Ten years in Nepal

EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES THROUGH EDUCATION

MARK PINOLI

2011 - 2021

LOGGED ON Foundation

Cover photos: *(top) a class being held in a computer lab that we installed at a secondary school in the Tanahun District; (bottom) children in a tent classroom at one of the Dolakha District schools we helped after the 2015 earthquake.*

The only way to do great work **is to love what you do.**

Steve Jobs

Ves Raj Banstola is a teacher at the Shree Bhumeshwor School in the village of Astam, the site of our first project. Knowing little about computers when I first met him in 2011, we worked with Ves Raj over many years to build his digital literacy skills so he could maintain the Astam Computer Centre. He became the school's computer teacher and in 2014, he was appointed our Manager of Education and Training. The skills he developed allowed him to confidently deliver support and training programs to teachers from other schools where we provided educational aid. He is an exceptionally talented teacher and coupled with his IT skills, he excelled at building the confidence and computer competency skills of his fellow teachers.

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The Logged On Foundation
A registered Australian charity
(2011 - 2020)

Introduction

Ten years in Nepal helping to empower rural communities through education showed me how generosity is a fundamental part of who we are. I could never have imagined the positive impact this work would have on everyone involved and the many friendships that would be made whilst working beside Nepali people to find ways of providing a quality education for their children.

I'm often ask what was the crucible moment that altered my direction towards philanthropy in the Himalayas? Without complicating the answer, I'd often reply that it began with my first trip to Nepal in 1997. But it really started in my late teens when I developed a fascination with Eastern philosophy and religion and its practice in South Asia. That interest led me to study philosophy and social science at university and I promptly travelled to India and Nepal after graduation to spend six months predominately in foothills of the Himalayas. An area rich in Buddhist and Hindu traditions, I would often follow pilgrimage trails to temples and Gompas at higher altitudes to observe and sometimes participate in the rituals and practices that unfolded in this rarefied environment.

For over two decades, I have returned numerous times to travel and trek through Northern India, Tibet and Nepal. I deeply appreciated my sojourns in the villages, the tenderness and generosity of the people, surrounded by terraced fields, goats and cattle, rushing streams, set against the backdrop of snow-capped peaks of the tallest mountains in the world. Always greeted with "Namaste," with a folding of hands, the layers of rich customs and traditions, the sanctity of home and family is so poignant that it makes visitors feel welcomed and at-home. The many teachers and travellers I have introduced to Nepal over the last decade always spoke fondly of their experiences and expressed their eagerness to return with friends and family.

I cherished the moments of equanimity that came from walking in the natural beauty of the mountains and participating in village life. But the longer I stayed, the more the worries and suffering of the people became visible to me and the more uneasy I felt spending my leisure times amongst them as an affluent foreigner.

I decided to look into helping some way, possibly volunteering on a grass-root project in Nepal for a few years. Particularly in education because I would often be asked to donate to local schools and be invited into classrooms where children had no desks and would be sitting on mats on the floor. Many of the parents I spoke to didn't want their children to live the difficult rural life that they had. They wanted a better future for their children, a sentiment that I think is shared by parents everywhere.

I never entertained the possibility of starting a charity which was a significant undertaking. But as providence would have it, that changed when a friend of mine, Barry Broomfield, showed me his photo of the 'computer lab' in a Nepalese village school he had been supporting for a number of years through a sister school relationship. What I saw was a dilapidated classroom with several computers that were old, in bad condition, and with no internet connection. I didn't think they would get much educational 'mileage' from what they had.

***Photo**: I'm visiting a school in the Gorkha District that was destroyed in the 2015 earthquake to discuss our aid project with the Principal (on the right).*

Our programs have helped communities to create positive learning environments for children and individuals from the most marginalised groups.

Photo: *Bishow Adhikari and I are leading one of our tour groups through Lower Mustang near the Muktinath pilgrimage site (courtesy of Jason Dickie).*

The school, located in the village of Astam at the foothills of the Annapurna mountain range, was ahead in its thinking about how computers could make a positive impact in their children's education in the same way that it had in more affluent countries. Computer science at the time was not part of the Nepalese curriculum, power supplies in villages were unreliable at best, there was no internet, good quality computers were very expensive by local standards, and technical support was only available in the cities. The Astam teachers were courageous in their attempts to bring computers to the school, especially in the context of rural life and the general lack of resource in government schools. So, I decided that I would help by buying the equipment they needed to successfully run computer classes and to spend a few months in the village to help the teachers learn how to use technology in the classroom.

Around the same time I made that decision, I read the book *Leaving Microsoft to Change the World*. A story about John Wood, a Microsoft's executive who, after a trip to Nepal, made the decision to walk away from his lucrative career to create the non-profit organisation, *Room to Read*. Since its humble beginnings establishing libraries to promote education, the organisation has given many millions of children across the developing world the lifelong gift of education through a variety of programs.

The book inspired me and the idea to start my own charity snowballed. Before setting foot into Nepal to start the computer lab project, we established a registered charity called the Logged On Foundation and organised our first fundraising event. A replication of a simple name that reflected what our work was about - 'Room to Computer' didn't sound quite right. I'm a social anthropologist by training, with a good understanding of Himalayan cultures, I have a passion for digital technologies with software engineering experience, teaching experience as a university tutor, and an intrepid traveller with a fledgling interest in philanthropy. What better way of combining all my skills and interests and applying them to help communities in an area of the world that I had grown to love?

Technology has transcended cultures, races and economies to become a driving force in the lives of people across the world. At the time of starting Logged On, I became aware of the substantial body of work and development efforts around using computer technologies in education and in closing the digital divide – a gap that existed between rural and urban areas, and on a global scale, between developed and developing countries. Governments and UN agencies were ramping up efforts in developing policies and programs to give underserved communities access to technologies that would open up the flow of information and global interconnectedness, which has been understood as a key to accelerating education as well as human progress.

I felt confident in formally registering a charity that would focus on computers in education and, with the full support of the Astam school and community leaders, we completed the installation of a computer centre eight months later. I also spent three months in Astam leading up to the official opening to help establish the facility and to provide technical and education support. I returned to the school numerous times over the years to deal with the many frustrating technical issues, fine-tune our approach, pick the right equipment that was robust enough for a rural environment, and to learn from the community what their needs were in relation to their children's education and the use of the centre for the benefit of the community. Overall, we spent a few years refining our approach to aiding communities in Nepal and then incrementally began helping nearby schools. The work expanded into nearby Districts and grew to include the successfully completion of a total of 67 separate projects, spread across 31 communities/villages in eight Districts.

Over the years, I was able to see first-hand the potential technology had for transforming education in rural schools and how many of the challenges faced by communities wanting access to computers and the internet could be overcome. I was also able to understand how our work helped to achieve this transformation and lower the barriers which prevented children from receiving a quality education.

Our technology enabled education programs have made an impact on teaching and learning outcomes and these programs have been an important part of our work. But we also understood that multiple approaches were needed to help children succeed at school. Our programs expanded over the years to include teacher training programs, supplying educational resources, awarding student scholarships, training and community capacity building programs, health projects, and school construction and infrastructure programs. Overall, our programs have helped communities to create positive learning environments for children and individuals from the most marginalised groups.

2015 was a particularly difficult year after Nepal was struck by an earthquake that flattened entire villages leaving hundreds of thousands of people homeless. It was an honour for me personally to have been involved in helping communities to recover from this terrible tragedy. I was

This photo sparked the start of our first project in the village of Astam. This is the computer lab in 2010 and the photo on page 11 shows the computer centre we installed in late 2011.

inspired by the generosity of people from around the world who entrusted us with their donations and their sincere and heartfelt desire to help. It was also an honour to be part of a wonderful Australia-Nepali team who worked incredibly hard side-by-side to raise the funds and execute the projects in Nepal under very tight deadlines and in sometimes dangerous conditions. With a modest amount of funding, the team was able to help seven schools spread across three Districts.

I have nothing but praise for the Nepali people for their resilience. Almost immediately following the earthquake, I watched as hundreds of self-organised groups in Nepal were quickly mobilised and shared information globally, raising funds, and using whatever resources they had to deliver critical aid and support to devastated communities. In the villages we assisted, we saw the results of communities coming together to start the recovery process. Within weeks, entire schools consisting of 'tin-shed' classrooms were built from the rubble of collapsed buildings, and children were trying as best as they could to return to a normal learning routine despite the difficulties and trauma cause by the disaster.

When I was visiting what was left of Kathmandu Durbar Square, I photographed a man with a large Nepali flag, followed by a number of children, who climbed on top of the rubble of one of the former temples (see rear cover photo). They waved the flag in support of national pride and as I watched I remembered a phrase that was popular on social media, "Nepal - we will rise again". Given my experience of the dedication and will-power of the people that we worked with, at the time I had no doubt that they would – and indeed they did.

Over the last ten years, nine with the Logged On Foundation and one year with Rotary, we have had may people from Nepal, Australia and around the world support our work. We also struck wonderful relationships with a number of organisations who contributed to meaningful outcomes in the communities we served. All of us together have shared our enthusiasm for community development as well as creating pathways for travellers and volunteers to spend time in the villages where we delivered our aid programs.

The work, for now, is finished and I have written this report to acknowledge the valuable contributions made by the many individuals and organisations. I present to them a full portrait of what we together were able to achieve. I hope it inspires them to continue to do good work in helping underprivileged communities in Nepal or elsewhere in the world. This document is also a portrait of how a small charity, with modest funding and lots of determination, can contribute towards making a positive change in community education development. I hope it provides insights and inspiration to anyone contemplating on applying their skills to address some of the world's most pressing social problems.

Photos around the village of Astam in 2011-2012.

OUR CHARITY

The Logged On Foundation was a development agency dedicated to helping children and community groups in underserved areas of Nepal.

Our history

WE ENVISIONED A WORLD WHERE CHILDREN HAVE EVERY OPPORTUNITY TO REACH THEIR POTENTIAL AND HAVE THE SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE TO BE ABLE TO PARTICIPATE FULLY IN THE WORLD.

We worked with people, businesses and community groups who shared this vision and wanted to help create educational opportunities for children. We built lasting friendships and trusting relationships that were founded on an ethos of partnership in community development.

Logged On has benefited over 7,200 individuals in 31 communities through a number of education initiatives including our scholarship, technology and education, infrastructure, disaster assistance and volunteer teaching programs.

We were committed to the education of children which is why our focus was on supporting rural schools in their efforts to provide a quality education. In addition, we also supported women's community groups through our "technology for education & training" program. Women have a key influence on decisions in the family that have a positive effect on the wellbeing and development of children. Therefore, not only were we committed to the empowerment of women, we also understood that by supporting them were also helping to create a positive future for their children.

Our mission

1. Work with local communities to help them access the resources, information, skills and technologies they need to provide educational opportunities to their children.
2. Provide education and community empowerment programs that impacted on the welfare of children and their families.

Activities include:

1. Teacher training and providing educational aids and resources to schools.
2. Scholarships and sponsorships for children.
3. Training and community capacity building programs.
4. School construction and infrastructure programs.
5. Establishing computer facilities and using technology to: empower teachers and students; help build communities and promote positive change; and foster the development of '21st century skills' for transformative and sustainable educational programs for children and their families.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals are 17 goals that set out a vision for a world free from poverty, hunger and disease and are a blueprint for achieving a better and more sustainable future for all. Our programs contributed in four goals: quality education, gender equality, clean water and sanitation, and reduced inequalities.

OUR APPROACH

Photos below were taken at our computer centres in Kaski and Syangja Districts.

Grass-roots

Programs were driven by the community with our support and encouragement. We had excellent community relationships and had local champions who were willing to push through ideas, ensure local ownership, and monitor and report back on successes and failures.

Building networks

We created a 'family' of schools with teachers and members of the community having shared goals for education and success. We built the capacity of members of one village and then asking them to help the next village. It was an incentive for involvement that opened the way for an ongoing exchange of teachers, knowledge and support. More widely, we developed cluster of communities across Districts. A cluster of schools in one area allowed us to encourage group technical support that could help sustain our programs.

Capacity building

We helped to build the capacity of teachers and members of the communities we assisted by providing training opportunities with the aim of sustaining local projects and enabling members to contribute to community-based learning and information sharing.

Education

We promoted a diverse range of education programs for teachers, children and their parents. We supported children through our scholarship and sponsorship program and offered greater strength and diversity in education through digital technologies.

Our history

Established in 2011

01

The Logged On Foundation Inc. was registered in Victoria in March 2011 as an Association with the support of the inaugural committee members and received charitable status from the Australian government. In November 2013, the Association was upgraded to a Public Company so the Foundation could operate more freely within Australia under the management of a Board of Directors. The objectives of the Foundation remained essentially the same. We also received registered charity status within months of the establishment of the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission.

2011

02

A computer centre was established in November at a lower secondary school in the village of Astam near Pokhara. The village was connected to the internet for the first time. We spent ten weeks in Nepal managing the project and providing training and support services.

2012

03

We developed a teacher training program and refined our approach to providing computers that are suited to rural schools. We commenced our Scholarship Program and connected the Astam school to RMIT University's remote teaching program. We also delivered computer literacy training programs to members of the Astam community.

2013

04

We developed our volunteer placement program, the Pathways Program, and introduced teachers from Stenden (Netherlands) and RMIT (Australia) universities to schools in Astam. We installed a second computer centre at a secondary school in a nearby village. We partnered with Microsoft Nepal to deliver certified community computer literacy training programs.

2014

05

We installed our third and largest computer centre at a higher secondary school. We had our greatest number of participants in the Pathways Program with volunteers from Nepal, Australia and the USA helping to deliver projects in two groups. We provided computers to a number of smaller schools in the Dhital VDC. We also installed our first non-school computer lab at a women's cooperative. Together with our partner, *HANDS in Nepal*, we installed an education resource centre in another village in Dhital.

2015 06

We assisted six schools and one orphanage as part of our earthquake aid program. We were able to assisted in the construction of temporary classroom and installed water filtration systems. We also place our first group of Flinders University teachers in Nepal, initiated the Child Sponsorship Program, installed a computer centre in a new district, provided seeding funds for the building of a new school, and established a computer centre at a another women's cooperative.

2016 07

We launched our award winning documentary *Earth-Q*, initiated a major school building construction project for a school in the Gorkha District that was destroyed in the 2015 earthquake. We also delivered a multi-week community computer literacy training program in the Syangja District.

2017 - 2018 08

Pre-service teachers from La Trobe and RMIT Universities were placed into schools in the Kaski and Gorkha Districts. We established a computer centre in another new district, developed a partnership with an Australian business to deliver community aid projects, installed two computer labs in the Syangja District, and our Child Sponsorship Program grew to cover all the children in the Gorkha orphanage.

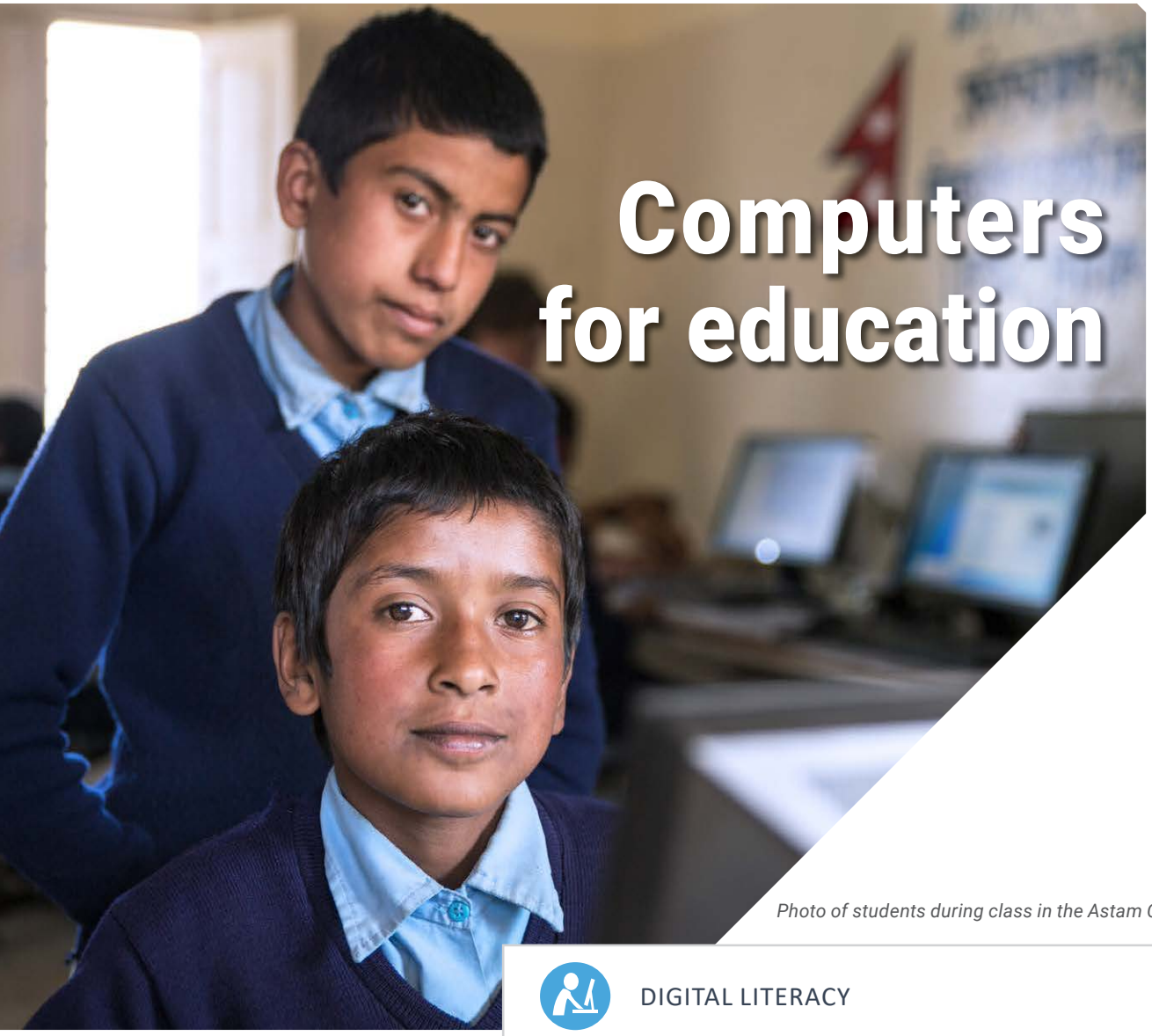
2019 9

We installed computer labs in six schools across three Districts in addition to visiting our existing project sites to assess the impact of our work. Our major school construction project in the Gorkha District was completed and, in collaboration with our partners, we installed a sanitation facility in a village in the Syanga District.

2020 - 2021 10

The Foundation voluntarily wound up in a strong position having helped over 7,200 individuals in 31 communities. With the help of the Rotary Club of Gorkha and Rotary Melbourne we extended the Child Sponsorship Program into 2021.

Photo of our first project, the Astam Computer Centre, completed in late 2011 with 11 terminals connected to the internet.



Computers for education

Photo of students during class in the Astam Computer Centre.

DIGITAL LITERACY

The global village needs a new technological culture in which literacy and numeracy are no longer enough. Without digital skills, the existing inequalities between rural and urban, and the developing and developed world will deepen. We have helped to bridge the digital divide by providing the necessary resources for communities to develop digital skills for education, communications, life-long learning, and for access to important information relating to health, skills training, well-being and economic prosperity.

OPPORTUNITIES

Providing technology goes together with cultivating local knowledge that was essential for sustainability. We created opportunities through training programs that empowered teachers and learners, helped to build relationships between communities, promoted change, and fostered the development of digital skills.

EDUCATION

We set goals to help encourage the uptake of transformative educational programs for children. We understood that education is not just about improving exam results, but also about stimulating the curiosity of children where learning can happen through self-instruction and peer-shared knowledge.

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

When women are empowered to lead full and productive lives, children and families prosper. We were committed to promoting equality and the empowerment of women through a number of programs which included delivering computers and training programs to women's community groups.

Providing computers, connecting communities to the internet, and deliver computer-based education programs to schools in rural Nepal was our flagship program. We also ensured that we had motivated teachers, professionals and members of the local community involved in our projects and provided ongoing training and support.

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) can complement, enrich and transform education in a positive way. As the lead United Nations Organisation for education, UNESCO has promoted international efforts to help countries understand the role such technology can play to accelerate progress towards one of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals - a quality education. According to the UN *Qingdao Declaration* (2015), to achieve the goal of inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning by 2030, ICTs must be harnessed to strengthen education systems, knowledge dissemination, information access, quality and effective learning, and more efficient service provision.

This was the position that we embraced before the start of our first computer centre project in rural Nepal. We understood that with the technology available today, geographic limitations should not mean educational limitations. Computers and the internet are a vehicle for allowing children to learn, explore and create in ways previously not possible. They also enable children to join a global online learning community. Computers offer an up-to-date interactive learning environment with rich dynamic content including photos and videos that school textbooks can't provide.

I found that the state of rural schools were often poor with a lack of infrastructure and educational resources. The quality and availability of teaching materials effected what teachers were able to achieve. Many classrooms were very bare and not, by Australian standard, considered to be a child-friendly learning environment. There was low quality furniture and lighting, a chalkboard and little or no other learning aids. Most classrooms had a collection of posters or the alphabet with symbols and animals painted on the wall for younger children. Each subject had a core curriculum textbook printed in black ink without grey scale or colour photos. We would often see schools keep whatever resources they had locked away in cupboards and rarely used. Some schools had libraries, but children would not have access to the books at all or for any sufficient amount of time. In some schools, we found that donors provided computers and other educational materials, but teachers had not been given the necessary guidance, inspiration and training on how they could be used to support their teaching or enhance learning outcomes in the classroom.

The existing educational system in many rural schools was based on traditional textbooks, rote learning, and teacher-centred lecture based methods where students didn't often get the opportunity for independent learning. Limiting learners to the textbook and teacher-centred lecture methods is generally understood in international education circles to be unable to fulfil the needs and demands of 21st century learners, especially since it fails to develop critical thinking skills.

We understood the situation faced by rural schools and the perspectives of international educators when they critique rote-based education systems. We were also aware that different cultures impart different values to educational approaches and concepts. Therefore, over the years we and our partners identified simple, powerful and 'appropriate' ways of using ICTs that engaged and resonated positively with teachers and their students.

Our focus was on working in close collaboration with local teachers to help their school improve the educational outcomes of their students through the integration of ICTs into the teaching and learning processes. Together, we understood: the positive role ICTs could play in education;

Grade 8 maths class being taught by Ves Raj Banstola at the Shree Bhumeswor School in Astam (2011).

how difficulties associated with their ongoing maintenance could be overcome; and, how, with training and preparation, ICTs could facilitate a transformation in the student learning experience.

We were committed to following the local curriculum in the delivery of all student focused education based programs. We encouraged the use of our computer centres and labs to enhance the traditional teaching of subjects - as sources of teaching materials or through the use of multimedia presentations to reinforce the textbook learning objectives. The centres have also helped to accelerate the learning process with students being given time to discover knowledge through the internet or by using multimedia and software resources.

The facilities and training programs we have provided have also supported the professional development of teachers and improved education administration and management in school. Key to facilitating this transformation was to first understand the existing skills and the needs of teachers. Secondly, to respond by providing the appropriate technical and training support.

Many of our programs focused on equipping both students and teachers with basic IT skills, such as learning how to use the Windows operating system, Microsoft software, browse the internet, using email, photo editing, and troubleshooting skills. Computer skills are important for individuals to access opportunities in both employment and further education as Nepal integrates ICTs into their wider economic and institutional activities. Good hardware and software skills were also important because access to professional support in remote areas was often difficult.

We also implemented projects that went beyond delivering basic IT skills to enhance existing teaching practices. In collaboration with our education partner and local teachers, we explored ways ICTs could potentially shift the focus of education away from teacher-centred lecture-based instruction to student-centred interactive learning. The process involved encouraging student to be proactive in the production of knowledge, not just memorising and describing pre-existing knowledge. We supported local teachers to encourage students to become teachers through peer tutoring and reciprocal mentoring, effectively creating a space where learning was a collaborative process. Placing the learner at the centre of the learning process allowed students to draw on a range of resources, including teachers, fellow students, and digital information to complete their study. This had the additional benefit of increasing the self-esteem and motivation of students and their overall classroom engagement. With varying degrees of success, this approach had sown the seeds for transforming education and the relationship between students and teachers in some of the schools we helped and flourished in others.

We believe that the impact we have made in the communities we have served were significant. The integration of ICTs into rural schools was difficult in the beginning but became increasingly easier in later years. Especially with the shift in Nepali education policy that encouraged the introduction of student-centre learning models and computer science as a compulsory/core subject in all schools. The high demand for quality computers and the internet, the wider availability of quality computer literacy training and professional development course for teachers, the increase in demand for trained computer teachers in schools, and the uptake of cheap and readily available quality ICTs more broadly in Nepal, has been encouraging. We are proud that we have played a part in stoking the fire of positive change.

Photo of students at the Shree Bhumeshwor School about to start their computer science class in the Astam Computer Centre; (next page) students at the Shree Janakalyan School in Lower Astam.

Technology enabled education programs can help improve teaching and learning and have been important in our work. But we understood that multiple approaches were needed to help children succeed at school and to be able to fully participate in the world.

SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE

Public schools in rural areas are often in a bad state of disrepair and can be poor learning environments for children. We have worked with communities to construct safe child-friendly classrooms and helped to renovate existing classrooms so children could study in an environment conducive to learning. The infrastructure program was initiated in 2015 following the Nepal earthquake. Our first project was the construction of temporary classrooms to replace the ones that were destroyed in the disaster. Our infrastructure initiatives have also included water storage and filtration systems and a community hygiene facility.

SPONSORSHIPS & SCHOLARSHIPS

Our Sponsorship and Scholarship Program was another way that we helped lower the barriers that some children faced in accessing a quality education. Scholarships were awarded to students who were good academic achievers from economically or socially disadvantaged backgrounds and had the potential to achieve even better in their studies with assistance. We also introduced a Child Sponsorship Program as a rewarding and effective way for sponsors to support vulnerable children. This program supported an orphanage in the Gorkha District.

TRAINING & CAPACITY BUILDING

Project success required an ongoing strategy for local capacity building. We have built skills in the communities we served and helped with the professional development of teachers. We also delivered digital literacy and technical training programs and built local leadership and governance skills. We worked with Microsoft Nepal to provide training and engaged local computer specialists to support our projects. We also introduced teachers from international universities to help local teachers introduce technologies into their classroom. They also supported local teachers to introduce student-centred pedagogical approaches into their teaching.

Pathways Program for volunteer opportunities

The Pathways Program was our volunteer program for connecting skilled people from around the world to communities we worked with in Nepal. Our focus was on placing teachers in rural schools where we were invited to find ways of bringing sustainable benefits to their student's education.

Together with teachers, community leaders, and our partners in Nepal, we created opportunities for volunteers to share their knowledge, time and goodwill by contributing to the needs of schools and community groups we have served.

We accommodated a diverse range of professional volunteers, including: teachers and IT specialists who delivered teacher professional development programs and community vocational training sessions with a focus on digital literacy; tradespeople and engineers who worked on water and hygiene projects, ICT maintenance, electrical protection, and infrastructure programs; and, specialists that developed solutions for deploying technology in challenging environments.

We have also placed international pre-service teachers into government primary and secondary schools. Most of their efforts were directed towards helping to improve the study and English communication skills of students, which was highly valued by parents and teachers. They were also able to integrate technology into their teaching to show the power of technology-driven student-centred approaches to education as a way of opening up new avenues for learning and creativity. Volunteer and local teachers were encouraged to work in close collaboration and share pedagogical methods that they could potentially integrate into their own teaching that were appropriate within the local educational and cultural environment. It was through this collaborative process that we aimed at inspiring local teachers to accommodate student-centred approaches and other methods that could help to improve student educational outcomes long after volunteers have departed.

We were able to strengthen our program by working with four universities to provide professional placement opportunities for their students. We cultivated cooperative relationships on educational initiatives through a Memorandum of Understanding with La Trobe and RMIT Universities which allowed us to fine-tune and extend our educational assistance programs in Nepal. The relationship also allowed us to strengthen our contribution to the cross-cultural experience and personal and professional development of pre-service teachers.

The overall aim of the Pathways Program was to: create positive and lasting impact on communities in Nepal, their schools, students and teachers; meet the professional and personal development needs of program participants; meet the placement requirements of the home institution (if relevant); and, meet our development objectives so we could grow our program of assistance to more communities.

LA TROBE UNIVERSITY

RMIT UNIVERSITY

Flinders UNIVERSITY

Stenden

Teachers from Flinders University in South Australia together with staff from the Shree Bhumeshwor School in the Astam Computer Centre on their first day of professional placement.

// Professional education placements

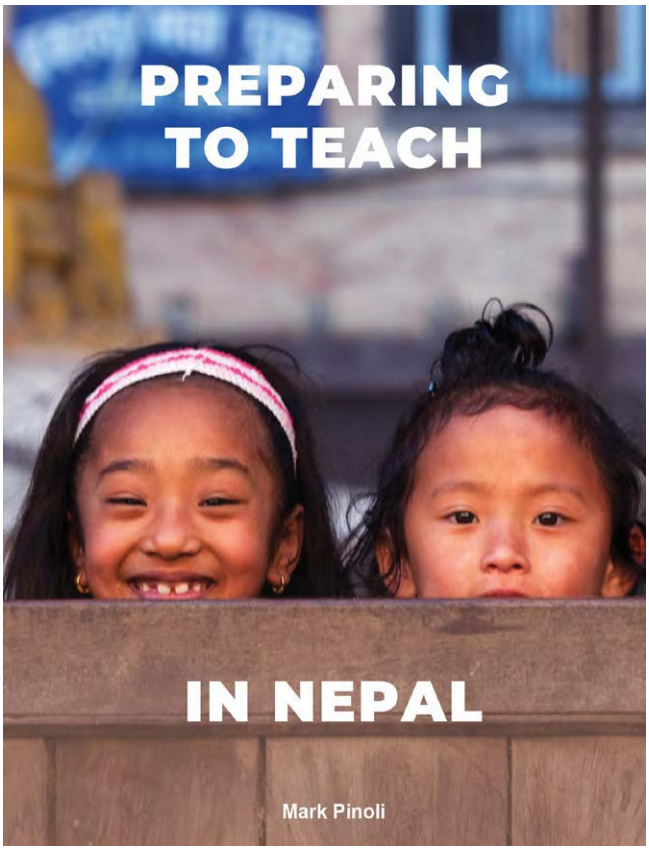
Professional experience is at the heart of many professional placement, teaching practice or field experience programs. Volunteers are placed into a real life professional setting, allowing them to practice what they have learnt during their studies and to further develop skills and confidence as a professional.

The Pathways Program has helped to address some of the needs of communities in Nepal while developing the professional capacities of participants. Over the years, we developed a collaborative program by working closely with: leaders and professionals in Nepal to create a positive environment for volunteer practice; and, universities and their students to deliver transformative educational programs for Nepalese children and the community. Volunteers have been committed to: working under the direction of the school Principal; working in close collaboration with local teachers; and, to follow the local curriculum.

Program participants in the past have been able to implement a broad range of teaching and learning approaches and developed an appreciation of the different perspectives and local realities on education. They have also had the opportunity to challenge preconceived ideas and training about what constitutes the 'best' pedagogical methods and identify simple, powerful and 'appropriate' ways of teaching in Nepal that engage and resonate positively with students and their teachers. Through this rich collaboration, participants were afforded the opportunity to deeply reflect on the beliefs and capabilities that were important to them as an emerging professional.

In addition, the importance of developing teaching skills in a cross-cultural setting cannot be underestimated. Teacher training institutions, for instance, have a focus on preparing pre-service teachers for the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse school systems. In Australia, cultural diversity is evident in many schools with around 45% of the population being born, or have at least one parent born, overseas from one of over 200 countries.

We partnered with four universities and worked with their pre-service teachers to provide them with an opportunity to develop their cultural competency skills and abilities in working with diversity by teaching in Nepal. We created a supportive environment where participants were able to develop the personal and professional skills that can come from being completely immersed in a different cultural and linguistic environment. We also provided pre-departure and in-country sessions to highlight the need for participants to be aware of how their cultural immersion experience may help shape their beliefs and reinforce behaviours that are consistent with building personal resilience and leadership.



Preparing to Teach in Nepal

A publication for international pre-service and professional teachers who are preparing to teach in Nepali schools.

This guide was compiled from over seven years of experience in working with volunteers placed in Nepali schools and draws on observations and interviews with local teaching staff, Nepali students, and volunteers. It recommends an approach to preparing, as an overseas teacher, to travel to Nepal and conduct classes in local schools. It also identifies simple, powerful and 'appropriate' ways of teaching that aligns with the local curriculum and engages students and their teachers. The focus is on teaching in primary and lower secondary government schools, but there are lessons for teaching in other domains such as vocational and community training. This information would also appeal to teacher training institutions placing students in Nepal with a focus on preparing their students for diversity in the education systems and enhancing the cross-cultural competence of their students.

ISBN: 9780648020318

Download: doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.13078352.v2

Thanks to Sarah Abramson for her design work on the publication (www.sarahabramson.com.au).

In addition to having created an environment for volunteers' cultural immersion experiences, we also provided:

» Team building activities that connected participants in the program and facilitated a relationship where they were able to effectively work together in Nepal.

» The opportunity to connect participants with professionals in Nepal to help broaden participants understanding and outlook.

» Experienced in-country support and access to licensed operators to take care of all the needs of our volunteers during their placement and travel arrangements outside of teaching.

PROGRAM TALLY

27 **Individual Pathways Program placement assignments**

55 **Individuals from outside Nepal participated**
(around 15% returned one or more times to volunteer in Nepal)

Core values

KNOWLEDGE DATABASE

The outcomes and collective experiences of participants was used to build a knowledge base for the benefit of future participants.

PROFESSIONAL INVOLVEMENT

The program only accepted suitably qualified people who had the necessary training and experience that allowed them to contribute to the teaching objectives of the school. Most teaching volunteers, for instance, were education students in their final year of university or were professionals with experience.

CONSULTATION

There was a strong community consultation and review process. Interviews of volunteers, children, the Principal and local teachers were collected and assessed to ensure that the program had a positive impact for all participants and to further improve the program.

LOCAL CAPACITY

The program did not detract from the important work of helping to build local teaching capacity. We encouraged ways of integrating the efforts of volunteers with those of local teachers with the aim of having a positive impact on children's education that would continue after the departure of volunteers.

Pathways Program Assignments

All of our volunteer assignments from 2011 to 2019 are summarised below. Further details are provided in the project reports in subsequent chapters.

Establishing the Astam Computer Centre (2011 & 2012)

Australian and Nepali volunteers assisted with the construction of the building that would house the computer centre, designed the furniture fixtures and layout of electrical fittings, installed the computers, facilitated the creation of a management committee, connected the village to the internet, provided technical training for the committee, teachers and members of the community in Astam. Australian volunteers returned in April 2012 to follow-up on impact assessments, equipment maintenance and provided a three weeks digital literacy training program for teachers and members of the community. Computer training classes were also delivered to Bhumeshwor School students over 10 days that focused on digital literacy and English communication skills.

Teacher placement (April - May & Oct 2013)

Our first teacher on placement assignment came from Stenden University in the Netherlands in early 2013. The two month placement focused on the teaching of English, computer skills and the arts at the Bhumeshwor school in Astam. At the same time, I was able to provide a series of training seminars over three weeks for teachers and members of the community. The sessions focused on technical maintenance skills and preparing teachers to incorporate computers into their teaching. Our second teacher placement was an independent RMIT pre-service teacher who spent four weeks in October teaching English and computer skills to students in grades six, seven and eight.

Teacher placements (Nov 2013)

The first group of RMIT pre-service teachers and a lecturer spent four weeks teaching English and computer skills classes at the Astam School.

General volunteers & ICT professional (2014)

A group of volunteers provided help in computer centre equipment installation and in our project assessment and documentation process. An ICT and ESL teacher from Australia provided computer literacy training for teachers over a two month period in Astam and nearby schools. He also conducted research on appropriate technologies in the classroom, provided program assessment and advice, and networked with local professionals and service providers to encourage their involvement.

Teacher placements (2014)

The second group of RMIT education students and a lecturer taught English and computer classes in two schools in Astam.

Teacher placement (2015)

Our first Flinders University pre-service teacher placements arrived in late 2015 and spent one month teaching English and computer classes to the children at the Shree Bhumeshwor School.

Teacher professional development (2015)

We arranged for two Australian trainers with over 20 years' teaching experience to deliver a professional development course to teachers in the Dhital VDC. The course exposed participants to a variety of teaching methods, including student-centred classroom methodologies, and built their confidence in the application of these methods.

Leadership Program (2015 - 16)

The first participant to complete our Early Career Leadership Program spent three months with students from seven schools from Upper Mustang. The students and their teachers migrated every winter from this region to a makeshift school on the outskirts of Pokhara so they could continue their education. The placement assignment focused on teaching English and working with local teachers to introduce new pedagogical techniques in the classroom.

Gorkha project (2017)

A team of volunteers from Xtreme Adventures Australia installed a water capture and storage system in one of the schools we supported. They also installed a computer lab and provided electrical installation services.

Teacher placements (2017)

Our first group of La Trobe University placement teacher arrived in November 2017 to spend a month teaching in schools in the Kaski and Gorkha Districts. The focus was on working with local teachers in teaching English. Part of their brief for Gorkha was to also provide special tuition to children at the local orphanage after class to help boost their study and English communication skills.

Teacher placement 2 (2017)

A second group of education placement students came from RMIT University. The students spent four weeks teaching in Nepal and were accompanied by their RMIT supervisor. They spent time teaching at a school and orphanage in the Gorkha District before completing their placement at the Bhumeshwor School in the Kaski District. Their focus was on working with local teachers to deliver the English curriculum and teach in the Astam Computer Centre. They also spent time at the Mustang Winter School near Hemja teaching English to Primary School children.

Computer labs (2019)

2019 was one of our busiest years with the arduous task of installing laptops in six schools across three Districts in addition to visiting our existing project sites to assess the impact of our work. Special thanks to Patrick Goonan for his efforts in ensuring all of our projects were successfully completed on time.

Community health (2019)

A new team of eight volunteers from Xtreme Adventures Australia returned to Nepal and worked beside local people and contractors in the Syangja District to install a community bathroom with the aim of improving access to proper sanitation facilities in the community.

Community health photos courtesy Sudip Aryal, teacher professional development photos courtesy Marion Mundana.

Special thanks

I would like to extend a special thanks to academic staff members at our partner universities who worked with us to ensure the success of our program: Dr Richard Johnson (RMIT), Associate Professor Kerry Bissaker (Flinders), and Associate Professor Catherine Lang (La Trobe).

Our most sincere thanks to Dr Nicky Carr (RMIT) who accompanied her students to Nepal and work with teachers at the Shree Bhumeshwor School in Astam. Her dedication to working with local teachers and creating the best possible opportunities for her students has attracted our respect and the admiration of the Astam community.

Photos (top): *Dr Nicky Carr being greeted to Nepal by the Chair of our Computer Centre Committee, Raju Pariyar; (bottom & next two pages) photos taken during volunteer placements from 2013 to 2019.*

In 2017, we signed an MoU with La Trobe University to pave the way for their Education Faculty students to gain professional experience in Nepal. This is the second agreement we entered into with an Australia university. Signed by Professor Betty Leask, La Trobe's Acting Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), and myself, the agreement started off a five-year cooperation that focused on placing pre-service teachers in schools in Nepal through our Pathways Program.

Pathways Program participants in the past have been able to develop a broader range of teaching and learning approaches and an appreciation of different perspectives and local realities on education. We were keen to work with La Trobe to strengthen our contribution to their student's experience of Nepal and their professional development.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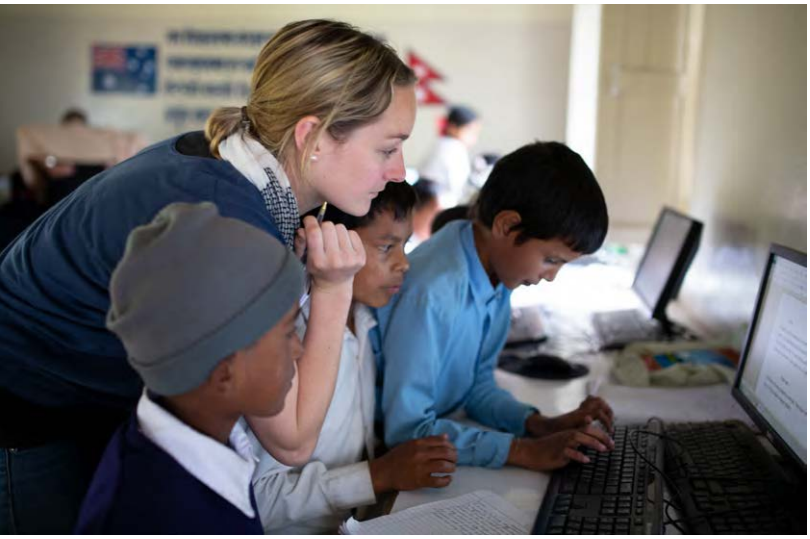


Partners, sponsors & supporters

Over the years, we developed valuable relationships with the following organisations who helped support our charitable objectives.

PARTNER
An MoU was signed with the School of Education that encouraged a cooperative relationship focusing on Nepali and Australian teacher capacity building and children's education programs.

PARTNER
We have an MoU with the School of Education to place their pre-service teacher in Nepali schools and to provide support services to help them succeed in a cross-cultural teaching environment.

PARTNER
We have placed Flinders pre-service teacher in Nepali schools and provided training and support services to help them succeed in a cross-cultural teaching environment.

PARTNER
Our sister US organisation who has done great work in empowering Nepali communities through grassroots projects. We introduced HANDS to the Dhital region where we have cooperated on projects, built relationships with local communities, and shared a number of service providers. Sincere thanks to Jan Sprague and Jake Peters.

SPONSOR
WorkSafe has donated computers that has been installed in schools across four Districts of Nepal. WorkSafe has been an ongoing sponsor of our projects to connect schools to the world of digital education.

SPONSOR
UWA supported the screening of our documentary *Earth-Q* in Western Australia. They also promoted our work through their media channels. The funds raised as a result helped to rebuild a school that was destroyed in the 2015 earthquake.

PARTNER
We worked with Xtreme Adventures to help support their Leadership Program by coordinating community development projects for their teams to fundraise for and participate in during their visits to Nepal.

SPONSOR
Star Tutor provided the funding to help support a number of our projects, including our computer education and disaster assistance work.

SPONSOR
ASG (WA) provided seed funding for our scholarship program. The program ran for a number of years before being superseded by our child sponsorship program.

SPONSOR
The prime Victorian sponsor of the screening of our documentary *Earth-Q*. The screening in Australia and overseas helped us to the raise funds to rebuild a school in the Gorkha District.

SPONSOR
The Nepalese Student Association was our major sponsor of a post-earthquake school rebuilding project in the Gorkha District. Special thanks to Kabin Chaudhary.

PARTNER
We have placed Stenden students in Nepali schools and provide support services to help ensure a successful teaching placement experience.

SUPPORTER
Jessica Whitaker and Bonaventure Travel in Perth was a generous sponsor of our fundraising events in WA.

SUPPORTER
Thanks to Glen Dimplex Australia who supported our fundraising events across Australia for many years.

SUPPORTER
Thanks to Capt John Holmes and Ansett Aviation Training for their support of our fundraising events in Victoria.

Our partners in Nepal

Relationship building has been an essential part our work. We are proud of our efforts in building strong in-country connections and relationships between Australia and Nepal.

We have worked with businesses and community groups who shared a vision for creating educational opportunities for children. The successful completion of our projects would not have been possible without the support of the following organisations in Nepal.

Microsoft Innovation Center *Nepal*

PARTNER

Microsoft Nepal has been a strong supporter of our initiatives. They provided the equipment, installation & technical support for our first project in the village of Astam. They also provided a number of certified computer training programs for over 160 teachers and community members onsite at our Astam Computer Centre and at Microsoft in Kathmandu.

Our Foundation – Empowering Communities Through Education

PARTNER

Our Foundation has been a trusted implementation partner. They have helped us to establish computer labs and safe drinking water systems for schools in the Tanahun and Gorkha Districts. They have provided ongoing monitoring, support and training within the communities to ensure the sustainability of projects.

Rotary

PARTNERS

We established a relationship with Gorkha Rotary who assist us in supporting an orphanage and schools in the Gorkha District. We also developed a relationship with Melbourne Rotary who contributed funds towards rebuilding a Gorkha school that was destroyed in the 2015 Earthquake. Melbourne Rotary also enabled us to extend our Child Sponsorship Program into 2021.

Dream Nepal Adventure Pvt. Ltd. – Nepal – Pokhara

Amrit Treks & Expeditions

Annapurna Eco Village

PARTNERS

The Adhikari Family at Amrit Treks, Annapurna Ecovillage and Dream Nepal Adventures have been our primary long-term partners since 2011. They have provided significant support in project management, the community consultation processes, and looked after all aspects of volunteer and staff travel and accommodation in Nepal.

NRIDS 2061

PARTNER

NRIDS have been our implementation partners for a number of computer centre projects in rural schools and community groups in the Syangja District. They also facilitated support and ICT training for teachers and members of the local communities we supported.

प्रगती महिला विकास बचत तथा ऋण सहकारी संस्था लि., मायाटारी

PARTNER

We have worked with the Pragmati Women's Cooperative to deliver ICT training programs to women and to manage a community health project in the Syangja District.

KEY PEOPLE (AUSTRALIA)

My most sincere thanks to the many individuals who volunteered in the management of our organisation, fundraising, community and donor relations, program coordination, or gave us sound advice and connected us to the right people and organisations in Australia and Nepal.

Dr Bruce Mackintosh
Chairperson
Board of Directors

Michael Broomfield
Director
Board of Directors

Sudip Aryal
Director
Board of Directors

Dr Richard Johnson
Director
Board of Directors

Mark Pinoli
Chief Executive Officer
Company Secretary
Board of Directors

Bev Langdon
Administrative Officer

Matthew Jones
Policy & Financial Advisor

Anjan Tripathi
Adviser & Community Relations

Gabriella Olszewski
Fundraising

Peter Bach
Project Assistant &
Committee Member

Puspa Wagle
Advisor & Committee Member

Dipesh Chaulagain
Advisor & Community Relations

Dr Raju Adhikari
Advisor

Michelle Slattery
Strategic Initiatives &
Committee Member

Monica Lamperd
Pathways Program

Margie Lamperd
Child Sponsorship Program

Chenna Vu
Digital Initiatives

Daniel Lombardo
Digital Initiatives

ASSOCIATION COMMITTEE MEMBERS (2011-2013)

Mark Pinoli (President - founding member), Michelle Slaterly (Vice President - founding member), Ian Gould (Treasurer), Peter Bach (Secretary - founding member), Lauren Stewart (founding member), Sean Walsh (founding member), and Puspa Wagle.

KEY PEOPLE (NEPAL)

BISHOW ADHIKARI
Kaski Coordinator

Bishow was the Chairman of the Shree Bhumeshwor School's Management Committee, an Executive Member of the Trekking Agencies' Association of Nepal (Western Region) and has been on committees for many other organisations. Bishow has been an active coordinator of numerous community project in the Dhital region. When he is not volunteering his time helping the community, he is involved in running the family business in Astam and Pokhara. He was the Nepal coordinator for the Sister School Project between Gingin District High School (Australia) and the Shree Bhumeshwor School and it is through this effort that we heard about the village of Astam and met Bishow and his wife in Australia for the first time. Bishow was pivotal to the successful establishment of our first computer centre in Astam and all of our projects in the Kaski District. He also managed community relations and was a magnificent host to our friends and volunteers who spent time in Nepal.

SUDIP ARIYAL
Chief Advisor

Sudip was our chief advisor and a member of our Board for a number of years. His extensive experience working with government organisations, NGOs and INGOs, his unrelenting efforts, skilful negotiation and project coordinating skills helped to ensure the success of our work in Nepal, particularly the Syangja, Gorkha and Lamjung Districts. He held a number of positions within the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) including the 2015 Earthquake Cluster Coordinator for the Gorkha District. He is currently a UNDP Regional Manager in Nepal. The success of our 2015 Nepal earthquake aid program was largely due to Sudip and he was also the co-producer of our award winning documentary *Earth-Q*.

KAVITA THAPA ADHIKARI
Tanahun Coordinator

Kavita has worked as GIS expert for the Nepal government and was a project coordinator for the Spanish NGO Fundación Solidaria TAI. Kavita coordinated all of our efforts in the Tanahun District and she, along with Purna (her husband) and Bednidhi Adhikari from the Annapurna Ecovillage, were the technical experts who installed the Slow Sand Water Filtration units in three schools in Tanahun and Gorkha Districts after the 2015 earthquake. She is an exceptional project manager and a community consultation expert. She is the current Project Manager at HANDS in Nepal and has helped with our projects in a number of Districts for many years.

PURNA ADHIKARI
Kaski & Tanahun Coordinator

Purna is owner of Dream Nepal Adventure which was our service provider, along with Annapurana Ecovillage and Amrit Treks, for coordinating all volunteer placement and tour services in Nepal. Purna also co-managed, along with his wife Kavita, our efforts in the Tanahun District including the installation of water filters in a number of school. Purna and Kavita both run *Our Foundation*, a charity that empowers communities through education. Purna, along with his brothers Bishow and Bednidhi and family, run the Annapurna Ecovillage with whom we have worked closely together on community development programs in the Dhital VDC since 2011.

Many individuals in the eight Districts of Nepal where we've worked have helped us to complete our projects. I wish to pay special tribute to the following friend who gave an enormous amount of time and effort to ensure our success in Nepal.

RAJU PARIYAR
Computer Centre Chair & Adviser

Raju was elected as the Management Committee Chairman of our first computer centre in Nepal. Over the years, he went on to become the Chairman of many community committees in the Kaski District and has been an active participant in community development projects. Raju accompanied our team on a number of projects in other Districts as our principal adviser and translator (see page 50 for more).

VES RAJ BANSTOLA
Education & Training Manager

Ves Raj is the maths, science and computer science teacher at the Shree Bhumeshwor School in Astam. He has been committed to youth welfare and was President of the Hemja Youth Club and the President of Dyilo Agricultural Cooperative. Ves Raj was involved with our first project from day one and he has been central to our success in Nepal (see page 2). He has also been our principal advisor on integrating computer education with the Nepali curriculum, manager of our teacher placement program in Dhital, and manager of our digital literacy training program.

SITAL MASKEY
Gorkha Coordinator

Sital is a well-respected business man in the Gorkha District. He is Charter President of the local Rotary Club, past President of Lions Club and Gorkha Chamber of Commerce, Founding President of the Leo Club, Committee Member of Lions Eye Hospital, and the list goes on. It was through Sital's efforts and extensive network that we were able to achieve a quick and successful completion of the 2015 earthquake aid program and subsequent Gorkha projects which included the Child Sponsorship Program.

PHURBA LAMA
Dolakha Coordinator

Phurbha helped us coordinate projects in two schools destroyed after the earthquake in his home District of Dolakha. His is an English and Maths teacher, teaches ESL in Kathmandu, and has been trained by the British Council to be a teacher trainer. Phurbha has also been actively involved in community development and has coordinated the construction of school facilities and the installation of computer labs in Dolakha. After the earthquake, he was involved in the construction of temporary homes and the supply of relief materials to his village.

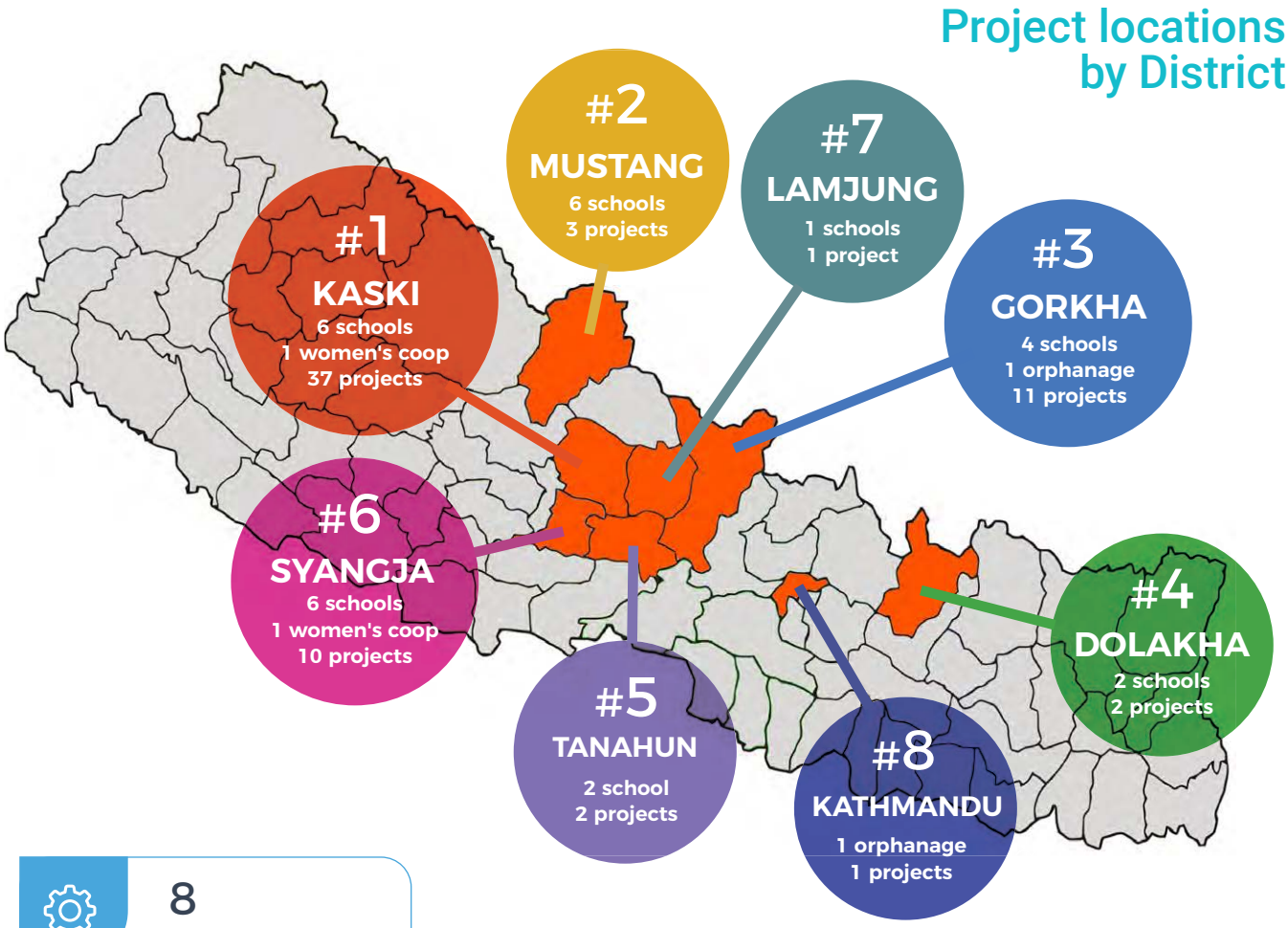
TARA ARYAL
Syangja Coordinator

Tara was the Women Computer Literacy Coordinator at Nepal Rural Information Technology Development Society (NRIDS) and President of the Pragmati Women's Cooperative. She is a respected community leader in the Syangja District and has been helping to coordinate our projects in Syangja, including the delivery of training programs to women, our community health project, and the installation of computer facilities in a number of government schools.

Our Projects

I present a summary of all of the projects we have supported and the estimated impact on the communities we served. Projects will be arranged by Nepalese Districts where the work was commenced for the first time in approximate date order. Project numbers on location maps for each District indicate the approximate order of their commencement date.

Project locations by District



8
Districts

spread across two provinces of Nepal where we have delivered projects.

SUMMARY STATISTICS

67
Projects

in total were delivered to a total of 32 schools / organisations.

31
Communities

or villages where we provided assistance to their children, teachers & parents.

7,200
Individuals impacted

estimated impact on individuals who experienced immediate benefit from our project.*

** The long-term impact for the lifetime of all the project we delivered is estimated at 9,470. Some of our projects, such as our school building program and health projects, will benefit generations of students.*

28
Schools

with whom we have had the privilege of providing assistance.

2
Orphanages

were we have delivered assistance programs.

2
Women's Cooperatives

with whom we have worked with and provided computers and training.

167
Scholarships

in total that have been delivered to 6 schools spread across 2 Districts.

20
Children sponsored

in an orphanage in the Gorkha District.

395
Trained

in digital literacy training programs for community members.

18
Computer Centres

or computer labs have been installed in schools, women's cooperatives or an orphanage.

127
Computers

have been delivered and installed to the organisations we have supported.

14
Temporary classrooms

were erected with our support in earthquake ravaged communities.

27
Individual placement

assignments have been completed by international volunteers in Nepal.

55
Volunteers

travelled to Nepal to participate in our Pathways Program. 15% returned for more assignments.

2
Infrastructure projects

where we have created child-friendly learning and living spaces.

2
Schools

where we have provided books, stationary and other essential school supplies.

2
School building

constructed with our financial supported in the Kaski and Gorkha Districts.

5
Community health

projects have been completed, including water filtration and a sanitation building.

Photo of our community training program during the installation of our first project, the Astam Computer Centre, at the Shree Bhumeshwor School in the village of Astam (see next section).

Kaski District 01.

Our flagship program, first cultivated in the Kaski District, was establishing computer centres in underfunded government and community schools in rural Nepal. In Kaski, we were able to develop approaches to empowering teachers to deliver rich educational content in the classroom using computers and encourage children to create and learn about the world in ways previously not possible.

In Kaski, we were also able to fine tune our approach to establishing centres including: selecting the technology that would best suit a rural environment; providing educational and training programs that resonated with teachers and the local community; and helping to establish support structures communities needed to sustain the centres for the long-term.

We listened to teachers about their needs and were able to deliver programs that not only developed their digital literacy skills and confidence in using computers in the classroom, but also helped them to introduce new teaching methodologies and pedagogical approaches to their students. We were also able to deliver educational programs that enabled members of the community to connect to online entrepreneurial opportunities, access important information relating to education and well-being, and to stay in contact with family in Nepal and overseas.

We also developed a model of cultivating a cluster of computer centres in schools in close proximity which encouraged collaboration between school and allowed allows us to create the necessary support structures that sustained our programs.

Most of our Pathways Program teacher placements and volunteer opportunities were located in Kaski. We were also able to launch other core programs in Kaski including our scholarship program and community computer literacy training program in cooperation with Microsoft Nepal.

Kaski was an important first step and we spent 2011 to 2017 working hard to build our educational development approach. The partnerships that were cultivated and the knowledge base developed were carried into the other seven districts of Nepal where we complete projects.

+7
6 schools
1 Women's Coop

+1,215
Individuals impacted

+40
Projects completed

+167
Scholarships awarded

Location

Shree Bhumeshwor Lower Secondary School, Astam, Dhital VDC
140 students | Grades 1 to 10 + pre-primary

Astam - Kaski Project Summary (2011 - 2017)

2011

1. We helped with building construction, designed the furniture fixtures and layout of electrical fittings, installed 11 computers with a 300AH battery power backup supply, facilitated the creation of a management committee, installed a long-range WiFi antenna to connect the village to the internet, and facilitated technical training sessions for the management committee and community members.

2. We initiated our annual teacher training program that focused on assisting teachers in their use of computers and digital content in their classrooms.

3. We employed a computer teacher for six months to help support the school in their use of the computer centre.

2012

4. We launched our Scholarship Program with the first awards made to seven Astam students.

5. We launched our community digital literacy training program which was conducted in the computer centre.

6. We initiated our first student project that focused on developing digital literacy skills. The students were able to create the school's first website.

7. The school joined RMIT University's remote online tutoring program - *eTutor.*

2013

8. In partnership with Microsoft Nepal, we delivered a multiweek community digital literacy training course.

9. We placed our first university pre-service teacher volunteer in Astam in February. There were two additional teacher placement groups later in the year.

10. A cultural study tour was arranged for Swinburne University. This marked the start of our tour program and opened a new revenue stream for the Foundation.

11. We established a partnership with the US charity *HANDS in Nepal. HANDS* established a library in Astam and, together with our computer centre, we were able to deliver the two facilities as an educational resource centre for the community.

12. Astam teachers & Computer Centre Management Committee members helped to install our second computer centre in the nearby village of Bhedabari.

1 Astam Computer Centre

We were formally welcomed by the Astam community on the day of our arrival on 9 September 2011. The welcome ceremony heralded the start of a ten-week effort to establish our first computer centre in Nepal. By early November, the centre building had been completed, eleven computers were installed and a computer teacher was employed. On the 9 November, the village was connected to the internet for the first time and the centre was officially opened the next day.

Astam was the location of not only our first computer centre, but it became the site for multiple projects over a six year period.

What we learned from Astam gave us the confidence to expand our initiatives to help a total of 31 communities across eight Districts of Nepal.

DIARY ENTRY

We arrived in Astam expecting that the new school building that would house the computer centre would have been near completion. Unfortunately, only the foundation and building frame was completed. Over ten weeks, we became heavily involved in overseeing the construction of the new building, furniture design, selection of building materials and paint, lighting and power layout, and ensuring building security.

The second set back to the project was the absence of electricity. Lightning struck a transformer that cut power to the village for over two months and nothing had been done about it. Over the months, a new connection was established to the grid and electricity was restored.

Building construction was put several weeks behind schedule in October because of two major Nepalese festivals – Diwali and Dashain. The delivery date for the computers was set for 1 November and the opening ceremony nine days later. No one alerted us to the fact that the tradesman working on the building were from India and would be returning to their homes to celebrate Diwali with their families. When we saw them packing up five days before the computers were due to arrive, I asked where they were going and when they would be back? They responded "in seven to ten days"! There were no desks for the computers and the electrician hadn't made an appearance either.

Despite the setbacks and difficulties, extensive negotiations with workers and help from the people of Astam ensured that the new building was at a stage where the installation of the computer equipment could begin. Desks were installed without the Formica finish and the installation of the power outlets were happening as the technicians were setting up the computers. Another power outage during the first few days in November was solved using a petrol powered generator borrowed from the Annapurna Ecovillage Retreat. Final touch ups to the centre went on right up to the evening before the opening ceremony.

We sailed close to rocks more than a few times. When a 'crisis' arose, the community came together to work out a solution without fail. We all had absolute determination to see this project through to the end and would not accept any further delays.

During a visit to Kathmandu in October, I visited the Microsoft Innovation Centre and was introduced to the School-in-a-Box program which bought together products from Microsoft, Dell and NComputing to provide a high

13. We were able to solve ongoing power supply issues with our partner, the Annapurna Ecovillage, by installing an off-grid 300W solar power system along with additional electrical protection equipment.

14. We provide a computer and a backup power unit to a small primary school nearby to our Astam Computer Centre.

2014

15. We arranged another Microsoft Nepal community training program in Astam.

16. We expanded our scholarship program to include students from three schools in the Dhital region.

17. We had our greatest number of participants in the Pathways Program with volunteers from Nepal, Australia and the USA helping to deliver projects in two groups.

18. Our Nepal team installed our largest computer centre to date in another school. This was the fourth school we have helped.

19. In partnership with *HANDS in Nepal*, we installed a resource centre in another village in Dhital. *HANDS* provided the library and building and we installed a computer centre.

20. We installed a computer centre at the Hemja Women's Cooperative and provided ongoing training and support.

2015-16

21. We provided seed funding for a school building construction project in Kaski.

22. Our first group of Flinders University student teachers were placed into the Bhumeshwor school.

23. Our greatest number of student scholarships were awarded to students from five schools in Dhital.

24. Educational resources were provided to Chhonhup Winter School and we placed an Australian teacher at the school for three months.

25. We provided computers and power equipment to another school in Dhital.

26. Our first computer centre outside of the Kaski District was installed with the support of our Astam team.

27. We arranged a professional development seminar for teachers from three schools in Dhital.

28. After five years of successful operation, we provided a major upgraded to the equipment in the Astam Computer Centre to improve performance.

2017

29. Two groups of pre-service teachers from La Trobe and RMIT University were placed into two schools in Dhital and one school in the Gorkha District.

30. We provided additional digital teaching aids at the Bhumeshwor School as well as renovated and refurbished the school's pre-primary classroom.

quality, low cost computer solution for schools. The thin client solution consisted of one server and ten terminals that would provide a one computer to one student computing experience for eleven students. This packaged system had been rolled out to some of the top private and government schools and colleges in the country. I had the opportunity to visit the Ratna Raja School in Kathmandu to see the system in use. We decided that the School-in-a-Box package would be ideal for Astam.

On 31 October, Director of the Microsoft Innovation Centre, Allen Tuladhar, along with his technical team, visited Astam to personally deliver the computers. The Microsoft team installed the computers and provided specialist training to the Computer Centre Committee and our local technical team during the installation that took a week to complete.

Our internet service provider installed a long range wireless antennas to connect the school to broadband internet. Astam is fortunately positioned on a ridge with a clear line of sight to the Northern end of the town of Pokhara. Only two antennas were required to connect Astam to Pokhara for a symmetrical DSL connection.

The Centre was officially opened on the 10 November 2011 by Arjun Thapa, Development Officer for the District Development Committee.

A Computer Centre Management Committee and a technical team were formed to deal with the day-to-day running of the centre. The Committee and the technical team were instrumental in helping to complete the new building and the installation of the computer and electrical equipment.

We also networked with NGO's and companies in Nepal to share ideas, experiences and advice regarding similar projects that they were undertaking. I met with HELP Nepal, the Nepal Library Foundation, Smart Solutions, World Distribution Nepal, BrainWorks Learning Solution Centre, Nepal Wireless, Nepal Schools Trust and the Microsoft Innovation Centre Nepal. I was also able to visit a number of schools in Kathmandu to discuss their experience with using computers in their classrooms.

Photo *(top): the entrance to the Astam Computer Centre with Raju Pariyar, Chair of the Centre Committee; (next page) progress in the installation of the Astam Computer Centre from what we saw on our arrival to the completion of the project with local students using the computers for the first time. Many thanks to Alan Tuladhar (with camera - third photo left), Director of the Microsoft Innovation Centre, and his team for their valuable contribution to the project.*





DELL


DELL



Computers are in, what did we do?

SAMUDAY

A platform for building a cooperative online learning community.

We received a request from RMIT University for help in the 2013 eTutor program. The software platform they were using was not able to service the program they envisaged, so we built a web-based interactive peer-to-peer learning and communication tool from the ground up. The website allowed children and teachers from around the world to interact in a supportive online space. *Samuday* allowed users to post photos, videos, blogs, chat online, video conference, collaborate and more. It also allowed primary school students to participate in the eTutor program which was previously not possible. We were proud of our contribution and ability to add value to our partnership with RMIT.

Online learning with eTutor

With the technology available today, geographic limitations shouldn't have to mean educational limitations. When we presented Certificates of Recognition to the students who participated in RMIT University's eTutor program, our appreciation for the potential technologies have for connecting rural children to the 'global village' was deepened.

Congratulations were extended to the Shree Bhumeshwor School students who participated in the eTutor program over two years in 2012 and 2013. They were the first rural Nepalese students to be part of this international program and were awarded RMIT certificates for their efforts (top photo).

eTutor was a collaborative project between RMIT University in Australia and schools in Malaysia, India and Nepal. It involved education students from RMIT interacting with school students in an online environment to assist children with their English language skills. At the same time, participants learned more about other cultures, their own cultures, and about teaching and learning in an online environment.

In 2013, the development of *Samuday* as the eTutor platform allowed primary school students to join and interact with primary and secondary students from other schools and RMIT teachers online for the first time.

As a result, the Bhumeshwor students in Astam were able to share photos, stories and 'chat' with students from Morang South Primary School in Victoria. I was able to visit Morang South Primary to speak to the participants about their experiences interacting with their peers in Nepal. I was also able to present our own Certificates of Appreciation to the students who made an outstanding effort in sharing their stories with students at Bhumeshwor (photos below).

Teacher training

Following the installation of the Astam Computer Centre, we initiated a number of programs that were aimed at preparing children to live in a world where technology would become increasingly important to the way they communicate, do business and learn. The first step was to develop the digital literacy skills of teachers and to help them use computers as part of their teaching. This was at the core of our approach to enabling technology in the classroom.

This was not always an easy feat and we tackled this with time and perseverance. Teachers did not always have the luxury of spending an adequate amount of time to learn in the computer centre or to prepare lessons because outside of school hours there were livestock to feed, the garden to tend to, and family meals to prepare. In addition, the power was out on some days and the backup supplies would only run for about half the day. There were plenty of technical issues and the internet was unreliable at times, especially in the first few years of our work. Teachers with limited confidence in using technology expressed their reluctance to use the computers as well, however this changed in later years when the Nepal government introduced computer science as a compulsory subject.

We were able to run a number of programs, discussed in the various sections of this report, that helped build the capacity of teacher who were eager to use the computer centre. This was a collaborative learning process and we worked closely with teachers and responded to their requirements and the need to deliver simple and effective education programs. This included requests for professional development training that focused on expanding and strengthening computer education skills as well as learning new non-technology based pedagogical approaches that teachers could introduce into their classrooms. Our programs included:

1. **Regular training & mentoring**: I provided three week intensive training programs annually and in some years on a bi-annual basis. I was also able to provide daily support during my frequent field visits to Nepal. With the internet, I provided ongoing remote technical support and mentoring from Australia over six years. We also had local and international ICT professional volunteers spend time in the Astam school to help address the challenges teachers and community members were facing.
2. **Training providers**: We worked with Microsoft Nepal to provided training programs in the Kaski District that were aimed at improving digital literacy skills in the community at-large with special classes for teachers that were focused on their needs. We also provided support to several teachers to undergo specialist training at the office of Microsoft Innovation Centre Nepal in Kathmandu.
3. **Teachers**: We employed a computer teachers from Pokhara to work full-time at the school for six months to help build the computer skills of staff as well as conduct computer education classes for students. In addition, for six years we placed pre-service volunteer teachers from a number of universities in Astam. Part of their brief was to work beside local teachers to help them integrate technology into their teaching where appropriate. The volunteers were committed to working in close collaboration with local teachers to introduce new pedagogical approaches that they could integrate into their own teaching practices.

Through this rich collaboration, we had the opportunity to reflect on the appropriate use of technology in a resource poor environment and identified simple, powerful and 'appropriate' ways of using computers and the internet in the classroom that engaged and resonated positively with students and school staff.

We found that the success of any project in Nepal required local champions who were able to inspire the people around them, manage projects to a high standard, and be highly motivated to overcome difficulties. We were very fortunate to have had our local computer centre champion and teacher, Ves Raj Banstola, who worked hard to help realise many of our projects and keep the Astam Computer Centre continuously running since 2011. We provided extensive training to Ves Raj over many years and the skills he developed allowed him to confidently deliver technical support and training programs to not only his colleagues in Astam, but he also went on to provide support to nearby schools and managed the installation of a number of computer centres and labs in two Districts of Nepal.

We also had a highly engaged Computer Centre Committee who provided support and were on-site to help deal with any issues. Over the years, we have worked together to overcome some challenging obstacles with maintaining computer and power equipment, but we succeeded, and together we were able to develop specialised knowledge on installing and maintaining computer and internet equipment in rural Nepal.

Computers in the classroom

We attempted to harness the power of technology-driven, student-centred approaches to education for accelerated learning and inspiring and building the confidence of children, especially in an environment where rote learning was the norm. Computers, cameras, LED projectors and other technologies opened up new and powerful avenues for learning and creativity. Technology was also a powerful way of delivering rich educational content to reinforce the learning objectives of the curriculum, especially where students' textbooks are black ink on paper and the use of chalkboards is the norm.

Ves Raj Banstola delivering a technical training program to students and teaches during the installation of our second computer centre at the Bhedabari Secondary School (page 43).

Volunteer teachers
2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2017

Volunteer university pre-service teachers initiated numerous projects and learning activities that involved the use of computers and other digital technologies including smart TVs, cameras, mobile phones and LED projectors.

Over the years, we ran a number of special projects to engage students in the computer centre which occurred alongside computer classes run by teachers on a weekly basis. As part of the Pathways Program assignments, volunteer teachers developed projects that made frequent use of the computer centre as part of their teaching program and they were able to share their knowledge with local teachers.

I was also able to work with Bhumeshwor teachers to run projects that focused on developing English communication and digital literacy skills of students at the school. In one exercise, we were able to introduce a new learning and creativity project using computers and cameras. We worked with students from several classes who were divided into working groups and asked to take photos around the village and in their home, as well as write about Nepal, their village life, and about their experiences at school.

When they completed their task, the student groups came together in the computer centre to discuss the material collected, prepare their content, use photo editors and Microsoft Word, and to collectively decide what was to be uploaded into a Blogspot website. In essence, they collectively created the school and community's first 'website'.

When the site was launched, it took some convincing that what they created was available on the web for the world to appreciate. Around 70% of households in Astam have at least one member of the family overseas who have permanently moved or have immigrated temporarily for employment. So following the launch of the website, we observed via Facebook and emails the accolades and congratulations that were sent to students from their families, friends and Nepali people from around the world. The sense of achievement when they realised that they were the first to publish this type of material about their village for a global audience, and the fact that they were more than capable of doing so, was palpable.

***Photos** (top-left): students creating content for the launch of the Bhumeshwor School's first website; (top-right) our first volunteer teacher in Astam, Verena Beyrle from the Netherlands, teaching in the Astam Computer Centre; (bottom) students during their weekly computer centre class.*

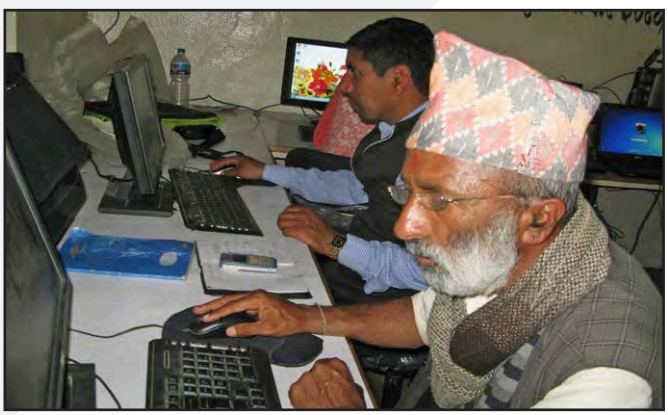
Digital literacy training

In collaboration with the Microsoft Innovation Centre Nepal, we arranged a community training program in 2013 and 2014. The training was conducted over two weeks and attendees were awarded a certificate of digital literacy competency on completion. The program was arranged and largely funded by us with a small contribution made by participants as a course fee. A total of 155 participants of all ages and gender joined in the annual program and included teachers and members of the Dhital VDC community. It was so popular, that classes were conducted in six daily shifts so all participants could have adequate time on the computers. Microsoft Nepal bought additional laptops to the Astam Computer Centre to meet the demand. There were frequent power outages at the time which was solved by our partner the Annapurna Ecovillage who supplied a petrol generator.

The workshop introduced participants to computer technology, essential software for business and personal use, email and communications programs, and how to access information on the internet.

Within the training program, we arrange special sessions that delivered content that was relevant to the needs of teachers and members of the local women's group. This program was developed in collaboration with Microsoft Nepal, the Astam Women's Cooperative, and the Shree Bhumeshor School teachers.

We were able to run smaller sessions on demand throughout the year to help people use the computer centre and to connect them to family in Nepal and overseas through social media and Skype. This was conducted mainly through the teachers and local youths who had a passion to learn and help by volunteering in the centre. In addition, our volunteers, university pre-service teachers and I spent many years building knowledge on the use of digital technology within the community.



Celebrating International Women's Day

Our message posted on Logged On's social media

"We first met Samjhana Bhandari (top photo) at the Astam Computer Centre in April 2013 where she delivered a two week digital literacy course. Over 90 people from 4 different villages attended the course delivered primarily by Samjhana. She works for the Microsoft Innovation Centre Nepal and is the Coordinator at Forum for Information Technology Nepal.

Samjhana has provided training to more than 2,000 women, teachers and students a year. 'My wish is to work with women, children and the old age community' says Samjhana. She also provides training to government school communities and members of community groups. She is also involved in public education on community radio programs.

The participants in the Astam training program were overwhelmed by Samjhana ability to teach people in villages, irrespective of their level of education, how to use computers and connect to the world through the internet. We are all appreciative of her wonderful ability to teach and her passion to help people from disadvantaged groups.

Thanks to the Director of the Microsoft Innovation Centre Nepal, Allen Tuladhar, for bringing Samjhana to our Astam Computer Centre."

***Photos**: the joint Logged On and Microsoft Nepal training program held in the Astam Computer Centre (photos thanks to Bishow Adhikari & Ves Raj Banstola). Top photo of Samjhana providing a special training session to the Astam Women's Group.*

WHY COMPUTER CENTRE?

We established centres in the larger government schools and installed computer labs in smaller schools that were located near to the computer centres. Why did we call them computer centres? During school hours, the facility would be used exclusively by the teachers and students of the school and after hours they would be available for community training programs and as an e-library and communications facility. Essentially, the centres were the only computer and internet resource available in the village and hence a resource for the entire community. Computer Centre Management Committees were established and worked closely with school management to coordinate access and help maintain the facility.

Photos *(top): digital literacy certificates awarded by Allen Tuladhar, Microsoft Nepal Director, to course attendees (photo - Bishow Adhikari); (next) technical training provided to youths and members of the community during the installation of the centre in Astam; (next) an Astam family in the centre connecting to their family members in Europe using Skype; (next) Samjhana delivering a community training course in Astam (photo - Bishow Adhikari).*

230 **Total community members trained in the Astam Computer Centre**

Scholarships

Thanks to our sponsor, Michael Broomfield (ASG WA State Manger), we were able to formally establish a Scholarship Program in 2012. The purpose of the program was to provide opportunities for students who struggled to afford school expenses, vocational training courses and living expenses, to be able to pursue their studies without obstacle. The scholarship program added another layer of assistance in our mission to help local communities access the resources they need to provide educational opportunities to their children.

Our first and most prestigious award, the Anne Van Riel (AVR) Scholarship, was awarded to girls that lived in the area the Foundation was working and: was facing serious obstacles that affected her education; had the determination to study hard and valued her education; and the award had the potential to improve her situation so that she could perform at a higher academic level. The AVR Scholarships also included a support and mentoring component where local teachers and community leaders volunteered their time to provide academic support, leadership and life skills training to awardees. Our mentors understood what was required to ensure that our program was not just a 'hand-out', but a 'hand-up' to the future.

We also awarded General Scholarships to economically and socially disadvantaged children in the schools we supported and were exceptional achievers or had the potential to achieve even better in their studies with assistance. Scholarship recipients also came under the attention of teachers who spent time to help nurture their skills and talents through academic support and mentoring.

The program started with seven recipients from the Shree Bhumeshwor School (Astam) and expanded three years later to 85 awards made to students from six schools in the Kaski and Syangja Districts. They were Shree Bhumeshwor Lower Secondary, Shree Bhoomeshwor Secondary, Shree Baraha Higher Secondary, Shree Janakalyan Primary, Shree Nu Bahakot Secondary and Shree Kalika Schools (details in the project reports below).

167 **Total Scholarships Awarded to students from 6 schools in 2 Districts**

General Scholarships Awarded in Astam (2013, 2014, 2015) **37**

3 **AVR Scholarships Awarded in Astam** (2013, 2014, 2015)

SAPANA'S STORY: Sapana's mother, Bilmaya, had her leg amputated as a result of an injury that became infected. There were many household duties Bilmaya was unable to perform because of her disability and Sapana's father, Tike, was working in the Middle-East earning money to pay family debts. Sapana was a great help to her mother and family in this difficult situation. However, her school grades suffered because of the extra domestic duties she had to perform and so had little time to study. Sapana was awarded our first AVR scholarship and she was provided with the support she needed to succeed at school.

Photos of scholarship recipients and school award ceremonies.

During one of my field visits to Nepal, I had the opportunity of visiting the homes of all the scholarship recipients in Astam to gauge the impact of the scholarships on students and their families. I spoke to the mother of one recipient and asked how she felt about her daughter receiving a scholarship? She replied that she was surprised and very happy for her daughter and didn't realise she was doing so well at school. She also said "I wasn't able to attend school and I can't help my daughter with her studies... the only way I can help is to do more home duties so my daughter has more time to study." I was struck by how the scholarships not only provided financial support, but the prestige of receiving one shined a spotlight onto recipients and opened a space for them to spend more time studying. I hoped that it would also inspire them to succeed.

Expanding to nearby schools

After two years of working in our computer centre in the village of Astam, we were ready to expand our programs to schools in the nearby villages. We had fine-tuned our selection of reliable computer, internet and power backup equipment that would best work in rural Nepal. We also developed a local support base and understood the knowledge we needed to impart during training that would resonate with local teachers and help ensure project sustainability. Lessons learned from using technology in the classroom was shared as part of program of influencing the way education is conducted in schools more widely.

Our Impact in Astam

- We were able to mentor teachers in their journey to becoming computer literate and being able to integrate technology into their existing teaching practices. We also helped them to refine their process of evaluating and selecting appropriate online resources for their students.
- We helped teachers to use computers as tools for introducing student-centric learning models as part of their teaching strategy. The effective use of technology allowed teachers to challenge their students to reflect on their own understanding. Learner-centric models in teaching were also introduced more broadly to the school by volunteer teachers on our Pathways Program.
- The school was able to effectively use the technology we provided to enhance the learning of the local curriculum and reinforce existing pedagogical practices. The computers were used as presentation tools to promote class understanding of the material in the curriculum. Students were able to use the computers to gathering relevant material to reinforce their understanding.
- Targeted outreach in the community helped to build digital literacy skills that met local needs. We were able to implement computer based education initiatives that impacted hundreds of individuals. Especially youths who were eager to learn IT skills that could give them an advantage when seeking employment.
- The computer centre was an important tool for school administrative tasks and lesson plan development. Class preparation was time-consuming for teachers and the gathering of material from the internet for printing and screen display was used to great effect.
- The centre provided access to online content for the community and was used as communication tool that allowed families to stay connected.
- Our scholarship program helped lower some of the barriers faced by financially disadvantaged children and provided support to encourage them to perform better at school.
- We helped to prepare a generation of Astam children for the future where technology will play an important role in their education and work life.

Photo of children at the Shree Bhumeshwor School during play time on the last day of a RMIT University teacher placement assignment.

2 Bhedabari Computer Centre

In rural Nepal, schools need to have staff with good computer skills to ensure the successful integration of technology into their classrooms. There is no IT Department and support businesses are in the major towns or cities. We spent time in Astam selecting the right equipment, simplifying the troubleshooting process, and refining our training program in preparation for expanding our work to nearby schools. In late 2013, we decided to apply what we had learnt to open a second computer centre in Bhedabari village, located 7km North of Astam. We also delivered training programs to Bhedabari teachers who attended our Astam training programs in previous years. They expressed their confidence in being able to effectively operate a computer centre in their school.

Location

Baraha Higher Secondary School, Bhedabari, Dhital VDC
Students: 180 | Teachers: 13 | Grade: 1 - 10 + pre-primary









Programs completed

1. Computer Centre (2013)
We installed a Dell server with Windows Multipoint Server connected to 10 terminals (thin client connection, LED monitor, keyboard and mouse) that allowed a Microsoft Windows experience for 11 users. The server also included MS Office suite and a variety of educational software. We installed a UPS with a 300AH battery power supply that was able to run the centre for 5 hours without mains power. We also installed a WiFi router and power connectors with circuit protection. The installation was followed by a training program that was delivered by our Education and Training Manager, Ves Raj Banstola, who also provided ongoing support to the school.

2. Scholarships (2014 & 2015)
Students from Bhedabari were included in our scholarship program over two years with a total of 47 general scholarships and 2 AVR scholarships awarded to students in this village. This included two awards made to students who were enrolled at the diploma level and studying veterinary science at the Bhedabari College.

3. Computer Training (2013 & 2014)
Several teachers from the Baraha School attended the two week training program conducted in collaboration with Microsoft Nepal in Astam over two years. Additional teacher training was provided during the course in extension to the introductory material that focused on the use of computers in the classroom.

Photos *(left): the Bhedabari Computer Centre installation and follow-up training; (bottom) scholarship awarded to one of the veterinary science students with his father.*

4 Dhital Computer Centre

Having spent many years building local technical knowledge and a mechanism for regional support, in addition to the successful completion of two computer centres, we were able to confidently tackle our largest project in the Kaski District. Our third computer centre was opened at the Bhoomeshwor School in the village of Dhital as part of our program to create centres for online learning. In terms of student numbers, Dhital was the largest school that we had supported at the time. We were able to install the latest Intel PC and software that made the centre the most advanced and energy efficient computer facility in the region. Our Astam team, who assisted in the Bhedabari project, were able to fully manage the installation and provided technical support to the school. The team helped to build technical capacity in Dhital through training and supported school management in implementing effective strategies for using the centre for the benefit of the community.

Location

Shree Bhoomeshwor Higher Secondary School
Dhital Village, Dhital VDC, Kaski District
Students: 250 | Teachers: 15 | Grade: 1 - 10 + pre-primary

Programs completed

1. Computer centre installation (2014)
We installed a custom built server with Windows Multipoint Server and 15 terminals (thin client connection, LED monitor, keyboard and mouse) that allowed a Microsoft Windows experience for 16 users. The system included MS Office suite and educational software. We also installed a WiFi router, power circuit protection and a UPS backup power supply that would allow the centre to run for around 4 hours without power. The school had internet connection and this was patched through to the centre during the installation.

2. Scholarships (2014 & 2015)
Given the student population, we awarded the greatest number of scholarships to students at this school with a total of 54 general scholarships and 2 AVR scholarships awarded to students from this village.

3. Computer training (2013, 2014)
Several teachers from the Bhoomeshwor School attended our two week training program conducted in collaboration with Microsoft Nepal in Astam over two years. Additional teacher training was provided in extension to the introductory material that focused on the use of computers for primary and secondary school education.

4. Teacher training (2015)
We arranged for two Australian teacher professional development trainers to deliver a 10 day training program to teachers at the Bhoomeshwor Secondary School and several nearby primary schools in the Dhital VDC (see next page).

Photos *(top five): the centre installation process (photos courtesy of Ves Raj Banstola). We initially installed 10 terminals and added another six later in the year; (bottom) one of our Bhoomeshwor School AVR Scholarship recipients with the School Principal.*

SPECIAL PROGRAMS

Teacher Training

In 2015, we made arrangements for two Australian teacher professional development trainers with over 20 years' teaching experience, Ekkehart and Marion Mundana (top photo), to deliver a 10 day training program to teachers at the Bhoomeshwor Secondary School and several nearby schools.

The course was developed to expose teachers to a variety of teaching methods, feedback techniques, organisational strategies and activities that could enhance their classroom practice. The aim was to help local teachers to learn, adopt, and apply new methods within their own classroom settings. The course also helped to build confidence in the application student-centred classroom methodologies.

Each lesson contained: the structure of explicit teaching methods with a review from previous lessons; strategies and classroom organisation presented as icons in order for teachers to gain the meta-knowledge of explicit instruction; feedback on strategies to elicit whole class and individual feedback; and games and activities to consolidate knowledge modelled in order to give teachers the experience of participating in these activities.

The feedback following the course was very positive with teachers reporting that "the strategies were very helpful for teaching". Most felt that they could and would apply the strategies in the classroom and felt comfortable and confident during the course.

Community Outreach

Our Media & Community Relations Manager, Bishow Adhikari with his wife Goma (middle), talking about social work and the Logged On Foundation on Annapurna FM. The success of our first and subsequent projects in the Kaski District would not have been possible without Bishow's help. His community liaison skills and project management abilities were exceptional and he was always eager to promote our work, and the work of many other not-for-profits that he was involved with, to the public. Bishow and his family have worked tirelessly on numerous social support projects that benefited their community and we are very grateful for their support and friendship over the last 10 years.

Top three photos courtesy of Marion Mundana, bottom photo courtesy of Bishow Adhikari.

COMPUTER SCIENCE BECOMES COMPULSARY

Around 2014, we became aware of the Nepal Government's policy to introduce computer science as a compulsory subject which was rolled out to Grades 6 to 8 in the lower secondary schools where we were working. The demand for computers naturally escalated, particularly after 2016. But despite the policy, there were difficulties in purchasing quality computers and their ongoing maintenance for many rural government schools. We were fortunate to have begun and refined our approach prior to this shift so the schools we assisted were ahead in implementing the computer science curriculum. We were happy to share our experiences and knowledge with many schools over the years, although we couldn't always provide equipment given our modest budget. In the last several years, we found more schools were able to access computers suited to rural use given the decreasing cost of quality equipment and an increase in the availability of government and not-for-profit support schemes. There was also vast improvements in the internet infrastructure, particularly with WiMax and fibre optic technology, that provided more reliability connections with higher speeds at lower costs.

Helping smaller schools

There were a number of smaller schools in the Dhital VDC area that sought our help. They were generally primary and lower secondary schools that had around 10 to 80 students in total. Providing a full computer facility was not possible given student numbers and their proximity to our computer centres in nearby schools. They also generally lack the resources to maintain a large computer lab. However, we did help by providing computers for educational use and school administration and found that even one computer was a big help. Given the age of the children, the computers were a great tool for teachers who were eager to add rich content into their teaching such as playing educational videos, showing photos and animations.

3 Shree Janakalyan School

We had a good relationship with the Shree Janakalyan School as it was the closest school to the Shree Bhumeshwor School where we established our first computer centre. Both schools were in the village of Astam. Many students would begin their first few years of schooling at Janakalyan before going to Bhumeshwor. We were able to provide a computer on request, awarded a number of scholarships to their students and placed volunteer Australian teachers at the school. Two of the teachers and the Principal also attended our digital literacy training courses in Astam.

Programs completed

1. Computer (2013)
We provided a Dell desktop computer to the school along with a UPS battery backup power supply. The teachers at the Bhumeshwor School provided teaching and technical support as well as digital educational material to Janakalyan.

2. Scholarships (2014, 2015)
A total of two AVR Scholarships and two General Scholarships were awarded to Janakalyan students as part of our annual scholarship program.

3. Computer training (2013, 2014)
Several teachers from the school attended the two week training program conducted in collaboration with Microsoft Nepal in Astam over two years. Additional teacher training was provided in extension to the introductory material that addressed the use of computers in the classroom during these courses. I also spent time at the school helping with training during my field visits from 2012 to 2014.

4. Volunteer teachers (2014)
Two Australian pre-service teachers from RMIT University were placed in the school for four weeks to work beside local teachers to help with the English communication skills of students.

Location

Shree Janakalyan Primary School
Lower Astam, Dhital VDC |
Students: 35 | Teachers: 4
Grade: 1 - 3 + pre-primary

***Photos** (top): I'm coordinating our assistance program with the Principal and teachers; (bottom) students being introduced to the school's first computer.*

6 Kalika School Resource Centre

Together with our partners *HANDS in Nepal*, we installed an educational resources centre at the Kalika school. The children at the school and their parents were predominantly from the Dalit community - traditionally the most marginalised and poorest group in Nepal. *HANDS* provided a building and library and we provided the computers and peripherals. The centre was built in the summer of 2014 and furnished with custom built cabinets to hold school materials and five tables for the computers with the help of *HANDS*.

Photos *(top): teachers from RMIT University on their first day teaching at the Janakalyan School; (bottom) Kalika welcome ceremony with our Community Relations Manager, Bishow Adhikari, HANDS representative, Jake Peters, members of the community and I in front of the resource centre.*

Location

Shree Kalika Primary School, Dhital, Dhital VDC
Grade 1 - 5 + pre-primary, 50 students + 7 teachers

Programs completed

1. Computer Lab (2014)
We installed three NUC PC computers with Microsoft and educational software and a UPS battery backup power supply. Our Astam team provided technical support and training to the school.

2. Scholarships (2015)
A total of three General Scholarships were awarded to students from this school as part of our annual scholarship award for the Dhital region.

3. Teacher professional development training (2015)
Kalika was one of three schools who participated in our program where we arranged for two Australian teacher professional development trainers to deliver a 10 day training program at the nearby Bhoomeshwor Secondary School.

Himalaya students during a computer science theory class.

7 Himalaya School Computer Lab

Location

Shree Himalaya School, Dhital, Dhital VDC
Students: 85 | Teachers: 8 | Grade: 1 - 5 + pre-primary

Programs completed

1. Computer (2015)
We provided two NUC low power desktop computers with LED monitors and UPS backup power supply with rechargeable lead-acid batteries that would provide power for up to 5 hours during power outages.

2. Scholarships (2015)
A total of 4 General Scholarships were awarded to Himalaya students as part of our annual scholarship award for the Dhital region.

3. Teacher professional development training (2015)
Himalaya was one of three schools who participated in our Dhital teacher professional development seminar delivered by Australian teacher trainers.

We expanded an existing lab (with one computer) at the Himalaya School in Dhital by providing two additional computers and battery backup power supply. Himalaya was located nearby to our largest computer centre in Dhital at the Bhoomeshwor Higher Secondary School.

When we returned to the school the following year, we found that the teachers loaded a substantial number of educational videos and software for student use and the room was used on a daily basis.

The Dhital area was the first location where we established our cluster of computer centres and labs in local schools. The Himalaya project took the total number of schools we helped in this area to six. It was the final computer facility project in the cluster.

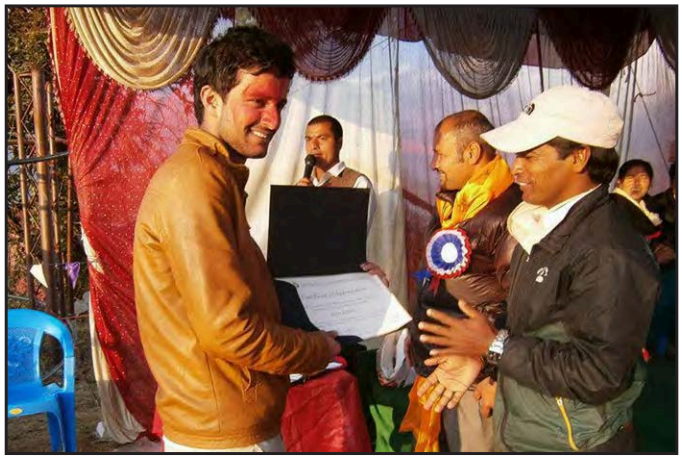
Nepalese volunteers

We had the pleasure of working with many Nepali friends who volunteered their time to work on our projects for the benefit of their community. We have done our best to name those who have made a substantial contribution, but there have been many more who have helped in some way. Their contribution in Nepal has been acknowledged through Logged On Foundation awards, by their community during ceremonies, or they were elected into formal positions or given responsibilities set by their community. Our volunteers have gained experience and developed skills that we sincerely hope will help them in their future endeavours and career.

Photographs
of volunteers helping in our many projects

Computer engineer students from Pokhara University were invited to participate in the installation of our first computer centre outside of the Kaski District at the Shree Nu Bahakot Secondary School in Syangja. Not only did they help with the installation, they were also able to gain technical knowledge and an understanding of the requirements for running a computer facility in rural schools (see page 91).




***Row one**: formation of the Astam Computer Centre technical team and committee, driven primarily by youths and community leaders from the village.*

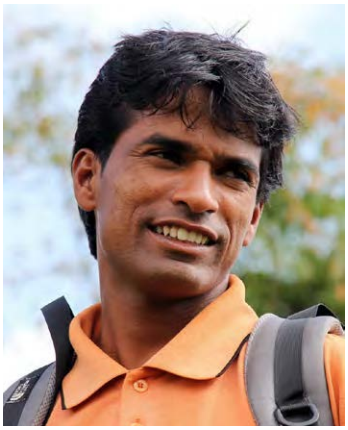
***Row two**: we had many individuals with IT skills help in our computer centres. Amrit Adhikari was one volunteer who taught these skills to community members in Astam. We awarded our Certificate of Appreciation to Amrit along with several of his friends at a community ceremony.*

***Row three**: youths helping each other to navigate Windows at the Baraha Centre and our Training Manager being acknowledged by the school community for his contribution in establishing the centre.*

***Right**: The Syangja community came together to help complete our health project (see page 97 - photo courtesy Sudip Aryal).*

Community Empowerment

Our programs have focused on helping members of the Dalit community. Dalit refers to a social group made up of diverse ethnicities that have been the most systemically marginalised group in Nepal. Dalits are considered to be 'untouchable' in the traditional social hierarchy of the Hindu Varna system. Although outlawed, the intergenerational disadvantage and deeply embedded injustice and inequity is still experienced and many suffer from loss of personal and collective self-respect, physical and economic insecurity, and exploitation of labour are just a few examples.



Leadership

Raju Pariyar, a member of the Dalit Community in Astam, was selected to be the first Chair of the Astam Computer Centre Committee - his first committee leadership position. Over the years, he went on to become the Chairman of the Ward Committee where he is a resident, a member of Astam School Management Committee, a member of Dalit Welfare Management Committee, and a member of the Water Treatment Management Committee.

Raju has accompanied us on a number of projects in other Districts as our principal adviser and translator. His exceptional inter-personal and communicational skills allowed us to effectively understand local needs and issues and to conduct follow-up assessments of our impact in the communities we assisted.

Scholarship support

The picture of education for girls in rural Nepal is often one of ongoing economic and cultural limitations, along with time consuming domestic duties, that keep them from obtaining a quality education. According to the World Bank, investing in adolescent girls is the catalyst poor countries need to break intergenerational poverty and to create a better distribution of income.

This approach is not only fair, it is a smart economic move and our scholarship program was one way that we could help in lowering the barriers girls faced in accessing a quality education. Over 70% of our scholarships were awarded to children from the most marginalised castes. In addition, over 65% of general scholarships were awarded to girls and all AVR scholarships were awarded to girls.

Women's Cooperatives

Dalit women have low status within their own communities, and as such they occupy an even more disadvantaged position than their male counterparts. In addition to scholarships that focused on girls, we embarked on our first project outside of rural government schools and initiated a computer facility and training program that focused specifically on the needs of a women's community group. The Hemja Women's Cooperative helped around 1,000 women and provided support services to its members who are predominately from the Dalit community (see next section). We were encouraged by the results, so decided to open a second computer centre at a women's cooperative in a nearby District a year later (see page 93).

5 Hemja Women's Cooperative

In December 2014, we installed a new computer facility at the Hemja Women's Cooperative (HWC), Hemja Multipurpose building, located around 14km North-West of Pokhara in the town of Hemja. This was our first computer centre and training program that focused on the needs of a women's community group. HWC helped around 1,000 women who came primarily from the traditionally most marginalised groups in Nepal. They provided training programs, support services, and managed a pre-primary day care facility for the benefit of their members.

We received a request for assistance from the group through our Manager of Education and Training, Ves Raj Banstola. We responded by establishing a pilot centre with five computers to deliver digital literacy and vocational education courses. Ves Raj was also involved as a committee member at the HWC and provided ongoing technical assistance and helped to coordinate support and training in this project.

Location

Hemja Women's Cooperative
Hemja Municipality, 1,000+ members

Programs completed

1. Computer (2014)

We installed a server with 5 terminals with LED monitors, keyboards and mice for a Microsoft Windows experience for five users, including MS Office suite and a UPS backup battery power supply.

2. Training (2015 - 2016)

Our Manager of Education and Training provided ongoing support and training and arranged for Samjhana Bhandari from Microsoft Nepal to return to the region to deliver a digital literacy training course to members of the cooperative.

Impact

The computers were installed in a room at the multipurpose building which was full of foot powered sewing machines. Members were trained to sew so they could generate additional household income. When we returned to assess the impact of our project in June 2015, we found:

- Most of the sewing machines were moved to the basement and the Nepal government provided an additional five computers to the centre.
- One of the members took on the role as Centre Trainer after completing a computer literacy qualification. She provided ongoing training and support to members.
- 50 women had been awarded digital literacy certificates after completing an intensive computer training courses coordinated by the Centre Trainer.
- The local youth group, who shared space in the multipurpose building, volunteered their time on an ongoing basis to support the centre and its users.
- The centre was frequently open and being used by college students for study, as a communications facility for families to stay in contact, as an e-library resource, for digital literacy training, and for local business women who, at the time of our visit, were preparing promotional and other materials for their businesses.
- A government approved literacy education program was initiated in the centre to teach illiterate women from the Dalit community basic reading and writing skills. Core to the program was the use of special software that was designed to assist in the teaching of literary skills.

Other Initiatives

Collaboration between schools

We held a number of annual meetings with Principals from all the schools that we supported in attendance. The meetings provided a forum to discuss progress made with the use technology in the classroom, any issues schools faced, and to share solutions and methodologies. It was also an opportunity to assess the impact of our programs and to offer solutions and support where required.

Infrastructure & upgrade project

We provided a number of upgrades to the Astam Computer Centre from 2012 to 2017, placed Australian teachers at the school to help with teaching, and provided a variety of training programs and educational material support.

In 2013, we upgraded internet access at the centre to WiMax - a far more stable and reliable technology for accessing the internet in rural areas. The antenna could also be housed indoors which was a welcomed change since the previous WiFi antenna was on a pole in the middle of the school playground and was hit by lightning several times. Also in 2013, we were experiencing significant issues with power disruptions and equipment damage from lightning and fluctuating mains power. This issue was solved in partnership with the Annapurna Ecovillage Resort by installing an off-grid 300W solar power supply and additional electrical protection equipment. In 2015 and 2017, we updated a number of components in the server and the centre equipment to increase speed and lower power consumption.

In 2017, we were able to secure special donor funding to improve facilities at the school in two areas:

1. Several of the Astam teachers attended a British Council training program in Kathmandu where they were introduced to a variety of pedagogical approaches and the use of appropriate technology in the classroom. They were inspired by the use of LED TVs for education and made a request for one so they could source educational material on a USB drive for display on the TV. A 55" TV was installed in the Astam Computer Centre building.

2. During our visit to the school in late 2017, we found that there were significant improvements made to grade one to five classrooms to create a more child friendly environment. Children were completing work on one large table in collaboration with each other, rooms were painted and educational material and books were available within the classroom. One room remained neglected - the pre-primary classroom. We had the funds to provide new furniture and to paint the walls which included the letters of the alphabet. We also provided new carpet and cushions for seating to provide a more comfortable space for the children to learn.

***Photos** (top): One of our annual School Principals meetings held in Pokhara; (next) the pre-primary classroom before renovation; (next) the classroom after full renovation; (bottom) the new LED TV in the computer centre being used by teachers and Australian volunteer teachers to show educational videos to the students.*

Mustang District 02.

Before the start of winter, schools from the Upper Mustang region near the Tibetan border close their doors because teaching during the extreme cold of winter is not possible. Students and their teachers pack up their belongings and 'migrate' to lower altitudes for around four months of the year to continue their education.

In 2014, we met the teachers and children from six primary schools from the Chhonhup VDC in Upper Mustang soon after they completed their three-day journey from their mountain home at an altitude of around 4,000 metres to the warmer outskirts of the city of Pokhara. The teachers and student from the schools merge together at a rented one room hall building which became the Chhonhup Community Winter School during October to February every year.

The children slept on mattresses a few inches thick on a bare concrete floor and a courtyard at the rear of the building, covered with a plastic tarpaulin and furnished with plastic chairs, was where many classes were taught. Teachers conduct classes during normal school hours and after hours they become the children's carers. The parents either stay in Upper Mustang or went to other parts of Nepal or India for three to four months to earn money to support the family for the coming year.

Over the years, the Chhonhup community collected enough money to purchase land, located 15km West of Pokhara, to build their own winter school but not enough to start construction. In 2015, we contributed seed funding to the Upper Mustang community to commence the school construction project. We also teamed up with our friends from the US based charity, *HANDS in Nepal,* who also contributed to the construction effort. The following year, a large group of Korean donors contributed the significant portion of the funds to complete the first floor of the building. Additional funding from a variety of donors enabled the Winter School Management Community to add a final second floor which was completed in late 2018.

My sincere thanks to Tasi Gurung (photo next page) for coordinating our efforts with the Upper Mustang schools and community and coordinating our visits to the region.

Location

Chhonhup Jinju Primary School (6 schools from the Chhonhup VDC, Upper Mustang), Hemja, Kaski District
Students: 50 | Teachers: 7 | Grade: 1 - 5

8 Chhonhup Winter School

We provided supported to the teachers and children from the Upper Mustang area of Nepal during their winter school stay near Pokhara. This is shown on the Kaski District Map in the previous section (number 8 - page 32). We were also able to visit all of the six schools in Upper Mustang in April 2016 and for a second time in September 2016 to conduct follow-up assessment with the teachers and Principals. The map below shows the schools we visited which formed the Chhonhup Winter School community:

1. Buddha Primary, Namgyal | **2**. Phawa Primary, Phuwa
3. Brendra Primary, Thingar | **4**. Bhrikuti Primary, Kimling
5. Saraswati Primary, Nyamdo
6. Dibya Gihyan Primary, Chungjung

Programs completed

1. School building program (2017)
We were the first organisation to contribute seed funding in 2015 to commence the planned construction of the winter school in 2016. There were many donors and the school building was completed in 2017 with the second floor extension completed in 2018 (see top photo).

2. School resource (2015)
We provided educational support by purchasing much needed educational materials for the academic year - textbooks, library books, pens, writing books, posters and other writing and learning materials requested by the school Principal.

3. Teacher placement program (2015 - 2016, 2018)
We placed an Australian teacher at the school for three months to contribute to teaching in collaboration with the local teachers. The placement also included a program to introduce a number of pedagogical approaches to local teachers so they could introduce them into their teaching practices (see next section). We also placed four teachers from RMIT University for a short placement into the school in late 2018 to assist with teaching.

***Photos** (top): the completed winter school building; (bottom top - left): I'm meeting the Principal and teachers at the school for the first time in 2014; (bottom top - centre & left) distributing educational material that was purchased for the school; (bottom - left) plaque presented by Tasi Gurung, our Upper Mustang Coordinator, that was mounted in the new school building acknowledging our contribution; (bottom - centre & right) the outdoor classrooms at the winter school rented building prior to the completion of the new building.*

Early Career Leadership

Monica Lamperd was the first participant in our Early Career Leadership Program. The program was a leadership development and skills-strengthening opportunity for passionate, creative and determined individuals who recently completed or were in their final year of study in the areas of education, development studies, engineering or other fields that were complementary to our core development areas. The program provided leadership training and identified and built on the strengths of participants as leaders. The program also had a Nepal placement component where participants could put their skills into action and contribute to long-term community development goals.

Monica first went to Nepal in 2014 on our Pathways Program teaching English at the Shree Bhumeshwor School in Astam. She developed valuable skills for teaching English as a second language and fell in love with the country.

She returned to Nepal on the Leadership Program a year later and spent three months teaching at a boarding school for children from the Upper Mustang region. She worked with local teachers to develop educational resources with a focus on improving the reading and communications skills of the children. She also worked on the professional development of teachers and helped them to plan classroom activities and prepare teaching resources. Monica was appointed the Pathways Program Coordinator following the assignment.

Teaching kids in Nepal

Andrew Rogers

A DONCASTER East teacher is educating students at home and abroad thanks to a charity working with disadvantaged and remote communities in Nepal.

Monica Lamperd is back home after working in Asia as a volunteer teacher in 2014 through the Logged On Foundation.

Her stint included spending three months at a boarding school in a remote mountainous area.

Ms Lamperd said Logged On's work included building computer centres, offering scholarships, providing funds to buy school books and other supplies, and placing Australian volunteer teachers in Nepalese schools. The music teacher at Rosanna Golf Links Primary School described the work as "transformative".

"I've since committed to an ongoing relationship with this school," she said.

The earthquake which killed 8000 people last April has also left thousands of students studying in tents and temporary shelters as the country continues to rebuild, Ms Lamperd said.

"Logged On is currently fundraising to rebuild a school in one of the most severely earthquake-affected areas," she said.

The foundation has produced a film about its work in the remote community, with a screening to be held at RMIT on June 4.

Details: loggedon.org.au

Monica Lamperd teaching Nepalese children.

***Photos** (top): newspaper article about Monica's work in Nepal; (below) some of the schools we visited in Upper Mustang in 2016. The infrastructure with no heating means schooling is impossible during winter; (bottom - right) Monica working with a local teacher at the winter school near Pokhara.*

SPECIAL PROJECTS

Nepal earthquake

On the 25 April 2015, a 7.8 magnitude earthquake struck Nepal seriously affecting around a third of the national population. Nearly 9,000 people were killed, 22,000 injured, and entire villages flattened leaving hundreds of thousands of people homeless.

The epicentre of the earthquake was in the Gorkha District with hundreds of tremors occurring across the country's central-Eastern region for many months. The largest was a 7.3 magnitude aftershock occurring on 12 May 2015 in the Dolakha District.

Government records show that over 33,000 classrooms from 7,923 public schools in 32 districts were condemned with 90% of schools destroyed in the worst affected districts. Almost one million children were unable to attend school in the immediate aftermath and aid agencies expressed serious concerns for the future of millions of traumatised children and their vulnerability to disease.

Within a few days of the disaster, we put out a call for support, arranged fundraising events, and commenced planning an aid strategy with our Nepal team. Five weeks later in late May, our Nepal team and I came together in Nepal to implement our program aimed at helping to repair and revive schools affected by the disaster.

We entered both Dolakha and Gorkha Districts to provide aid to six schools and helped one school in the Tanahun District. The quakes' greatest impact was in the remote rural areas and this is where we decided to focus our efforts, although it made the response very challenging, more expensive and sometimes dangerous.

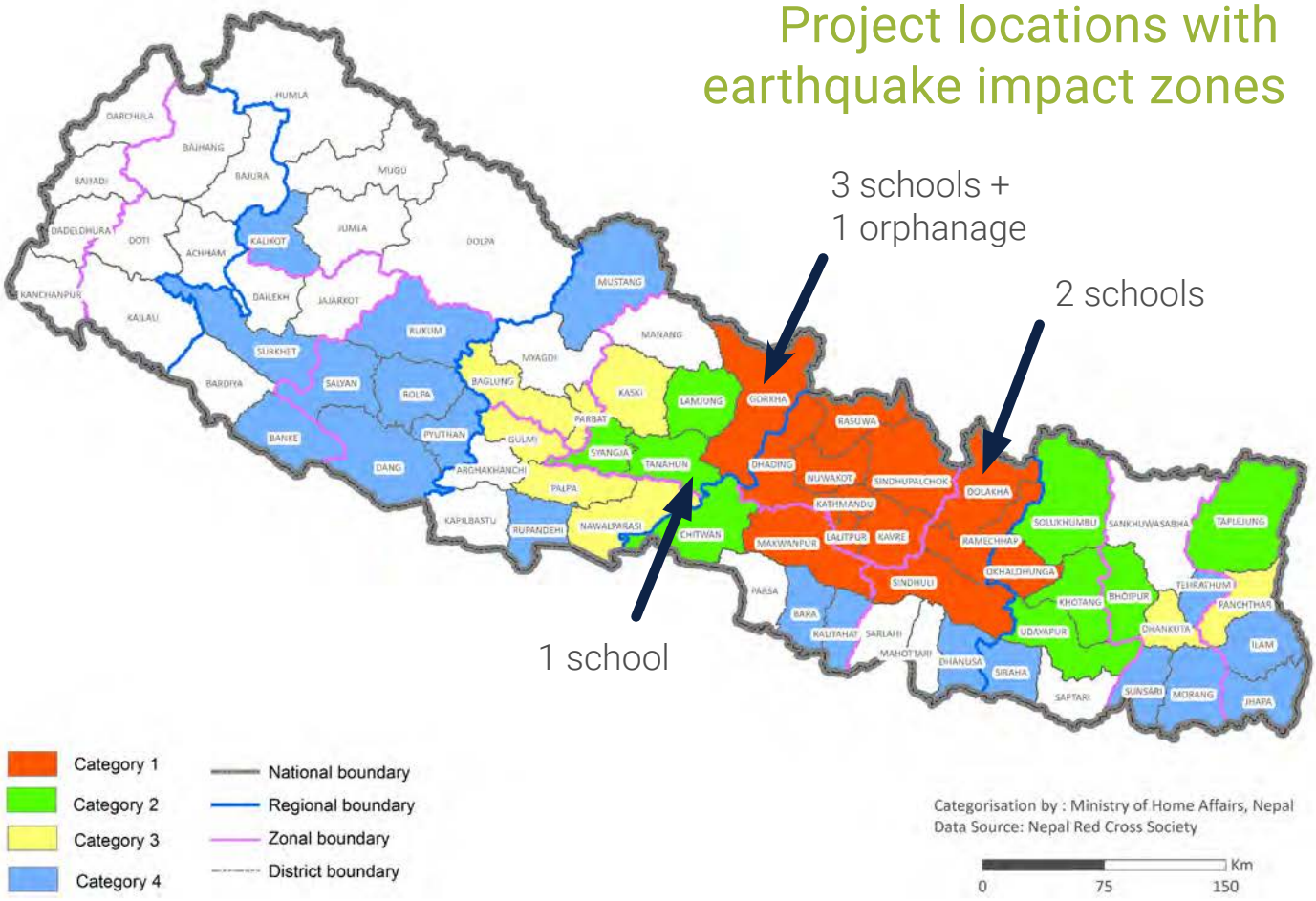
We discussed what the most pressing needs of the schools were with government officials, the local UNDP representatives, school Principals and community leaders. Having considered carefully their needs and how we could best source local resources that were within our budget, our aid program focused on three core areas: assistance in constructing temporary classrooms; ensuring the health of children; and providing educational material for children and schools.

The earthquake occurred on a Saturday at a time when most people, at least in the rural areas, were outdoors. It was also the only day of the week children do not attend school. When I arrived at the schools in the Gorkha District and saw the level of destruction, I couldn't help but think about how many tens of thousands of children would have been killed if it happened any other day.

We concluded our aid program in July 2015. Our team and I were proud of what we were able to achieve with a modest amount of funding and in a very short time frame. We were also able to deliver projects in three districts for the first time. The relationships struck with communities in two of those districts grew over the years and enabled us to expand our educational assistance programs to more schools in Nepal.

Children at the Himalaya School in the Gorkha District in a makeshift classroom fabricated in the ruins of a school building destroyed in the earthquake.

Project locations with earthquake impact zones



Aid program focus areas

With an estimated one million children left without access to proper classrooms, there was an urgent need to help schools create a safe space for children to learn. We were able to help schools in the following way.

Classroom construction

We provided roofing material and steel trusses so temporary classrooms able to withstand the heavy rains in the monsoon season could be constructed.

Health & hygiene

Aid agencies warned of the potential for the spread of waterborne diseases. We installed slow sand water filtration and storage systems into schools.

Educational material

We provided teaching materials to schools, and bags, pencils, pens and notepads to children to help them return to a ‘normal’ routine.

Our assessment

In the communities we assisted, we found many families living in shelters made of corrugated iron sheets and plastic tarpaulins adjacent to their damaged homes. The families whose homes were not destroyed slept in makeshift shelters at night because of the fear that their homes would collapse in one of the many tremors that went on for months. Access to adequate water and sanitation facilities were also seriously affected.

At their schools, classrooms were either seriously damaged or completely destroyed and the toilets were also destroyed. Teachers conducted classes in either tents, existing buildings that had their walls demolished (because they were in danger of collapse), or in makeshift structures that were constructed from bamboo or salvaged timber with corrugated iron (CGI) sheets or tarpaulins for the roof and walls. These materials were either purchased or salvaged from the rubble.

UNICEF warned that children in Nepal faced an unprecedented emotional toll as they dealt with the devastating consequences of the disaster. When I spoke to the children about how they felt, they told me about how they cried when they saw the destruction at their school. They were very distressed by the death of loved ones, the destruction in their communities, and the frequent aftershocks.

Project imperatives

The earthquake struck on 25 April and the second major aftershock on 12 May 2015. Nepal's monsoon season starts around early July and ends around late September. We commenced our work in Nepal on 30 May and had little time to implement our program before the start of the rains. With the monsoons comes muddy and unstable roads with a higher risk of landslides. Towards the end of June, we experienced disruptions to our schedule three times because of landslides.

Roads are difficult and sometimes impossible to travel on in the monsoon season. The transport of materials to the schools at this time was not an option for us. The priority was the completion of structurally sound temporary classrooms before the start of the rains. We were therefore focused on transporting the materials needed for their construction as quickly as possible.

Also, schools were not permitted to start rebuilding permanent classrooms until the government formulated a reconstruction policy and set national earthquake resistant school building requirements. The immediate policy was for schools to use tents or available material to build Temporary Learning Centre (TLC) so teaching could resume as quickly as possible.

TOTAL DESTRUCTION

UNICEF estimated that nearly one million children were severely affected.

Classrooms and the homes of children were either seriously damaged or completely destroyed. The *Save the Children* Country Director stated that "we are extremely concerned about the emotional well-being of children and the fear and distress they will feel after having their lives ripped out from beneath them."

TEMPORARY CLASSROOMS

The Nepal Education Ministry estimated that it would take at least three years to overcome the impact of the disaster and run classes in permanent structures.

Communities came together to build temporary classrooms or TLC from salvaged materials, tarpaulins and corrugated iron sheets. NGOs and the government also distributed tents to schools so classes could resume as quickly as possible.

REBUILDING SCHOOLS

Rebuilding was put on hold until a national policy was developed. The National Reconstruction Authority was established in late December 2015 to direct rebuilding efforts.

The Authority reported at the end of 2018 that 55 percent of schools had been fully reconstructed while a further 25 percent were under construction. The Authority's CEO stated that "we are working towards achieving the goal of completing the rebuilding task within the next two years," which was around six years after the disaster.

Our response

In response to community requests, project imperatives, our budget and the resources available in the communities where we worked, we decided to focus our aid effort in three core areas.

Health

When people are living in temporary shelters and toilets are destroyed, the resulting disruption to normal hygiene and sanitation practices increases the risk of disease. The greatest risk comes from drinking contaminated water, especially during the monsoon season when rains flush contaminants into the water supply.

Access to clean drinking water in rural areas can be a challenge at the best of times. A 2011 government survey found that 82% of drinking water supplies in Nepal are contaminated with faecal bacteria. About 11% of Nepali children have diarrhoea at any one time, which contributes to school absenteeism and the stunting that affects more than a third of the nation's children (UNICEF Nepal WASH Annual Report 2014).

During field visits and emergency relief meetings in the Gorkha District among NGOs, INGOs and the government, I noted that there was little attention being paid to the implementation of a longer-term water treatment solution. Agencies that were working in water and sanitation were focused on emergency response using chemical water treatment solutions; mainly in the form of purification tablets or small ceramic/activated carbon filter units.

We decided to help with access to safe drinking water by installing a slow sand water filtration system at three school. This was a medium to long-term solution that could adequately service schools with a large student population on a daily basis.

In 2011, I became aware of a health research project near the location of our first project in the Kaski District. The project was funded under the auspices of the Japan International Cooperation Agency and was a collaborative effort between Japanese Universities and the Nepal Medical College. Their project was aimed at improving the health condition and livelihood of the community by improving the quality of the local drinking water. They designed and installed a slow sand water filtration system in a number of schools and conducted research and health checks of children and adults over several years. At the conclusion, the researchers were able to demonstrate that the system was very reliable in improving community health.

The filtration system was also a reliable solution because it had a low installation cost and was simple to maintain with little training. It had the advantage over other methods because local materials could be used in its construction and local people could install and maintain the system. This made it the best option for our project.

This system was, to the best of my knowledge, the first non-chemical and sustainable medium-size water treatment solution installed in rural communities in the aftermath of the disaster. It was our response to help reduce the risk of serious disease outbreaks in the communities we assisted. We also wanted to provide a sustainable solution to the ongoing issue of children not attending school because of illness caused by contaminated drinking water.

Water filtration system with three buckets (plus a fourth spare) and the holding tank in the foreground. Unfiltered water trickles into the top bucket and then passes through coarse grain sand. The water is then feed into a second bucket with sand of a finer particle size. The same process occurs through a third fine sand filter before it enters the holding tank ready to drink. Maintenance lies almost wholly in the cleaning of the filter-beds. No chemicals or other materials are needed in the process.

Temporary classrooms

The focus of the government, NGOs, and INGOs in the Gorkha District at the time we arrived was on providing CGI sheets to households before the start of the monsoon season, or a cash equivalent that families could use for other purposes if they had no need for CGI sheets. Our focus was on providing help to schools that received little or no assistance from other organisations.

During our survey of these schools, we found that classrooms constructed from brick or stones with no reinforcement suffered from serious damage or were totally destroyed while reinforced solid concrete buildings were relatively untouched. Classrooms built with steel frames or trusses, with a CGI roof, remained intact, but any brick/stone walls in these structures that did not have crossbeam support had collapsed.

Based on our observations and discussions with our Nepal team and the communities we assisted, we decided to either install Temporary Learning Centres (TLC) made of steel trusses with CGI roofing or only contribute CGI sheets to support the schools in their own construction efforts. This was a solid solution and achievable given our budget and project constraints.

Our steel truss TLC were robust and could potentially last for many decades. The roof was made of welded frames bolted to support beams that were fixed in reinforced concrete foundations. CGI sheets were fixed to the roof using metal fixtures. The structure could withstand earthquakes and high winds.

It had the additional benefits of being able to be constructed, transported and installed in schools before the start of monsoons for immediate use. Bamboo/wood and tent TLC would eventually need to be removed once construction of permanent buildings began, but the steel TLC could remain as permanent structures. After the rains, walls could be built around the frames according to government rebuilding requirements.

Education & welfare

After two devastating earthquakes and countless aftershocks, *Save the Children* and *UNICEF* both elaborated on the potential psychological trauma, stating that it could take years for some affected children to recover emotionally.

Our efforts were focused on supporting schools as they did their best to create a child friendly learning environment and re-establish familiar routines. Creating a stable and friendly environment was one step towards helping children overcome the trauma of the disaster.

In addition, we provided teaching materials such as chairs and whiteboards for their classrooms. We also gave educational materials directly to the children which included school bags, pencils, pens and notepads. These gift not only helped them with their studies, but assured them that there was an international community concerned with their welfare.

Our in-country adviser, Sudip Aryal, and Gorkha aid coordinator, Sital Muskey, inspect metal trusses we commissioned, destined for two schools in the Gorkha District.

***Photos** (right): school stationery and other supplies being delivered to the Chandra Kala School in the Gorkha District; (bottom) the modes of transport taken to our project sites on what was very difficult and sometimes dangerous roads. Materials we provided to schools in the Gorkha District were transported using tractors as they were the only vehicles that could travel on the damaged roads. We were able to access other schools by truck or four-wheel drive vehicles that frequently got bogged (bottom photo courtesy of Kavita Thapa).*

Gorkha District 03.

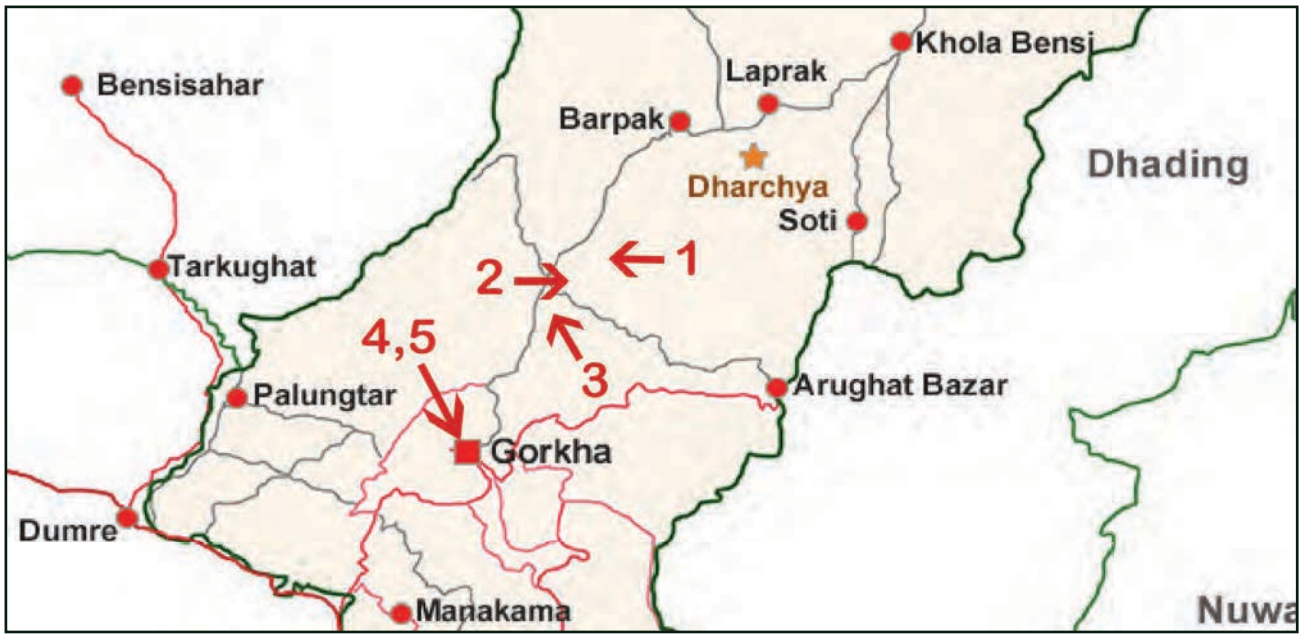
We entered Gorkha for the first time in June 2015 to help four schools recover from the earthquake. We were able to build strong relationships with a number of communities during the delivery of our aid program and, as a result, continued to deliver projects in this district for many years.

All of the schools we helped in Gorkha were within 30km of the epicentre of the largest in a series of earthquakes and tremors that struck Nepal. We found many communities completely destroyed and traumatised by the loss of their friends, family and livelihoods. But the people in Gorkha were also resolute in returning their lives to normal. Communities came together very quickly to build temporary homes and construct makeshift classrooms. The children were able to returned to school within a matter of weeks.

Most of our aid efforts were concentrated on three schools, helping them to return to a normal routine and run classes as best they could in what were very difficult circumstances. We discussed what the most pressing needs of the schools were with the UNDP regional coordinator, government officials and the school Principals before we finalised our aid program. I am particularly grateful to the District Education Office for granting us permission to work in Gorkha at short notice and for their support and advice.

The last organisation we helped in Gorkha during our earthquake aid program was an orphanage that was making preparations to take in children who were orphaned in the disaster. We returned to Gorkha in September 2015 and decided to continue our support of the orphanage by initiating a Child Sponsorship Program.

Accepting a letter of authority from Hari Aryal, District Education Officer, to conduct work in schools in the District.



+5
4 schools + an orphanage

1,850
Individuals impacted

+11
Projects completed

+20
Children sponsored

1 Shree Himalaya Higher Secondary School

Himalaya was the first school we assisted in Gorkha. It was here that I was first able to grasp the magnitude of the disaster when I saw the buildings that were once classrooms for 650 children reduced to rubble. The school, located around 10km from the epicentre, was recommended to us by the UNDP Gorkha Coordinator, Sudip Aryal, as one in need of help.

This was the largest school that we assisted in terms of student numbers. The children were being taught in 12 temporary classrooms, or Temporary Learning Centres (TLC), all congregated within a tight space of around 1,000 square metres. The classrooms had no walls, were constructed of wooden frames with corrugated iron (CGI) roofing, and many were overcrowded with the largest containing 87 students.

Most of the TLC were constructed on nearby land that was rented to the school until debris could be removed from the school grounds. The first priority was to build TLC from salvaged and purchased materials followed by the more arduous task of clearing debris to make way for reconstruction efforts in the future.

I was impressed with how quickly the community was able to come together to erect the TLC in a very short amount of time, especially in light of the fact that many of them had to build temporary homes for their own families. It took around two weeks to build a makeshift school where 20 teachers were able to run classes for all 650 children.

TLC was a term that was readily adopted by the staff at all the schools I visited. What appeared at first to be a slightly cumbersome reference to a simple structure was actually empowering language. This was reflected in the pride expressed by the people involved in their construction when I was video interviewing them for our *Earth-Q* documentary (see page 84). The community was determined to direct their energy towards creating a functional learning space so children could resume their schooling quickly. There was a sense of purpose in ensuring that the future prospects for their children would not be compromised by this disaster.

Location

Saurpani, Ward 4, Gorkha District
650 students | grades 1 to 12 + pre-primary

Projects completed

1. Temporary classrooms (2015)

We installed temporary classrooms to help with the overcrowding in existing TLC using steel trusses and 28 CGI sheets for the roof. The size of the trusses built, 6 x 9 metres, was the equivalent of two classrooms. Ten bags of concrete for the foundations and roof installation equipment were supplied, including the funds for the hiring of labour for the installation of the structure. The school planned to install walls around the structure after the monsoon season so the temporary classrooms would become a permanent addition to the school.

2. Slow sand water filter (2015)

We installed a slow sand water filtration system with a 1,000 litre holding tank and 500 litre filtered water tank with all necessary fittings and spare materials for its maintenance. Training was also provided to the school along with a maintenance manual and supplies. The system was configured so it would be able to meet the safe drinking water needs of the students, teachers and nearby households on a daily basis.

Impact

- We provided a medium-term safe drinking water solution for 800+ individuals.
- We installed TLC to help the school create a safe child friendly learning environment.

Children at the Himalaya drinking filtered water from the system we installed.

Photos *(top): the state of one of the Himalaya School buildings following the earthquake. Any salvageable wood or CGI sheets were removed and used in the construction of TLCs; (bottom) TLCs were constructed around two weeks after the earthquake so classes could resumed as quickly as possible.*

***Photos**: (left) photo of our two classroom contribution to Himalaya. This steel structure would eventually be walled and fitted to become a permanent building (photo courtesy of the school); (bottom) inside one of the tent classrooms at the Jalakanyadavi school.*

2 Shree Jalakanyadavi Secondary School

Jalakanyadavi lost six classrooms and the only structure that withstood the quake was a new building completed several years before and made of reinforced concrete. The 350 students at the school were either being taught in the new building, sometimes two classes being conducted in the one room, or in one of the tents that were located at the entrance to the school. The school had space on the roof of the new building for the installation of the second truss we commissioned in Nepal.

Location

Taku Majhlakuribot, Gorkha District
350 students | grades 1 to 10 + pre-primary

Projects completed

1. Permanent classrooms (2015)

We commissioned a 9 x 18 metres truss structure that was used to construct four classrooms. The materials provided included pre-welded frames, 74 CGI sheets for the roofing, installation materials including concrete for the support beams, and transport and labour costs. These classrooms were fixed onto the roof of the new building to become permanent classrooms. Tarps were used as temporary walls and the plan was to install permanent walls around the trusses when reconstruction efforts commenced.

Impact

We installed four permanent classrooms to help the school provide child-friendly teaching spaces and eliminate the need for overcrowded classrooms or teaching in tents which would be an issue during the monsoon. We anticipated that the structure would last for many decades.

The tents and CGI classroom at the entrance to the Jalakanyadavi School that were constructed before our arrival.

3 Shree Chandra Kala Lower Secondary School

Location

Tamalabot - 9, Arukharka, Gorkha District | 250 students | grades 1 to 8 + pre-primary

I wrote to our donors mid-2015 to report on the successful completion of our earthquake aid program. I said that the Tamalabot community has some of the warmest and most welcoming people that I have encountered in my 22 years in the Himalayas. They were tireless in helping the school and our team to complete our work.

The school was recommended to us by the District Education Officer because the community was predominantly composed of Barhamu people, a highly marginalised indigenous group and one of 59 indigenous peoples recognised by the Nepal government. Although they have been strongly influenced by Hindu culture, they have their own original animist culture and Shaman tradition.

The school was completely destroyed except for one building which was being used as the Principal's Office and pre-primary classroom. This building was condemned by the government as structurally unsound and requiring demolition despite its ongoing use.

Chandra Kala is located at the end of a road that was difficult to traverse and only accessible by tractor. It took over three hours to travel 38km from Gorkha Bazar where we collected the materials for delivery to the school. During our first visit, we brought teaching materials and installed a water filtration system that would service the school and nearby households. There was also a lack of stationary and the children had never owned a school bag to carry their books to class. So we decided to return two week later to deliver school bags and stationery for the students and additional teaching materials for the school.

In between those two trips, I stopped in Kathmandu on my way to the Dolakha District and was able to visit a factory that made school bags. We ran through a few design options and then placed an order for 250 bags that were manufactured and delivered to Gorkha the following week.

I wanted to help the school with metal trusses for temporary classrooms similar to the ones we installed in the other Gorkha schools, but there was no space available at the time to install the structure before the monsoon season. The existing TLCs could not be moved either. They were built on two small terraced patches of

land perched on a hill overlooking the remains of the school. The narrow pathway in front of the TLCs were less than two metres wide with a steep drop over the edge. It serviced 250 children rushing between classes.

I returned to the Tamalabot community in September 2015 to film a story about the difficulty the school faced in providing a quality education for its children. The completed film, *Earth-Q* (page 84), gives voice to the concerns of teachers and parents and highlights the struggles children face learning in the makeshift school. Some of those struggles were summed up by the Chairwomen of the School Management Committee during an interview when she said the children "have to go up to school on rocky and hilly tracks that are difficult to walk. While they are studying and it rains, they can't hear properly. When it gets sunny the tin roof gets hot. After it rains the floor is flooded and muddy, it's a disaster! When it's sunny, the floor is dusty!"

In 2016, we were able to secure permission from the Gorkha District Education Office to commence a reconstruction project and help build a permanent four-classroom brick and concrete building, with capacity to add an upper floor for an additional four rooms at a later date. The building was constructed using a government approved, earthquake resistant design.

The reconstruction was started in 2017 but put on hold while another building funded by the Japanese Aid Agency JICA was completed. I am happy to report that the building was completed and acknowledge contributions to funding made by Rotary Melbourne, the local Ward Committee and the Nepal government.

***Photos** (top & bottom): inside one of the TLC constructed by the community at Chandra Kala School.*

Projects completed

1. Stationary & school supplies (2015)

We distributed 500 notepads, 750 pencils, 250 erasers and pencil sharpeners, 250 pens and 250 school bags to the children. We supplied five whiteboards with markers and erasers and ten chairs to the school.

2. Water filtration system (2015)

We commissioned the installation of a slow sand water filtration system with a 1,000 litre holding tank and 500 litre filtered water tank which provided clean drinking water to the school community. The system was delivered and installed with plumbing, metal fixtures and a concrete base to support the tanks and training on its maintenance was provided on the day of installation.

3. School rebuilding program (2019)

We were the principle sponsor of the construction of a permanent four room earthquake resistant 6 x 22 metre building. The building, constructed of brick and reinforced concrete beams and concrete roof, was used as classrooms, computer lab and library for the school. The building was constructed in a manner that would allow for a second story to be added if additional rooms were required.

Impact

- We helped to construct an earthquake resistant school building that will be used by the community to teach generations of students.
- We provided a clean drinking water system that benefited over 300 individuals.
- Supplies provided to the school and stationary and bags for all the children helped the school return to a normal teaching routine and the children to overcome the trauma of the earthquake.

***Photos** (right): the 'handover' of the water filtration system with maintenance manual to Chandra Kala Principal and teachers; (bottom) the completed four classroom building that we helped to build at the Chandra Kala school.*

Supporting orphaned children

Child sponsorships

4

Location

Bal Mandir Orphanage
Chhahare, Gorkha Bazar, Gorkha District | 20 orphans sponsored

***Photo** (top): The first donation made to the orphanage in 2015 that marked the start of a multi-year relationship. Sital in a white t-shirt is handing the donation to the Principal; (bottom) Bibash was the first child sponsored, a 13 year old boy in Gorkha whose father died when he was nine years old and his mother abandoned him when she remarried. When I first met Bibash in 2015, he said he wanted to be an engineer. In 2019, he was accepted into a Diploma of Business course and was awarded a full scholarship.*

At the end of our relief work in Gorkha and having successfully helped three schools in the District, a final request was made to help an orphanage. I visited the Bal Mandir Orphanage on my final day in Gorkha and saw that they were also heavily impacted by the earthquake. The Principal was making preparations to take in more children who had lost one or more of their parents in the disaster.

Our project coordinator in Gorkha, Sital Maskey, is a well-respected businessman and philanthropist in the District. It was through Sital's efforts and extensive network that we were able to complete our aid efforts. Not only were we successful at getting materials and transport at a time of shortage, competing with international and local NGOs, we were also able to complete commissioned projects and have them delivered and installed in schools within a matter of weeks.

After receiving and declining two offers of a wage for his outstanding efforts, I thought it would be polite to offer one last time. There was a partial acceptance the third time. Sital said "I cannot take the money for me, I am happy to give my time, but if you want to give, give it to an orphanage where I am Chairman." I accepted his request and made a donation to the Bal Mandir Orphanage.

The orphanage, located within the Shree Bal Mandir School complex, lost an entire floor of an accommodation building. Some of the children were moved to a room in the lower floor and the rest of the children were forced to sleep in tents on the school playing field.

The Principal, Lumnath Lamichhane, was approached by community leaders in Gorkha about taking on more children who were orphaned in the disaster. Space was very limited, but when I returned in September 2015, Lumnath had taken on four new children and was doing his best to make arrangements for more.

The children were living in difficult conditions due to the lack of quality accommodation. Following discussions with Lumnath and Sital, I thought that we could support them through a child sponsorship program, similar to the programs offer by some of the large charities. I decided to start the program by becoming the sponsor of one of the children, Bibash's, with a commitment to finding sponsors for all the children. I put a photo of

***Photos** (top): Some of the children, Sital Musky, Chair of the Orphanage Management Committee (to my right), Lumnath Lamichhane, Principal (far left), and our in-country adviser, Sudip Aryal (behind), after the successful completion of our 2017 water project.*

Bibash on my Facebook page with an appeal to friends to sponsor a child. In a short amount of time I found sponsors for all the children.

For over six years, we worked with Bal Mandir to create lasting and meaningful changes by supporting the children through years of schooling, and by helping to maintain a positive living and learning environment. The contribution from sponsors were used for educational and living expenses including food, hiring caretakers, clothes and educational materials. Some of the funds were used to improve infrastructure at the orphanage which was a priority for several years after the earthquake.

Child sponsorships were an effective and rewarding way for donors to help create positive futures for the children. We kept donors in contact with their sponsored child through an exchange of letters and provided annual progress reports. All of the children understood and appreciated that there were families in other countries that were genuinely concerned for their welfare. That understanding and the exchange of personal letters was empowering and gave many of the children more confidence about their future.

LIVING EXPENSES

Sponsorships covered all living expenses from food, hiring caretakers, extra-curricular activities, cloths and educational materials. We also supported the orphanage so they could maintain a healthy and happy community.

MEANINGFUL CHANGE

We helped to create lasting change by supporting children through years of schooling. We received regular updates on each child that we pass onto sponsors. We pass on gifts and letters to the children from their sponsor.

SPECIAL PROJECTS

We provided infrastructure support that have helped to create a safe and child friendly environment. We have also delivered special programs to the orphanage that have helped the children to succeed at school.

Sponsor story

In 2018, Jacqui Mallaby visited Bal Mandir to meet Purnima, the child she has been sponsoring for several years. Jacqui also assisted in collecting letters from the children for their sponsors on our behalf. I would like to share one of the emails she sent to me below.

***Photos** (top): Jacqui with some of the children at the 'hotel at the school'; (bottom) children learning how to juggle (photos courtesy of Jacqui).*

"I then went to meet the rest of the children staying in the 'hotel at the school'. Lumnath explained he does not refer to the children as orphans as this may impact negatively on them."

Dear Mark

Saturday I was introduced by Lumnath to the English class where Purnima was attending. I was invited to speak to the class about Christmas and what it means in Australia as this was their subject for the week. I then went to meet the rest of the children staying in the 'hotel at the school'. Lumnath explained he does not refer to the children as orphans as this may impact negatively on them. I think this is great! It was another great example that he really has these children's best interests at heart and loves them all so much. I definitely got the sentiment the children really loved him.

When the children had finished classes he called them all to the office where we sat and chatted for a while. Afterwards they began working on their Christmas cards for their sponsors.

They are WONDERFUL and I will send them to you on my return. I was able to spend a little time speaking with Purnima, Kumari, Saraswoti, Aas, Suman, and Bishal. I taught Suman and Bishal to juggle. They were very excited to learn and got the hang of it quickly. They were so good at sharing the balls that we had to juggle!

It was difficult to communicate with the girls in English except for Aas who they kept looking to for help to interpret. Kumari was very confident and outgoing and she was keen to learn juggling also! Purnima and Saraswoti were very very shy but were wonderful at taking care of little Saroj (6 years old). At one time he came into the girl's room crying - he was tired the poor little fella, so Purnima put him on Bishal's bed and he immediately went to sleep.

It was getting to the end of the day and time for their food. I returned the next day and took Purnima, Saraswoti and Suman shopping for clothes. I watched school assembly and was introduced to all the staff.

That's today's report. To sponsor Purnima and then finally go to Nepal to see her and the other children was such a heart-warming experience. I would love to come back soon and see how they have all grown and progressed in their lives.

Regards

Jacqui

Stories of a few of the children we have supported at Bal Mandir

SARASWOTI

Saraswoti lived with her parents in a remote village in Gorkha until her father was killed when a large rock fell on him during the 2015 earthquake.

She has one younger brother, Suman, who lives at the orphanage and two older sisters. One sister is possibly in Malaysia (she doesn't know) and her other sister went back to her village to attend school.

Because of the accommodation shortage at Bal Mandir, Saraswoti stayed with her mother's sister in Gorkha under the financial support of Bal Mandir. She eventually moved into the orphanage after the completion of a new building.

Her mother visited Saraswoti on occasion. She was believed to be suffering from a severe mental illness since her husband's death and no one knows where she goes or where she lives. Saraswoti is doing very well at school and wants to become a nurse.

ASHOK

After the death of Ashok's father, his mother became a caretaker at Bal Mandir. In early 2015, she became ill with cancer and was unable to care for him, so the orphanage took responsibility for his welfare. She passed away the following year.

Ashok has a younger brother who was living at the orphanage with his mother and a sister who Ashok was living with until she got married. The husband did not want him in the household so he went to live with his grandfather who lived 3km away from the orphanage. It was difficult for Ashok to go to Bal Mandir every day and his grandfather struggled to support him since he spent most of his money on his daughter's cancer treatment. He eventually moved in with his brother.

Ashok struggled after his mother's death and his teachers said that "he feels responsible for his brother and has to be strong for him."

Ashok recently passed the district exams and was accepted into a Diploma of Commerce and Business course in a college 140km away. Although he received a scholarship to study at the college, he continues to receive support from Bal Mandir for living expenses.

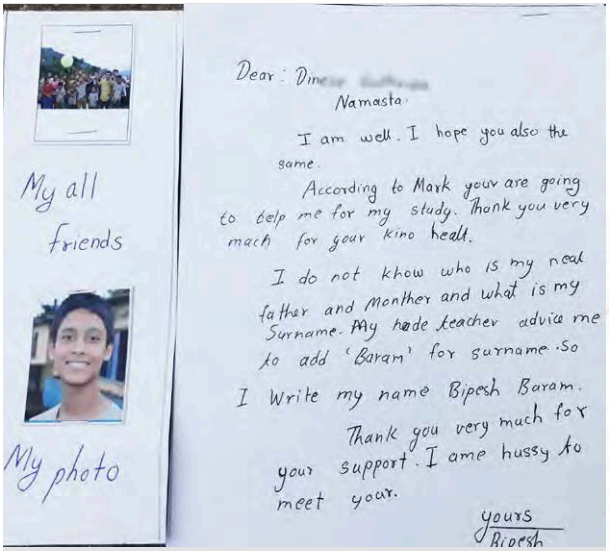
DIPESH

Dipesh was abandoned on the side of the road as an infant and no one knows who his parents were. A woman who was an orphan herself took him in and cared for him despite the fact that she was also homeless and with no partner or family. She eventually got a job as a shepherd of goats in the Coplang area of the Gorkha District, but she met with an accident and broke her hip and was unable to continue her work. Her injury and loss of income meant she was no longer able to care for Dipesh. She heard about Bal Mandir on the community radio so she approached the Principal for help.

Dipesh plays the flute and he has a very curious and creative mind. He tries to repair broken devices and wants to know how they work. Prior to arriving at the orphanage, he spent most of his time herding goats and so his educational foundations were weak. However, in a short amount of time he has made excellent progress.

He had never seen TV until he arrived at the orphanage, now he loves looking at TV as much as he can. With his curious mind and the support of the orphanage, the Principal feels he will excel at school. He supports the younger children and is very helpful around the orphanage and school. He also enjoys being a member of the Nepal scouts.

A letter from Dinesh that I carried to Australia and posted to his sponsor in NSW and Shakti's letter to his sponsor with a page of his artwork.



Projects & impact

1. Child sponsorships (ongoing since 2015)

The program has helped to maintain operations at the orphanage and support and educate 20 children. We believe that the connection between the children and their sponsors has had a positive impact on their self-esteem and optimism.

3. Teachers from Australia (2017)

We placed six volunteer teachers from Australia into the Shree Bal Mandir School to work with local teachers in delivering English lessons. Part of their brief was to also provide special tuition to the orphans after class and help boost their study and English skills as per the Nepali curriculum.

During one tuition program, the children were taken through the process of writing letters in English to their sponsors. According to the Principal, their writing skills were poor so he made a special request for help. In response, the

2. Special projects (2017)

During our annual visits, we attempted to identify priority projects that would benefit the children. In 2017, we were able to complete two projects. The first was the installation of a water storage system at the school where the children lived. Although installed for the school at large, it was of benefit to the orphans for drinking, cooking and hygiene after school hours, particularly during the dry season (see next section). Secondly, we noticed that the beds were run down and bedding was in poor condition so we were able to replace all of them and re-fit the bedrooms (photo shows the old beds).

Australian teachers ran a letter writing workshop to help the children reflect on their daily life, what they achieved during the year, what they want to achieve, and how to express this in their letter. At the completion of the program, we were able to collect letters from all of the children for distribution to their sponsors. Sponsors were particularly excited at not only reading well-constructed letters, but also seeing how skilful many of the children were at drawing. They included drawings in their letters without any prompting from the teachers.

Working with Rotary

As the Director of International Services at the Rotary Club of Melbourne, I was able to extend the work the Foundations commenced in Gorkha into 2021. We connected with the Rotary Club of Gorkha and with their help Rotary Melbourne made a contribution to the Chandra Kala School construction project (item 3). I was also able to extended the Child Sponsorship Program with sponsorships managed through Rotary Melbourne. I therefore had the privilege of undertaking charitable projects in Nepal for 10 years.

Exchanging of Rotary Club banners with the President of the Rotary Club of Gorkha in Gorkha Bazar.

5 Shree Bal Mandir Secondary School

Location

Chhahare, Gorkha Bazar, Gorkha District | 300 students | Grades 1 to 10

The Bal Mandir Orphanage is located on the grounds of the Bal Mandir Secondary School. The centre of activity for the orphans was a small four-room, two-story building, located at the Western end of the school. There was a kitchen and dining area in one room, one room accommodation for the boys and another for the girls. The fourth room was a classroom used by the school. The Principal of the school is also the Principal for the orphanage and the legal guardian of the orphans. It was inevitable that we would extend our assistance program to include the Bal Mandir School.

In April 2017, our first two projects at the school commenced with a team of volunteers from Xtreme Adventures Australia installed a 11,000 litre water capture and storage system. In the dry season from December to June, the school and surrounding community faced water shortages and the 2015 earthquake disrupted the supply infrastructure to the area further complicating the situation. The issue was not just having access to enough safe drinking water, and without the need to collect it in bottles from a source some distance away, but also to have an on-school supply to maintain hygiene.

Our second project, with the help of the Xtreme Adventures team, was the installation of a computer lab with ten computers and a backup power supply. This was the first computer lab for the school.

Our third project took place in November 2017. We placed six teachers from Australia at the school to help the Bal Mandir teachers deliver English classes to their students. After school hours, the teachers provided special tuition and educational programs to the children from the orphanage.

Projects completed

1. Computer Lab (2017)

We installed 10 Lenovo laptops with external keyboards and mice, and a UPS battery backup power system. We also installed power points, electrical grounding and fuse protection to the lab. An Epson LED projector was purchased for the school and installed in the lab.

2. Water capture & storage system (2017)

A group of ten Australian volunteers installed gutters to funnel rain from the roof of one of the school buildings into two 5,000 litre storage tanks that we provided. We installed pipes, a pump with electrical fittings so the school could pump the water into a 1,000 litre tank installed on the roof of another building. The water could then be gravity fed into a reverse osmosis water filtration unit and through to a smaller tank ready for consumption. We also provided taps, plumbing and a sink outside the lavatories.

3. Teacher placement (2017)

We placed teachers from RMIT and La Trobe University at the school to work with local teachers in grade six to eight. They also provided special tuition programs to children at the orphanage who are also students at the school after hours.

Impact

- We provided a solution to the water shortage problem that resulted in children and teachers not having to drink untreated water that was either carried to school or collected from a well located outside. The water was also used to maintain hygiene standards during the dryer months.
- The computer lab we installed allowed the teachers to deliver content rich educational programs and develop the computer skills of students.
- The placement of Australian teachers helped improve the English communication skills of students and the study skills of the students at the orphanage.





Photos of the three projects that we were able to deliver to the Bal Mandir School in 2017. The water system installed by Australian volunteers (top row), the computer lab (bottom right) and the teachers who volunteered at the school (bottom left and middle).

INDUSTRY PARTNERSHIPS

Partners in leadership training

With one registered charity for every 444 people in Australia, the task for a small charity such as ours to find creative ways of supporting our work was challenging.

In 2016, I was fortunate enough to have connected with Jack Carmody and Russell Tomlin, both WorkSafe Victoria employees and Xtreme Adventures founders, at a Nepalese Consulate Victoria event. We discussed how Logged On could become involved with their Leadership Journey and Trek Program to the Mt Everest Base Camp. The program was aimed at building the skills of future leaders and promoting teamwork by providing an experience that developed the individual and the team as a whole. They wanted to include a community aid project to their program so participants could have a meaningful engagement with a Nepalese community. It was also an opportunity to further develop the leadership skills of participants.

Based on the recommendation of our in-country adviser, Sudip Aryal, we were able to identify a project at the Bal Mandir School that would solve a water shortage issue. In addition, it was through Russ's and Jack's connections that we were able to secure a donation of Lenovo laptop computers from WorkSafe Victoria. Along with additional equipment we had in hand, we were able to install a computer lab at the school.

The Everest region journey began in April 2017 and I was able to join the group over a 12 day period to make a successful ascent to the base camp. After the trek, the group travelled to the school in Gorkha and over three days we were able to install the 11,000 litre water storage and pump system and a computer lab. Not only did the group raise the funds for the community project, within the group there was an electrician and tradespeople who lent their expertise to design and install the lab and water storage solution.

Jack reported that:

> *by aligning ourselves with our charity partner, we have been presented with the wonderful opportunity to make a difference to the Nepalese community, and more importantly its children, by providing them with more hygienic living conditions and greater prospects for learning. It was an opportunity too good to miss. We left the children in Gorkha in a better position than the one in which we found them. A great sense of achievement was felt by the group. We had done something special and created an experience that will stay with us always.*

The relationship continued and in 2019, we were able to source more laptops from WorkSafe Victoria for delivery to schools in three districts of Nepal.

A new group of leadership trekkers successfully completed the base camp ascent in April 2019 and then went on to complete a community sanitation project in the Syangja District that we had arranged.

We are encouraged by the wonderful relationship struck between Xtreme Adventures, WorkSafe and the Logged On Foundation. This is a good example of how business, government and charity can come together to contribute to meaningful outcomes for all involved and make a difference to communities in need.

I'm with the Xtreme Adventures group at the Everest Base camp (April 2017). Not everyone made it to the final point, but we all made it safely back to Kathmandu. We then travelled to the Gorkha District to complete the Bal Mandir projects.

Laptops

Distributed across various districts

The laptops donated to the Foundation by WorkSafe Victoria and facilitated by Xtreme Adventures founders have been used to install computer labs and centres in seven schools across four districts of Nepal.

Clean water

Gorkha District

A ten member Xtreme Adventures group in their first community aid project installed a water collection and storage solution to help a school during the dry season when water shortages becomes an issue for the community.

Community health

Syangja District

Eight Xtreme Adventures team members worked beside local people and contractors to install a community bathroom and improve access to proper sanitation facilities.

Dolakha District 04.

Communities in the Dolakha District did not only have to endure the fury of the earthquake centred in the Gorkha District. A powerful aftershock of almost equal magnitude centred in Dolakha occurred a little over two weeks later which added to the devastation.

I have a friend, Phurba Lama, who is a teacher from the Dolakha District and when he heard that I was in Nepal delivering aid to schools, he appealed to me for help. Part way through the work in Gorkha, I was able to return to Kathmandu to meet with Phurba and hired a jeep to take us to his home town. We passed through Sindhupalchowk to get to Dolakha and the devastation that I saw on the journey was heart-breaking. Both districts were sites of destitution with an estimated 90 percent of residents' homes destroyed. I noticed that there were far more tents and tarps incorporated into makeshift homes than in Gorkha, perhaps because there was less availability of CGI sheets at the time. Tents were also being distributed by the United Nations and the Chinese Army. A major road crossing between Nepal and China is in Dolakha.

+2
Schools assisted

+780
Individuals helped

+2
Projects completed

1 Shree Durga Higher Secondary School

At the Durga School, of the 28 classrooms that were in operation before the earthquake, half were condemned by the government as unusable. When I arrived, many of the classes were taking place in tents that teachers felt would not hold up very well in the monsoon season which was a little over a month away. They had collected bamboo and salvaged some timber that they were planning to use to build four temporary classrooms, but they did not have any tin sheets for the roof. We were able to assist them.

Location

Magapauwa - 2, Dolakha District
450 students | Grades 1 to 12 + pre-primary

Impact

We provided roofing material for four temporary classrooms which helped the 15 teachers at the school to conduct classes as best they could in safe and non-crowded conditions.

Project completed

Temporary classrooms (2015)
The school was planning to erect four large TLCs to handle the cramming in existing classrooms and to ultimately replace the existing tarp/tent classrooms. We delivered 84 high quality CGI sheets to the school so they could complete their construction.

Photos *(top left): the bamboo and salvaged material used in the construction of four temporary classrooms at the Durga school being looked over by the Principal; (top right) the second of two trips we took to transport CGI sheets to the Dolakha schools for use in constructing TLCs - Phurba Lama is in the foreground; (left) one of the tent classrooms at Durga.*

Inside the tent classroom at the Durga school.

2 Shree Nabin Secondary School

Out of the 14 classrooms at the school, 10 rooms were condemned by the government as unusable. There was one tent being used as a classroom that was provided by the Nepal Army - their base was located less than 200 metres away. So they could resume classes quickly, the only option the school had was to demolish the walls of the condemned classrooms that had an intact roof and support beams and continue teaching in these fragile structures. There was a serious risk to life if a large tremor occurred, but I was told that the teachers ran through a number of drills to see how quickly the children could run outside the classrooms and deemed the risk acceptable.

When I arrived, around four weeks after the Dolakha aftershock, the school was erecting a large bamboo frame structure that eventually became a four room TLC.

Location

Channedanda, Bhusapheda - 8, Dolakha
300 students | Grades 1 to 10 + pre-primary

Impact

We were able to help the school complete the bamboo TLC so the children could be moved out of the existing condemned classroom into a safer space for learning.

Project completed

Materials for temporary classrooms (2015)
We purchased and delivered 84 high quality corrugated iron sheets that was used as the roof of the four classroom bamboo structure the school was erecting. The future plan was to remove the sheets and use them as roofing for permanent classrooms after reconstruction.

***Photos** (bottom left): the bamboo structure that eventually became four classrooms at Nabin; (top right and bottom) also at Nabin, the tent classroom where classes were temporarily held. The bottom photo on the cover of this report was also taken during a class in this tent.*

The photos above are of the existing Nabin School buildings that were seriously damaged and condemned during the government survey of schools in the earthquake zones. So teaching could resume quickly, the walls were removed to make them 'safer' should another tremor strike. In the bottom photo, the fact that two classrooms with no walls are facing each other makes it difficult to conduct classes. Not all the rooms had their walls demolished, the top photo showing grade one children in a room where the rear wall collapsed but the rest of the building remained relatively intact.

Earth-Q the documentary

What began as a project to document our disaster relief work, turned into an award winning film. Earth-Q was screened in Australia and made available online with the funds raised helping to rebuild one of the schools featured in the film.

The earthquake left around 9,000 people dead and three million homeless. It also destroyed or damaged around 33,000 classrooms, putting the aspirations of a generation of children at serious risk. *Earth-Q* documented the impact the disaster had on rural communities and the struggles they faced to provide a quality education for their children.

It also portrayed a country which not only dealt with the challenge of rebuilding, but also with the political strife which followed the introduction of Nepal's first Constitution and plunged the country into deeper economic turmoil, delaying rebuilding efforts.

Earth-Q is a journey through the beauty of the Himalayan region, a celebration of the welcoming nature and selflessness of its people, and a witness to the heart-wrenching appeals of teachers and parents for help to get their children out of tents and tin shelters into proper classrooms.

earthq.loggedon.org.au

FILM DETAILS

Duration: 41 minutes
Format: Colour (24P 1080P HD)

DIRECTOR & PRODUCERS

Mark Pinoli (Director & producer)
Sudip Ariyal (co-producer Nepal)

LOCATION

Filmed in Kaski, Dolakha, Gorkha & Tanahun Districts of Nepal. Film produced in Melbourne, Australia.

AWARDS & SCREENING

Silver Award Winner, USA, 2016: Spotlight Documentary Awards.

Official Selection, Pinewood Studios UK, 2019: Lift-Off Global First-time Filmmakers Sessions.

Official Selection, Toronto, 2019: Nepal Cultural International Film Festival.

Full launch at ACMI, Melbourne.

Full première screening at the ACMI in Melbourne. A panel discussion followed the screening consisting of Victorian Multicultural Commissioner, Sam Almaliki, Consul-General of Nepal, Chandra Yonzon, South Asian Community Link Group President, Dr Raju Adhikari, head of the Help-Himalayan Youth Foundation, Hanisha Sharma-Luital, and myself as the Director of Earth-Q (anonymous photographer).

Director's notes

It was a pleasure to have been able to help communities recover from the terrible tragedy that struck Nepal. It was also an honour to be part of a compassionate and dedicated team in Nepal who worked incredibly hard under very tight deadlines and in sometimes dangerous conditions.

When I arrived, I realised that the damage to schools meant an educational hole for children from which it would be difficult to recover for many years. Imagine trying to learn in a tin-clad classroom when it's raining, you can't hear the teacher and the classroom floor is flooded with water. In summer it's so hot that you have to go out of the class to cool off, or it's so cold that writing is difficult.

Yet despite the trauma of the disaster and the hardships endured, the children are laughing and the people are concerned for my welfare, telling me they have nothing to give me for my help except a little food and love?

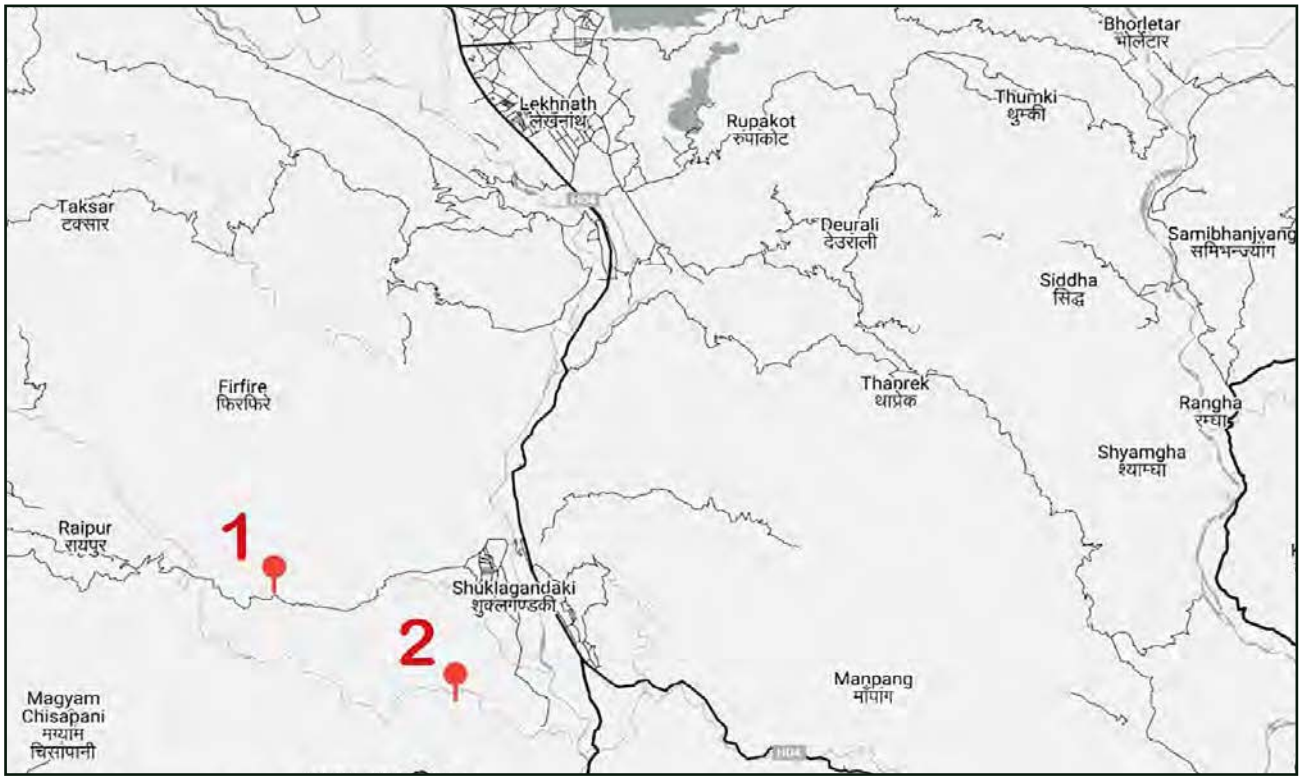
The making of the film was an intense and heart-wrenching journey and I have nothing but praise for the Nepali people and their resilience. I think that they are an embodiment of the human spirit and its ability to overcome adversity. I was thrilled that I was able to produce a film that not only brings attention to the serious issues faced by many children, but highlights just how selfless, considerate and giving the people are.

Earth-Q gives voice to the victims of the disaster so they can share their experiences and struggles. This is their story and ours and we promoted this film to raise funds to help rebuild a school. We wanted to get the children out the temporary classrooms and into a child-friendly learning environment.

Tanahun District 05.

Tanahun was one of three districts where we delivered aid to earthquake affected schools in 2015. The impact in this district was not as severe as Dolakha or Gorkha, but around half of the houses near the school we assisted were destroyed. There was also a relatively high rate of water borne illnesses in the community, so we decided that we could help by installing a water filtration system.

We made a commitment after our first project to return to Tanahun to work with more schools since we had strong connections with members of the community who could help us deliver and monitor projects. Tanahun was one of the districts where we wanted to establish a cluster of computer centres at schools that had a strong commitment to providing computer based learning programs. We returned in April 2019 to install our first computer facility in this district.



+2
Schools assisted

+700
Individuals impacted

+2
Projects completed

1 Shree Chhabdi Secondary School

Chhabdi was the first school to receive the slow sand water filtration system that we installed in three schools during our earthquake relief work. The other two were in the Gorkha District.

The school lost four classrooms and there was widespread damage to family homes in the area. In the nearby village, the water supply system was destroyed and households were forced to secure and store their own sources of water.

The Principal also reported that there was a significant number illnesses in the community, particularly children and adults with Typhoid. When we arrived at the school, children were drinking untreated water from a tank located in one of the buildings. When I asked the Principal if the households filtered or boiled drinking water, he pointed out that the community, having lost their homes and cooking utensils and facing difficult living conditions, did not prioritise the boiling of water. We felt that this was an ideal place to set up our first filtration unit.

Location

Dhorphirdi-4 | 375 students | Grades 1 to 12

Project completed

Drinking water filtration system (2015)
We installed a 500 litre tank and sand water filtration system with concrete base, pipe and metal fixtures that would provide drinking water for the school & nearby community. A training program for school staff was also provided on filter cleaning and general maintenance to ensure its long-term use.

Impact

We provided a sustainable and chemical-free clean drinking water solution for over 400 individuals. This was an important contribution towards reducing the level of water-borne illness in the community.

Photos *(top): completed filter system ready for use; (bottom left) local worker helping to install the concrete base and metal supports for the tank and filters; (bottom right) a half-day training program for school staff on the maintenance of the system.*

2 Shree Mangalodaya Secondary School

After a four-year hiatus, we returned to Tanahun to start a new cluster of computer centres and teaching labs in this district. For a rural government school, Mangalodaya had a well-appointed computer room with good furniture and five desktop computers that were more than six years old. However, only two were working and the computers with CRT screens were high power consuming devices and there was no UPS system to power them during power outages. The addition of battery powered laptops that were fast and reliable would allow the school to conduct classes even during outages.

Location

Channedanda | 300 students | Grades 1 to 10

Project completed

School computer lab (2019)
We delivered and installed nine Lenovo laptops with the latest Microsoft software and external mouse.

Impact

The laptops enabled the school to have a solid computer teaching facility that allows students to learn digital literacy skills using the latest Microsoft software and for a one student to one computer experience (as opposed to multiple students crowding around one computer).

***Photos** (top): the home of one of the Chhabdi school students that was destroyed in the earthquake; (bottom) I'm with two team members, Patrick Goonan and Raju Pariyar, and Kavita Thapa from Our Foundation (our local NGO partner) formally handing over the laptops at the Mangalodaya school welcome ceremony.*

Photos of the installation of the computers at Mangalodaya and their immediate use by students from Grade 9.

Syangja District 06.

Installing computer centres and labs in rural schools has been one of our flagship programs. Our computer centres in the Kaski District have helped to bridge the digital divide by providing communities with the technology that allowed them access to information and global interconnectedness, a key to accelerating education as well as human progress.

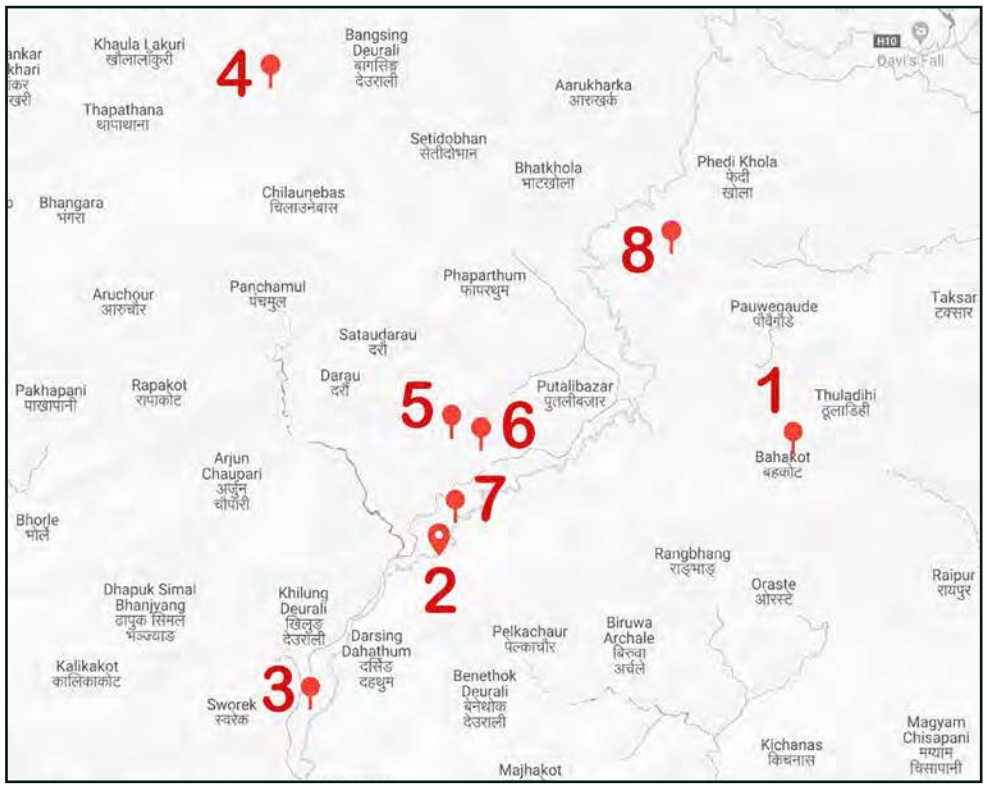
When installing centres, our model has been to work with a cluster of schools in close proximity and provide equipment and training. This has resulted in cooperative relationships between schools and the sharing of experiences and knowledge. It has also allowed us to develop a simplified support strategy for the cluster as a whole, including links to technicians in the area that could take care of the needs of the schools.

Our first cluster in the Kaski District was completed in 2014, with three major computer centres and three computer labs installed in schools and one centre in a women's cooperative centre.

In 2015, we commenced our second computer centre cluster in the Syangja District. Syangja enabled us to mature our model for providing computers and the internet, and delivering training programs that have a positive impact on children's education. In 2019, we successfully completed the Syangja cluster with computer facilities installed in six schools.

We were also able to continue our commitment to women's cooperatives and helping them to support women from the traditionally marginalised groups in Nepal. In 2014, we provided computers to the Pragati Women's Cooperative and a comprehensive training program that focused on the use of information technology to serve the needs of Cooperative members.

The relationship we developed with the Cooperative allowed us to complete a community health project in 2019. Members were able to identify and co-manage a sanitation project, and engage a group of Australian volunteers who travelled to Nepal to help complete the work.



+6 Schools helped

+2,420 Individuals helped

+10 Projects completed

+1 Women's Cooperative

1 Shree Nu Bahakot Secondary School

Location

Bahakot, Syangja | 367 students | Grades 1 to 10

The first computer centre installed outside the Kaski District was at the Nu Bahakot School. At the time, it was the most advanced centre installed and included a fibre-optic internet connection. We were planning on using a less reliable WiFi connection which was usually the only option available in rural areas. The availability of fibre optic in the village was a surprise and we took the opportunity to have an optic cable run from the nearby junction point into the school.

Nu Bahakot had five computers prior to our arrival, but only three were working. They were old, very slow and utilised power-consuming CRT monitors which made it difficult to keep them on for more than an hour during power outages with a battery backup system.

This is a common situation in rural schools. They may have a handful of computers, usually old ones that were donated, were very slow, and the operating system and software was out-of-date. They often didn't work at all or worked very poorly given their age. There was no point in using limited school resources to fix them. During classes, groups of students would huddle around and share a computer which made it difficult for each of them to develop essential computer skills.

After the installation of the centre, our Manager of Training, Ves Raj Banstola, delivered an intensive training program on the use and management of the system. Ves Raj is a teacher at the Bhumeshwor School in Astam, the site of our first computer centre. Over the years, we had trained Ves Raj so he could confidently deliver training programs to all of our centres in Dhital and this first one in Syangja. He excelled at building the confidence and skills of fellow teachers in using computers and the internet in an educational environment.

Our heartfelt thanks goes to the Mackintosh family. We could not have completed this project without their generous support.

Impact

The computers and internet allowed teachers to deliver content-rich educational programs and students were able to develop their computer literacy skills. The extensive training provided to teachers also gave them the capacity to use the facility to prepare educational material for their students and provide support to members of the community who were using the facility after school hours for communication (Skype, email, Facebook) and to access information.

Project completed

1. Computer Centre and ICT training (2015)

We installed the centre using reliable, fast and ultra-low power technology. We provided a 4th generation Intel i5 server with SSD drive and ten Ncomputing thin client terminals with keyboard, mouse and LED monitor. This was the equivalent of 11 Windows computers. We also connected the school to the internet using fibre optic and paid for the connection for the first three months. To ensure operation during power outages, we also installed a 150AH UPS backup battery supply and surge protection fuses to ensure that the devices are protected.

We also delivered a technical training program for the teachers on how to use and manage the new server during and after the installation was completed.

2. Digital Literacy Course (2016)

A two-week computer literacy training program was delivered to the 10 Nu Bahakot School teachers and members of the Pragati Women's Cooperative in a joint training program a number of months later (see next section).

3. Scholarships (2015)

Nu Bahakot became the first school outside the Kaski District to be part of our Scholarship Program. A total of 15 General Scholarships were awarded to students at this school.

***Photo** (top-right): A teacher from the Nu Bahakot School logging into his Windows account for the first time.*

Photos *(top-left): a technician is connecting the fibre optic cable to the school for internet access; (top-right) Ves Raj Banstola delivering the training program to teachers as part of the installation program; (right-middle) teachers taking turns at accessing their Windows account; (bottom) the computer centre installation team at the completion of the project. The group also included volunteer computer engineering students from Pokhara University who not only helped in the installation, but were also learning about the issues and technical requirements for providing computers and the internet to rural schools.*

2 Pragati Women Cooperative

Location

Mayatari, Syangja District | 350 Members

In 2015, we had the privilege of continuing our commitment to women's empowerment by supporting the work of the Pragati Women's Cooperative. The Cooperative provides support services to women in the Mayatari area of the District. They also provide training programs, social and financial support, including micro-credit loans to help members start their own businesses or expand existing enterprises.

We installed a new computer facility with five computers at the Cooperative building. We also funded a 15-day comprehensive computing skills and leadership development training program, in partnership with the Nepal Rural Information Technology Development Society (NRIDS) and Pragati Women's Cooperative.

The training program was designed around the needs of participants and to ensure that they gained the necessary knowledge and skills to be able to effectively use and manage the facility for the benefit of members.

Also joining the training session were teachers from the Nu Bahakot Secondary School where we installed our first computer centre in Syangja. Special sessions that focused on the use of computers in a classroom setting were delivered exclusively to the teachers.

Projects completed

1. Computer Centre (2015)

We installed five NUC desktop computers with LED screens, electric surge equipment and a 150 AH UPS backup battery supply with the latest Microsoft Office suite.

2. Digital Literacy Course (2016)

We designed and delivered a 15-day computing skills and leadership development training program to Cooperative members and teachers from the Nu Bahakot School. A total of 60 women of differing age groups, castes and educational backgrounds registered along with 10 teachers. Participants were introduced to the many ways computers could be used effectively in their daily lives, the basics of operating systems, folder and file creation, using MS Office software, photo editing, using multimedia files, browsing the internet, using Facebook, Skype and email for staying in contact with family and clients, and the basics of trouble shooting and security.

Impact

- The computers and training program helped the cooperative to improve the management of its micro-financing and member support operations.
- Members were able to stay connected to their clients, friends and family in Nepal and around the world using the computer centre.
- Participants in our first training program developed the skill to be able to provided support to other members in using the computer centre.
- We developed a cooperative relationship with the group which enabled them to engage the community more widely to identify and spearhead a community health project that we sponsored in 2019 (discussed in Section 7 below).
- The computer facility has been used as an e-library and information resource centre. It has also allowed access to online government and banking services.

***Photos** (top): The welcome ceremony at the Pragati Women's Cooperative and official handing over of the computer centre; (next) day one of the two-week digital literacy training program (courtesy Sudip Arial).*

Nu Bahakot teachers receiving training on how to use their new computer centre.

SPECIAL PROJECTS

Empowering women in rural Nepal

We have been committed to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls since our inception. We have helped to lower the barriers women faced in accessing information technologies and training programs that focused on their needs and aspirations.

Our first empowerment initiative was the student scholarship program. We have awarded hundreds of scholarships to economically and socially disadvantaged children to help lower the barriers they face in accessing a quality education. Around 65% of the general scholarships were awarded to girls. Our prestigious Anne van Riel Scholarships were awarded exclusively to girls who faced significant obstacles that affected their education, and who showed dedication to their studies. The program also had the commitment of teachers and community leaders who mentored and supported the girls and encouraged them to achieve their best at school.

We have also contributed to women's empowerment through our technology for leadership, education and entrepreneurship program. Although our primary focus was on education in rural schools, we also recognised that women have a key influence on decisions in the family that have an impact on the well-being and development of children. By supporting women, we have not only worked towards their empowerment, but also helped to create a positive future for their children.

As discussed earlier, in the Dhital VDC we managed a two-year project to deliver digital literacy training workshops to local women that focused on their needs. The workshop introduced participants to computer technology, essential software for business and personal use, email and communications programs, and how to access information on the internet. This program was developed in conjunction with Microsoft Nepal and the Astam Women's Group.

In the Hemja Municipality, located near Dhital VDC, we installed a new computer facility at the Hemja Women's Cooperative building. The group supported around 1,000 women in the area and we provided a similar training program with ongoing support to their management team.

I visited the cooperative eight months later to conduct a follow-up assessment and found that the computers had become a highly valued resource for the group. So much so that the sewing machines that were originally in the computer room and used to teach women tailoring skills for income generation, had been moved to the basement to make way for more computers donated by the government. I observed student members searching Google to gather information for their assignments, middle-aged women accessing their Gmail accounts, and business owners producing advertising materials and menus on MS Word. We were encouraged by the determination shown by members to develop their skills in the computer centre to increase opportunities for securing work, to promote their businesses, as well as to communicate with clients, friends and family.

Given the success in Dhital and Hemja, we responded favourably to an appeal made by the Pragati Women's Cooperative for an ICT program in the Syangja District. As discussed in the previous section, we installed a

The President and members of the Pragati Cooperative navigating through the operating system on the day we installed their new computer centre.

computer facility at the Cooperative building and worked with its management committee to develop a training program that would best serve the needs of the organisation and its members. The result was an intensive two-week workshop that focused on developing the ICT skills of participants and introduced them to technology-enabled business and learning opportunities.

Participants were divided into three daily shifts to ensure that they were able to receive individualised assistance. Our training coordinator and one of our Board members, Sudip Aryal, said "it was a touching moment to see local women curiously learning computers who have managed to join the class after completing their regular agriculture work in their field. I am very happy to have dedicated my time to the training to help them realise their aspirations."

Over the years, we have seen the rise of Facebook in Nepal to become an important tool for communication. In 2018, the Kathmandu Post Newspaper reported that social media marketing had become an effective way to promote products and services on a small budget with high impact, thanks to a rapidly growing number of social media users in the country. In both the Dhital and Syangja training programs, we helped participants sign-up for a Facebook account and provided guidance on how to best use the platform for business purposes.

We were also able to show participants the importance of

> **"Gender equality and the well-being of children are inextricably linked. When women are empowered to lead full and productive lives, children and families prosper."**
>
> *UNICEF*

Facebook for personal use. Many Nepalis have sought employment abroad and international labour migration was a major way for individuals to support their families. Overseas workers are in the millions and the money they send home accounts for one-quarter of national GDP. Facebook was an important platform for families to stay connected.

During one of the workshop sessions, Kamala Poudel (50), cried after adding her son to her newly created Facebook account. She was able to talk with him via Messenger for the first time. Her son, who was in Dubai at the time, was surprised to see her friend request and replied “what will you do with Facebook Mum?” Her reply was “talk to you of course!” Kamala said. “It is a common situation that many of our family members and relatives are outside Syangja District or even outside Nepal. So I will now use Facebook to communicate with them from time-to-time" Kamala further commented.

At the conclusion of the workshop, the Cooperative management reported that they felt more confident in managing their micro-finance operations using the computers. They were able to write letters and prepare reports in Word, create bills in Excel and make presentations using PowerPoint. They were also using the facility to access information and to communicate more effectively with members and clients using Gmail and Skype.

When I first met Tara Aryal, Pragati Coop President, in 2014, she said in frustration “every time that we want to do something, we are always asking men for help.” Her words resonated with me and I had discussions with our team in Nepal about how we could help address Tara's concern. We were able to respond in two ways.

Firstly, through a confidence building program. At the end of the two week ICT workshop, our training coordinator the

NRIDS took the opportunity of adding a short community leadership program where a number of prominent community members engaged participants in interactive confidence and community-oriented skills building exercises. This program also reinforced the importance access to information technologies was for independent learning, and in business and networking opportunities.

Secondly, by presenting an opportunity for the Cooperative to be visible agents for positive change. In 2018, we were able to secure funding and Australian volunteer help for a community project (see next section). We asked the Cooperative if there were any pressing problem in the local community which we could help solve and would benefit the local children and community as a whole. They identified a community health project and the need for the construction of a communal latrine and wash facility in a nearby village. We accepted their proposal and asked them to take a lead in the community consultation and decision-making process. The project was successfully completed in 2019, thanks to their management efforts.

Photos *(top): Our Training Coordinator introducing Pragati Cooperative members to computer hardware on the first day of the two week training program (courtesy Sudip Arial); (bottom) I'm with our in-country coordinator, Sudip Aryal, discussing the most pressing needs of the cooperative and how we can help.*

7 Pragati Women Cooperative & Putalibazar community

Location

Putalibazar, Syangja District
1,200 members

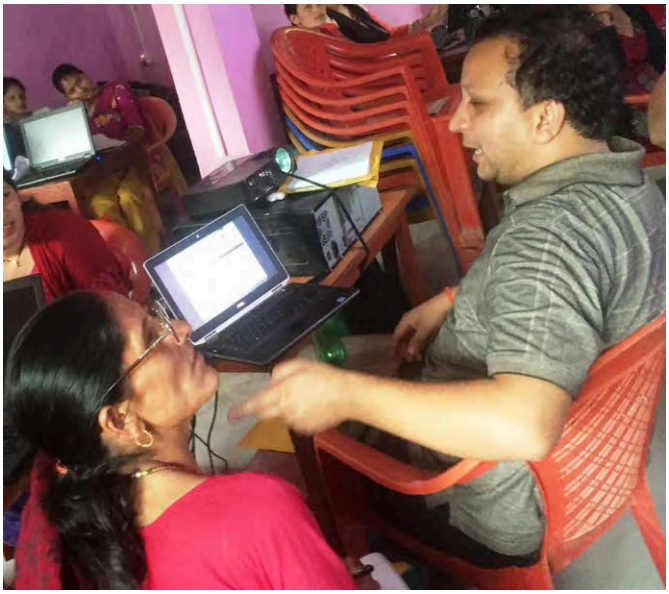
According to a 2014 World Health Organisation (WHO) report, almost 40% of the population in Nepal do not have access to adequate sanitation facilities. This means that serious diseases such as dysentery, cholera and typhoid are a constant danger. WHO and UNICEF estimate that diarrhoeal diseases cause the deaths of thousands of children under five years old every year, and around 10% of children are away from school on any given day due to gastrointestinal illness caused by drinking contaminated water.

In 2018, we contacted our friends at the Pragati Women's Cooperative and asked if there was a pressing problem in the local community where we could work together to help find a solution. They were able to identify a local health issue and a need for a communal latrine and wash facility.

Given the importance of community health, we accepted their proposal and initiated a project to install a public toilet located at a junction between the village and the main highway that runs nearby. This junction is used daily by local people, school children from a nearby school, and visitors who drive through the area.

We were able to work with members of the Women's Cooperative, local community leaders, and our Australian partners Xtreme Adventures who helped to raise the funds and provided volunteers to help construct the facility.

***Photo**: Sudip Aryal, a valuable contributor to the digital literacy training program (photo courtesy of Sudip).*

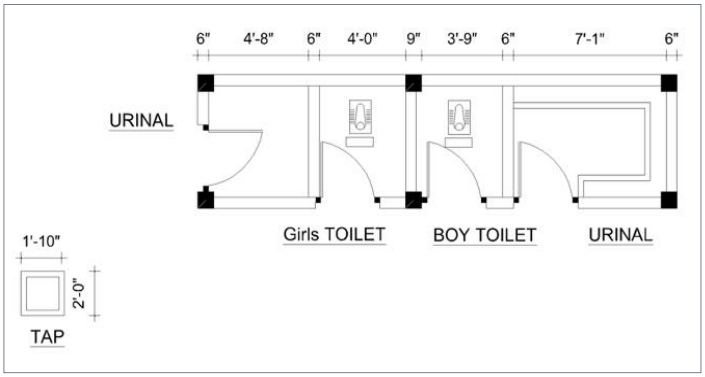


The aim of the project was simple – provide the convenience of a public toilet for members of the community who were away from their home during the day, and reduce preventable diseases in the area.

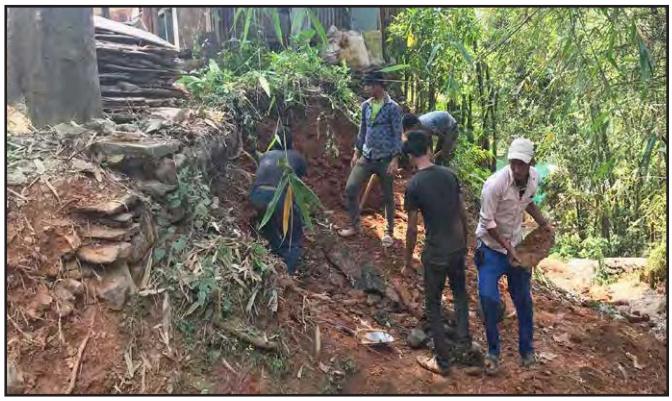
There was a secondary effect of this project. Because it was located near a highway that runs through the District, it was a rest stop for travellers. Requests for a small donation have been helping to maintain the toilets, and local shops have benefited from an increase in the sale of snack foods and light meals bringing income to the community. This has ensured the buy-in of local businesses who are taking responsibility for the maintenance of the facility.

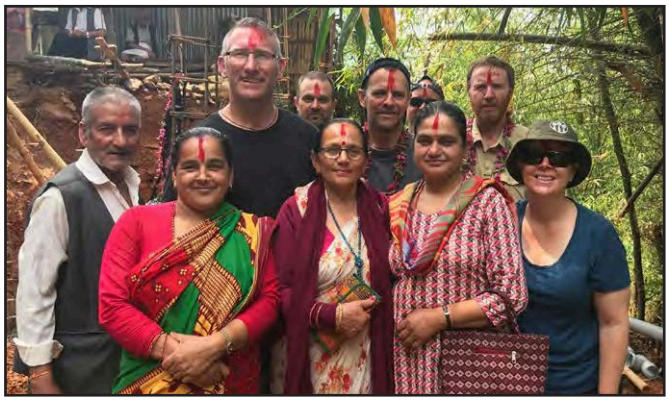
Project completed

Toilet and wash facility (2019)
We installed a four-cubicle toilet made of reinforced concrete and stone with a 2,000L water tank and wash basins with taps for hand washing (see design plan on the right).



***Photos**: the project unfolding from community consultation and handing over the seed funding (top photo), clearing the site, volunteers from Australia working with local community members working on the clearing and construction, to the completed building with water tank for handwashing (bottom six photos courtesy of Sudip Aryal).*





3 Shree Dahathum Secondary School

The second and third computer centres we installed in the Syangja District were recommended to us by our partner the Nepal Rural Information Technology Development Society (NRIDS). They identified Shree Dahathum and Shree Andha Andhi Prakash as two secondary schools that were in need of computers. Both schools also had computer teachers with the necessary skills to be able to maintain the centres and support fellow teachers in integrating the computers into their educational programs.

The NRIDS reported that around 60% of the students from the Dahathum area were from traditionally marginalised or indigenous castes. Many of families were unable to afford stationery or school uniforms and the school relied on donations from the community to buy all the necessary educational materials for the school.

Dahathum had five second hand computers prior to our arrival, but they had numerous faults and software issues. The computers were rarely used other than to show students the hardware components.

Location

Bhirkot Municipality, Ward 2, Dahathum
553 students | Grades 1 to 12 | 32 teachers

Project completed

Computer Centre (2017)
We installed 10 Lenovo laptops with external keyboards, mice and a 150AH UPS battery backup power system. The school was seeking support from the broader community for connecting the centre to the internet.

Impact

The computers enabled the school to teacher computer science which, at the time, the Ministry of Education was making the subject compulsory throughout the country.

4 Shree Andha Andhi Prakash Secondary School

At the Andha Andhi Prakash School, 30% of the children were from traditionally marginalised/indigenous castes and these families struggled to meet education expenses for their children. The school had four poor quality computers and three were not functioning properly. There was no internet at the time of the installation. We installed six computers which was performed by our partners, the NRIDS.

Location

Bichari Chautara, Aathgharey, Andhikhola
Rural Municipality, Ward 3, Syangja District
160 students | grades 1 to 10 | 15 teachers

Project completed

Computer Centre (2017)
We installed three laptops with external keyboards and mice plus three NUC desktop computers with monitors, and a UPS battery backup power system.

Impact

The computers enabled the school to teach computer science, that, as described in the previous project, the Nepal Government had made compulsory. This has been a difficult policy to realise as many remote schools have no computers or old ones that do not work properly. In many cases, the subject is studied as theory from government issued textbooks. The computer facilities we provided helped students to develop competent, hands-on hardware and software skills.

***Photos**: (top two) installation of the computers at the Andha Andhi Prakash Secondary Schools; (bottom) our local team officially handing over the laptops to the teachers and Principal at Andha Andhi Prakash (photos courtesy of Sudip Aryal).*

5 Shree Ranithumka Lower Secondary School

Shree Shishu Ranjan Basic School 6

8 Shree Khor Thape Basic School

In April 2019, we were able to secure 15 Lenovo laptop computers for distribution to schools in Syangja. Initially, we were planning on installing five in a small school at the basic level (classes from grade one to grade five), and ten at a lower secondary school (classes up to grade eight). The schools were the Shree Shishu Ranjan School and the Shree Ranithumka School.

Because computer science is a compulsory subject in grades 6, 7 and 8, there is a greater need for computers at lower or higher secondary schools. However, we have also provided computers to basic schools because they engage students with early childhood educational software and videos during classes. They have also been a valuable resource for teachers to develop their computer skills and source digital educational materials to enhance the learning experience of their students.

Prior to the distribution of the laptops, we had a discussion with the two schools and our in-country Director regarding an appeal for computers made by the Shree Khor Thape School. We decided to help by providing them one laptop with a commitment to providing more computers in our next distribution round.

These three schools were chosen because the majority of families in the area were from the traditionally marginalised Baise and Sudra Caste. Also, the schools had no capacity to purchase computers or software and, as is the case for many rural government schools, they relied on donations to obtain teaching materials and equipment other that the basics such as blackboards, textbooks, pencils and paper.

Location

Shree Ranithumka Lower Secondary School
Putalibazar - 11, Syangja District
Students: 175 | Grades: 1 to 8 + pre-primary
13 teachers

Shree Shishu Ranjan Basic School
Putalibazar - 13, Syangja District
Students: 40 | Grades: 1 to 5 + pre-primary
6 teachers

Shree Khor Thape Basic School
Phedikhola - 1, Syangja District
Students: 35 | Grades: 1 to 5 + pre-primary
6 teachers

Projects completed

Shree Ranithumka Lower Secondary School (2019)
We installed ten Lenovo laptops with external mice, Windows 10 and Microsoft Office Software. The school had three desktop computers but were not functioning.

Shree Shishu Ranjan Basic School (2019)
We installed four Lenovo laptops with external mice, Windows 10 and Microsoft Office Software. The laptops were the first set of computers that the school had owned.

Shree Khor Thape Basic School (2019)
We installed one Lenovo laptops with external mice, Windows 10 and Microsoft Office Software. The laptop were the first computer that the school had owned.

Impact

The three schools that we helped were able to teach computer science classes with students able to properly develop their computer skills and teachers able to prepare materials for the classroom. The laptops were also used to deliver digital educational materials to younger children.







Photos of the welcome ceremony, hand-over and installation of laptops at the Shree Ranithumka Lower Secondary and Shree Shishu Ranjan Basic Schools.

Lamjung District 07.

In 2019, we completed our second computer centre cluster involving six schools and one Women's Cooperative in the Syangja District. In the same year, we were able to commence a new cluster in the nearby Lamjung District.

We were fortunate enough to have been invited by Dr Rajendra Ghimire to support the Shree Laxmi School in Shree Manjang, the village where he was raised. Rajendra accompanied us on a three-hour jeep ride to the remote school where we received a warm welcome from the community. The school had a dedicated building where we were able to install ten laptops.

On our way to the village, Rajendra recounted his time as a student at the Laxmi School, and the journey he made from the village to a university in Kathmandu. After completing his law degree, Rajendra was offered a scholarship to attend the University of Wollongong in Australia, where he was awarded a PhD. He returned to Nepal to pursue a law career and is now the Chief Attorney General for the Gandaki Province. The school community expressed their deep respect for their former student during our welcome ceremony. He is an inspiration and an example to the students that, with a good education and effort, they could also realise their dreams of a prosperous future.

The Laxmi School was the first in a cluster of computer centres we are planning on completing in the District over the coming years.

Location

Shree Laxmi Secondary School
Dordi Rural Municipality, Shree Manjang, Lamjung
170 students | Grades 1 to 10 + pre-primary
15 teachers

Project completed

School computer facility (2019)
We delivered and installed ten Lenovo laptops with the latest Windows 10 and Microsoft Office software with an external mouse for each computer.

Impact

The laptops enable the school to have their first computer education facility that could service the school adequately and run classes that allows a one student to one computer experience.

+1
School helped

+185
Individuals helped

+1
Project completed

Welcome ceremony and official opening of the computer centre at the Shree Laxmi School.

Kathmandu 08.

We have been committed to helping rural communities access the resources they need to provide a quality education for their children. But there are exceptions, and we found one orphanage in Kathmandu city where we felt compelled to help.

Punarbal Plus is an orphanage that is dedicated to educating and providing care to children who are infected with the HIV virus or have been directly affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Punarbal Plus also tries to address the prevailing stigma and discrimination that HIV-infected people face in Nepal.

In 2019, 35 orphaned children resided at the Punarbal Home, of whom 30 were HIV infected. Those who were unaffected were siblings and the policy was to keep the children together as a family where possible.

All infected children were undergoing anti-retroviral treatment which was provided free of charge by the government, but when children were sick, Punarbal paid for medical expenses which was substantial.

Punarbal's commitment to helping the children lead normal lives is commendable. In 2019, 28 children attended public school and four children took their School Leaving Certificate (SLC) examinations in the previous year. With Punarbal's help, those who passed their SLC exams went on to study health care, law and sociology diploma courses. Three youths from the orphanage went on to complete building electrician, bakery and motorcycle technician training. These youths, after undergoing six to eight months work, were reunited with their relatives in their home villages.

Punarbal also supports members of the community who are infected with the virus and provides vocational training workshops and social support services.

Location

Punarbal Plus, Sitapaila, Kathmandu (35 resident children plus staff and community members receiving support).

Project completed

Computer lab (2019)
We installed five Lenovo laptops with external mice, Windows 10 and Microsoft Office Software.

Impact

The laptops were used to teach digital literacy skills to the children and for the older children to be able to access information on the internet for assignments. The plan was to also teach ICT skills to members of the Punarbal community.

+1 Orphanage helped

+50 Individuals helped

+1 Projects completed

Installation of the computers at Punarbal Plus Orphanage. The orphanage had three desktop computers but only one was working properly.

The Journey

We bought many people from around the world to experience the beauty of Nepal and the hospitality of its people. It was a pleasure to have created pathways for adventurers and volunteers to spend time in the villages where we were working. It was also a pleasure to have been able to connect with our donors and supporters and the Nepali community in Australia. This section acknowledges the help given by the many individuals and organisations who we connected with over our ten year journey.

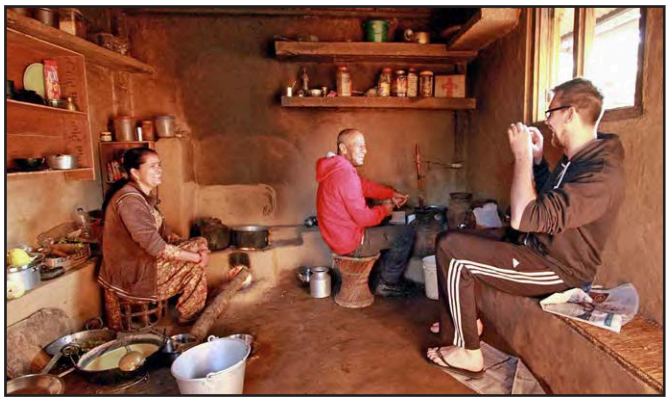
Expeditions & Tours

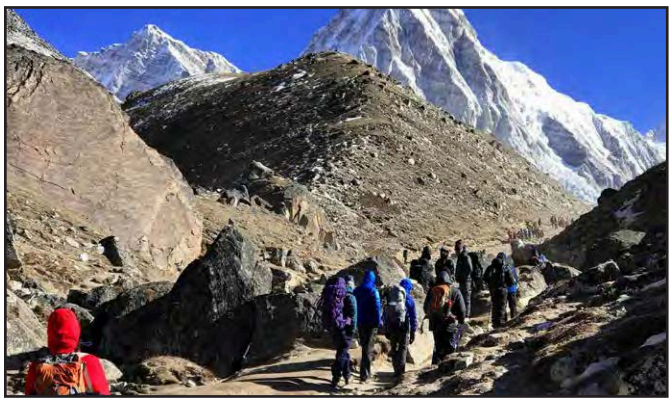
We created cultural tour packages for universities and provided tour and accommodation services to our volunteers who were placed in schools in Astam, Dhital, Hemja and Gorkha. We also organised a number of tours and treks in Mustang, Upper Mustang, Annapurna and Kathmandu valley.

Over the ten years, we built relationships with local community groups and businesses that was grounded on an ethos of community development. This allowed our guests to wander off the well-trodden paths to experience something unique. Not only did we show Nepali cultural sites, hospitality, and the natural beauty of the mountains, we also showed our guests how a relationship between community development and responsible tourism can have a positive impact on local communities.

Our expeditions program not only allowed us to share the excitement and passion we have for Nepal, it also opened up an additional income stream for the Foundation. Whatever profit we made, we put back into helping rural communities to provide a quality education for their children. Our most heartfelt thanks to our valued service providers in Nepal: Annapurna Ecovillage Resort, Amrit Treks & Expeditions, Dream Adventures Nepal and Himalayan Wander Walkers. Sincere thanks to Lila, Arjun and Makhi Tripathi for their help and hospitality shown to our volunteers in Malekhu.

***Photos** (top): one of our tours to the Mustang region near Muktinath; (bottom) the favourite guest house of all of our clients in Nepal - the Annapurna Ecovillage Resort in Astam, Kaski District; (next page) photos from a variety of our tour programs.*



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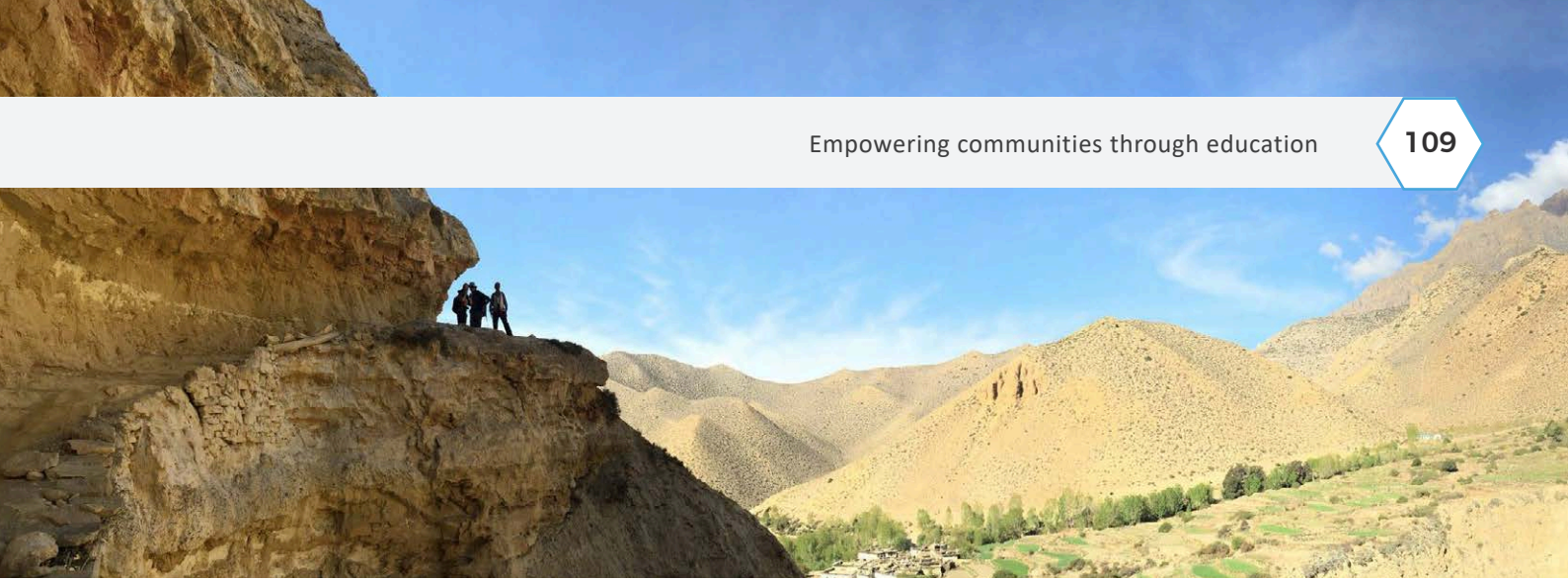

Fundraising Events

The majority of our income came from many generous individuals who donated to our cause or attended one of our charity events in Victoria, NSW and WA. Our 2015 earthquake appeal was our most intensive fundraising campaign and we received an overwhelming amount of support. We had, for instance, RMIT University teacher who volunteered in Nepal the previous year, operate a cake stalls at RMIT (bottom photo left); St Thomas School in Malaysia had a collection for our earthquake appeal (photo below right); and friends in Germany also ran their own fundraiser (photo next page top left). Special thanks to Larrisa Fry, Tahn Haimon, Maria de los Angeles Mena Mateos, Hannes Baisch and Mindy Saunder. A special thanks also to: Russ Tomlin and Jack Carmody from Xtreme Adventures and their teams for their fundraising effort in our joint community projects; and Chandra Yonzo, the Consulate of Nepal in Victoria, and Parsu Sharma-Luital for their contribution in our screening of *Earth-Q*. The success of our many fundraising dinners in Melbourne would not have been possible without the skilful catering service of Rajendra Pokhrel and team from Downunder Curry (Northcote) and in Perth, Bhairab Dhakal from the Himalayan Nepalese Restaurant. Special thanks to Gabriella and Chris Olszewski for their efforts in our Perth Earthquake Appeal dinner.

Thanks to the following individuals and business who contributed to our events: Bonadventure Travels (WA), Emily Domingo and the Gareth Voigt Quartet, Michelle Slattery, the late Kye Bartel and Bespoke Soiree, Capt. John Holmes and Ansett Aviation Training, Mandy Cipri, Adrian & Jennifer, Centrepiece by Design, Peter Walker and Strandbags, Lisa Celenza, Francesca Jennings, Luke Celenza, Glen Dimplex Australia, Mirjam Kooij, Loreal Perth, Joke & Peter van Riel, Star Tours & Travel Service, Versatile Building Products, Barry Broomfield and Gina Martinovich & the Gingin community, Smiths Beach Resort, Karsha Syred and Bushy's Dream Cottage, Revlon Australia, Himalayan Nepalese Restaurant and Café, High Tide Surf Store, Fazari's Butchers, Paul Litwin, Vasse Felix, Stella Bella Wines, Denny Guthrie, Linda Yates and the Humble Horse in Cowaramup, Iain Fisher and Belmont Home Entertainment Express, Kerry Day, Monica Lamperd, Jetts Gym in Northcote, Chris Williams and Slattery Auctions & Valuations, Lavina Harte and I Harte Media, Nevermind Bar in Hawthorne and Chocolate Drops WA.


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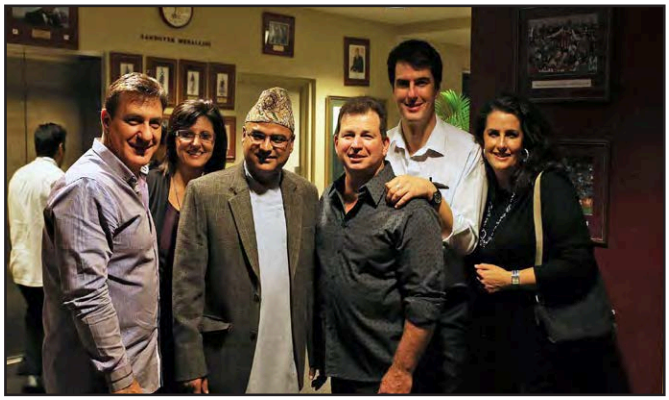


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Thanks to the many photographers who provided the fundraising event photos.

Communities in Nepal

All of our assistance programs were driven by members of the local communities with our support and encouragement. We had an exceptionally good community consultation process and strong relationships with local champions who were willing to ensure local management and ownership as well as monitor projects. We also facilitated cooperation between schools with teachers and community leaders having shared goals for education and success. It was an incentive for involvement that opened the way for an ongoing exchange of ideas, knowledge and support.

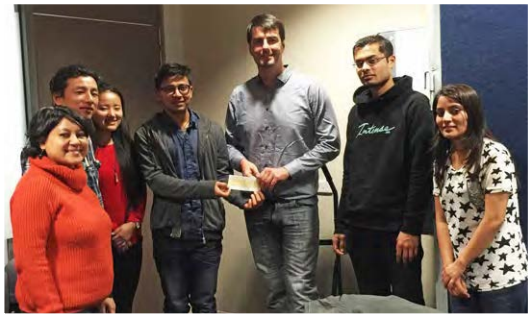
We also had the privilege of connecting international donors to the communities we were helping, some of whom were able to travel to Nepal, through our sponsorship programs and volunteers in the Pathways Program were able to work side-by-side with community members on development projects.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to the many Nepali people who came together in their villages and towns to warmly welcome us and to give their time to complete projects in their communities - many of whom became my very dear friends. The photos below are a small sample of the many people we joined in 31 communities to work together on projects over the last decade.

Nepali Community in Australia

I had the pleasure of connecting with many individuals from the Nepali and South Asian community organisations in Australia including the: Latrobe University Student's Association (photos below), our valued project sponsor; the Nepalese Association of Victoria; South Asian Community Link Group; Nepalese Victorian Consulate; and JET. Many individuals from the community provided help and direction with our work and we were fortunate to have had many Nepali community leaders participate in our fundraising functions. My most sincere thanks to Anjan Tripathi, Puspa Wagle, Dipesh Chaulagain, Namaste Melbourne, Dr Raju Adhikari, Chandra Yonzon, Niru Tripathi, Dr Kashiraj Pandey, Bhairab Dhakal and Ang Dawa Sherpa.

Thanks to the many photographers for the images in this section including MNTV, Solangture Photography, Sankalpa Photography, Vision Multimedia and Sabin Thapa.




JET Australia Foundation
Melbourne Chapter


Vision Multimedia

Photo taken in May 2015 at Kathmandu Durbar Square of proud Nepali citizens on top of the rubble of one of the former temples that was destroyed in the earthquake.

Ten years in Nepal empowering communities through education

ISBN: 978-0-6480203-3-2

Contact us

LOGGED ON Foundation

North Melbourne, Victoria 3051, AUSTRALIA

Email: loggedonmail@gmail.com

www.loggedon.org.au