

Namaste and greetings from a beautiful autumnal Kathmandu

With the monsoon finally declared over after record breaking rainfall, Nepal is finally enjoying the blue skies, warm sun and chilly evenings and mornings of autumn.

The country is slowly coming back to normal after the 10 day Dashain festival (Nepal's version of Christmas), where the cities empty as those from villages, head home to celebrate with their families. Kids and adults alike traditionally fly kites and play on community 'ping' swings and many goats, chickens and ducks are sacrificed in the name of Durga, providing the festival's main food source. Sadly this year's Dashain festivities were somewhat hampered by 3 days and 2 nights of torrential rain, as the eastern edge of Cyclone Phailin covered all the country bar the far west of the country, making travelling between friends and family difficult, especially due to the lack of public transport and taxis during this time.

The country is now awaiting its second greatest festival, Tihar or Diwali (The Festival of Lights) and again friends and families come together to worship and celebrate in a fest of blessings, sweet, sugary, fried foods, singing and dancing while the country twinkles in the glow of millions of candles, oil lamps and fairy lights.

Politically the country is rapidly entering election fever, as we head towards elections for the new Constituent Assembly Members (members of Parliament) on the 19<sup>th</sup> November, after the they were all sacked for failing after 4 years of inactivity, to write the countries new Constitution.

If you wish to keep up to date with what is happening in Nepal, take a look at [www.nepalnews.com.np](http://www.nepalnews.com.np).



## News From VSN Homes

Our college boys have settled into their new routine. Mahesh leaves early in the morning and is back by lunchtime, whereas the science boys, leave mid morning but don't get back until after 7pm at night! Our class 9 and 10 kids have started extra tuition before school in readiness to prepare them for their SLC exams, meaning they too have long days of study.

Various festivals have been celebrated since the summer – Saune Sankranti (Change of seasons day) , Teacher's Day, Janipurnima (Beans day) and Gai Jatra (Cow day), Teej (Ladies festival). Our kids helped organise their school's Teacher's Day festivities, which was greatly appreciated by all the staff members.

Unfortunately we have been having some issues with kids across both homes having high expectations of what they want and what they think should be made available to them, as apposed to what they actually need. This has been exacerbated by volunteers ignoring our home rules, spoiling the children unnecessarily and imposing western ideas of need on them, which undermines much of the hard work and energy our homes staff put into the bringing the children up in an appropriate and Nepali way.

And finally, the kids were really happy to see Dr Bipin, who did a surprise health check for them, as he has been away in Thailand for the last two years doing masters degrees in Tropical and Public Health. Raju was especially pleased to see him, and he and Bipin serenaded us with an impromptu jamming session – Bipin on the guitar and Raju on vocals.

## BFCH (Brighter Future Children's Home)

We have had a mixed bag of behaviour from our BFCH kids this last quarter – some being hard working and helpful around the house, while others have been lazy, slovenly and disrespectful to staff members.

Jaggu was away for nearly 4 weeks over this period and sadly, despite their promises of good and helpful behaviour, the girls used this as an opportunity to be lazy, unhelpful and above all rude and disrespectful to Bikram and especially Sita Didi who in their opinion is just 'riff raff'. The boys on the other hand went out of their way to be supportive and helpful to the staff during Jaggu's absence.

We have been having ongoing issues with the girls for several months now on everything from personal hygiene (severely lacking!), looking after their clothes and possessions, to attitude towards school and their studies, as well as their general behaviour around the home. It doesn't seem to matter what approach we take with them, softly softly or hard hitting, they just don't seem to care about anything other than themselves. Not all of them are guilty of all crimes, as Puja studies hard and Sunita A has been making a much greater effort with her studies and is also kind, helpful and respectful to Sita Didi.

Their first term exams reflected the effort they put in, with four of them failing in at least 2 subjects. Sujan, Puja and Tajendra on the other hand did extremely well finishing in first and third positions with over 86%. Poor old Taj scored an overall average of 94% and still came third, and being the boy he is, is determined that in his next set of exams he will go up at least 1 position! Their second term exam results will be out after the Tihar festival in November, as will Suresh and Kamal's first set of college exams.

Suresh and Kamal are enjoying college and rising to the challenge of a different style of teaching and much harder course work. Despite their long days and heavy work load, they still remain the smiley, positive, helpful boys they have become. They are currently on a month's holiday and will return to college after Tihar in early November.

On a more positive note, the BFCH tomato tunnel has been an amazing success and the home has managed to save over 10,000Rs from the sales of extra veggies after making deductions for seeds, manure etc. A massive thank you to Bikram and Sita Didi for all the hard work they have put into it. The plan is to put the savings towards a second tunnel to help increase further the BFCH veggie yield, which will not only help us reduce our food costs for the home, but give us greater income generating opportunities.

Work has also been done on the outdoor kitchen to make it more durable and long lasting. Sadly the torrential rains of this year's monsoon took a great toll on the structure, washing away the dried mud coating and rotting the bamboo walls, so now the bamboo has been replaced with bricks. Once finished, this kitchen won't be going anywhere for a long time!

The kids have just had a 2 week holiday in order to celebrate Dashain. 6 of the kids spent the holiday with relatives – Suresh, Bishnu, Kamal, Sunita B, Ashmita and Puja – while the others celebrated at BFCH. Sadly due to the awful weather some activities were curtailed, but a lovely time was had by all.



## SSCH (Shining Stars Children's Home)

Thankfully the SSCH kids have on the whole been behaving themselves, with only minor misdemeanours here and there. Dharendra has really smartened up his act and the only complaints to date, were some of the younger kids wouldn't do as Jaumaya Didi asked or follow the home routine while Hari was away for a couple of days, and Sunita threw a teenage strop and refused to talk to the staff for 4 – 5 days, when she was banned from spending all her spare time next door with Pratima. We haven't heard back yet how their behaviour was while Hari and Sushmita were away over Dashain, but the fact that there were no emergency phone calls to Devendra over that time, we are taking as a positive sign.

Health wise the kids have been OK, the usual coughs, colds and sore throats, but nothing more serious. Sher had a follow up on his ear drum surgery with a view to getting his second ear sorted, but unfortunately he has developed a fungal infection in both ears, so surgery will have to wait until this is cured properly. Suresh's is slowly growing new hair in his bald patches and the treatment for this is ongoing. Most of the kids have had eye checks and for those that needed them, new specs or new lenses. Hari also took Mina to have her 'milky' eye assessed as in the past we were told that they could polish her cornea to turn it permanently black, so that it wouldn't stand out and she wouldn't face discrimination. However, after consulting with the specialist we have now been told, that the treatment isn't permanent and has a high risk of causing further damage, so we have decided not to go ahead with the treatment. Finally, Luna has been having some counseling sessions to help her with her hysteria fits which resurface every once in a while and she has reported back that she has found them really helpful.

School is ticking along nicely, although Dharendra, Khem, Hira and Raj failed some subjects in their first term exams. Dharendra and Khem's results are a little worrying given they are in their SLC year. Raj can be forgiven as this was his first set of exams after skipping a year, but needs to work hard to catch up and Hira is making an effort and doing the best he can. We are hoping for better results for the boys in their second term exams.

Ashok, Moon and Rajendra are enjoying college and working hard as is Ajaya. Mahesh doesn't seem so convinced and still has his heart set on drama, and unfortunately isn't able to comprehend that there aren't any full time drama courses at his level, and that he needs to get a solid academic foundation behind him, so when he chooses to follow his dream he is able to support himself while looking for work.

Hari took the younger kids to Bhaktapur this year to watch the Gai Jatra festivities (he took the older kids last year) as well as visiting the giant Shiva statue and they really enjoyed it. Some of the kids (BFCH as well) participated in an inter school marathon competition and Luna finished in the top 10, Dharendra in the top 15 and BFCH's Sujana in the top 50 – competing in a field of 1,500 kids! A massive congratulations to all of them, and to all the other kids who participated.

Dharendra was chosen by school to participate in a heritage painting competition organised by one of the banks. The results will be published at the end of this month. Over the Dashain holidays Mandir, Madan and Lal made up a 3 man team for a quiz organised by members of the Badikhel community and finished in 2<sup>nd</sup> place out of 7 teams, winning themselves 1,500 rupees, notebooks and pencils.

Finally, Kasam came to visit SSCH – the first time since leaving us in 2011. He is doing really well and had just heard that he had secured a scholarship to study radiography at college, starting after Tihar. It was lovely to see him again.



## Community Maintenance

The back wall at BFCH has been completed, making the property safe from future floods and landslips. John our CM volunteer worked incredibly hard throughout the rainy monsoon months, with help here and there from other volunteers, members of staff and the kids and has a beautiful and strong wall.

This project completed he then packed his bags and headed to Bhimpokhara in the west of the country, to continue our ongoing project of helping build improved cooking stoves for the poorer members of the community. In the 6 weeks that he has been there, he has completed 5 stoves, and is close to finishing his 6<sup>th</sup>, made possible by a kind and generous donation from two Dutch Volunteers, who were volunteering with a different organisation here in Nepal, but liked and believed in what we at VSN are trying to achieve.



## Women's Education & Empowerment Programme

September saw us host our first Women's Education & Empowerment volunteers, Shri and Gloria and they have taken to the programme like ducks to water.

Based in Kathmandu, they have been teaching at two different classes, 6 days a week. Mornings are spent teaching and working with local teachers Indu and Saraswoti in a large class (45ish students) just outside the ring road on the northern outskirts of the city. Once class finishes at 1pm, after a cup of tea and snack, they jump on to a bus to their next class in Balaju, a 15 minute journey around the ring road. Here they work with Nilu in a smaller more intimate venue with around 10 – 15 students.

The teachers and ladies in both classes have been so warm and welcoming and are loving the creativity and fun that the volunteers bring to their classes. Although the students take their classes very seriously and are desperate to learn, each and every class is filled with hoots of laughter and encouragement as they do what is asked of them from their teachers.

Their focus has been on communication rather than perfect spelling, pronunciation etc, giving their students the confidence to have a go. Lessons have been designed in order to be fun, interspersing the drier side of things with role plays, interactive games, stretching exercises, dancing and singing!

In the month that they have been in placement they have covered such topics as understanding and responding to basic questions, ie name, age, husband's name etc; polite greetings, introductions and inquiries; understanding and basic ability to read English words phonetically based on the equivalent Nepali sound; writing their names, friends names; identifying fruits and forming sentences with 'like' and 'don't like'; understanding, reading, speaking and acting out common action words ie drink, dance, walk, stop; parts of the body; feelings; numbers 1 – 50 with simple addition and subtraction and how to use a mobile phone, store numbers, check balance etc. Each lesson includes an element of revision from previous lessons as well as either building on a subject or introducing something new.

To find out more about this fantastic new programme, check out our placement profiles on our website [http://www.vsnprojects.org/programmes-teaching\\_education.html](http://www.vsnprojects.org/programmes-teaching_education.html) and have a look at the photos posted on our Facebook page [www.facebook.com/vsnprojects](http://www.facebook.com/vsnprojects). Short video clips soon to be added.



# VSN's 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Appeal



## Live Below The Line NZ

To everyone who participated in the NZ Live Below the Line on behalf our Shining Stars Children' Home - a Himalayan sized thank you, not only for your sacrifices, but more importantly so that we didn't have to sacrifice Pragatti! By your selfless act you saved Pragatti from the pot.

## Eat So They Can

Despite the fact that the official Eat So They Can weekend has just gone, it doesn't mean you can't still get involved. Eat So They Can events can continue to be held from now until the end of the year, so it's not too late to host an event. For further detail and to sign up this link <http://www.eatsotheycan.org/> and remember to tag Nepal as your beneficiary. Do something amazing this autumn and help us keep our Shining Stars bright and twinkly by helping us to feed them.

## Christmas is a Coming!

With the autumn nights drawing in across the northern hemisphere and the warm summer days around the corner in the southern hemisphere, thoughts are beginning to turn to Christmas and the trials and tribulations of Christmas shopping.

With this in mind, why not simplify your life, save yourself a whole heap of time and effort and forget about running around the shops buying gifts people don't really need or want. Instead, why not make a donation to our 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary appeal and give them a meaningful present that will not only bring them joy and a sense of worth, but will also help secure the future of our 24 Shining Stars children and their further education needs.

To see how you can help and/or to make a donation please refer to our website <http://www.vsnprojects.org/help.html> or contact Kate at [kate@vsnpjrojects.org](mailto:kate@vsnpjrojects.org)

**Every donation however large or small is greatly appreciated and crucial to the success of the work we do.**

## Fundraising Trek

If you would like the opportunity to trek to Everest Base Camp for an amazing cause, GVN will be running a fundraising trek on our behalf in 2014. Put these dates in your diary 18<sup>th</sup> September – 5<sup>th</sup> October and you can register your interest at the following link [www.globalvolunteernetwork.org/everest/](http://www.globalvolunteernetwork.org/everest/).

Walk to the foot of the roof of the world to give our kids a 'Brighter Future'.

## And Finally .....

We would like to thank all our local and international friends who continue to support us and our projects. Without your help many of our dreams would never come true and the life our children would lead would be drastically different. Through your continued love and support, the children in our care are able to grow up in a happy, safe, loving environment, free to enjoy their childhood.

With warm regards and a very happy Tihar  
The VSN Team



Helping Others  
To Help Themselves

### Volunteer Service in Nepal

PO Box 15142, KPC 901, Kathmandu, Nepal

Phone: +977 1 4264363

E-mail: [info@vsnpjrojects.org](mailto:info@vsnpjrojects.org)

Web: [www.vsnprojects.org](http://www.vsnprojects.org)

 [www.facebook.com/vsnprojects](http://www.facebook.com/vsnprojects)

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