



EDUCATE THE CHILDREN

Natural and Political Tsunamis

Christopher London, Executive Director

So far, 2005 has been dramatic for the world and for ETC. First, the earthquake in Aceh on December 26, 2004 and the terrible tsunami that swept across the Indian Ocean stunned us all with their devastating scale and ferocity. The New Year was ushered in with countless images and stories of suffering and loss. It was heartening to see that people across the world responded with an outpouring of fundraising drives and donations. Everyone at ETC hopes that the long-term reconstruction of the devastated communities will not be forgotten as the tsunami ebbs off the front pages of the world's newspapers.

Then on February 1, Nepal experienced a political tsunami when King Gyanendra of Nepal sacked the prime minister, dissolved the government, declared a state of emergency and began censoring all media outlets. For a week there was no telephone or internet service in Nepal and we had no contact with our staff in Kathmandu. It is extraordinary that in the 21st century it is still possible to take a country almost entirely off the global information grid.

Both of these world events have had an impact on ETC. After the coup, we had no way of knowing what was happening with our office and staff in Kathmandu. We heard from Sara Shneiderman and Mark Turin (co-founders of the Thami Education Project; see page 5) that the situation in Kathmandu was calm, which allayed our fears. But it was disconcerting to have to continue with our daily routines here in Ithaca not knowing what was happening to our compatriots.

As fate would have it, ETC's work in Nepal has continued unabated. Indeed, during that first week after the coup, Nepal Director Mira Rana and Education Director L.B. Basukala made a trip to Sankhuwasabha district to survey the ongoing work of the Nepal Bhotia Education Center (page

4). ETC managed to celebrate International Women's Day on March 8 in an event attended by over 300 women's group members (page 6). We have even begun cooperative trainings in our old project area in Rasuwa District, thanks to a grant from the American Himalayan Foundation. So, we're happy to report that despite the political situation in Nepal, for ETC it is business as usual.

The impact of the Indian Ocean tsunami is another matter. As I reported in an appeal letter mailed last fall, donations to ETC in the months leading up to the November election were historically low. November and December were quite the opposite as donations in those months hit historic highs. You, our supporters, were extremely generous this past holiday season and for that we are extremely grateful. But, in the aftermath of the tsunami, donations to ETC slowed to a trickle such that our income in February was over 80% below the average for that month over the preceding 4 years.

The last few months have felt like a roller coaster for everyone at ETC. But what is most heartening for all of us, what gets us up in the morning, is knowing that we are part of something good and that by working together these extraordinary times will never derail us from our task. We thank you for supporting us in this endeavor; because of you, ETC will fulfill its mission: to provide opportunities for women and children in Nepal, empowering them to improve their own lives.



Students at Jan Bikash Primary School, Godavari

Mother's Day is just around the corner!

We have over 100 children who need sponsors!

See Page 7 for details

ETC Nepal Director, Mira Rana, Visits America

Despite the hectic election time, my fall visit to the U.S. was very successful. I met with many people from various organizations and with ETC's Board of Directors. This was the third time I traveled to the United States and represented ETC Nepal at a board meeting. I am so proud to have such a committed Board of Directors who always work to make ETC stronger and more effective.

During my visit, I participated in events in San Francisco, Washington DC, Wilmington, Delaware, and at Cornell University. The gathering of highly distinguished persons in San Francisco was very interesting and they kindly showed a desire to support ETC's work. It was also rewarding to meet with people from Three Guineas Fund, American Himalayan Foundation, and the Urban School in San Francisco. I feel lucky to have met with the director of the International Children Resource Center (ICRC) to discuss the possibility of a collaboration between our two organizations.

It was wonderful for me to be able to participate in the American Nepal Society's Dasain festival in Washington, DC. ETC set up an information table at this event, which was attended by countless Nepalis living in the DC area. My meetings with Karina Manasseh from the World Bank and with Elizabeth Ruethling from The Global Fund for Children were very interesting for me. I am thankful that these people gave their valuable time to hear about ETC's activities.

Following a meeting with the Wilmington West Rotary Club in Delaware, the members pledged their support to ETC. I was also happy to visit the Unitarian Church in Delaware, where many of the people are ETC sponsors and donors.

My stay in the Ithaca area proved to be very productive— and busy! The attendees at an informal meeting in Elmira were so impressed with ETC's activities, and I am grateful for their commitment and support. It was also wonderful to join board member Dr. Roy Coats in a program for the members of St. Paul's Church in Ithaca. The participants, ETC sponsors, were very interested in learning more about the realities facing women in Nepal. I was also fortunate to have met with

soil scientists, John Duxbury and Julie Lauren at Cornell University, and to have discussed with them possible programs in Nepal.



In New York City, I met with the president of Elephant Rock Foundation, Jon Simon, who expressed his keen interest in supporting ETC. I was also very happy to see Dr. Kul Chandra Gautam from UNICEF. He was extremely positive and supportive regarding ETC and our ongoing work in Nepal.

Finally, my sincere and special thanks to Roy and Alma Coats, Freema Hillman, Tika Gurung and Susan Hangen, Manohar and Anju Sharma, Susanna Pearce, Phyllis and Bob Wynn, Christopher London, Adam Swart, and Suzanne Cullen. Many thanks also to ETC's Board of Directors, donors, sponsors, and members, who inspired me and helped make my trip productive. Without the help and support from generous people in the United States, we would not be as successful in carrying out our activities in Nepal.

Introducing E T C Nepal's new staff:

Mr. Kaman Bahadur Malla, ETC's new Agriculture Officer, brings to ETC experience from many parts of Nepal, including work as an agriculture officer and a program coordinator in various districts in western Nepal. Mr. Malla has also been involved with ICIMOD, an organization with which ETC has a partnership.

Ms. Anita Paudel Pokharel, Office Secretary, joins ETC after much experience teaching English and Secretarial Management. She has also worked as a Library Consultant and, in addition to her service with ETC, she continues to work as a Pre-Primary Supervisor in a private boarding school. Ms. Paudel is completing her Bachelor's degree.

In a wonderful success story, **Ms. Sunita Chhetri** has joined ETC as the new Procurement and Administrative Assistant. Ms. Chhetri had been an ETC-sponsored student since 1994 and passed her SLC exam in 2000. Now, more than a decade after joining the ETC community as a student, she joins as a staff member, with a great deal of first hand knowledge and experience to offer!

ETC's Board Corner

What's New

Dr. Roy Coats, ETC Board Vice-President, and his wife, Alma, are off to Cuba in April for a work trip about 4 hours east of Havana. This is through a program called Volunteers in Mission (VIM), which they have been active in for some dozen years working all around the globe doing work similar to Habitat for Humanity. Roy and Alma are busy collecting sample medicines from doctors' offices to take down with them as they are in short supply there.

Katharine Rankin, is the author of *Cultural Politics of Markets: Economic Liberalization and Social Change in Nepal* (2004, Pluto Press and U of Toronto Press) and has received tenure as Associate Professor at the University of Toronto. On a personal note, Katharine and Peter Zimmerman were married last year and the newlyweds are also the happy parents of a beautiful daughter, Niku.

Charles Rosenthal is ETC's newest board member, joining in November 2004. An Ithaca resident, Charles brings many years of fundraising experience at Binghamton University with him to ETC. Charles is very enthusiastic and supportive of ETC's work in Nepal.

Board Secretary and Treasurer, **Dan Sisler**, continues to serve as chairman of the Helen Keller International Board of Trustees. HKI has an office in Kathmandu and is currently focusing on home gardening projects, which improve nutrition for families in its work area. Dan notes that, "My two favorite organizations, ETC and HKI, are both able to function and do good work in Nepal."



Women's Group members who have model kitchen gardens the whole community learns from.

Board Spotlight: Barbara Cook



Meeting Barbara Cook is like being swirled in gusts of positive energy, enthusiasm, and optimism. ETC's founder, Pamela Carson, got caught up in Barbara's spell, and from their friendship came much of what ETC is today.

Pamela and Barbara met through a Nepali doctor, who knew both women loved Nepal and wanted to make a difference. After talking on the phone with Pamela about their shared hopes, they planned to travel together to Kathmandu.

In the end, that momentous 1991 meeting took place in an inauspicious venue: a ladies room in the Bangkok airport, where Pamela and Barbara talked about Nepal, their plans, and the future they would forge together. In the years since, Barbara has taken the leaps of faith that brought ETC from a small sponsorship program to one of the most-respected small NGOs in Nepal today.

In ETC's early days, Barbara and Pamela worked day and night to ensure sponsored students were well cared for. Barbara negotiated with school directors, shopped with children for school supplies, and acted as troubleshooter *extraordinaire*.

As ETC grew, Barbara was instrumental in assembling a bright, committed Nepali staff. She recalls when Raju Dhamala, currently ETC's Senior Administrative Officer, first considered working for the organization as an accountant. "I knew he was the right person," she says. "He was well trained in accounting from working in the hotel industry, but wanted a position where he could make a difference in his country."

Barbara is a silversmith who travels the world in search of unique stones that she incorporates into her beautiful designs. She works closely with Nepali craftsmen who, for generations, have fashioned wonderful jewelry.

Board Secretary Dan Sisler says that Barbara, an ETC Board member since 2000, "has the vision to develop a successful program of assistance. She also has the insight and humanity to anticipate how that program will enhance the lives of impoverished Nepali women and children."

Good Friends in High Places

ETC Looks to Partnerships to Broaden Its Impact

The strength of Educate the Children's Integrated Community Development model is our lasting commitment to the people we work with. But, because our model is so labor intensive, it is hard to replicate. To broaden ETC's impact, we are forming partnerships with local organizations in distant areas of Nepal. Two organizations that we

have been working with since 2003 are the Nepal Bhotia Education Center (NBEC) and the Thami Education Project (TEP). These wonderful projects are bringing educational opportunities to people who have had very few before. We look forward to building more such partnerships in the future.

NBEC: Bringing Educational Opportunities to Women and Children in Sankhuwasabha

The Nepal Bhotia Education Center (NBEC), was created in 2000 by ETC Board Member Josh Brody and Chhongduk Bhotia. NBEC works with about 300 children and adults who live in Sankhuwasabha district, which lies along the Tibetan border in northeastern Nepal. Most of the Singha Bhotia people practice Tibetan Buddhism and, thanks to NBEC, they are becoming literate in their native language and in Nepali.

The most remote part of the region NBEC serves is a six-day walk from the nearest road over rugged terrain ranging in altitude from 4,000 to 13,000 feet. The sparsely-populated region is home to the Upper Arun River Valley, where a mountain pass leads to Tibet.

Like ETC, NBEC focuses on making locally-meaningful education available to underserved populations. And, by integrating women's and children's education, NBEC's programs bring lasting benefits to the community. The ETC-NBEC relationship has been a fruitful one. As Josh Brody states, "The partnership gives NBEC institutional support and we can share our ideas and our experiences."

NBEC helps primary schools get more community involvement in formal education as well as literacy training for adults. By working with adults and children, NBEC gives families strategies to

help their children succeed in school. One of NBEC's major innovations has been to prepare reading and literacy training materials in the Singhawa language which had never been done before. The Nepali government has even adopted these materials into its own curriculum.



NBEC students with Chhongduk Bhotia.

While the ongoing conflict in Nepal has made NBEC's work difficult, its residential schooling program in Khandbari, the district headquarters, is doing well. This program helps girls finish high school and provides training so that they can become teachers in primary schools in their home communities. The Nepali government is committed

to placing at least one female teacher in every school so NBEC students will be well positioned.

Mira Rana visited Khandbari and writes, "These girls are so lovely and committed to helping their village. Chhongduk is getting food for the residence through credit from one of his friend's shops and fees and stationary is managed from his pocket. So it would be worthwhile to support this program as soon as possible. We like this program very much."

While ETC has some resources to support NBEC, more is needed to keep this important work going. If you would like to make a specific donation to NBEC, please let us know. You can make a big difference in the future of the Bhotia people.

TEP: Working With the Thami Minority Community

The Thami Education Project (TEP) was established by the Thami community in April 2003 with the help of Sara Shneiderman and Mark Turin, two anthropologists affiliated with Cornell University. The Thamis are a small ethnic community in Dolakha and Sindhupalchok districts who have been very marginalized within Nepal.

TEP sponsors the education of Thami children in their local village schools in Dolakha, and enables higher education for a select number of high-achieving students at boarding schools in Kathmandu. TEP support includes school uniforms, supplies, textbooks, and exam fees for each child. Initially, TEP supported 16 students and that number has grown to 20. They range in age from six to nineteen years old, and study in classes one through twelve. Seven of the twenty students are girls.

Currently, two girls are studying in ninth grade at the New Shrine Academy in Kathmandu with TEP support. Shanti Thami is from Chokati village in Sindhupalchok district, while Karuna Thami is from Damarang village in Dolakha district. They are both progressing extremely well; their teachers report that they are both hard workers who have done their utmost to catch up with Kathmandu-level studies. Shanti and Karuna are on track to take the SLC exam in spring 2006. When they pass, they will become among the very first Thami women to accomplish this.

Komintal Thami is TEP's first college student. He began working towards his Bachelor's Degree in

Management at Kathmandu's Saraswati Campus in 2004. His five younger siblings are all enrolled in a village school.

TEP has also started programs to educate villagers about cleanliness and hygiene, provide loans for emergency healthcare, and improve the facilities at the local primary school. Villagers have

formed groups by residence and work together to keep their areas free of trash (especially non-degradable plastic), and each household that does not have a toilet is building one with the help of the others.

A rotating credit fund has been established, from which individuals can borrow up to Rs. 5000 interest-free for emergency medical treatment. Five families have used this opportunity in the last two years, and most have paid back their loan already. The Damarang village

primary school has been furnished with new small stools and tables for children, which were made with voluntary labor and wood donated by active project members.

While TEP is a self-funded organization, because it is small and located at some distance from Kathmandu, ETC plays a vital role by providing it with an institutional foundation. ETC's staff in Nepal has worked closely with the Thamis who run TEP to improve their management skills and learn how to function as a non-profit organization. The partnership has been very rewarding for both ETC and TEP. All of us at ETC are excited to be participating in the steady growth of this wonderful, and much needed organization.



TEP students receiving school supplies.



Thanks to Terry Koch for help with the NBEC story and to Sara Shneiderman for the TEP story. The photo to the left shows TEP-sponsored students and their families.

The New Year's Day Women: Making a Difference From Wilmington, Delaware

In 1979, ETC Board Member and long-time supporter, Phyllis Wynn, decided to have an open house for friends who had no interest in watching football games on New Year's Day. Thus began the annual gathering of the New Year's Day Women of Wilmington, Delaware. About 60 women who share Phyl's interests and volunteer efforts get together to reflect on the past year and discuss their hopes for the future.

In January 2000, after hearing about ETC from Phyl, the New Year's Day Women decided to collectively support a women's group in Nepal. Since then, their involvement has grown tremendously. The New Year's Day Women now sponsor seven women's groups through ETC! Individ-



Phyllis Wynn and Nepali Friends

ual members sponsor three more women's groups as well as three children through ETC's Community Sponsorship program. Phyl has been sponsoring women's groups since 1996 and supporting the education of Bimala Lama through ETC since 1990.

To date, the New Year's Day Women have contributed nearly \$20,000 to Educate the Children. Because of this support, hundreds of women and children in Nepal have learned to read and write, have access to a better education, and have become leaders in improving the quality of life in their communities. Groups like the New Year's Day Women make a tremendous difference and cause a ripple effect of change throughout a community.

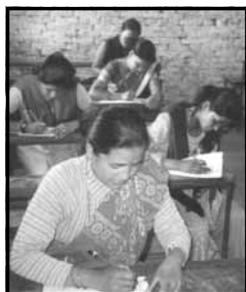
ETC Celebrates International Women's Day!

On March 8, Educate the Children participated in an event celebrating the 95th International Women's Day at Kitini Higher Secondary School in Godavari, Lalitpur. ETC staff members, women's group members, and special guests made speeches highlighting the importance of Women's Day.

The program was facilitated by a women's group member who had also been a former ward representative. The chief guest of the event was Educate the Children's Nepal Director, Mira Rana.

In addition to the speeches, the festivities included a poetry writing competition, many games, and a folk song competition between the women's group members of the Godavari and Ichangu Narayan project areas! The winners of these events were all awarded prizes.

ETC's celebration of International Women's Day was a huge success. More than 300 women representing forty women's groups, along with other special guests and local community members, participated in the festivities. All participants found encouragement, solidarity, and enjoyment at this celebration. The event was featured in an article appearing in the March 9 issue of The Kantipur Daily.



Poetry Competition



International Women's Day Celebration in Godavari



Poetry Reading

Supporting Children and Honoring Mothers

Community Sponsorships

ETC's Community Sponsorship program is a very rewarding and enriching way to support not only a child, but that child's school and community. As a sponsor, you will receive letters, photos, and grade reports from the student you are sponsoring with updates regarding her or his progress. Becoming a Community Sponsor will create a bond between you and the child benefiting from your generosity; it will provide you with a more personal, more intimate connection to Nepal and to ETC.



Ashmita Thapa, 5, and Manid Lama, 10, are just two of the many students that can benefit from your support. Your generosity will provide them with school supplies and pay their school fees, while improving their schools through teacher trainings, the provision of teaching materials, and facility improvements.



Happy Mother's Day!

Mom. It's a short word with only three letters, but how great is the meaning! How deep is the love! With Mother's Day not too far off, let us honor the first woman in our lives! ETC offers gifts that can be given in honor of your mother this Mother's Day. Please consider giving a gift that will brighten more than one person's day:



- *Training for one teacher (\$15)**
- *Kitchen garden for one family (\$25)**
- *Literacy for one woman (\$35)**
- *Toilet for one household (\$50)**
- *Legal literacy for one women's group (\$75)**
- *Construction of goat or pig housing (\$100)**
- *Water tap for several families (\$200)**

Visit www.etc-nepal.org/mothersday for more information, including a choice of cards to send.

Thank You!

- ~ ETC would like to offer a huge thank you to **Monica Soni** and the **South Asian Dance Company at Harvard University** who organized a benefit dance performance in which troupes from eleven northeastern colleges participated. ETC received all proceeds from the event!
- ~ Thank you to our dedicated volunteers: **Carly Benkov, Leslie Eliet, Sara Kross, Ruthy Lorenzana, Margaret Myers, Igor Rubinov, Carly Sparks, and Amina Ahmad.**
- ~ Thanks to the **American Himalayan Foundation**, the **Cornelia Lombard Trust**, the **Elephant Rock Foundation**, and the **International Foundation** for their continued support of ETC's work.
- ~ Many people made ETC's events celebrating a decade of Integrated Community Development possible. In San Francisco, thanks to **Bess Bendet** and **Three Guineas Fund** for use of their office, and too **Arlene Blum** for graciously giving her time as a guest speaker. **Freema Hillman** was an incredible hostess, friend and networker. In Ithaca, thanks to **Chenga Drury, Dhiki Drury, Kath March, Shreya Pokharel, Amrutha Nanjappa** and **Cornell University's Sitara South Asian Dance Troupe, Gimme Coffee, and the Carriage House Café.**
- ~ **Srijana Bajracharya, Gopini Lama, Zack Nelson, and Ramesh Pokharel** for their help with translations.



Founded by Pamela Carson

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