organized a bus trip with 34 students to the Narayani river.

Enthusiasm for outing

All the children came up to school at 11am in their school uniforms. While they brought little bags each containing a note book, a pencil, a water bottle and even some home-made snacks, we brought a map of Asia and a topographical map of Nepal. Everyone was fully prepared for the day's activities. The students' eyes were twinkling with merriment as it was the first time they had ever been on a bus trip to a riverside in the rainy season. We all boarded a mini bus at the school gate. This time we had enough seats so no one needed to stand. We began heading towards our destination: the Narayani River, about 12 kilometers north of the school.

Diversions of Nature

We eventually arrived at the river side temple, the backyard of which overlooks the beautiful landscape of the green hills, from which it seems the Narayani River emerges and flows into the plain. The children gathered together over the horizontal iron railings, capturing the landscape in their minds. They gazed at the river in amazement, watching the diversions of nature.



Size does not matter, only height

The teachers asked all the children to sit down on the floor, rolled out a map of Asia and asked them to find Nepal on it. Children in turn came up to locate their country. Before that they were taught how to find directions in the use of a map. Then they were to find out the neighboring countries and their location from Nepal.



“Ranjit, can you show where the Narayani originates from?” He followed river line with his index finger to the north and said, “From Ganesh Himal (mountain).”

The children looked at the map and turned to see the real Narayani River flowing behind them.

The Narayani exports soil

We spent about two hours in the temple premises, and then decided to make the children feel the river water themselves. Pujan picked a lump of sand and asked, “Why is this so dark with a few shiny grains?”

“This is known as sand,” the teacher explained, “the rocks have eroded away over time due to the strong current and the tiny particles as sand flow with water. Since most of the mountains of Nepal are made up of igneous rocks, the sand out of which looked dark but a few shiny grains are from



sedimentary rocks.”

There is a tower in the river, which now erects out of the main stream. Some of the children liked to have the river view from the top of it. They climbed the pillar and enjoyed the surging waves of the river.

“Their destination is the Bay of Bengal, India,” the teacher spoke, “They are returning where they came from. I mean the monsoon clouds from the Bay of Bengal bring rain to Nepal in the rainy season that causes floods.”

“I wish we had a large boat to sail to India together” Samel imagined.

Nature: the perfect classroom

The trip has certainly broadened the horizons of their knowledge and experience. It is a great opportunity for them to get into deep conversation with one another about what comes along. During the five hour outing they are able to attend to most of the subjects except for mathematics. The teachers, side by side, seem tactful to take advantage of the situation. If the attitude on the part of teachers continues like this, I’m sure, the day is not far from us when Nature as a whole is



unanimously accepted as a perfectly well equipped classroom.

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