



EDUCATE THE CHILDREN INTERNATIONAL

Past, Present and Future of Educate the Children

Christopher London, Executive Director

I recently returned from a trip to Nepal where I had the good fortune to visit our past, present and future project communities within the space of a few days. I report on these visits inside this issue, but this compressed view of Educate the Children's history reinforced for me several truths about our organization that I want to share with you here.

First, in our current Godavari project area (Page 5) I saw that our field staff has a remarkable capacity for building egalitarian relationships with people in the communities where we work. Though this might seem ordinary, in fact development workers are rarely able to overcome the perception of being "outsiders," if they even try. This skill is a major factor in Educate the Children's success.

Second, I visited Dolakha district (Page 6) where we will significantly expand our work starting January 2008. There I saw how our practice of participatory development and our



Women's Empowerment Program Staff Leela Kayastha and Indu K.C. flank cooperative members in Godavari.

5-year commitment are what truly distinguish Educate the Children from the endless parade of organizations that pass through communities. It is this practice and commitment that ensures our staff's ability to bridge the social distance that inevitably exists between development workers and communities.

Third, in our past project areas in Rasuwa and Nuwakot districts (page 4), I could see the lasting impact our Integrated Community Development model has because of the way in which the programs are mutually reinforcing. Sustainability is achieved because the timeline of our work and the quality of our staff make it possible for us to see our model through to completion.

It bears mentioning that you, our supporters are what makes this work possible.

Through your gifts and sponsorships you free

(Continued on page 3)

In this issue...

- ~ An Ithaca Student Visits Nepal
- ~ Board and Staff News
- ~ Success in Rasuwa and Nuwakot
- ~ Godavari Project Ready for Phase-out
- ~ Dolakha Planning Begins

My Visit to Nepal Lucas London

Starting last year, students at the Lehman Alternative Community School (LACS) in Ithaca and Kitini Higher Secondary School in Godavari have been participating in a School-to-School Sharing Project through which they have exchanged emails to learn about each other's lives and communities. Several students in Ithaca organized a raffle to raise funds for Kitini's computer center. Lucas London, son of Educate the Children's Executive Director, visited Nepal in April and personally delivered to Kitini the funds he and his friends collected. Lucas writes:



Lucas London presents a check to, Narayan Baskota, Headmaster of Kitini, while Educate the Children's Nepal Assistant Director Ganga Gautam looks on.

(they gave me no mercy). What we were there to do was my father and some other ETC members visited several Village Development Committees and had meetings. When we visited the Kitini School I met with the students and presented the funds LACS had raised for them. There I was shown what the funds were to be used for: they had computers, but they were old, slow ones and hard to use. I hope that what we have done has helped people in Nepal. I really enjoyed my visit and can't wait to visit another time.

For three weeks I was in Nepal, a country on the other side of the world. Once there it was very hard getting used to. For one living in America I have taken for granted all the electronics, better economy and richer lifestyle that are considered common in America. I really enjoyed my stay in Nepal because I had the chance to learn about a new culture, meet people and experience new foods. One of my favorite things about visiting the rural areas in Nepal was the beautiful scenery. The view of the forests, hills and mountains was spectacular. One of my least favorite things was the abundance of mosquitoes and fleas

Thanks to all the students at the Lehman Alternative Community School who helped organize the raffle:

Lilly Katz, Jocelyn Sawyer, Maggie Sawyer, Hannah Chason-McCarthy, Laurel Wolfe Wawrzynek, Emily Belle, Laura Muzzy, Aye Hsay Tar Tun, Lucas London, Noah Fisch-Lewis, Caleb Lorenzana, and Hannah Utter.

Thanks Brittney!

Brittney Rohrer, a high school student in Minnesota, chose Educate the Children as the focus of her senior project. She made a Firstgiving web page and raised over \$650!

Educate the Children Board and Staff Corner

Two New Staff Members in Nepal

We are happy to welcome two staff members to our Nepal office. Omkar Pandey is our new Agricultural Development Officer, who came to us after several years with MADE-Nepal, a project of the Swiss organization Helvetas. His experience and friendly personality will be a great asset to Educate the Children. Sanjita Gurung has rejoined Educate the Children as a Development Assistant in our Women's Empowerment Program. Sanjita had worked with us as a motivator in our Rasuwa and Nuwakot project areas. She grew up in Rasuwa and her mother is an active member in a coop we helped form. We are pleased to have Sanjita back.



Educate the Children staff person Sanjita Gurung with her mother, a member of Gosaikunda Cooperative in Rasuwa District

Indira Sharma, Mel Goldman and Renee Thakali Join the Board

Educate the Children is lucky to have three new members on our Board of Directors. Indira Sharma joined us last summer. She is a long-time resident of Corning, New York where she was a businesswoman as well as a realtor. Indira and her husband Hari were instrumental in forming The Association of Nepalis in the Americas, the largest Nepali organization in the United States. Mel Goldman is an expert in entrepreneurship and venture capital and is the founder and managing director of Intech Ventures. He also teaches at Cornell University's Johnson School of Management and is owner/operator of a vineyard in Hammondsport, NY. Mel was a Peace Corps volunteer in Nepal and helped start New Era, Nepal's premier consulting and research company. Another new member with a Peace Corps connection is Renee Thakali who worked for the Corps when long-time board member Don Russell was the Country Director and she was also a volunteer before that. Currently Renee is the U.S. Department of Agriculture Ecosystem Restoration Team Leader for the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie in Illinois.

(Continued from page 1)

Educate the Children from the constraints imposed on organizations that depend significantly on institutional funders such as international donor agencies (e.g., The World Bank) or governments. Such support often comes with short timelines and many strings attached. Because of you, our staff is able to do its job as it knows best and to do so within a rational time frame. It is your support that makes Educate the Children a uniquely effective organization. Thank you.

Past: The Lasting Impact of Educate the Children

In 1994 Educate the Children began working in Rasuwa and Nuwakot districts. Over the next 7 years our activities evolved to become our Integrated Community Development model. In April I visited Rasuwa and Nuwakot districts for the first time and met



Dandagoan School in Rasuwa had been razed. It was rebuilt with a grant from the American Himalayan Foundation to Gosaikunda Women's Cooperative.

with leaders from four cooperatives as well as several school principals. I knew from an independent evaluation that Educate the Children has had a lasting, positive impact. But after seeing it first hand. I saw that Educate the Children's work there was extraordinary.

Five years ago, Samyukta Cooperative in Nuwakot was formed by 11 women's groups with an initial savings fund of 33,000 Rupees: it now has 26 groups and over 1 million Rupees. The member groups have also maintained their own funds which have collectively grown to almost 1.5 million Rupees. Samyukta recently won a second grant from the American Himalayan Foundation worth roughly \$10,000. Similarly, Gosaikunda Co-

operative in Rasuwa won a grant to rebuild a local school building destroyed during the war. That school is considered to be a flagship school by the District Education Office .

The schools I visited were all functioning well despite the war. As an example, we helped establish a kindergarten class in Gyan Jyoti School in Nuwakot; since then they have added 3 more classes. One of the teachers turned out to be Januka Neupane who had been sponsored through Educate the Children!

In short, my visit confirmed for me the conclusion of the independent evaluation: "In terms of capacity building, cultivating and developing good health and sanitation habits, easing livelihood problems, addressing gender issues, enabling economic opportunities, raising women's socio-economic status, earning respect and recognition for them, and raising community awareness in favor of children's education, ETC has done a wonderful job."



Januka Neupane received could attend school thanks to her sponsor in the United States. She is now a teacher at the same school where she was a student.

Present: Godavari is Ready to Go

When Educate the Children brings its Integrated Community Development model to a community, we commit to a five-year process of progressive social change and phase-out our work during a sixth and final year. This time frame ensures that cooperatives, school management committees and other local institutions are prepared to sustain and build upon the changes we ushered in.



Dalit children and parents wait during a scholarship distribution at Kitini School in Godavari.

That these changes can be sustained has been shown clearly in the case of Rasuwa and Nuwakot Districts (page 4). Nevertheless, as we prepare to phase-out our Godavari project, we ask ourselves, "Have we done enough to ensure sustainability? Are the cooperatives ready to step into a leadership role? Will schools continue to practice the nurturing and effective teaching philosophy we promoted?"

In April I met with the management committees of two recently formed cooperatives in Godavari. They were truly inspiring groups of women. Though they had concerns about the phase-out of our activities, in each meeting the general attitude was "We're ready!" I had

many questions about what has happened in their communities and families since Educate the Children began working with them. They responded with many stories about how their husbands no longer object to their being at meetings, getting involved in organizing community activities and otherwise living independent lives. Some even told of fundamentally changed relationships with their husbands, of having transited from a situation of domestic abuse to one of equal partnership.

Similarly, I met with teachers and headmasters from 12 schools. They too expressed concerns but felt that their schools are on a much firmer footing now. They also talked about how students and their families have a better attitude toward education and teachers, which makes their jobs easier and the students more successful. The schools still have many needs of course, but now they are better able to find ways of addressing those needs. We are very confident that the Godavari community is well-prepared to continue without us.

What Happens After Phase-Out?

- ~ Educate the Children will maintain contact with schools and cooperatives; in the future we may collaborate with them on projects they spearhead.
- ~ In 3 years an independent impact evaluation will be done; this will assess the sustainability of the Integrated Community Development model.
- ~ At that time we will conduct a survey of scholarship and sponsorship students to find out where they are and what they have done since phase-out.

Future: Trust-Building in Dolakha Progresses

I spent 6 days in Dolakha district where we expect to initiate our Integrated Community Development model by January 2008. We have already been working there with the Thami Education Project, a small program that provides scholarships for Thami youth to finish high school and move on to college. Last year, in partnership with the Thami organization Faselung Samajik Sewa our work grew to cover school improvement, teacher training and primary school scholarships. Faselung will continue to be a key partner as we expand our presence in Dolakha.

But we cannot simply show up in the community and start to work. Rather, we have take the time to introduce ourselves and our programs, tell people about our past work, and solicit an invitation to come work with them. If we don't receive a formal, written invitation, we can't move forward. This may seem to be a minor detail but it is quite unusual for a development organization to submit itself to scrutiny before it begins to work.



Participants in an information session in Sunkhani, Dolakha.

Because of this, most of my time in Dolakha was spent, not hiking through its beautiful, pleasant landscape, but in meetings. With Faselung acting as host, we described Integrated Community Development



Jang Bahadur Thami, of Faselung Samajik Sewa, opens an information session in Sundrawati, Dolakha

and then opened the floor for questions and answers. And did people have questions! One man asked: "You talk about women's empowerment. Do you really mean it or is that just a slogan?" Another told us that so many organizations waltz through their community that they are skeptical of yet another one coming along making promises.

My role was to address these concerns and doubts. I started by agreeing with them: too many organizations in Nepal and around the world make promises they do not fulfill. Educate the Children is different because we commit to a 5-year process of change. I also told them that we are not afraid of criticism, in fact we like it: it inspires us to do a better job. Starting our relationship with a community with such frank dialogue helps build the trust we depend on for our work to succeed. There still is much to do, but so far people seem to like what we have to say. We're planning on plan to launch our initiative in January 2008.

Thank You!

Special Thanks to Our Volunteers and Supporters

- ~ We received our first Car Donation from former board member, Susan Hangen! Do you have a clunker you would like to dump? Give it to Educate the Children: go to our website and click on Get Involved.
- ~ Albert Horowitz of Horowitz Architecture in California is helping us with the design and installation of a slow-sand water filtration system at Kitini Higher Secondary School. He raised \$1100 from his friends and family to help fund the project. Water for Humanity also contributed \$1,000 in support of the project.
- ~ Swasti Shrestha, a Cornell graduate student, prepared an evaluation plan for the Nepal Bhotia Education Center.
- ~ Minakshi Ratadiya, Kimberly Hamilton, Torri Bennington, Gul Tatar, Callie Armstrong, Candace Berne and Susan Schwartz have helped create educational materials, edit materials, file and stuff envelopes.
- ~ Renee Thakali made presentations about Educate the Children to the American Association of University Women and the Exchange Club in Lockport, IL.
- ~ Special thanks to our Ithaca Alternative Gift Fair and website Alternative Gift donors who purchased holiday gifts from Educate the Children for family and friends.



Hello, I am Dhanashree Bellur and I worked as a Marketing and Communications volunteer at Educate the Children (ETC). I found my volunteer experience at ETC to be rewarding and an excellent learning experience. Coming from a third world country like India, I know and understand the reality of living conditions in Nepal and that's why I decided to volunteer for ETC. I found the work atmosphere highly motivating and the experience has given me the opportunity to explore my creative skills.

A great team of volunteers has helped us make progress on a marketing and outreach plan

- ~ Alex Patriquin, a Cornell University Johnson School of Management graduate student lead a focus group and designed and analyzed our first ever supporter survey. Focus group participants, Carolyn Beyers, Edith Cassel, Barbara DiSalvo, Leslie Eliet and Margaret Meyers were fundamental in helping us zero in on key issues.
- ~ Jenna Lee and Madhava Hansen designed the survey postcard and prepared a detailed assessment of our website.
- ~ Naima Saeed, a master's student in the Cornell Institute for Public Affairs conducted a cohort analysis comparing Educate the Children to other similar organizations.

In Memoriam

- ~ Mark LaSarre died recently from cancer and asked that, in lieu of flowers, memorial gifts be made to an organization dedicated to improving the lives of children in an impoverished country. His mother, Priscilla, chose Educate the Children. Mrs. LaSarre hoped that Educate the Children would receive up to \$2,000 in memorial gifts but the amount given has far surpassed that! We are very thankful to the LaSarre family and friends for remembering Mark through support of Educate the Children.
- ~ Long-time supporter Cynthia Yacoe passed away and designated Educate the Children to receive memorial gifts. An interior decorator and artist, Cynthia traveled extensively to India and Mexico. We thank her for creating beauty during her life time and her support of Educate the Children.



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