



EDUCATE THE CHILDREN INTERNATIONAL

Local Survival in a Global World

Christopher London, Executive Director

There are many economic and humanitarian crises in the headlines right now. The devastation in Burma and Sichuan are astounding, and reminiscent of the tsunami and Katrina two years ago. So too the collapse of the US housing market, which combined with rising oil prices, is wreaking havoc on financial markets and the cost of living the world over. And then there is the global food crisis.

The rising scarcity and cost of staple foods around the world has a variety of causes including rising fuel costs, weather conditions in key producing areas, the diversion of crops to the ethanol industry, and increasing wealth and hence consumption in the two most populous countries on the planet: China and India. But just as significant not only today but into the future is complacency.



A recent article in the New York Times described the explosion of brown leaf hopper populations in Asian rice fields. An old foe, the leaf hopper, as is to be expected, had developed resistance to the variety of control measures that had been devised to keep them

at bay. But while the leaf hoppers went about doing what they do and through evolution improved their capacity for survival, we humans decided to cut back on the work we used to do to adjust our agriculture to better resist them, such as plant breeding. The powers

that be somehow imagined that such work was no longer so pressing, that we humans were on top of our game and didn't need to worry about leaf hoppers or other threats to the food supply. We are today witnessing the tremendous consequences of such lack of foresight.

By contrast, just as the global powers began turning their backs on the agriculture sector, Educate the Children initiated its

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Agricultural Development Program, with its emphasis first and foremost on local food security through our kitchen gardens project. Kitchen gardens are not going to resolve the global food crisis or even its local manifestation in our communities in Nepal. But it is a step in the right direction.

As Linda Farthing illustrates in her moving account (see page 4) of the changes she could see when visiting Nepal for the first time in seven years, our work is contributing to the development and growth of local markets for agricultural produce. Additionally, by increasing the productive capacity of the families in our project areas we are able decrease the amount they have to spend on food and diversify their diets through new crops. Critically important in this is the education of families to emphasize how important good nutrition is for children to succeed in school.

At Educate the Children we strive for a holistic transformation of the communities where we work. Were we, say, to provide only scholarships, some children would go to school a little longer than they might otherwise. But it is questionable what the long term effect would be, not just for that child but for her community and country. By integrating the education of children with the broader improvement of family and community well being, we are able to initiate a process of lasting and self-sustaining change. We proved this in Rasuwa and Nuwakot districts where, despite the long war between the Maoists and the government, the schools and women's groups we worked with have continued to grow and improve. We are confident that this will be true everywhere we work.

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Educate the Children's Board of Directors is mounting a Matching Challenge Campaign to support our work in Dolakha! Watch your mail box this summer for a special message about how you can contribute to the growth and sustainability of Educate the Children

Photo Credits This Issue: Bonnie Chollet, Dan Forringer, Ganga Gautam, Chandra Khaki, Chris London

Four New Members Join the Board!

Katherine (Kat) Anderson has more than twenty years of experience as a development professional at not-for-profit agencies including Oxfam America, Planned Parenthood of Tompkins County, and Family & Children's Service of Ithaca. She has served on the board of the Boston Women's Fund, Ithaca Rape Crisis, and is currently on the board of The Ink Shop Printmaking Center. Katherine received her undergraduate degree from Kenyon College and holds a masters degree from Harvard Divinity School. She is particularly interested in efforts to empower women both in the U.S. and internationally.

Barbara Butterworth has almost 40 years of experience as an educator, including 7 years as Principal of the Lincoln School, an American international school in Kathmandu. Her professional experience includes administration of a major USAID development project in Cambodia, serving as an advisor to the Government of Nepal in school and school system administration, teacher training, evaluation, research, data analysis and policy development in Nepal, California, North Carolina, Sri Lanka, Kuwait and New York. Barbara was a Peace Corps Volunteer in Nepal from 1965-68. Her education was completed at Wellesley College, Cornell University and at Stanford University where she was awarded a Ph.D. in Educational Administration and Policy Analysis.

Former Educate the Children volunteer, board member and executive director Susanna Pearce has rejoined the board! Since leaving Educate the Children in 2004, Susanna has completed a four-year program in psycho-energetic healing at the IM School of Healing Arts in New York City for which she now teaches. She currently works for the Institute for Circlework in Ithaca whose mission is to contribute to the creation of a peaceful global civilization by supporting the development and practice of a heart-based feminine leadership. There she is organizing a women's leadership training program in Israel, bringing Jewish and Arab women together to bond and heal across their differences. Susanna has a BA and Masters Degree in Asian Studies from Cornell University. She is also on the Board of Directors of the International Mountain Explorer's Connection, and serves on the Tompkins County United Way Allocations Team.

Elisabeth (Beth) Prentice, retired as Director of Capital Strategies of NeighborWorks of America, a national not-for-profit. A former Peace Corps volunteer in Nepal (1966-1968), Beth has a Masters Degree from Cornell University in City & Regional Planning. She has spent her career in community development and housing finance, including many years as an executive in the private sector. Beth has extensive professional experience working with not-for-profit organizations.

Nepal Seven Years Later

Linda Farthing

Kathmandu is a total assault on western sensibilities. Motorbikes, people, bicycles, cars, dogs, rickshaws, and the occasional cow all compete for space on narrow polluted



Linda in conversation with teachers at Bal Byasee School

streets, often with only potholed patches of asphalt passing for roads and sidewalks nowhere in sight. The din is incessant: drivers calling out destinations and soliciting passengers, and truck horns sing-songing to each other. Intense smells, from the rich smell of delicious spicy cooking, to the fetid smell of rotting garbage, waft through the air. I escape this melee into the relative tranquility of the little street that leads up to Educate the Children's office and then into the quiet cool of the office itself. It's been seven years, and stepping over the threshold brings back a rush of memories of working as Educate the Children's Director, struggling to understand Nepal's complexities and how to support a process of social change in one of the world's poorest countries.

Meeting again with Mira Rana and her staff, I hear the same enthusiasm about the projects being undertaken, the successes and challenges. Educate the Children's staff seems more mature, more sophisticated about how to achieve their goals, and more confident that their integrated development model produces positive results. But in development work the proof is in the pudding: you have to go to the work areas to find out what is really going on.

So we set off to project areas near Kathmandu. I had been involved in establishing both the project at Bal Byasee School and in the Godavari area seven years before. How had they done? Accompanied by my husband Ben, with camera in hand, our son Minka, with a video camera, and daughter Maya, providing general support, we went to find out.

In an impoverished neighborhood in Kathmandu, I saw astounding physical changes in 500-student Bal Byasee School. Thanks to Educate the Children's help, there were new classrooms, an equipped kindergarten, and teachers had received many trainings. Perhaps most importantly, Educate the Children's assistance had inspired the school to seek partnerships with other international agencies with deeper pockets. These had brought a basic science lab, a

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library and much more. The principal I had met seven years before was enthusiastic about what he and his staff had been able to achieve. "I am very happy", he told me in English before switching to Nepali. "Educate the Children was the first group to help us here and it was as if it brought the sunlight to us. The experience was so positive that it encouraged us to seek other funds. We never would have embarked on improving the school without Educate the Children."

Then we head to Bishankunarayan and Badikhel Village Development Committees, southeast of Kathmandu, in the broad fertile valley that is the country's heartland. One highpoint of my return was my time with the women's group my mother and I began supporting in 2002, two years before she died. Their enthusiasm and pride in their accomplishments would have made her proud. The group's chairwoman, Chandrawati Bisunkhe, explained that the group savings and loan fund has made a big economic difference. But perhaps the most important difference that she could see was in the women's self-esteem. "We don't have to ask permission for everything like we did before," she told me, "We are much more confident."

Our visit also took us to two rural schools, transformed since the last time I had seen them. What struck me most was the commitment of the staff. Working with poor salaries (when they come at all – teacher pay

is often delayed months at a time), and often very impoverished children, these teachers and principals have a sense of optimism and hope that is infectious.

On a path from one place to another, we heard a particularly wonderful success story when we met Bimala Sadasarkar who, with a Rs. 5000 (US \$81) loan from her women's group, had expanded her family's jewelry business. Before she and her husband Rudra



Linda checks out a field in Badikhel

had little choice but to borrow everything from an intermediary who took most of the profits, paying them a pittance. Now they sell directly to shops in Kathmandu's tourist district and earn as much as Rs.12,000 (\$193) every two weeks, making a huge difference in their family's life.

We visited a legal literacy training where 24 women in vibrant pinks and reds were crammed into a small room huddled over their notebooks. One, Sumitar Pahari, told us, "Before Educate the Children came, we didn't know our fundamental rights such as our right

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to vote or our right to divorce. Now that we have learned these and so many other things, we are much better equipped to manage our lives."

Then we were on to lush kitchen gardens, and an agricultural demonstration plot. The whole time a small man followed us around, repeating a question to Educate the Children agronomist Omkar Pandey in the Nepali



Linda and Ben, with Agriculture Program Officer Omkar Pandey, converse in Badikhel with women's group members who manage a demonstration farm

equivalent of tugging on his sleeve. "He insists that we go and see the garden he and his wife have made," Omkar told us.

It turned out to be one of the highlights of our visit. Tucked up towards the high forested hills that frame this part of the Kathmandu Valley, was a wonderful semi-commercial organic garden about a 1/3 of an acre in size. Bir Bahadur Pahari told us that his wife Nima had learned about kitchen gardens from Educate the Children and they had expanded the concept to the flourishing garden we saw before us. They were earning Rs.25,000

(about US\$400) from the plot every year.

Wandering through lush plantings of cauliflower, radish, onions, cabbage and mustard greens at the end of a long day was delightful. Here was the real evidence that Educate the Children was transforming its limited funds into positive changes in people's lives: people were learning, replicating and expanding what they got from their association with Educate the Children into something that worked for them.

Time constraints meant that I didn't get back to Nuwakot and Rasuwa districts northwest of Kathmandu that were Educate the Children's main project areas when I was Director. But I did spend several hours reading what in many ways I consider the most important document of any project: the impact evaluation. This is done several years AFTER a project has left an area, and so focuses not only on how many women learned to read or schools got new classrooms and teacher's training, but also on what remains of the project long after the organization running it has left. Appropriately the report indicates several areas that Educate the Children could have strengthened, but overall once again Educate the Children came through with shining colors. Some highlights:

"ETC has done a wonderful job...A remarkable change has occurred in the people's thinking that they are capable of doing things which they hitherto deemed impossible... ETC's 8 years of sustained development efforts has transformed the old society into a new one where female literacy rate has gone up and a trend for gender-free

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and compulsive education has taken root. Women are in lead role on social issues, where they themselves identify problems and work for necessary changes...

"The literacy classes worked wonders... The tangible indicators of mental changes are higher school enrollment rate, girls' enrolment, active and functional groups, sanitation and personal hygienic practices and the attitudinal and behavioral changes."

Now Educate the Children is on to Dolakha District, northeast of Kathmandu. I spoke to Sara Shneiderman and Mark Turin, our neighbors and friends in Ithaca, who are currently living and working in Kathmandu. They had begun a small project in the Dolakha area with people from the marginalized Thami ethnic group years ago, and I had encouraged them to think about partnering with Educate the Children. Three years ago, they did. The result was Educate the Children's successful collaboration with the Thami Education Project and the local non-governmental organization Fashelung Samajik Sewa (Fashelung Social Service). The project included improvements in three schools, teacher training and a scholarship program.

This January Educate the Children expanded the program to include all facets of its Integrated Community Development model in three Dolakha Village Development Committees, all with majority populations of Thamis. Educate the Children hopes that the women's empowerment and agricultural development programs will serve to strengthen Fashelung, which is the first Thami-led organization to implement development

programs that begin with, but extend beyond their own ethnic group. This approach puts Fashelung's members at the forefront of changing attitudes about hierarchy and ethnic exclusion in Nepal.

Sara is enthusiastic about Educate the Children's initiatives in Dolakha, "I have no doubt about ETC's ability to work effectively with the local Thami organization because they have done such a great job in assisting our project for the past three years." Sara's father Ben Shneiderman made a financial commitment to the project to honor her and Mark's long commitment to the region.

I left Nepal immensely satisfied by my own contribution to what Educate the Children has become today. Our Educate the Children is a small but bright example of the power of people working together, despite the enormous challenges, the inevitable disagreements and clashes of personalities, the complexities of dealing with an ever-changing reality. But with each generation of change, Educate the Children has not only risen to the challenge, but embraced it, creating a program that each and every one of us – staff, participant, volunteer and/or donor – can be really proud of. I know I am.

Laxmi Basukala, Educate the Children's Education Director, perhaps put it most succinctly when he told me, "You know I have lots of friends who work in big development organizations and get paid really well. But not one of them has the job satisfaction I do. I really feel like I am making a difference."

Water for Life

Bonnie Chollet

In 2002 Educate the Children in collaboration with Cornell University's South Asia Program designed a curriculum for teaching 6th Grade children about Nepal and its development challenges called *To Sustain Life: Nepal, Water and Development*. Former Executive Director Linda Farthing spearheaded the project with the collaboration of Bonnie Chollet, a retired educator from Elmira, NY. Last fall Sheila Reed used the curriculum at Chemung Valley Montessori School in Elmira, NY. Board Member, Indira Sharma, visited the classroom to display Nepali costumes and objects and talked about Nepali customs and Philip Wilde, an independent filmmaker recorded some of the activities. Here is Bonnie's account of the project.

"Water is heavy," said Cooper as he carried 2 ½ gallons of water in a brass Nepali water jug over 200 yards of uneven terrain at the Chemung Valley Montessori School in Big Flats, NY. The children of Sheila Reed's upper elementary class were learning about the importance of access to clean water in low income countries. Using the a curriculum developed by Educate the Children they are learning how geography, culture and climate change effects the availability of water.

Two billion people in the world do not have clean water. "If they don't have clean water, they can get sick and die," stated Kassra. This is the Decade of Water for Life, a millennium goal of the United Nations, aiming at five gallons per person per day within 0.6 of a mile from their home. The students are learning about the challenges facing low-income rural families. One half of the world's population lives on a near subsistence level in rural areas like Nepal. They are recognizing the differences between industrial and developing countries.

"My family used 315 gallons of water yesterday," said Sarah while sharing her family's water tally with the class. Mrs. Reed then asked how many trips she would have to take to carry water for her family and if the class might rethink how they use this resource. Llew remarked, "Well, my brother takes really long showers. I don't."



Sheila Reed leads her students at Chemung Valley Montessori School in using the Educate the Children's *To Sustain Life* curriculum

During the five days of interactive learning, the children learned about a low cost solar disinfection strategy using plastic bottles and sunlight (SODIS) as a possible solution to the problem of unclean water. As they observed the UV absorption stickers on the bottles, they commented on the change of color indicating how the ultraviolet rays were cleaning the water by killing bacteria. On a different day the students divided into groups, and each took on the persona of a different ethnic group to become aware of how culture and status impact the use of and access to resources such as water.

The goal of the water curriculum is to assist “students to become global citizens who are aware and concerned about the challenges facing the great majority of the world’s people.” Judging by the reactions of students in Sheila’s class that goal was certainly achieved. They also raised \$350 to support Educate the Children’s programs. Chloe Samter was so moved that she raised another \$50 on her own! The students learned a lot and made a big difference too.



Students take UV measurements while learning about the SODIS water purification method

Clean Water for Students at Kitini

In 2004 Executive Director Chris London and Nepal Director Mira Rana were in San Francisco to host an event for Educate the Children. There they met Al Horowitz, an architect and friend of long time supporter Freema Davis, who took them to see a community-wide water filtration system in Marin County that he thought could be implemented in Nepal. Three and a half years later, it has become a reality! In March there was a ceremony to inaugurate the system at the 1500-student Kitini Higher Secondary School in Godavari. In addition to providing



The bio-sand filtration system can be constructed entirely from locally purchased materials.

potable water for the students and staff at Kitini, the project will serve the wider community as a demonstration of a simple, effective water filtration system that can be scaled to the household or community wide level. The system was installed with the financial support of Al, Steve Hebert and the Water for Humanity Foundation as well as Educate the Children and Kitini School itself. We now are planning to install water filtration at the schools we are working with in Dolakha. We hope to eventually make this a permanent feature of our Integrated Community Development model.



Chris, Al and Prakash Amatya of the NGO Forum for Urban Water and Sanitation inaugurate the system.

Kids Helping Kids

Triangle Day School 6th Grade students from Dan Forringer and Samantha Macy's classrooms in Durham, NC wanted to help school children in a developing country, so they did a web search and discovered Educate the Children. For one week they ran a morning bake sale as students arrived at



Students at the Triangle Day School in Durham run a bake sale to benefit Educate the Children

school with their parents. They also had a candy cane sale where students could purchase a candy cane for 50 cents and attach a note to be delivered to another student. The students wanted Nepali kids to feel healthy and safe, so they chose to pay for medical kits for the schools and teacher training with the \$925 they earned through their sales!

The American School of Dubai 3rd Grade students from Tammy Dadosky's classroom continue their yearly tradition of sponsoring two students, Rupseh Bishokarma and Krishna Maya Bisunkhe and their schools. Every Monday the kids held a bake sale and did household chores to raise \$1,000. Since 2002, the 3rd Grade students have raised over \$15,000 to help Nepali children!

Politics in Nepal

As this newsletter goes to press, Nepal is in the midst of a national holiday called to celebrate the initiation of the constitutional congress which will lead to a new legal framework for the country. Though there continue to be conflicts, which sometimes spill over into violence, nevertheless we are confident that Nepal will be able to chart out a brighter future for itself. The 10-year-long certainly did have an effect on our day to day work but it was mostly indirect. For example, if there was a general strike it made it difficult if not impos-

sible for our staff to get to the office or to our project communities. But because of the way we work and the deep bonds of mutual affection and respect that we build within communities, neither the war nor the current conflicts have had any lasting impact on Educate the Children's staff ability to achieve our goals. We hope for the best but whatever the outcome of the current political situation, Educate the Children will continue to work with the people of Nepal to overcome poverty, illiteracy and discrimination.

Ambassadors for Educate the Children

Marcy Schaeffer spoke at the United Methodist Church in Trumansburg, NY about her recent trip to Nepal and talked about Educate the Children's Integrated Community Development. She also spoke at Philanthropic Educational Organization (PEO). Thanks Marcy!

Nathaniel Houghton, a Cornell freshman and volunteer at our Ithaca office, is also a radio talk host who interviewed Chris London on WVBR. We hope locals heard this radio show and learned more about Educate the Children.

Volunteers Karen Schantz and Nate Houghton, and board members Russell Martin and Srijana Bajracharya talked with people about Educate the Children during the Alternative Gift Fair held in Ithaca last December. Thanks to all of you who bought holiday gifts!

Don Russell's editorial, called A Small Town American Organization (Educate the Children) in Nepal from which Governments and International Agencies Could Learn Much was published in the Rome Observer and Times of Utica newspapers.

Margaret Myers and Kerstin Nethen, a student intern from Germany, and Board Member Russell Martin represented Educate the Children at meetings of Ithaca INGOs (International Non-Governmental Organizations) to discuss how these agencies might collaborate.

Barbara DiSalvo, Leslie Eliet, Margaret Myers, Stella Merschrod and Tibby McLafferty represented Educate the Children during our sponsorship of the Tompkins County Library Book Sale on Sunday afternoon, May 4. While selling books, they wore ETC t-shirts and passed out brochures. Thanks everyone!

Special thanks go to Barbara Cook, Kathy Rankin and Josh Brody who after many years of service have left our board of directors. They have played a big role in making Educate the Children what it is today and for that there can never be enough thanks.

Cornell graduate student Su Hyun Kim under the supervision of Linda Haas Manly helped our planning by analyzing our Education Program in light of Nepal government and international policies relating to the education sector .

Pamela Carson's Uncle Douglas Steade Rowley Leaves a Legacy

Douglas Steade Rowley, age 94, left a bequest to Educate the Children in memory of his niece Pamela Carson. They had a special bond and he told Pamela he was going to make a planned gift to Educate the Children. He was the grandson of H. Curtis Rowley, president of the G&C Merriam Company in Springfield who founded and published the Merriam Webster Dictionary after buying the rights from Noah Webster. Mr. Rowley distinguished himself as a celebrity photographer in La Jolla, CA, taking photos of Hollywood stars and U.S. presidents.



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