



CHILD ACTION NEPAL

Newsletter No 8

February 08

About Nepal

Over 26 million people live in Nepal, and they consist of 92 castes, sub-castes, ethnic, and sub-ethnic groups, representing 40 languages. Although there has been a massive influx to Kathmandu and smaller "cities," the vast majority of Nepalese still eke out a living from subsistence farming in rural areas far from electricity, roads, or other social services. Only 20% of the land is arable, the rest is too mountainous. Deforestation is rampant. As of 2006, there were a grand total of 371,800 main phone lines in the entire country, and just over 4,073 kilometres of paved roads.

Medical care is limited, and Nepal has virtually no social programs for people who, for whatever reason, end up destitute: no food stamps, no welfare or AFDC, and no social security.

Women and girls in particular are disadvantaged. Only 42% of girls are able to read or write, and their older sisters and mothers are even less likely to be literate. The legal system also discriminates against women. Cultural mores make it difficult for women to assert their basic human rights and receive health care and a decent education. Lack of education among girls usually means early marriage and child-bearing (34% of Nepali girls are married by arrangement before they are 16 years old, and 7% percent are under 10 years of age).



For such young women, there is little family planning, poor child care, and a lower likelihood that their own daughters will be educated. The cycle of poverty continues.

Nepal is one of the only countries in the world where women's life expectancy (59 years old) is less than that of men (61 years old). Infant mortality in Nepal is one of the highest in the world (61 per 1000 live births, although an improvement on 1991 when it was 165‰).

51% of Nepal's population are children under age 18. While 70% of Nepalese children begin elementary school, half of them drop out before the fifth grade. Fortunately, the internal armed conflict in Nepal that caused millions of children to suffer and almost 1000 to be killed or injured, came to a relatively peaceful resolution in 2006. Even so, a decade of violence has left 40000 children displaced, 8000 orphaned, and many in great need. Schools have also been disrupted, with thousands closed.





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Karishma



Karishma today

Karishma was ten years old when she joined LBU. She has a striking smile and is very bright. She is living with us with her older sister Reshma.

Their father, who was in the army, died in a bus accident when they were both babies. Less than one year later their mother, a farmer from Eastern part of Nepal, committed suicide.



Karishma in 2003

Their grandmother and their uncle took very good care of the two little girls. However, it became difficult for them to keep Reshma and Karishma as the grandmother was getting old and the uncle had to take care of his three own children as well as four other nephews.

Karishma is in very good health and went to school before joining LBU. She is now in class VIII. She is making rapid progress in English and has been very quick to acquire computer skills. She is first in her class and has the personality of a leader.

Tihar 2007

This year we celebrated Tihar in our new house for the first time. I went there in November with my Mum who is very popular with the children who call her Grand-mother. The Tihar festival is about family and it is important that our children feel part of a family like other children in Nepal. We decorate the house the house with garlands and every day we lit dozens of oil lamps to illuminate the house and make it visible from the sky for the Goddess Laxmi to pay us a visit and reward us with prosperity.

We celebrate each day of the festival but the most important one is Bhai Tika. This year it was a very sunny day so we put rugs in the courtyard in front of the house, where sisters and brothers performed the ritual before opening their presents with the same excitement as children at Christmas.





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Trek 2007

Last year 13 of our supporters agreed to participate in the Annapurna Challenge. Each of them worked hard organising a number of events to raise more than £1,100 each. We are extremely grateful for their efforts, their generosity and kindness during the whole year. The trek was a real physical challenge but they all came back healthy and with fond memories. As an example here is the testimony of Natalie: "We arrived in Nepal in mid-October to start our journey of an incredible 10 days.



Rewarded by the fantastic views of the Annapurna range



During the trek

The trek was amazing, the scenery beautiful. It took us through many villages, large forests, past waterfalls, cornfields, masses of open space, amazing mountain views while passing thousands and thousands of goats!"

The reception at LBU

We wanted our group to understand how important their support was for the Children of LBU. To start with, thanks to the funds they raised, we acquired two new washing machines and a large screen TV with a DVD player to allow our family of 25 to watch films and cultural programmes comfortably (We are very strict when it comes to the programmes the children can watch). The 3 items were delivered shortly before the trekkers arrived for the party and the children and our staff were able to thank them personally for these gifts.

Rather than describing the party myself here is another testimony from Natalie: "After the trek we made our way back to Kathmandu to finally meet the kids and see the orphanage!! When we arrived they put on the most amazing performance of Nepalese singing, dancing and musical instruments. We stayed afterwards for lunch, got shown around and spent some time getting to know them. They have got to be some of the most loving kids with the most simplistic values, not interested in money, just happiness out of life."

Making new friends at LBU



Laxmi, Shila and Muna performing for our guests



Please do not hesitate to send your comments to info@childactionnepal.org.uk
Child Action Nepal, Reg. charity number: 1097447, www.childactionnepal.org.uk
c/o Florence Krief, PO Box 39679, London W2 6YP Tel. 07773 277 647



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Running for CAN

We would like to give some special thanks for the ten supporters who last July run the London 10K to raise funds for CAN. In particular Mark, Matt, Jo and Alex (photo) who run in memory of their friend Duncan Williams, who die last year when trekking in the Himalaya.



This year we are looking for 12 runners for the 6th July interested, you only need to fill in the attached form and return it the address below. We are looking forward to hearing from you!!

Special thanks too to Linda O'Neill who run the Loch Ness Marathon last October.



Parachute jump

Since the end of 2006, Bhav Jani and her friends have organised many events including a parachute jump to raise funds for Child Action Nepal. In total they have raised £5,000 which is a huge amount for us and makes a real difference for our children. We are extremely touched by their kindness and generosity.

Our 2007 Fundraising Party



This year again, our fundraising party was a great success in spite of the bad weather. Thanks to our guests and in particular the generosity of Simon Archdale and Peter Fox Linton, the donors of fantastic prizes and the volunteers who worked all night, we raised nearly £3,000.



Sponsoring a child

Any donation is welcome and even £10 or £20 makes a difference. However, should you wish to sponsor a particular child and follow his/her progress as he/she grows up, the cost is £40 a month or £20 if you wish to co-sponsor a child with friends or family. Alternatively, we can arrange for you to have a co-sponsor.



With my Nepalese brother, Rolak in November 2007: we just celebrated Bhai Tika, one of the celebrations of Tihar festival where sisters give tika (a coloured powder placed on one's forehead), and mala (a necklace of flowers) to brothers along with wishes for long life and prosperity.

Gratefully yours,

Florence Krief

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