

Nepal NewsBlast • July 2008

SUCCESS & SUCCESSSES IN HARD, CHANGING TIMES!

Dear Supportive Donors and Friends,

Near April I returned after nearly 2 months in Nepal. It was one of the hardest trips I have taken, yet we were greeted with successes in our programs while the country spiraled downward daily.

I will share briefly the lacks we were met with:

- **Gas (Petrol):** *The wait: 36 hours and more.*
- **Propane:** Generally used for cooking in the city. *The wait about -18 hours for one container which may last 2 weeks.*
- **Kerosene:** For farm equipment, tractors and other farm vehicles. *The wait around - 8 hours.*
- **Wood:** For cremations. (Difficult getting the bodies to the crematorium because of lack of fuel for transport.) *The wait - unknown.*
- **Education & Commerce:** No fuel means transportation in general was halted. Children couldn't get to school on private or city buses so schools were closed. Produce couldn't be received from the farms to sell in the cities.
- **Roads:** Blocked by the queued cars for fuel, lines 6 deep, wrapping for as long as 3 miles per station. *The wait around - 36 hours.*
- **Water in the villages:** Women gathered water by the table spoon to fill their 5 gallon containers because they couldn't 'dip' into the wells; they had to wait for the water to seep from the sand to their spoon, a slow process.
- **Water in Kathmandu:** The hotels ran out, so washing and flushing were not available for the guests or staff for entire days. *Wait time more than - 24 hours IF it could be transported.*
- **Pollution of the streams & river water:** So severely polluted it irritates the skin of anyone touching it..all due to the way a few use it for 'fishing' by using poison to kill and float the fish to the top to gather & sell.



- **Food:** City restaurants could not keep food fresh when they got it, they did not have fuel for cooking. Many restaurants were closed more than they were open.
- **Electricity:** 6 hours a day or less; businesses were forced to use generators, if they could get the fuel to run them, so food spoiled. People became ill from not being mindful of where they ate.
- **Hospitals:** Not enough oxygen for their patients let alone electricity or sufficient water or other materials to manage the critical and emergency patients.
- **Communication:** Not available most hours each day because of no electricity. Email, phones, faxes, web access - all barely available.
- **US Embassy:** On the critical fuel list for their generators and vehicles & all embassies faced the same conditions.
- **Strikes:** By different groups for various reasons of discontent-eroded the safety and further fouled the polluted air with burning tires in the road meant to hamper traffic and life in general.

Overall, life was and remains hard all over Nepal. The pre-elections caused a great deal of unrest. A transportation entrance bordering India & Nepal was blocked. The area wished to secede from Nepal. The Nepalese Army was on high alert on that front alone because of national elections. Only the Maoists were visibly promoting their agenda though Nepalese streets..

There are 27 different political parties, 7 being different forms of communism. *(They don't even agree on what form of communism to have if you can imagine).*

The flags of the communists were everywhere. I was told that members of households who would not hang the flag would be beaten. I heard that the villagers were told if the Maoist party didn't win the election they would be killed. The election went to the Maoist party; many votes were cast by proxy, so illegalities were common and not reported to the West.

No steadiness has come to lift the country, though the King did step down reluctantly after his tyrannical rule of 2 years following his successful coupe in '05 after 5 years as monarch. *(I was there for that too.)*

The dear new villagers we met on this trip were elated at our arrival and their opportunity to be involved with our work programs.



Sunita (third from left), Treasurer of the Micro-lending bank we set up, watches as Sumitra (right) pays back her loan money.

In one single women's group of a collection of villages, we expected about 56 women. Instead over 150 showed up to take part. We could not at that time give all of them goats, but we agreed to give them goats as we receive the funding. They know the difference our work brings them. The word is out and it is good.

We met with one small village group which we have declined to work with for now. They refused the literacy classes we had arranged through Rotary Clubs in Kathmandu. We've learned it is easier to work with educated women. We left open the invitation to join us after their free education is completed.

Continued on other side

Other NGOs tagged our groups by joining to help the villagers because we actually follow up on our groups after they have completed the passing of 2 goats. No other NGOs doing similar work stay with the programs past the agreed passing of 2 goats.



Receiving blessings by the villagers after giving them hope with goats and Micro banking.

We've seen that the groups need access to continual assistance and reassurance. This helps combat 5000 years of lack of experience in order for them to remain successful. The cultural changes in our groups exceed other programs we have observed. Our women are socially altered because of having to work with each other regardless of their caste. We are pleased with these changes as they will be the road to peace.

Although pressure remains to snub each caste, it gets harder to do so as each year passes because they are joined together in our groups. No other groups work in the villages where we do because of the extreme danger of the district. We are it! Rabin has taken it upon himself to help the village families. He teaches that daughters must not be sold for any reason. This kind of human trafficking is not heard of in our villages at this time, nor is infanticide considered a threat. Rabin's vision lifts every woman.

While in one of my highest altitude village homes, I witnessed the Rotary program of the eradication of polio in the world. This home was dark with only candles burning. I walked a woman who applied the dosage to 2 girls, one an infant. I was so excited to witness this first hand.

Amazing what committed people can do in our world, Rotary being one such group to take on polio. Now they are taking on clean water, worldwide!

We were slowed by all the lacks in Nepal, but we remain successful with the completion of the school. It has the capacity to educate 200 children at a time.

Goats continue to be passed out, at this time upwards of 8000 grace the country from our work. Educational programs are in place for the adults, more wells have been dug.

We remain undaunted by all the harshness seen and experienced because the bigger picture is successfully serving the country and our intentions to improve the world, to make a difference.

There are so many things to relate about the trip, but I have taken so long to get this out, I

won't share more at this time. You can always call me or write me for more information.

Rabin's parents were with me for a few days on their whirlwind trip to see their youngest son Santosh, (our webmaster, I will add), graduate from college in Texas with his B.S. They were thrilled to see this country; to witness better ways to live; to experience Disneyland and friendly people. No filth & good food enhanced their stay. Now they understand our work in Nepal all the more by meeting the generous people of our land.

Currently we are reorganizing the internal aspect of our charity, including



Inspecting the new goats with our newest village.

a name change which better suits our exemption status. We started first with passion for our work and we hold our successes close. We are working on upgrading our paperwork and processes with the help of volunteers and interns. It is exciting in all ways.

What do we need you ask? More money for the classroom items, (desks, benches, etc.), more goats for the single women; more materials, like new or used working laptop computers. Or just check the list of needs on our webpage: www.rstarministries.org. Get on board with offering your email address to relieve us of mailing expenses, please. (We won't sell it, ever!)



Above: Finishing work on the TOW (Top of the World) school. Left: TOW School intricate old style carving.



Taking a train ride at Disneyland, the "Happiest Place on Earth."

Remember we are a 501C tax exempt charity. We are available to make presentations to your friends or groups; we are here to answer your questions.

Thank you for all you do to keep the vision alive: hope for the women and children in Nepal. While we help them, we help ourselves too. We make a difference, thanks to you!

Sincerely with appreciation,

Rosalind Russell,

"Women Helping Women & Children.therefore the world"
EIN #83-0442006

