



CHILD ACTION NEPAL

Newsletter No 12

December 11

Ragpickers in Nepal

Ragpickers, known as *Khate* in Nepali slang, come mostly from rural areas, usually from poor families involved in non-agricultural, low-paying occupations. Many of them leave illiterate single parent or stepparent families behind them and are attracted by the prospects of jobs and facilities.

Most of the urban centres of Nepal have street children and it is estimated that more than 400 child ragpickers live and work in Kathmandu City, most of them boys, and the average age has been estimated at 11.7 years.

They live from day to day, usually spending all the money they earn in a day, and are still often left without enough money to feed themselves. In addition to experiencing hunger, it is common for ragpickers to fall sick. They usually suffer from acute or chronic tuberculosis, have physical injuries like cuts, scratches or burns, skin diseases like scabies, or intestinal diseases.



These children are generally deprived of love and education, two essential elements in the development of children, and are at high risk of being exploited by others, especially people running junkyards and adult bandits that exploit and/or abuse them criminally or sexually.

Maya and Laxmi

It is not usually the policy of LBU to take children who are still living with at least one of their parents. However, in the case of Maya and Laxmi, it was agreed to help their mother in her desperate situation.

Maya and Laxmi come from the high Himalayas, on the Northern border with Tibet. They are extremely poor and in winter they go to the South of Nepal to sell herbal remedies. Their father was an alcoholic and died after a life of deprivation.

Maya and Laxmi in 2011



Maya, Laxmi with their mother and little brother at their arrival at LBU in 2002



His wife heard about LBU and decided to come to Kathmandu to give us her two girls before returning to her village. Laxmi and Maya also have two brothers. The older being brother, like in most Buddhists families is brought up as a monk in a monastery. The younger one was still a baby. We were worried that Maya and Laxmi could be abandoned in the streets of Kathmandu and decided to welcome them.

They were very petite and fragile when they joined us. They started in lower kindergarten, but worked very well at school and are now both in Class 8.



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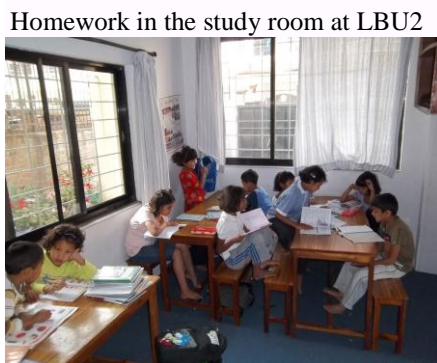
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Working hard at school



Punam, Barsha, Kumari and Hukuma ready to go to school



Homework in the study room at LBU2

Our children really love going to school, not only because it challenges their mind and open their horizons, but mostly because it makes them feels like all the other children. They feel that they are part of a family and live a normal life. They are not pariahs anymore because they are orphans. They enjoy wearing their uniforms and having books, notebooks, and stationery. Every day after school, they do their homework together. At LBU1 the children have the support of two education managers and at LBU2 it is our children already in college who help the little ones with their homework.

Vaccinations

This year some of our children and staff at LBU2 had typhoid, maybe due to the heavy rains. Everybody at LBU1 had been vaccinated before and did not suffer of more than occasional colds. We therefore decided not to wait anymore and had the 36 children and 7 staff vaccinated with Hepatitis B, DT, MMR, BCG and Typhoid. This was not an easy task and many had pain in their arm for a whole week after the vaccinations. Everybody was very courageous, except for two of our children who seemed to have a real phobia about needles.

5 already in college

We have three children who will finish college in April 2012 and two children (Arjun and Krishna) preparing for A levels.

Next year, Karishma will go to university to become a chartered accountant, Reshma will go to a fashion design school and Som Bahadur to an hotel management school.

We also have five children in class 10, and three of them should be able to go to college next year while two of our children will start vocational training.

Arjun (below) and Krishna (right) in their new suits for Class 10 farewell ceremony and party



April Vacation



Visiting Gupteswar Caves during our trip to Pokhara

This year for our April vacation, we went back to Pokhara. Our older children from LBU1 have been there many times but this was all new for the children of LBU2. We visited Bahari Temple which is in the middle of Phewa lake and can only be access by barks, the Devil fall, Gupteswar caves, Pokhara museum which shows the lifestyles and history of Nepal ethnic groups as well as details of the different ascents of some of the highest mountains in the world which are situated in Nepal. We also celebrated the Nepalese New Year with a nice meal and some dancing.



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Natural disasters at LBU

This year we had a flood and an earthquake. First in May which is supposed to be still in the dry season, we suffered heavy rains. The water was started to come to LBU2 house so Rolak, our house manager had to build a ditch very quickly to avoid disaster. All the fields and our crops were flooded. This was a bit demoralising, as everybody had worked hard for months to grow garlic, potatoes and beans.

Then in September, Itahari, an Indian town near Nepal borders, suffered a magnitude 6.8 earthquake. It was felt in Kathmandu and the Eastern part of Nepal. A few people died after a large number of buildings and schools collapsed (including three at the British embassy).

When it happened, Rolak immediately told everybody to run outside the house and nobody was hurt. The two houses also resisted and we did not have any damage but everybody had a big scare and will remember that day.



Karishma and Ruku trying to retrieve some garlic after the flood (above). View of LBU1 from LBU2.

Bicycles and hip hop

This summer we received two donations to buy bicycles for the children. Many of the bicycles at LBU1 were damaged and it was costly to repair them all the time. At LBU2 we also had some of our old bicycles but they were not always adapted for the children. We bought 8 bicycles, 4 for LBU1 and 4 for LBU2. The children were really excited when they got them. 9 of our children also started hip hop lessons in April and love it. Since Nov. though, the oldest children have stopped to study for their 3rd Term exam.



Tihar

As usual, our Tihar celebrations were joyous. We decorated the two houses together, making them

ready for the visit of goddess Laxmi. We put a lot of lights to make sure she did not miss us and will bring wealth to our home. The children then went to play music and sing door to door to collect sweets and money according to the custom. We also receive visits from many singing groups.

The Girls putting a special tikka on the front of the boys for the blessing of Bhai Tikka





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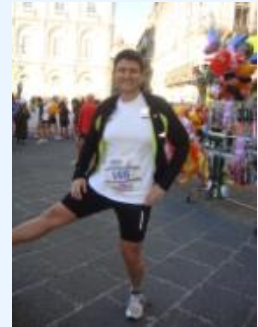
284 miles in 9 days

Last year Freddie Rider and Tom Limb from the Terrestrial Army organised the “Dragon Relay”, an amazing run of 284 miles across Wales and raised £15,000 for 3 charities. We were very lucky that one of the chosen charities was Child Action Nepal.

During 9 days, Freddie and Tom ran nearly non-stop and along the way were joined by over 100 members of Wales Universities’ Officer Training Corps at various stages. Throughout the entire event, these runners carried “The Bastion Baton”, a handle from the stretcher used in Afghanistan to carry wounded troops and civilians to safety.

Running the NY Marathon

This year we were very lucky that Michele, an Investment Banker in the City decided to run the New York Marathon and raise funds for Child Action Nepal. Michele had a very bad cold just before the run, but still made it in a remarkable 4 hours 28 minutes and 55 seconds. He has already raised £6,000 and that is a big deal for us.



Michele, getting ready for the marathon

Thank you for your support!

This year Franco did it again. After traveling by bike from Sienna in Italy to Kathmandu and raising nearly £20,000 for CAN, Franco again raised more than £6,000 this year. He organised a big party for his 40th birthday and instead of receiving gifts from all his friends they each donated at least £40 to Child Action Nepal. This year again, we would also like to thank the five runners of the London 10k who spent their Sunday morning running to raise £200 each.



Franco at his 40th Birthday party

Sponsoring a child

Any donation is welcome and even £10 or £20 makes a difference. However, should you wish to sponsor a particular child and follow his/her progress as he/she grows up, the cost is £40 a month or £20 if you wish to co-sponsor a child with friends or family. Alternatively, we can arrange for you to have a co-sponsor.



This year I was lucky enough to be able to see the children three times, in April, August and October. It was important for my adolescents who need guidance and support in their studies. They are full of dreams but also anxious about their future and it was really nice to be able to see and talk to them.

Gratefully yours,

Florence Krief