

January, 2009

It has been seven days since leaving Central Oregon and already much has happened. I had read about the power problems in Kathmandu before arriving, but did not really comprehend the full issue. Each summer we have power outages while we are here and it has been amusing and just part of the trip. It is not so simple in the winter season. The issue of the power issues is huge at this time. There is a bit of debate as to the reason it is so extreme, basically due to a low rainfall year during monsoon, the rivers/res. are quite short of normal water levels that are needed to supply companies with adequate power. The outcome is what they call power shedding. Which basically means that approximately every six hours the power rotates through the city. Its effect is dramatic on heating, business, refrigeration and basically running a city that already has very low functioning infrastructure. The weather is pretty nice during the day but drops below freezing during the night.

My first week has really been about getting up to speed with many projects. I first met with Dinesh our good friend and employee, he really keeps things functioning while we are not here. Between massive amounts of tea intake we have gone through each project, checking and updating what has been happening in our absence. Having Mark here last year had a dramatic effect on what we could accomplish. From Hopeful Home, water filters, sponsored children and teacher training, we have been comparing notes and deciding what is the next step to meet goals.

Our first visit was to Hopeful Home Orphanage in its new home. It was really exciting to see the new place and discuss the yearly successes and problems that have come up in the move. Mark did an amazing job with finding the home and putting them in the rare position for an orphanage of owning their own home. It is a remarkable place and seeing the kids a year older is always a surprise. Dinesh and Gopini (house director) always have many new plans and strategies for the improvement of the home. We are having a meeting this next week to talk about their water issues and new plan for a bit more house discipline for the older children. One of the successes of Hopeful Home is keeping the children through high school and helping them enter college. The challenges of having 35 elementary children changes as many of them are now entering high school age. Overall it is an amazing place. I talked to many of the children and they were so grateful to be living in their own home.

Dinesh and I have also been working on the water filter project. We have just about one hundred locations where we have given some assistance, and in those there are several that need a bit of upkeep, about nine have not been maintaining their filters to standard and I will need to visit those and again educate on the reason the filter must be used for the children at all times. We are doing a little filter trading and putting in at least twenty new filters. A widow's home and school of physical handicap are new programs that we will be helping

with water supply. The power issue has added such a difficulty to our water assistance. For example the hopeful home receives city water once every three days for a two hour slot. The water usually comes between 2:00 and 4:00 A.M.. Someone must be ready to turn on the pump to get the water to the roof top to be stored in large containers. Then in the morning the gravity pressure allows the electric filter to be used to purify water for drinking, and put into containers in the house for the children. As you can guess, what if load shedding is taking place at the time of water delivery? Big problem. Hopeful home has one of the best situations. They have containers, filters, and pumps to get the water. Most other children's homes are not this lucky. Water is a constant issue. When we twist the faucet at home we are in the rare few that can do this. We are brainstorming the advantages of hand pumps and wells. The newest news is that Dinesh located a possible Rotary club in Kathmandu that may be able to help us make the connection with our local club from Sisters. I met with five club members at my hotel and they were very excited about the connection. Saturday morning I will be presenting to the club hoping that they will be the final piece to a matching rotary grant that has been in the works for a few years. This is very exciting and could be a way that we can complete our goal of putting filters in all Children's homes in Kathmandu valley.

I have also been getting up to par on our sponsored children. Mark and Dinesh have really set up an excellent system for our children that are sponsored to schools within the Kathmandu valley. Dinesh has been explaining the different family situations and how he checks on the kids. The children in most of the schools are on a fifteen day break at this time, so I have not gotten the chance to see them in school at this time. Since my first time in Nepal I have always been so taken by how often in the worst situations things seem to work out for the best. It is a place that connections seem to take place. I believe it is why so many people from around the world love to come here. As I was leaving the Tibet Guest house one morning, Tsirring an employee of the guest house and a friend that we have known for years, approached me and shyly asked if he could speak to me about Ten Friends. He told me of a family that he knew that had come to him and asked if they could put their child in the Hopeful Home Orphanage. I was a bit stunned and asked why they would want their child to live in an orphanage. He explained that that the boy's parents were from a low caste and wanted to give their 2.5 yr old son Rohan a chance to go to school. In the afternoon I went to visit the family. They were living in a small one room brick home that had belonged to the father's parents. The house was in very bad shape and as many Nepali's do, the child, parents and grandmother all share the one room. The father is a part time driver and is unable to find other work. They served me tea and we talked about school. I explained that we sometimes sponsor children to local schools and asked if they would be interested. Both the mother and father were very excited. The boy is now almost three and was more interested in his father's jacket buttons. I went back to the hotel, stunned as always and immediately wrote Mark to see if there was possibly a school sponsor that was waiting. As I finished my e-mail a Hungarian man that I had briefly met

the night before came to sit by me. He said, I was watching you talking with a few local people and I was wondering if you could assist me. I asked, what do you need? He explained that he and his wife were about to leave Nepal in two days time and they were teachers from Hungary. They decided they would like to sponsor a child to go to school, but did not know how to locate a child or find someone to take care of the logistics. That is Nepal.

Although the Himalaya Teacher Training center is in Khandbari in eastern Nepal there has been much to do relating to the training center while in Kathmandu. From meeting with local education organizations, to learning about a starting a Nepal based NGO. I have been learning so much about the education system and process for becoming a teacher in Nepal. It has been frustrating at times but very important to learn the whole process. It has also been very promising that every person that I have met is very behind the idea of assisting the young teachers that will one day return to their villages. Sunita is one of the leaders of the Training Center came to Kathmandu last month to take a computer course. Sunita is an amazing young women who was one of the first students that started at the Training Center. Sunita has been an amazing asset in Kathmandu and has been working on her English skills and computer training to assist in the orphanage work. Sunita and I have been meeting with ETC (Educate the Children) discussing funding for program and how to re-start the NGO in Khandbari for the girls training. I will try to explain, although it is a bit complicated. Originally four girls were selected from their villages to come to the larger village of Khandbari. The girls were from the Sankusava district of Nepal. They are called Bhotia, meaning high mountain people. The directors of this program and the idea came generally from two people. Chunduk a local Nepali man and Josh Brody an American from Pasadena California who had spent many years in this region and has been a champion of the program at all levels and across many borders. They started the Nepal Bhotia Education Center which is the hostel in Khandbari. The girls have been able to work on continuing their education to become teachers in this location. Chunduk and Josh teamed with ETC to set a holistic plan for the girl's education. Their planning included selection of more girls. Communication and buy in from local education district and administration, strategic planning with government teacher training programs for placement upon passing courses. At that time the program to become a primary teacher was four years. With government credit changes and more stringent requirement it is now a eight year program. Funding originally came from many sources. The program met difficulty during the Maoist conflict and both Josh and Chunduk were forced to pull back from program. The organization was not able to keep their official status and funding started to disappear. In most situations this program would have been lost. The girls kept the program alive living on almost nothing with great determination and focus with the drive that their calling was to be a teacher. After being absent from the area Josh Brody returned to check on what was left, he was pleasantly surprised that two of the original girls, Sunita and Dhanjik had held the program together and had even added new students. It was on Josh's return trip to the area that I met Josh

Brody for the very first time. That chance meeting while getting on a plane in Tumlingtar was the start Ten Friends support of the girls and the teacher training program. Mark visited the program last winter and we started some financial assistance, then this summer we visited again with Josh Brody and starting setting the plan to get these girls their credentials and back to their villages. Sunita and I have been setting the strategic plan with ETC who has been acting as a middle man between outside funding and the Nepal administration. We are working on a plan that ETC will assist the young women with the paperwork to transition their own NGO and become independent of other organizations. Ten Friends is now the only funder and will be in partnership with the training school, I will soon be going to Khandbari to help set up bank accounts and communication with phone lines, computer access and looking for long term housing. Then I will walk for about two weeks visiting all of the young student's families and villages. All the way to Kimitanka on the Tibetan border. This should be an amazing trip, especially in the winter. Ten Friends has raised enough for all of the girls living and tuition expenses for this year. I am so excited with the potential of this project. We like to say it has upstream potential of affecting so many children and the potential for a huge increase in literacy in this region. See other attachment for information on education information in this area. The stats that really stand out to me is of the 2% literacy rate among women in this region and that only nine students from this area at the time of the start of this program had passed their SLC.(10<sup>th</sup> grade equiv.) I am hoping to be in Khanbari on by the fourteenth of this month.

One of our goals is to put computers into the teacher training school. Dennis Dempsey has been a great support for this. We have been trying to get seven laptops to Kathmandu. I was not able to carry them with me on this trip. We planned to ship them, but the new government has set very stringent import rules and the cost is unmanageable at this time. I am hoping to purchase one computer for the girls and then we will carry the others in as soon as possible. If anyone knows of someone flying to Nepal in near future, please contact me.

The last focus of mine has been looking for someone local to sew our stretchers. Rescue Response gear has been supplying stretchers for cost for many years, and their support has been amazing. With the increase in shipping costs and the drop in lbs that we are allowed to carry, we have decided to get the stretchers made here. At this time our friend Bhirmaney has agreed to manufacture stretchers for us and this will be an excellent way to save money in shipping and allow us to make them here in Nepal. He is working on our new sample at this time.

That is the latest. I hope you can read my rambles and make something out of them. It seems that the projects are really coming together. None of this could happen without the support and efforts of everyone at home. I can not express enough the effect of the donations from all of you involved in Ten Friends. Take

care and I will talk to you soon. Wish me luck for my Kathmandu root canal. The thought makes me sick and I wake up thinking of the movie running man.  
Be well.  
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