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NAMASTE!!

Hello Everyone,

This past month we have had to say goodbye to many wonderful volunteers and have welcomed an influx of amazing newcomers. The beginning of the summer is also the traditional start of the monsoon season, so it seems fitting that the flow of helping hands has increased!

As we finally saw the end of *bandhs* (public strikes) that unfortunately disrupted our weekend schedules, we were still able to get together and celebrate. There was Buddha's stupendous birthday, a dinner-party on the scenic rooftop of Hotel Excelsior, a successful Medical Camp in Chitwan, and guided tour of Budhanilkantha by the wonderful kids from Snowland Ranag School. All thanks mustly go to the generous heart of Shereen Berrahma, an intensely committed volunteer since day one, for organising that last one!

Featured in this month's newsletter are the volunteer stories of Felix Stengel, Björgvin Porstensteinn, and Melanie Brenneckie. Also, we provide good ideas on what our future volunteers could bring in our 'Wish-list' section for all our various projects and a great recipe on the bag of wonders that is the Momo.

To find out what will be happening in the Kathmandu Valley and the trips we're organising over the coming months, check out the final pages.

Additionally you can click over and have a look at Projects Abroad Nepal's Country Blog <http://www.mytripblog.org/pg/groups/3014/Nepal> to read about the latest goings-on in Nepal!

Enjoy ☺

Projects Abroad Team, Nepal

Medical Camp in Chepang School, Chitwan



On 5th June three Projects Abroad staff, six volunteers and six local doctors and nurses from Chitwan Teaching Hospital attended a project in a rural school where all 180 children were given a routine medical check-up.

The children at the school come from remote villages in the mountains that surround Chitwan, the majority coming from the Chepang community. If it weren't for the funding provided by Projects Abroad and other organisations these children would otherwise not receive an education. The money donated goes towards providing the children with a place to stay, food, clothing, education, and, most recently, medical treatment.

Most of the children never had the opportunity to receive medical check-ups. The day began with the children talking to the nurses and then their medical history being recorded in personal files. The children are able to keep these documents so that if they need further medical treatment or future check-ups their medical record will be clearer.



After the paperwork, the children were weighed and had their height measured by Felix, this was then recorded by Kelsey, and then finally Nicole used a graph to record the children's measurements. This information was then used to show whether the child was in the correct percentile for their age. The results showed that only a handful of the children were the correct height and weight for their age, many being a lot smaller and lighter than they should have been. This graph proved very useful as if the child is measured again in the future it will be easy to track their progress.

The next stage of the camp was a physical exam carried out by Dr. Alia, who listened to the children's chests and carried out similar routine procedures whilst Daisy recorded the findings.

Finally the Nepali doctors talked with the children about whether they had any medical problems or symptoms. If they did, the doctors then diagnosed their problem and prescribed the necessary medication.

While the children were going through these stages, the other children were taken one class at a time to a hand-washing lesson. Cara and Jennifer, along with a Nepali translator, taught the children the significance of washing their hands in the correct manner as to prevent the spread of bacteria. They demonstrated this in a very inventive way, by mixing red dye with a pot of moisturising cream and then spreading this on the children's hand and having them shake their partner's hand. Once they had done this they held up their hands to show how the dye had passed on from one to another. And at the end of the class each child was given a flannel and a bar of soap.



Once the program had ended Daisy and Rebecca went to a local pharmacy with the record files of the children who needed medicines and additional treatments or referrals. Using the money given from Daisy's local Belgian council, the medicine was bought and then passed on to the children individually. Money was also left behind to

pay for their medical tests, such as scans and x-rays, that some of the children needed and were taking place the following week.

The majority of the diagnoses were for minor skin diseases, worms, and respiratory problems; however, there were a few cases that were more serious, such as diseases affecting the spine, heart, and eyes.

Projects Abroad had a major part to play in the setting up of this Medical Camp and the continuation of the monitoring of these children should mean that any potential future problems should be found and treated before they develop in to something more serious. We would like to thank the doctors, the staff, and the volunteers especially for putting up with the scorching Chitwan heat!



Happy Buddha Jayanti

On the night of the full moon in May, which this year landed on 17th, Nepal celebrated the birthday of Buddha. Every full moon is a holy day in Buddhism but the full moon Vaisakh/Baisakh (April/May) was special not only because it was a festival to celebrate Buddha's birthday, but it was also a commemoration of Buddha gaining enlightenment as well as Nirvana.

At the Boudha Stupa in Kathmandu, one of the holiest Buddhist sites in the world, people gathered to commemorate this sacred day. Circling clock-wise around the towering stupa, we climbed up onto one of the many panoramic rooftop cafés for a magnificent view of the proceedings below. We looked out towards the magnificent stupa, adorned with streaks of prayer flags and multi-coloured lights; one of those nights you just know you're in a special land.

As people walked around the stupa, spinning prayer wheels and releasing the prayers out into the world, they would stop every three steps to get on their knees and then lie down before walking again.



Volunteer Stories

From Iceland to Nepal by Björgvin Freyr

All I knew about Nepal when I first came here was from Hergés Tintin in Tibet. I knew it had big mountains, the Himalayas, and I knew that they had Stupas where you should always walk on the left side of, and, of course, that they had the mysterious Yeti.

The drive from the airport doubled my knowledge of the nation. I soon figured that there was no reason a cow should not be on the middle of the road, that a green traffic light meant "go" and a red traffic light also seems to mean "go"; it was all new to me since I had only travelled in Europe before and once to Cuba. Projects Abroad took good care of me the first weekend and I met a few of the other volunteers and felt comfortable in this new environment. After a weekend in Thamel at Hotel Excelsior, Caroline took me to my host family, but before she did that she warned me that it might be different from what I had gotten used to back home. I was curious and whispered to the universe, "I want to have something different, just bring it!" I soon found out that the universe has a weird sense of humour. I was ready for the cold showers, Dal Bhatt in the mornings, neighbours visiting the host family at seven o'clock in the morning, the power cuts, and I was even was ready for the micro-buses, but nothing could have prepared me for the squat toilets. I had to learn how to aim and if my aim wasn't good enough, I would have to clean! And then there was always the risk of running out of toilet paper since the roll seems to get smaller really fast if your aim is off, but after a while even the toilet was conquered.

My placement was the Life Development Centre, which is a school for handicapped children; they all took me in right away and everyone seemed to be really fascinated by my blonde hair, so I made friends easily there as well. Back at my host family I lived with a Danish boy and a Belgium girl who both became my good friends quickly; in the evenings we discussed the Dal Bhatt or adventures on the micro-bus, watched DVD's that we most often bought for 30 rupees and just laughed when someone stood up in the cinema where it was filmed, chilling at the rooftop or went to Bouda, where choosing a restaurant was sometimes kind of like a game of Russian roulette – sometimes we got a bad stomach and sometimes not.

Nepal was always getting more and more interesting. Once we met some street kids that the Belgium girl had befriended some weeks before and we decided to give them milkshakes. In the beginning there were only five, but somehow word travelled fast and that ended in 12 milkshakes and around 200 photos. The same happened at the

monkey temple Swayambunath, if I switch the words milkshake with biscuits and street kids with monkeys. We also met a crazy rickshaw driver; he was so cross-eyed that we couldn't understand how he saw anything he was doing. He also laughed like a maniac and was always showing us how good he was at riding the bike with no hands. He was great and we encouraged him to race other rickshaws. After a few races he won and we gave him water, since he seemed to be melting in front of us and paid him generously for this most entertaining rickshaw ride ever.

Since volunteers only stay for a few months at a time, people always come and go; if you meet someone and you become good friends you should always be prepared that they will leave one day or you will leave, and it is always sad to have to say goodbye. But since facebook the world has shrunk and it is easy to get in touch with all newfound friends. Once the Belgium girl left, three new girls and one boy moved into the house with me. They came from all over Europe – one from Wales, one from Holland, one from France, and one from Switzerland. Now we got to get to know Nepal in a new way, through showing it to others. We told them about the quest to find a one rupee bill, I showed them the micro-bus and the way to Thamel. We actually took a little sight seeing tour of Thamel on foot as well; they had to learn that also so there was no harm in that. Also, I took them bungee jumping since that had left me completely in love with Nepal and now that I have left Nepal I really envy them seeing all these things for the first time.

Although I have left Nepal I still have all the memories, the experience, and a few quirks. The other day I was at a supermarket in Denmark and was presented with the price of 600 kroners, my first thought was to say "No, I think 500 is a better price". The experience will stay with me forever and it doesn't matter if it was meeting the monkeys at the monkey temple, mastering the art of getting a good price with a taxi or finding out that when the street kids want water they want it to make it easier to sniff glue; it is all an important experience whether it is good or bad it is always something you learn from and can use some time later. I'm thankful to everyone I met in the last weeks for giving me the experience I got and truly hope that everyone that goes to Nepal will see it the way I have seen it these last few weeks.

Volunteer Donations

Volunteering in itself is always a fantastic way to help people that are less fortunate than ourselves but this month there have been a few volunteers in particular who have contributed further to their placements. The whole team just want to give a special thanks to everyone!!! These contributions are very gratefully received and we hope you realise the amazing difference you are making.

MSPN

Thanks to Sydney Wallach (MSPN, 2 months). She made educational posters teaching about safe sex and the spread of diseases like HIV/AIDS. Special thanks to her because she has left these behind so other volunteers can use them in their placements. Very useful!

CP Centre

Many thanks to sister duo Jenna and Nicole Schellen (CP Centre, 2 weeks) for bringing some great activity books for kids with them. These books are now a proud part of our library for all volunteers to gather inspiration for exercises that encourage a child's creative and also scientific side.

Volunteer weekend

The Snowland kids' tour of Buddhanilkantha

On Saturday, 11th June, the wonderful kids of Snowlands Ranag School took a group of 12 volunteers and staff members to the mountainside temple of Buddhanilkantha, not far from their school. Acting as guides, the children walked us around the historic temple, telling us of its significance, from the most minor of intricacies to the legendary myth behind it. Organized by our volunteer Shereen, who works hard every single day at the school and orphanage, it was a memorable day for both the volunteers and the children.

According to legend, and the children, Buddhanilkantha was once buried beneath the ground until a farmer had one day stumbled upon it. Striking the ground with his hoe, he accidentally struck the statue's toe and as blood seeped out, he knew he had found something sacred. The Buddhanilkantha is one of the most sacred as well as the most unique statue of Vishnu. Here, Vishnu, who has many incarcerations, is shown as Narayan, the creator of life. Narayan is sleeping on a cosmic bed of a multi-headed snake – Ananta. The snake has 11 heads that coil protectively around Narayan, whose 4 hands hold the symbols of Vishnu – a lotus seed, conch shell, a mace, and a chakra disc. The statue itself is forbidden to non-Hindus, but we were able to see its detail even from a short distance. The children also told us that the king cannot step foot into this holy temple for fear of death. An ancient had a dream once where upon entering the temple he died and therefore decided to build a replica in the mountains for his worship.

Not only did the children explain its legendary heritage, they explained to us the intricacies of their culture and religion, from the proper way to worship to naming the gods all the smaller statues hidden in the stones represented. After our tour, the children took us up the mountain to a field where we played and hung out until it was time for lunch back at the Snowlands campus. We were all served a giant platter of Dahl Batt (the very first time for many of them – mainly newcomers!) and afterwards a trip to the Boudha Stupa was in order with a second group of kids.

Shereen's aim of the excursion was to raise enough money to organize a grandiose momo cookout for the kids, which they will be sure to enjoy for a welcome break from Dahl Batt. While for us it was a great experience to learn Nepali history and culture, while also connecting with the great Snowland kids. At the end of the day, it became more and more difficult to say goodbye but there are already plans in motion to return.

Recipe of the Month!

Nepali Vegetable Momo

Ingredients:

Dough for wrappers:

- 5 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 tablespoon oil
- 1 cup water or as required
- Pinch of salt



Filling:

- 3 cups assorted vegetables (spinach, cauliflower, carrot, green peas, daikon, red pepper, green pepper), finely chopped
- 1 cup onion, finely chopped
- 1/2 cup green onion, finely chopped
- 1/2 cup cilantro, chopped
- 1 teaspoon garlic, minced
- 1 teaspoon fresh ginger, minced
- 1/2 teaspoon turmeric
- 1 teaspoon cumin powder
- 3 fresh red chillies, minced
- 1 cup paneer cheese, roughly crushed
- 2 tablespoons clarified butter
- 1/2 teaspoon fenugreek seeds
- 1 tablespoon water-flour mixture (thickening agent)
- Salt to taste

Cooking Instructions:

For stuffing mixture: in a non-stick pan heat clarified butter, splutter fenugreek until it turns dark. Add chopped onions and sauté until just slightly light brown. Add turmeric, garlic, ginger, and chillies. Fry for 30 sec. Put vegetables and stir-fry until slightly soft. Do not over stir-fry the vegetables. Salt and pepper the vegetable mixture. Add cheese, green onions and cilantro, mix well. To solidify the vegetable

mixture, add one tablespoon of flour-water mixture. Mix the mass over until thickened. Transfer the vegetable filling into a bowl. Cover and refrigerate for at least 1 hour to allow cooling.

In a large bowl combine flour, oil, salt and water. Mix well and knead until the dough becomes homogeneous in texture, about 10 minutes. Cover and allow to stand for at least 15 min. Knead well again before making wrappers. Prepare 1 inch diameter dough balls. It is recommended to work with a dozen or so balls at a time to prevent from drying. Take a dough ball, roll between your palms to spherical shape. Dust working board with dry flour. On the board gently flatten the ball with your palm. Then roll out into a 3 inch diameter wrapper. Repeat with the remaining dough balls. Cover with a bowl to prevent from drying.

For packing, hold wrapper on one palm, put on one tablespoon of filling mixture and with the other hand bring all edges together to the centre, while making pleats. Pinch and twist the pleats to ensure the absolute closure of the stuffed dumpling.

Heat up a steamer, oil the steamer rack well. This is critical because it will prevent dumplings from sticking. Arrange uncooked momos in the steamer with some space left between the dumplings. Close the lid, and allow steaming until the dumplings are cooked through, about 10-15 min. Take the dumplings off the steamer, and immediately serve. Alternatively, you can place uncooked dumplings directly in slightly salted boiling water and cook until done, approximately 10 minutes. You may also slightly sauté cooked dumplings in butter before serving. To serve, arrange the cooked momos on a plate dressed with momo achar of your choice.

World News

Death of Sai Baba

For millions of people Sathya Sai Baba was one of the most spiritually influential people in the world providing not only guidance and knowledge but also charity in the form of schools, hospitals and other institutions all across India. Despite having a massive following in Asia, particularly in India, he has devotees from all over the world, including Nepal. His pictures can be seen everywhere, his influence very apparent, therefore it is understandable that his death three weeks ago has sent many Nepali people into mourning. Our thoughts go out to everyone who is grieving at this time.

Sathya Sai Baba

(insert picture)

23rd November 1926- 24th April 2011

“Love all, serve all, help ever, hurt never.”

Wish Lists

Projects Abroad Nepal's volunteers often want to bring items out here for their placements but find it hard to know what the different placements need. We've put together some 'wish lists' for some of the centres and schools to give new volunteers an idea of what is most needed...

Physio Placements

*Theraband
Gym Balls
Exercise Sheets
'Tuffie' wipes*

DMD Centre (8 boys aged 10-18)

*Games
Bubbles/straws
Clothes
Toothbrushes
THEY LOVE
SPIDERMAN!*

Snowland Ranag School (160 kids aged 5-19)

*Notebooks/Crayons
Clothes
Shoes
Balls*

Surya Vinayak English Secondary School

Reading books

Anal Jyoti Boarding School

*Notebooks
Pencils/Sharpener
Eraser
Materials for creative
activities*

Life Development Centre (38 people aged 7-40)

*Clothes
Underwear
Socks
Pens, Crayons, Paints
Pillows
Toothbrushes
Soap*

NRH/MSPN

*Creative Books
Reading material
Clothing
Shoes*

Clark Memorial

*Stationary
English books*

Patan & Bhaktapur CBR

*Wedge Mats
Floor Mats
Bubble wrap
Blankets
Children's clothes
Games/toys/blocks
Folders/Filing
Medicine Balls*

Medical Placements

*If you are coming to
Nepal to do a
Medical Placement
then please
remember your lab
coat!!!*

Friendship/Happy or J & K Houses

*Reading books
Creative materials
Clothes
Shoes*

Dear supporters and well-wishers of MSPN,

Today, we would like to appeal for your support for the children residing with us. In our rehabilitation home, we care for up to 18 children who are affected by HIV. We are very grateful for the support we already receive from our well-wishers; however we have a current specific need for donations of clothing. Most of our children are from poor backgrounds, and thus have very few possessions. It is crucial for their well-being, hygiene and self-esteem that our children have adequate clothing.

We would like to appeal to you for donations of any old children's clothes that you and/or your family no longer require. Shorts, trousers, dresses, shoes, sleepwear; anything that you can spare would be greatly appreciated by our children.

You can send donations via the following address:

**MSPN - The New Life Centre
Tikhedeval Lalitpur
House number 870
GPO Box 25012
Kathmandu, Nepal
Contact us on: +977 9841215333 (Mobile) or +977 1 5524112**

You may also wish to visit our website: www.mspnepal.wordpress.com

OR...if you would like to fundraise before you leave for Nepal then we can help you to buy things for your placement whilst you are out here!

What to do in Kathmandu??...

July 1 - 3

Trip to Chitwan National Park

July 8 & 9

July 8th: Rooftop dinner-party

July 9th: Soccer game